

Suzanna: Mic's on. All right. This is Suzanna Calev. I'm the archivist at Farley Library at Wilkes University, and I'm here in Mechanicsburg PA at Dr. Mike's home. If everyone can introduce themselves.

Dr. Mike: Pardon me?

Suzanna: Do you want to introduce yourself?

Dr. Mike: Francis Michelini, Dr. Mike, former professor of biology, academic Dean and president at Wilkes College in those days.

Michelle: Michelle Michelini Hardiman, the first child of Francis Michelini and Ann Marie Michelini.

Lisa: And Lisa Michelini Spengler, the middle child of Anne Marie and Francis Michelini.

Suzanna: Oh, wonderful. So today I'm here to talk about the Agnes flood and I'd love to just ask you some questions and get some memories about the flood and the recovery efforts made by you and your family. First, I would just love to just talk about your time at Wilkes before becoming the president, if you'd like to talk about how you arrived at Wilkes as a biology teacher.

Dr. Mike: I was scheduled to finish in June of 1955 with my doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, I had three job offers through the president's office at universities. One was University of Alabama or Arkansas, where Orval Faubus had been Governor and stood in the doorway of the university and said, "No black men going to come to my university," and so my advisors at Penn said, "No Penn graduate is going to go to your university." So that was the era in which I was job searching. A second job, which actually was offered was by a researcher examining pine gall tumors in Bar Harbor, Maine. Apparently there is a form of tree growth where the ocean water and the salt water hits the trees, and for some reason there is a growth of pine gall, actually proliferated cancer type cells in the pine tree, that Philip White, who headed this outfit in Bar Harbor, Maine was researching.

Dr. Mike: Again, cancer research was and still is a major field. I had an offer from Bar Harbor, Maine. I had my new wife; we were married in 1952 and did not have children yet in 1955. When we heard about Bar Harbor, Maine, she didn't have a telephone to look it up, but she knew it was damn cold for six months of the winter and said, "Mike, I don't care where you go, but you ain't going to take me to Bar Harbor, Maine." The third job, which would have started in August of 1955 but I did not have a job and I had a wife to support. She supported me through graduate school. I kept saying, "I married you because I owed you \$85 and I couldn't afford to pay your back, but I ended up choosing Wilkes.

Dr. Mike: We drove up along the Delaware river, which had just had a flood, and in one of the flood books, I have the flood of 1952 or something, but I remember when we were

driving up along the river the devastation of the flood line. This was from Philadelphia to Wilkes, no interstate highway systems. Lo and behold, there was Chuck Reif, the chairman of the biology department, Edith Numisniac, who was an excellent high school teacher who Wilkes had hired a way to teach microbiology bacteriology in those days, and ... the name escapes me, but a half time assignment from a young woman in biology who was going to have a child. They were going to expand the third position in the biology department at Wilkes to be a full time person. And here comes this fresh wet behind the ears, PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, which was like the Holy Grail (me). I look back and I say that cachet of an Ivy League Doctorate, you cannot put a value on it. It's like you look at the Supreme Court Judges. If you didn't go to Yale or Harvard Law School, you ain't got a snowball's chance in hell of getting appointed to the Supreme Court. Why? I don't know. History says these are the cream of the crop.

Dr. Mike: So I got a job offer from Chuck Reif to be the third member of the department and my teaching load was 15 hours a week. I taught comparative anatomy, histology, embryology, genetics, and physiology. I had never had a course in any of it. I had never had a comparative anatomy course at Seton Hall. I was a chemistry major. I had never had it at Delaware, cause that wasn't their shtick, and here I was with a PhD from Penn to teach comparative anatomy, histology, embryology. So academically, I was way in over my head, but I had sense enough to say to myself, "read the chapter the night before and then see what the students think." So I'd read the chapter and I think most of my teaching in the early years was basically saying, "I read this last night, I didn't quite understand what's going on. What do you guys think?"

Dr. Mike: And the Les Weiners of the world and the Jerry Steins of the world and the Vince Trapeskis of the world were bright, pre-med guys and women. Cathy DeAngeles, not in my class, but right during that time slot, we had some very bright students coming from the University of Pennsylvania. For some reason or other, they kept me in the pipeline of supporting applications to the National Science Foundation, which was only five years old, and they encouraged me. Somebody at Penn kind of pushed my application for research before I even had the job at Wilkes to continue the research, and I wound up with an Atomic Energy Commission Fellowship, \$100 a month or something. Well I realize in retrospect, my God, that was the golden metal, PhD from Penn with this kind of identification as a discipline.

Dr. Mike: And so I moved into the post World War II period. The federal government realized most of the pre-World War II research was done by private citizens and by their philanthropy. Institutions like University of Pennsylvania, MIT, Berkeley, Cal Tech, Harvard, and University of Chicago were the universities that initiated the research. The University of Chicago researched nuclear reaction things, and so there were specialties among the universities. Rutgers, where Waksman was, with luck with penicillin. He took the penicillin thing and ran with it at Rutgers and came up with successive antibiotics, but there were no antibiotics before that and there was no ... what was the polio vaccine that in your generation?

Michelle: Jonas Salk.

yeDr. Mike: Yeah, the Salk Vaccine. My brother had polio as a child, was crippled all his life with polio, and postwar research found a way to prevent polio, the Salk vaccine. So it was an era of such rapid change in the sciences, and because I was coming from that PED UP background, somehow or other, I filed a grant with the National Science Foundation for research funds, which included students as research assistants, and Wilkes was one of the first to apply. That was purely undergraduate. It had no graduate programs, and Wilkes applied successfully and was one of the first colleges around the country in which the government National Science Foundation said, "that's not a bad idea. Let's see how sophomores, juniors, and seniors in college learn to do research. Why do you always have to wait till after you get your Master's degree to decide?" So Wilkes was very early in that mix in which government was looking for people with crazy ideas. Dr. Farley, the one thing I've learned with this history project with all the presidents was that Wilkes was always open to trying something new. Always. I look back on it and I say the support they gave to a young guy coming in wet behind the ears...

Dr. Mike: Chuck Reif was just marvelous. In a three man department, we designed a whole research program, which continued my research, but included undergraduate students, and then Michelle had some allergies and we got to know Sheldon Cohen, who was a practicing physician who loved research. He was trapped taking care of snot-nosed kids who had allergies, but Sheldon Cohen, you remember Sheldon, Michelle? He would go to him and he was a wonderful physician, but he was a researcher, and mentally he was one of the few physicians who really had a kind of sideline of research. He got involved because I had a greenhouse built that had some extra space. So we invited Sheldon to do research at Wilkes, and he became a major influence on that generation of young pre-med students, like Les Weiner and [inaudible 00:12:27]. I don't know. In California, he's one of the top researchers,/faculty member leaders in the world.

Suzanna: I have a question about what the Wilkes-Barre community was like when you moved there and -

Dr. Mike: What the what?

Suzanna: What the Wilkes-Barre community was like when you moved there and what impressions did you have of the people, of the the city? I'm just curious.

Dr. Mike: That's a very complicated question. In 1970, when I became president of Wilkes, Bill Scranton had just finished serving as the head guy for the Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest. This was when the 60 student protests were all agitating and so on, in Wilkes-Barre. I'd love to see that film of the inauguration, because he specifically said number one: anybody that's wants to be a college president has rocks in their head. The pressures of change were so great during the 60s, nobody knew how it was going to turn out. It was basically a very pessimistic inaugural speech to say the least. He identified the Wilkes-Barre Scranton area as the most diverse area he had ever experienced in his travels politically in the

United States, 42 different ethnic groups identified with them. Each one told to hate the other group. You've got to really let that penetrate.

Dr. Mike: There was Every kind of church. There was an Irish Catholic Church. God damn, there's going to be an Italian Catholic Church, and there's going to be a Polish Catholic Church. Even religions, with the acquiescence of the coal industry, wanted labor so they could control the inheritance. That's why I'm so fascinated now with the post World War I and the Great Depression years with the interests like coal mining because the barriers separating people were so fundamental to the social and economic structure of the country that there was a crisis during the 30's developing. And what's fascinating is that those at Bucknell University, which had a Presbyterian or a religious affiliation, came up with the idea of developing a junior college in Wilkes-Barre with no connection philosophically to Bucknell,. For it to be totally independent, so that the institution could help to change the culture of ethnic isolation and of class structure in the area., From shifting the culture of "you've got to hate your neighbor or you're in trouble" to one of saying, "every individual is capable of learning, the women as well as the men." Here comes Bucknell University Junior College. In 1936, Dr. Farley came, and Bucknell rented rooms for the junior college.

Dr. Mike: But Farley sees a vision with trustees, who obviously hired him. There must have been a nucleus of trustees at Wilkes. I have Dr. Farley's book. Arnold Marts was one of the key people there, but they, in the 1930s, in the midst of depression, supported formation of this junior college to exist in Wilkes-Barre that would not exclude anyone, male, female, black, white. There were very few blacks because in the coal mining industry, a black man didn't survive in the mines very long. He was a competitor for a job, so there would be a rock fall. So the communities excluded the black population and Wilkes was the only institution that did not subscribe to some religious affiliation. Bucknell itself had this religious affiliation. What prompted those people to say, "We need something with no artificial barriers? We don't care whether you're a Pollack from Nanticoke or an Italian from Pittston." 42 different ethnic groups, all taught to hate each other. The high schools taught to fight each other at a football game or something. Everything was to divide and here comes Wilkes, which says "We don't give a shit. You do what you're capable of doing. That's what we're for."

Dr. Mike: No Halal society, no Christian endeavor, nothing religious. That's not our job. Well of course the Bishops hated it. Their control of the Catholic women's colleges and the Catholic men's colleges was so complete that they didn't want to see this upstart college come along. I have experiences personally with actions by diocesan leadership. I divide the church into two different parts: my personal philosophical belief versus the structural part of the church, which I detest and saw at its worst and it adding to the device. So that creation of an atmosphere in which diversity was welcomed, in which the faculty were in control. Nobody tried to tell a biologist what he was going to teach or how to teach it. Chuck Reif never told me, "Don't talk about genetics and anything about the gene selection or so on. You teach genetics, period."

Dr. Mike: And so faculty were in an environment, you had some professoriate from Europe who had lived through the thirties and were smart enough to see what was happening and

what Hitler was doing. They came to United States. You'd think back over the faculty at Wilkes, you had Seminal LeVich, you had [inaudible 00:20:01], you had a cadre of educated European scholars mixed in with depression era. "You got a job for me, man, I'm yours," So there was a faculty development period during the late thirties, that when World War II ended. I'll go back a little bit now because it's relevant. In 1918, when World War I ended, World War I veterans had been promised a bonus of \$300. In 1933, nobody had been paid their bonus, and so the veterans did what students caught on to many years later, they mounted a protest and they marched on Washington and there were about 3000 World War I veterans who were saying, "Dammit, you owe us a bonus and you're not paying it, and we're desperate. We can't feed our families."

Dr. Mike: Well, they camped out on the mall in Washington DC. President Hoover got ticked off and he said, "You can't camp out on the mall. You can't put up a tent city of 2 or 3000 veterans. We'll take care of you," and so on. Nothing ever happened. Finally it became a showdown between the government and the veterans, and there were two army units in Washington, which the United States did not have a long standing army, large standing army. They were probably company size, 5 or 600 men. The major in charge of one of the company of military assigned to Washington was Eisenhower, Dwight Eisenhower, and the major in charge of the other group of military was Douglas MacArthur. Within the military at West Point context, there was always leadership competition between them, and MacArthur came from a very rich family.

Dr. Mike: His mother rented an apartment and catered to him. He never had to do a damn thing at the Academy. He was a wealthy taken care but brilliant man who later moved on, but at the time you had Eisenhower with his company of troops and MacArthur with his company of troops ordered by the president to get the veterans off the mall. He didn't care how they did it, but get them across the river and so on. Well, Eisenhower followed his orders and got them off the mall. MacArthur, it was like going through North Korea and across the Yalu River, history repeating itself. He was going to be the leader that got rid of this problem and solved it, so he kept pushing them and the result was conflict in 1930's by veterans and the government, and Roosevelt came up with some of the programs, the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, the NRA.

Dr. Mike: He was trying to stimulate the economy, and this is where Chuck Reif, after he left Wilkes, he headed the Franklin Roosevelt Institute in Hyde Park in New York. So you've got an expert in the field there of the 30's, but I've read a lot about the 30's and what went on during that time. The wall at Wilkes-Barre, when you go in from Pierce Street the one from the first left turn, the beautiful red stone wall, that was built by by the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) during the 30's. They were finding ... the WPA, Works Project Administration, they were finding things to hire people for as well. Wilkes put these programs in.

Dr. Mike: The Civilian Conservation Corps took care of national parks. They were starting to find a role for government to initiate economic activity. Economic activity was totally in the hands of the railroad builders, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, and banking, the major families that have homes in Rhode

Island. There was no income tax or anything, so the capitalist culture was very clearly defined. The labor culture had begun to change dramatically with unionization and with John L. Lewis. The coal mine workers were one of the first to agitate. When I go back up to Wilkes with you someday we're going to go over to the athletic field and I will show you the signatures of miners during the 1920's and 30's, signatures on the explosives warehouse store, which is still on the campus. I'm not sure why somebody doesn't take photographs of them. The digression is that through the 30's a great deal was happening.

Dr. Mike: The culture was changing. Capitalism was no longer the dominant controlling economic forum of United States of America. There was no structural form. I remember my father during the 30s cursing out Franklin Roosevelt because he was putting an interstate commerce commission that required trucks crossing state borders to meet certain requirements. I remember my father ranting, "What in the world is this president doing, telling me where I can move my trucks and where I can deliver something, but if I cross a border without their approval, they can take away my moving company?" So the irony of free enterprise (but you've got to have some controls) led to really a split culture during the 1930's. As the 1940's approached, what was happening in Europe? Prior to World War I, you had royal families and you had emperors in Russia and so on, but during the 1930's, after World War I, those forms of governance, Austria, Hungary, where my ancestors came from, was split apart.

Dr. Mike: There was no clear Germany, no Poland, no Czechoslovakia. Structurally, the royal families were either executed like in Russia, or you had white Russians trying to escape to get away. Entire royal dynasties were being wiped out. You had Hitler and Nazi-ism, you had Stalin and communism, you had Mussolini and fascism and you had the Spanish Civil War in the 1930's, which people forget about, but the major World War II began in the 1930's with the Spanish War between communism and what I would say is a more democratic form of government. I don't understand that era very much at all, but it is critical, because Germany was learning lessons by fighting in Spain. They were learning. Number one, cavalry was obsolete, tanks would work. We still had 10,000 horses in cavalry bouquets when World War II started. The countries were not investing in the military development.

Dr. Mike: In fact, the Congress was so divided they could not agree on any single American approach. Roosevelt played a chess game, and between initiating government incentives like the CCC and creating some jobs, he also began to initiate economic growth. We were building B-24 bomber planes in the late 1930's. In 1939, '40, we were sending them to Britain under Lend-Lease. Talk about a duplicitous son of a bitch who was right. He played a game with the Congress, which actually made it possible for America to gear up. I have figures in the World War II book that are just mind boggling, the capacity of America. Once the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, which there is a school of thought that says Roosevelt crossed himself and said, "Thank you God," that he actually wanted the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor and there are time delays in communication. There's some substance to that, because without the precipitation of

the attack on Pearl Harbor, America was split right down the middle. We wanted nothing to do with World War II. World War I was so horrible. I had two uncles, World War I in a German helmet up there, and I think one uncle was gassed, but they never talked about it. But World War I was a vicious war. Trench warfare, the helmet would evolve because they developed shelves that would explode above your head and even if you were in a trench, you're going to get killed if that hits your head. And the French came up with a pot kettle and every army began to say, "Geez, we got to protect our guys." And so the helmets in that collection are part of the evolution of warfare. It fascinates me because I was a biologist. What the hell do I know about the political things, but the world was changing.

Dr. Mike: So Spanish war became a laboratory for new technology. And the Germans introduced the tank into warfare. Nobody realized what was happening. They still had the cavalry, but they introduced flying machines into the Germans under, the Nazi leadership, knew what they wanted and it was going to control you, regardless. The Spanish war was a test vehicle for competing world forces to take sides. And it still made it.

Dr. Mike: That went on for eight, 10 years. I have no idea how many years this Spanish war was within Spain. And province voted to become independent. So Spain is kind of a hodgepodge mix of different political philosophies, because of their experiences in pre-World War II, post World War I.

Dr. Mike: I'm not sure whether I'm digressing or not, but the period of the '30s, you can't understand World War II and post World War II, without understanding post World War I, which gave rise to all the -isms, the Nazis, the Fascists, Communists, and threatened the world with total domination by dictatorships. And that battle is still going on. Except now, it's China and Russia is still it power. But by the time, see my train of thought said regresses.

Suzanna: I guess I was curious in terms of the atmosphere of Wilkes, the community, the students, but pre-flood in the sixties to seventies.

Dr. Mike: The pre-World War

II. Suzanna: Yes.

Dr. Mike: Development of Wilkes became accessible post World War II, by unprecedented numbers of students. Pre-World War II, 3% of high school graduates went on to college and they went to private colleges for the most part. State normal schools, trained teachers, but Dickinson, Lehigh, Bucknell, Marshall or any of the private colleges. Susquehanna, they trained church organists. There was a great diversity of post high school opportunity, but nobody could afford it during the '30s.

- Dr. Mike: But in the post World War II with the 12 million GIs with benefits, that would provide them an education, the entire structure of American society was changed. Women became accepted. Wilkes was taking women from World War II, while there were still Penn and all the Ivy Leagues were still all male or all female. They had their companion colleges. Wilkes always took this focus that we are an educational institution. We will do everything we can economically to make it possible for you to go on to post high school education and all of a sudden you've got thousands of students with the resources provided by the post World War II government.
- Dr. Mike: Wilkes became a four year institution in 1947. It's growth from then on has been continuous. This history project that the past presidents are doing, with three surviving presidents trying to really think about a history of the evolution of it. I think part of what made me go off my rocker was I was afraid of that meeting. I didn't know what kind of direction we would take and we still don't know.
- Dr. Mike: At our meeting on September, whatever, August 27th I guess it's in the book, I keep kept pushing for it, which makes me feel so guilty, because I was the one that broken up, and we never did get to talk about what are we trying to communicate to a new president about the history of Wilkes. About its role in the culture of Northeastern Pennsylvania.
- Suzanna: The Wyoming valley.
- Dr. Mike: Opportunities that were to the sons and daughters of coal miners who had no future. And it's such a unique institution. And it ignored religion, which pissed off religious entities to a fairly well. Religion does not like to be ignored and Wilkes ignored it.
- Dr. Mike: In fact, when I heard that some president, and I still don't want to know who approved having our Christian endeavor on campus and so on, "I'd say, Oh, are you assholes? Don't you know what history we have worked so hard to change? And now you're bringing them back on campus. As a religious organization." I still think it was a deadly mistake and I don't want to know who did it. I'm sure they thought they had good reasons.
- Dr. Mike: But going back to the history of Wilkes, the number of aggressive faculty, nothing was ever rejected. You'd take a university with strong department structures. It is impossible to implement change without umpteen committee meetings. So Wilkes had developed a culture. Alvin Brooke, a physicist, came to me one day, and it was in the '60s, I was academic dean. He said, "I think we should start a programming and environmental science."
- Dr. Mike: "What the hell is environmental science Al?" Well, this environment, the acid mine water, the breakthrough in the river....there were a lot of things happening so environmentalism was beginning to make an impression. We better find out what happens to acid mine water, we better find out what's going on with the changes in flora and fauna.

- Dr. Mike: So Alvin Brooke came to me. He had a full blown curriculum design within the physics department to be an environmental science major and Wilkes had the first undergraduate degree in environmental science. Undergraduate, Penn State had a master's degree but Wilkes had first undergraduate degree. My point is that structurally, Wilkes has always had an acceptance of new ideas and flexibility to do things that established institutions and structures made almost impossible.
- Dr. Mike: And so, there was always creativity. In theater, with Al Groh, fine arts fiestas exchanged the public square. Are you crazy? What does a dumb hunk from Nanticoke want to do with fine arts fiesta? They won't even know how to spell it.
- Dr. Mike: And sure enough, it changed the appreciation of the arts and the music. Dorothy Dickson Dart built a theater, beyond reproach with the latest technology consultants from Yale and acoustics and slight wands and things.
- Dr. Mike: I was in the sciences, but the political structures with Hugo Mailey, the economic structures with Sam Rosenberg, they were so profoundly influenced, the community by what those men did in labor relations. They brought RCA in at Wilkes. Dr. Farley committed to a master's degree. We only had a two year program in physics. He said, "We will have a master's degree for engineers if that's what it takes to bring RCA to mountain top." And by God they said, "You do that. We'll come and start." Created 7,000 jobs up in Mountain Top, making transistors, one of the first transistor production plants to go into the world.
- Dr. Mike: My connection with the sciences is mine. That's personal and I see the evolution of, from that undergraduate research participation, to a culture of research was always an accepted and expected part of the undergraduate experience. You had to know where knowledge came from. If you're taught, understand where it's going to go.
- Dr. Mike: And business practices, you can't meet the federal requirements or the state requirements for sewer system unless Nanticoke talks to East Nanticoke and Hanover talks to West Nanticoke, because this fragmentation of communities, you cannot build the sewage disposal plant by yourself. And so you go mainly with the Institute of Municipal Government, which later became... [The Institute of Regional Affairs.] The influence of Wilkes in breaking down barriers, political barriers and communities, economic barriers between labor and management. Sam Rosenberg brought together labor and management, said, "Hey, you guys are out of work there. No more coal going to be mined. RCA is going to build up here. If you don't agree as labor to cooperate with business, nobody's going to make an investment here. You're not going to have jobs. Your kids won't have jobs. They'll all go to get educated and then leave."
- Dr. Mike: We supplied half of the school system of Connecticut. It was based on Wilkes teacher graduates. They were so damn good. And you remember [Charlotte 00:00:43:14], he used to come down and he and John Chwalek would play golf and he'd hire every education major he could. Tom Moran's daughter became the principal of the whole damn school system in Connecticut. The reputation of the quality and the, not

individuality, but the creativity that your mind wasn't just, if you're a teacher to teach a particular subject, your focus with a student has to be, how do you use your brain? How can do learn? What's going on? So the teacher graduates from Wilkes always found jobs. To Baltimore or Philadelphia or any other community, an insight into teaching that the teachers colleges at Columbia had no clue about.

Dr. Mike: And, it's curriculum was never bound by what was being done. It was always about what can be done. And so much of that Wilkes history, is based on that. It's a given. If you're hired at Wilkes, you're expected to start a new road, do something. You're not here just to teach students. You're here to teach students how to learn and how the world's going to change. And it's fascinating.

Suzanna: Let's focus more now on the flood, pre-flood 1970s to 1972.

Dr. Mike: Pre-flight?

Suzanna: Pre-flood.

Michelle: Pre-flood.

Suzanna: Focus on the pre-flood, like 1970 to '72.

Suzanna: '72. What that atmosphere was like.

Michelle: What was the atmosphere like?

Dr. Mike: Yeah, people forget that we were in the middle of construction of what was a very innovative, multidisciplinary building, the original Stark Hall, 1955, from a single and dominant gift of \$990,000. Which would be the equivalent of maybe 35 million dollars now. \$990,000, was a gift from Walter Carpenter, anonymously at the time. I was a young faculty member. I helped design my own office, and laboratory. My first year at Wilkes, I was designing my own lab. An animal room right next door to me, and the elevator there, and my office, I still walk up there and I can find it in a heart beat.

Dr. Mike: But RCA commitment that Dr. Farley made to expand to the graduate level. That was huge. He gambled everything, basically saying, "We can do this." From a two year engineering program to master's level work. And Umid Nejib is worshiped by anybody who lived through that era and saw what his influence and guidance was. That whole transition to computers and things. But Umid, was such a... I have a eulogy in one of these scrapbooks that I gave at his funeral library the other day. He just was a remarkable person at Wilkes, We've interviewed others, like Joe Bellucci.

Dr. Mike: So part of our kind of interest in interviewing is it bring out a pattern, constant innovation and change. So, when the commitment was made in 1968, '69, to build a new addition, connecting the two wings of the science building that was facing River

Street, it was multidisciplinary. Had started on the art gallery, it had mathematics department, it had English literature department.

Dr. Mike: There was no deliberate separation of departments. In fact, the campus buildings were designed to be multi-functional. Engineers should not be educated in an environment of just engineering. They should see theater, they should see the arts in operation. They should know what a political scientist does.

Dr. Mike: So that building is fascinating in retrospect, because of the price change and the inflation of the time. Dr. Farley was still president, initiated the whole planning. And I remember sitting with him as Academic Dean and he had an idea, okay, how can we squeeze some efficiency out of the faculty, out of the teaching role? So we said, "Let's make a large lecture hall, 150 students." It's still there. "And then, provide facilities to break down into small 10, 15 student units, in which that large lecture is then conversation and discussion about that lecture, which will be directed by a senior student."

Dr. Mike: These were wonderful concepts. So that building was designed with dividing walls, and so on. The basement had an offer from Dan Flood: a two year old air force computer had been declared obsolete and they were buying into new computers and would give the old one to Wilkes. So, the design of that new building was incorporating a whole basement level to accommodate those huge computer cabinets that became the original thing.

Dr. Mike: And we're talking about pre-flood.

Suzanna: Yes, 1970 to 1972.

Dr. Mike: The concept of that addition of an art gallery, classroom space, which was ecumenical. You could teach philosophy or English literature. It did not separate physically chemistry, physics, biology. This was a learning center. It was not called a science building or an addition. It was a learning center and the idea...

Dr. Mike: So the flood came, and the flood kicked everything awry.

Dr. Mike: Number one: inflation had increased the projected costs of the building from 3 million to \$7 million. I became president in the middle of this construction and we couldn't afford to hire another academic Dean. So Dr. Farley became chancellor here. Anyone in fundraising was thinking, "here's the pioneer God, if anybody can raise money, Dr. Farley can."

Dr. Mike: It didn't work out that way, because donors wanted to see the new president's ideas for Wilkes. For two years, Dr. Farley was chancellor. I don't think I spoke to him 10 or 12 times. I was so conscious of the faculty in effect say, "Oh, Mike became president. Dr. Farley's still running the place." I went to an extreme of isolation, here he was on the third floor of Weckesser as chancellor.

- Dr. Mike: I'm going to confession now. Things that I've thought often but I've never spoken about, but that two year period was very difficult and was very awkward. Inflation was raising the cost of the building exponentially. The base was shrinking because the general economy was sinking in the early '70s, and the college was really caught in some serious choices.
- Dr. Mike: We eliminated one floor of the building. The new building under construction wasn't paid for. Contrary to Dr. Farley's era, every dollar had to be in the bank before we laid the first brick. We couldn't do that anymore. So we reduced it. We'll build the fourth floor, but we won't put anything in it. Everything became scaled back, because the building was already being built. You have no choice about that, but you could control whether the third floor and the fourth floor would be finished or even assigned a function. We'll build it, but it's got to be a hollow space for the future. God knows what that's going to be. So then came the flood.
- Dr. Mike: It was a breathing space for Wilkes. The flood, was just a breathing space to kind of sit back and say, we got a real problem. We know what we want to be as an institution educationally. We're in no position to become an institution physically. We didn't own the buildings around the campus. We could not complete the one major building designed as a functional academic building, a learning center, because we couldn't get the money. The computer in the basement, by the time the floodwaters went down, computers were this big. We got a whole floor in the basement for a computer. The world was changing so rapidly. It wasn't just the flood.
- Dr. Mike: I'm not going to change history, and if the flood was a turning point in my tenure marked by, "Oh Mike was the president that recovered from the flood." That is so far from reality, because the transitions in education and technology and culture, Title IX, people forget the '60s and '70s were turmoil. Wilkes had a head start because we never had excluded women. We still were bad with the integration of racial integration, because we had no black community to speak of. So that period of the '70s externally, and then our world was changing dramatically.
- Dr. Mike: The flood rewrote federal policy and support for higher education. The flood prompted a major shift in direction of involvement of government other than the GI Bill, which had provided opportunity for returning veterans and things. The government was not health education and welfare, it was one small department. The Department of the army was the other. Dan Flood controlled two thirds of the budget of the United States. He was the chairman of the subcommittee on health education and welfare, in the house where all financial bills have to be generated, and he was chairman of the subcommittee on defense. We had one of the most powerful congressman ever in this country when Dan Flood was our chairman.
- Dr. Mike: It's such a confluence of events that contributed. I can't wait to read some of those Flood Recovery Task Force minutes, because the organization pushed the federal law to be rewritten in five weeks. September 6th when Nixon came with that check. There was a lot that went on between

June 27th when the water came over the dikes and September 7th when president Nixon handed me a check for \$4 million.

Dr. Mike: That story will probably never be told. Number one, because no one would admit that politics could make deals. Nixon was Republican, a house, and Dan flood, the budget was controlled by the Democrats. But they had working relationships with each other. And I won't go through the historic Alaska 1964 earthquake when Warren Magnuson from the state of Washington felt a responsibility, since Alaska was not yet a state. Their only hospital in Alaska was a Catholic hospital in Fairbanks, and so Magnuson who considered Alaska to be part of his congressional district, and it probably was, passed federal legislation to help that Catholic hospital recover in 1964 because it served that community.

Dr. Mike: Warren Magnuson and Dan Flood took that precedent and said, "The federal government has given money to private institutions." So that ball was picked up and started to run through the Congress. That's where I'd say I was so occupied by the campus and the public relations, "We are going to survive that." I was never part of the political side of it, but I knew damn well what was going on. Again, I'm going to be fascinated reading. Max Rosen was a confidant of the Republicans and Dan Flood was a Democrat controlling the budget. So, those two guys wrote that flood recovery bill and created the first federal organized department to help private institutions in cases of disaster.

Suzanna: So-

Dr. Mike: And that five or six weeks politically must be fascinating.

Suzanna: I'm going to take a step back, and talk a little bit about the pre-flood before June 27th. I would just love to get both of your perspectives too, on news when hurricane Agnes was coming up. I'm wondering-

Dr. Mike: No one predicted it.

Suzanna: Yeah. I'm wondering, were you prepared? How, what was the-

Michelle: Well-

Suzanna: Go ahead.

Michelle: I do remember we had moved stuff from the cellar up to the first floor, thinking that if there was water, that that would be the height that the cellar would get flooded. I remember the morning that the civil defense came through the neighborhood with their trucks, ordering everyone to evacuate. I walked across West River Street, and walked up the embankment to look down at the river. Normally you would look down many feet to the river and I could touch the river water.

Suzanna: Oh wow.

Michelle: And that's when I remember thinking, "Oh, this is going to be really bad." And I'll never forget that.

Dr. Mike: Now.

Lisa: He was in Harrisburg, we were carrying stuff to the first floor. But my dad was coming back from Harrisburg, and called and said... Well, Mommy also knew because she had Danny [crosstalk 01:00:34] also. They started moving the Hertz, the Martz buses out of town, and they started to clear the car dealerships. And then when my dad was in Harrisburg, which kind of flooded first, you were coming home and told mommy to start... Well you got home. And he lifted. And that's what's interesting. What did you lift from the first floor to the second floor? Four dining room chairs. [crosstalk 01:01:03] Like, why did you do it?

Dr. Mike: The chess table.

Lisa: And the chess table, you took upstairs? Yeah. So the thinking of, you knew something was coming, but you didn't-

Dr. Mike: Take it seriously.

Lisa: [crosstalk 01:01:17] what we were taking up. Yeah, seriously. And then the civil defense trucks and we left

Dr. Mike: And, to give the devil his due, general [Frank Tandon 00:01:01:29] was in charge of the civil defense area, before the flood. They knew the river was rising, but the decision that had to be made at five o'clock, six o'clock, do we tell people you got to evacuate? This'll be a nightmare of traffic and congestion and so on, or do we wait until daylight hours? And they made the decision to wait.

Dr. Mike: Nobody realized that the river, and the data's all in here, that the river rose from four feet, four feet, a foot an hour for 36 continuous hours. Nobody could be prepared mentally or physically for that. But the evacuation time of 10 or 12 hours between calling an emergency at night, or calling emergency at the morning, it was a no win. No matter what you did, you're going to be wrong.

Lisa: And we used to live on Dana Street, which was up on a hill. That's where we went to stay with our neighbors-

Dr. Mike: With neighbors, former neighbors.

Lisa: But then they were sand bagging. And you and I ran back downtown and were sandbagging the dike. We were helping-

Suzanna: What day was this? Do we know?

Lisa: Well, and that's when they blew the whistle.

Dr. Mike: Yeah, 11 o'clock Friday morning, because I had gotten back from Harrisburg by 10 o'clock. I went immediately to the library because the rare books vault, I have no idea what a rare book was, but I knew we had a rare book vault in the library. And I said, "We got to get the rare books up." And I went to the library, and we started carrying the books up. And then an hour later at 11 o'clock the sirens blew-

Lisa: They blew the whistle.

Dr. Mike: Get out of here. If you look at the library... I can show you the pile of books that I sat down on the top step, and just said, "We've got to get out here." And I have no idea what they were. I wish I had saved one of those books.

Lisa: Well, he would need to fill in because that was the last time I saw him for three days. And I knew he was fighting fires, I knew he was out, but we're sitting there, and I used to wake up in the middle of the night thinking that he'd be knocking on the door and nobody would let him in. But we didn't know. There were no cell phones. We didn't know where he was. We knew he was on the campus, had a boat, and I think once you got a message to Mommy just saying like he was okay. But those three days-

Dr. Mike: As far as I knew, you were up at Dixons. [Dixon's 00:01:04:35].

Lisa: We were okay. And that's where his story of fighting the fires, and seeing the mannequins floating down the the street, how they thought they were people.

Dr. Mike: There are pictures of that. The one thing that I don't think I wrote down anywhere was you learned that streets are not level when you're out in a boat. And you started to realize that you could be riding over the top of a car, but 15 feet ahead you saw a fireplug. And then you knew that is not a level, straight and level street. And you started to learn a whole new set of evaluations of elevation because you didn't want to hit your engine propellar on something that would incapacitate you floating down the river in a heartbeat.

Dr. Mike: When I look at those boats, and they were still the one in the college parking garage, they were so small. I remember water skiing, and picnicking, and so on. It had the boom rider front, which was terrible for the [crosstalk 01:05:52], it was not a big... They are not big boats.

Dr. Mike: They had 50 horsepower engines. And when I think of what we were doing in those boats-

Lisa: Tell them about the fire, fighting the fire.

Dr. Mike: I wrote that in there with the... The two books were assigned to the Ross Street Fire Department. Now, Ross Street Fire was underwater, but their personnel were operating either off North Hampton Street where the temple, some Jewish temple, because I remember going up that temple lawn and sleeping for five hours. I was so exhausted, and then going back down. But you know how Wilkes-Barre goes so that you could get to dry land in about a hundred yards from where the water was. Are you familiar with the North Hampton Street fire? Did I ever tell you this story?

Lisa: No.

Dr. Mike: I think the first impression I had, and you had to wait until the river rose to a certain height because even after the dikes gave way, you couldn't launch a boat. There was no water in the street until the water reached maybe two, three feet. You were just kind of sitting around, and the fire house guys organized, "OK Mike, your boat will be here, and these two firemen will go in your boat." And the other college... We usually worked in pairs, because they were both the college boats, basically, my boat and the college boat. And the fire department worked or directed assignments to those boats. I think the only time we were alone was when we had people rescue calls. And I don't know how they determined those, but I remember one of the first things I did in the boat, you remember when Gienta's Pharmacy was down on the corner of Academy Street?

Lisa: Yeah.

Dr. Mike: There was a call that the water had already risen beyond the first floor. And people who had said, "Oh, it'll never reach the second floor." All of a sudden the waters lapping through their bathroom door. And there was a lot of panic. And it was about six o'clock in the evening and it was getting dark. And it was the only time, really, that my boat was all by itself.

Dr. Mike: And me and a fireman, we were directed to go down to a certain address right beyond Gienta's pharmacy. I can see the intersection because there was a gas station, or something, because I saw a red light blinking under the water and I thought, "What the hell is that?" It was an emergency light on a gas station truck that had been short circuited by the water. Here's this red light blinking under the water.

Dr. Mike: And we were going down and there was this big woman and her dog on the second floor on the porch roof coming up the second floor window. I remember the fireman helping to get her in the boat and that dog was the calmest person on the boat. I'll never forget that. The big police dog type thing. Just... You're going to make me cry,

but it knew what the circumstances were. I will never forget the way that dog just got right in the boat, perfect. I controlled myself.

Dr. Mike: But I was not on house to house rescue very much at all because the boat was too small. I don't know how they did manage.

Lisa: Well you, you also had to keep going around the campus because you didn't want anybody-

Dr. Mike: Well, the next assignment was with PP&L personnel, because as the water rose, they began to realize how vulnerable the whole electrical system was. I remember, I don't know if they were PP&L guys, but two guys got in my boat with these long poles, and we started going up and down streets disconnecting the switches on the telephone poles, and they're still there. You look down, and I remember being on South River Street, and across the street from our house, disconnecting so that when the power came back on, you wouldn't be overwhelming the entire system. Their job was to disconnect the system.

Dr. Mike: When we get power back, we will reconnect slowly and not burn out transformers, and all kinds of home things. And I'll digress for a moment to say we got back in the house, you girls weren't there. I think your mother and I stayed down there. I wanted to be on the campus somewhere.

Lisa: But I still remember going in before power, there was a generator. And I was crying because we had to get home before it got dark because the whole town was dark. You were the first one in, he had a pass to go in, but there was no electricity.

Dr. Mike: The pass is in the book.

Lisa: And I still, the dark... to be home before it got so dark because there was nothing until he turned on the generator.

Suzanna: This stretched over a... how many streets? This was the entire... Wilkes-

Lisa: The whole valley.

Suzanna: The whole valley?

Lisa: The whole valley.

Suzanna: Was out of electricity?

Lisa: Yep.

Suzanna: Wow.

Dr. Mike: King Street, 44th, everything

Lisa: Dark.

Dr. Mike: From Pittston on down, there was no power and no water. I remember your mother and I went to bed. I think I had a baseball bat or something, which you know, big deal, just because I felt I had to be a presence., And all of a sudden your mother sits up and "Mike, look at all the lights on next door." The whole building, lights were blazing away. This was like 10 o'clock at night.

Dr. Mike: I said, "What in the hell? How did that come on?" And I don't know what I did, really.

Michelle: That was the girl's dorm next door to us. What was it? [Waller Hall]? Was it Waller?

Dr. Mike: Yeah, Waller, right. I don't think I did anything until there was nobody to call. You didn't have telephones, it wasn't like cell phone days. The next day we found out that one of the circuit breakers that we thought we had disconnected was behind the bunch of leafy branches. We never saw it. And it was the one that was providing power to Waller Hall. Here we are in a blacked out town, this big dorm has lights on all over the place.

Dr. Mike: Oh, God, that was funny. It was funny because we knew it wasn't dangerous. We thought there might be a chance of a fire in Waller Hall, but you couldn't do anything about it anyway. Fires during a flood are the worst, most dangerous thing there can be, because they are so difficult to fight. And is that where we started out, North Hampton Street?

Lisa: Yeah.

Suzanna: Fire, yeah.

Dr. Mike: Okay. We... With the fire guys, it was daylight, and we were told that there was smoke coming from a building on the corner of North Hampton Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. I think that was the intersection. And we have the two boats, because there were firemen and a pump to pump water, and the hoses with the nozzles to go fight fires as a team. We go down to North Hampton Street, and you could see the smoke coming out. If you looked, you could see the reflection of flames against the water.

Dr. Mike: Very, just a red kind of flickering fireplace almost. And piece of cake, we'll look at that out in heartbeat. The boat next to us had the gasoline engine, that was the pump. And my boat had the guys with the nozzles. The boat starts the pump. We get water pressure through the nozzles. The fireman in my boat says, "Okay, you can give me access." And they had a long pole from the other boat that broke the window to get the hose, they floated it, to put out this fire and the Goddamn pumped stalled.

Dr. Mike: So we started the fire on North Hampton Street. I don't know... I think I wrote down somewhere, nobody in history knows how that fire started except me and the fireman who I have no idea who they are.

Suzanna: What day was this, do you know? Do you know roughly what day... what date... the date of the fire?

Dr. Mike: No.

Suzanna: No? Okay.

Lisa: I think it's in there. You will find it in some documentation because I did see it and I did see it in there and the, there is something in there.

Dr. Mike: Because we were there all night. When that window broke, and I wrote this down because it's the only time in my life I ever... I understood John Kennedy's flight where he crashed affected me in People Magazine this week, I never understood total disorientation. But when he broke the window, the smoke started billowing out this window, and we suddenly went from physically fighting a fire with a hose and mechanical things, total black out. Nothing. You couldn't tell up from down. Mentally, I panicked, and then realized you're in the boat, you can only be in one dimension, but what direction do you go? I couldn't tell anything. Then the other boat was hooked to us by the hoses between the pump that didn't start, or that had failed. And I remember thinking, "I got to get out of this smoke," and the other boat was on. So we both had it out and broke out of the smoke curtain.

Dr. Mike: And I have never... You cannot understand disorientation. And it made me appreciate pilots, and made me understand what happened with John Kennedy, because you lose all sense of dimensions. You don't know up and down from left and right. Mentally, you simply don't know. And it was a weird feeling, and I don't know why I just decided hit the throttle and get the hell out of here. But that was the only choice, and we got away from it.

Dr. Mike: So the fire kept burning. It was night. It might've been about two o'clock in the morning and the fire gets worse and worse. You couldn't do anything. Daylight comes, and some firemen on the dry land figured out, "Hey, up by this temple on North Hampton Street, we've got a fireplug."

Dr. Mike: "Do we have water pressure?"

Dr. Mike: "Sure. Got lots of water pressure." They hooked up a fire hose to an above plugged water... by then the flood had, it was high water, and they hooked it up to the fire plug, and no water in it or anything. And they hook the nozzle, and they have a splitter on it, that the one hose could break into two streams. There were two firemen in the boat and we dragged, we wrapped it around the back, remember I had the water ski things? We anchored the fire hose to the two things, and we dragged that fire hose, had to be a

couple hundred yards, long way. And I remember it was only a 50 horse power engine. The flood was cresting that time. The power of the water, and we just chunked the log. But we kept making progress and finally got to that little alley way.

Dr. Mike: And that's where you'll see the pictures in the book. And those firemen, how the hell they climbed up that telephone pole, but they climbed up a telephone pole. The burning building is here, the alleyway is here, and downtown Wilkes-Barre starts here. The main block and South Main Street. And across the street was the Bin'ai Brith apartments. We get the hose and the guys up on the roof, and the hose that we had towed out there connected to this Y splitter, and they got the water going, and started to get water on the fire, tried to keep it from jumping the alley. You remember we looked at some of those flood pictures, was it you that it that we were looking at where the fire, and the directions the fire went? And it's funny how that fire went. We kept it from getting to the stores on downtown, but it was a big fire. It went all the way up through Pennsylvania Avenue, and the buildings.

Dr. Mike: Here I was alone in the boat, two firemen up fighting the fire. I go across the way to Bin'ai Brith apartment, tie up and go to sleep. And basically, I just had to stay there until the firemen either had to be evacuated or what. I remember I fell asleep, I was so tired, but I was there in case they needed me. And they fought that fire, and you'll see pictures with the two firemen and two streams of water. It looked like you're peeing in a river. Here's this huge fire and two guys trying to keep it from jumping in the alley.

Dr. Mike: But I think I... I just sat in the boat all the time they were there, so I had a good rest. But I remember tying up to the Bin'ai Brith, the roof of their entrance kind of thing, and just staying there. Couldn't do anything in case the firemen had to get off the roof. I spent about, I guess maybe, six, seven hours there or something. I don't know how long.

Suzanna: What was the community reaction to the flood in general? Was it lots of people panicking? Were people running to the dikes to sandbag?

Dr. Mike: I don't think people panicked at all.

Lisa: [crosstalk 01:22:49] They just ran. But this is something that I've completely...our focus...and the things I remember with about the college. That's what I remember. I have no recollection of anything that went on with a community person who lived there. My recollection is only Wilkes, and my dad getting that college open, and taking care... And he always took care of the people who were working. He had the beer keg in the back of the trunk, going to the square, the Salvation Army giving up bologna sandwiches, and that's what we ate. And just his presence gave everybody a sense of comfort because he was working. He wasn't just saying, "Do this, do this." We were all working, we were working, he was part of working. The community, and everybody saw everybody just working.

Michelle: Yeah. I think everybody in the community was just in a state of shock, initially. And then you just do what you have to do to get through day by day. And Lisa and I were assigned to go over to the dike, and pick up some National Guardsman, and then we would be

assigned a building on campus, and we would go and clean it out. And we would go to that building. And I can remember in one of the homes, I can't remember if it was a dorm or classrooms-

Lisa: It was a dorm on West River Street.

Michelle: The books that were in the bookshelves all swelled because of the water. Well, then you couldn't get the books out. It was just like such a physical job to try to actually just pull those books out of the bookshelves. It was crazy.

Michelle: And one of the things I'll never forget is walking over to the gym

Lisa: There's a picture, I think.

Michelle: There is a picture. And you look through the big double doors into the gym, and the gym floor look is rolling waves because the gym floor buckled, but it never splintered. It looks like waves of an ocean just rippling across the entire length of the gym. It was so striking. I was going into my junior year in high school, I don't remember a lot of what Lisa remembers, but that's one of my images.

Lisa: There was a building... There was a dorm that, it was up higher on West River, or South river street, and we were like, "Oh thank goodness it's not going to be totally a mess." We thought we had had it with mud and everything. We go, and it looked like it wasn't even touched. And we're like, "Oh, the carpet was a little wet." And then we pull the carpet. Remember we ran out because the smell.

Michelle: Oh the smell was so bad.

Lisa: The building we thought would be our least of work was the worst. But the other thing that makes us, and this is where I separate the community from us, we had a trailer that FEMA brought in that we were, this was when we were the only people in town, that we were the only ones. We had a trailer in the back. We could still sleep up top, but-

Dr. Mike: It was a kitchen.

Lisa: It was a kitchen, basically. And again, we were in high school, we were only concerned about our home, and our family. I don't remember what Nancy O'Donnell did. I don't remember what any of the [crosstalk 01:27:02] people who lived in town did.

Michelle: You really had no cell phones. You had no communication with your classmates. Most of our classmates were all flooded, so everybody was essentially doing the same thing, just trying to clean up.

Dr. Mike: It's like soldiers being in combat where they rarely talk about it because it's indescribable. It is so personal that it's almost impossible even to communicate except with a fellow soldier who has experienced the same thing. And the post-flood was almost like that. You didn't talk to people about the flood.

Lisa: I told my dad, I do not remember when we finally got into the house. I don't remember. I remember we wanted to have a Halloween party in the barn because the house, it was our house, but it was completely gutted. You could see through, it was just the beams. But I do not remember. And I said to my dad, "I don't remember walking in that. I don't remember the day we were able to move in." And I didn't go back for 10 years after. I just couldn't ever go back. And I think it was pretty-

Dr. Mike: And you were already-

Michelle: No, I was going into my junior year of high school. Lisa was going to be a freshman.

Dr. Mike: Right. I was a freshman.

Michelle: But I don't remember... When I think of living in that house, I think of living in that house prior, I think of my room prior to the flood. I think of everything prior to the flood. I don't really remember much-

Dr. Mike: I don't either.

Michelle: After it.

Lisa: I do not either. I don't either.

Dr. Mike: We lived there for two more years or two and a half more years.

Lisa: I don't remember.

Dr. Mike: That's true. I look at the furniture, like I described the dining room set, I have no mental image of that furniture on 30 West River Street. And yet it's that furniture, it's the living room and the dining room, that's the furniture we bought.

Lisa: And I remember things, but I don't know if it was before or after the flood. I don't remember the timing.

Suzanna: Right, yeah.

Lisa: I don't remember whether we played basketball out back before the flood, or was it after? I don't..., I just don't know. I only remember that cleanup and the bologna sandwiches in the, I wasn't drinking beer, but he had. That's all I then remember.

Dr. Mike: I told you that story, didn't I, about the beer?

Suzanna: I don't... Repeat it for the-

Dr. Mike: The National Guard guys came from all over the state. Milton Shapp was the Governor, and he really orchestrated the use of the National Guard to help the flood recovery. And they came with a lot of guys from-

Michelle: Ligonier.

Dr. Mike: Ligonier, and also where they're flooded when the dam broke down-

Lisa: Jonestown.

Dr. Mike: Jonestown, yeah. And there is, in one of these books, there is a reference to National Guard reports. I found it yesterday. I was just leafing through and, I don't know, sometimes I wrote notes on it. But if you're leafing through, there is a reference given in which you can access online a lot of the reports there. And I don't know which book I put it.

Dr. Mike: Wonderful. Oh, that's staff photos. But anyway, that's the problem. You go through things often enough and before you know it, you've lost continuity. You're going to have to work your way through. I think they're fairly well organized in time sequences, but as you can tell, the memories flow, and you're really... And some are big blanks.

Lisa: Yep.

Michelle: Yeah.

Michelle: There's a newspaper article in there, and I'm sure it was by a double crosser who worked for Max Rosen, Andy Shaw, who was his Chief Staff guy. And he's the only one who had access to the financial data where suddenly there's a press report about the money being spent on the President's home. It's in there somewhere. And a \$87,000, which was supposedly exorbitant [inaudible 00:30:02]. And I thought, "Who has... I didn't even know what the numbers were." Somebody that knew it, and I didn't know until years later that Andy Shaw was Max Rosen's chief assistant.

Michelle: He doesn't have very good place in the history of me or Chris Price, incidentally. But the-

Michelle: National Guard.

Dr. Mike: My train of thought... National Guard. But between Dan Flood's influence, I understood that they were on the road going to South Carolina for maneuvers, and Dan Flood said, "The hell you're going to the South Carolina. You're going to Pennsylvania back home to

help with the flood." But the entire state National Guard was mobilized back. Here we've got all these guys, and I remember the second day they were there, I said to the major in charge of it.

Dr. Mike: I remember the second day they were there, I said to the Major in charge of it, "Where are you staying?" He said, "Oh, we're up on the mountain in the Ashley schools." And I said, "Geez, you got to make the trip back and forth all this time?" And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, the second and third floors of all our dorms are empty." I said, "If you've got a power supply." So he said, "Oh, that would save us a lot of travel time." Next thing I know, here's this convoy of trucks coming back down. The first two trucks they unloaded were all Iron City beer.

Dr. Mike: They filled two dorm rooms just with their supply of beer. They didn't give a shit about the flood. And we ate with them a few times. They had their own fields kitchen that they set up outside. In fact, for years I had a military jacket.

Lisa: Yeah, we still... it's still hanging here.

Dr. Mike: That may still be in there because I never throw stuff out.

Lisa: Yeah, it's still hanging here.

Dr. Mike: But anyway, getting them down on campus was a blessing because they could socialize among themselves, not like going up to an elementary school. And so for some reason it was hot, was in July. And I thought, I'm going to go see if Stegmaier will give me a keg of beer and bring it down on campus. So I had a white 1964 Ford convertible. So I go up to the Stegmaier Brewery. "Oh, yeah, Dr. Mike." I said, "Yeah, I got a bunch of national guard guys down on campus. Can you give me a keg of beer and take it down to them?" "Oh yeah."

Dr. Mike: And then what was the other one? Starts with a K. The other beer-

Lisa: Gibbons?

Michelle: Gibbons?

Lisa: Was it Gibbons?

Dr. Mike: Was it Gibbons? I don't

know. Lisa: Yeah, it was Gibbons.

Dr. Mike: But anyway, one day I would go Stegmaier and another day I'd go to Gibbons. And I'd have the keg in the back of the trunk of the convertible and I'd just do my tour on campus. Everybody knew come noon, Dr Mike was going to be making the beer run and they'd have their canteen cups up. I think of the role I played, and I often go back, I don't ever remember making decisions. The only decision I made was when Andy Sordoni called me and he said, "Dr. Michelini, is the college going to undergo restoration?" And I said, "Oh, hell yes, Andy. We're going to be here." He said, "Well, I got pressure on contracts and material." And he said, "I got to know whether you were going to make us the restoration." I said, "You're damn right I am." And that was the first decision and the only decision I made. Yes, we're going to be going.

Michelle: Wasn't there someone whose daughter was going to go to Wilkes?

Dr. Mike: Oh, yeah. From the Knife and Fork [crosstalk 01:36:15].

Lisa: No, no, no. It was the first Thanksgiving after mommy died that we decided to go out and we were at the shore and it was a restaurant. They converted a home to a restaurant and-

Michelle: But it was the Knife and Fork owner family that was part of the Knife and Fork in Atlantic City, New Jersey?

Lisa: Yes. That did this restaurant. And you made the reservations and he knew the last [crosstalk 01:36:37].

Michelle: And now tell your story, dad.

Dr. Mike: So anyway, to finish this story, I remember the father wrote me a letter and he said, this is the father who owned the restaurant, and he said, "My daughter has been accepted at Wilkes in September. Will you be opening?" I said, "Sir, you know, a college is its people. It's faculty." I said, "The buildings, we've got a lot of work to do, but sure we're going to be opening." I think the first decision was made, other colleges were offering to take our students for the first semester. Something told me that's the kiss of death.

Dr. Mike: You get a college student going to one place for a semester, they're going to make friends. You may recapture a third to a half of them, but you're going to lose half your freshman class. So almost instantly I said, "Of course we're going to be reopening." And so he wrote me this letter and I answered him and I said, "Yes, that you know the faculty is intact and we will... we're already working to restore services to the buildings and so on." He sent me a check for \$5,000 and Jane Lampey said to me, and years later, "Mike, I earned every penny of that \$5,000!" She was the biggest problem. Oh my God. I think if it hadn't been that we knew her personally because his father sent us a check after the flood, Jane would have thrown that kid out of school so fast.

Dr. Mike: She said, "She was a piece of work." But she graduated from Wilkes.

Lisa: And that's where 12 years ago we walk into this restaurant and the guy asked if you were Dr Michelini from Wilkes? And you said, "Yes." And it was the father of this daughter who said, what did he..he said something about how nervous he was because his daughter wanted to go there or something and he still, this was just 12 years ago, still thank my dad that his daughter was able to start school at that time.

Dr. Mike: That was really...

Lisa: That was---.

Dr. Mike: But I'll never forget Jane [inaudible 00:06:15], "Mike, I earned every penny of that \$5,000!"

Lisa: Oh, geez.

Dr. Mike: Oh, God bless her. Yeah.

Suzanna: What I'm wondering is what positive changes occurred after the flood? Like what sort of, like you said that bill was passed. I'm wondering what other... Was disaster planning, like did Wilkes create a disaster plan after? Was there one before?

Dr. Mike: You realized there could be no disaster planning other than raising the dikes.

Lisa: True.

Dr. Mike: You couldn't change the electrical connections in houses. You couldn't reconstruct. In fact, the flood costs us a lot of unfunded... government money could not be used for bringing old buildings up to contemporary code. See, when the college got a building, it was grandfathered in. And if you didn't have modern electric boxes or stairwells with fire barrier doors, you were exempt after the flood. And the guy that lives up the street, and I rarely talk to him about it other than with Riz, he was one of the guys in labor and industry who said, "Oh no, no, no, you can't go back in those buildings." So there we are not only with the flood damage that was part of the reconstruction money from the Federal Government, but we had to do all of that bringing up to standards, labor and industry things.

Dr. Mike: And that's where the Weckesser hall particular, I didn't go and a lot of the buildings but Weckesser hall. That's why you have those floor firewalls now. And that hall had to be raised separately. And I think the biggest job Tom Kelly and I and my court had to do was to raise that money and have to market it. That's where those slides... I got to look at that and see, I'm not sure I mentioned that a lot to perspective donors. It was a touchy, are you in flood recovery or are you upgrading a facility to [inaudible 00:08:40]? That's two totally different marketing needs approaches, you know. How do you stay honest and say, this money is really not going for flood recovery. It is going to meet

labor and industry standards. That's a no-brainer. Nobody's going to give you money to meet the labor and industry standard.

Dr. Mike: So I think we have to make a lot of ethical decisions about what we could say to prospects. A lot depended upon how liberal a foundation was, how flexible they were able to be to give you \$100,000 or something. Not every foundation in Pittsburgh was a center of foundations; Alcoa, U.S. Steel. Found out that they were very generous to private higher education. And with those guys, you could be honest. But run of the mill, you could not publicize that we have to do labored industry upgrades with the buildings that had formerly been grandfathered. I think we did it honestly and ethically.

Dr. Mike: I don't recall ever making up anything or misleading anybody. If it was part of our effort to make that million up, I think the people we approached or the foundation, they understood it. They understood what you were saying, Hey, sounds like government bailing us out only to the extent that they legally can help with flood restoration. They cannot legally give you federal dollars whether President Nixon gives it to you or not. You cannot use that for a non flood related purpose.

Suzanna: I see. Can you describe the events leading up to President Nixon's visit and like what that money, that check was used for exactly. Do you remember?

Dr. Mike: No, I cannot.

Suzanna: Okay.

Dr. Mike: And that's why I'm going to be so fascinated reading those flood recovery task force records because it very clearly was the interface with government and the needs, the analysis of the needs for the local communities. And it had task forces looking at a businessman's need to replace his inventory. Or for a company that was providing city steam where half of the Wilkes buildings were all on a city steam plant, which closed, never opened after the flood. So there were so many different elements of community decision making. How much do you help a small businessman versus the college? And my total absorption was the college. So I've told you before, I have very little mental connection with decision making unless it involved Wilkes. I think I realized my role was as much public relations as it was... "Yes, we are going to be here. Hell no, flood isn't going to stop us... Faculty is the key to it."

Dr. Mike: All the rhetoric to build confidence that we're going to have the college opened in September. We might be a week or two late. We were a week late. But we're in business." And that had to be my recurring message to faculty. I'd sent letters to any non-tenured faculty members that said I'm very sorry, but we cannot guarantee...and that got us in trouble with the AAUP because a couple of instructors who had been instructors for seven or eight years filed a complaint. I didn't even know it. I think one of my loyal administrators just figured Mike doesn't need to know this and threw it away.

And that was not resolved until Chris Breiseth was president. Bob Capin had to deal with that for 10 years and Chris Breiseth finally worked it up.

Dr. Mike: It got so complicated and so much faculty versus administration and I'd never had a word. I had no idea that that had all evolved from that decision. I had to send out letters to everybody non-tenured and say, we cannot guarantee. And some, I remember one English faculty member, he had a, I forget it, you've got a very prestigious PhD., he had only been on the faculty for a year or two. I got a note, not even a call: Dr. Michelini, I'm going to California and we're going to be there. Sorry. So this is a month before classes are supposed to start. So there were a couple who just disappeared. And others like Al Sherzan who my daughter went on trips to Russia with, there's pictures somewhere. Yeah. Who was an odd combination of a faculty member. He was a mathematics teacher and he was a, what was his other discipline? Maybe language. Might be. Wonderful guy. He was one of the guys. No department could grant him tenure.

Dr. Mike: Wasn't full time math, wasn't full time language - if it was languages. And a wonderful guy. Trusted him with my daughter going to Russia with him. So there were some very difficult... I think that was personally the most difficult decision I had to make was not to bend the rules or do anything. But it's haunted me ever since. He was such a good person, wasn't it?

Lisa: Yeah. Yeah. Well, he taught Russian then at Bishop Hoban. He taught Russian at the high school and then still had, yeah. And then did the trip to Russia.

Dr. Mike: I always regretted that. That was one of the outcomes of the flood that I had to terminate faculty who were not tenured. You couldn't count on anything. And Al was one of the victims. I often think-

Lisa: There's a picture of him and I just saw it earlier in one of those books. Yeah, with our group.

Dr. Mike: Yeah. I think they were getting on a bus for something.

Lisa: Yes, for probably to go to the airport.

Dr. Mike: Probably to go to Russia. Yep. So everything's a memory.

Suzanna: I would love to ask about the flood recovery task force, if you know who was part of that? Like you mentioned Max Rosen.

Dr. Mike: How do I... Other than this list of meeting topics and kinds of things, there must be a file [inaudible 00:16:30].

Suzanna: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Mike: Is there a lot of reading stuff? I think I could take a glimpse at it and say, Oh yes, this was my, you know, because I must've been getting all those reports. But I didn't read them with attention to what did the report say about small businesses? You know, go through the topics and I say other than being part of the flood recovery task force, I didn't have very much to do with surveying small business needs after the flood.

Suzanna: I see. Okay. But some [crosstalk 01:50:01].

Dr. Mike: And a lot of those topics I will, I went over them twice this morning and I was surprised that how many other things had to be done surveying businesses of people. The government was involved for the first time, not just for college. We were just a small piece of a huge community pie. You have banks that were flooded out. What happened to their records? There were no computer backup files. If you add a file, it was in a safe, you know.

Lisa: That was under water.

Suzanna: Right.

Dr. Mike: Yeah, that was under water. So there were so many other issues that had to be dealt with in the Valley as a whole that are reflected in that inventory of reports that I have a feeling I got all those in my secretary. She knew if I took a cursory look, but I wasn't particularly interested in serving businessmen of what they had to do or what to recommend. They had to rebuild the inventory. What's the big deal about that?

Suzanna: Can we talk about President Nixon's visit and just for the [crosstalk 01:51:24].

Dr. Mike: You heard it all.

Lisa: Did you know he was coming or-

Dr. Mike: No.

Lisa: I kind of remember mommy going quick, you got to get dressed, daddy called. We're going to [crosstalk 01:51:39]. Yeah. That she-

Dr. Mike: I think they called us from the airport. I do not think ... Now he's a Republican. Dan Flood is a Democrat. Who's going to get credit for what? And if you want dollars and you're Nixon, you got to stay a damn good friend of Dan Flood. And if you're Dan Flood and want presidential support, you've got to be very careful about what you say about President Nixon. So I think an awful lot of political compromise, they faced reality. And so the President didn't make a big luhaha about his visit. And Dan Flood never made a big bohaha about anything. They realized that working together in this set of circumstances, politically and economically, that's what had to be done. And to get

legislation of that magnitude and an appropriation in five weeks of the Congress, that's nothing short of miraculous.

Dr. Mike: Bill Kashatus, there was a Wilkes graduate, Dr Kashatus, whose son became a history professor at Community College, wrote a book about Dan Flood, something. I think I have it on a shelf somewhere, but K-A-S-H-A-T-U-S, Kashatus. I have something he wrote in one of those books, I think post flood. But he was very knowledgeable politically and would probably have insights to it. But you know, knowing what you do, and the government was so much smaller then. You didn't have the huge departments you have now.

Suzanna: Got it.

Dr. Mike: And so you could say let's go have a drink and Dan Flood could go over to the bar and get drunk. And his counterpart in the Senate could go over and get drunk and they can hug each other and say, "Okay, Dan, see you tomorrow." "Yeah, what do you want, 20 billion? Oh, okay." It was actually that kind of comradery in a Congress that you could never see nowadays. It's like me saying, unless you understand World War I and the aftermath and depression years of the thirties and the total absolute opposing views of America ever getting involved in another war in Europe, or getting involved because of your survival of democracy required it, unless you understand those pensions, you can't really understand how Wilkes, how this little two year junior college found its role and establish its credibility. And that by the time I got there in 1955 we were doing National Science Foundation research applications and stupid research.

Dr. Mike: looked back over and try to understand those people on that board. And number one, I associate them with Quakers for whatever reason. Somehow or another, there were three influential people in my life and who were Quakers and Gene Farley was one and Mary Russell Webster was a Quaker and I lost the third one on my mind. But I look at their philosophy of being and doing good which is so unique that that's the only social construct that I can give credit to for being that altruistic. They care about people. They care about people at an individual level. They never talk. They don't brag about what they do. They live according to a standard that we should all be striving to achieve. And when you meet people like that, I always think Dr. Farley was like that. Mary Russell Webster, but, and Dave Goddard. Yeah, Dave Goddard. It's very interesting and there's no answer to it, of course. There's goodness in people and the people put up their money and Wilkes came into existence. But we covered a pretty good range there.

Lisa: Range. Yes, we did.

Dr. Mike: So many things, especially the post World War II opportunities of the GI Bill. However that came to be, and that was an all encompassing, because they were scared to death they would have 12 million or 16 million veterans marching on Washington instead of the 3000 after World War I. If you don't understand the thirties and MacArthur and Eisenhower's role in that, you do not understand how afraid the Congress was that the returning veterans would take over America. I mean, politically,

veterans would constitute a huge majority of the power structure. These were leaders and these were guys who were Lieutenant Generals. They were going to be your Congressman. So Congress was scared shitless and rightly so at what a post World War II society and economy was going to be like. So the GI Bill, I associate it with my education; the opportunity it made possible. But there were so many components.

Dr. Mike: If you wanted to learn how to be a plumber, the GI Bill said, "Damn right, we'll get you in an apprenticeship and we'll support you." If you wanted to become anything, there was a way that the GI Bill, the last thing they wanted was to fragment the returning veteran groups. If you were married and had a child and wanted a mortgage... What was the homes built in Long Island? The famous post World War II started the model homes in Levittown. Levittown. Levittown came up with the brilliant idea of mass produced small homes. They had no garages, nobody had cars. So, so many components. If you ever had the time, and I have a lot of American Legion magazines and VFW magazines, and the two military organizations fought like cats and dogs. Every one of them wants credit for getting the GI Bill passed.

Dr. Mike: In fact, I picked the hundredth anniversary or something in which the VFW cover is saying, you know, we created this or that. And then the same month you get an American Legion magazine. So everybody wants credit for it and none of them deserves any credit for it because it was such a composite of fear of the unknown. Nobody really knew how returning soldiers were going to... There was no PTSD recognized and you were turning loose 12 million or more who had been leaders. I mean these were not guys coming back that were all 17, 18 year olds. These were potential new governing class. So the Congress really, really was fearful of how they could learn their lesson of World War I postwar, ignoring anybody who had anything to do with it. To saying, "we better find ways to incorporate this returning cohort of most of the young men into the society or we're going to be in big trouble."

Dr. Mike: And in that sense it was the most marvelous construct and it changed the whole society, changed the whole culture. And the capitalism of the 30s in which private enterprise was the leader in research and science and so on. All of a sudden government said, we better get involved. You know, we wouldn't have won the war without the atomic bomb or we would have suffered millions of more casualties if it wasn't for research. And we damn well better support the people.

Dr. Mike: And so the government got involved in supporting guys like me with the Topic Energy Commission Fellowship. Without that added support I think... When I went back to Seton Hall, I used the GI Bill every other year and I worked in the supermarket, 25 cents an hour, maybe made more by after the war. But I saved the tuition for the next year so that I stretched out over nine years with the GI Bill benefits I had earned, plus the graduate fellowships from the Atomic Energy Commission or the National Science Foundation. Which I didn't even know it by that time the University would say, "Oh yes, you'll have a fellowship for \$100 a month," I think was big, big deal. In graduate school, I did get that kind of institutional support from government. And as I say, a lot of

this, I had no conscious awareness. I mean to think I got to be 93 before I can even understand my own life, and the things like that.

Suzanna: And such an interesting life it is.

Dr. Mike: I've got to go up to the bathroom.

Suzanna: Okay.

Lisa: Okay, put that on tape.

Suzanna: We will stop now.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [02:03:23]