

## Oral History of Carl Stern

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewer is Judy Feigin, and the interviewee is Carl Stern. The interview took place at Carl's home in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, October 22, 2020 in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. This is the first interview.

MS. FEIGIN: Good afternoon. You've had an amazing career, and I can't wait to get to it, but I want to put you in time and place, so let's have a little sense of the family.

MR. STERN: They start with the dinosaurs.

MS. FEIGIN: How far back do you know your family history?

MR. STERN: Quite a ways. Probably at least to the 1700s, but you don't want to go back that far.

MS. FEIGIN: It wouldn't be the first oral history that did but that's not usually the case.

MR. STERN: My wife has managed to acquire her family history back to the 12th century.

MS. FEIGIN: Amazing! But let's start with yours.

MR. STERN: I was born in Sunnyside, which is New York, in Queens. It's part of New York City. I grew up in Flushing and Jackson Heights, which are also in Queens.

MS. FEIGIN: You were born when?

MR. STERN: August 7, 1937. My mother was a teacher. She was a fashion illustration teacher in a New York City high school. In those days, oddly enough, newspapers and magazines did not use photographs to illustrate fashions. All the depictions of clothing for sale were sketched by artists. My mother did it, for example, for Lord & Taylor in the early 1930s. So my mother,

during the Depression, got a teaching license and taught fashion illustration. Her family came from somewhere along the German/Polish border in 1848, as did many people. Curiously enough, she searched in vain for a number of years trying to find records of their arrival, assuming it would have been in New York, Ellis Island or such. Ultimately, she found out by going to the Archives here that they had come in through Baltimore. She had never thought to check that.

My father came to this country in 1928 from Munich, Germany. That's Bavaria, the beer drinkers. He had a degree in mechanical engineering. When he arrived here, he studied civil engineering. He got a civil engineering degree at Cooper Union in New York. In those days, as I guess it is to some extent now, you have to have a sponsor to come to the United States, and he was sponsored by Karl Laemmle, whose name would be better known on the West Coast where Laemmle movie theaters still exist.

Karl Laemmle was the German immigrant who actually founded the motion picture business in Long Island City and subsequently, because he needed better weather, moved it to Hollywood. Karl Laemmle is responsible for the movie industry being in Hollywood. In any event, Karl Laemmle sponsored -- he was called Uncle Karl Laemmle -- he sponsored at least 150 Germans that he had known in Germany to come to the United States, including my father, and he would guarantee that they would have employment when they came. So my father always said he came here to

be in the movies [laughter]. In point of fact, while he was studying during the day, at night he earned his keep by going to the Laemmle facilities in Fort Lee, New Jersey, to soup the day's shooting through the chemical baths, processing the movie film that had been shot that day. So he was there at night cranking the film through the chemical bath. He said I came here to be in the movies [laughter].

I have a twin brother. In fact, I should mention, Karl Laemmle, that's Karl with a "K." I'm Carl with a C. I was not named for him. When my parents had twins -- in those days medicine was not as advanced as it is today -- having twins was a bit of a surprise. They had decided that if they had a boy, they would name him George after a previous family member, actually my mother's father, or Carolyn, or Carol, for my mother's mother, depending on if it was a boy or a girl. Well they got two. We're fraternal twins, so my brother got George. I, fortunately, did not get Carol [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Although there are men with that name.

MR. STERN: Yes, that's true. In any event, that's why I'm Carl with a "C."

MS. FEIGIN: You started in Queens and then what?

MR. STERN: Thinking back to my childhood, I remember there was an apple tree in the backyard in Jackson Heights which was good for climbing. I remember a neighbor would give my brother and me a penny apiece for collecting Japanese beetles off his roses and putting them in a can of kerosene. We used to play ball on Dukes field, which was next to P.S. 148 where I went to elementary school in Jackson Heights. In those days, there would be a

square block with no structures on it at all. This was a much more primitive time. In fact, when I first started broadcasting on television, I got a letter from a fellow in Baltimore saying if you were the worst right fielder who ever played with the Jackson Heights Robins, I know you.

MS. FEIGIN: And that was you? [laughter]

MR. STERN: That was me. He had the right man [laughter]. It's hard to explain, but in those days, Jackson Heights for example had these empty fields. There was no such thing as supermarkets and just down at the corner there were a couple of shops including a little market. There was a butcher, a guy named Gottesman. He had the first television set in the neighborhood, black and white of course. He would invite patrons like ourselves – he lived over the store of course -- to come watch the Friday night fights or *Can You Top This*, if you recall, a comedy show, on Friday nights. This was in New York City, but this was a very, I can't say rural, it wasn't rural, but it was sort of a low-key neighborhood. If we were going into Manhattan, which was seldom undertaken, we would say we were going into the city.

MS. FEIGIN: Jackson Heights now, and I'm sure you know this, I think it has the most languages for any area its size in the country. It has over a hundred languages. It's just a polyglot of communities. It's amazing now.

MR. STERN: In those days it was largely Italian and some German, Irish. I won't call it a low-income neighborhood; we would've called it middle class. There were a lot of civil servants, police and firemen and so on.

It's hard to explain what life was like back then. I can remember as a kid lying in bed at night listening to the roar of engines being tuned up at LaGuardia Airport, which was about five blocks away. These were engines of flying boats that flew during the Second World War between New York and Scotland. Flew over the Atlantic.

The building was a two-family structure. The fellow downstairs was employed by one of the airlines doing mechanical things with airplanes. My father had a place of business in College Point, which is a community on a little peninsula that juts out almost under the Whitestone Bridge. I can remember going to visit his office and passing the anti-aircraft batteries at Flushing airport that were there to help protect New York City. I could go on forever. It was a different life.

MS. FEIGIN: So you were in Queens during World War II?

MR. STERN: Yes.

MS. FEIGIN: And do you have memories specifically related to the war?

MR. STERN: Other than the air raid drills, which were periodic, you had to pull down the shades. In those days, you had to have black shades, black window shades, and you would pull those down, and we'd all gather under the dining room table until we got the all clear.

MS. FEIGIN: That's incredible. How long did you stay in Queens? Until when?

MR. STERN: Until I was age 13, and then we all moved to Manhattan, to the West Side, 99<sup>th</sup> and West End, which is near Columbia where I ended up going to college.

MS. FEIGIN: Given how your career developed, I'm curious. Growing up you didn't even have a TV when you were very young.

MR. STERN: Actually, we were lucky. An uncle gave us a TV set, an Emerson I recall, when we were 13, my brother and I, and we put it in our joint bedroom. When I say we were lucky, we were lucky thinking that we were privileged, we had a TV, but the lucky part was it didn't really work. So it didn't interfere with our studying [laughter]. We went to Stuyvesant High School, so I attribute whatever learning I have in life – and it's not as much as it should be -- I attribute it to the fact that we had a TV, but it didn't work.

MS. FEIGIN: Was it just the two of you or were there other siblings?

MR. STERN: Just the two of us.

MS. FEIGIN: Growing up, did you watch the news?

MR. STERN: Of course. My father would come home, probably around 6:00 or so. He would always honk when his car was approaching our building because that meant he was going to start looking for a parking space. That would inform my mother that she could put the kettle on or whatever. So he would come home with the *The World Telegram and Sun*, which was the afternoon paper. We also of course got *The Times* in the morning. We would flip on the TV at 6:00, and we'd watch the local news and then the national news.

MS. FEIGIN: I want to follow up on two things you just said. First of all, there were morning and afternoon papers.

MR. STERN: Indeed there were. *The Daily Mirror, The Daily News. The World Telegram and Sun* was a consolidation of two newspapers. And *The Herald Tribune. The Times* and *The Herald Tribune* were probably the highest regarded publications.

MS. FEIGIN: I think *The Post* was an afternoon paper.

MR. STERN: I don't remember *The Post* at all. It came and went through various mutations.

MS. FEIGIN: Right. I think it was owned by Dorothy Schiff who was very liberal.

MR. STERN: Yes. That may have been after I was a kid.

MS. FEIGIN: So there were maybe a half dozen newspapers in the city then?

MR. STERN: Yes. *The Post, The Saturday Evening Post, Colliers, Newsweek, Time, U.S. News & World Report.* In those days, we read them all.

MS. FEIGIN: Some of those are magazines.

MR. STERN: It was expected of us, and in fact to this day I shudder when I was teaching not too many years ago, none of my students read a daily newspaper. I was teaching at a university, and none of them were reading a newspaper.

MS. FEIGIN: Not even online?

MR. STERN: They may have. I wouldn't even put my money on that.

MS. FEIGIN: That's discouraging. In terms of the news on TV, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it was fifteen minutes of news a night, right?

MR. STERN: That's right. Even when I was 21 years old and I went to work at a radio/TV station, and this was in Cleveland, and we can get to that later, to

give you some idea, at 2:20 every afternoon we did a book report. Those were not very exciting days in television [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: C-SPAN's book show was considered highbrow [laughter].

MR. STERN: This was not C-SPAN [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: So the news was fifteen minutes, and there were only basically three stations, correct, that everybody watched?

MR. STERN: Yes. The NBC station and the CBS station. In those days, ABC was really not much of a presence, but Channel 5 in New York, the Dumont station, was fairly well regarded, and, of course, there were some other less-viewed stations, WOR Channel 9, WPIX Channel 11. Public broadcasting had begun on Channel 13.

MS. FEIGIN: Back then?

MR. STERN: Roughly about 1950, early 1950s I would say. I'm guessing. I would have to look it up. There were a lot of stations, but of course by today's cable standards, it was just a tiny bunch.

MS. FEIGIN: I also believe that television ended at midnight.

MR. STERN: Yes. I'm trying to remember. Maybe even 1:00 in the morning, but you're right. Things were so different then. Your mention of midnight makes me think of the years in Cleveland when I was a broadcaster, again pardon me for skipping ahead. In the evening I did a two-hour show on radio in the beginning, and I was cautioned that if somebody said a curse word, a profanity such as "damn" or "hell," my instructions -- I was alone in the station at night, myself and an engineer -- I was to take the station

off the air. I was to play the *Star Spangled Banner*, take the station off the air, wait a few minutes, and then sign the station back on. That's how strict they were about broadcast standards. Today you could get away with just about anything [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Well, on some stations. I'm not sure on all stations. I think way back in the day when they went off the air at midnight or whenever, they played the *Star Spangled Banner*, right?

MR. STERN: Yes. And when we signed on early in the morning. But those were different days. My first producer when I started doing the radio show I just mentioned, his original job at the station, he was the wake-up man. He was to telephone at 5:30 in the morning members of the studio orchestra to make sure they would be down in the studio by, I don't know, 7:00 or whenever the station signed on. The large station that I worked for, one of twenty-four clear-channel stations, had maximum broadcast power so it was a big station, they all had music that they played which, to some extent, was coming from their own orchestra.

MS. FEIGIN: That's amazing.

MR. STERN: I remember Harold Arlen, the first announcer for KDKA. He worked for Westinghouse in Pittsburgh. At night he was to wear a tuxedo. This is radio [laughter] but he would have to wear a tuxedo. His instructions were when visitors came to visit the studios, he was to serve them ice cream. I don't mean to suggest I was back there with Marconi, but I'm trying to

illustrate that the great leap forward that broadcasting has undergone – this was quite a big leap.

MS. FEIGIN: That's important to understand. I think that's hugely important. People today have no sense of what it was like then.

I know you're anxious to get to Cleveland, so let's quickly get you there. But to finish up with New York, you went to Stuyvesant High School?

MR. STERN: I did. And I was a pre-med. I loved biology.

MS. FEIGIN: I should just say that Stuyvesant was a school you tested to get into, but it was all male in those days.

MR. STERN: Oh, of course.

MS. FEIGIN: Of course [laughter].

MR. STERN: My recollection is we all wore neckties. This was a different time. I was the editor of the literary magazine, something called *Caliper*. Little stuff like that, but we were down in the Lower East Side of Manhattan near Beth Israel [Hospital], which actually happens to be where I was born.

MS. FEIGIN: The Lower East Side of Manhattan, which is today sort of the center of the universe, then was what?

MR. STERN: It was still in the late tenement stage. Today we don't talk about tenements. We talk about lofts and things like that [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: After four years at Stuyvesant, you went on to Columbia?

MR. STERN: Then I went on to college, yes. I was there as a pre-med for about less than a year [laughter]. I discovered that medicine was a science and not a philanthropy. My chemistry teacher was Linus Pauling, of some repute.

MS. FEIGIN: Quite!

MR. STERN: And I did not do well in chemistry. I don't mean to suggest that I failed, but it was enough to persuade me that that was not what I was going to be doing for a living, and I became basically a government and history major.

MS. FEIGIN: Were you a commuting student at Columbia or did you live there?

MR. STERN: The first year I commuted, but thereafter I lived on campus in a fraternity house. By the way, you seemed surprised about Linus Pauling. The faculty then, and now I am sure, was unbelievable. C. Wright Mills for sociology and Richard Neustadt for my government courses. These names are probably not known to your readers, but these were the academic all-stars of that era.

MS. FEIGIN: Absolutely. My only reason for being surprised at Linus Pauling is because when I paid more attention to Linus Pauling, he was out on the West Coast.

MR. STERN: Promoting Vitamin C as the safeguard against all illness [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Well, the common cold at least [laughter].

MR. STERN: It didn't do much for flat feet [laughter], but he was determined to get people to take Vitamin C to prevent colds. You're right.

MS. FEIGIN: Didn't he win two Nobel Prizes?

MR. STERN: Two Nobels solo, all by himself. You're right. I should tell you also during that time I had other activities. I ran the campus radio station,

something that intrigued me. I was on the University Student Council as a college representative. I was a Sachem, which was one of these secret societies supposedly where you meet in the chapel crypt at midnight and plot various things presumably to help the school. I would show you the secret handshake, but then I would have to call for your assassination [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Well it's COVID era so we can't do handshakes in any event [laughter].

MR. STERN: Those were very good years.

MS. FEIGIN: Did your brother go there also?

MR. STERN: He did. He was an undergraduate at the college as well and took a degree in civil engineering at the engineering school and then went on to Harvard Business School where I'm sure he was corrupted [laughter]. We have eight Columbia degrees in our immediate family, and I know you have one or more as well.

I then went on to journalism school, which was a graduate school only. Journalism is not taught at Ivy League schools as an academic subject. They regard it as a science, sort of like plumbing [laughter]. You get an M.S. for studying journalism at the graduate level, not an M.A. You might wonder how I found myself at the legal end of things. When I was a senior at Columbia College, I had to write a senior thesis. We all did, and I wrote mine at the law school on what the difference was between right and wrong.

MS. FEIGIN: That sounds like philosophy.

MR. STERN: Don't ask me to explain it today. And then I stayed at the Journalism School, and I had to write a master's thesis when I left there, and I wrote that also at the law school, a paper on group defamation. Today I guess we'd call it hate speech. That was a wonderful experience. I had some great classmates: Lou Boccardi who went on to become head of the Associated Press; Oleg Kalugin, a master spy. I don't know if that name rings a bell, but he lives here in Washington now. He was a KGB general. He came as a sort of Russian exchange student. We all thought he was a fighter pilot. I even had him in my home with my parents. He was KGB. He finally turned on his Russian masters, so much so that to this day there is a death warrant out for him should he return to Russia. But we all enjoyed his company.

I did intern for a couple of weeks with Edward R. Murrow down at CBS. I can tell you that in the two weeks I was there, Edward R. Murrow never said one word to me [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Did you have a sense of him?

MR. STERN: Yes. He was obviously a towering intellect and towering communicator but only in his writings and his broadcasts. He was not loquacious. He didn't talk much. I guess he considered that a waste of time. He was not warm and fuzzy, but obviously we all regard him as a patron saint in the broadcast journalism business.

MS. FEIGIN: What was he doing? Was he doing news? He also had his *Here and Now* show.

MR. STERN: They had him doing some really dreadful shows that were aimed for a more popular audience, but when I was there, he was principally doing radio broadcasts, which was his forte anyway. It was one of life's experiences.

MS. FEIGIN: Before we leave Columbia, a couple of questions. People now don't know this and don't believe it, but Columbia then was all male.

MR. STERN: Oh yes. Of course there was Barnard across the street, and that's where I met my wife.

MS. FEIGIN: Barnard is still across the street, but Columbia is now, and has been for many years, co-ed.

MR. STERN: We all understood that Barnard women looked forward to taking classes at Columbia, which they were permitted to do, and the men looked forward to being in those classes that accepted women. We had ridiculous panty raids and things like that which I ought not attempt to explain.

MS. FEIGIN: Actually I think that would be fascinating because that is something nobody could imagine.

MR. STERN: The men from Columbia would assault the dormitories of Barnard across the street. When I say "assault," I don't want you to take that too literally. We would attempt, by one male student climbing upon another, to reach through a window that you could get into in the Barnard dormitory. Then the idea was to steal a piece of ladies' undergarments which you could then display to the world which presumably was quite interested to know what you were getting from the Barnard dormitories [laughter]. Those

were panty raids. That was it. I could go on but it's embarrassing as well as humiliating.

MS. FEIGIN: You graduated from Columbia what year?

MR. STERN: I graduated in 1958 and then I stayed another year at the Journalism School which in those days had a one-year program because it was assumed that most of the students were being sent there by their publishers or by their newspapers and magazines to learn how to be better reporters, and so I managed to wiggle my way in straight from the college. I have to confess I was a lousy journalism student [laughter]. For example, we had to spend an internship at the Middletown, New York newspaper, but only for a couple of days. I was sent there and I was made a photographer and so I was assigned on a given day to take some pictures of a flower show outside of town. I dutifully got in the car and drove that way. As I was leaving town, I passed a barbershop. I noticed something strange, state policemen coming out the door of the barbershop carrying a cash register. I said that's odd. I'm going to have to check into that. But of course I went on to my assignment. I came back into town and lo' and behold, the officers are back, bringing the cash register back in. I said that's really odd. So when I got back to the office I told them what I had seen. It turned out that was the first bookie raid, a gambling raid, in Middletown in about twenty years and here I was with my camera, and I had missed it now not once but twice! [laughter] That launched my career in journalism.

MS. FEIGIN: One more thing about your Columbia years. It seems to me, or am I wrong, those were pretty halcyon years at Columbia. Pretty quiet?

MR. STERN: So quiet in fact, without getting into partisan politics or where I stand today, my brother and I both joined the Young Republican Club because it was the only political club on campus and we were interested in contemporary politics. Oddly enough, Columbia in those days was called The Little Red Schoolhouse, as though it was packed with anarchists and bomb throwers. I'm just trying to tell you that those were very quiet years. They were the post-Eisenhower years. Eisenhower had already left. He had been the president of Columbia

MS. FEIGIN: And he was president of the country of course by that time.

MR. STERN: Yes. Actually, my interest in politics started around 1948 when Tom Dewey ran against Harry Truman. Harry Truman, who today we regard as a wonderful, wonderful person. When I think of all the excesses in the White House, I always remember Harry Truman kept on his desk a roll of stamps so if he was going to send a personal letter to somebody, like a critic criticizing his daughter's music performances, he wouldn't think of the government paying for his personal correspondence. In any event, in those days my father was quite a rabid Republican, so we were all for Tom Dewey, but Tom Dewey, as history records, lost in a surprise to Harry Truman.

Actually when you think about it, it wasn't much of a surprise. I remember while the election was under way, *Life* magazine, which in

those days used to publish these spreads over two pages in the middle, in the fold, pictures from the annual Governors Conference of the governors meeting at White Sulphur Springs or The Greenbrier or someplace, and they would have the governors stand in a chalk version done in tennis court chalk of a map of the United States. They would each stand there with a sign bearing the name of their state for this group picture which *Life* would publish every year. I still remember in 1948 during the election campaign the outline in there – the caption under the picture -- explained that each governor could be seen standing in the outline of his state holding the name of his state. (In those days it all would have been *his* state.) Except for Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. You could see the New York sign at his feet. When asked to hold the sign, he responded, “I’m no sandwich man.” [laughter] Well maybe that’s the sort of humility that cost him the election in 1948.

MS. FEIGIN: We should probably explain for people reading this down the road because they may not know what the reference to “sandwich man” is because there aren’t many anymore.

MR. STERN: Those were fellas walking around doing advertising, carrying signboards on their presence advertising sandwich shops nearby where office workers on their lunch break should go to buy their sandwich. They were called sandwich men, walking around with these boards strapped in front and behind which they put on over their heads in a sort of inverted “V” as they walked around.

MS. FEIGIN: Okay, so you got your master's at Columbia and then what?

MR. STERN: I applied for a job at a number of radio and television stations, all of them in the northeast, about as far south as Richmond maybe if we make that the edge of the north and maybe as far west as Chicago. I had several offers, but the one that was paying *real* money, I mean Cadillac money, was Cleveland. Ninety-five dollars a week! Now probably to readers that sounds like a relatively small sum, but when I went to work there, I lived next door to the radio station in a hotel and I rented a room by the month. It was a tiny room in the rear of the hotel but they did change the linens every day, and I paid the princely sum of \$75 a month for my room [laughter]. So \$95 a week! I went there saying I wanted to be a writer. Then when I got there, I found out that if I actually aired one of the newscasts -- each day's on-the-hour newscast that local stations do -- they would give me an extra \$5 a day. That brought me up to \$120 a week.

MS. FEIGIN: This was on radio?

MR. STERN: This was KYW radio, which today is in Philadelphia but in those days it was in Cleveland. There's a long story there but I'm sure not of interest to readers, but yes, this was a big radio station.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you have a beat or what was your assignment?

MR. STERN: Initially I was assigned to work at night to go out in a news cruiser, a big station wagon festooned with all sorts of lightning bolts on the side that advertised the name of the radio station, and I was to do rounds checks. That is to say you go to the police stations and hospitals checking in to see

if there's something going on. My duty was to call in to the on the air program twice an hour with a report of something that was going on in town so that we could say we were covering the city at night. I did that for about two months.

MS. FEIGIN: So there was something every hour? You had to come up twice an hour with something new?

MR. STERN: Yes, but if you're fairly resourceful – I never fibbed -- it's not hard. Now some of those stories may be fairly uninteresting, but I did that for about two months and then the person who was doing the radio show was switched to another job, and because my voice was familiar to his show, he was doing a night-time show, they put me in as the host, and that's what I did for the next two years. In those days, Cleveland was the ninth largest market in the country. I don't want to insult anyone's hometown, but it is I suspect now probably around 35th in the nation.

MS. FEIGIN: So you spent two years in Cleveland?

MR. STERN: No. I went on into television. All in all I did seven full years in Cleveland, and my wife and I loved it and love it to this day.

MS. FEIGIN: Your wife is now part of the story, so when did you get married?

MR. STERN: I got married in 1960 when my wife graduated from Barnard. I always say that she married me only because she wanted to live in Cleveland [laughter]. She disputes that, but in those days Cleveland was a fabulous city. It had the Cleveland Orchestra. The Cleveland Orchestra is still fabulous. But the Cleveland Art Museum and theaters, the Cleveland

Playhouse where my wife, who is an actor, was an ingenue on staff for a year or so and was very active in theater life there. We just had an enormously good time and did lots of things that we hadn't done in New York. My radio show was at night, which meant in the morning Joy, my wife, and I had spare time so once in a while we'd even go bowling [laughter]. In my day, kids from New York didn't go bowling [laughter], but we went bowling.

We had a wonderful time and made friendships there that we have to this day. When you're starting out in life, of course you build a life and it becomes in a way much more like home to you than even the places you've come from.

MS. FEIGIN: Right. So you transitioned to TV. How did that come about?

MR. STERN: It came about because the radio station reformatted. It went from basically a night-time talk format to night-time rock and roll format. It may startle you, but I'm not a rock and roll disc jockey [laughter]. Actually, the TV station was situated around the corner on the same floor. I was out of work for about two hours. The news director came in and said, hey, do you want to come work for us? So I took my hat and coat off the stand and went around the corner and started working in TV.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you have a specific beat in TV?

MR. STERN: Yes. At that point I was basically a government reporter if you will, city hall, county building, county administration building, that sort of thing.

MS. FEIGIN: Somewhere along the line you did law school.

MR. STERN: While I was doing the night-time radio show, we did a half hour every Monday with lawyers from the Cleveland Bar Association so that people could call in with their legal questions, and in those days, we didn't put people on the air in their own voice, so to speak. We were concerned, even with a seven-second delay which is mechanically easy to do just by threading the broadcast through a recording machine, but we were so nervous, if you will, about letting people speak on our airways virtually live. In fact, for about a year my wife would come down at night and help me just by being in the control room to screen incoming calls to make sure they were on target.

In any event, that half hour once a week where we had the lawyers, I discovered that I had difficulty comprehending what questioners or the lawyers were talking about. For example, somebody asked about a quit-claim deed, real estate property law, and I would think they said quick claim deed. So I thought it would be a good idea, and to be honest, I'd always been interested in the law. I wrote my master's thesis and my senior thesis at the law school at Columbia.

I started going to a night law school there, Cleveland Marshall, and to some extent knowing that I was studying law, I suppose that contributed to the news director wanting me to cover legal things. In fact, after I had been doing that for a few years, the station had been reacquired by NBC, the network. It was not when I joined. It was a Westinghouse station when I joined it. I was asked to do, and I did do, a three times a week

commentary on the NBC radio network out of Cleveland, and occasionally I got to do some network reports into *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*. So I was the first to do a piece on Jay Rockefeller when he ran to be secretary of state in West Virginia, and I did the first piece on John Glenn when he became one of the Mercury astronauts from New Concord, Ohio. I did the first report on television on John Glenn.

We did a lot of stories but being in Cleveland is not the same thing as being in New York or Washington, D.C. I recall at one point the first Job Corps camp was open, if anybody remembers Job Corps. This is back in the Kennedy era, R. Sargent Shriver. I was assigned to go down there and do a story in extreme southern Ohio on the first Job Corps camp, and I remember my newsroom boss told me to fly down there. He asked me to arrange for a flight to take me and my crew to go down there because it was too far to drive. I called the local aviation company, and they gave me a quote of \$250. I came back to my news director and told him, and he said that's way too much. He said talk to me tomorrow. So the next day I asked him, and he said yes, I have it all arranged. I said how much? He says \$50. I said \$50? He said, yeah. It's an airplane that belongs to Cleveland Freight Lines [laughter]. But we survived. Need I go on? I'm here.

MS. FEIGIN: So you did law school while you were still working?

MR. STERN: The answer is yes. What I ended up doing after the first year was I would go to Western Reserve University in the morning from about 9:00 to

11:00, two courses. Then I would go to work. I would do a broadcast about 6:15 on the television, and then I would go over to the night program at Cleveland-Marshall. I was able to do it. The two law schools had never really cooperated, but the dean of the night law school was the mayor of Shaker Heights where I lived and which I covered as a reporter, and the dean of the day law school at Western Reserve -- now Case Western Reserve -- was Oliver Schroeder, who was a University Heights councilman, who I also knew, so we worked it out. I actually have 50% of my credits from Western Reserve and 50% of my credits from Cleveland Marshall.

MS. FEIGIN: Where is your degree from?

MR. STERN: Cleveland-Marshall. I finally ran out of options to finish, which I did in four years rather than three. I had to take the final courses at Marshall which I did. Those were wonderful times, and obviously I learned a lot of things.

MS. FEIGIN: Interestingly, when I look at the reporters who cover the courts now, I'm surprised that a lot of them are not trained as lawyers but I think a lot of them take a course at Yale for a year, at the Yale Law School, even Linda Greenhouse [former *New York Times* reporter] and Pete Williams [NBC Justice correspondent]. I don't think either of them was trained as a lawyer.

MR. STERN: It's a wonderful program. Let me just say that it was fairly easy to get into Reserve in those days because -- and I don't mean to be unkind -- but

many of the students were young men who were seeking a draft deferment during the early days of the Vietnam War, and so they were not the most motivated students. At the night law school, they were motivated, and it's interesting. I did very well in law school. I was a magna cum laude. In those days, by the way, unlike how it is today, there was one summa cum laude at graduation and three magnas.

I just want to make a couple of observations. We had a study group, and I always advise young people going to law school to get into a good study group of people who are smarter than you are. Of course you don't want to study with people who are dumber than you are. In our study group we had five people and four out of the five of us ended up at the top of the class like birds on the telephone wire, all in a row, so we must have gotten something from each other by virtue of studying together and to end after those years at such a place.

MS. FEIGIN: The poor fifth person! [laughter]

MR. STERN: He owned a hardware store and he was busy at the store. I also learned, occasionally for example, I would go down to Columbus with one of my professors who I liked and I'd hear him argue cases at the Supreme Court down there. I can remember being with him, and I guess it wasn't at the Supreme Court, but he lost the case, and I couldn't understand how he had failed to win. His argument was overpowering I thought, and I remember him saying to me "If you're going to be a lawyer, you have to develop a tolerance for disappointment" and that has stuck with me to this day.

MS. FEIGIN: I assume, by the way, a lot of the people were trying to avoid the draft, but I assume that your class was almost entirely, or maybe entirely, male?

MR. STERN: Yes. Probably 90%.

MS. FEIGIN: So you think as many as 10% might have been women?

MR. STERN: Yes. But very few. I had some good stories during my time in Cleveland I was able to feed into the network. I had one story about the Pepper Pike police chief who had his patrol crews in the morning out distributing *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper, and he of course was getting the income from it. He explained that he was putting them on patrol but they were actually delivering newspapers for him [laughter]. And I covered the Sam Sheppard trial really from top to bottom.

MS. FEIGIN: You should say for people who won't know who Sheppard was and what that incredible trial was.

MR. STERN: There was, if you remember, the television show and movie *The Fugitive*. They were fictional dramas, using as their springboard the real-life conviction of Dr. Sam Sheppard, an osteopath, for the brutal murder of his wife Marilyn at their home in Bay Village, Ohio. He was convicted in 1954, but F. Lee Bailey, with whom I became fairly close in the years that followed, took Sam Sheppard's case. He got the Supreme Court of the United States to overturn the conviction about ten years after Sheppard had been convicted, on the basis of excessive adverse pre-trial publicity, and that was quite an experience. I spent a lot of time on that case.

MS. FEIGIN: F. Lee Bailey was quite a character.

MR. STERN: That he was. I remember when Sheppard's prior conviction was first overturned and Bailey managed to get him out on bond. I remember he had Sheppard come into the courtroom with his toiletries kit and plop it right on the table in front of the judges, saying "My client is ready to go back to prison tonight if you don't grant bond" [laughter]. F. Lee Bailey was a heck of a showman.

I still remember here in Washington in Duke Zeibert's restaurant, he used to have a cartoon at the front door. It showed these two inmates in their prison stripes talking in the cell and one prisoner says to the other "Your lawyer was Edward Bennett Williams? No kidding, my lawyer was F. Lee Bailey." So I have very vivid memories. Bailey was a superb lawyer, at least in those days. He later fell into some misdeeds, I guess.

I can still remember he had the county coroner, Doctor Sam Gerber, on the witness stand. This is in the second trial, and Gerber is explaining how one of the things that led him to believe that Dr. Sheppard was guilty was because there was a blood stain imprint from what appeared to be a surgical instrument on a pillow in Marilyn's bed where she laid beaten to death. And Bailey said "What kind of surgical instrument was it?", and Gerber said "I'm not sure." Bailey said "Did you look for one like it?" Gerber said "I searched all over and I never found one like it" and Bailey said, "Exactly." That was the end of his cross examination. Bailey was a marvelous lawyer.

I also kind of have this spooky memory still in my mind when Sheppard was acquitted at his second trial. He was leaving the courthouse with Bailey and as he left the courthouse -- the courthouse was in a building that was about 23 stories tall and also accommodated the county jail -- and in the half-light, this was at night, I have this memory of Sheppard walking down the steps of the courthouse a free man for the first time in many years. The prisoners up there, you could hear them applauding as Sheppard was walking down the steps.

The only time I really recall anything like that, and we'll get to this later, was during Watergate when Leon Jaworski went to argue the Nixon tapes case in the Supreme Court. He's walking up the steps and the passersby and the audience that had assembled, congregated on the Supreme Court steps, were applauding and somebody from the crowd yelled out "Go get 'em Leon" [laughter].

Those were fantastic days. In the beginning, I should tell you, I thought Sheppard had been wrongly convicted in 1954. But as I got to know him and his character better along the way, I don't want to suggest that I'm convinced he was guilty, but I wasn't convinced as years went on that he was innocent. For what it's worth, but I'm not going to convict him postmortem or however you want to describe that.

MS. FEIGIN: Are there any other major cases that you want to talk about during your Cleveland era?

MR. STERN: Of course I did moot court, law review, all that sort of stuff when I was in law school. Moot court, Blackacre and Whiteacre and all of that, and I argued in Detroit. I think we lost, my partner and me. While I was at Western Reserve, I wrote a paper on, believe it or not, ulcers -- whether ulcers should be a compensable injury under the workman's comp laws. There was a point where I had a little medical condition, it was not an ulcer, but it was like an ulcer, and that got me interested. It was a point at which the courts were just beginning to think about compensating non-traumatic injuries. For example, there was a famous case involving a D.C. transit owner, Roy Chalk, and his Trans Caribbean Airlines. His chief engineer had been driven nuts by Chalk to get a plane back in service that had a rusted wing or something and it got to a point where the engineer back in his room had a heart attack. The question was whether that was an on-the-job injury, and the court concluded that it was. It was really quite a pioneering ruling.

There was a similar case in New Jersey, I believe called *Carter*, which involved an assembly line worker who just couldn't keep up. There was a case out of the Eighth Circuit involving a railroad track switcher up in a tower. There was no sudden, traumatic injury in each case, but the stress of the job was so great they were predisposed to illness as a result. Employers looked to hire this type of responsible, eager people. Those are the workers who are more likely to get these kinds of injuries. So I wrote this paper at the Allen Memorial Library, the medical library, at Western

Reserve with the lyrical title “The Compensability of Non-traumatic Ulcers,” which was then published in the Cleveland Marshall Law Review. I can tell you that to this day no court in any jurisdiction has ever cited that article for any proposition [laughter]. It was among the articles I managed to do when I was doing law review.

MS. FEIGIN: To be able to do law review and have a full-time job, I can’t imagine.

MR. STERN: I should tell you, I did have one case for myself. It was not in court. It was before the Internal Revenue Service, in their appellate division or whatever they call themselves. When I was going to law school, I deducted the cost of my education. My total law school education for four years came to about \$5,000. In any event, they challenged the deductibility. The question was whether I was looking to enter another plateau by going to law school. Did I want to become a lawyer, or was I just trying to improve myself in the occupation that I had. And I successfully argued that case. Fortunately I turned out not to be a liar. They didn’t come after me [laughter].

I guess I am best remembered in Cleveland for the fact that when I first went on the air there, I was very young. I was probably maybe 22 or 23 and I looked it and the boss saw me in the newsroom reading with my glasses. I did not wear them on the air. He said you know you really look older and smarter with your glasses. I tried it, but the glare from the studio lights was too much. So I went across the street to an optician and I bought a pair of frames and for years in Cleveland when I was on the air I

wore frames with no glass in them at all. My vision was still good enough. The point of this story is no one ever caught it! I would reach through and scratch the corner of my eye. I'd have an itch; I'd reach right through the frames, and nobody ever caught it [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: That's a great story. I thought it was only women who had to go through appearance adjustments [laughter].

MR. STERN: I had wonderful training in how government works. Let me give you an example or two. I learned that politicians exaggerate. I know you won't believe that, but it's true. Governor James Rhodes was running for reelection on an issue that if voters would pass a highway bond issue he was advocating they would put a lot of people to work in Ohio. I went to work one day and the headline in the paper says Rhodes says passage of highway bond issue means 140,000 new jobs in Ohio. I thought, gee, that's an awfully large number. I looked at the U.S. Statistical Abstract that said there were 135,000 construction workers of all types in the state of Ohio. So I called the governor's office, and I said where does this figure come from? They said they didn't know, ask the highway department. I called the highway department and they said ask the governor. That night the governor was in Cleveland. I went up to him and I asked where does the 140,000 come from? He said that's simple. When you put a man to work – in those days it was men – we've got maybe 7,000 men in the entire state working on these highways. He says when you put a man to work, he supports his family, his wife, his kids, so

it's like putting four people to work. Four times 7,000, that's 28,000. But this is a five-year program. Five times 28,000 is 140,000. So I learned political math. That's one thing I learned [laughter].

I also learned that politics is a business of getting along with other people, even adversaries. I was with Mike DiSalle, the governor, the night he lost to Rhodes, the two of us and a radio reporter from Cleveland. I was sitting on his porch waiting. DiSalle knew he had lost, but we were waiting for the final results to come in from Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, the largest county. And Ray Miller, the clerk there, was sitting on the results because he didn't want to acknowledge that his Democratic colleague DiSalle had lost. It was getting later and later. We're saying Mike, please, we want to pack it up and go to bed. And DiSalle said "Look, it's sort of like Timothy on his deathbed. The priest comes in to give him the last rites and the priest says 'Timothy being as you're on your deathbed, it's time to renounce Satan.' Timothy looks up at him and says 'Father, being as I'm on my deathbed and not knowing where I'm headed, I'm in no position to make enemies' [laughter]. So that's me and Ray Miller." I learned the business of politics and political math by being a reporter in Ohio. And what I learned, of course, was that it's no different in the big time.

MS. FEIGIN: How did you get to the big time?

MR. STERN: Toward the middle of 1966, I was asked to cover a . . .

MS. FEIGIN: Excuse me. Let me pause you one minute. Before we get to that question, it occurs to me you were in Cleveland during some really tumultuous times. The Kennedy assassination, for example. Tell me about that.

MR. STERN: It pains me to do that. As a journalist, I always managed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. When President Kennedy was assassinated, Joy and I had been in Washington. I was covering an urban renewal hearing that concerned Cleveland. Joy was actually in the Cabinet Room at the White House, a visit that had been arranged by our congressman, seeing Jack and Jackie take off from the South Lawn to go to Dallas. To make the story short, I got food poisoning, and I had to rush home to Cleveland, and I was in bed when President Kennedy was shot in Dallas.

The only thing like it was when I was with Martin Luther King in Charleston in 1968 covering his various crusades and campaigns. And there came a point where I called the office and said look I've done about all I could do. I'd better go home. And I went home, and the next day, Reverend King was shot and killed. And I was there the day before. So timing is everything in life, and it's amazing that I wasn't canned by every employer I ever had.

MS. FEIGIN: Wow. Okay, so we're about to get to the big time.

MR. STERN: In 1966, I was asked to come to Washington to cover The World Peace Through Law Conference, which was held in Washington, D.C. I did a piece on the air about that, and the bureau chief in Washington sounded

me out about doing more things in Washington, and the next thing I knew, I was reassigned by New York, where NBC's headquarters is, and the deal was that if I stayed in Cleveland through the end of the Sam Sheppard trial and the Congressional elections of 1966, then I was to move to D.C., which I did. I think my wife would tell you she's still upset. In those days, Washington, D.C. – I mean this is before White Flint, before Watergate, before the Kennedy Center, before Bloomingdales – was not a very exciting place to be. But obviously, for a reporter, it was a great place to be.

MS. FEIGIN: What was your assignment to be in Washington?

MR. STERN: It also took an odd turn. I covered the Supreme Court and the Justice Department, essentially the legal beat, and some other agencies. I had a desk actually in the Justice Department press room, and I covered the ICC, the FCC, the FTC, which were also there in the Federal Triangle.

MS. FEIGIN: Is there still a Justice Department press room?

MR. STERN: Yes. There is. In fact, my will is witnessed by the three pressroom reporters from 1967. I hope they're still alive. In any event, I primarily covered the Supreme Court for radio, but I was not being used on TV because in those days, this goes back to *Huntley-Brinkley*, if your readers remember *Huntley-Brinkley*. Huntley did the national and international news in his part of the show and he was on first. Brinkley did the Washington stuff, but there wasn't a lot for Brinkley, who was a wonderful reporter and broadcaster. There wasn't a lot for him to do because we had

a marvelous reporter at the Pentagon and a marvelous reporter on the Hill and such, so Brinkley liked to do the Supreme Court stuff himself, as what we call “readers.” So the bureau chief assigned me, and this was really from the get-go, to be the number two person, the back-up man, to our White House correspondent, Ray Scherer. So for the first year-and-a-half I was in Washington, I fed Justice Department and Supreme Court stories to radio and I otherwise worked as Ray Scherer’s backup at the White House.

MS. FEIGIN: What did that involve?

MR. STERN: A lot of radio pieces and occasional TV pieces.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you interact with the president? These were tumultuous times.

MR. STERN: Every time is tumultuous. I can’t really point to one that wasn’t. Of course, when we get to that, and I know we’ll probably do that at our next session, when we get to Watergate and things like that, then we’re really going to talk about tumult. But it was tumultuous in another sense. The Vietnam War era produced a lot of demonstrations in Washington and that produced a lot of chaos and incidents of one kind or another.

I can remember standing with Attorney General Mitchell and his press guy Jack Landau on the balcony just outside his office during one of these anti-Vietnam demonstrations. It was swirling around the building and the police were throwing tear gas at the demonstrators, some of whom were throwing red paint or eggs at the building and so on, and I remember Mitchell said to me “Looks like the Russian Revolution down there,

doesn't it?" [laughter] Troops from the 101st Airborne were stationed in the hallways on the first floor in case demonstrators tried to enter the building, and piles of -- I think it was calcium chloride -- stacked like sandbags on the first floor, which were to be used to dispel clouds of teargas if they reached the building.

MS. FEIGIN: What year was it that you moved to Washington?

MR. STERN: I actually began working at the bureau the first of the year of 1967, and of course I had to get accustomed to Washington. For a new reporter who had never covered Washington, anything in Washington, it was a little daunting. I recall the very first assignment I got I was sent by the deskman, George Cheely, down to the State Department to cover Dean Rusk's weekly briefing. I forget what day of the week it was, but he would hold forth up on the seventh floor, sort of an on background press briefing.

MS. FEIGIN: We should say Dean Rusk was Secretary of State.

MR. STERN: Right. Secretary of State Dean Rusk. And so I went there. Of course, I had never been in the State Department before. I had never seen Dean Rusk before. He holds forth, and I'm diligently taking notes, and when he's finished, I called in to Cheely on the desk. The first thing George asked me is "Okay, Carl, what did he say that's new?" Well that's what you would expect he would ask. I said "New? How would I know?" [laughter] Which illustrates I think the importance of having veteran

reporters on these beats. So that was sort of my introduction to covering Washington.

MS. FEIGIN: Were you covering when President Johnson announced he wasn't going to run again?

MR. STERN: Yes. I lost a lot of money. I was betting he would.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you cover that story?

MR. STERN: I'm sure I did. But I want to back up just a step. In the Vietnam War era, particularly when the Nixon administration came in, actually in 1969 and 1970, 1971, et cetera, for the Justice Department, that was quite a frenetic era. It was an era of Guy Goodwin. His name is probably not even known to you, but he was the prosecutor in I think the Criminal Division. I don't remember if they had a National Security sort of section then. In any event, Guy Goodwin was the guy going after all the anti-war -- what he might have regarded as anarchists -- bomb throwers, et cetera, Leslie Bacon and the crowd that was over there around 18th and Lanier Place who planted a bomb in the restroom at the Capitol building. The era of the Berrigans who supposedly wanted to blow up the steam tunnels all over Washington. All the madness of the anti-war era was being played out in Washington. Almost all those matters ended up sooner or later in front of the magistrate or judge in the District courthouse here. They even hauled in Jack Anderson's colleague, Les Whitten -- Jack Anderson, the columnist -- because of the things Anderson was learning and writing about. It was a

very, very busy time period. So the idea that things were ever quiet, that's not so.

MS. FEIGIN: Guy Goodwin worked at the Justice Department or the U.S. Attorney's Office?

MR. STERN: He was Main Justice. Of course, he was not alone. There were others with him, but he was sort of the head person. They were trying to prosecute as many people as they could who they felt were endangering the peace of the United States. The FBI, which I also covered then – obviously it's a component of the Justice Department – was also extremely active. That was the era of going after the Weathermen Underground and all of the fugitive hunts, the black bag jobs.

MS. FEIGIN: In those days, I believe, the FBI was housed in the Department of Justice?

MR. STERN: The Director was. The Director was also just around the corner [from the press room] on the fifth floor, and from time to time, I would see the Director. I remember when Martin Luther King came to visit and then Hoover came outside afterwards and called him a goddamn liar and all sorts of things. I managed to make Hoover's no-contact list.

MS. FEIGIN: Explain what that means, a no-contact list.

MR. STERN: The instruction to the press office, what they called external affairs, was not to be nice because of some stuff I had done, some stories I had done about the FBI.

MS. FEIGIN: What do you think it was that angered him?

MR. STERN:

It's a little bit too complicated to explain, but basically something had occurred. I forget what, and the FBI person with whom I was communicating said the Bureau was not involved and then the press chief of Main Justice told me they were involved. Hoover thought that I had violated an off-the-record. His guy had told me they weren't involved. I said look, you guys are working for the same outfit. I'm just trying to get the story straight. But that resulted in my making the no-contact list.

I had encounters with Hoover. I can recall one in particular. I got wind that Hoover was going to appear before Congressman John Rooney's subcommittee, which handled his appropriation every year. It was time for his annual meeting with Rooney's subcommittee behind closed doors and that he was going to reveal this so-called plot by the anti-war Catholic group, the Berrigans, to kidnap Henry Kissinger and to blow up the Washington steam tunnels under the Capitol and so on. We can talk about the Berrigan trial in the next episode. I waited outside the room when Hoover came out. I was the only reporter there, although there were a couple of photographers, and as he came out, I accosted him with my tape recorder and microphone trying to get him to talk to me. He said not a word, just stoic, looking straight ahead to his car. Well, a photographer took a picture of the two of us walking along and sent it to me. So I went into the FBI press office, to the number two guy, Bud Leinbaugh, and I said "Bud, I'm not so jaded that I wouldn't like Hoover's autograph. Can you get me it?" "Yeah, sure, don't worry about it." So six months later, I

still don't have a picture. I go in to see Bud and asked what happened to my picture. "Oh, don't worry." Finally, Hoover dies. I go in to see Bud, and I said, "Bud what happened to my picture?" He says, "Don't you know as long as Hoover knew you wanted something, you were never going to get it?" He was holding out that picture to try to keep me in line [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Oh man. Well that's better than what he did to a lot of other people.

MR. STERN: Well that's another story. That's Cointelpro, which we also may talk about in the next chapter.

MS. FEIGIN: Absolutely.

MR. STERN: What else can I tell you?

MS. FEIGIN: We have you still on radio and TV. Didn't you segue to just TV?

MR. STERN: I did both. One of the secrets is that in those days, radio actually paid better than being on TV [laughter]. It's because in those days we were paid by the piece. We had a base salary, which was the same for all of the correspondents, \$45,000 a year. They also had to keep track of how many spots you were doing if the accumulated pieces exceeded your base pay. A radio piece paid the same as a television spot. I could do twenty or more radio pieces a week without difficulty. I might do one television spot a week. I was making out like a bandit on my radio fees, so I continued. I also did a radio newscast. They gave me one hourly. I think it was 6:00 or 7:00 at night on the radio network from the bureau. I would

go in to do one newscast that I would write, a five-minute newscast, but that didn't always work out too well.

I remember, for some reason it would always happen about a half hour before my newscast, there would be some catastrophic landslide in some South American city where thousands of people had perished. I can't speak Spanish to save myself, and I could never pronounce the names of the places where these catastrophes occurred. All I can tell you is the catastrophes occurred, but that wasn't noted until the newscast following mine [laughter].

Once I had to substitute for Russ Ward on *World News Tonight*, which was a ten-minute co-op radio newscast, co-op meaning the local stations could drop in their commercials. The timing was very important for the local stations to know when the network feed ended and where the commercials would be, so timing was very important. You had to hit certain times on the clock. The first time I did it, I thought it went very well. In fact, I could see a bit of a commotion outside the glass-windowed booth from which we did our radio broadcasts, and people seemed to be waving at me. I really felt great. It turns out that I had run one minute short [laughter] for which I compensated the next night by running one minute long [laughter]. So you really wonder why anybody kept me on the payroll.

MS. FEIGIN: [laughter] You ultimately left radio completely for TV?

MR. STERN: Well radio left us. NBC sold NBC Radio. If you ask me what year, I would need some time to think about that. But eventually the NBC bureau here did no radio broadcasts, or they may have done a few feature-type things, but the daily coverage actually came out of a different floor and ultimately a different building. I continued to file every day, two or three maybe more reports, typed reports – on paper – which went to radio as well as to TV, but generally I stopped doing radio when they split off NBC radio network from TV.

MS. FEIGIN: Do you have any personal stories about the attorneys general you covered? You covered some interesting people out of the Justice Department. Do you have a sense of Mitchell, since we have been talking about that era?

MR. STERN: I can tell you a little about each of them; I covered fourteen attorneys general. I don't know how much tape you have here. Katzenbach was my first attorney general, but he left shortly after I came, although I don't think that was the reason [laughter]. And then Ramsey Clark, and Ramsey Clark was a very idealistic, very decent guy, really a privilege to work with.

I have one story that I don't know that I've ever told. The main actors are probably pretty well gone by now. During the search for Eric Starvo Galt – do you remember Eric Starvo Galt? That was the name. The FBI was looking for James Earl Ray, the assassin of Martin Luther King. He had used the name Eric Starvo Galt. Lyndon Johnson ordered Ramsey Clark to fly down to Memphis immediately with Deke DeLoach,

the FBI number three guy maybe – I don't know if he was number three but he was sort of the liaison with the White House – to try to calm things down in Memphis. Apparently as they were approaching Memphis – this is all second-hand – Ramsey asked DeLoach, “What can I tell the press?” DeLoach said “Tell them we'll catch the criminal within a week.” Clark says “I can't tell them that. What if you don't?” They made a wager. The bet was that Ramsey Clark was to get a case of sherry if the killer wasn't found within a week. He was – after three weeks. The result? On Friday afternoons, we would go in to sit with Ramsey Clark in his office and have sherry. It wasn't contraband. It came from the FBI [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: That's a great story.

MR. STERN: So these things happen.

MS. FEIGIN: Okay. I think that's probably a good place to stop. You covered some amazing trials in D.C., so next session I hope we can get to some of them unless there's anything you want to add before we sign off.

MR. STERN: I was just about to tell you something about the search for James Earl Ray, which was in those days the FBI didn't have an automated system to whatever extent they have one now, and I recall the circumstances under which they finally did identify James Earl Ray who was not arrested until three weeks later, as I mentioned, in London. That's another long story. But in those days, FBI fingerprint records were kept literally in shoe boxes in a building just beyond the Capitol building in Washington, in that area where HHS is. They had millions of fingerprints and they had to start

somewhere. Somebody said, “Why don’t we start in the fugitive file?”, and lucky for them, the fugitive file had only 40,000 entries. Literally going through them one by one by hand, they found James Earl Ray. But if the supervisor hadn’t had that thought to start with the fugitives, they might still be looking.

MS. FEIGIN: Where was the fingerprint that they got?

MR. STERN: It was left on the windowsill of a bathroom from which James Earl Ray had fired the shot. I think it was a thumb print.

I wanted to mention something about the perils of covering news for audiences that were unlike the ones I knew in New York or Cleveland. One moment was a real awakening for me – made me realize that I wasn't in Kansas anymore, to use the words from *The Wizard of Oz*.

I was invited from time to time by organizations to give a speech. For a while I accepted money, but after a while I stopped accepting money because I came to believe it was wrong. In any event, in 1969 I was invited – this was my first speech invitation – to give a talk to the Medical Association in New Orleans, Louisiana. At that point I had been covering the Supreme Court for two years, and I gave what I thought would be a valuable speech in which I was trying to explain that even some of the most controversial decisions of the Supreme Court had really been justified and even made sense if you really knew the facts of the case. This was an era of “Impeach Earl Warren” posters and billboards and so on, but I didn't fully realize that. In any event, I went and I gave this

speech to the Association. It had a practice then of publishing the talk it had received in its bi-monthly news publication. It would publish the text of what the speaker had said. And they did. They published without alteration the speech that I had given. But an editor's note had been inserted on the top of this article, and it read: "The views of the author are held in disrepute by responsible conservative authorities, but we believe even the views of our enemies should be heard." That was my introduction to another part of America.

MS. FEIGIN: That makes me ask one follow-up because ethics is something that's fascinating to me. You mentioned that you began by accepting remuneration and then you decided it was wrong. Do you want to explain that? What made you come to think it was wrong?

MR. STERN: There came a time when I was invited by telephone executives of AT&T to address a regional meeting they were having in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I went and I gave a talk, but I realized when I was there – this was at a time of the AT&T breakup litigation – that in a sense they invited me more because they wanted to color my impression of the litigation for my reporting than that they really wanted to hear me talk about the personalities in Washington. That was the first reason I decided no more.

There was a second incident that occurred. I'm slightly loathe to explain it because the person involved is still very active today in the news business, but there was a case that involved a small college, Grove City

College in Pennsylvania, that raised a Title IX question. The question was whether they were failing to do enough to give women students an equal opportunity to engage in athletics. The legal question presented to the Supreme Court was whether the federal government could cut off all federal programming money to the school or just to that program. I went up to Grove City College to do a story on that because it obviously had ramifications for other schools as well. I brought with me several clippings from the newspaper, wonderful articles in *The Washington Post* by a columnist lauding this brave little school that was fighting this thing. I brought those articles with me because they contained factual information that was valuable to me in putting the story together. The president of the college, when I was interviewing him for television, said do you ever give speeches? I said yes. He said we just had so and so, and he mentioned this fellow's name. It was the guy who had written these columns. The president said we just had him here a month or so ago and paid him \$15,000. I said – well, I didn't say anything. That's what finally drove me out of this idea of accepting money.

I had first encountered it actually with the FBI, believe it or not. When I was first in Washington in 1967, I was invited down to Quantico to give a talk to new agents, to participate in a session about how to deal with the media. Okay. I came back. A few days later, I get a phone call from the FBI, from some administrative office, asking for my Social Security number. I said "Why?"

MS. FEIGIN: You'd think the FBI would know it [laughter].

MR. STERN: But this is the administrative office. They said we're sending you a check. I said, "A check?" "Yeah, for \$1,000." This was when a thousand dollars was money. I said "I can't take money from you. I cover you." They said, "We do this all the time with news people who come down here and talk." Clearly, the Bureau should not have been doing that, and of course reporters should not have been taking money if the FBI is anywhere within the ambit of their journalistic activities.

MS. FEIGIN: Right, but for all we know it could still go on.

MR. STERN: I don't know. I don't want to say that because I don't know it.

MS. FEIGIN: This was a personal determination by you as opposed to someone outside?

MR. STERN: Absolutely. I don't want to be sanctimonious, but it's improper. And I was being properly paid by my employer. I have a wife to support me. What do I care? [laughter]

MS. FEIGIN: [laughter] Okay. Thank you.