

ORAL HISTORY OF BENJAMIN R. CIVILETTI
FIRST INTERVIEW
AUGUST 21, 2001

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewee is Benjamin R. Civiletti, former Attorney General of the United States, and the interviewer is Patricia Shakow. The interview took place at the Venable law firm at 1201 New York Avenue, in the District of Columbia, on Tuesday, August 21, 2001, at 10:00 a.m.

Ms. Shakow: Mr. Civiletti, let's start at the very beginning and go to your family's beginning in the United States. Can you tell me when and from where your ancestors first arrived here?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. I can tell you approximately. My great-grandfather was named Stephano.

Ms. Shakow: His first name or his last name?

Mr. Civiletti: First name, and last name Civiletti, of course. He migrated to the United States in about 1875 or so with his wife. He was from Palermo, Sicily, and she was from Genoa.

Ms. Shakow: He was from Palermo and she was from Genoa. How did they meet? On the boat?

Mr. Civiletti: No. Apparently she was in a convent —

Ms. Shakow: As a nun or as a student?

Mr. Civiletti: As a student. And then they apparently met when she finished her schooling. They were married in Italy and came to the United States and my grandfather, Benjamin, was born in the United States. It's interesting. The family of my great-grandfather had seven brothers, and it must have been that they were on the opposite side of Garibaldi when

he united the Italian states, because two brothers came to the United States, my great-grandfather on the East Coast and his brother on the West Coast, two brothers went to Egypt, two brothers went to Great Britain, and one brother stayed in Italy. I know of the Civiletti clan that went to the West Coast, but not well, and I know of the brother who stayed in Italy because that family became museum curators. He toured the United States with an art exhibit when I was at Hopkins. And later he did a family tree, which was terrific for us. It went back to the invasion of Sicily by the Normans in about 1100-something. And one of my boys took the family tree to school for genealogy studies and that was the last I saw of it.

Ms. Shakow: Oh, how terrible.

Mr. Civiletti: (Laughter) It was the last we saw of it. So, someday I'll have to go to Italy and look up the family and reconstruct the family tree.

Ms. Shakow: You have not been to Italy, to either Genoa or Palermo?

Mr. Civiletti: Oh, I've been to Italy a lot, but I've not been either to Genoa or to Palermo.

Ms. Shakow: You should speak to Justice Scalia about the welcome he got when he went back to Sicily. He said he felt like Mussolini. He'd come out to the window and crowds of people would cheer him in the small town of Scalia.

Mr. Civiletti: I think he may feel like Mussolini more frequently than that.

Ms. Shakow: (Laughter) He said his nine children always disabuse him of any pride.

Mr. Civiletti: In any event, my great-grandfather came to New York and he had a number of different businesses. One was, naturally, fruits and vegetables. Another one was

barber shops. He was quite successful. My grandfather had one brother, Harry, who became a lawyer in New York. My grandfather became a marble mason and traveled the country when marble facades on buildings and skyscrapers were popular. He met my grandmother in Chicago. She was a Walsh, and her family had come from Valpariso, Indiana. They were farmers. My grandparents got married and moved back to the East Coast in New York in the Bronx, I think, where my father, his younger brother, older brother, and two sisters (five children) were born. My father was born in 1913.

On my maternal side, my grandfather, Julian Alexander Muller, was born to German parents in Charleston, South Carolina, in about 1885 or so. I don't know anything about those great-grandparents. My grandfather was a six-day bike racer and so he was on a racing circuit in New York. My grandmother was raised in New York. Her mother died early and she raised her brothers and sisters, about five or six of them. She was a hairdresser, and a very venturesome woman. She went to San Francisco with her companion, a girlfriend, just before the San Francisco earthquake. They went by train, the two of them, and had a great time. She related the trip to me years later. When she came back from San Francisco she met my grandfather. They married. They had two daughters, my mother, Virginia, and her sister, Louise, who is still living. My grandfather became ill and my grandparents moved to the country where she opened a beauty shop. She also owned a diner, and she had a marina business, so she was a good business woman.

Ms. Shakow: Out of necessity.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes, out of necessity. And then my grandfather recovered and was in the grocery business as a manager for A&P.

Ms. Shakow: Enterprising people. You have a wonderful, all-American mix of the immigrant groups from that period.

Mr. Civiletti: Right. Two Irish grandmothers, and one German and one Italian grandfather.

Ms. Shakow: That's wonderful. You mentioned one of your aunts who is still alive?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. I have two aunts that are still alive. One is Louise Flood, who was my mother's older sister by about two years, and she was probably born in 1915. My mother was born in 1917. My Aunt Melissa, who is my father's younger sister, was probably born about 1918, 1920 maybe.

Ms. Shakow: Did you grow up knowing them?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes.

Ms. Shakow: And others I assume of your parents' large families.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes.

Ms. Shakow: And therefore you had a lot of first cousins that you knew, too, as a child?

Mr. Civiletti: Not so many surprisingly. I guess the depression — you know, on my mother's side of the family, there were only two children, and on my father's side there were five. But the older brother had one child, my cousin Donald. My father's older sister died, while in college, of a diabetic seizure. My younger uncle, my father's brother, did not get married until very late so there were no children for me to associate with there. And then Melissa, the younger sister, had two daughters, but they were probably eight years younger than me. So I really had

two cousins who played an important part in my early life. One, Donald, who was a resident of the Chicago area and the other, Thomas Flood, who was my Aunt Louise's son and he was an East Coast cousin in the Jefferson Valley, Shrub Oak, and Somers area of Westchester and Putnam Counties.

Ms. Shakow: Somers, New York?

Mr. Civiletti: Before the age of ten I saw my cousin Donald all the time. After the age of ten I saw Tom Flood.

Ms. Shakow: What about siblings? Do you have siblings?

Mr. Civiletti: I have one sister. Her name is Pamela and she lives in California, near Los Angeles. She is 12 ½ years younger and she is a management nurse in a hospital in Pasadena. She has two children. I have a niece, Sarah, and a nephew, Joshua. And Sarah is at WSU, Washington State University. She is a great soccer player and goal tender. Joshua is trying to do things in the movie industry.

Ms. Shakow: A lot of young people, especially Californians, get very involved in that and a lot show great success. Are you the first lawyer in your family, or are you the only lawyer?

Mr. Civiletti: Well, I'm the first lawyer in my immediate family, but Uncle Harry, my grandfather's brother, was an estates and trusts lawyer, and I would see him from time to time and he asked me how I liked law school and I told him fine. And he'd say, "Well, you are going to be an estates and trusts lawyer I hope." Every time I saw him we would go through this. And I said, "Well, Uncle Harry, I don't know, I kind of like trial law." He said, "Oh, it's a terrible business." He said, "Your time is not your own. You get beat up all the time. The judges are

arrogant and nasty to you.” He said, “In estates and trusts you are helping people. You set your own hours and it is very, very rewarding and that's the only way to practice if you want to have a life.” So I said, “Well, I'll consider it Uncle Harry. I'll think about it.”

Ms. Shakow: But you never did.

Mr. Civiletti: I never became an estates and trusts lawyer, no.

Ms. Shakow: That, of course, is what older lawyers told all women lawyers.

Mr. Civiletti: Oh, did they?

Ms. Shakow: Yes. Estates and trusts, because then you can have a family and you can get out of the office at a certain time. But none of us took that advice. It's probably just as well.

Mr. Civiletti: So Uncle Harry was a little bit of a predecessor but since then, of course, I have a son who's a lawyer. I have a daughter-in-law who's a lawyer, and I have a son-in-law who's a lawyer. So we have more lawyers than we need.

Ms. Shakow: That's like my family, too. How did you come to be born in Peekskill?

Mr. Civiletti: My mother and father were raised near Peekskill. They were raised in little towns about eight miles from Peekskill and Peekskill was where the general hospital was. My mother went to Mahopac High School. My father went to Shrub Oak, the same school that I later went to until I was about midway in my sophomore year of high school. It was interesting. It was a tiny little school and maybe ten years or so ago they had a reunion and my parents got invited to the reunion and I went to the reunion although I didn't graduate from the Shrub Oak High School. The reunion was not for one class or for two classes, but for all classes.

Ms. Shakow: Oh, my, it was a small school.

Mr. Civiletti: I think the school opened in 1930 and its first graduating class was '31 or something near to it. It was a lot of fun. Gaile and I went to it and enjoyed it very much.

Ms. Shakow: What was Peekskill like? It is a Hudson River town, isn't it?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. It was a river town, some grain business and some mills in the vicinity, some metal working business, not very affluent — a rather poor town.

Ms. Shakow: Kind of a blue collar town?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes a blue collar town. Peekskill was between eight and ten miles away. We went there for shopping or for movies or to play sports. Later on, my mother had a dress shop and my father ran a Grand Union grocery store there.

Ms. Shakow: And for a long time, you were an only child.

Mr. Civiletti: Right.

Ms. Shakow: Are you still in touch with any of your friends from that time in your life?

Mr. Civiletti: Oh, sure.

Ms. Shakow: Who are the memories? Have most of them stayed in that area?

Mr. Civiletti: No. I have stayed in touch with two sets of friends. I went to Irving School in Tarrytown, New York, at about 14. I had gone to Shrub Oak until then. And so two of my best friends — one is from the Shrub Oak area, a doctor in Easton, Pennsylvania, named George Joseph. And the second one is a retired shopping center leasing agent named Barrie Wood, whom I met in 1951 at Irving School. So we've been friends for 50 years. And

Dr. Joseph, we've been friends since 1945, so 56 years.

Ms. Shakow: Do you remember how you spent your time as a grade school kid?

What you did after school, what games you played?

Mr. Civiletti: Basketball and baseball.

Ms. Shakow: Baseball I would expect. Basketball is a bit of a surprise.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. I played a lot of sports, but basketball was my favorite.

Ms. Shakow: And you're talking about organized basketball, school teams and other things, as opposed to just hanging around. Or you did that too?

Mr. Civiletti: I started playing organized basketball in about the sixth grade, maybe seventh grade. My father put a hoop up in our back yard. We lived on a hill and we were not close to anything recreational. I pounded that basketball in that hoop, continuously, two hours a day, rain or shine, cold weather or not.

Ms. Shakow: Kept you out of trouble.

Mr. Civiletti: And got pretty decent at it.

Ms. Shakow: Was your mother working or was she at home most of the time when you got home from school?

Mr. Civiletti: When I was younger, between nine and twelve, she was home. And then she had my sister when I was 12, so she was home for a little while, for a couple of years then. Before that, of course, it was the war, and she worked in the munitions factories in Indiana, outside of Chicago. I was on a farm in Michigan with my grandparents and my cousin, Donald.

Ms. Shakow: That's why you spent so much time with Donald?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. We lived there for about two and a half years, from 1942 and a half to 1945, when my father came back from the merchant marine. He and my mother moved to the East Coast and I with them. For a couple of years while we settled in she did not work. Then when I went to Irving, shortly after that, she opened this dress business getting ready to pay, I guess, for college. She did that for ten years, roughly, all the time I was in college and through law school. Then she became a private secretary to a watch company executive in Croton-on-Hudson. She did that for about five years and then she quit and she became a real estate agent and got her broker's license. So she had an interesting — like her mother, she had an interesting set of careers.

Ms. Shakow: You didn't have then anybody from outside the family who came to take care of you?

Mr. Civiletti: No. Always with my mother and grandmothers, one or the other.

Ms. Shakow: What are your memories of World War II? You and I are the same age, and I have vivid memories of what it was like.

Mr. Civiletti: I have a memory of the “Day of Infamy” speech of President Roosevelt. Everyone was in a state of shock and trauma and it was very serious, and at the same time very exciting, of course. I remembered that quite well. I remember newsreels. Going to the movies was a dime. My grandmother Civiletti loved the movies and so she and I would go to the movies with my younger uncle, my father's younger brother, and would see the newsreels of people fighting or on the beaches or troops or ships or airplanes buzzing around that looked very dangerous to me.

Ms. Shakow: You were in Michigan by then? And your father was already in the

merchant marine?

Mr. Civiletti: Well, no. In 1941 I was six, I was probably still in Indiana Harbor, where my father at the time was working at the Inland Steel Company. My grandfather and grandmother Civiletti lived with us, and my Uncle Mickey lived with us, and my Aunt Melissa lived with us, my mother and father lived there. My Uncle Steve had just gotten married, Donald's father, and so I was probably still there at the time the war began. I don't think my grandmother and grandfather had the farm yet and I probably stayed in Indiana Harbor until the house that my mother and father were building was finished. My father and my grandfather and both my uncles all worked on the house. They finally got it built and so we moved from Indiana Harbor to Hammond, Indiana, which was a more rural area. I switched schools, one of my many switches of grade schools, to a little public school named Parish Grade School and I had a wonderful teacher named Miss Jorgenson. I took a strong liking to her, and she took a liking to me, and I can remember stuttering while reading and not being able to read very well. And she worked with me and encouraged me. And by the end of the year, I could read very well. She was just terrific.

Ms. Shakow: I hope she lived to see you become Attorney General.

Mr. Civiletti: She did. And I invited her to Washington but she wasn't able to come and she wrote me a nice letter and I wrote her back. Anyway, probably about 1942, we moved to the house in Hammond but I didn't live there very long. We moved to a different house. I'm sorry. It was the Indiana Harbor house. That was a bigger, more roomy house, because we had a lot of people living in this little house that I first described. The bigger house was probably in Indiana Harbor. It was a lovely house. It had great big porches all around it,

but it caught fire a couple of times because of a defective chimney. It never burned down. We were able to put the fires out. I was in a different school there, and after that we went to Hammond, to the new house that my parents built and everybody piled in there. And after about six months there, my father went into the merchant marine. He had lost his index finger in a rail car accident in the steel mill, so he was not eligible for the armed services, but he didn't want to sit home, so he volunteered for the merchant marine in about 1943 or so, and my mother was working in the munitions factory in Kankakee. I got shipped up to — by that time, my grandparents had bought this little farm in Michigan, in Colon, Michigan, so my cousin and I got shipped up to my grandparents.

Ms. Shakow: Were your uncles in the service?

Mr. Civiletti: My Uncle Mickey was. My Uncle Steve was not, and I don't know whether it was some kind of a physical condition or his age, but he wasn't. Uncle Mickey was in for the full 4 ½ years. He was with Patton's tank group.

Ms. Shakow: Do you remember V-J Day or V-E Day?

Mr. Civiletti: I remember. Big celebrations. I think on one of those two, I think V-J Day, I was down in, as I recall, I was in Long Beach, Long Island, where my maternal grandmother and her sister had a little summer cottage. And my grandmother would take me down for two or four weeks every summer and I was there. I think it was in the summertime. And everybody had balloons and were shooting off firecrackers and it was just great fun and exciting. I was excited because I thought my father would come home, out of the service and be reunited with my mother and me. It was pretty thrilling.

Ms. Shakow: And all that happened. Your father came back.

Mr. Civiletti: And my mother quit the munitions business and we moved to the East Coast.

Ms. Shakow: What, came back to Peekskill?

Mr. Civiletti: To Jefferson Valley.

Ms. Shakow: Did your family move to Baltimore at some point, or did you know Baltimore only when you went to college at Johns Hopkins.

Mr. Civiletti: Only when I went to college.

Ms. Shakow: They stayed in Peekskill?

Mr. Civiletti: They stayed in Peekskill. I was going to go to Cornell. I had sent in my initial \$100 acceptance and I had visited Cornell the year before and liked it, but my parents liked Hopkins. We had a great family physician who had gone to Hopkins and he loved it. He had gone to both undergraduate and graduate school there, so he was always advocating Hopkins. And since I had applied to Hopkins, and I also had scholarships, but they were for athletics, and my parents were not terribly enthused about me going to Oklahoma, for example. So it came down to Cornell and Hopkins and I was favoring Cornell because I had a lovely girlfriend who was going to Syracuse. And I was going to try to play football and basketball. I had talked to the coaches there and I had a chance.

(Interruption.)

Ms. Shakow: You were discussing your choices — Johns Hopkins or Cornell.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. After discussing it with my parents through the spring of 1953, I decided that Hopkins was the better choice for me. Then I came to Baltimore that fall. My first visit to Baltimore.

Ms. Shakow: You had never seen the campus before.

Mr. Civiletti: No. It was with some trepidation because at the time I thought that anything south of Philadelphia was troublesome. The society was biased and prejudiced and full of hypocrites who said smooth and gracious things and did and thought other things. It was with some reservations that I came. And I came, of course, from boarding school, which was a very rigid environment, to Hopkins, which was a very open environment. So I had a hard adjustment.

Ms. Shakow: Were you disabused of all your concerns about Baltimore when you got there?

Mr. Civiletti: Not entirely. Before I got there I think Hopkins, for example, was still segregated. At the undergraduate school it was. And the year after I got there a friend of mine from Peekskill, Ernie Bates, came and was admitted as a student. I'm not positive he was the first black student, but he was certainly the first black student that was at the university while I was there. And then others followed. We played W&L, Hampton Sidney and a number of others, Randolph-Macon College, a number of other schools, and had quite a time with accommodations and nastiness and all, with Ernie Bates on the football team.

Ms. Shakow: This was basketball?

Mr. Civiletti: This was football.

Ms. Shakow: One hears those stories from that era. Even Jackie Robinson went through that.

Mr. Civiletti: Oh, sure. I got to know a great many young men from Baltimore, and formed good friendships that lasted all these years, and found them to be like everybody else. You know, good ones and not so good ones.

Ms. Shakow: Johns Hopkins was an all-male school at the time?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. That wasn't strange to me, because Irving had been all male.

Ms. Shakow: What was campus life like there?

Mr. Civiletti: It was fun.

Ms. Shakow: Was it full of politics which would have been ahead of its time I guess?

Mr. Civiletti: No. It was two or three things. It was very serious studying by 80 percent of the students, very serious laboratory work and research.

Ms. Shakow: All the premeds.

Mr. Civiletti: Among others. Then there were the athletes, some of whom were also very serious students, some weren't. Then the other part of it was the fraternity life — about 20 fraternities — and that was the social life largely on the campus.

Ms. Shakow: Did you belong to a fraternity?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes.

Ms. Shakow: And you were happy about that, you enjoyed it?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes.

Ms. Shakow: What teams were you on? Sports teams?

Mr. Civiletti: The freshman year I was on basketball and lacrosse.

Ms. Shakow: Lacrosse was a very important sport at Johns Hopkins.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. I did fairly well having never touched a lacrosse stick before I got to Hopkins. I started on the freshman — they had a separate freshman team — and I started on that team as a defenseman. So I did those two sports the first year. The second year I did

basketball and baseball. I was a pitcher in baseball so I switched from lacrosse to baseball. And the third year I did football, basketball and baseball. I did that in my senior year, too.

Ms. Shakow: And in between you studied.

Mr. Civiletti: Right. And in between I studied and I decided in my sophomore year that I didn't want to be a doctor.

Ms. Shakow: You had started as a premed?

Mr. Civiletti: I didn't like comparative anatomy. I didn't like organic chemistry, so I switched to psychology.

Ms. Shakow: And that became your major?

Mr. Civiletti: That became my major. And as a result of switching, I had a lot of courses to pick up, so my junior and senior years I had a very heavy schedule, except maybe for the senior year, last semester. It lightened some, but it was up to — what do they call those, points or credits? I was taking 21 credits my junior year and then another 19 credits the first semester of my senior year.

Ms. Shakow: And you still managed to graduate in four years?

Mr. Civiletti: Right. And it was very healthy. Between the athletics and the scholastics, I really kept my nose out of trouble and to the grindstone my last two years.

Ms. Shakow: Did you have any favorite professors there or mentors who directed you toward law school or were just important to you?

Mr. Civiletti: There was a man named Dean Shaffer who was Dean of Students and a leading professor in the psychology department. He was also an avid athletic team supporter. So he became — he taught abnormal psychology, which was very interesting — and

so I became friendly with him and admired him and visited Sheppard Pratt on a number of occasions where we would have seminars and programs. He was a good influence at Hopkins. There was another man named William Morrell who was a great lacrosse player and he was a math teacher. He was someone I admired too.

Ms. Shakow: Was Johns Hopkins the kind of place where faculty members would invite you home to get to know their families?

Mr. Civiletti: They didn't invite me. I think in some of the smaller, liberal arts disciplines or history or political science or French, they may have done that. In the sciences, they didn't do it very much.

Ms. Shakow: And you didn't have much time for it anyway, considering all of the other things you were doing.

Mr. Civiletti: Or disposition.

Ms. Shakow: What part did the Vietnam War play at this point? I guess it was a little bit early, you were class of '58 or '57. It would have been a bit too early.

Mr. Civiletti: The Korean War, I was too young for. It finished about the time I graduated high school and was in my first year in college. And then the Vietnam War came after I was out of law school. I graduated from law school in '61, and the Vietnam War heated up later, so I was way too old.

Ms. Shakow: You had student deferments as most people did in the early part of that, and then you were married and I suppose you had children.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. I was never in the service. I came close when I graduated from law school. I can't remember if I was solicited or I volunteered, but Gaile and I visited the

Air Force and I had an opportunity to become a first lieutenant in the Air Force and that was tempting because we didn't have much money at all, and uniforms were provided, but I pursued a clerkship instead.

Ms. Shakow: Tell me about your wife. Where did you meet?

Mr. Civiletti: I met her my junior year at Hopkins.

Ms. Shakow: Was she a student at another college nearby?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. She was a student at Villa Julie, which at that time was a two-year comfortable little college in the Green Spring Valley of Baltimore, and now it's a bigger school, a full-time four-year college. But at that time it wasn't. And she came to a fraternity party where I didn't have a date, I was in khakis and just reading a newspaper and watching —

Ms. Shakow: To see who came in the door.

Mr. Civiletti: To see which face came in. I put the paper up and down just to check everything out. And so I saw this beautiful girl with this jobo guy, and I inquired about her and then one of my good friends was dating a woman who was a good friend of Gaile's. And so they fixed us up, and we got along fairly well.

Ms. Shakow: And that was it.

Mr. Civiletti: No. And then we had a kind of a falling out because she had been to Princeton a good bit and she was full of Princeton this and Princeton that. And when we went to Hopkins June Week, which was the end of the year for the seniors — I invited her to June Week — and we had about four dates right in a row, and by that Sunday at a Jazz Festival, I had had enough of Princeton. So I went to buy more beer for our group and came back about three hours later, much later than I had anticipated, and everybody was gone except a red-hot, stone

face, sitting on our blanket. That was the end of the relationship then. She was absolutely furious, and rightfully so. But I came back for a football game the following fall, to make a long story short, and she was there and she looked beautiful. So I went over and cut in on her date and danced with her and she said, "I can't dance with you, you are too rude." So then we started dating again and became engaged and married the next year.

Ms. Shakow: Almost everybody I know has that kind of experience, where there is a break at some point, then you realize no, you really want to go back to this.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes. That's the person.

Ms. Shakow: That's very nice. And she grew up in Baltimore?

Mr. Civiletti: She did. In West —

Ms. Shakow: And what was her name?

Mr. Civiletti: Her name was Lundgren. And she grew up, she was raised, interestingly, a little similar to me. She was raised a lot by her grandmother, her maternal grandmother. And she went to a private boarding school, too. Hannah More Academy. Her parents were divorced and her father was a builder up in Pennsylvania when I got to know her. Her mother never really worked very much, she was not well and her grandmother was a very good businesswoman and cared for Gaile and her mother.

Ms. Shakow: Did your family like your wife and did her family like you? Were there any problems? Were there any problems along those lines in the beginning?

Mr. Civiletti: There were no problems with Gaile's family. Her grandmother liked me and I liked her grandmother very much.

Ms. Shakow: And she was the one you had to deal with really.

Mr. Civiletti: Right. And then later, soon after we were married or soon before we were married I got to know her father and we get along very well, too. My father loved Gaile from the beginning. My mother was a little hesitant. She thought Gaile was a little frail. She asked me, she said, "She's not sickly, is she?" And of course Gaile is a slight person, thin by nature. But over time, they got closer and closer and by the time my parents moved to Baltimore, which was about 1976, somewhere around there — My father retired when he was 62, so 1913 — it would have been '75. Stayed a year in Jefferson Valley and then came down to Baltimore in '76. By the time she moved to Baltimore, they were pretty close.

Ms. Shakow: And of course, once children come, I think that the older generation gets very involved.

Mr. Civiletti: Oh, yes. She loved her grandchildren.

Ms. Shakow: Tell me about your wedding. What was that like?

Mr. Civiletti: It was a lot of fun. It was at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Mt. Washington, located in Baltimore, a beautiful little church. We had a very nice reception. We honeymooned in — my father was a fine singer, and so he sang at the wedding. Barrie Wood was there. Tom Flood was there. All my friends were there. Gaile's friends were there. Standard kind of wedding. A rehearsal dinner and then the reception after the wedding.

Ms. Shakow: And of course in those days no one thought you were too young to get married.

Mr. Civiletti: My mother might have thought I was a little young.

Ms. Shakow: Mothers always think their sons are too young to get married.

(Laughter)

Mr. Civiletti: I was, I guess, 22 and Gaile was 20.

Ms. Shakow: Which nowadays seems very young.

Mr. Civiletti: Like babies today, it seems. Then we didn't think anything of it.

Ms. Shakow: That's right. Everybody else was getting married, too. Why did you go to Columbia to law school? Let me go back a second. Did you graduate with honors from Johns Hopkins.?

Mr. Civiletti: No. I graduated probably in the middle of the class, maybe the upper quarter. If my entire career had been the last two years, I would have graduated with honors, but the first two years were a little rocky.

Ms. Shakow: And you had decided during your senior year to go to law school? Or before that?

Mr. Civiletti: Before that.

Ms. Shakow: And took the LSATs?

Mr. Civiletti: I did very well on the LSATs.

Ms. Shakow: Applied to many places?

Mr. Civiletti: I applied to Brooklyn Law School. I applied to Maryland. I applied to NYU and I applied to Columbia. I think four or five.

Ms. Shakow: That's a mixed bag, isn't it? I mean Brooklyn. Why did you apply to Brooklyn?

Mr. Civiletti: It was a New York school. It had a good reputation.

Ms. Shakow: You wanted to go to New York. You wanted to live in the city.

Mr. Civiletti: Right. And it had a good reputation. It was somewhat smaller and

not as selective as NYU or Columbia.

Ms. Shakow: And not as expensive I would guess.

Mr. Civiletti: Not as expensive. But Columbia was quite expensive, but I had been working summers and had good jobs and worked two jobs. I worked a construction job in the daytime, and stocking shelves in a supermarket at night. One year I had two great jobs. I was a lifeguard in the daytime and I was an usher at a drive-in movie with one of those red spears at an outdoor movie at night. So as soon as all the cars got in, I'd go into the booth and sleep unless somebody had a flat tire or busted the window out because they didn't take the speaker off.

Ms. Shakow: Well, that sounds like a better summer than stocking the shelves.

Mr. Civiletti: Right.

Ms. Shakow: Essentially those were the kind of summer jobs you had as a teenager?

Mr. Civiletti: Right.

Ms. Shakow: I never had very interesting summer jobs either. Nothing that led me to the law.

Mr. Civiletti: The construction job was interesting. I learned masonry and how to lay cement blocks and bricks and slate patios.

Ms. Shakow: Has that become a hobby of sorts?

Mr. Civiletti: I've done some of it, not an awful lot.

Ms. Shakow: It's a very good thing to know. My husband is very handy, too. It's wonderful. How did you like Columbia and living in the city?

Mr. Civiletti: I liked Columbia and I loved living in New York.

Ms. Shakow: Where did you live?

Mr. Civiletti: I lived on about 110th Street, right off Broadway on 110th Street in a fraternity house. My old fraternity had one floor for graduates.

Ms. Shakow: Isn't that wonderful. That was very nice. Who were the great professors at Columbia in those days?

Mr. Civiletti: One I enjoyed very much and then came back to know because he came into the Department of Justice when I was, I guess, Deputy Attorney General. That was Maury Rosenberg, who was the professor of civil procedure and trial practice.

Ms. Shakow: It must have been interesting having an old professor work for you.

Mr. Civiletti: It was terrific. It was great and he was great.

Ms. Shakow: Meanwhile, you are courting your wife at a distance.

Mr. Civiletti: Back and forth. She would come up and it was one of my more prolific letter-writing periods.

Ms. Shakow: I hope she saved the letters. I've just finished reading John Adams' biography and of course those letters were actually terrific. She probably has them.

Mr. Civiletti: How about Harlan's — have you read that?

Ms. Shakow: Yes. I read what was in the paper about Justice Ginsburg — such interesting people. Well, someday when someone does a more thorough biography of you, you'll have to go and find those letters.

Who were your close friends at Columbia? Do you have any that you still see?

Mr. Civiletti: No. I don't have any. At the time I had a couple of good friends in

the fraternity that were not in law school and I had a couple of acquaintances in the law school, but I have not kept in touch. A couple of them came to — about four people — came to the wedding, came down for the wedding, but I haven't kept in touch with any of them since then.

Ms. Shakow: What were your favorite subjects that first year?

Mr. Civiletti: I liked criminal law. I liked contracts. I liked trial practice. I liked evidence, although we didn't have — I think evidence was the second year. But I think we had introduction to evidence or something.

Ms. Shakow: Did you have torts?

Mr. Civiletti: We had torts. Sure. Real property. The standard five.

Ms. Shakow: Con law?

Mr. Civiletti: Not the first year. I didn't like real property really that much. I didn't mind torts. I liked criminal law.

Ms. Shakow: I liked the ones with stories. Did you have enough money, if you'll forgive my asking, to have a social life in New York, to enjoy New York? Did you go to the theater or to the opera? Even ball games?

Mr. Civiletti: No.

Ms. Shakow: You were pretty much with your nose to the grindstone.

Mr. Civiletti: Pretty much.

Ms. Shakow: Did you have a job while in law school?

Mr. Civiletti: No.

Ms. Shakow: It went very quickly then I guess, once you decided to get married and go back to Baltimore.

Mr. Civiletti: Yes, it did. We made that decision probably in the spring of 1958, made the decision in December to get married in June after the end of the school year. And then later in the spring, evaluating everything, Gaile's mother had continuing illnesses. And the tuition was — I can't remember exactly, but it was more than ten times I think, the Maryland tuition. I visited the dean of the Maryland law school and talked to him about school and about the transfer. That went very well. Gaile's grandmother was desirous to have her back. And I found to my surprise when I got there, an old friend from Hopkins who transferred from the University of Indiana to Maryland, Herb Belgrad, who is now still a close friend. We started a car pool with about three or four people and those people plus Herb plus one other man became a group of five who have celebrated New Year's Eve together for almost 40 years. All still married to the same ladies.

Ms. Shakow: That's wonderful. A triumph. That's very nice. Was the school in Baltimore City?

Mr. Civiletti: Yes.

Ms. Shakow: Is it called UMBC? That's the undergraduate.

Mr. Civiletti: No, no.

Ms. Shakow: It's the University of Maryland School of Law.

Mr. Civiletti: At the time, the University of Maryland had but two campuses, College Park, where almost all the undergraduate schools were, and some graduate schools. And then the University of Maryland graduate campus, right in Baltimore City, right on the west side of the city. The School of Pharmacy, the School of Nursing, Dental School, Medical School, School of Social Work, School of Public Health, and the Law School were all — all seven or

eight of them were in Baltimore City. Since then, that dichotomy still exists, and the hospital is there, University of Maryland Hospital, and shock trauma unit and additions to that. But the higher education system in Maryland has become just that. The units within that system are 17 or so. The University of Maryland is one. And then in order to serve the Baltimore community better for undergraduate education, UMBC was developed, which is University of Maryland, Baltimore County. And it's just outside the Beltway and it has developed into a very prosperous and fairly large school. But the system now also includes Towson University and —

Ms. Shakow: Some of the ones out on the Eastern Shore?

Mr. Civiletti: The Eastern Shore universities.

Ms. Shakow: Speaking of race, what was it like at law school? Was it fairly integrated at that time? In fact at Columbia for that matter?

Mr. Civiletti: Columbia might have had a few blacks, I do not recall. I do recall it had a few women. And at the University of Maryland, there were definitely a half a dozen black students in my class. One, Charlie Dorsey, became a friend and he became Director of the Maryland Legal Aid society for many years. There was one woman in my class at the University of Maryland. Harriet Cohen became her name, a very nice lady.

Ms. Shakow: How large was your class?

Mr. Civiletti: About 60.

[Tape Ends]