

[Start of Recording 1]

Girkin: Okay. Today is Monday, March 11th, 2019 and we're currently at the Duffy's Cut Museum at the Gabriele Library at Immaculata University. This is my Formal Field Interview for History 650: Oral History. To start off, do I have your permission to record this interview?

Watson: Yes, you do, Rich.

Girkin: First of all, can you state for me your full name please?

Watson: William E. Watson.

Girkin: All right. And where and when were you born?

Watson: I was born in New York City in 1962.

Girkin: And do you... what hospital was that at?

Watson: Believe it or not, it was called New York Lying-in Hospital. (laugh) I'm sure it's called something else today, but that's what it was called back then.

Girkin: All right then. Okay, (pause) and you grew up in New York, correct?

Watson: Yeah. I lived in New York for the first, I guess, 13 years of my life. Yeah, about 13 years.

Girkin: Okay. So, I want to move on, and I want to get a little information about your parents. So I'll start with your father. What was his name?

Watson: He was William E. Watson and he was born in Chicago [coughs] in 1933.

Girkin: So his name was also William Watson. So does that make you a Third or a Junior?

Watson: Well, I'm the Fourth in a row. Yeah. My son is the fifth. I put it on his birth certificate, and I told him he better have a sixth. (both of us laugh)

Girkin: And what were they and what was your father's occupation?

Watson: He was a professional musician; he was a flute player. And he was... when we were born... he was in the American Symphony Orchestra, actually with Leopold Stokowski in New York. It was a big deal. Yeah. And my mother was Mary Tripician; married him in the '50s and they

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lived in Germany for a while there. They met in an orchestra. She was born in Narberth, actually in the family house... where I lived for three occasions in my life too... three different times in my life. But they met in the Indianapolis Symphony, somewhere in the '50s. And then when he got called up... he was called up to the Army in the draft at the time of the Hungarian Uprising, so that would have been, I think, '56. They lived in... they were over in Germany, and then when he got out of the Army, they lived there for another couple of years. He was in... My father was in the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra and the Bamberg Symphony; made a bunch of recordings actually with those guys. I have some of the CDs... they made it in the CDs, of course, they were records in those days. And my mother played the bass. She was... my father was a flute player and my mother was a bass player; that is a double bass, you know, huge bass. She was small too. It was kind of crazy; she was putting the biggest instrument. But so they met in Indianapolis and that's... my mother was here in Pennsylvania, my father was from Illinois. They got hired there in the symphony, they met there and they were living in Germany for maybe five or six years, you know, and then they came back here right before we were born. He got a good job, you know, with Stokowski. My mother was actually offered a job by Stokowski as well, prior to going to Germany before he even offered a job. He was the man; Leopold Stokowski was the big conductor, transforming lots of orchestras. And she had to turn it down because they were going to Germany, then when they got back here, she was again offered a job by him and she had to say no because she was pregnant with my brother and me. So she may be the only person in the world who ever got an offer from Stokowski twice and had to turn it down twice. It's crazy. Yeah. But my father was, you know, he stayed in professional musician work for a couple of years and then he went into TV work in New York: public television stuff and public presentations of music with young audiences. Then after his parents died, he inherited enough money that I don't know that he did anything except give private lessons. But my parents got divorced [in] '70... I don't know where in the mid seventies... probably '74 or somewhere around there; something like that. My mother worked every day till she died. You know, my father was living the Life of Riley, but we moved to Narberth, '77. Actually for a year when we were kids, we lived in Narberth for one year. I was way too young and you don't have any memories of that. And then again, from '77 until I got married in '87, so I was there for another 10 years. My mother moved in with her mother, my grandmother. So I was basically, as a teenager, raised by my mother and my grandma... my brother and I were raised by our mother and my grandmother in Narberth...in the house that our grandparents bought in... around 1920 for \$5,000 or \$4,000. It was \$4,000, which is now, I mean, when we sold it, good Lord, after my mother passed away in 2010, for upwards close to \$400,000. It's crazy. I paid off my mortgage in Springfield with the money from the sale of that house, but I mean my grandfather's garage... and my grandfather had a lot of stuff of course, including the Duffy's Cut file. But his garage he had all his license plates from way back. I still have a whole bunch of them, including one that says "For Prosperity: Repeal Prohibition."

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Girkin: Oh Wow.

Watson: Isn't that's crazy?

Girkin: That's crazy. You mentioned earlier that you had a sibling: a brother. So can you.... do you mind telling me a bit about him?

Watson: Yeah, we're twins. So he came out a little before me, but he's named after our other grandfather, Joseph Francis Tricipian, who was actually from Sicily; our grandfather on that side. I'm named after our other grandfather.

Girkin: Okay. And what's his occupation nowadays?

Watson: He's a Lutheran minister. So our grandfather came from Sicily. My father's side, by the way, it was all Presbyterian. They were the Donnellys: my grandmother's... my paternal grandmother's family... they would've been Catholic originally, but they became Episcopalian and then... it would have been Anglican in Canada because they came in through Canada... and then Presbyterian. Thomas Donnelly, our Irish forbearer, one of our forebears cause there's a sh... was about to curse there.. whole boatload of them all sides. My paternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother's side... there's Irish on all those sides, but the one we associate with most is the Donley side. And my grandmother was a Donnelly, Jane Donnelly. Her great grandmother was from Belfast, Jane Lawrence. She was named after her; she's Jane Donnelly. And her great- grandfather, Thomas Donnelly, who gave rise to the name, and our line, was from Donegal, but he was born on the ocean. So he would have had no recollection of growing up as an Irish Catholic in Ulster. He came over here... they both came over here around 1830; they came in through Canada. It was in 1830. And the interesting thing is that when they got married, they got married in the Anglican cathedral in Montreal in 1840-something. And I actually have it on my phone. I'd have to look that up, but I got the record in there... in the Anglican Cathedral's files. When they got married in Montreal, their parents weren't there; they were under age, something crazy like 15, 16 years old. But I think that their parents died on arrival here during the time of the cholera epidemic because there's no parents. They got married young and then came to Illinois and the Donnellys met the Watsons there. And so that's why we're here, on that side of the family.

Girkin: Okay. So you said... so earlier, you said that you were born in New York, but then around 13, you moved to Pennsylvania.

Watson: Yeah, Narberth.

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Girkin: So what was it like growing up, both as a child in New York and as a teenager in Narberth?

Watson: Well in New York City in the '60s, I don't have much recollection; I was too young. I went to public school and everything... they call them PS, I went to PS 166. I could walk there, you know. [laughs] From the high recollections of my youth, cockroaches are all over in New York. It's disgusting. I remember seeing, walking home from my public school lunchtime, a cockroach, cross Amsterdam Avenue that was so big, that it had a sparrow sitting on his back end, was pecking it. Nobody believes that, but my brother saw it too. All I know was that shocked the hell out of me. But I mean, you know, I have great recollections of the city in the '60s, and in the '70s, for the skyline. The people in it were hideous. The city itself was great because I saw all kinds of horrible things, especially when I came of age in the '70s. I saw three people get killed outside of my window.

Girkin: Geez.

Watson: One lady, she was crossing.... we were on 98th and Broadway. And it could be an exciting thing because John Lennon and Yoko Ono came to our lemonade stand one time.

Girkin: Really?

Watson: Yeah, that's no BS. There were a bunch of us, you know, and we were like the perfect multicultural crowd. It was me and my brother, our friend Yoel and his brother Ranon from upstairs; they're Jewish sons of rabbis. Guy Williams and Junior Williams, the black kids from up the street... real close to them as well as Yoel. We all had sleepovers and everything. And then Ricardo Wong, whose family was Chinese from Cuba. So we looked like the perfect New York crowd, sitting there and, you know, multicultural crowds at the time when flower power was around and all that stuff. It was still in the early '70s and yeah, they came up to our lemonade stand and they stood there. They were looking at us and we were like, we knew who he was, but "You want to buy some lemonade?" But they were soaking up the scene; that was New York. But the murders that happen and you hear about it in the news; I didn't see anybody get murdered, but I saw accidents: I saw a lady running across Broadway get hit by a car. She exploded. It was disgusting. And I'm looking at it, I said "She's not going to try to cross the street" because you do that. In New York, you look out the window and you could see Hudson River if you look to the left; couldn't see Central Park up to the right cause there were too many buildings in the way. I could actually see the river from my window... and this lady got killed. And then another guy was unloading a van and a pickup truck just smacked (crashing gesture) into him. Guy was driving drunk, probably about 50 miles an hour... (short pause) gone. That shocked the hell out of me. And then an old lady across the street jumped out of a window. So I mean that's too much for a kid. I was glad to get the hell out of there

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and moved to the suburbs where, I mean, I saw crimes too. I didn't... it wasn't... I never actually got victimized; I was a fast runner. But right before we moved, there were these punks who tried to get us in front of the... we were in those days, they...we were interested in history and natural history and stuff, so the Museum of Natural History in Central Park West was a great place to go. And they had some history as well as a lot of animals and biology and stuff. [We] started out playing with all our friends Wolf Pack, a huge hide-and-seek game, and then just stop and look at the exhibits and say, "Well, this is interesting and stuff;" playing Wolf Pack in the exhibits. But yeah, we were almost mugged about a month before we moved down here, and an anti-crime unit pulled up on a taxi cab, stopped it; it ran at the last minute. I said "Thank God for these guys" and how stupid they were. They weren't going to prosecute these guys in. They had a criminal record a mile long, and they said "We'll call you back if they do something between now and the trial date." Well, we moved down to Narberth and, in the intervening time, we got a call from these guys: "Well, they like to be come back and testify." "Hey man, you had your chance, we're not in New York anymore. I'm not going back for the trial." I'm sure the city's prison records are just filled with stories of... the '70s was a terrible time, in some ways, in New York. Abe Beam was the mayor; [John] Lindsay before... he was a great unifier. Abe Beam presided over a lot of corruption, a lot of crime. They cracked down on the Times Square crime, and it all moved up to the upper west side. I was glad to get the hell out of there and go to Narberth and a real school. We didn't have any... in middle school in New York, there weren't any textbooks; it was a joke. There was no education going on in there.

Girkin: So how did that affect learning at all?

Watson: You didn't learn; you just survived. I mean there was a kid who had his throat cut in front of my homeroom in New York, in the hallway, and it was a big deal called the cops. Principal got beaten over the head with a crowbar, almost killed. It was a joke; it was an absolute and total joke. And we moved the Narberth and went to Lower Merion High School and said "Man, I was in a real school." Textbooks, teachers, nobody's running for their lives. I remember one day I left... I just left school one day I said, "I'm not going to hang around here, these thugs." So I just started walking around and I ended up at where my mother was working in the flute repair place. along the way, I lost one of my galoshes; there was snow and I was walking in my one sock and one galosh. It was tough; a weird upbringing. I was glad to get to Narberth and being around like grandparents stuff too, 'cause, every Easter and Thanksgiving and Christmas, we spent in that house. So I was glad to be there. A lot of very positive memories and got a real education at Lower Merion.

Girkin: Okay. And with your childhood, you mentioned that your parents did get divorced, but growing up did your parents... did they bring you up to consider certain things important in life?

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Watson: It wasn't a religious household, until we got to Narberth and my grandmother had us go to church every week. She was Lutheran, so she... our maternal grandmother was German and Irish, but they were more German in their consciousness. So they were Markley and Swope. The Markley side was more of a mixture; a lot of Irish in there. We had one ancestor on that side that was born in Derry during the Siege of Derry. That's crazy enough. Dara was the name and they moved up to Bucks County. The Markley's, per se, were Lutheran and then the Swopes were Lutheran as well.

So my grandmother was a Lutheran and that's why my brother's a Lutheran minister. I went to church every week. I was at lector and did the Usher stuff. It was good little community church. And I liked the minister; he was a good man. If he'd still been... I became a Catholic, you know what I mean? We have a mixed family: it was Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians. But I probably would've still been Lutheran if it hadn't been for the death of my minister in the early nineties, like '91- '92 time frame, somewhere in there. And the guy that took his place was just "Yuck," so I went to a Catholic Church down the street. I was studying Catholicism in Grad school anyway before that, and I had knew that decision at some point I wanted to be Catholic and... I had a miracle in Grad school actually, studying in the Latin exam. They had a whole Medieval Latin class: started out with late ancient texts and they're harder than the medieval texts; much more verbiage and more proper Latin grammar. But we started out with the Passion of Saint Perpetua and went all the way up to the time of the Crusades... Crusader documents, and it was an interesting class. John.. by the way, my friend John... was in that class, but he dropped out and I don't know if he ever finished his Latin requirements, so I don't know how that would have happened by the time... they would have had him retake that if he actually finished up. So it was kind of amazing. But anyway, I was getting married and then my grandmother was dying and I had to take this exam. That was my last requirement in Grad school and it's in the, let me see, '87 timeframe. And I was fascinated by the Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity. They were thrown to the lions in North Africa and it's horrifying descriptions of what happened to them, you know? And it was the same thing that led a lot of Romans to convert to Christianity. It's just... "why are these people willing to get killed for their beliefs," you know? So I said, "Man, this is really something." And I focused on that text almost exclusively to the detriment of the others. And I went into the exam, thinking I was going to fail and have to retake it and, up for dozens of things that that guy could have put in front of me, he put that text down; a miracle. I've got an A+, [laughs] oh God, cause I had the thing practically memorized. I mean it was crazy, but that's when I've thought I was going to become a Catholic eventually; you know that I did. Now I'm mostly in church because I'm a musician and on weekends, I play weddings and funerals pretty well every weekend. And my kids went to CCD and everything, but they know....I mean they experienced CCD. If you went to Catholic school, it's one thing; if you want to see CCD, it's a whole other thing and they were turned off by it. So I don't really... I'm in a Catholic institution, but I don't really go to church that often. I should for the better for my soul, but I mean whatever; it is what it is. I'm there. (laughs) I'm

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there for weddings and funerals, not in ways of the Mass, but whatever. I mean, who knows what it all means in the end anyways. I don't know.

Girkin: So how would you... so I heard you talking earlier and you were saying it was at the time you met your wife. How did you meet your wife?

Watson: That was by chance. I was on my way back from a bagpipe job. I won't go into the whole story, but my buddy... I called my buddy Tony and said, "Well, let's go to a particular bar, particular time." I changed out of my stuff, and he and I went there and then she was there with her friends. So it was just a chance. It was called Friendly Saloon in Ardmore. Now it's an Irish bar; I can't remember the name of it, but it's right across the street from the former Viking Smorgasbord on Lancaster Avenue, just as you go over the bridge from Montgomery Avenue towards Lancaster Avenue. It's a little bridge there. So Wynnewood, Ardmore, right where they come in there as well. My whole life [inaudible] in the eighties. (coughs)

Girkin: Okay. And how many kids you have? I know you mentioned one earlier being William Watson, the Fifth. Do you have any more besides him?

Watson: I have three kids. I know I'd had more if I could have afforded it, but I have my oldest kid, a daughter, Laura Elizabeth Watson, and then my son came next, William Ernest Watson. Ernest is my middle name, so I tend not to say that out loud, but honest...whatever, it's a family name. They were, I guess, hicks by then, the Watsons, and that started out in Missouri with my great-great grandfather...my great- grandfather was born in... actually yeah, he was born in Missouri. My grandfather on that side was born in Iowa and whatever. So Ernest is some family name for whatever reason. And my youngest is Margaret Josephine. She was actually named after somebody who died, who he knew, of cancer, who was a bridesmaid. And she was actually with John Ahtes. It's a crazy thing that these two people died, were there...the two people who were together; I think groomsmen and bridesmaid. Of all the people there, they're the ones who died. That's weird that they were in the scene. So Maggie is the youngest. She's at Villanova now; she's transferred there from Ursinus. Villanova's easier, commuter- wise. She was living at Ursinus; it was driving her crazy. So she is... she's got a... I got her a Kia, so she's going to drive. Right now, she's gotta get her license and stuff, but it's the same thing: it's drop her off, pick her up; same thing they did with Laura and Willie their first year. Willie went to Villanova, graduated, and Laura went to Rosemont and graduated, and Laura's here actually now doing grad work in Psych. Willie's down at Drexel; got a full ride doing astrophysics. I taught at Drexel as well as... so I taught at Drexel from... I taught at Drexel for 12 years. I taught at LaSalle for six years, an adjunct. But I could be assured of work at each of those places, pretty well every semester. And it was... LaSalle who had a lot to do with me getting hired here. Um, yeah, the call came in..

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Girkin: Yeah, we can mention that later when we get into your... when we talk about your career as professor. And so now we'll kind of move onto your education. As you stated earlier, you went to public school or PS... what was the number again?

Watson: PS 166 in New York, Upper West Side. Yeah.

Girkin: Okay. So you went there for elementary school and then, at the age of 13, you moved to Narberth where you attended Lower Merion High School. So what kind of activities were you part of at Lower Merion, and we'll start with, first, inside school. So inside the school, what activities were you in?

Watson: It was just hockey. (laughs) I was one of the guys who was a hockey dog. I either want to be a hockey player or historian. And it dawned on me, by 11th grade, that hockey wasn't going to happen because there's not enough ice time; I wanted to be a historian. I wanted to go to Penn for Grad school. I knew that. I knew the resources there were... it was one of the big places to study medieval history. I wanted to be a medievalist, although my original interest in history was World War II because all my uncles served and I would hear their stories every Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. And so, World War II was the thing I read when I'm relaxed for the most part. But I became a medievalist because I just love medieval history. It's one of those things as a kid, but whatever it draws you in. The Kenneth Clark *Civilization* series, the first two episodes, that I saw it when I was a teenager, really had an impact on me. It was "The Skin of Our Teeth" and "The Great Thaw;" those two episodes from Kenneth Clark really... that's what sent me over the edge, "I'm going to be a medievalist," and that's eventually what happened.

Girkin: So, you said for that brief time that you did hockey, what position did you play?

Watson: I was a goalie for Lower Merion. It was a crazy thing; there's pucks coming at you super fast. A couple of guys on the Lower Merion team got tryouts with the NHL, but they didn't make it. But there was some good players. One guy on our own team...before a game, you've got to warm up for the game and shoot on the goalie... [points to face] like that close to my eye. I was like "What the hell you shooting that fast and that hard on your own goalie?" I mean, it was crazy. I played hockey until even after I graduated, on men's leagues teams for a couple of years, right before, guess... was I in Grad School then? It was when I was bagpiping, that's for sure. No, it was in undergraduate still. And one of those games got to park in my index finger and it split the bones. It was ridiculous; never had an injury like that and my entire life at that point: nothing that serious, nothing that painful, no matter what the hell it was. And I said "That's it." I was already bagpiping. I was already making money bag piping and I had to get rid of... hockey was costing me money; cost me a whole summer

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of bagpipe jobs. So that was the end of that. And the bagpipes had been for 37 years... 38 years now, part of my life.

Girkin: So did you start the bagpiping while you were at Lower Merion?

Watson: Right after.

Girkin: Right after Lower Merion. Okay

Watson: Yeah, and we did the Saint Patrick's Day Parade with Gallagher's from really early on. Jim Kenney was in there, the mayor; we met a lot of these guys. Bill Keller was a State Rep.; was in there with them... lot of interesting context. Danny Gallagher still runs a group in the parade, but it's like a fraction of the size; it had 300 guys back in the day.

Girkin: So, that was inside school. So outside of school, what... during your high school years, what were your activities outside of school?

Watson: Well, we played street hockey and it was all hockey. It was all geared towards hockey. we had a really good group of friends that you hung out with, but you know what you do in high school: you just drive around; whoever has it... who has their license. You just drive around. "Hey. Yeah, we're cool. We're driving around." I just kind of.. (laughs) looking back on it, it's kind of ridiculous. We just hung out; we had a group of friends. We actually walked to Lower Merion from Narberth; we never took the bus. There were a group of guys that were a whole bunch of brothers: Carney Brothers, Kroll Brothers; we had a bunch of brother. Everybody just... we all walked as a mob; we were the Narberth crowd going to Lower Merion. And I enjoyed it. I mean, it was...you look back on it, maybe you look back on your past with rose colored glasses, but compared to New York: (sound of disgust) Right before we left New York, I got accepted into music and art, it would have been a different story. For art: never pursued it after that. I mean as a kid I was... cartoonist kind of stuff, but it was good enough; I got into a high school for it. But, I'm glad I didn't stay. I never wouldn't want of... lots of stuff wouldn't have including the bagpipes... maybe I would have played the pipes there. I don't know.

Girkin: Okay. So you said... you were mentioning earlier that you did your master's degree at University of Pennsylvania, but where'd you attend your undergraduate?

Watson: That was Eastern College out on... on Montgomery Avenue? No, it's Lancaster Avenue. Yeah, 'cause Montgomery Avenue doesn't have any dead ends up there until you get to the King of Prussia [Mall]. So that was... yeah, it was Lancaster Avenue. So actually we drove there from

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Narberth and it was a half hour commute; wasn't bad at all. But the guy I studied under there... Fred Belky was his name; he'd go into to get his Ph.D. at Penn. And while I was an undergrad, I met Edward Peters at the Delaware Valley Medieval Association. The main thing that attracted me to Eastern was my interview with him. I was planning on maybe going to Temple to study under a guy named Ismail al- Faruqi, who did a bit of writing on the Muslims. I mean, I knew I wanted to write about the Muslims of Asia and Europe... the period when the European territorial monarchies were getting underway. And they were imperiled by another wave of invasions.. the "second dark age;" it's like Charles Oman said. You got the Vikings, the Magyars and the Muslims. And it was all Charles Martel and Charlemagne; that stuff really was the period... that was the area that really intrigued me. And, so I actually had it; I had a letter, ready to go to send to him, and it was on the news. I was actually... this is insane. I had typewriter out type the letter... in those days, it was just typewriters.. and I had it in there and I was typing it. I had the news on, in the background, and by God, the guy got murdered at Graterford Prison by an inmate. He was like a Muslim chaplain to Muslims there and this follower of Farrakhan, or whatever, killed him as a legitimate... criticizing their version of Islam or somebody was murdered. And then, holy cow. "Alright, well Belky's a good guy, let's study under him." He got his Ph.D. at Penn before Peters was there, but he knew Peters. So I attended the Delaware Valley Medieval Association meetings every month... every other month, whatever. And I met Peters before I applied there. And so that helped me hugely to get in; he knew I was a serious student into medieval history and so, I got in. That was my first choice. Princeton was my second choice. I only applied to two places. Princeton said "Get the masters at Penn and then you could transfer." I don't want to do that. Then I heard for Penn and I stayed. I wonder, Penn was my first choice. I wanted to go in there and I had gone to the Van Pelt library; seeing the resources there and all the time... whenever I had extra money, I was buying medieval history books down at the... not only the Penn Bookstore, but the Penn Book Center, which is, it's no longer there. It was a great bookstore. Now that place is, I think, a Wharton building. Wharton's expanding all over the Penn campus; it's like an industry all unto itself. So, yeah, that's gone. And the old Penn Bookstore, the university bookstore, going that moved down on lower down on Walnut. But I was familiar with the campus; I was familiar with the program there and it worked out great. And that summer I started, I started before the fall semester started by taking an intensive Arabic course down there with Muhammad Jiyad, who was a great professor and he moved to up to Mount Holyoke I think or Amhurst somewhere; it was in Massachusetts. But when he was at Penn, I formed a bond with him and helped him get a citizenship actually; he was from Iraq. His father had been killed by Saddam Hussein and his brother was tortured by Saddam Hussein. Muhammad Jiyad... he had saw the writing on the wall, so he left and came over here, left this whole family there. It messed him up; that his wife and his daughter were over there, never went back. Um, and then I met Naji Abu- Latifa This is an insane, but true, story; again, the small world kind of scenario. I knew a guy at Eastern named Sharif Abu Dawd. He became... I think he became a Baptist or something, but he was Muslim.

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He was born and raised a Sunni Muslim and... we were friends. It wasn't like super close friends, but you know, every now and then we'd have lunch in, hanging out. When I got into the Language Partners program the first semester at Penn... I guess it was that summer before I even started. It was when I was taking the Arabic class. Muhammad Jiyad suggested the Language Sparks program. Somebody over there was learning English, you're learning Arabic. It's a great thing. Penn has a lot... they've got students from all over the Arab world and got on the phone, sounded just like Sharif, who was from Gaza and he said his name was Najji Abu-Latifa, and he was also from Gaza. I said, "Damn, do these guys all sound alike?" It's exactly like Sharif. And when I first met Najji, I said "Man, on the phone, you sounded like this guy I knew named Sharif." He says "Oh, I'm sorry. I put my friend on the phone with you cause I was too nervous." And Sharif didn't realize he was talking to me, isn't it... I mean, I didn't say to him "You sound like Sharif Abu-Dawd on the phone," but I should of. But Najji had a couple of interesting years. He ended up getting his B.A. at Temple and he lives up in Bethlehem; now he's got six daughters, working for a computer company. I haven't seen him in years, but I helped him get his citizenship. He had a really hard time. He lost his Israeli... he had passport; they conquered Gaza. He had... I shouldn't go on all these details. In an event, now he's naturalized. He was almost deported from here. He was at... the Israelis went back to see his family at one point. I will say this, that they saw a photo of his apartment in West Philly, which was a pigsty. It was horrific, but he had Palestinian flag on it. That was the reason why they said, Uh-oh, he's a potential terrorist." He called me from the airport in Amman, Jordan. He said, "Bill, you've got to help me." I said "Man, I'm not James Bond. I can't go and help you, but I can write letters." And he got.. he came back here and he's done well for himself. Really good... he's a good American, a good success story. But anyway, I met John Ahtes down there too. There's a sort of overlap between... there was Najji and a guy named Barry Lituchy, who was from New York. It was... he was a real good friend of mine too. His career almost got completely sidelined. And he went up to NYU and I don't think he finished up there, but he's an adjunct professor up there. He's done other things, but he was a Russianist and he and I were assigned to Riasanovsky. Riasanovsky became a good friend of mine. We were his TA, but I was... I played for Riasanovsky, both of his daughters weddings. And I got real close to Risanovsky's family, ut Barry Lituchy and I were Riasanovsky's TAs, and we've got real close and sort of have a slight overlap for me... It was Barry, Najji, me and John. And then Barry went to New York and Najji went to Temple, so John and I became best friends. But John came in on the R5... I mean, excuse me, I went in on the R5 line to Penn, right from Narberth... there's a station, Wallingford is the R6 line; it goes right into the 30th Street. So we met as we were walking to the Penn campus and we said "hey, from the suburbs here? Me too." And John Ahtes became a best friend as the years went by. It was crazy that things worked out. I brought him out here He's been instrumental with Duffy's Cut and getting this thing moving.

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Girkin: I'll be sure to touch on that later in the interview. So you went to Penn or University of Pennsylvania for both your masters and doctorate [degrees], and it was in medieval history, correct?

Watson: Mhm. Minored In Russian history and Islamic history.

Girkin: So, so you were primarily medieval, but minored in Russian and Middle East. So what was your... for the end your doctoral studies, what was your dissertation defense?

Watson: My dissertation was on... it's called the Hammer and the Crescent, and it's about the Muslim invasions of Gaul/France... what was Gaul/Francia early on, at the time of the Franks, who gave, then, the rise to the name France. So Charles Martel, Charlemagne... it was fascinating stuff. I knew I wanted to write about that too when I was an undergraduate even... I mean, before I was undergrad...(laughs) literally, it was something that just caught me; I said, "Wow, I knew about the Vikings, but I didn't know that the Arabs... there's Arabs in the Alps. I had one of the chapters in my dissertation called "The Arabs in the Alps." I mean it's funny cause I had friendships with Arabs, but they were the enemies in my ancestors on my mother's side in Sicily, The Tripis gave rise to Tripiciano; Tripi is the base of the name Tripiciano and it's in... they're mentioned in Idrisi ibn[inaudible] and Alice Dockery and in sources in the Middle Ages as being held up around Mount Etna. And there's a comune of Tripi... they call the towns "comunes"... Tripi and Naso, where my grandfather was from. They're mentioned in there as resisting the Arabs. It's crazy. That's another thing from Graduate school, where only Penn has books that go into that kind of depth. The Pellegrino, a history... the history of the Toponyms of Italy and Sicily, and I'm looking at that and "Oh God Almighty, there's Tripi." And it gives rise to the name Tripiciano; on the mainland, Tripisano, and in Sicily, it's Tripiciano. Michel Amari was the big historian of medieval Islamic Sicily. And he's... so I looked at his... he's got a compendium of the Arabic sources and there it is. So I told some relatives on that side of the family and they were fascinated by it. I mean, that's insane. You can take something back to the 8 or 900s, but that is it. I mean, for the areas of northern Europe, sometimes there's such movement. Sicily's not a huge island, so it's not hard to trace. Our Scottish side, the Watsons, were from Linlithgow; Donnelly side is from... Linlithgow is in Scotland, in the Lowlands. Donnelly's are from, Lawrence's are from Belfast. The Swope side from Swabia... it comes from the name Schwab and the Markleys are partly from Saxony and partly Irish from [inaudible]. Nobody's hundred percent anything. That's what makes it interesting. That's what makes history so interesting.

Girkin: Okay. So at this point you were done your doctoral studies and you've completed everything. Did you know you wanted to be a teacher or were you kind of just wanting to be like, what?

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Watson: Yeah, I wanted to be a historian and teaching and research, and I knew I wanted to do that when I couldn't do hockey. Man, it was definitely... that was my plan. So.. and I wanted to teach on the Main Line. I wanted to be..this is why, when this job opened up, I was like, "Oh great!"

Girkin: So you wanted to like stay in the area?

Watson: Yeah. I had no interest in going up.... my brother's been up in Jersey for... since he graduated as an Undergrad. He moved to Jersey, so I have no interest in moving anywhere. I want to stay here and I wanted a job on the Main Line, and I got a job on the Main Line, so it's a miracle.

Girkin: Okay, so [pause] where did you first teach? I think you did mention earlier Drexel and LaSalle, correct? So how long were you an adjunct for both of them?

Watson: Okay. So Drexel, they hired me in '86, and La Salle was '92. And I was fully employed and in terms of number of classes, actually, I had more than than I should have. I mean, the typical load for full time faculty members is four classes, but they're, I might've had eight, sections. It was insane. All I was doing was driving between places and grading. But it was not a bad life, but it was precarious because you weren't sure if the enrollments would be up and you'd be guaranteed a certain number of classes. But I got to tell you, the chairman at Drexel, Eric Brose, went out of his way to help keep me employed. But at Temple, George Stow had a huge role...

Girkin: (interjecting) You mean LaSalle?

Watson: Excuse me, I mean LaSalle, ha! Yikes! At LaSalle, George Stow was the man because I can tell you that, when I was interviewed here, they had to do a call to someone right away to verify who you are, because claiming to be this maniac or whatever. She called George Stow up at LaSalle and George Stow picked up his phone and I was like "Well alright, she told me I don't need to do anything more. You're hired." So I was like "holy cow." So I sent him a Christmas card for a bunch of years. I own him more than that. I tell ya. I mean, he got me hired here, so that was great.

Girkin: So when you were at LaSalle, what kind of classes did you teach?

Watson: Yeah, I did the.... the one I did most often was like a Western Civ class, and I did other classes there. I'm trying to think back on, it was so long ago. I took some classes in the 20th century, Europe, and there was even one on America I remember I did there. There was a guy named Steve Lackernick, who was in the Veterans Administration. I met him through bagpiping, and I did some Marine Corps anniversary things with Tom Connor with him... with this guy, Steve Lackernick,

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and he was a very dynamic speaker, so I brought him into Drexel. Every single... they had a quarter system. I hired him a lot of time, give him a little money to get to take them for dinner. He did a great lecture on the Vietnam War. He served in the Vietnam War. Crazy stories, but man, and the V.A. was no BS there's. It was real deal and a very interesting. [I] brought him up to LaSalle as well. Huge hit in that class, but the other classes I really couldn't use him in, but I had people coming from other schools... I was occasionally teaching in other places too... who came specifically to hear him because I knew that, up at LaSalle, not going to be that often that was going to have an outside speaker come in. But, I was at LaSalle for six years as an adjunct. Yeah. And was at Drexel for twelve years as an adjunct. And my son is now at Drexel, which is kind of interesting.

Girkin: So it's all coming full circle.

Watson: Yeah, it's interesting.

Girkin: So you talked... so while you were teaching there, how'd you prepare for the classes? Because I can imagine, unlike nowadays where you have the Internet and all these scholarly articles online, obviously in the early and mid-nineties, that was not the case. So what can you tell me like kind of like the difference in preparation back then versus now?

Watson: Yeah, I still do it the way I did it then, to tell you the truth; now because it's more thorough. But you know, you get whatever the textbook is, you can choose your own or if it's something with standards of the class. And those days were a lot of standard textbooks you used, so everybody had used the same. Actually we're back to that here now. But you just find an authoritative and you start taking notes. And I tell this to everybody that, if you were stuck on a desert island with one book as a historian, you got to get William Langer's *Encyclopedia of World History*; it is the best thing that was ever produced. It's not theory-of-the-month club kind of stuff. It's what actually happened. Forget the interpretations that may change decade to decade; this thing was and remains, in my opinion, the best one volume history of the world: *Encyclopedia of World History* by William Langer. He didn't write it all. He brought in hundreds of experts. So there's each section, he's got 1300s... everywhere in the world. Some experts are writing those... experts from decades ago, maybe so, but it's like a bottle of wine: a lot of these stories are better... (laughs) sorry...in the past and done a lot of them today who was trying to get fame by like shocking. I mean Duffy's Cut is a kind of shocking thing; verifiable, however, that fits into a lot of traditional narratives. So a lot of people tried to be sensationalistic and shocking and a lot of the new histories that came out, I'm not entirely convinced that are worth the paper that they published on. I shouldn't say that, but there's just nothing,... here was no subject for which the full story has been told. There is nothing. There's always something more to be found. The World War II stuff, for example, I mean you can read; you spend your entire life reading and you

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never will get it all in: when they are looking at the battles and leaders, technology, the espionage, you name it, the economy. But yeah, William Langer was the thing I always cracked open, no matter what the subject was. Start with William Langer and then find other things. I did a lot of classes, while I was doing that, over at Penn in CGS; they were night classes, they call it now LPS. They were specialized classes: short duration, much like our excel here. So I would do stuff. I would do special topics like on the Vikings, on Charlemagne and the Franks, great battles; stuff of interest to an audience. [pause] So yeah, Adam Langer and... so I've got really detailed notes more than I would need here in my classes here in the file cabinet in the office. I've got John Ahtes' notes when he died. The executor gave me all the John's notes; I've got them in the office too. His are in longhand, so there's sometimes hard to read, but I mean it's kind of crazy 'cause, in the future, nobody's going to have that. I now print like page like this, printed out here. I have almost all my notes condensed and I have enough memorized from previous years that I only need... but it's detailed. I have one... I don't know if I have that here, but I've have... the most recent one that i had to condense stuff on as the Vikings, 'cause I'm up to that in Medieval History at the moment, but I'm behind.... (papers rustling) I don't know if I have that with me here. But yeah, here it is. Instead of... for example, all my classes; every class looks like that. So yeah, that's really the way to go if you're going into Higher Ed.. I don't know that you would need that in Secondary, but it would be helpful to have that in Secondary; like your own outline of world history. So I have copies of this here, of all of them, for all the subjects that I teach. And I have another one at home, in case office blows up or my house blows up; I need to have copies. Some things I actually keep in my car in case everything blows up; medication: my car blows up, I have in the office or at home. So you have to have multiple copies. I got to tell you, the most horrifying story I've ever heard was in Grad school, when there was a guy, before my time, who had his dissertation. It was a single copy of his dissertation and he put it in his refrigerator freezer to keep it safe. But when he went to deliver this thing 'cause he knew if his house burned down, his apartment, the freezer wouldn't burn up; it was metal. But he was going to deliver to the Penn campus. He had a car that didn't have locks working right. So the guy broke into his car and... this is the days before.....everybody was xerox-ing everything. So I mean I xerox an entire section, but you had to literally xerox... not like today at all; everything's on a flash drive. I mean I have... I'm going to have all my AV stuff on flash drives. I have some flash drives literally with about 30 hours of videos. You don't have to use DVDs anymore. DVD players here were getting antiquated; you weren't going to replace him. So I said "To hell with this, I'm going to copy it." And so everything I had that... it's weird. It's very weird how things have changed.

Girkin: So I was going through some books that you have authored and there is one book that you authored that I do remember you using it one of your classes, and you did this while you were an adjunct. So what was your purpose for writing *The Fall of Communism in the Soviet Union*?

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Watson: Yeah. Actually, that's through Alexander Riasanovsky connections. The fact that I was his T.A. at Penn for many years. His History 49-B was the Soviet period. Well, we did a three volume history of Russian and readings.... Readings in Russian History is what it was called, right after I finished my Ph.D; I finished up in 1990. So in '91-'92, we had a three volume set of readings come out that we actually made a lot of money on and became very well acquainted with the sources. There's something called the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*; it had a lot of the news stories from Soviet period and it translated in English. And so I had to write the copyright contracts for that and they already granted permission, including John Scott's widow. He's the guy who did *Behind the Urals*, who was an American communist to went over in the Soviet Stalin period and got disinfected with Communism; came back and wrote a very important book called *Behind the Urals*. His widow gave us permission; I thought that was really neat, much like the Liam Neeson letter for Duffy's Cut, which we still haven't seen. Goddamn. I actually got a hold of Joe Devoy and the Duffy Brothers, thinking of doing a show again. I want that letter. I just think they want to give that to his agent. So in fact, one thing I'm going to do today is call, cause I've emailed him and I texted him and he's too busy to get back to us. But yeah, that was really neat. And we made money, we used them; I used them at Drexel. I may have used one or two of them up at LaSalle and I'm not sure... probably used that. If I did, I probably would use the one for the early modern stuff; the second volume. I'm not sure... I may have done Russian History there and I did stints in Russian history through Riasanovsky at Cabrini and Rosemont, and a lot of public talks; things at the Jewish community centers... there's a whole bunch of them than I did Russian history many classes in that he didn't want to do; things he was too busy to do. And so through that connection, I got the a *Collapse of Communism* thing and all. I mean, not only that... I knew enough Russian, I forgotten everything that Lauren [inaudible]... if you don't use it, you lose the language. But I knew enough of the written language that I was able to... from my work in the Arabic sources on the Rus; that was one of the main fields that I'd done research in... original research. And Alexander Riasanovsky's brother, Nicholas Riasanovsky, said I made a contribution to him. It meant something to me because we used his textbook; Nicholas' textbook out from Oxford is the big one. He used in the most of the courses, and he saw my stuff that I've wrote on the Rus and he said I made a contribution. That man is something to me. But, the Russian indexes in Russian... sort of Russian source books on the Arabs in contact with the Russians. So anyway, getting copyrights for documents... Part of the *Collapse of Communism* book has documents, in the end, and it's current stuff... what was then current stuff because... he book came out in '98. But when that came out, I didn't have a chance to use any of these other places 'cause it actually.... it came out a few days before I started here, so I've used it here; I did the research there. Riasanovsky and I went to a bunch of conferences together. I drove him to the airport when I wasn't going, and then when we went together, we went on the airplane together. It was a lot of fun. And he took me all over the place. He was a real gentleman scholar. He didn't just use his graduate students; he drew me in and.. Again, I played his wedding...daughters'

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weddings. I knew the family. With conferences, you know, and, and a couple of my first publications actually out were things that I'd read there at publishing conference were because to him. He did the medieval Rus from Latin and Russian sources; I did it from Arabic sources. So we had a common interest. I was interested in the Vikings too, and that he never thought that the Rus were Vikings. I have since come to the conclusion that they were Swedes/Vikings. I mean the rituals, sacrificial rituals especially... evidence there for that, among the Vikings, is very strong; similar kinds of things. So, anyway, he didn't know that before he died so I'm glad. But I defended him at a lot of conferences 'cause some of the things of the Normanists, the historians of Russia, who were saying that they're all Vikings and no Slavic influence at all, were wrong. But anyway, I don't know how we got off the subject, but that's how I got into Russian History; it was because of Riasanovsky.

Girkin: Now you said you wrote this book in '98, and the collapse of the Soviet Union happened seven years before. So, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was it hard to get the documents from Russia... was a hard to get Russian documents at that time?

Watson: It was a lot easier because the opening of Soviet archives, There's a guy, I think his name is McPherson, was the first guy to find out about the 1937 census; that was after the collapse of communism, found the Soviet archives and there's 30 million and missing people by 1937. Now he was the one that blew that wide open. Of course, there were a lot of people before that who were talking about the horrors; Robert Conquest is probably the first one. He got stuff leaked out by Russians who wanted the rest of the world to know. he wrote *The Terror Famine* and things of that nature; *Harvest to Sorrow*. But there... there's a whole bunch of stuff that the Russians are willing to talk about it now, even under Putin, they're willing to talk about, and Putin was a reformer. He was connected to Yeltsin. He was connected to Sobchak in Saint Petersburg first, in Leningrad as a reformer. Sobchek ended up being corrupt.; he also ended up being seen by the Russians is inept and... they're never going to be a democracy like we are, so we can't worry about that. They are their own tradition and own culture. We were too worried about what making everybody be like us. It's not going to happen there or in the Middle East.

Girkin: That is true. So, after becoming an adjunct, you mentioned earlier that you became a full time faculty member here at Immaculata University, then college. And how long have you been teaching here at Immaculata?

Watson: I been here 21 years as a full time professor, so it's a long time; 21 years and starting in this next fall be 22 years. So you make all kinds of decisions based on various reasons... factors in your

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life. I mean I'm, I'm glad I'm here. I would have made more money at some other schools, but Duffy's Cut never would've happened if I hadn't been here. And that is the most important thing I've ever done other than giving birth to my kid... well, I didn't give birth to my kids, being another half me. {laughs} Whatever. I'm glad I didn't birth there, holy cow. But, cause I saw that.. I was there [with the] camcorder; was like "Oh God." But anyway, other than having kids, Duffy's Cut has been really the biggest thing. I mean, it's huge. I mean, it's enormous.

Girkin: There's a lot here in this museum. So you've been teaching and off for 21 years. Do you have any favorite classes that you like to teach?

Watson: I like the World Civ. class because it's a lot of interesting things. You.. you're not just stuck in one narrow timeframe. But I do Russian history and Middle East history. I did World War Two, Irish history, which I love . That's the most recent one since John passed away. I took over Irish history. I love that class, which back in your day, it would have been done by John. And then for a couple of years it was on hiatus. But 20th century Europe, World Conquerors... class I created, which is a lot of fun; I love that class. That's real fun... medieval studies, which I'm doing now, which I like; I don't know if anybody else does. I love it. I'm going so slow in there right now though. They should had their midterm already. They're not going to have that until after... none of my classes are going to have midterm till after they come back because it's just too, I'm not going to slow. And that's because of the onlines had been destroying me. Tonight, I'm going to be grading til midnight probably. We're on spring break here, but the onlines... my God.

Girkin: So you've been teaching.. 21 years so that would place us around... little before the year 2000.

Watson: Yeah, '98 is when I started.

Girkin: And I know.. I looked up and Immaculata became coed in 2005 being an all... so it was an all girls school first and then became coed. So what was the change like here on campus? Like what... what was it like?

Watson: Well, there's a lot more history majors when it went coed. You know, the battles and kings and the stuff that attract guys into history. But there were some really good students back in the day. The first student who actually helped out with Duffy's Cut was not a Earl Schandelmeier; it was Anna Besch and she came to all our talks with me and John. She was the one who got the letters out to the politicians. That was the semester.. So you're looking at '03... somewhere in there. We got the marker in '04... so yeah, it was 2003. There were some very serious students back then and there's

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very serious students since then, but it's changed. I mean it's for the better 'cause its made the institution thrive. But there were some really intense history majors back then and there was one student we had, who was in business, wrote a huge number of history papers; wrote a paper at the Phi Alpha Theta Conference, from one of the history papers she did in World Civ. even. um, We still have great students of both genders. We've had some standouts, going on to Grad school. But Anna was the first student involved in Duffy's Cut; she was... she's all but forgotten unfortunately because of all the hundreds of people would come since her to help out with Duffy's Cut, but she was the pioneer. That was... she was there when she did the recording, which I think Earl has of the psychic, Lady Downey, who would... no relation to Jack Downey. But though Lady Downey who was involved in the... Oh, what's the house up in New York, they made movies about it....

Girkin: Amityville?

Watson: Amityville Horror.

Girkin: So in that period, you said this girl, what was her name again?

Watson: Anna.

Girkin: Anna. And so she was instrumental in pioneering the Duffy's Cut. And you said also when they started allowing men in the undergraduate program, there was an like an uptick in the history majors. But going on the level of administration, is there like any kind of like backlash because allowing that...

Watson: Yeah, Anna didn't want it to go coed. She was in some drive to keep it from going coed, student and alumni petitions and stuff, 'cause she saw the power of the petition in getting the marker. But then she saw and met Earl, who was the first guy, in the, in the history of the program. He was....he had been here in the Excel program and became a regular day student that semester. So, I know there were a lot of guys started coming into the first guys in the, other than Earl has..he's now one of the co-equal members of the leadership... when he's around. He was there when we got the marker and all the battles that... when we finally got the marker here, after that, had to get permission to dig. so you got to give people credit where it's due, which some people involved in the Cut have not done... i.e. the whole website versus the Facebook page: Website gives everybody credit; the Facebook page is a personal empire. but the transition here was pretty smooth, I got to say, from college to university. I can't... there were hiccups, but it wasn't anything. From our perspective... the faculty's perspective, it was long time ago; it was all female when I was hired here. The college just thrived: new buildings, the incentive, the student center... I haven't been back there.

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There's not selling food over in Loyola anymore; they've got a new student center. Yeah, so every college has glitches happen. They didn't believe... there's nothing unique to any school. The same problems that happened in school A,B, and C are the same kinds of problems.

Girkin: Yeah. The only reason that we have, I asked about the coed was like how that transition was because La Salle and Saint Joe's went coed in the '70s, and it was just a long time for Immaculata to eventually go coed. Even schools like Rosemont didn't go coed until 2013 or, 20not 20, 2009. If I went there, I would have been the first male graduating class.

Watson: Yeah, they all have to do the same thing; it's financial. It's just the idea that you've got to have a larger student base. You can't just go with one gender; it's not going to...in the modern times, it's not possible. It's a vestige of the past, you know, and they still got the Villa Maria...is that coed? I don't even know. So I think, for a lot of years, that was a major feeder school and the other IHM schools to this place and when that stopped, it's logical would go coed; You have to be coed; it's ridiculous to think any one gender, for perpetuity, is going to keep the place open. West Point and other military academies going coed, letting women in; that was an issue too. Getting limited, but it's ridiculous. Again, you can't... you're not going to have any institution survive that's not up to modern times; standards in modern time, I mean.

Girkin: Yeah, because it's like, I can imagine that if they didn't go coed it, it'd be tough for Immaculata. We're celebrating our hundredth anniversary next year. it'd be interesting if they never went coed. Like, would there would still be as large as it is today?

Watson: I don't think so. No. We had small classes and those days, yeah. Smaller.... Yeah.

Girkin: So, going back with everything, with all the places that you've taught, Lasalle, Drexel and currently here at Immaculata, are you a member of any professional teaching organizations or any that may not be teaching but like historic and organizations?

Watson: I was in the... what's it called, AAUP: Association or whatever the heck it's called, American Association of University Professors, until I got tenure and then I'm not sending money. [laughs] It's all about money; a professional organization. I used to be a member of the Delaware Valley Medieval Association, the Medieval Academy of America, De re militari, and medieval military study thing. The proliferation of information on the Internet; I don't feel any need to feeling you need to do that anymore. It's money, constantly money. I'm a member of some hereditary historical organization: Sons of the American Revolution, Sons of Union Veterans, and Society of Colonial Wars. To me, that's, right now at this stage in my life, important, and then the other things. I mean, I'm tenured. I don't need it. I hate to say it, but it cost money. It's all comes down to money.

[end of Recording 1]

Total time of Recording 1: 1:03:23

[Start of Recording 2]

Girkin: Okay. So while we were talking about your time here at Immaculata, you were mentioning Duffy's Cut. In brief, can you explain what Duffy's Cut is?

Watson: [coughs] Duffy's Cut is an Irish railroaders mass grave and it's located about a minute by car from Immaculata; dates from 1832. Fifty- seven Irish immigrants from Donegal, Tyrone, and Derry, hired by Philip Duffy on the docks, build mile 59 of the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad, which was Pennsylvania's first railroad. Mile 59 is a 22.3 miles out of Philadelphia, but 59 miles east from Columbia on the Susquehanna, which is why the numeration is different from the modern day rail line, being measured east to west. But it is a place where 57 Irish railroaders died during a cholera epidemic in the summer of 1832 here, maybe six to eight weeks. And all of them died. [clears throat] We found out, subsequent to the start of our excavations here, that the first seven of those individuals were murdered. Blunt force trauma, no defensive wounds, buried in coffins with a hundred nails used to seal them to keep the bloody mess inside. So that railroaders, who were still alive as the cholera was hitting the camp, bury these guys in the fill... the railroad fill, which would become the custom everywhere along the rail line in later years... the first known case of it, so that they wouldn't riot, knowing their colleagues had been murdered. This is a time of growing nativism. The East Whiteland Horse Company members owned Mile 59; we know that from the railroad records. The Pratt family and their associates would have been charged with keeping the peace in this area at a time when there wasn't a constable. And they were dependent on a judge down the road named Cromwell Pierce; a man whose family was Orange Irish from Ulster at a time where Catholics had very few rights and advocates in this country. And of course, the township where this mile of track is located, that time, maybe 900 people in it, not a whole lot, almost none of them are Catholic. So they came here, unaware of the climate, probably speaking Gaelic. Catholics in an area where there weren't many Catholics and working for 25 cents a day, which is probably undermining the local economy and then the minds of the locals thinking that they were going to do this work and get paid more money and they were disposed of. We believe that more than just the first seven died. Maybe they all died, in which case would be the worst mass murder in Pennsylvania history.

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Girkin: So you said that they hid face problems here in America when they arrived in 1832. Now, what kind of problems were they escaping from Ireland? Like were they just coming because there was just a better opportunity or were they're like more underlying reasons?

Watson: Yeah. In Ireland, the Catholic population in 1829 got the right to vote, but economic empowerment was going to come; was not readily available for decades. It wasn't til the 1880s with changes in land laws that the Irish Land League... that the economy began to slowly change for Irish Catholics. It's certainly not before the fact that the island, part of it gets free in the Irish Free State in 1920-21 timeframe with the landowning elite, the Protestant Ascendancy group, would finally be out of power for most of the island. It's still got lingering issues in the North, but Catholics in Ireland, anywhere in 1832, would have been basically excluded from the money economy. The only place really in Ulster, where all these guys came from, would have been any opportunity for Catholics to earn money would have been in the Belfast shipyards at the lowest end of the hierarchy; literally, geographically, in the shipyards at the very bottom, as well as the bottom of the economy. Very few of them would have had money economy experience before coming here. And we suspected, in the case of the Duffy's Cut workers because where they were from, Donegal, Tyrone, and Derry, those guys wouldn't have any opportunity up to that point in their lives to earn a wage. It would have been working for an absentee landlord on the potato crop, and that crop gets shipped, of course, to England, you know, as a form of payment. But they would've gotten in return was the opportunity to plant a small plot of land for themselves, but they were like serfs; they were coming from an economy that made them virtually serfs and were a minority. The Protestant Ascendancy, of English and Scottish Protestant background, ruled over to the Catholic majority.

Girkin: So what you're saying is that back in Ireland, basically because they were Catholic, they were pretty much pushed aside for pretty much everything.

Watson: For everything.

Girkin: And so you think... were they thinking that if they came to America they could like escape that reality?

Watson: Oh yeah, yeah. This would be the first opportunity in their lives to participate freely in a money economy; to get away from the oppression that they would have faced every day in their lives... second class citizens in their own country. So yeah, this was the beacon on the horizon but they didn't realize where they were coming. There were riots and problems relating to sectarianism, Irish sectarianism, the year before they got here. There was an Orange parade marching through Catholic neighborhoods in Philadelphia in 1831 like they do every July 12th in Belfast and Derry now; it causes tension. The Protestants showing the Catholics, "Hey, we won the Battle of the Boyne,

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screw you guys,” so that’s present over here as well. Nativism is on the rise. The Know-Nothing Party in 1844, there were nativist riots in Philadelphia, you know, Protestants against [inaudible]; Gangs of New York scenarios attacking Catholics. The Catholics were lynched. Irish Catholics were lynched. Gothic churches were bombarded with cannon. Saint Michael’s, Saint Philip Neri. Catholic churches were burned elsewhere in the country at the same time. There were disorders directed against... riots against Catholics. A famous case up in near Boston. The Ursuline convent, a case where they, actually Protestant nativists, disinterred the remains of old nuns: dead; long dead and buried sick. That's from the old world problems coming into the new world.

Girkin: Just amazing how like you escaping one country because of this sectarianism. And then you come to America thinking, “Oh, well it's going to be going better.” But as we know, that wasn't the case.

Watson: Yeah. And in the time of Duffy’s Cut, there's another newspaper story that says there was a group of immigrants here in Chester county, at the time, suspected of having Cholera; no one knew for sure whether they did. They were hunted down by locals and a guy locally harbored them in his house. They were all killed, including the property owner, and their bodies were burned.

Girkin: Jeez.

Watson: That story was in the newspapers shortly after the stories about the incident at Duffy’s Cut, which were changed in the record between October and November 1832, in terms of numbers and there was all kinds of alteration of the record, enough obfuscation of the story, in order to preserve family names.

Girkin: So at the time, the newspapers and the company, they took lengths to kind of hide this story that it wasn't going to be as big as it was like saying only a few got killed, but it was more.

Watson: Yeah, this is bad news for the railroad. If the full story got out, that the crew of 57 died of violence and cholera, they wouldn't be able to hire more cheap Irish labor, which it depended on to build the railroad on the east coast here. There's somewhere between 15,000 or so... 15, maybe as many as 20,000.... trying to count this up is hard... Irishman died [in the] 1820s- 1830s at the industrial sites up and down the East Coast. These guys died building canals, they died building rail lines and they're buried in the infrastructure for the most part; mass graves everywhere under our feet. New Orleans Canal alone cost 8,000 Irish dead. So they're cheap labor; they're going to be relied upon in the emerging Industrial Revolution here because of the cheapness of their labor and their ability to do endure hard work in harsh conditions.

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Girkin: And not getting paid well.

Watson: And not getting paid well.

Girkin: So this, the story of Duffy's Cut, began in 1832. When did... when and how did you stumble upon this story?

Watson: Well, the peculiar connections here go back to my grandfather Joseph Tripician, who was the Sicilian immigrant, worked for the railroad originally as a stone cutter and then worked his way up to become the assistant to Martin Clement. He was the executive assistant to Martin W. Clement, the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Success story, if there ever was one, for immigrants. And he took an interest in this story while working for Clement. Clement was the assistant supervisor for the Pennsylvania Railroad for the Paoli area in 1909-1911, living with the Donahue family here at Immaculata, before Immaculata was in existence. And he learned about the story of Duffy's Cut from local railroaders and probably from George Donahue, the guy who owned the property, his wife, Bridget Doyle Donahue, who was the sister of the man who, in 1873, put up a wooden fence at the side of Duffy's Cut to commemorate the deaths of the Irish laborers there some 40 years earlier. Our geologists believe that [Patrick] Doyle found bodies, skeletons, and taking the fill from the western end of the valley where the Duffy's Cut is located... Duffy's Fill is located, took that old 1830s fill out to expand the track line to the north and found skeletons because the bodies that we found in the South Valley were on the eastern side of the ravine halfway down. That's where the skeletons were in the coffins. There's no fill west of that ravine, so that stuff was grubbed away at some point. Tim Bechtel, our geologist, says that's where bodies would have been located in the same sort of a layer of geology. So that the idea that Doyle did something to commemorate them, move the bodies to where they are under that stone monument today; the stone monument was actually put up Clement to replace the wooden fence that was beginning to deteriorate. 1873 to 1909, it was a wooden fence there. 1909 to today, there is a stone monument. So Clement also assembled a railroad file on this, of all the documentation that he could find on the Duffy's Cut story; he's personally interested in it by the time Clement got to be Vice President of Operations in Philadelphia of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which bought out the Philadelphia and Columbia way back in 1857. There's a need to keep stories like this out of the public, cause it's still bad PR for the railroad era in the 20th century where fear of communism is pervasive; labor unions are on the rise in the U.S. at that time, in the '30s and '40s, so they wanted to keep this secret yet again. So Clement, in 1909, creates the file, builds a stone monument, and then doesn't want the story out there when it becomes an executive. And then eventually, in the '30s and '40s, he's the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the most powerful company in the railroad... anywhere in the world. And absolutely said that this is not to get out into the public; there's a page at the beginning of the file says, "Don't let this out in the public. Keep it secret." And as late as 1959, Clement and my grandfather would discuss this with people as long on

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the conditions that have not be revealed wider and met Clement's nephew at a talk right after we found the first skeleton in 2009 at a talk at St David's Episcopal Church in Wayne and Radnor area. And he said he was brought in in 1959 and showed the file and they told him the story. He says, "Don't tell anybody." Why? Why? Because everybody knew that murders that happened there... is bad, bad news for the old families out here in this area as well as for the railroad.

Girkin: So your grandfather, correct, Tripician. He worked for Clement on the Pennsylvania Railroad. So how did he get in possession of this file?

Watson: When the Pennsylvania Railroad merged with the New York Central, okay, in the '60s. And then the days of railroads were basically numbered in the way that they dominated transportation. So that railroad went under, the new one... it was called the Penn Central, Pennsylvania Railroad- New York Central, in like 1967, something like that. In the early seventies, like '73, all of their documents were put up for sale in an auction by Freeman's. I actually have the catalog: miscellaneous bundles of documents for sale, and then in addition to lots of other railroad memorabilia at 30th Street. That file had been taken out of the vault of the railroad by my grandfather because he wanted... he didn't want his to end up in some other contexts; he wanted to preserve the story somehow. So he had that in his possession, and my brother inherited from my grandmother. I didn't know any of that, and my brother recalls our grandfather talking about the story when her kids; I really don't have much recollection of that. But when my brother showed me this file in 2002, my eyes bugged out and I said, "Wow, this is where I work. I got to get moving on this thing."

Girkin: So, in hearing all of this, it only sounds like things are really coming full circle. You had your grandfather who worked for the railroad, he got this file about a mass grave burial that was never supposed to be really ever mentioned to the public. And here you are working only a mile down the road.

Watson: It's crazy. Right on the cover of the file says between Malvern and Frazer and that's where Immaculata is. I mean it's nuts.

Girkin: That's definitely a story. So okay, so you found.. so you got this file in 2002 and at that point, you only had the file. So how did you locate the area of where to kind of start the excavation?

Watson: Right. We went out... John Ahtes and I... went out in between classes.. after classes, to try to find the stone monument that the file said existed. At that time, the current housing development was only partially completed. It was in 2002 again, and it wasn't... and the time we're talking about, was maybe only two years in existence... that development. So it was on Labor

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Day of 2002 that I saw this file. And my brother had had this for a couple of decades, since our grandmother had died... before she died. And it was only 2002 when I saw this thing and this thing got started because, up to that point, he didn't have any way of really figuring out the geography. So it was him and myself and Tom Connor, bagpiping associate of arts. We were out on Columbus Day. For some reason, we were all off. I know we don't... we're not off Columbus Day here now. But anyway, we were off and we went out and we found this, the stone monument; just trips to the woods until we found it. It was a guy walking his dog and he told us where it was. So once we found the monument, we knew there was some validity to certain things in the file and it would be maybe [long pause] a following... part of that semester, we decided we were going to put in for a historical marker from the state. So that was in 2003 really because the Fall of '02, we theorized what we wanted to do try to find a site. There's some excavations there, maybe even find the bodies. And then in 2003, we began the process of getting the historical marker, which we got in 2004; which was a huge project unto itself. We had another member of our team joined then, Earl Schandelmeier, who was a student of me and of John... mine, a student of mine I should say, and of John's, and we got him on the project and he helped out. He was the one who was made the leap and say, "Let's go look in the valley." That was Earl's first big contribution. Go look in the valley instead of just looking at the monument. Now as it turns out, most of the bodies were probably under the monument. But we always thought, with the file discussed, about there being a mass grave and individual burials. We never thought we'd find the individual burials, so we find a mass grave first and we might never find the individual burials. The opposite would happen in time, of course. 2004, we got the marker; we also got permission to excavate and that came from the state, just like the marker did. They declared it, that if it's ever been a cemetery, had permission to dig just to keep them up to date and as things progressed. And in trying to get a team together, it was four years. Okay. Let's see... four years till we've got a geologist and five years till we found the first skeleton. Found a lot of artifacts in the intervening time though, including the oldest example of Irish nationalism in North America: the Erin go Bragh flag pipe bowl [and the] pipe stem mark with Derry. The railroad file gives us an indication of when the men arrived in this country, the summer of 1832, there's one ship bringing laborers.. primarily a ship with laborers on it, and that's the John Stamp and he came into Philadelphia June 23rd, 1832; that was our ship. Everybody on there was from Donegal, Tyrone, and Derry; the pipe stem marked Derry. Well, in fact, at the National Archives, that is one of the few ships, from 1832 timeframe, that has an entire listing of its passengers; a lot of them don't. But that that the connections here with the file says, when the men arrived, there's one ship, one single ship in that timeframe, probably have arisen at the port of Philadelphia. That's the John Stamp. They're 47 guys on that ship of the right age and occupation. Duffy at that time, we found in the tax records, was living at a place where there's a modern actuary institute..... at a place called Bryn Clovis Farm, horse farm behind it, where he had 27 people living with him. He was renting a house, 10 of them were listed is non naturalized labors. Wow. 47 and 10 equals the number that the file says died at the site. So it was a lot of really interesting convergences

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and the only pipe stem that we would find in the years between 2004 and 2009, when we found the first skeleton, had the city of Derry stamped on it. It's the only city on any of the pipes stem; that's Derry. That's where the ship came from.

Girkin: Well, there you go. So you mentioned between... you started digging in 2004, and it wasn't until 2009 until you found the first body. When you first started digging for those like few years, did it ever occur to you that you weren't gonna find anything like this could have been just a like almost like an old wives' tale; like there was nothing in there?

Watson: Yeah. Everytime someone said something like that, it made us work all the harder, because we had a team coming together... we had a lot of students of course. Over the course of the excavation, we had at least 50 people involved in it that were students. And we brought in the Chester County Emerald Society police who helped us get the historical marker and get the permission. So we have the County Coroner and County District Attorney approve of what we were doing officially because of the Chester County Emerald Society, we had a lot of cops on this; one of whom is still with us, Bob McAllister, to working with some of this. Then, through contacts from my Grad school days at Penn, we got Janet Monge, the bone curator of the Penn Museum, her assistant, Samantha Cox, who is a trained archeologist, and obviously Tim Bechtel, the geologist; they all came from Penn. It's amazing the team we put together. Then Tim's cousin is Matt Patterson, the forensic dentist who helps find the anomaly in the first skeleton we excavated called an M-1 agenesis; he's missing his right top front molar from birth. And it's like one in 100,000 people have that and just so happens that people with the same last name as the 18 year old on the ship list, and we reasoned that this body to have been John Ruddy, they're also missing the right top front molars. They're not even 100,000 people in Donegal, so yeah; that's our guy. And one of the things I think I also got to mention here is that that railroad fill did not predate 1832 right? That railroad fill... there's no, there's no way... like we had people... every time we did somebody, somebody who's going to come out of the woodwork and say "Oh, it's not this, it's not that." Well, that railroad fill did not predate 1832, so they're not apparently massive or bet graves. They're not American Indian graves. That fill did not exist before 1832; narrow timeframe when somebody could have been buried in there for the railroad opens up is 1832-33, then the railroad opens up in that rail lines and use, you're not going to bury people into fill that is in operation. You can't bury people in the fill before the fill exists. So we've had all these arguments with people; I'm [inaudible] to hear it anymore. That was about his deed from 1832. It's impossible for it to be otherwise. And you only record of any burials there, ever, is the railroaders. There's no record of anyone else being buried there.

Girkin: It's quite a story actually. Crazy. So in 2009 you found the first body. It was in March of 2009. So what for you and the team, what was like your initial reaction when you went into the

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ground and all of a sudden you're fighting skeletal remains. What was the... like what was going through your mind?

Watson: That day.. It was March 20th, 2009. I remember it very vividly. I mean we went out, we had a lot of success archaeologically. There was a big tree there to come down. Whenever there's tree roots exposed, there's a lot of artifacts that come up. So we found a pipe stems that day, we found pipe bowls that day and we found shirt buttons that day. It was a pretty... and nails would be used in the shanty construction; lean-tos for the workers. It was a very successful day archaeologically, but around two in the afternoon, at a spot that had been determined by Tim Bechtel, who said dig four feet west of a piece of metal bar that he'd put in the ground... dig four feet by, actually northwest, of this bar, down to a depth of two feet; you're going to find something. It was a stopping void where something had collapsed down to the bottom and had been solid at one time. It leaves an uneven layer of soil above it. It's kind of like the way that a submarine is detected by a destroyer by sonar: pings down, comes back up and gives you an image of what's down there. And it was on the money because, about two in the afternoon, the two guys who were digging there... I was over by the stump with most of the workers. Bob Frank and Pat Barry, who were the two guys at the fill working away with pick axes, came running over with a bone that was unmistakably human. I mean it was nothing like that we'd ever found before. We took it to the Biology Department here and the Immaculata immediately and call and Frank Martin was the professor; he said that is a human tibia. And we called the coroner's office and the District Attorney's office who called Amtrak, we called the state police, called the home owners. And we said this is the first of the bodies. And my brother was on his way down when we told him that he found something. So he went out there and found some more bones and we said, "Well alright. If we got this side exposed by the end of the day, we're going to get everything out that we can." So I went back in with John Ahtes and Bob Frank and the four of us guys; by the end of the day we had most of his skeleton out and the proverbial shit hit the fan because, immediately, the press was in on it, the Irish government wanted to know what was going on 'cause we told them we were looking for these guys. Lots of things clicked into place that we were hoping for five years up to that point... six years actually, because we wanted to do this in '03; formulated in '02, I guess you could say... good Lord... from '02, when we sort of envisioned it, till '09. Seven years; but a solid five years of digging before we found a skeleton and were getting these people saying we couldn't do it. The reason why we made sure it happened. We did it; every Friday, we're out there digging and a lot of it, most of what we did was just nothing. The geologist says "Go down a couple of feet, something there that doesn't belong." He finally realized that what we're looking for is a stopping void. But we dug a lot of spots before we found the skeleton. And before we had the geologist on hand, it's hit or miss. We found the shanty easy enough. We had the battlefield restoration associates group, Bravo Gravo, help us find where the shanty is and John Hankey, the railroad historian [inaudible] for the 1830s from the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, predicted where that shanty would be. The artifacts, into themselves, are interesting because you have early,

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rare 1830s railroad artifacts here on display in our museum because of that. Plus the Irish context stuff like the pipe bowls and stems. We've got articles of clothing: there's a shoe buckle that's actually down at the Penn Museum. But we have a Barlow knife; we've got lots of things that were on the persons of those men. A lot of early railroad artifacts that are rare. John Hankey; he thought that the Morris and Essex type track piece was the most important. Kurt Bell of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, who also identified a lot of this stuff for us out of Strasburg, thought that the stone spikes were the most important, cause they only had illustrations for those, whereas we have a known one example of the Morris and Essex type track down at the Smithsonian. So what we found is very rare stuff, but the bodies were more elusive. We needed radar for that and that was very expensive; we had no money. So things came together gradually. But by 2012 we had a whole team there to get this thing done.

Girkin: So after you found the first body, how quick was it that you found any of the other bodies?

Watson: For a whole month, we couldn't do anything. We had to just sift through what they call the spoils heap to stuff. We found more bones in there during the excavation process, taking the dirt out and going through that, sifting it bit by bit, we found more bones including finger bones, it's crazy... toe bones. Then Tim Bechtel came out and did another radar survey, and he said another four feet to the northwest of where Ruddy was, and you're going to find.. around a huge tree; the tulip poplar, it's 120 feet tall... that they look to be an enormous stopping void. And by God, there were fur skeletons over there. One guy couldn't get fully excavated from there until 2012 when the tree came out and the stump got popped out by Joe Devoy

Girkin: So when you found these bodies, was it interesting to find that they were not in a mass grave; that they were all buried in separate areas?

Watson: Yeah, we were stupefied that we found the first burials of the individuals before we found the mass grave. We thought for sure we'd hit the mass graves, and the individual ones we'd never find. But these ones, Janet Monge very quickly said that these were people who had been murdered; they didn't die of cholera. They were all victims of blunt force trauma, which she said to her resembled a skeleton that she had from the Little Bighorn that had been killed by the Sioux at the Little Bighorn; Custer's man.. she's got skulls of Custer's men... some of them, at the Penn Museum. She said this is exactly what these bodies [had]: close combat kinds of wounds with no defensive wounds; they weren't defending themselves, meaning they were probably tied up before they were killed... our guys tied up before they were murdered. But they were murdered, I mean, there isn't any question about that. Janet Monge is on record on as saying such in a number of places.

Girkin: So while you've... so, in total, there were six or full remains that you found, was it?

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Watson: We found six fairly, fully intact skeletons. One guy, there was a seventh who was largely the deteriorated because of the flow of water through the exact area where the burials took place. He left a stain. There were some pieces of him and he got buried in West Laurel Hill, but he was largely a stain in the ground. Then his coffin, that line in the state of where her body was; some bones but not a whole lot. Every one of the bodies had one of their limbs partially washed away due to the flow of water: right arm or right leg. They were all placed with the heads facing the west and the feet in the east. And they would have been buried on orders probably of Duffy, supervised maybe by the blacksmith, but done by the workers who were then still alive. The other bodies would have been a mass grave and stretching out to the west and not with any skeletons, but these are the guys who the railroad file says escape the valley; corresponds with that story and were forced back in. In this case, they weren't force back in; in reality though, they were brought back in sealed coffins and the railroad could never deny and local constables... not constables, excuse me... and the local company members could not deny that there were seven bodies that were brought back in because everyone will be seen that. That's what they said to the newspapers, in their so called corrections story. They talked about the full number of dead to newspapers who said, "Hey, it was eight or nine." So that may still be another individual buried out there; we haven't found an individual... or it could be the kid of one of the women. There were two women there who were related to the workers. One was a sister and one who is the daughter-in-law. One of them had a kid, less than a year old, and according to Samantha Cox, the archeologist, that skeletal remains would not... those bones would no longer be intact. It would be long since deteriorated; they wouldn't survive like an adult's would.

Girkin: So you said that there are two women on the cut and one of the women... and you found the remains of one of the women. So when you found that, were you like, "Oh, what do we have here?"

Watson: Yeah, the last of the skeletal remains we found was SKO-07, a woman. When we found her, it was just four of us who were on the scene at the time. It was me, John Ahtes, and a couple of the dig crew guys and we said, "we're gonna make sure we find somebody on the day here." And by God, we found a lot of coffin. So by the time we got to the excavation, John was dead and Bob Frank came out with me to excavate that skeletal set of remains. And the skull was more intact than any of the others; it was a real face. The other skulls had been deformed by the blunt force trauma, so that there were a few faces that remain. These are extremely bloody deaths. These were not the case of a mercy killing, where you make things less horrible for somebody. These men died in worse ways than they would if they had cholera: extremely violent ends and all their faces were just blown away by the pickaxe. Their skulls were blown up... blunt force trauma, meaning they could use pickaxes or shovels and axes. One guy had an ax blow and a bullet fired into the top of his head. There were several bullets, found on the bodies, but the woman's face was much more intact. She was, nevertheless, killed by blunt force trauma on the head. You see in the photos of the holes in her head.

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We didn't know it was a woman at first. We just knew this was a very small person, roughly five feet; very intact skull and also a very intact pelvis. I lifted her pelvis off the ground and it was very heavy. That proves to be a very important part of the story. But Janet Monge looked at these remains and she said this is a woman, based on the pelvis and based on the small palate and the jaw that was intact. So, it was not surprising because we knew that these camps would've needed a cook and a laundress. So it could have been one or two women. I always thought it would be the younger woman because of the idea that a younger set of remains wouldn't of survived; that the eight [that the] newspapers report. She said "No, it wasn't an approximately 20 year old female. The woman who had the kid was 21 year old Elizabeth Devine, sister of William Devine. The other woman was the daughter-in-law of John Burns, her name was Catherine Burns {coughs} and she was 29. Janet Monge said this is an approximately 30 year old female. Whoa! Well, so we have how we got the names because the names are associated with specific ages on the ship list and Janet Monge is able to come with approximations of the ages and the skeletons. There's one 18 year old male, John Ruddy from Donegal, and one approximately 30 year old female... 29 year old female from Tyrone. So those are the two we took back to Ireland and are there. And the others we've got buried at West Laurel Hill, with the assistance of the cemetery people; it's absolutely incredible.

Girkin: So you mentioned that John Ruddy was 18 and Catherine Burns, you said was 29. what was like the average age of these railroad workers? Between what and what age?

Watson: Their average age is 22.

Girkin: So basically a college student.

Watson: Yeah, and that's the thing, as everybody was out there digging, you could have been you guys out there. Aany of us with the Irish heritage; it could have been out there. So you know, obviously, that was meaningful. Everybody was involved, knowing it could have been us out there. In fact, in 1832, no one advocated for these guys; let them die... let this thing, this atrocity, happen. And even if you force people to die, the quarantine that we know was enforced, according to the file, was bad enough; but to actually murder them is another thing. So the fact it was kept secret by the railroad for all these years,va changing of the record... made this like a crime story. It was like a crime scene and that's why the police were so interested in it from the beginning. And, it seemed like a crime scene. One hundred percent casualties never happens in a population that gets cholera; 50% at the most.

Girkin: Now you were.... you said that there's really no help for these individuals and the railroad cars 'cause because they were Irish and they were thought to have cholera, which could spread to the local populous

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in Chester county. But I remember reading in one of the books that the Sisters of Charity actually reached out to help. So what was the whole story with that?

Watson: Someone, we don't know who, called on the Sisters of Charity to come out and help. In the Philadelphia epidemic. There were 12 Sisters of Charity who were working in the city cholera hospitals. There were two orphanages, Saint John's and Saint Joseph's, that the sisters were already working in before the cholera epidemic. When cholera hit the city, you're talking about July of 1832 nursing's flat; nobody wanted to deal with this disease because nobody knew anything about it. It was going to be another 50 years before somebody discovers that it's a microbe and how to treat it; well actually, the treatment of it was even more delayed. But the idea that it was a microbe and... you know what you're dealing with, that it was vaporous; things that cause this disease... [pause] miasma theory. But there were no nurses left, so the Sisters of Charity did that. Someone called four of those 12 to come out here. We know the story of how they got out here: they were brought out in the coach, in a wagon, and dropped off before the cut and that on the way back, no one would convey them back into the city; so they walked the entire distance, having been exposed to cholera victims. We know that none of them died. We know that Duffy encouraged them to leave almost as soon as they arrived, so he probably didn't call them out. He didn't want them there, knowing that there had been something before they got there; i.e. the murders. They certainly weren't there at the end when I suspect the others were murdered; make sure that the entire population of workers was contained, completely; couldn't spread the disease, couldn't continue to undermine the local economy. Whatever the reason why they were killed, there's multiple causes, multiple causation, in anything in history. So you get rid of this population of individuals, the nuns go back into the city before that is completed, and we know the names of a bunch of them; we just don't know the names of the four who came out here. That'd be neat to know. None of them left a written record 'cause there's an order that has a huge tradition of anonymity. It was only by a lot of digging in the archives, that we got the names of, I'd say of the dozen, we have at least nine of their names, which is kind of neat. But yeah, they didn't die; none of the nuns in Philadelphia died. Some of them in Baltimore died. Exposure to cholera; it could cause diarrhea and vomiting. You could be dead within a couple of hours, depending on how well your constitution is physically, or you might survive it, and half the people who got it did survive it.

Girkin: So I'm going throughout the whole project, going back to 2002, even to when you found the bodies, to when you buried the bodies, to even the present: were there controversies? I mean he was assuming that there would be.

Watson: Yeah, there's a lot of controversy. I mean, the battle to get the marker. I'm not going to go into that, but that was a battle; far more of a battle than it should've been. Getting permission was a lot easier than getting the marker....Permission to dig because the battle had been fought but,

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always, somebody pops up out of the woodwork. There was issues with the railroad, and again, I don't want to get into all of that, 'cause now that everyone's on our side, everything's cool. But early on, local people who didn't want their family names dragged through the mud, they... can't get into any more with that. It'll be revealed in time; a lot more than that. But that has been an interesting part of the situation as well. A lot of people, still to this day, wanted to keep this thing out of the limelight for a variety of reasons and battles all over the place. It's prematurely aged all of us, but you gotta do it. And then every time someone says no, we say, yeah, we'll, we'll see about that.

Girkin: I can understand not wanting to go further into it. But on a lighter note, we'll go with... so you mentioned earlier that you repatriated Catherine Burns and John Ruddy's remains back in Ireland. What was the response in Ireland, in those local areas, when you did that?

Watson: There was a huge turnout for each of those reburials; in Donegal in 2013 and in Tyrone and 2015. It was... for us, it was very overwhelming, 'cause we knew where these people were from; there were people who probably still in Ireland that were related to them, who are connected. The Ruddy's will be easier to find that out with you because of the fact that that was his name from birth. Catherine Burns; that was her married name. The only way that we're gonna find out relatives of hers directly, connected to her, would be through the use of DNA, finding family group circles from one of the major companies. Hopefully that will happen. But in each case, there was a large number of people from the local population that came out. We got support from the Irish government; Sinn Fein, in the case of Catherine Burns in Northern Ireland. And in the case of the burial of Catherine Barnes, I mean, the whole entire parish came out for a week. For John Ruddy, who was in the Holy Family Cemetery in Ardara, southern part of Donegal; he got buried in the Gallagher grave. Vince Gallagher, from Philadelphia, gave us a family plot and he's from Donegal, and Paul Doris from Philadelphia got us in touch with Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Clonoe, near Coalisland, in Tyrone. That's the place where we had a wake actually before the burial. The entire parish came out for a wake; hundreds of people. Both of these burials were very well covered in the Irish media. The Irish government thought well of what we did. It was important for us to bring that part of the story back to Ireland; that there's two people who we can identify. The other ones, at West Laurel Hill, I don't think we're going to have their names until DNA can be done because we've retained teeth from all the first seven; DNA is extracted from the teeth of the older skeletal remains. And that's how.... and that stuff's still intact. It's the new DNA we're going to have to get... in the case of the Ruddy's, we got some in 2012 but in 2013... excuse me, from Donegal... but it went bad after four years of waiting. By 2017, there was no bones or anything. By the end of 2017, it wasn't any good anymore.

Girkin: So you're going to have to go back and try to get saliva...

Watson: Saliva and hair; stuff that you use today to get DNA from living people. So, but if one of the big DNA companies comes in, grinds up the old teeth, gets DNA out of there and sets up

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family group circles, let's see, do Ancestry and other DNA companies... 23andme; I think we're going to.. there's going to be a lot of people whose family trees are suddenly filled in with stories they didn't... they only had legends. The Ruddy family has a legend about a guy who came over to Philadelphia and vanished.

Girkin: Well now we know that it wasn't a legend.

Watson: In the 1830s. Yeah, that's our guy; that's John Ruddy. The Burns family, and again, that's not her maiden name. So that's going to be an interesting discovery: What is her maiden name?

Girkin: So even that... even 180 years after these events occurred that people are on there are still very welcoming; they want this to be told.

Watson: Yeah, because it's a part of their history as well as part of Irish American history. I mean, it is important that a huge number of immigrants come into a country that is, later on, perceived as being very welcoming immigrants, in a country where the Irish have had such a huge impact, end up getting murdered by locals; by nativists. It's the seedy underbelly of the Industrial Revolution, the rise of America as an industrial power and a sad story for countless numbers of Irish families that finally might know what happened to their ancestors. Justice... justice.

Girkin: It' almost like the souls of these men and women, I should say, were going up beyond centuries and calling out... they want their story to be told.

Watson: Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, I think there's... in any tragedy like this, there's going to be an echo over time; something surviving. There's a lot of folklore associated with the site; there's a lot of ghost stories. We'll see.... I won't go into all that, 'cause I'm personally connected with one of those stories before I even knew there was a file. There's a reason why folklore is so heavily focused on ghosts in any culture; some kind of survival from the past. It's not historically correct. That's what folklore is: an addition to everyday mundane customs, but a big portion of folklores ghost stories and there's a reason for that.

Girkin: All right. And so to close out the Duffy's Cut portion. The story of Duffy's cut: would you say this is crucial to early American history to have this story out?

Watson: Why this story is important is that these guys died building the second railroad in America; second road in all North America, the first railroad in Pennsylvania. The fact that there is murder to an immigrant worker crew that can be verified, proven in the archeological record, that might eventually prove to be the worst mass murder in Pennsylvania history. The fact that they built

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something that is still in use to this day, the R5 line; the Amtrak line eventually goes all in that to Chicago. They started that. It was the most expensive mile of the Philadelphia in Colombia Railroad; would have is \$32,50 by the time it was done. The average mile, the contract amount, was for less than that. But by the time it was done, it was 32,500; the average mile railroad is \$4,000 That's the most expensive mile, most difficult mile, the last mile to be completed. The second railroad in North America, the first in Pennsylvania: they died build something huge and their story is not in the damn textbooks.. {pause} yet. Except that's our purpose; to get it in the textbooks. The average American history textbook needs to include stories like this; it can't just be charts and graphs and stuff like that. So when the NEH happened... we got a grant in 2016, you were a part of that; we try to get the story into the curriculum, into the history books. There were books today that talk about Duffy's Cut. There's railroad history, there's epidemiology histories, there's specialized histories. But getting into the textbooks, where it's going to impact students in high school; that's the key so that people grow up understanding there are genuine sacrifices. Building America, making the superpower economically that had it has remained to this day. People need to know that and not just how the charts and the graphs and stuff like that in the textbooks that show that "Oh, we became this... number of track miles were produced in a certain year and this tonnage of iron, or whatever, was cranked out." These were real stories here that build America; you've got to have that out there in the record. Can't sit on it forever.

Girkin: So when you find your file use came, you saw the little puzzle of American history in a way, and it's still continuing to this day.

Watson: Absolutely.

Girkin: Okay, and in closing, looking back on everything, so with Duffy's Cut all of that... even before that, so anywhere, do you have any proud moments that you can look back on? I'm assuming Duffy's Cut is one of those proud moments that you look for.

Watson: For an academic historian, when you conduct research and get it published. The idea that you go into classroom... if you don't know the subject well enough, unless you have actually published in it.... really, I mean, if you contributed to the field, then can get up in front of a class and talk about it. I don't want to teach in a field that had been published in. If I haven't done something in that field, then I stay away from it. So anytime we have something published, I feel good. Any historian would... anyone in any field, in any discipline would; not just historians, no matter what science you're going to, botany or chemistry or whatever. Publishing is important because you're contributing to the body of knowledge in the field. Any of the books that I've had come out, it made me feel good. Good groups of students. A student goes on to do something after they graduate, you can take pride in you shaped somebody to do something in the field. And that's what we're in this for:

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to shape the field in some way; by individuals and by research, getting people out into the wider world with some important skills. But of everything that I've done, I mean, this Duffy's Cut stuff... it's nothing I've ever done before or ever will do after will match this. This is... we contributed to something that had not previously existed in, except in the realm of very vague folklore; nothing real until this. This is a contribution that... and because it's so many other graves like this... we've figured exists from the Erie Canal and the New Orleans Canal, somewhere between 15-20,000 dead, 1820s-1830s; this is the tip of the iceberg of stories that can be recovered. So hopefully, we go from here to these other mass graves. That's our intention. That's our hope that we can do this elsewhere. And tell the story of the Irish came over here and died building the country.

Girkin: And on the flip side of that, do you have any regrets?

Watson: Like, well, I should've been a lawyer, if I wasn't worried about money financially, or a finance person, you know. You don't make a whole lot of money as a historian; you just don't. It's... there are pluses and minuses to being a historian in any kind of other academic field... you're doing what you want. You're helping to influence another generation every single semester, contributing to the field. You don't enter academia to be rich; that's not the idea. Sometimes I wish I had done something that made me more money because... especially if you have kids in this modern economy, my God, the weight: having kids versus having money. Once you have kids, you've got no more money. Whatever money you had before, believe me, it's going to go away from diapers to college, good Lord. But that's another thing, you know, that is absolutely... you know, as a species, you want to preserve your line, whether in... and we're not just talking any mammal, you know, it's a part of the urge to carry on. So the fact that I've got three kids and they appreciate history enough. None of them are interested in history the same way as I am, but I've dragged them, throughout their entire lives in the summer, to historic sites. They've been every Civil War battlefield, for example, a lot of Revolutionary War battlefields; a lot of museums. And I feel proud that they have that interest in them. But the only thing that matches that is Duffy's Cut, of all the things that I've done. Yeah. This is something that's like...it's more than... as you can see in the museum here, all this stuff. This belonged to people who otherwise would not have been known. Their stories are known in music. You know, I don't know, 50 musical pieces that have been written. A lot of them on that CD compilation, Bands a lot of people today know like Blackthorn, Dropkick Murphys, Christy Moore; those are big names in Irish music. Novels had been written and there's an opera, for goodness sakes, that has been rendered. Murals, artwork, paintings. It's had an impact in Irish American and Irish culture, in a way that we never would have imagined. Now there's a beer and that's going to give some of the proceeds of the sales to become the first sure way that this project has a steady stream of revenue to help maintain the costs. I mean, we can't do things if we don't have money. Now there's a beer, which may even hit more of the people 'cause the can has the story on the back of it; in fact, I should put an empty can into one of

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these cases. It's had an impact and if we can all ever... you and everybody else involved in this... because it'll probably... we did that. We did that. We brought their story to light and hit a nerve.

Girkin: So hopefully we can expect big things in the future with the whole project.

Watson: Yeah. We're not gonna stop until this is done, that's for sure. And there's more of this to be told and it will be told. We'll make sure of that.

Girkin: I want to thank you, Dr. Watson, for allowing me to interview you on not only your life story, but also on this important project in early American history.

Watson: Absolutely. My pleasure.

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Total time of Recording 2: 0:53:46

Total time of the full interview: 1:57:09