

## Jerome Richfield, Track 2

*Tape two begins*

00:00 JR: There was an opportunity, in those days, to learn a great deal about minorities, that most of us didn't know about, simply for lacking real contact. There's no question this was a lily white school, and what few blacks we had around were not treated appropriately, and of course, the attitude of most of America towards Latinos certainly held, too. It was—it was a bad scene, and of course, what brought it to a head, you know the precipitating event of that whole thing, don't you? On the football field? Where they had a volunteer LAPD?

JB: So Markham was LAPD—

JR: Yeah. And, when he—there was a fight on the field, and he sent some students who had got off the bench back on the bench, and he came up behind a black student and kicked him in the ass because he wasn't walking fast enough to get back to the bench, well—That was the football season where, at the end of the year, they had pictures of all the players in, but not the black players, even though Archie Chatman himself had this tremendous scar on his arm for a great heroic touchdown he made where he went crashing into the goalpost. And when I inquired, Why would you leave those players' pictures out? Well, they'd put it on red stock and the pictures of the black guys didn't come out. Then why didn't you change the red stock? Hoo-ooo screw that!

JB: This isn't *The Sunburst*, the annual?

JR: No, this was some special thing that was sort of a cardboard, a red cardboard with little pictures of the players on it. It wasn't *The Sunburst*, it wasn't *The Sundial*, it was something the P.E. folks put out.

JB: So there was racism, there was discrimination in that department.

JR: Oh, yes.

JB: Was Markham known by the players, do you know, to be a member of the LAPD?

JR: Oh, I think so—

JB: Was he?

JR: That's where we learned about it.

JB: So that was no secret.

JR: No.

JB: Well, things blew up, but things blew up with a background, and the background was resistant to blacks being on this campus, to Chicanos being on this campus, was it overt resistance or passive resistance?

JR: No, it was a real indifference and neglect, and seeing through them, and past them, and so on.

JB: What about Oviatt and the blacks?

5:00 JR: Well, Del was an ardent Mormon, and the Mormon church is not famous for its attitudes about blacks. But I don't remember any evidence that he ever demonstrated that he had any personal feelings of hostility or discrimination. But see, he was so totally offended by the bad behavior of the students who acted out their resentments, the black students. I mean there were a couple of bad characters there, one guy with his knife, and another kicked Spencer in the chest, and ol' Spencer was a non-aggressive, nice old man, and it's most unfortunate that that happened but you're not going to get an emotional display exacerbated by group action, without there being people, whether you're pro or anti-abortion, who aren't going to act out badly. Punch a cop, make them—drag 'em in the street or hit somebody else with a sign, and stuff like that. What some of us tried to do, and the whole point of what we tried to get the senate to do, was to accept the fact that this was—this bad behavior, this misconceived attempt at rectifying something, was a political action, and not a criminal one. It was not for the personal welfare of any individual, it was a misguided attempt to do something for their own people. Archie was an electric leader, oh my god, the speech he gave when Martin Luther King was assassinated, it'll make your hair stand on end. So several of us, for example, wrote to the judge, making that point, not that they shouldn't be convicted, but that when he sentences them for kidnapping, and their other crimes, he should remember that this is not a criminal act in the sense of being for personal gain, but it was a misguided attempt on the part of young, emotional people to right a wrong and to benefit their own people, and that oughta make a difference in mitigating the sentence. Well, of course, I heard myself condemned on TV by the great George Putnam, that liberal news commentator, I considered that badge of merit. But, I mean, he falsified what we had done. He told the public, and he'd mentioned me by name, that we were trying to get the students off. Well, either he didn't see the letter and didn't know what he was talking about but said it anyway, or he saw the letter and was perfectly happy to lie. And I suppose, if I could have shown any real damages to me, I would have sued him. Although I probably would have been afraid to.

JB: Well the judge—did the judge take this into account, is there any evidence that the judge heard your argument?

JR: No.

JB: You and Nord also requested amnesty of the senate, didn't you—

JR: Yeah.

JB: —The senate go on record. What happened with that?

JR: Well, when I got up to read the paper, Vern Bullough didn't want me to read the paper because the senate had it, and I had to ask Oviatt to intervene because this was an agreement we had made with Archie. And I mean, as Vern, the proud father of black children, the great liberal, and he tried to inhibit this action.

JB: Why did he do that?

JR: I have no idea. Why did he do lots of things? The first thing I remember when, finally Oviatt got him to back off and let me read the paper, to the senate, was [unintelligible] getting up and walking out, he wasn't gonna hear it. You don't listen to anything that's nasty. And I read the paper and lost by very little. But, the same paper then, was going to—even—god, I can't remember now, did it lose by very little or just barely win? Because there was a general faculty meeting called and the issue was taken up again and I couldn't be there because I was away with the statewide senate at the time, and it was soundly defeated there.

JB: I want to go back to those minutes again, to tell you exactly what the story was, as—those minutes reflect but I believe there was a counterproposal by MUD, do you recall that?

JR: I'm not surprised.

JB: Which prevailed?

JR: Yeah. What was the tenor in that?

JB: It was certainly not as conciliatory as yours was. I could—

JR: Well, see, I remember I was on the executive committee in the senate then, and I remember I was also on the advisory board of the San Fernando Valley Child Guidance Clinic, and I was at a meeting at the San Fernando Valley Child Guidance Clinic when a phone call came for me, at night. That Oviatt was calling a special meeting with the executive committee to come up with a resolution condemning those students' actions. And I must say I didn't act with the greatest courage in the world. I was unhappy with the tenor of several statements there, but the whole group was so intent with such fangs out that it just seemed to me that I would be killing myself and alienating myself too far, and giving up any hope of having any kind of influence if I sorta didn't go along with this to some extent. But, I can remember sputtering a little bit, and—and, but not being effective in getting any modification and that was an angry bunch—angry, indignant.

JB: Are you proud of the position you and Mort took to it in retrospect?

JR: Hell yeah! We got a funny letter from Willie Brown, and I knew Willie Brown because of my lobbying with the statewide senate. I mean, I have this great Ronald Reagan story to tell, too, where staff and I went and we spent an hour with him and that was for public relations, just to get him to understand the value of faculty perspective, we were appealing to him as a trustee and a very effective one, and he came to every damn meeting, with police helicopters and everything going in those days.

JB: So you talked to him for an hour?

JR: Yeah, and I remember this—we were talking about student demonstrations, and I said to him, Well you know, you have to be careful not to condemn them too simply, because that's a mixed group. There's a lot of different folks out there, some are there because it's exciting, some are there because it's a good substitute for objecting to their parents, they expect to get into less trouble, that is, until the police came and started beating heads. Some are there because they are truly concerned about the importance of putting their lives at stake for a value that is unclear to them, and baffled (??) to them. And some of those students really need to have the value of our involvement and this far away war explained to them. And they're seriously concerned with people they don't trust having a very deleterious effect on their lives.

JB: —Very civilized. Thank you, you need this?

Unidentified: Sure.

JR: He said to me, Well, he said, "Yeah I realize that. You know, there was this one time, there was this really lovely girl, she was so good looking, you knew she came from a good family." Don't you like that? From our soon-to-be President of the United States? "She was such an attractive girl, you know, she came from a good family." Now that's the kind of mentality that, you know, when minorities, who were discriminated against, run across that kind of thing, that's enough to make your spleen break. Well, he went on to say, This girl was saying to him, fuck you, fuck you. And he said, "I said to her, honey, don't do that. You will look back on this and you will be ashamed in years to come." And he said to me, "You know what she said to me?" And I said, No, what? She said, "Go fuck yourself!" (Broesamle laughs) And I said to him, Well, you've had one of our more articulate students. (Broesamle laughs) And he laughed, he laughs easily, that was the one grace that he had, it is very easy to make Ronald Reagan laugh, and staff and I had a good time doing it.

JB: So you found him reasonably charming and forthcoming—

JR: Yes, but I was horrified by that statement, you know—

JB: Then he goes out and makes these angry statements before the camera, do you remember? His public face was very different from his private or post-presidential face that he—

JR: Well listen, the guy's not a phony but he's an actor and he acts. And he does that very effectively and very deliberately. He did that in the trustees, when someone made a statement, and it might have been me, that the faculty in the group at the trustee meeting, and also the ones at our table, they really appreciated, and so they broke out into spontaneous applause. He was able to look over at us and, I mean, he produced such self-consciousness with the kind of disdain he was able to show. And I thought, that's remarkable. That's remarkable.

JB: You—you used two terms that interested me, in terms of our response to the students, one was fear and one was appeasement. In talking with Harry Finestone, he coined the term, guilt. You think there was a measure of guilt that prompted us to react with two ethnic studies departments and the EOP program as well?

JR: I don't know who felt guilty, I know some people have accused me, Maya Reed, for one, talks to me about Jewish guilt. I think that's a pile of horseshit.

JB: Do you? It's a phrase here I used, so that's interesting, you just don't buy it?

JR: No. I think he picked that up from Jackie Mason. (Broesamle laughs)

JB: In New York politics—

JR: Huh?

JB: In New York politics.

JR: Yeah. No, I—I think, if you know the difference between right and wrong, and you're trying to do something to rectify it, and you're trying to do it, it's not easy and there's no waving the magic wand, it's, people don't accept the possibility that your interest in doing what's right is a sufficient motivation. So they look for an explanation. It's gotta be something personal, what are you getting out of this? I mean, I'll tell you what I've learned from four hundred years of academic world, where things are supposed to be in some measure loftier and more intellectual than in other places in the world, it's ridiculous. You'd get accused of things that never crossed your mind and that play no role and it is the most unmitigated projection. You discover who did think of it. And why do they feel so free to attribute it to you? It's because they accept it in themselves as being something normal, and ordinary, and standard. I'm talking about lying, cheating, and stealing. I'll tell you, my sense of integrity was important to me, and my commitment to doing what I thought was right was important to me, and the contempt that I feel for people, not on moralistic grounds that they're not as holy as I am, I had—I believe that everybody will sell out at some point. I don't know what it means to say that you can't be bought, there's something is going to make an enormous difference in your life, but not for some of the petty—that little joke, why academic politics are dirty, answer: cause the stakes are so small, that's devastating. That's devastating cause its real, just real. I mean, if somebody—if I had to lie and I'd get a million dollars for doing it, god I hope I'm not tested. But for some of the chickenshit I see around me, you know, the Shelley Harris crap I might call it. The Ram Royd

crap I might call it. That kind of stuff. It's all over. I mean I don't know why I singled them out, it's just examples come to my mind, about this kind of they—in the army you ran into manipulators like that but at least there it was more forgivable, those people were interested in the quality of their lives and surviving, make—might've made a difference if you could steal a carton of cigarettes as to how you tolerated living in the barracks. But, it's some kind of ego game, and it's incredible.

JB: To what—to what degree was the desire to do the right thing? A decisive moving force in the response that the university not, the pressure for minorities to get in?

JR: Well, that's what I mean by my first answer, that I think the major factor was fear, and a sense of vulnerability. I don't think that the desire to do the right thing played a meaningful role at all. I do believe—and, you know, I could be wrong, I could be misreading myself, the reason and I, Mort—that Mort and I went to a lot of trouble—cause we were getting a lot out of it personally in the sense that we were learning a good deal, and these were exciting times. I mean, we got pretty close with some of these guys. Art Jones would explain to us what life was like in the ghetto. He lives in a small place with his aging mother who went to bed and he forgot—he promised to call somebody. So he goes out on the street to a phone booth to make the phone call so he wouldn't wake up his mother by calling in the house. The police come along and they pull him out of the phone booth just to find out, What the hell you doing up? What are you doing out? Who you calling? And all that. Do they do that to white folks? No. Do they do that to black folks? Sure. Now, what was the confirmation of that? Mort and I were in my car at one time, and we were looking for Archie, I don't remember why. And we were told that Archie was over here in this dormitory up the street, the one that used to be blue like a bad bathroom somewhere.

JB: Northridge campus residence.

JR: Yeah. So, we were parked outside, and we saw a couple of black students going into a building, and we called them over. And as Mort was saying to the black fellow, If you go inside and you see Archie Chatman, will you tell him Mort and Jerry are outside? At that time, the girl got hysterical and starts saying, You'd better move! You'd better move! You gotta go, you can't stay there! You'd better move! And I thought, what in the hell is happening? And there was a black and white back there. Well, she was hysterical. Well, around here I see a black and white and figure hooray they're protecting the place. So, I mean, you begin to get little insights into some of that stuff. And then of course, you know, Mort and I invited a bunch of conservatives to come over here one day, since I was president of the campus, and we were going to talk about some of these issues, and we remember Benson refused to come. At any rate, when the campus reorganization came by, Benson thought that I was some idiot who would give away the family jewels and he wouldn't let—he wouldn't let me have both minority departments. So, that's how it happens that you got Pan-African in your school and Chicano studies in mine.

20:00

JB: He was afraid of the empire? Or your empire?

JR: No, but I would do too much for them. Maybe he believed in Jewish guilt, I don't know.  
(Broesamle laughs)

JB: That leads directly to a question that I've wanted to pose, and that is your Deanship of Letters and Science. When did you become dean? Of that school?

JR: Of Letters and Science? February 1972.

JB: What was it like to run that—that empire, unwieldy?

JR: Well, I was a strong believer in the reorganization—from my point of view as dean, I wanted to know people, I wanted to know the problems, when you have seventeen departments you can't do that. Things become too mechanical, too formulaic, it's hard to make judgments based upon what you feel is appropriate when there's that much to know.

JB: What was it like making personnel decisions? When you had to pass on each file?

JR: Well, that part's alright. I had already served on PP and R four times and the times when PP and R read all the files. That's when Oviatt was chair. You know that we had seventeen votes on Mort Auerbach? Cause Oviatt would convince somebody to vote no, and I would come back up after that happened and raise the issue again and convince some person, I think one person kept changing.

JB: Seventeen?

JR: Seventeen. And finally, I prevailed. Now the point is, you know, Mort's dissertation got published but he didn't—he turned out one thing after that. An article by—about Burke in the social science encyclopedia now. Jim Woodress had the wrong idea about encyclopedias, he thought that was all pat and that writing for them wasn't scholarly. He didn't know that this particular encyclopedia went for authorities to do first rate jobs. At any rate, what I wanted the committee to recognize, that if Mort was weak in that category, and of course these were the days when our own field was dominating a good deal of personnel stuff and publication was supposed to be unnecessary because he didn't have any, back in social science division days I was on a committee and turned down Earl twice so, you know, that's part of how we got to be enemies. Because he had never written a postcard onto his mother. (Broesamle laughs)  
Anyway, what subject are we on? The food always distracts me.

JB: What was it like being the Dean of Letters and Science? Making personnel decisions?

JR: That first year, it was the people in History who had the greatest shot. John Stafford was chair of the school of personnel committee and I was the Dean, they considered me the Red Dean—

JB: Did they call you that?

25:00

JR: Yeah. And he was the—the Union Communist. Well, guys like John Schaffer, he came in to see me, white-faced that he didn't get promoted. And I said, There's nothing in the record. How can you be promoted with nothing? What are you doing? That's when Schryver was famous for his statement, The good thing about working at a state college, is when you're through teaching you can go home and watch TV. So, he didn't believe in publication. We went, no one has tenure. My good friend Reba Sulfa, I'd like to hit her while I'm driving my car, actually, she called me to say, you'd better pay attention to this guy, Sandolin. He can't teach, the students are up in arms about him. He makes a 400 level course do the same amount of library work that a 100 level course does. And, there's something wrong with the guy. So I investigated, I mean, I didn't just take Reba's word, but she was the effective cause of my even thinking about looking into his case, I interviewed faculty, students, who knows who I talked to. So I went no on him, too. And there were these big grievances filed. I had Jimmy Septin as the opposing lawyer on one and Hoistler on the other and they—together they were a laugh. I didn't even have to sweat to whip him.

JB: With where you spent, what was it, two years at Harvard law?

JR: Four terms! Out of seven.

JB: Tell you a story about that.

JR: That didn't do me any good. Philosophy did.

JB: At the beginning of 1972, back of the—faculty of L and S [Letters and Science] circle, as to whether or not the school ought to be split up, and only a bare majority favored, a hundred and forty-three to a hundred and thirty-five, why was it that narrow?

JR: Cause the principal argument to the making—to the reorganization is so the Dean can be closer to the departments and the departments didn't want that. They didn't trust that. There would be more administrative meddling. Don't you see the implications that this is bound to have some negative effect on departmental autonomy? (Cat howling in background) Our— Quiet! Just because you're an Asian cat, you think it's your time to howl? (laughs) I remember Michelene Sakharoff saying, If I were any closer to the Dean, it would be obscene! That was all very cute, but administratively it was impossible and I'm surprised, not that it was close, but that it went through at all.

JB: Really.

JR: You know, the School of Education supported Tony Lebye, and they made it perfectly clear in their evaluation, cause he's out playing golf and he leaves us alone. When Al Pierce recommended that I look into getting a job here, that was the good thing he said about the president, is that he leaves us alone.



JB: I'm gonna go move my car, how are you doing?

JR: I'll be, oh, hey—

JB: You don't seem to be losing force, at all.

JR: We can talk about anything you want.

*Pause in recording*

JB: Could you speak just briefly about the process by which L and S was split up and one of them was with three schools, was that logistically difficult to accomplish?

JR: No, you know, like, the president had put up this ten year commission, Charlie Kaplan was chair, and I got on it when I took Stanley Ross's place as Dean of L and S. And that was the place where the idea for the division of L and S, and other changes that went on, I don't remember what they all were, took place, and I guess, we talked, that committee, whenever Bob Way would let anyone else talk, about what departments belonged where. I talked about History as important humanities, the interesting thing was that History had already had its experience of my saying no on people's tenure and promotion and they weren't going to have anything to do with me. The interesting thing is when no's turned out to be a lot tougher on publication than I was, and I enjoyed that. The only argument I remember having, and I didn't particularly want History, I didn't care to have Stelk in my school and a few others, and a few others I could think of, Poldef and so on. So I didn't mind that. I didn't mind not having Pan-African Studies actually, although I didn't engineer, Jim Dennis and others think that I rejected them and they think I coulda—I was so powerful that I coulda had them if I wanted to, actually, I went around to all our departments asking them to vote to take them in and none of them would because they, for one thing, apart from any discrimination there might have been, they saw them as an FTE liability. And there was so much stress on FTE, you'll remember, that everybody was cock-eyed about it. Well anyway, the only one that I asked to come into the school of humanities was Anthropology. Cause I felt that cultural Anthropology is one of the most important subjects for the young, Valley-centric kids to take, and that one of the most important things for barriers to people's future education was to realize that there were many different ways of doing things, and looking at things, and so on. And that once you become culturally tied up and bound up with is not certainly for that reason right. But Paul Kirk felt, No, our—our students will have trouble getting into a graduate school if we're not viewed as a social science. Okay. But outside of that, there was no big deal about it.

30:00 JB: For years, you were both the School Dean and a member of UPC, right?

JR: Mmhm.

JB: Did you have any trouble reconciling those two statuses?

JR: No, I didn't—remember, these were—you were talking about—before collective bargaining? I didn't feel that I was a member of a managerial class as distinguished from the workers, I was a charter member of the union, and I always approved of union objectives and never approved the union strategies and tactics, I deplored those.

JB: Let's switch sides and I'd like to ask you just to expand just a bit on that.

*Pause in recording as tape 2 ends*

[END OF TRACK 2]