

ORAL HISTORY

Introduction : Mr. Joseph Salzburg ...
(Felice) - (117 W. Ross) -

Thursday, April 1, 1993

It is Thursday, April 1, 1993 — I am Betsy Bell Condon, Director of Community Relations at Wilkes — and meeting with Joe Salzburg, a Professor Emeritus ^{of} from the Mathematics and Computer Science Department.

Joe has been at Wilkes since its Bucknell University Junior College Days — first as a student ~~grad~~ of the class of '35 ... and later on as a teacher. He's witnessed tremendous changes in the campus, the student body, the faculty and administrators — and Joe's recollections will be of particular interest in our Oral History Series.

Perhaps you'll start off by telling us a bit about yourself, Joe, ~~and~~ your personal background and then move on to BUJC ^{and} Wilkes —

Thurwell Lewis scored BT TO at BUJC
+ on to Edwardsville School
principal + then to NW area HS

Felice - '73 - Teacher WBS -

- How did BUJC profs feel about ^{coming here} ...

- Theatre Dept. — Chase

- Your own W-B background

- women in class?

- some profs stayed on: Hall
Schugler

~~Ed Hartmann~~ ^{division}
- Charles Barnes

Frank (Frances) Antinelli
Hayleton —

later on Head of H. H. S.

Hollinshead —
Coe College Iowa
pres.

to Joe Solshur

April 2, 1993

Thanks so much, Joe, for a fine "oral history" tape. I bet Peggy C. will really enjoy typing it up for our archives — and there will be many others who'll read your recollections with delight. I certainly learned plenty of bits and pieces from your input yesterday, and we are all grateful for that super memory of Joe Solshur! also, thank you for getting the tape machine going — ☺.

I've written Ed Hartmann with the hope that we can "tape" him in the near future. I also dashed off a note to Prof. Richards (enclosed copy)



just because my heart aches for him
each time I pass him on the street.
His life must be very difficult these
days.

Joe Cordran has a fun memory of you
I'll have to share with you some
day. Many thanks again -
Betsy C.

ORAL HISTORY

JOSEPH SALSBURG

APRIL 1, 1993

BBC: Okay, it's Thursday, April 1, 1993. I am Betsy Bell Condon, Director of Community Relations at Wilkes. I am meeting with Joe Salsburg, a Professor Emeritus of the Mathematics and Computer Science Department. Joe has been at Wilkes since its Bucknell University Junior College days, first as a student of the class of '35 and later on as a teacher. He has witnessed two tremendous changes in the campus, the student body, the faculty and the administration. And Joe's recollections will be of particular interest in the Oral History series. Perhaps Joe, you'll start off by telling us a little bit about yourself, your personal background, and how you came to BUJC and what happened after that. And I'll interrupt you now and then with some questions.

JS: Alright, if I talk too much or too long, or about things you're not interested in. I am a native of Wilkes-Barre and graduated from high school as all my contemporaries did in the middle of a great depression. This was in 1933, which was the year that Bucknell University Junior College was founded. For many of us it was an opportunity to go to college at all because we couldn't afford to go away and our parents could not afford to send us. And this gave us an opportunity, for many of us who were also working, to keep their jobs part-time at least and they had a place to go without the added expenses of living out. So for many people, many professional people, we would not have had them as professional people if the school hadn't started. I think of Ed Hartmann, I think of Charlie Burns. Ed Hartmann, as a matter of fact, was working in a thankless job as an assistant manager at Neisner's, which was a floor sweeper and so forth. And here is a man who went on to get his Ph.D. in History. It would never have happened. It was a great opportunity really for so many of us. We would not have gone to college, simply would not have. We met in the Fall of 1933 in what was then Wilkes-Barre Business College, over on Northampton Street.

BBC: Over on Northampton Street.

JS: Yeah, the parking lot is there across from the YMCA. In fact, that new YMCA was built either the first year or the second year. We had the third floor of that building in the first year, in '33-'34. And there were classrooms at the front on Northampton Street. And when the weather was warm the windows had to be opened, and I know the instructors had a tough time competing against the construction work just across the street. But we watched that beautiful building go up in the two years that we were there. In fact, some of our classmates from Hazleton, I remember Francis Antonelli--Frank Antonelli, do you know him at all?

BBC: No, but the name is familiar.

JS: He was from Hazleton. He was principal of Hazleton High School later on. And he commuted, except that he rented a room in the YMCA and that was his dorm. He was one of our first dorm students.

BBC: Oh no, marvelous.

JS: I know it because after classes sometimes in the afternoon we used to go over there and play cards in his room. And that's where we first met. Most of the instructors came down periodically, came up I should say, came up from Bucknell campus. They were assigned duty here and some of them were here permanently. They were assigned as permanent faculty. I remember particularly in the Music Department--Pop Gies, Dr. or Paul Gies. And later when I went down to the campus I got to be a very good friend of his. We used to sit around the Lewisburg Area and drink beer together. Wonderful man. Blanchard Gummo, the art teacher, came up. The executive around the place was a man named, I think John, his last name was Eisenhower. I have a feeling it was not spelled like "hower" it may have been "hauer." He had been an administrator, I think, in the Reading School District somewhere, and he was our first Director. I guess that was what we called him. It was a job that Gene Farley took over when he came here, following Eisenhower.

BBC: We have very little information concerning him.

JS: Farley was not the first director. He had an assistant director. A man named Byron Hollenshead. Sounds like one of Shakespeare's sources. He was a very interesting man. You're too young to remember Richard Dix, the movie actor, but he looked like Richard Dix to me. He had a great distinction; he was a graduate of Brown University. And back in the late '20s Brown University had what was called an iron man team. They didn't make any substitutions all season. And Hollenshead boasted of the fact that he was a substitute on the iron man team. So he never got to play.

BBC: That is fascinating, I love it.

JS: Hollenshead later went to Coe College in Iowa and became President of Coe College. I don't remember, I guess when you look at the records about it, I think our class was somewhere around a hundred, I don't know, maybe, I'm sure that, you know I think I have some old bulletins from there that have a list of the class over in my old office.

BBC: Please leave them to us at some point.

JS: I have been trying to give them to somebody.

BBC: Well, if you'll get them to me, I'll be sure they get put away properly.

JS: I think Ed Hartmann had a lot of things, too. Al Groh had some things. They are really Bucknell University Bulletins.

BBC: Can I backtrack a minute on Hollenshead? Are you saying that he was here for a time as an assistant administrator?

JS: Yeah, all the time I was here, he was the assistant director, yeah.

BBC: And then he went on eventually?

JS: Then he went on to Coe College. I think maybe, oh no, he went from here and he was President of Keystone Junior College.

BBC: Oh, for goodness sake!

JS: Then he went on to Coe in Iowa. And from there I lost track of him, but I'm sure he's not with us anymore. And what else do we know? We as I say met on the, our classes were on the second floor. It got sub-divided; the faculty had their offices there as well. We started to have extracurricular--by the way, the second year we took over the second floor as well. I think the Wilkes-Barre Business College was falling on bad times, and their student body had decreased. So we had extracurricular activities as well as our academic work. We put out a paper called the Bison Stampede. I remember putting on a play, which we did in that first year. We did it at Meyers High School. There was a little auditorium on the ground floor of that building, but it was not available for use by us, I think we may have rehearsed there once in a while. That building later was acquired by Misericordia, I think, or maybe King's.

BBC: For King's, I remember King's too.

JS: Eventually by King's, yes. And then got torn down to make room for Lazarus's expansion. We did a play. I remember the first play we did was called "The Trial of Mary Dugan." And I think there was another play done later on. The man who directed it was an Economics Professor, his name was Forrest Keller. I remember we didn't get along too well. I remember writing a parody regarding him better than anything. We had some athletic teams. We had a football team, and we used to play either the high schools in the area --

BBC: Yuck! There was nothing else here? No other colleges?

JS: Well, we weren't able to, we weren't good enough to play Seminary, for example, I remember. And a basketball team. We traveled. I was on the basketball team; I was a substitute on the basketball team. We traveled to play some of the prep schools in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Usually, we got beaten pretty badly as I recall. Otherwise, I wouldn't have got in the game. I got in when we were either very far ahead or very far behind, so that I couldn't

affect the results. But mostly I think it was when we were very far behind because that was usually the case. We may have had a tennis team. The basketball coach was a man named Hank Peters, Henry Peters, who went down to Bucknell later on and was tennis coach down there. He has since died. I don't know whether he was basketball coach down there or not, I think not.

BBC: Were there women in the class?

JS: Oh, yes, yes.

BBC: What was the percentage of them? It wasn't a small number then?

JS: No, not as I remember. Yes, I was approaching puberty at the time.

BBC: Glad to have some women around.

JS: Yes, I noticed them. No, there were a lot of women in our class.

BBC: Did many, did most of your class go on for further education and how many of them went on to Bucknell?

JS: I would say most of the, a great number, the great majority who went on to college, to finish their college, went on to Bucknell. Others, there was another girl whom I was very fond of who played Mary Dugan in the Trial of Mary Dugan. She went up to Wellesley. And others went to different places. They were able to go on to college.

BBC: The professors who were making that commute, and/or those who chose to live here, how did they feel about coming to Wilkes-Barre to do college courses?

JS: I think they enjoyed it, yes. I think it was a new experience, it was a new experience for everybody. It was a new experience for us because we were new to college. And this was, I think, it must have been for many of them, if they looked at it that way, a fascinating experience. Because when they had the opportunity some of them stayed on. Voris B. Hall, for example, the Physics professor was recently come up from Bucknell. A man named William Schuyler, who was a Chemistry professor, he lived here, I'm quite sure. Mathematics teacher as I recall, Johnny Gold, was from Bucknell. We met him when we went down later on, but he used to come up to teach mathematics. And Voris B. Hall was the Physics teacher. I can't remember if, I don't recall if we had any Biology or a head of Biology or not. But we had dances and things like that. I don't know the exact number of the class that went to Bucknell, but it was not inconsiderable and we were new to them down there too. We met new friends, but we stayed together quite a bit as a group when we went to Bucknell. Because, for one thing as I say, I don't mean to minimize the fact that we did have a lot of friends, we were welcomed. But these were people who had been Bucknellians for two years

and we were almost like freshmen except we had junior standing. So we stayed together as a group quite often.

BBC: How was your academic preparation did you feel? Of course, you were sharing the same credits as them.

JS: We had exactly the same as the Bucknell students. As a matter of fact, we were better than most because we were highly motivated. We were going to school because we wanted to get to be something, and we were given the chance. I think it was a highly motivated class. I speak for the other people. I was a little bit young, and I don't know if I had any motivation or not. I know it was a chance to go to college for all of us and we had to make good.

BBC: In the two years you were here, you were still in the building on Northampton Street.

JS: Yes and for several years after that, yes.

BBC: It wasn't until a couple years later that we . . .

JS: Acquired Kirby Hall.

BBC: Right. Okay.

JS: And I was no longer here by then.

BBC: What happened to you then after you graduated from Bucknell.

JS: Well, we were still kind of in the Depression, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to be except I was very active in the theater at Bucknell. I got to be one of the representative seniors in the yearbook, I represented the theater I guess. There was quite a dramatic picture of me in the yearbook, I was 19 years old and thought I was a real man of the world.

BBC: You were a young student weren't you, Joe?

JS: Yes I was.

BBC: Yes. You graduated, you're being modest about your abilities.

JS: Well, I have a lot to be modest about. I kicked around for a while and I got into broadcasting. I was in broadcasting for about 19 years.

BBC: With the war around it?

JS: Yes. The war in the middle of it.

BBC: I mean, broadcasting around the war.

JS: I was in the Navy, I went in about 1942 until about '45. I served in the Navy as a communications officer. And then I came, after I left broadcasting, burned out I think there, I came to talk to Dr. Farley. I thought I would like to be a college teacher and he said, my degree by the way--I had a double major in French and English. I eventually taught math here for 34 or 35 years. And it's interesting, I had all the guts. I had never had a math course in college. Had never had a math course in college. And so, when I went to Farley, I said I would like to teach here. And he said you need an advanced degree; as a matter of fact, you need a doctorate to get into the English Department, but thanks anyway for the inquiry. This is a long story of no particular interest in the general history. But . . .

BBC: Tell it anyway.

JS: I was working in the life insurance business and I hated it. I didn't last too long in that--about 2 or 3 years. But I thought there were things like mathematics that I had never been interested in. I had an intellectual curiosity so to keep my mind going, I guess, I took some math courses here and a physics course. And I had some . . .

BBC: Were we still BUJC?

JS: No, no by now you were already Wilkes.

BBC: No, by now we were already Wilkes when you had come back.

JS: Yes, because this was in 1959 or so. And it was '48 when I left. No, I just skipped over it guess. Anyway, I had had some courses with Tom Richards. They were hurting in the Math Department at the time and he asked me if I would like to teach. So he sent me to talk to Farley, and Farley was happy to have me. He had forgotten completely that I needed a degree. I could understand that. I needed to have a degree to teach English but they were hurting badly for math teachers at that point. So I said yeah I'd like to, except I don't have any background. I have had about four or five courses in math here. And I would like to go off and get my master's degree, at least, somewhere and then come back. And he said, but we need somebody this year, and I made a bargain with him. If they could fill in for me for one year I would come back whatever happened. But if they couldn't find anybody to fill in, I would start then. But he said don't worry about it because you can always get your degree by going summers. He told me anything just to get somebody to work here.

BBC: He wanted you, he wanted you.

JS: He wanted me, he wanted somebody. And I stayed for 35 years or so.

BBC: Well, did you ever get off to get your master's?

JS: Yes, I got my master's at Columbia.

BBC: Oh you did, how soon after, at what point did you do it?

JS: I went that summer. And then I stayed down at New York for a whole year. And I went the following summer and then I started to teach and then I went the summer after that, after my first year of teaching. I went back for the summers.

BBC: How did you find it, teaching?

JS: Tough! Oh I found learning very tough. When I got an assignment, I had to do all the work that I should have known up to that point so that I could start on the assignment. It was a horrible year, Betsy. I had such nerve, cocky is the word I think. If I had known what I was getting into I never would have done it and I would never be speaking to you now.

BBC: But you stuck with it and you learned it.

JS: Yes, after my fashion.

BBC: What were the classes like? How were the students? You've seen thirty some years of students in classes, what?

JS: Yeah, I don't think they have changed much. I have found like us, that most of the students, then at least, who were from around here also had an opportunity to go to college that they might never have had if we didn't have a school here locally. And all of us came from middle class to lower class families, financially, economically. We were highly motivated. And these students were, too. They were very highly motivated. They wanted to get out of what their life was and be better than their parents and they did. You still have students like that here now, I'm sure. This was something that's been characteristic of Bucknell Junior College and Wilkes as long as I've known it.

BBC: I don't know if you can call Professor Richards your mentor but he was obviously someone who got you involved here. Is Prof. Richards now the man who lives at the Sterling Hotel?

JS: Yes, yes. Tom Richards, he was department chairman for many, many years.

BBC: Do you have anything you can say about him.

JS: Best teacher I've ever had.

BBC: Alright the best teacher you've ever had. We know so little of him now.

JS: Tom Richards had an influence on so many people, and he always said "I never influenced

anybody in my life." He didn't think he did, but he did. He was such a fine teacher.

BBC: You must have taught in a great variety of classrooms over the years too. Starting out in what place?

JS: Yes. Yes. When I joined the math department it was in Conyngham which had burned. In fact, I was there in my office on the first floor in the back when the fire occurred. I had an office with Stan Wasileski at the time. And most of the big damage was done in the front, but my papers were all waterlogged and the books and so on. And the great fire, it was the year that Bing Wong came here. His first year here. So we have survived a flood and a fire in that department. Our classes were mostly in that building. We shared it with the English Department for a while; at least some of the English people were there. I remember Stan Gutin's office was in Conyngham for a while. And the Art Department. Chester Colson, I think, was the chairman at the time.

BBC: And then where did you go?

JS: We moved into Miner Hall, the old Miner house.

BBC: Yes that's right, sure, on South Franklin Street.

JS: Which is now the gym, where the gym is now, the expanded gym. We were there, of course, when the gym was next door. So we were in Miner for quite a while, until Stark was finished, and we moved in.

BBC: The campus itself, you've watched it change and grow as well as the whole area of Wilkes-Barre which you must have known very well since you grew up in the area. Any comments about all of that?

JS: I always thought what a nice school it was to have all of these old houses to work in and to live in for some of the students. And I think once we started to get some of the out-of-town students, dorm students, I think it was different from many of the other colleges, before the days when we built dorms just as dorms. And still I think they find it--I think Jane Lampe has told me that the preference of these kids is to live in one of these houses rather than in the new dorm.

BBC: How did they do the dorms?

JS: I don't know. They may have had a lottery, I don't know. But it was, you see, I was away for a while and when I came back it was fascinating to see how the school had grown from one floor of the Wilkes-Barre Business College to a campus that had 30 or 40 buildings, I don't know how many, when I came back. Yeah, it was fascinating to me, but I was never too far away from home. When I was in broadcasting I was working in Scranton and lived

for a time in Scranton and then later in Wilkes-Barre. So, I was here when the buildings were acquired, when they were being built.

BBC: Did you know some of the personalities that were involved in the actual start of the BUJC in terms of the Board members, the trustees?

JS: I didn't know them. I know, of course, who they were. I mean I was just a little kid and nobody was paying much attention to me and I wasn't to them, I was just glad to go to school. But, many years later when I was on the campus, I got to know *(tape one ended)*

(Tape two)

BBC: Alright, you were talking about Dr. Marts.

JS: Let's see, I think he may, I don't remember that too well, I think he may have got to be president.

BBC: Now we are talking about Dr. Marts.

JS: Yes, Dr. Marts. I know he was active as a money raiser with Marts and Lundy's Company when I was at Bucknell. What I can't remember is whether he got to be president while I was still there. I am not sure of that. I have the feeling not, but later on when I was in broadcasting, they had finished building a new gymnasium down at the campus at Bucknell and apparently Marts had got the Mutual Broadcasting System to agree to cover it on their nationwide network and Mutual assigned me (I was working as an announcer here in Wilkes-Barre) to go down there and handle the coast-to-coast broadcast which was a big thing for a young broadcaster at the time. But I did have a picture, and I suspect it went in the flood, of me standing at the microphone platform down in the gym--I think I was introducing Dr. Marts to the coast-to-coast audience. So that was a big thrill. But certainly when he used to come up here, I saw him and . . .

BBC: Did you ever remind him of that moment?

JS: Yeah, he knew about it. I didn't bother. He knew who I was; he knew I was an alumnus, I think. And I had the privilege, it must have been an anniversary, we had a ceremony here and the President of Bucknell came up and we were, I think, memorializing the beginnings of the Junior College. I don't know, it was our 50th I suppose, and I stood in for Dr. Marts who was no longer with us at that time and read a speech of his.

BBC: I remember that. I must have been here invited from another area. Certainly I do.

JS: I was very cute.

BBC: I bet you were good.

JS: No, I said, I felt very awkward about it. I think this was Chwalek's idea, I'm not sure. I mean I had to read the speech as if I were delivering it. It was the speech in the dedication of the Junior College, I think. And so I had to put a, I mean what I'm saying, I would do this and I would do that, I wanted to remind them that it was not I I was speaking of but I was then Dr. Marts. So I put in a disclaimer saying that I was not now nor had I ever been President of Bucknell University to my knowledge.

BBC: We talked also, just a minute ago about the coup, or whatever, that took place when RCA contracted with Wilkes or Wilkes with RCA. Can you talk a little about that situation?

JS: Yes, Dr. Farley committed Wilkes to starting a master's program to induce RCA to start a plant here because they needed training and education for their engineers who were to come in here. And, if there was no such thing available in the area, I suspect, they would have thought twice about bringing their plant in. So Farley made a commitment, and as I recall, it was as you said a while ago characteristic of the man, without too much consultation with us, the faculty at the time, he made a commitment to those of us in the sciences and mathematics to bring this about. And we did.

BBC: You called it a courageous move and then we also . . .

JS: Yes, he was extremely courageous in doing it, and as I say, we may have resented it, I don't know, but, like so many of these things, nothing would have gotten done. We would not have our fine University here if Farley had not operated that way.

BBC: Yes, it's important to remember that now and then, I'm sure. So you, I am sure, were teaching some of those, or were you, some of those engineers from RCA?

JS: Yes, some of the classes. I think I taught a calculus class up at RCA.

BBC: Oh, you went there too. Our faculty went up there, too.

JS: Yes, we went up there too. There were times when it was not convenient for them. And I think most of the time if we could we had the classes there I'm pretty sure it was a calculus class I taught there.

BBC: The name of the Mathematics and Computer Science Department--obviously, it was not the Computer Science Department for many of the years you were involved.

JS: No, no. That's right. I'm trying to put a year onto it, and I would guess it was in the early 70's. Yes, it was the late 60's early 70's, I know that because, like most of us, in order to survive we had to suddenly become computer science experts. We went to school, some of

us took sabbaticals and got our degrees. But there was a series of seminars down at Lehigh that we went to, and this was my first exposure to computer science. So I place the date because the last time I was supposed to go down there it was pouring, pouring rain and had been for a long time so that was 1972. I remember I was going to drive down with, I can't remember his name, he was in the Sociology Department but he was going down to take these seminars, too, and I was driving and I pulled up along side of (what was the Guard Center, the name of the building?)

BBC: The old coal company building . . .

JS: The Glen Alden building. We called it Parrish.

BBC: Parrish Hall.

JS: To pick him up I pulled up to the side and went in and I said, (Ostrowski, I think his name was, I don't remember). I said, I think maybe we better not go. He said, I was thinking the same thing in this pouring rain, and that was the day before the flood.

BBC: That was the flood of '72, and you did not go.

JS: No we did not go down. I think we went down later and finished up maybe that fall. But, so, that's when our Computer Science Department started.

BBC: Took place.

JS: We had been teaching computer science courses before that because we had two computer science people. A woman named Betty Jahr sometimes she called it Yahr and sometimes she called Jahr I think (she called it Yahr but submitted to the Jahr because that's what most people said) and a man named Como, not Perry, I can't think of his first name and they were our computer science staff at the time. But all of us eventually got into it. So we became, I mean we were teaching computer science courses, but we had no degree, of course. We didn't become the computer science department until we got some real professionals . . .

BBC: Proper.

JS: John Koch and Joe Parker came in, they were the ones who started us off. And lucky it was we were to get them.

BBC: Well, this has been very interesting for me, fascinating for me to hear about.

JS: If I could remember it was a long time ago now, going back and speaking of Bucknell Junior College at its start. And it's with a little bit of a start that we recognize that it was 60 years ago this coming fall. So I am sure there was some happy, humorous college days anecdotes

that I might have remembered. We had some colorful people in the class. A man named Justin O'Donnell who finished at Bucknell and went on to I think Dickinson Law School and he got to be, he went with the oh, like the CIA or somebody. I think he was a spy. He went to Turkey and married a Turkish girl. He was in South America, and he has since died. But he was an interesting character at school, and if you ever get Charlie Burns to sit in front of this microphone, I suggest that you do, he remembers several things about it that I no longer do. I know he keeps reminding me of things that Justin did. He was a great practical joker, a brilliant guy too. By the way, one of our instructors there was Vincent McCrossin. I don't know if that name means anything to you, was a very brilliant, strange young man. I noticed his widow just died. I saw that a couple of weeks ago in the paper. Many years later, he left Bucknell where he taught us and he taught at the Junior College too, and many years later he came to work here at Wilkes. He was strange, I don't think I ought to say too much but he's the man whom I remember very much. He spoke many languages and he taught French and German, I believe, and English and many other things. But he taught here after I came here. He was a good friend of the Junior College people and he knew us all and he was always glad to see us.

BBC: There were so many that I only know the names of so it's appropriate to try to remember them here and there and get it down in the archives. But I do think what you, what we have covered . . .

JS: Okay, if there is anything else that occurs to you, I can come back.

BBC: Well, you can come back and do it more and you can write things down too. I'm glad you left the field of communications Joe, otherwise, we might not have gotten you here. But you still kept the interest in theater, you still kept the interest from the days of Coughlin High School.

JS: Yes, yes, I didn't have the stomach to make it professionally, although I tried that for a while in New York.

BBC: Because I think of you that way, too, I think since I've seen you appear on stage.