

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE NEW YORK COURTS

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Dean John D. Feerick



Found on exterior entrance to New York Court of Appeals

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE NEW YORK COURTS

**140 Grand Street, Suite 701
White Plains, New York 10601
914-824-5863
history@nycourts.gov
history.nycourts.gov**

ORAL HISTORY

Subject: Dean John D. Feerick

An Interview Conducted by: Robert J. Reilly

Date of Interview: January 30, 2026

**Location of interview: Fordham School of Law
150 West 62nd Street
New York, NY 10023**

In 2005, the Historical Society of the New York Courts (the Society) established an oral history program to document the recollections of retired Judges of the New York State Court of Appeals (New York's highest court), retired judges and justices from other courts in the State, and prominent New York lawyers (Subjects). Starting in 2009, all interviews were videotaped. Interviews prior to that time were either audio or video taped. Interviews were conducted by informed interviewers, familiar with both the Subject and New York jurisprudence (Interviewers). The transcripts of the record are reviewed by Subjects and Interviewers for clarity and accuracy, corrected, and deposited in the Society's archives. An oral history transcript is not intended to present the complete, verified description of events. It is rather a spoken personal account by a Subject given in response to questions. It is intended to transmit the Subject's thoughts, perceptions, and reflections. It is unique and irreplaceable.

All uses of this transcript are covered by a signed agreement between Subject, Interviewers, and the Society. The information is thereby made available for purposes deemed suitable by the Society, including research and education. All copyrights and literary rights in the transcript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the Society. No part of the transcript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Society.

This Oral History is subject to future annotation and technical revision. Footnotes supplying citations of cases and statutes and biographical information for public and historical figures mentioned in the transcript may be added. In addition, formatting and similar irregularities may be corrected and page numbering may be adjusted accordingly.

Requests for permission should be emailed to the Society at History@nycourts.gov or mailed to the Society at the address appearing on page one. The request should identify (i) the user, (ii) the intended use of the materials, and (iii) the passages to be quoted.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as "An Oral History of Dean John D. Feerick conducted on January 30, 2026 by Robert J. Reilly, at Fordham School of Law by the Historical Society of the New York Courts."

HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of the* NEW YORK COURTS**Oral History Project****INTERVIEWEE: Dean John D. Feerick****INTERVIEWER: Robert J. Reilly****DATE: January 30, 2026**

RJR: Hello, my name is Bob Reilly, and I'm here with John D. Feerick, who is a former Dean of Fordham Law School -- now Dean Emeritus -- and has had a very interesting role both in education and in public service, and has been involved for -- he's approaching his 90th birthday, so he's got a 70-year career in the law.

Thank you for joining us today, and Dean Feerick, great to see you and thank you for taking time out of your busy -- incredibly busy schedule.

Why don't we start with your background and your entry into life and entry into the law?

JDF: I was the first born of immigrant parents, Mary Jane Boyle and John Feerick in 1936, and I grew up in the Bronx. I attended Catholic grammar school in the Bronx located on Morris Avenue and 162nd Street, St. Angela Merici. I played sports in the Bronx, stickball and other kinds of games.

I also had part-time positions delivering newspapers, shoveling snow, for which I was paid maybe a few pennies an hour or something like that. So, the Bronx really is still with me emotionally -- I left the Bronx at age 26, and I was married and we chose to live actually also in the Bronx, in an area called Riverdale.

[2:05]

Riverdale, most people would say, "What? Is that in the Bronx?" Yes.

RJR: I recall you telling me you had a part-time job working at the supermarket.

JDF: That was a very important part of raising money to cover my college education, and it was the Safeway supermarket located on 116th Street and Lexington Avenue. I came down by a train, and having that position -- on weekends and in the summer made it possible for me to help my parents cover my tuition.

I was the oldest of five children, and my parents needed assistance.

RJR: I recall you saying that you've got great satisfaction in putting all the cans in the right order and that sort of thing, in nighttime. Did you do it overnight or something?

JDF: In my first year of law school, I continued to work in a supermarket, Safeway Supermarket, located then in Harlem, 137th Street and Lenox Avenue, near Harlem Hospital. I arrived on Friday night at the store at 9:00 pm -- everybody was going home. It was going to close, and my job was overnight to put the cans on every shelf that was empty. I worked alone by myself, and music was played that I could hear, and the next morning at 8 am I went home, got some rest.

RJR: Wow, an all-night job.

JDF: Yes, and they very handsomely paid me. I think it was three times the going rate, at that time, which was \$0.60 an hour. So I got \$1.80, something like that.

RJR: Now, I don't think your parents came from the Bronx, so where does the real family line start?

[4:01]

JDF: My parents were born in County Mayo, Ireland, and came here in the late 1920s. My mother, until she met my father, did part-time and/or full-time work for people who needed some assistance in taking care of children or cleaning their apartment, or house.

My father had multiple jobs. He was a sand hog and worked in the water tunnels in New York. He also worked for Sheffield's company, moving crates around, putting

things on vans, bottles, and things like that. And he went away during the Second World War to work on military installations in Greenland, Aleutian Islands, Alaska, Bermuda, as they were strategic locations for the United States.

So, we didn't see much of my father in the Second World War, and when he came back from the war, he chose a career operating a trolley. And then when the trolleys disappeared, and buses came online, he operated a bus, Third Transit Company, I think it was called, that merged into the larger bus company at some point. So, he was a bus driver, and my mother raised us.

RJR: After elementary school, I think at St. Angela Merisi, then you went on to high school, and what was that?

JDF: I rode in a trolley across 161st Street, in the Bronx, to Amsterdam Avenue. It was on Amsterdam Avenue and 152nd Street, called Bishop Dubois.

RJR: And now we're in Manhattan, right?

[5:57]

JDF: Yes, it was in Manhattan, and what distinguished the school was -- and it's before *Brown against Board of Education* -- it was an integrated school. I made friends of color, who were my classmates at Bishop Dubois, and it was a wonderful experience for me. I graduated in 1958.

RJR: And then you decided to move on towards college, so you were the first of this generation to --

JDF: Yes, I recall, a year ago in a communication saying, I was 18 years of age when I knocked on the door of Fordham College in the Bronx. I took a bus from Melrose Avenue -- sometimes there was a train to Fordham Road.

RJR: Is that the elevated train or is that the D train?

JDF: Yes, it was the elevated train. The elevated train and the bus was the way I got there.

RJR: And so, you commuted from home each day?

JDF: Right.

RJR: And at Fordham undergrad -- Fordham College at Rose Hill, as it's now called -- what were your -- what did you end up majoring in or your activities there?

JDF: It was a major experience in my life. I saw a different world than I knew existed. I became a political science major. I was fascinated by the Constitution. I learned that we had a written constitution, and I had a great professor who was a lawyer, later the head of the political science department, William Frasca -- Fordham Law School graduate in the 1930s.

I got active in student government. I was chosen by my class in sophomore year to be a class rep, just at the section, and then I was elected to be vice president of my class in my third year.

[8:00]

And then I was elected to be the vice president of the student body -- the whole student body -- in my last year. So, I became interested in representative politics, so to speak, and the opportunity you had to do good. I served with three other people, the president of my class, Joe Simone and two others, treasurer and secretary, John Masieo and Joseph Carrieri. And we were called the four J's party at Fordham College. It was a great experience, and I appreciated very much the classes I had in philosophy and ethics as well -- that was sort of like mandatory in the curriculum whether you were a political science major or not -- so I learned the importance of values that anchored on religious values.

RJR: And did you do any other extracurricular activities, additional roles, or anything like that?

JDF: I was fairly active. We had a club that a classmate of mine established called the Booster Club, and in my first year, we were all interested in sports, went to sporting events that Fordham participated in. And that meant sometimes going to Philadelphia, sometimes New Jersey, and being just there in the Bronx at home.

RJR: Now I take it there was an interesting incident when you were a senior organizing the elections for the following year. Can you tell me a little bit about that one?

JDF: I would say yes. I think the election would have been in about April of the year. I'm in my -- I'm going to graduate in June 1958. As the Vice President of the student body, I had to oversee any issues concerning that election of students in the class of '57 who would take over in the next year in the offices that we have.

[10:06]

And under the student constitution, the vice president had to deal with any election issues. And it turned out to be an election issue because a wonderful student, who was elected president of the class -- the student government -- when he went into his last year, resigned because of health issues that existed, in his case, even before the election.

So he resigned right away, and the Fordham newspaper took the position there should be a new election. I disagreed with that because the student constitution said issues about the election are decided by the vice president. And I thought whoever was the newly elected vice president for the following year should become the president in the line of succession, just like in the federal Constitution.

RJR: And did the People accept your decision?

JDF: It went to the student court, and the student court agreed with my decision. *The Ram*, the school newspaper, had a different view, but their view did not prevail.

RJR: That's good, so you were interested in elections from very early age and how vacant offices were filled.

JDF: And that persuaded me -- that interest in elections -- to go to law school rather than follow up on suggestions by the supermarket managers that I worked for, who wanted me to go into the supermarket training program and someday be an executive of the Safeway food stores. I decided instead to go to law school, and thinking that once I graduated from law school, I'd be able to get involved in elective politics.

RJR: And then you decided to go to law school.

JDF: I went to Fordham Law School, and it was at 302 Broadway in New York City, Duane Street and Broadway

[12:05]

Duane was a mayor of New York City back at the time of the Constitutional Convention.

RJR: It all comes back together again and the Constitution. Tell us about your three years at Fordham Law School.

JDF: It was a wonderful experience. I was surprised at the end of my first year when I was told I was first in my class, and therefore I would have a scholarship for the first time to cover my tuition. In my first year, I worked every day after school, in a small law firm Landis, Feldman, Reilly, Akers. In my second year, I was invited to join the Skadden Arps law firm, which was a firm of just a few lawyers, as a summer associate.

Also in my second year, I was chosen to be the editor in chief for the *Fordham Law Review*. And so, in third year, my experience tied to being the editor chief of the *Law Review*, having to make sure that we put out a very polished and quality issue of articles. And also, students wrote for the *Law Review*, and I wrote for the *Law Review*

as a second-year student, two pieces. And I wrote another piece in my third year, and the interest in legal writing and seeing yourself published in legal writing led me, when I was getting out of school, to decide to take on something I saw in the press about presidential disability.

RJR: Tell me a little bit about when the timing of all that was.

JDF: Well, timing was I'm graduating in June of 1961, and I had the benefit of being aware that the President of the United States over a few years before that -- President Eisenhower had to deal with cases of his disability.

[14:14]

RJR: Was it a heart attack issue?

JDF: Yes, it was a heart attack, and it was ileitis attack, which was another attack he had. And I remember reading an article, could have been in the *New York Law Journal* -- it may not have been the *Law Journal* -- but it basically said, "We have a problem that you can't figure out the response to that. And there were too many different points of view on how to deal with a disability of a president."

I found that fascinating, and I decided to make that the subject of an article. I was hopeful it would be published in the *Fordham Law Review*. I just graduated as editor in chief of the *Law Review*. That doesn't guarantee a future publication, but I was encouraged to stay with my writing.

RJR: And you had the experience as an undergraduate of dealing with a vacancy based on a health issue?

JDF: Yes, a disability of a student.

RJR: So, it was predestined, so to speak.

JDF: Well, I certainly wasn't aware of that at the time.

RJR: When did the article come out in the *Fordham Law Review*?

JDF: Well, it was interesting. I finished the article in the spring of '63, and they didn't have enough room in the issue of the *Law Review*. They told me not to worry about it. They would get it published in the issue that came out in the fall of '63. I put a lot of time in it, and I was hoping that it would be published and not rejected. And it did come out in the issue of October '63.

I know when I was working on it on weekends and when I was working at the law firm, one of the future partners of the firm said, "That sounds like a very esoteric kind of subject you're working on. Why don't you write on something more practical?"

[16:04]

I said, "No, it's interesting." I'm just a young associate, and I say, "It's interesting. It has got my interest."

RJR: Now, I think just to step back a little bit, I think just once you got out of law school, I think you recently got married, right? Got out in '61 -- this is all a lot going on at this point in your life.

JDF: Well, the most important person in my adult life was my wife. I met her in 1960 when I was a second-year law student. She was 21, a Manhattanville senior, and I was doing my thing in second year at Fordham Law School. It had to do with a moot court trial competition involving Fordham students in the courts of New York. It was just us, with women from Manhattanville and other schools coming down to serve as jurors at that competition. I met her after the competition was over that day when we had a reception at the law school. I was struck by her, her sweetness, and a gentle nature quality that just jumped out at me, I sensed I was meeting the person who's going to become the love of my life.

RJR: Great, that was a very important --

JDF: She died, as you know, last December in the 64th year of our marriage.

RJR: Now, when the article came out in the October 1963 edition of the *Law Review*, I think events began to pile up pretty quickly.

JDF: Yes, I had circulated the reprints of the article to the President of the United States, to his two brothers, to the Vice President, to Richard Nixon -- to a former Vice President Henry Wallace -- and a few other people who were interested in the subject, I thought, of disability of a president.

[18:16]

Maybe November 17th, I had a letter to the editor in *The New York Times*, in which I said that we have a real problem in the country having to do with how do we handle a disability of a president. And there's no better time to solve it than now, when we have a young able president. Little did I realize, a week later, the President would be assassinated.

When he was assassinated, Arthur Krock, a very famous journalist at the time for *The New York Times*, to whom I sent a copy of my article because I knew he was writing on the subject, said on Sunday, November 24th, that if the president had not been assassinated and he had been disabled, we would have had to deal with the issue of presidential inability, and there's a very recent article in the *Fordham Law Review*, a good article, which he apparently had read.

And as a result of that, I started to have communications from the media. One prominent media source wanted to know if they could send somebody over to my apartment where I lived in Riverdale and get a copy of it. And then I had another one that called and said that they were going to develop a program on television, and maybe I could be helpful to them.

Then eventually I got a call from somebody in the American Bar Association saying they would like me to be part of a program that they're going to put together on the

subject of inability of a president and also filling a vacancy in the vice presidency -- those two subjects.

[20:05]

RJR: So your article came out in October. On November 22nd, John F. Kennedy was assassinated on a Friday, and by Sunday morning, that article was cited on the front page of *The New York Times* --

JDF: Or in the column that appeared in *The New York Times*. It's the editorial page.

RJR: Well, that's an important page. I'm sure everybody would be interested to know then, once you got involved with the American Bar Association, at a committee that they were putting together, I think things really began to move.

JDF: It turned out, and you know, once looking at things professionally, and even now, the most significant single event in my life professionally was having a chance to be part of a very distinguished group to confer in late January 1964. I was the youngest person on that committee of 12, and they had a few visitors, like Senator Birch Bayh come to participate with the committee in talking about the subject of the disability of the president at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington.

At the end of the next day, we issued a report saying, not in constitutional language as such, here's what we think should be in an amendment to the Constitution. And that was the single most important event that, in my judgment, helped develop support in the country behind the proposal, and in almost all the States, to change the Constitution by adding to it the language now in the 25th Amendment.

RJR: And that was working through the American Bar Association. Was that the Young Lawyers Committee or no?

JDF: I was asked to chair that Young Lawyers Committee. The first time they established a Committee on Presidential Inability and Vice Presidential Vacancy.

[22:04]

They just established it after the ABA meeting. They put out the recommendations, and I was asked to chair the committee. I had representatives in every state in the country on the committee. I didn't know who they were, but we got to communicate with each other by telephone, and we would meet at an annual meeting of the American Bar Association. You had more lawyers in America at that time urging the adoption of a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution -- that really came out of the American Bar Association, working alongside Senator Birch Bayh, who chaired the Senate committee in Congress, and Richard Poff in the House, and also Representative William McCulloch from Ohio. And so, we had members of both political parties in both houses of Congress moving ahead to push the proposal by Bayh and the ABA.

Birch Bayh always talked about how important the American Bar Association was in the process, and what he was referring to was, not only the meeting, but we all got involved, and I was asked to educate lawyers all over the country as best I could about the subject who were not on the Committee. I also wrote a major article -- it was considered major at the time -- for the *American Bar Association Journal*. They invited me to do that -- explain to lawyers of America about this area, and I continued to write. I wrote for the New York State Bar and the Bar Association of New York and kept writing on the subject.

RJR: And then at some point, there was a Senate committee that you were --

JDF: I testified before -- Senator Birch Bayh was the chair of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, which was part of the Judiciary Committee, and the president of the ABA -- the president-elect was Lewis Powell. Walter Craig was the

president, later to be the chief judge of the federal court in Arizona. They both testified.

[24:07]

And I was invited to testify a few days later. There was another member of the ABA group, Jim Kirby, who I also think testified. He had been the counsel to the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, when [Carey Estes] Kefauver was the chair of that committee. He died in August of '63, and Birch Bayh succeeded him as a result of that.

So I testified for the first time in my life before Congress, and I spoke a lot about the consensus meeting. I had done a paper as a student in the Political Science Department at Fordham College on separation of powers, and I used in my testimony what I said in some of that paper, because -- it talked about the importance of separation of powers and that's built into the 25th Amendment.

RJR: So, things move very rapidly. So then the next step in the process of approving the Amendment?

JDF: The next step was obviously in the time period between January '64 when the ABA group met and July of '65 when the Amendment passed both houses of Congress -- in July of '65. In that time period, not only was I active in terms of the chair of this Young Lawyers Committee of America, I was practicing law too.

RJR: Full time job!

JDF: Yes, at the Skadden firm, I also was hurrying to write my book on presidential succession call *From Failing Hands*, thanks to the assistance of my wife, who did some of her research for me in the library at the City Bar Association. Little did I realize, however, that years later the chapter I wrote on President Johnson's succession to the Presidency would be treated as a principal authority for Robert

Caro's four volume work on Johnson with respect to the success of his succession transition from Vice President to President.

[26:17]

RJR: Now, as the process went on, it had to be ratified by the states, but the first step of the process is in the Congress.

JDF: I was very, very active in the process because I had the young lawyers of America working on it, and they would be giving me information I'd pass it on to the ABA and Bayh the concerns that were coming in, where there were issues. Let me also add that I was very active a year or two before – when I was doing my Fordham article, trying to collect a lot of information about other countries, how they dealt with succession, and also about state constitutions and how they dealt with disability and succession.

[28:14]

JDF: I was just told the other day that a lot of that correspondence has just been digitalized by someone here at the law school, they found my correspondence from years ago. I didn't know I had it in my office what I was collecting before I reached the conclusion that I did in my Fordham article.

RJR: Wow. Now, were you involved as it went around the 50 states to ratify?

JDF: Yes. I was receiving, for example, in Colorado, where there was an issue in a newspaper, a request from Dale Toohey who wanted me to write something for the *Rocky Mountain News*. . He said that the press has two different views on the amendment in Colorado, and so I wrote an article dealing with the issue. When there was an issue in Maryland in the ratification stage, Matthias, with whom I spoke when he was in the House, had eventually decided not to oppose the amendment but the legislators still wanted to know more about disability. So, I think -- I don't know if it

was the ABA, or the Senate general counsel, or Bayh's general counsel -- they made a copy of my article and just sent it out to people. So, my writing was important in explaining the Amendment, and why this provision and not that provision, things like that.

RJR: Was there ever a time when you thought it wasn't going to go through? Did that -- is that sort of -- ?

JDF: It was hard for me to understand exactly what was happening. I was busy, you know, as an associate in a law firm --

RJR: In New York, which the center of the action was in Washington.

[30:07]

JDF: I had a lot of communications with people on the telephone explaining the Amendment. As to other noteworthy communications on my part. I refer you to chapter 29 of my memoir *That Further Shore* pages 252-266. I mention there a call I received from Senator Bayh's office before the Amendment's approval by Congress for some research on the "either/or" expression that appeared in section 4 of the Amendment and a call I made on July 8th about an error contained in this section's use of "principal officers of the executive departments" without an "s" after the use of the word "department." After the amendment was ratified in February 1967, I was invited to the White House to President Lyndon Johnson's issuance on February 23, 1967 of a proclamation of the Amendment becoming part of the Constitution. The President of the American Bar Association, Orison Marden, and I met at the airport on a rainy day. It appeared no plane was available to take us to Washington. He decided to go back to his office.

He went back, left, I stayed there, and all of a sudden that maybe half hour later Eastern Airlines had a plane that was going to go to Washington. So, I got on that

plane, get to Washington. I know the ceremony had just started in the White House based on the time. I had the telegram that invited me. I raced, got out of the taxi at the White House, and the guards at the gate opened the gate for me. I showed them the telegram, and I walked up the path by myself with a little suitcase. Open the White House door and security guard saw me and says, you know, who am I? I said, "I was invited here." "Let us have that case that you're carrying." And then Richard Poff comes out of the East Room -- I think it was the East Room -- where the program was over and he and he took me right in to greet President [Lyndon B.] Johnson, who was going to meet everybody after the program. And that's the picture that I have in my office.

RJR: It's a great moment to be in the front of the line.

JDF: Oh, it was a big moment, and I was so taken by meeting the President of the United States, who was very tall, very strong. I think I closed my eyes, and I was just overwhelmed. I had, you know, come from New York -- hurriedly from New York. When I got the picture, somebody had him autograph it and send it to me within a week or two after the event. I was just taken back by that.

RJR: That was a great moment to be meeting the president who had succeeded the assassinated president and be dealing with the very issues that you'd brought up at the time.

JDF: Yes.

[32:08]

RJR: That's great. Well, as the amendment was ratified, what was the next step in your life as -- sure, there was the practice of law, but there was also a continuing interest in public matters and constitutional issues. Where did that lead you?

JDF: What was happening at the time the Amendment was being ratified, was another possible amendment being developed in the Congress of the United States, dealing with the Electoral College system. Because there was a third-party candidate by the name of George Wallace, who was running to secure Electoral College votes so that neither major candidate for the presidency -- the Democrat and Republican candidates -- would have a majority of the electoral votes, and he would become the kingmaker.

[34:19]

That concerned both parties in Congress and the American people as expressed in polls. So, the ABA decided to assist the Congress and lend its prestige once again to an issue of a major law reform in the Constitution, and I got involved with that. I spent more time giving talks throughout New York State and outside New York State at times and testified before Congress and was the person that the ABA Commission members looked to, to provide them with research material as they developed their recommendations, which were popular election of the President, get rid of the Electoral College. And then I drafted with Jim Kirby, who was at the inability conference meeting, because he had been, as I said before, Senator Kefauver's counsel to the subcommittee on constitutional amendment. So, the two of us sat in a hotel room in Texas -- at an ABA midyear meeting. We drafted this proposed constitutional amendment. We sent it to Paul Freund, the most distinguished person at the time, I think in the academic community, on constitutional law. And he was fine with the draft we put together. They sent it to Senator [Everett] Dirksen, and that became a very important proposal in Congress on how to do it, how to put the language.

[36:03]

And, I think Dirksen made reference to those of us who worked on it in the Congressional Record -- somewhere in the Congressional Record at the time. But eventually the proposal was modified a bit, not much. Passed the House of Representatives by almost an 80% vote, fell short because of a filibuster in the Senate. If Birch Bayh had been able to secure another half a dozen votes, that would have been in the Constitution today because there was so much support from Democrats and Republicans. There were people who had problems with losing their power in the Electoral College system, and some groups Birch Bayh expected to be supportive of him were not because they wanted to hold on to the electoral votes. But the popular opinion out there was very, very strong. There's never been another time before or after where the possibility of a change of that part of the Constitution was really there, and it didn't happen.

But I spent a lot of time on the subject, speaking to groups all over New York. There was a radio show in Albany, I can't remember the name anymore, and it constantly asked me to come in and talk about it and I put a lot of effort in, but it wasn't successful.

RJR: Now, just to bring you back to your practice of law, when you started at the Skadden Arps firm, you were the 12th lawyer -- not so big firm. I think we're starting to grow while this was all taking place. Let's go back into the practice of law and just see what it was like.

JDF: In 1968, I became a partner at the firm. I think I was the 8th partner.

[38:00]

It was still a very small firm, and I had developed an interest in law practice in the field of employment and labor law. We had represented both labor and companies dealing with employment and labor law issues. Eventually, I would write for the *New*

York Law Journal's column on labor and employment law, and I would be asked to participate in programs at NYU and other places on issues having to do with the Supreme Court and employment law. So, I developed, you might say, a reputation in that field for being knowledgeable -- I spent 21 years in law practice, and that was my field. And at the firm, as the firm grew, I became the hiring partner of new lawyers, and I spent a fair amount of administrative time as I practiced law as well.

RJR: Well, that firm was growing dramatically if you were in charge of the hiring, that's a --

JDF: Yes, I would say about 10 years out, 1971 -- I graduated in '61 -- probably 50 or 60 lawyers in 1971. By the time I left, it was almost 300, and it kept growing.

RJR: It was about 10 or so when you took over --

JDF: I also became involved in bar association activities in the New York City Bar Association and the 25th Amendment. When I began law practice, I had what I described about the American Bar Association, but at the same time, I started serving on committees of the City Bar, and eventually years later when I was Dean of the Law School, I was asked to become the President of that Bar -- the first academic, you might say, that was the president of the City Bar. That's because I had a long history of being on committees and sometimes having the opportunity to testify before Congress for the Association, such as on the 1971 amendments to the Voting Rights Act. I testified with the chair of the committee there.

[40:13]

So that was a wonderful opportunity to continue law reform, and I did a lot of that as well.

RJR: And that's the full name is the Association of the Bar of the City of New York.

JDF: It was called the Association of Bar of the City of New York. Today they dropped association, it's New York City Bar Association.

RJR: It's located on 44th St, between 5th and 6th Avenues.

JDF: Right, and the one significant moment of becoming the president was, I was the 56th president, and when I grew up in the Bronx, my hero was Joe DiMaggio. His 56 a day consecutive batting hits still remains as the record. And I said, "In my inaugural speech, what a great honor to have number 56."

RJR: Ties everything together right back to Angela Merisi and 161st Street.

JDF: Yes.

RJR: Wow. You're continuing on as a practicing lawyer in a firm that's growing like crazy. And I know you getting reinvolved with Fordham University and become eventually a trustee of the University.

JDF: In looking back to the 1970s, I was the president of the Fordham Law Alumni Association, from 1974 to '78, I was president of the Law Review Association of Fordham, and I think '70 to '72, and I was a trustee of the University from 1978 to '82 when I became Dean.

I also was active in serving on state commissions. And I was asked by Governor Mario Cuomo to chair the Commission on Government Integrity.

[42:08]

It was about 1968 to '69. And there's a volume here in my office of 23 investigations we were involved in and recommendations for reforms --

RJR: This was before you became Dean?

JDF: Yes. The Commission received Common Cause's first ethics award for the work done on campaign finance reform at the State level as of that time. We worked very hard to

come in with recommendations to correct abuses that might be there because of the use of money, including in judicial elections.

RJR: Now, as I'm just moving towards your career in Fordham Law School, Fordham had a great reputation for having great deans: William Hughes Mulligan, who was the Dean in the '50s and '60s when you were a student, and eventually he went on to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. And then he was followed by Joseph M. McLaughlin, who was Dean from 1971 to 81r so, approximately.

JDF: About 1970-'81.

RJR: And he went on the U.S. District Court --

JDF: And eventually the Second Circuit.

RJR: And then to the Second Circuit.

[44:00]

How did the whole deanship arise?

JDF: Well, it was an unusual selection in a sense that those who preceded me were on the faculty of the school, great deans, Mulligan and McLaughlin and people before them. And I came from law practice, and there were only one or two other deans in the country at the time who came immediately from law practice into a law school. I recall the Dean of Notre Dame Law School who came in as the associate dean and a few years later became the dean. But I came in as the Dean of the Law School because I was chosen by the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit president of Fordham University, from a list that he would have received from the search committee of the faculty. And he asked me to put my name in, and I had to make a decision. And it was not an easy decision because my career as a practicing lawyer was going well financially and with opportunities for clients.

Actually, one of the opportunities that seemed to be emerging was to be counsel to the Ford Motor Company in dealing with the labor negotiations that would go on with the unions. I had to turn that down because I now was in transition to the deanship of Fordham. But I made the decision because of my love of Fordham, and because the Jesuits of Fordham wanted me to be the Dean of the Law School and help create a vision for the future of the Law School. My wife was very supportive of it. My father was not. My wife helped me make the decision to do it.

RJR: That's great. And so, you took over in '82, and I know there's already existing plans on the works to maybe build an addition to the current Law School building, which was at that point located at Lincoln Center at 140 W. 62nd Street, had been opened in 1961.

[46:09]

But with the day division and evening division, growing responsibility, it looked like they needed some more space.

JDF: Yes, at the time in July of '82, Fordham Law School's largest challenge was dealing with the inadequacy of the building that had developed over many years with a student body that grew and needed to double the space, essentially. And that meant a capital campaign to raise about \$8 million, and the school really had no history with capital giving. So, I had a start as Dean, and that probably had something to do with maybe my choice as well, and reach out to the graduates of the school. Of course, I spent day and night, as my early years as Dean, wherever the graduates were, whether it's California or upstate New York. I went everywhere. And sometimes I guess the President of the University [Father Finlay] would come with me such as to Chicago and Saint Louis, there were reasons in terms of foundations there. So, it was very hard work, and thankfully, having a wife at home who wanted to be a mother and was a

mother, at the time, of six children, made my availability possible. So, I did my best and among the decisions I made was asking someone like yourself to come back to the Law School and become an assistant dean.

RJR: Made some great decisions in those days! And the new addition that was built really turned a building that was pretty functional, and with a beautiful atrium that brought light into the entire space and sort of changed the whole atmosphere.

[48:08]

JDF: Yes, and that's now the Gabelli School of Business, but at the time, it was very hard to have programs, invite people to conferences and programs, at the Law School. We didn't have that, a facility to do that, and we would have to borrow space from other parts of Fordham, and sometimes it wasn't available when we needed it. And Mayor [Edward Irving] Koch, I recall on one occasion giving a talk in our new McNally Amphitheater, that's tied to an atrium in the Gabelli building that is next building to where we are today. He said that this was the most superb platform for addressing an audience that he's ever experienced.

RJR: A beautiful room with a beautiful --

JDF: Yes, beautiful.

RJR: And then they could walk out into the atrium for a reception and conversations -- very important to the spirit of the school.

JDF: You wouldn't realize it, but it changed the character of the school and the sense that we could bring others -- people from all over the United States -- into conferences here in the McNally Amphitheater, and people became much more familiar with Fordham Law School and its physical plant. We couldn't do that before then.

RJR: And they could see the expertise of the faculty.

JDF: That's right. The faculty grew, and the student body grew.

RJR: And ran the international conferences on --

JDF: Well, it's interesting. We became a leader in bringing students internationally to the school. And there's a little handbook down in the admissions office today-- I was down there the other day introducing a Fordham College student to the admissions office and she came to see me because her grandfather was deceased, but he was a classmate of mine at Fordham College -- going to give her a little tour of the Law School. I walked into the admissions office, and there was a pamphlet on public service at the Law School, pamphlet on clinical education at Fordham Law School, and a pamphlet having to do with the international aspects of the school.

[50:13]

And all those areas were areas that developed when I was Dean of the Law School.

RJR: Transformative 20 years.

JDF: Well, thanks to the faculty, and thanks to the alumni and the administrative staff.

RJR: You had the right faculty to take on those positions and take positions of leadership.

JDF: And you can't -- you really can't do much yourself.

RJR: Yeah.

JDF: You have to be able to draw others in to help you. And the faculty were happy with what was happening to the School. The alumni applauded the School's slow evolution to be a national school and eventually an international school.

RJR: Now, you took on some public positions while you were Dean of the Law School. Why don't you tell us a little bit about some of those?

JDF: Well, they were very difficult positions -- well, public positions. I think I mentioned about becoming President of the City Bar, and then having to be able to remain Dean, and at the same time meet the responsibilities of the president of that bar. That often required a practicing lawyer to be full time during one's presidency. But I was able to

get some help from the President of University who said it was important to the future of Law School that our Dean be out there as a servant available to help. And that's Father Joseph O'Hare, who's deceased. He was the first chair, I think, of the Campaign Finance Board in New York City, and had a strong view about the Law School Dean's role as a public servant. So, I did that.

I chaired the Commission on Government Integrity. I think that was in the late '60s.

RJR: And who appointed you to that position?

JDF: Mario Cuomo, and then I was on the Law Revision Commission dealing with law reform.

[52:07]

Governor [Hugh] Carey asked me to do that. And I was called on as the years went on by the Chief Administrative Judge of the State. That was Jonathan Lippman, and then when Chief Judge [Judith S.] Kaye became the Chief Judge -- had come from law practice, actually, became the Chief Judge of New York -- she called on me many times. Would I chair a committee on cameras in the courts and chair a committee to promote public confidence in the judiciary? And it was like a 27-member Commission, and I remember it took several years of service. I was teaching at that point. I think that Commission was right after I had ended my deanship, and I was very proud to help in any way I could whenever she called on me.

RJR: The cameras in the courts, were there strong views on the -- ?

JDF: The pilot project of several years now came to a point where what do we do? Do we make it permanent? And we had a 12-member Commission, as I recall, and 11 members of the committee, with one exception, said we should have cameras and make this permanent, we should have cameras in the court. And with all appropriate

exceptions, you know, when it was more important to protect privacy considerations that might exist.

[54:01]

But the trial lawyers didn't like the idea of cameras in the courts. And it was also a time of the OJ Simpson trial, and it was all over the country, the complexity of that trial. And so, it did not become permanent, even though all the evidence seemed to suggest it should be permanent, so the public would have a better understanding of what goes on in the courts of New York. But the trial lawyers at the time were not supportive of that. That's my recollection.

And the Commission on Public Confidence in the Judiciary, which was created by Chief Judge Kaye, had 27 members from every Judicial District in the State. I remember later-to-be a Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division was asked to go on the Commission. He said, "This Commission can't work with the 27 people." He said that to a member of the Fordham faculty, and that member of the Fordham faculty said to him, "Give my Dean -- or former Dean -- a chance to chair that." And we made it work.

Among the many proposals we had was there should be ethics education of those who are going to be candidates for the elected judiciary. We also thought that there should be some more screening of those who were going to be candidates for the judgeship, like qualification commissions. That wasn't very, very popular. And then there were recommendations about the judicial conventions that took place. And then there was an issue having to do with whether law firms should have a restriction on how much they could donate, trying to make sure that money didn't dominate.

[56:08]

We were around for three or four years. Chief Judge Kaye talked about the Commission's work in her final State of the Judiciary report as one of the finest efforts of its kind in the history of the State.

RJR: And did some of those things occur?

JDF: Yes, we had to have recommendations. I would have to go back and particularize that a little bit more, but I think I talk about that in my memoir. So that was a very important public service.

I remember Senator, [John R.] Dunne who chaired a committee on salaries of which I was a member. And we recommended improving the salaries of judges in the State.

And then I was on the Public Integrity Commission, [Eliot] Spitzer was the Governor at the time, and we did a number of investigations. That was a very hard Commission.

The press was very active, and we worked hard to do a good job. Members of the committee included Judge [Howard A.] Levine and Judge James King. Then on Commission on Government Integrity had Judge Bernie Meyer, who had just come off the Court of Appeals.

But a lot of this came not only when I was Dean, but after I was Dean. I had so many requests that kept me at Fordham. I was the Special Master of Family Homelessness in New York City.

RJR: And where did that appointment come from? Was it a judicial appointment?

[58:01]

JDF: Yes, Special Master. There were three of us. And I think Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg was in the court suggesting that, supporting it, and the head of the Legal Aid Society. So, the two -- for the Legal Aid Society, it was very important, having three people, Special Masters, serving, and then there was an appointment in the Campaign of Fiscal Equity litigation.

As I recall, I was appointed by a State Supreme Court Justice to serve with Leo Milonas, who's deceased now, a former judge and also Judge [William C.] Thompson from Brooklyn.

And I remember when they wanted to have mandatory continuing legal education, I was on that initial commission chaired by, I think it was Justice [Thomas R.] Sullivan from the Second Department. He was the chair, and we put a lot of effort into whether there should be mandatory CLE, and we recommended that.

I also recall serving on a Commission focused on *pro bono* obligations by applicants to the Bar of New York of 50-55 hours. And what I remember about that is that the judge chairing the committee did a great job in the position. But I remember urging the committee that clinical education, even though the students were covered by tuition, should qualify. And people on the committee were not knowledgeable of the breadth of clinical education. And I tried to make the case for that to count toward that credit. And it was a former Dean of Buffalo Law School, who agreed with my view, and today that's very important for a lot of graduates of schools to say this is how I satisfy that requirement that I was, you know, and I was happy to see that.

[1:00:19]

As Special Master, in the Fiscal Equity litigation, when the case got to the Court of Appeals, in which we had said in our report how much should go into operational and capital projects, the Court did not want to direct the Legislature in its functioning, but Chief Judge Kaye dissented, thought that they should go along with our recommendations -- and I think there was another dissent too. But eventually, that money got into the system, even though at the time, there was a lot of politics going on.

The last 20 to 25 years of my life have been filled with opportunities to serve the public in many capacities. And I tried to, in a careful way, summarize a lot of that in my memoir, including public services for non-governmental groups such as the Citizens Union Foundation, for which I served as its president for many years, the Fund for Modern Courts, whose board I chaired after serving as president of the City Bar, and the American Bar Association, whose Board I chaired.

RJR: That's the book there, *[T]hat Further Shore*.

JDF: Yes, and part of the influence for the book was being the son of immigrant parents, and I wanted to tell their story. And part of their story was their oldest child's story and the stories of my siblings. And I tell their story in that book. It took me 18 years to put it together. It doesn't look like 18 years of work, but it was endorsed by Dean [William M.] Treanor of Georgetown Law School, [Timothy] Cardinal Dolan, and Judge [Robert A.] Katzman of the Second Circuit, and a lot of other people.

[1:02:09]

And it's given me great satisfaction that I could tell their story, and a picture of my parents are on the cover of the memoir alone with me when I graduated from the 8th grade in the Bronx from St. Angela Merisi. Also, my brother Donald, who is deceased, and my younger brother, Kevin, who does a lot of arbitration work today. I don't know how much more you want to know about my life except to say when I became Dean, I did not anticipate getting calls to serve as an arbitrator and to serve as a mediator.

I remember Jonathan Lippman, the Chief Judge of the State, asking me to get involved in a political dispute in Westchester County, where they needed more money to build the courthouse, and it was going to be hard to get more money. There were all

kinds of political issues, and I was asked to be the mediator, and we successfully mediated. Then I had to testify before the Westchester County Board of Legislators --

RJR: Who are the sides of this?

JDF: Westchester County was involved because they would have to put up some money.

But also, I think the Dormitory Authority, I think there were State funds that were also indirectly involved, and Judge Lippman asked me to become involved in that. I was always available to help Governors, and Attorneys General, and, most especially, the head of the judiciary.

RJR: Now, which Commission was it that Cyrus Vance was --

JDF: Oh, my heavens, that's it.

[1:04:03]

It was a Commission dealing with campaign finance. It was Cyrus Vance Senior and Robert Kaufman, both deceased, and myself. I think I chaired it at their suggestion, and it was a large Commission, and we made a lot of recommendations on dealing with the money in campaigns. That was really the last major service of Cyrus Vance. I remember him becoming ill before we finished our report. And then I went to the Fordham University Press. I said, "This is a very important Commission. Please publish the book without expecting any compensation." And they did.

I also did that when Chief Judge Kaye called me about a book on the New York Court of Appeals -- it was going to be history of the Court of Appeals, and they wanted to have Fordham publish it and would work out whatever that cost.. And I remember speaking to the Fordham Press, and I said, "This is very important to be supporting what the judiciary wants to have published here. It's education of the profession about the court and the history of the court."

RJR: Well, another area that I think people would be interested in, I know you, over the course of this long career, you met a lot of very interesting people, and a lot of them had very important impact on your life. Maybe you think, over the decades, people had major influences on your life and stayed with you either personally or in your mind for decades? And then we want to also find out, I know you have proven to be a fantastic mentor for generations of Fordham students that I know and other young lawyers. So, you can reflect on that a little bit for a while.

JDF: Well, in terms of mentors in my own life, of course, growing up with my parents and my Uncle Pat. He was an immigrant, participated in the War of Independence in Ireland back in the 1920-'21.

[1:06:09]

And then the manager of the supermarket, Johnny Meyer, was a role model for me that made me think seriously about supermarket management in terms of my career. And then I had at Fordham College, obviously many Jesuits who were my teachers. For me, they were mentors, they were role models. And at the Law School, I had Dean Mulligan, an outstanding Dean, very, very humorous, and was a very popular judge on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, and professor mentors I had like John Calamari, of contracts fame, with case books with his name, and Leonard Manning -- he was outstanding person on the Constitution of the United States -- and Raymond O'Keefe, he was a torts professor, who helped create the New York State Bar Association alcoholism program to help lawyers dealing with alcoholism. He had to deal with that himself and successfully, as I understood, but he was a fabulous teacher. Professor Joseph Crowley was another wonderful teacher. And when I worked in a law firm, a partner like Lawrence Riley made it possible for me to learn lot about the courts, making sure that I maximize experiences by coming to

depositions and doing things that lawyers would have to know something about. He's deceased now, many years.

[1:08:00]

In law practice with the Skadden firm, one of the founders of the firm, Leslie Arps, was a role model and mentor of mine, as well as William R. Meagher, who was an outstanding litigator. In my office today is a desk, table and chairs belonging to the two of them. There were other great lawyers in the firm.

And when I engaged in public services, I came to know so many people that I consider mentors -- Jonathan Lippman and Chief Judith Kaye -- I can't say enough about them. When she left the Court after being the Chief Judge, she wanted to write a book on predecessors, and she said, "John, I would like you to have a chapter in the book about no longer being Dean. What's it like having to deal with you now being a predecessor to the office of Dean?"

[1:10:06]

She didn't live long enough to take that to a conclusion. I greatly admired her.

Cyrus Vance is another hero and mentor. He was a lawyer-statesman, and I came to know him very well, particularly as a member of the Commission on Government Integrity.

He was then in China or Vietnam trying to work out the peace agreement with a British Lord, as I recall, and he was a phenomenal member of the Commission on Government Integrity.

And some years later, I was inspired by Judges Levine and James King of the Public Integrity Commission. But over the years if somebody thought I could be helpful by having a conversation about their career or steps that they might want to take, I should make myself available for that purpose. In fact, I remember saying to Cyrus Vance

Senior a long time ago, "Can I put in touch with you some people that want to maybe go into government or do something else? Would you be willing to meet with them?" Said, "Yes, I'll do that, John, if you recommend somebody." And then I took that experience, and began doing it myself.

[1:12:01]

We should create a lawyers-in-transition program in New York State, and I gave a talk before I was President of City Bar at a retreat of the Executive Committee -- that there should be a lawyers-in-transition program to help lawyers -- senior lawyers who are leaving the firms, who are getting to an age where they can't continue to do what they're doing, so they're leaving firms -- we got to be able to help members of the legal profession. I focused people on that need. I also was on the State Bar Committee that had a similar objective subsequent to the City Bar, as I recall.

I think if you profiled a lot of law students historically from Fordham Law School -- and I've never limited myself to Fordham Law School, if somebody from Brooklyn or New York Law School wanted to chat with me, I was always available. And that happened at times, but my office was always open to try to help a young person. I say that in the memoir, I say, "Of all the things I did as Dean, I think the most important thing I did, was being available for students" -- and including colleagues that needed some help. And I learned that in law practice because when people didn't become partners in the firm, I often would meet with them and try to help them link up with a smaller firm or whatever it might be. So that's how the next generation becomes part of my life. In fact, Bob I have to confess that when you graduated from Fordham Law School, you were looking around at different possibilities, and we got together and then something emerged from that.

[1:14:04]

RJR: Yeah. Great job. As you look back, think about the happiest days were in the practice of law, here, anything that stands out as being, “Wow, that was one of the great days of my life and career”?

JDF: Well, let me stay away for a second from my career and my life and the law, and focus on all those family moments with my wife and our children. And it’s with sadness right now that I reflect on that as I approach, as you mentioned, before my 90th birthday. My wife was with me for almost 64 years, and we met, as you pointed out, when we were both very young, and I look back on so many moments. We have six children, we have 11 grandchildren, we have two great grandchildren. And all those moments as I look back were clearly the happiest moments of my life. Those moments were limited and had to be tied to my work as a Dean, my practice as a lawyer, and my public services. But I always had support from my wife, and as I look at the professional area in terms of highlights, I think I said before, probably my most important moment in terms of the law was the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, and, you know, meeting the President of the United States, effectively saying to me, “Thank you for your assistance there.” And being Dean of the Law School was a tremendous honor, not just an honor, but the opportunity to have a meaningful life as a lawyer in the academic world.

[1:16:08]

As I said, I was a practicing lawyer, became an academic lawyer, and I spent 21 years as a practicing lawyer and more than 20 as an academic lawyer. And I’m still an academic dean emeritus, but I’m still very much involved in teaching and meeting law students. It gets harder right now, but people are in my office every week for counsel on employment. And I remember when some of the judges were leaving the court, they wanted to talk to me about where to go -- Justice Milonas, Justice Sullivan, and

Justice [Francis T.] Murphy, and there were a few others, including former Justice Betty Ellerin. I was at a program where there was the firm she went to in Atlanta, GA -- a program at the City Bar, and she had to say some words there. She looked out and saw me. She said, "When I first heard about this firm having an opportunity for me, I went to John Feerick and he said it's a pretty good firm, and that made a difference for me."

And then the partners of the firm who I didn't know came over and said, "Thank you."

So I've had -- I've been blessed with a good life.

RJR: And let me throw out a date for you to reflect on, the dedication of the Law School's new wing back in 1984.

JDF: Oh, that was -- yes, you're right. When we finished the Capital campaign, it was one of the happiest days of my life because we dedicated a new building and -- Justice [Sandra Day] O'Connor had agreed to come in and preside, so to speak, at the dedication.

[1:18:19]

And there's a picture in *The New York Times* of the two of us walking across the street.

RJR: So, Lincoln Center.

JDF: Yeah, Lincoln Center.

RJR: That's Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

JDF: Yes, that was right up there, great day in my life. No question about that.

RJR: Great moment, and that's what I was leading up to, and actually, at the end of the day, you may already remember this, the faculty had wanted to have a party to say thank you and celebrate just together up in the new -- at that point a brand-new room -- the

faculty reading room. And somehow, they sent someone down to tell him that there was a leak in the roof. And they and he came roaring upstairs to say, "Oh my goodness, on opening day, the roof is broken in," and the whole faculty study there applauding. Great moment.

JDF: Yes

RJR: Oh, lots of you know -- I always thought that graduation days were wonderful days, that you see the students walk across the stage and you know that everyone in the course of their career, they all hit some bump in the road and you realize that they all got up and picked themselves up and move ahead.

JDF: Yes, it's wonderful to work with students in all areas -- high school and grammar school and college -- I've given talks at all of those levels. In fact, one of my children was showing me an oral history I had with my wife. It was a 6th grade class, and I couldn't believe it. It was a number of years ago.

[1:20:00]

These kids in the 6th grade put all kinds of questions to us about how we met, and what do we think about this, what do we think about that? I think it's just being open to talk to people about who you are and areas that they might have an interest in. I've done 25th Amendment talks in 8th grade, high school, college, and more. You know, I've turned down a lot of interviews recently about the 25th Amendment because it's been hard in my grief dealing with the loss of my wife. That's the reality, and I just wasn't ready to so again -- and also, I'm not somebody that likes to get out there in the politics of the moment and say, "The President is disabled." Actually, the request I had in recent weeks was to I talk about Biden and Trump in the context of the 25th amendment. I said I'm just not up to that. I never hesitate explaining the Amendment

and legislative history. But when it comes to applying it, I've not been comfortable with that.

A few years ago, I received a call from the editor of a major magazine asking for information on the 25th Amendment. I made clear that it would not be responding to his question about application of the Amendment. He accepted the limitation and over the next few weeks called me from time to time for information. In his last communication, he said, "I want to thank you. My article is finished, going to come out next week." He said, "I'm glad that there's somebody I can go to in this country who is not practicing ideology in what he's telling me about the Amendment."

RJR: Great.

JDF: I was happy he felt that. I said, "I appreciate you saying that."

[1:22:13]

RJR: Well, now you've spent more of your career as an academic than you did as a practicing lawyer -- double the amount, so we say, although you were obviously practicing all the time -- and you look at legal education from a 40-year perspective. Any thoughts on how legal education has changed and evolved and any differences?

JDF: Big change I see is the diversity of the student body today. Back in the '60s, very few women were in at law school, and that's all changed. The students at the school mostly grew up in New York or Connecticut and New Jersey, Long Island. Today we have international students, we have students from all over the United States, and that's all new. And probably have more women at Fordham Law School than we have men at the Law School. The faculty at School is totally different. And it's diversity. We have over 200 adjuncts teaching more courses than imaginable. I don't recall, when I was a student here at the School, that I had more than five or six choices.

[1:24:00]

So legal education has really grown, and I talk about the faculty too. When I started, there was a Fordham law school faculty, who went to Fordham Dean Mulligan, Dean McLaughlin as two examples, and they were great professors at the School at the same time. Today, professors come from everywhere. It's not a school like it was dominated by only Fordham professors. There's so few on the full-time faculty today but a lot of adjuncts because the school is located here in New York. It's vibrant. The Dean last night had a program stating that there were 7,000 applicants this year for the School, and we're not going to bring in more than 500 students.

RJR: Not even.

JDF: I think there are a lot of applicants this year elsewhere as well, but far more than ever before in the history in its history. I hope I responded to your question.

RJR: Oh, yeah. Any areas you wish we covered that we haven't had a chance to talk about?

JDF: Well, being a son of immigrant parents -- and they were wonderful parents, and I miss them a lot and I talk about them in receiving recognitions. And I've been very honored, just the other day someone gave me the New York State Bar magazine -- One hundred fifty years old, and said, "Oh, your picture is there."

[1:26:01]

I'm shocked. My picture was there, when I received the Gold Medal in 1994. All of a sudden I see Leo Pfeiffer, saying "John, I want someone --" and he came from the Bronx, that's where his law practice was. He said, "I want somebody from the Bronx to receive the Gold Medal. We have no history of anybody from the Bronx receiving the Gold Medal." He's been gone many years. I hadn't even remembered this. And then all of a sudden, I remember that moment when Father O'Hare came, and they wanted somebody to say some words about me, and it was the President of the

University did so on the spot. And I'm sure you must have been there, no? It was 1994.

RJR: And where are you?

JDF: I'm not sure where it took place. Another honor that had great meaning to me was a few years ago, the American Bar Association Medal. I think that had a lot to do with my work on the 25th Amendment. And also there were other recognitions I received from the American Bar Association having to do with the problem solving award, and then they had another award for lawyers trying to bring the legal profession together, the academic and practicing bar. I think Bob McCrate was the President of the ABA at that time, and he recommended me for that recognition.

On January 22, 2002, as I was ending my 20-year deanship, I was presented by the New York State Bar Committee on Minorities in the Profession the Building Bridges award "In Honor of My Leadership and Commitment in Building Bridges of Opportunity for Minorities in the Justice System."

In my service for the Catholic Church, obviously, there have been so many other special moments -- important for my grandchildren to be aware of those moments because of my immigrant parents.

[1:28:18]

RJR: Great to be able to pass that along.

JDF: That's why it's a humbling honor to participate in the Historical Society, at this oral history project.

RJR: Any final thoughts you want to offer to posterity?

JDF: Gratitude to all of those who served in leadership of the bar. I've known so many of the leaderships of the New York State Bar Association. I served in the House of Delegates, the Executive Committee, the Nominating Committee; City Bar,

obviously; and the American Bar Association. I also was a member of the New York County Lawyer's Association and was given an opportunity, with others, to establish its Justice Center.

And in fact, at the American Bar Association, I had the opportunity -- couldn't believe it, a Fordham professor would be able to do that -- to chair the committee that set the standards for American legal education, academic affairs. As I was ending up my tenure as Dean, I think part of the reason was nobody was around as long as I had been. They said, "Well, we got to get this fellow." So I did that, but that was very important because, you know, they have the standards and I remember paying a lot of attention to those who serve in adjunct positions with some promoting the idea that's not a real legal education. I didn't agree with that. And I think you will find, I don't know what it's like today, but when I was chair, we made a number of suggestions that got reflected, and including in the preamble for law schools. There wasn't at the time any preamble for those in legal education, and we built-in the idea of public service as part of the standard.

[1:30:13]

So, I've had a lot of experiences within the academic community. I showed up at meetings and people saw me around and knew I was interested.

RJR: And those influences play out for over decades and grow.

JDF: Yeah.

RJR: Well, it's been a great time to be together and reflect on all this.

JDF: Well, thank you very much, all of you.

RJR: All right, all the best.

JDF: Bob, by the way, is former President of Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, but even before he was the President of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, he wrote the --

memorials of people who died who were part of the Friendly Sons, a tradition that had fallen behind by about 10 years. And he went back and everybody that should have had a written memorial ended up with a written memorial because of his dedication.

RJR: That was a big project.

JDF: And, and while he's left the Law School, he's retired from the Law School, he gives tours at the Museum of Natural History. He's not being paid for that and stays up to date on what the new exhibits are. He has to keep educated on that. He also gives tours at Fordham University in the Bronx, maybe down here as well. When parents come to, and when students come to, look at Fordham, there's opportunities to get his tours. He probably knows Fordham better than anybody around -- where all the bodies are, where the statues are.

RJR: That's to be a different film. Great, thank you very much!