Interview with Joseph Sharfsin
11/29/77

(BF: Briefly tell us about your background, where you were born and where you were educated.)

Well, I was born in a little hamlet in tobacco road, called Allendale, South Carolina, ten miles away from the famous Tobacco Road. And my father and mother were immigrants from the Russian Poland border. He settled there because that's where he was able first to have enough money to open up a little store. He had help when he arrived in America. All of us were born and raised in that little hamlet. He was always impatient about it because of the facilities. There were no facilities, really, to speak of... school, high school... but he didn't like them. He wanted us up north. And we came up north when I was about twelve.

In Philadelphia. And I went through grammar school there and I finished a year of high school, Central High, when the family conditions became such that I felt a keen responsibility to do something besides go to high school. So I quit. Maybe I would have been discharged pretty soon, anyhow, but I quit. And I went to work when I was fifteen, down in Snellenberg's basement. You're too young to know about Snellenberg's. Twelfth street and Market.

(BF: Is that a department store?)

Like Gimbels. Five dollars a week. Eight A.M. to five-thirty P.M. five dollars a week.

(BF: How did you get from there to...)

Four of that five dollars went to a tutor who began to prepare me for what was then known as the preliminary bar examinations, a substitute for a college attendee, if you please.

If you passed a preliminary bar examination in that day, you were admissible to a law school... some law schools...

So I managed to pass that examination; it wasn't very difficult, especially with specialized tutoring. At night... I worked during the day and then I worked another year at Western Union before I entered Dickinson Law School. But I was too young to know what I was doing, really... I was seventeen or so, seventeen and a half, approximately.

(WMP: Pretty young to be starting law school.)
Very young. I finished law school at twenty-one, and a half.

(BF: Where's Dickinson Law School?)

Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It's a good school now... rated very high, now. At that time, not rated so very high, when they took in a seventeen, eighteen-year-old boy, you know. The dean was a wonderful man... Tickett on Landlord and Tenant, you know; that was the dean, William Tickett. He wrote "Landlord and Tenant". I was thrilled to get in anywhere, let me assure you. So I began practicing law at age twenty-one in Philadelphia, without much hope of connection, until one night I attended a meeting at which a very forensic, magnetic man appeared. His name was S. Davis Wilson. He was a deputy to Hadley, but very impatient in that job, and he hired me first as assistant... as counsel to the controller, to himself, as deputy controller.

(WMP: That's unusual, isn't it?)

It was, yes, but his personality dominated the office. Hadley was a very quiet gentleman, very reserved, very conservative. Wilson was...the closest thing that I can compare him to was La Guardia. Some aspects of Huey Long...

(WMP: And he was a contemporary of La Guardia, wasn't he?)

You bet. Back when he became mayor, La Guardia was mayor... one of his terms. And he, from the moment I met him, everything about him agitated him... in agitation over him, in complete excitement, in a form of adulation, you know, which I followed very closely. And he paid me to act as counsel, which meant his assistant. He was not a lawyer.

(WMP: Where did he come from?)

Well, Bonniwell admitted him to the bar, he was never a lawyer. He was never intended to be.

(WMP: Was he a Philadelphian?)

New England. He was a New Englander. Then he took his family and moved to New Jersey, where he became justice of peace in some little town; then he came over to Philadelphia, got hooked up with Hadley, and he mesmerized Hadley in the same way he mesmerized everybody else. The result was that Hadley gave him the job in the controller's office, you see. Then in his inimitable fashion, he succeeded in having Hadley run for treasurer. He ran for controller the next term.

(WMP: How'd he do that?)
Well, he did that by ... it appealed to Hadley's nature. Hadley hated controversy....the last man in the world to serve as a controller. A treasurer, as you know, just sort of sat there, didn't do much. And by this time, Wilson had become such a dynamic figure, that everybody realized that he could get himself elected. And Dave Stern and Jack Kelly, who was the head of the party then, recognized that they had a firebrand on their hands. They nominated him without any question. That being so, we were sure he was going to be elected, and of course, he elected Hadley with him. So he took over the controller's office, then I became his chief counsellor.

(WMP: What was your early contact with him, that he chose you for chief counsellor?)

Well, all through the campaign, I was with him night and day. You see, he ran against...I can't remember the name of his opponent, but it will be in the press. It may have been Barney Samuel, I'm not sure...who later became mayor. But we had something like forty-five thousand registered Democrats. And that election day, the Republicans had close to six hundred thousand.

(BF: And was he running as a Democrat?)

As a Democrat.

(WMP: You're talking now about the registration.)

And we won by ninety thousand, and he pre-empted...the law permitted at that time a third party called the Town Meeting Party, and he ran over thirty thousand votes.

(WMP: What was his charisma?)

Well, he was a man ...he died at fifty-eight...he was a fellow about your height, very rugged...no formal education to speak of, but he had acquired a vast amount of knowledge that he had gathered...always played around the periphery of politics. He knew Woodrow Wilson, for example; he had helped manage Wilson's campaign in Pennsylvania. Personally, he was the nicest man in the world. The moment he got up on a platform, he became a new person. He denounced everything. Walter, you're not quite old enough, but you're talking about '32 and '33, we're talking about the absolute low level of political corruption.

(WMP: Also, it was the depth of the depression.)

The combination of the two. And nobody gave a damn, you know? The mayor was Happy Moore, J. Hampton Moore. Nobody cared. He least of all, not that he was corrupt...he was not a corrupt man...he was an honest man, but he just didn't care. It was a clerk's job to him...and he did nothing, thought of nothing, and his city solicitor, who was one of the loveliest men I've ever
met in my life, ...
(WMP: Who was that?)

Name was...we're going to run into this all through this...
(WMP: Well, it doesn't matter.)

Well, they saw themselves through 1932. They fell over the line and in March, 1933, a whole new world began, as you know. A whole new world...just as though you'd come into another country, because all the new federal legislation, all the new policies, everything began to take shape but quickly.

(BF: What happened in March?)

There was an inauguration. In those days, it was in March. From that day on, there were these brain-trusters, four or five men who surrounded him, most of whom are still living, ...a new spirit swept over the whole nation, and that infected everybody.

(BF: Did you play a part in his campaign in Philadelphia?)

Well, in '32, Wilson and I handled the independent Roosevelt campaign. The Democratic party at that time was still in the clutches of the Republican party...a man named McDonald dominated by the Republican party, he was the minority member, you know, of the County Commission. We got the money, George Earl gave us a lot of money, and Earl had the federal connections...

(WMP: He was connected with Roosevelt, wasn't he. They went to school together.)

And he put up enough money for us to run the campaign, which we did, on our own.

(WMP: George Earl did?)

George put up at least fifty thousand.

(WMP: That was a lot of money in those days.)

Which in that time was a lot of money. And the Democratic party got some...about that time Jack Kelly was elected chairman. So we worked very well with Jack. And between Wilson's organization, and the regular Democratic organization, of which Kelly became head, we organized in every ward and in every division, and worked very hard. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had enough money, and the result was overwhelming.

Well, that brought us up to 1933. So then, the business began of the next Pennsylvania governor. Who was going to be the next
Pennsylvania governor? We knew it was going to be a Democrat, I mean that Roosevelt's sweep...the impact of it was such that we just felt that had to be the result. So one day, Dave Stern sent for the crowd...Dave was the center of everything, you see. Everybody crowded around Dave because this was a Philadelphia Record. Dave was a great friend of Roosevelt's. And at one of Dave's meetings he began talking about the next governor. And Jack Kelly was there, and McClosky, and a few others.

And Wilson had one of his bad days. Now by this time, he'd been elected. He was now controller. And I wasn't there; I was supposed to go, but something kept me away...otherwise I could have calmed him down. Instead, he went off, and told Dave Stern where to get off. And that's all Dave Stern needed, you see. He didn't like him anyhow, and he knew he was tough to handle, so he said...fine, boys, good-bye. Everybody left. And Stern put in a call to Austria to George Earl, sent for him, had him come back.

(WMP: He was ambassador.)

Ambassador, over there. He came back and was nominated. And we went through, what, to me, was a humiliation. Touring the state with Earl, with Joe Guffy, for United States Senate, and Wilson as trust-buster, at the different meetings, they'd bring him up last, and he let them have it.

(WMP: Why do you say trust-buster?)

I just use that as an expression. He was a reflection of the fellow you read about in the history of Theodore Roosevelt, in that period. The fellow who was agin the fellow that had it, and he was for the fellow who didn't have it. And he had that power of making the man listening to him think...if I could just elect this fellow, everything's going to be right, you see. Well, we're a little older now; we know a little better than that. Anyhow, he did a lot to elect Earl. Earl gave him credit for it, and following that, the next big question was, who's going to be mayor? Now that time, there just wasn't any question, because Jack Kelly was the boss by this time, of the political organizations. And he and Wilson got along very well together. But Wilson had nothing to do with the organizations.

(WMP: Who brought Jack Kelly in?)

Dave.

(WMP: Dave Stern?)

And one reason Kelly came in, was, they had assessed his house. Maybe you heard that big story.

(WMP: I vaguely remember it. What was it?)
Enormous. They gave him an enormous figure. Just out of the blue, you know. And he said, hey, how come, you know. What's this all about? ...And for the first time he got interested in the way the political system worked. And the minute he got into politics, he was an attractive man, a very attractive man, Dave Stern took him up right away. And he was quickly named chairman. And he had as his partner Matt McCloskey, another builder. And they were good friends, too. So between them, Kelly was the head. Well, after they elected Earl, Kelly was the regular; he was the head of the party. It was very natural that Earl should look to him with more reliance, more confidence than he did on Wilson. So he brought Jack into his administration, secretary of revenue, and then, when the question came up as to who was to run for mayor there was just no question about it. If Kelly wanted it, he could have it.

(WMP: I'd forgotten that Jack was secretary of revenue, for Earl.)

A short while. So one day, and this changed my life, a meeting is called at Penn Athletic Club, with Stern and Greenfield, and McCloskey and Kelly, to make this formal decision about Kelly running. Wilson was in the running, of course. I waited downstairs; after all, I was only a hanger-on, and we were walking down Walnut Street, breathless to know what the result of this meeting is, and Wilson looks at me and he says...as I expected, it's Jack....they're taking Jack. ...Well, with that, I just sank, you know. That's all, now they just took Jack. That was the end of three years of hard work. ... And he looks up at me and he says....what's the matter with you? ...Well, I said, are you going to be talking now about a third party? .... because that's all he ever talked about, you know. He said, ...who said anything about a third party?....Well, I said... what else is there? ...He said, ...did you ever hear of the Republican party? And I give you my word, ladies and gentlemen, that man had never uttered the name Republican party without insulting it, you see. He had a favorite expression for it, he called it ...a corrupt and a criminal combination, masquerading as Republicans. That was his favorite expression.

I went home to my mother and told her the story, and I said, well, that's three years out of my life I can forget about. The man's crazy. I thought he had to be crazy. And two weeks later, he had the nomination tied up.

(BF: By the Republicans...) 

Yes, he had the commitments.

(BF: How did he do that, with a reputation for being so much against them?)

Well, the Republican regime in City Hall had to come to him because, you see, the mayoralty campaign was pending and the Republicans were still in power. Nonetheless, I couldn't dream of them considering him for a minute. But he convinced
them that Kelly was a sure winner, and that their only hope was to rely on him. And out of sixty, he got about forty leaders. And Mr. Hadley got twenty. Hadley also ran on the Republican ticket. And he defeated Hadley for the nomination. Then the big contest came between Wilson as a Republican nominee, and Kelly, as a Democrat. And Matt McCloskey spent or helped raise about a million dollars for that campaign...a very expensive one. And Joe Pew, who preferred above a Democrat, there was no limit to which he wouldn't go to see that Kelly was defeated. And even if it meant doing it through Wilson. He had very little contact with Wilson, but it was apparent that those two couldn't get along in the same room for five minutes together, you see. Joe Pew, as you may have read about or recall, stuck with Hoover, and the thought of Roosevelt coming to power just scared the life out of him...he thought the whole country was going to the dogs. He wrote a lot of articles about it and he was the only one of the Pews that really delved into politics. And he financed...he put up a lot of money for Wilson, to aid that campaign.

(WMP: How about Jay Cooke...wasn't he in there at that point?)

Uh huh. Pew brought Cooke in. He brought him in as the active man, because by that time, Jay Cooke had retired. He was very young...he was fifty years old, younger that fifty.

(WMP: He was a broker or something.)

Broker with the firm at Chestnut Street right next to the Girard...he was a partner. And he became an inactive partner, just kept his money in there at 6%, you know, as an investment, and became chairman of the Republican party. That gave the party a lot of standing that it never had before, because Cooke was a man of high reputation, and he represented Pew, who was the big money man, and who had financed the Hoover campaign, largely, and financed the 1936 campaign against Roosevelt, still living at the time in Kansas, you know...

(WMP: Landon?)

Yup. He was behind the Wilkie campaign, and so on. Well, that battle...you asked me one of the questions about that fight between Wilson and Kelly. There was a lot of talk that the 30,000 votes were illegally obtained. I had no way of knowing anything about that, but the Democratic party had three committeemen...two or three committeemen for each division. That meant you had at least forty-five hundred to five thousand people out on election day. We had the same thing. And we spent a lot of money, and so did they. I don't think the election was stolen.
I think, what happened was, the shared weight of the experience of the Republican machine, which was still strong, as against the Democratic machine, which was fairly young...it was numerous, it had plenty of people to work, but it didn't have the know-how. And...a very close battle, and as a little side-light, on the day after he was elected, and took office, he sent for Kelly, and I was in the office....

(WMP: Who did this?)

Wilson...and he said...now look here, Jack, he said, you know, after all, we're friends. We're Democrats and I was elected on this Republican ticket, and I'm not going to give you a damn job...cannot give you any job. He said...I've promised all the jobs have got to go one way, but I expect you to help me. That was the kind of fellow he was. Kelly laughed...he expected something like that. He said...I'll do what I can to help...you know, to help the city. But that was the spirit of the thing, you know. They were never enemies. They just each understood each other very well, and Wilson had the nerve to tell him...I'm not going to give you a single job, but I expect you to help me.

(BF: How did Wilson get along with the other Republican leaders...were they supportive?)

Well when it came to certain ordinances, that had to go through the council, they got along pretty well. But he had very little to do with them, very little. He named a cabinet, mainly of personal connections. He named me city solicitor, and I was very young. And they wanted him to name Jack Bell, who later became chief justice.

(WMP: What a reactionary he turned out to be.)

Once you got on that bench...well, as a lawyer, he had a practice that didn't lend itself too much to anything liberal. Most of their clients were what Haywood Brun refers to as inmates of the social register. And they had plenty of money. But we got along fairly well. The revenues began going down. The depression was on...people weren't paying their taxes and nothing new was being built until we reached the point of August, 1939, when we were almost broke. And he died August, '39. His term was up January 1, 1940.

(WMP: It was spoken around that he was a very heavy drinker.)

He had begun, and...rather secretly. I couldn't detect it very well. I knew too little about him, but the men around the office would tell me not to take certain things too seriously, you know, that...I think he tried to fight it and whenever he had a public appearance, it was one thing...but they say, he drank a great deal. So the city...we were broke...began issuing...
that could pay the bills, and we had no borrowing capacity. The borrowing capacity then consisted of about 10 percent of the total assessed valuation.

(WMP: Of real estate.)

Suppose all our real estate was assessed at a billion dollars, well, we'd have a hundred million of borrowing capacity, but we had over-borrowed, according to the banks. I said, I don't think so. I said, but I was pretty much alone with my one hundred and ten pounds or so, when I was headed for the hospital, I said, our borrowing capacity must be tested by its legality at the time we incurred it. In other words, when we did have a billion of assessment, let us say, and did we use our ten percent of borrowing capacity? That ten percent remained intact. That was my position. And that's the position I took. So I said to Wilson, the only way you can test this is to advertise notice that we're going to sell bonds. So we advertised notice of five million, and Morris Duane became plaintiff.

(WMP: Father or the present Morris Duane, I guess. That was Russell Duane.)

Russell. Excuse me. This is Morris. And Duane versus the city fixed us and defined the borrowing capacity. That was lucky he prevailed in that case...Kephart was the chief. And he allowed us to issue the five million, which didn't do us much good. Then he died.

(WMP: Did he die of alcoholism, do you think?)

No. Absolutely not. His heart was bothering him, and his wife took him to Florida for a week. While they were down there, she telephoned me to say that he was fine, and he was running up and down the beach, and she was going to bring him home. The next few days he came home and died within a week after that. He really died of heart failure. I don't think he drank very excessively...after he got into Philadelphia public life.

So, when the five million was gone, we had to prepare a budget for 1940. And the law required that that be done by about October, 1939. We had no way, that we could make of assessments, as we then stood, could justify any kind of budget. So, in desperation, I took Barney Samuel and George Connell, who had succeeded as deputy mayor when Wilson died. He remained acting mayor for three months, four months, and I went to Washington. Got hold of Jesse Jones. And he was the financial arbiter of the nation. He was head of the R.F.C., Reconstruction Finance Corporation. It was at that time saving many industries. It was the medium for government lending. And I told Jones my story; he took a few minutes and a little stub pencil he had and wrote down some notes. He was in a big hurry; had to get away. Well, I thought we're sunk. He's not paying any attention.
He left me and he had a meeting with the President. And he's entering the President's door...this comes out later...to see the President. And Joe Puffy is coming out of the door, and said...hello, hello ..... and they started to chat about Pennsylvania. And the President looked up and said...what's that about Philadelphia?...Pennsylvania? ... And Jones said... oh, it's some fellows...you see, I had the acting mayor and the city council up there... he said, some fellows from Philadelphia are up trying to borrow some money. They're broke.

(WMP: Who said that?)

Jones did. To the President. And the President said, .... Philadelphia? Oh, that's Jack Kelly. He said, Kelly was up here last week, and I gave him a faithful promise that nothing more was going to happen down there unless he was consulted. So don't do anything about that unless you talk to Jack.

Well, I didn't know of this conversation, but I got back to Philadelphia and I quickly ran up to Jay Cooke's house..he was having a dinner party, and he came out in his black tie and every thing else, and I said ....now, you know, Jay, I said, ...you've got to make some kind of a deal with Kelly, that will induce us to get his consent to this loan, because I've got to have this fifty million dollars. And he really disliked Kelly very much. He saw how urgent it was and he telephoned Kelly. And he told him, he said...you know, your approval's going to be necessary for this loan, and you know what we're doing with the money and we've got to have it to balance this budget. So then, the next day I was in the hospital. Well Kelly calls me on the 'phone ... I said, well Jack, are you going to do it? ....He said, yes I am, but I'm going to shake you down. I said, ....Well, whatever you want, you can have....He said, I'm going to shake you down for a million dollars. He said, you only need about forty-eight or forty-nine million, and I want a million dollars apporriated to start cleaning up the Schuykill. You know that was his main priority. That's what he loved...rowing, and it was in dirty, dreadful shape...and ever since then they've kept it clean. I said...no question about that. That's all you want? He said...that's all. So of course, I called up Barney Samuel and I said...you better put that million dollars in the budget, otherwise you won't get it. And it went in and, of course, the money came through. And Kelly could very easily have said, ...nothing doing....and he could have elected his man as mayor, which he never did do, because the next man elected was Lamberton, who was Barney Samuel's predecessor. You see, Joe and Dick didn't come along until much later.

(WMP: Lamberton had an office, I guess, didn't he...and that's how Barney Samuel got in?)

Who? Lamberton died. Only a few expenses. And then Barney succeeded. And then Joe didn't come along till after Barney had
done ten years in the office...or eight.

(WMP: That's right.)

That's when I ran against Joe, that first year.

(WMP: You ran against him in the primary...Democratic party.)

He gave me a good licking, too. But, Jack really ... I can't say too much of what he did. Every political instinct was to say no. That's what the average politician would have said, no. Don't give them the money. But Kelly was a different kind of man. He wanted to be mayor, and it was said he was vain, you know, he liked those things...but, he wouldn't do anything to hurt the city. And with his OK, I got the fifty million. And of course, we paid our debts, and we balanced the budget, and the bonds went from about sixty up to a hundred. That was the effect.

(WMP: That was known as the Gas Works loan.)

Hocking the Gas Works. And the man that really..... I did it, that is, I went down and maneuvered it and set it up...

(BF: That was your idea?)

But the man that put it through was Kelly.

(BF: But it was your idea to use the Gas Works as security?)

Only thing we had. We had absolutely nothing else.

(WMP: That put through about a half million dollars a year, didn't it?)

The Gas Works

It gave us a profit of four million. And I signed...we issued gas trust certificates, you see...you could buy certificates under a thousand dollars. And four years, we paid it up in about thirteen years. It was figured out actuarily. But the net reduction was around four million a year. And later on, I went to the government, in Chicago Street Railway re-organization, and I'm in Jones' office with John Carmody...John Carmody was public administrator...and in Jesse Jones' office he said...don't I know you from somewhere? And I didn't even want to be connected with the city. Oh, I said, Mr. Jones, everybody knows you. And he kept looking and looking, and finally he started to laugh. He turns to Carmody, and he said....never have I gotten such a loan as that. He said...there were those Philadelphia bankers right under their nose, a security owned by the city, no one else could compete with them....selling gas, quite a useful commodity, making four million dollars a year profit, and they wouldn't touch it. And he said...I borrowed it from them and I sold it back to them... sold them half at a half a million dollars profit. And he got more fun out of that, you know?
Because he was a banker at heart. And that's the way the city got back on its feet.

After that, things began to pick up and we collected more taxes and the thing is, we were out of debt. You see, the forty-nine million paid off these pressing debts. And one little story that, as I think about it, these many years later, my knees still shake, when I think of it...it was so frightening. And when I tell you, it will frighten you. In the middle of all this, who calls me up but Tom Ringe.

(WMP: Huh, I knew Tom well.)

And Tom was no kidder.

(BF: Who was he?)

He was a partner of Dick Dilworth.

(WMP: No, Tom was a partner of)

Of Morgan, Lewis, and Bockius...a very serious lawyer, solid as a rock. Anything Tom Ringe told you, you could just go to sleep on. He gave me some awful good lickings when I was city solicitor. He had been assistant city solicitor. He called me up one day and said...Joe, he says...hold onto your seat. I said, well, I'm ready for anything now.

Well, it seems that Tom represented a Philadelphia...I think it was then called Philadelphia and Western...Coal company. Some coal company. We owed them a million dollars, out of that fifty million. But they weren't worried that they wouldn't get the fifty million, you know, after all the city has got some security. But they didn't...they were in bankruptcy. And he said...I got to have some money, and it's got to be damn soon, otherwise we're not going to supply you with any more coal. The waterworks! Well, I'll tell you the truth...I was so frightened...I was very close to my mother...lived with my mother...my father wasn't living. And I discussed everything with her. I was so frightened I wouldn't expose her to this. I exposed no one...no one in Philadelphia knew during those days, that my next call from Tom Ringe meant...off she goes. And with no calls from the waterworks, you can imagine what would have happened. That was the tragic shape of this city at that time. And that brought on my ulcer and my operation. I think I wandered off into a lot of things that you weren't interested in.

(WMP: Oh no, I think it's a very colorful story you're telling.)
of the Wilson administration was, and you'll have to find
the name of the plaintiff, vs. the city...it's the one
that validated low-cost housing...forgiveness of taxes. The
point involved was whether or not we, the city, could forgive
the city tax on the federally financed housing. So-and-so
versus Philadelphia.

(WMP: In other words, tax exempt.)

Tax exempt. And I claimed it was tax exempt, and I won that
case. That's an opinion by Kephart.

(WMP: Chief Justice of Pennsylvania.)

And the opinion would be in the year ... '36...it'd be either
'36 or '37...one of the two books, three books, maybe...you'll
find it...somebody against the city.

You asked me if I'd played a policy-making role, as well as
counsel, and the answer, of course, I did. And what troubles
did Wilson have as a new-dealer trying to implement new-deal
programs in an entrenched Republican city organization...it
was a very intricate problem from the very beginning. They
were against most things that we were attempting to do.

(WMP: They didn't like to be put in the light of thinking of
help from Washington...that would relieve the taxpayer, and
give them services and so on.

That's right. And before you turn around they were looking at
1936, and their candidate, you see.

(WMP: By this time, now, you and Wilson are out like Democrats.)

We never, never changed our registration. Never. And Wilson
was refused the right to vote, because he was a registered
Democrat....I remember the Republican primary, in which he
was a candidate, he was refused the right to vote because he
was a registered Democrat, you see. Couldn't vote for him-
self.

(WMP: I'd forgotten that.)

You ask some things I didn't dream you'd know about. You ask
me the question .... Duane...right at the top, Duane
vs. the city...that's a case. That's the borrowing capacity case
on whether or not the assessment, you see, whether we were permitted under the existing assessment to borrow that fifty
million....because, of course, Jones wouldn't lend the money until we had a Supreme Court decision.

(BF: How about going down to number 22.)
Nine black college graduates lived in Philadelphia...the year was 1940. We were enlisting in the Army then. They were drafted and they were rejected. All of them were 4-F. College graduates. The PRT had approximately ten thousand employees.

(BF: PRT is what?)

Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company...the predecessor of SEPTA. Philadelphia was number two in the munitions industry. Detroit was number one; we were number two in importance. And we needed to put these men to work. So they gave them a job. The ten thousand men and women struck outright, for nineteen days, in the middle of the war. They sat it out because nine college graduates were going to run a bus or a trolley car.

(BF: Because they were black...was that the issue?)

All negros. I went to Washington and there was a committee here in Philadelphia representing a fair employment practice commission....FEPC....Malcolm Ross.

(WMP: In Washington, and Jim Fleming in Philadelphia.)

...in Philadelphia, and Malcolm Ross, a Harvard man, one of Roosevelt's friends, I think...was the Washington head. We went to see him and we persuaded him to get Roosevelt to issue a decree, I can't name you the act now, ...there was something in the act in Congress, and we listed those PRT employees as non-employable. In other words, starved to death. And I did it with a great deal of glee. And it didn't last that long...it didn't last thirty-six hours. They were back on the job. That's the story of that at that time. And FDR didn't hesitate a minute...didn't hesitate a minute...a special act. He had a right to disqualify...you know? I just can't think of what the act was. But every trolley...nineteen days

In those days, of course, he had other things to worry about. He depended on us, and we had desperately tried to work out, you know, some results, and the more we worked, the less we got. About the sit-down strikes which occurred in the thirties, and nothing was used by the city to cope with them...as you deal with Exide Battery Company and go out on a sit-down strike...I wasn't in office then...I know it was pretty serious...Apex, oh yeah, Hosiery, that was completely destroyed, and Sylvan Hirsch, you'll find that in the files...Sylvan Hirsch of Sunheim, Folz, and Kun...they were general counsel for Albert M. Greenfield and Company. Sylvan Hirsch was a member of that firm and he got a verdict of about $850,000 in federal court...damages...against the battery company...against the union...against the union!
It was the battery company that was involved. The union was headed by James Leader. He was the local head.

(WMP: He was the local head, huh?)

Yes, and he called a strike. And that was a very serious strike ... that hosiery ....

I was talking about the re-organization of PRT. During the re-organization of PRT ... went into bankruptcy soon after I took office in 1936.

(WMP: ...the public utility commission...)

No, state transit...The city transit system ...PRT.

(WMP: What would your role be?)

I was city solicitor then.

(WMP: City solicitor, I see.)

And the city had this tremendous interest, because we owned the subway. And we had a contract with the surface system, under which we supplied certain service to them; they supplied service to us, and we operated on a transfer system. So when PRT went into bankruptcy, of course, that had a violent effect on the subway system. The city consequently was also a creditor, and we went into the re-organization before Judge George Welsh. And that lasted about ... for four years, or longer. It went into bankruptcy in '34, about, and came out as PTC on January 1, 1940, the day I was finished. So I was in the re-organization for four years representing the city's interest. And the first capitalization proposed by Fred Ballard and Senator Pepper, who were counsel for the bankrupt company, the first proposals were two-hundred and ten million, capitalized at two-hundred and ten million. The next one, I'm just guessing pretty much, it was about a hundred and eighty million. Then the third was about a hundred and fifty or a hundred and twenty-five million. The PTC was finally re-organized with the capitalization of eighty-eight million dollars. Even it couldn't stand that, as you can see, because ...see, it went under, PTC went under, two years ago...then became SEPTA. So I went through that whole re-organization.

(BF: We're sort of running out of time and I'd like you to talk about question 23 here. It's a story about when you nearly became a Democratic candidate for mayor.... and Michael Bradley cast the deciding vote to nominate Dilworth. Several people told that story.)
Well, the story's very simple. There were fifteen men...a fifteen-man committee had been named, which Mike Bradley was chairman of...that was his one year as chairman.

(BF: Michael Bradley?)

Yup. And it was Dick Dilworth...was around the periphery of politics, then, only. It was all settled that I was to be the nominee...practically settled. Well, when I went up to see Bradley, we talked practicalities about the campaign, because it was kind of understood. Greenfield had given me his word...shook hands on it...and that's all. It was a bad year...they thought they were going to get licked anyhow. So...the meeting was called that night...fifteen men. Now the man that got me started was the chairman of the fiftieth ward committee...I remember him.... big, husky...fiftieth ward...great friend of Joe Clark's. Joe'll tell you who he is anyhow, the big, husky fellow...very wealthy, made his own money, too, and a rugged sort of guy. And he was the boss of the fiftieth ward. And he'd stop me on the street and say...when are you going to get started? Well, I finally got started. And he called a meeting to vote. At the last minute, Jack Kelly and McCloskey and Greenfield got very disturbed at the prospect of my being the candidate. And I don't mean to be indelicate when I say this, but, I must say what the facts are...and that is that at that time, and maybe they were right at that time from the standpoint of the public point of view, they felt that a Jewish candidate...at that time it was a little early. And today, of course, that's nothing...or even twenty years ago. And the last minute, my eight men stuck with me. That is, seven of them did, except the big, husky fellow! And he turned over and voted for Joe...for Dilworth, I mean. And...

(WMP: It wasn't Bradley, was it?)

Not Bradley...he later became a city councilman, too. I think Joe'd remember because I'm sure Joe had a rather keen dislike for him. Fiftieth ward chairman. And he cast the deciding vote. I mean he cast the vote that made a tie...because I got one of Dilworth's men...changed his mind...voted for me. So it evened it out. And you're right. Bradley, Bradley cast the vote that nominated Dick. And he was as surprised as anybody. We had lunch the next day together.

(BF: Dilworth?)

Yeah. He said...what the hell...what am I going to talk about? We knew though, you know, it was a bad year. In fact, I later had occasion to be a little thankful, you know, that I didn't get nominated that year, because it was the next year that I said, this is our year...1951...and I knew we were going to win in 1951. I just knew that because by this time, some of these fellows were already in jail, and they had a bad reputa-
tion over there. And Joe was just made to order for them. Absolutely! He was just molded for that campaign.

(WMP: In 1951.)

1951. He came out to see the clean fellow from the controller's office...a well-reared lawyer, and of course, his reputation was very good. No matter whether you liked him or disliked him, he was an honest man. And that's all they wanted, you see. And Joe...you could have bet a thousand to one on Joe in that election. He beat...let's see...who the heck did he beat...

(WMP: That was Poling.)

(BF: Poling. Dr. Poling.)

Dr. Poling. And I want to tell you, that was some candidate....formidable candidate, wasn't it...huh?

(WMP: Well, he was in a way...but..)

He wasn't a good candidate, but as a name...

(WMP: Yes...he was looked up to, I think.)

Yeah, he was looked up to.

Well, this time has passed so fast.

(WMP: You managed to come up with a lot of interesting memories.)

Any time you want to ask me anything else, just call me on the 'phone, you know. Right?