

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

University History Series  
Department of History at Berkeley

Winthrop D. Jordan

HISTORIAN OF SLAVERY AND RACE RELATIONS IN AMERICA, PROFESSOR AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1963-1982

Interviews conducted by  
Ann Lage in 2004

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Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Winthrop D. Jordan, "HISTORIAN OF SLAVERY AND RACE RELATIONS IN AMERICA, PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1963-1982", conducted by Ann Lage, 2004, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.



Winthrop D. Jordan

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[End of Interview]

## PREFACE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT BERKELEY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

The Department of History at Berkeley oral history series grew out of Gene Brucker's 1995 Faculty Research Lecture on "History at Berkeley." In developing his lecture on the transformations in the UC Berkeley Department of History in the latter half of the twentieth century, Brucker, whose tenure as professor of history from 1954 to 1991 spanned most of this period, realized how much of the story was undocumented.

Discussion with Carroll Brentano, coordinator of the University History Project at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, history department faculty wife, and a former graduate student in history, reinforced his perception that a great deal of the history of the University and its academic culture was not preserved for future generations. The Department of History, where one might expect to find an abiding interest in preserving a historical record, had discarded years of departmental files, and only a fraction of history faculty members had placed their personal papers in the Bancroft Library.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, many of the most interesting aspects of the history—the life experiences, cultural context, and personal perceptions—were only infrequently committed to paper.<sup>2</sup> They existed for the most part in the memories of the participants.

Carroll Brentano knew of the longtime work of the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) in recording and preserving the memories of participants in the history of California and the West and the special interest of ROHO in University history. She and Gene Brucker then undertook to involve Ann Lage, a ROHO interviewer/editor who had conducted a number of oral histories in the University History Series and was herself a product of Berkeley's history department. In the course of a series of mutually enjoyable luncheon meetings, the project to document the history of the Department of History at Berkeley evolved.

In initial discussions about the parameters of the project, a crucial decision was made. Rather than conduct short oral histories focused on topics limited to departmental history, we determined to work with selected members of the department to conduct more lengthy biographical memoirs. We would record relevant personal background—family, education, career choices, marriage and children; discuss other institutional affiliations; explore the process of creating their historical works and changes in the discipline. A central topic for each would be, of course, the Department of History at Berkeley—its governance, the informal and formal relationships among colleagues, the connections with the broader campus, and curriculum and teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bancroft Library holds papers from history professors Walton Bean, Woodbridge Bingham, Herbert Bolton, Woodrow Borah, William J. Bouwsma, George Guttridge, George Hammond, John Hicks, David Keightley, Joseph Levenson, Martin Malia, Henry May, Thomas Metcalf, William Alfred Morris, Frederic Paxson, Herbert Priestley, Franz Schurmann, Engel Sluiter, Raymond Sontag, and Kenneth Stampf. Miscellaneous files of the Department, 1915-1929, are also held in Bancroft's University Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Two published memoirs recall the Berkeley history department: John D. Hicks, *My Life with History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) recalls his years as professor and dean, 1942-1957; Henry F. May reflects on his years as an undergraduate at Berkeley in the thirties in *Coming to Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Using the Brucker lecture as a point of departure, it was decided that the project would first document the group of professors who came to the department in the immediate postwar years, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. This group, most of them retired, was the one whose distinguished teaching and publications initially earned the department its high national rating. They made the crucial hiring and promotion decisions that cemented the department's strength and expanded the curriculum to meet new academic interests. At the same time, they participated in campus governing bodies dealing with central social, political, and cultural issues of their times: challenges to civil liberties and academic freedom, the response to tumultuous student protests over free speech, civil rights and the Vietnam War, and the demands for equality of opportunity for women and minorities. And they benefitted from the postwar years of demographic and economic growth in California, accompanied for the most part through the 1980s with expanding budgets for higher education.

Carroll Brentano and Gene Brucker committed themselves to facilitate project funding and to enlist the interest of potential participants. Members of the department responded with interest, joined the periodic lunch confabs, offered advice in planning, and helped find funding. In the spring of 1996, Brentano and Professor Sheldon Rothblatt organized a symposium, titled "Play It Again, Sam." There, Gene Brucker restaged his Faculty Research Lecture. Professor Henry F. May responded with his perceptions of events, followed by comments from other history faculty, all videotaped for posterity and the Bancroft Library.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the oral history project got underway with interviews with Delmer Brown, professor of Japanese history, and Kenneth Stampp, American history, both of whom came to Berkeley in 1946. To date, we have completed a total of seventeen in-depth oral histories with this group, nine of which are now in print and on line. The interviewees represent a variety of subject fields and historical approaches. The series also includes one interview with a faculty wife. (View on line at [http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/univ\\_hist/history\\_department.html](http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/univ_hist/history_department.html))

Diverse in their personal backgrounds and scholarly interests, the faculty who came to the department in the postwar years had one thing in common: all but one were men.<sup>4</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, as more women completed PhDs, women within the academy and the women's movement nationally worked to increase women in tenured faculty positions. The Department of History at Berkeley slowly began to add women to its faculty, beginning in 1971 with the appointment of Natalie Zemon Davis. By 1990, the department had two female full professors, five associate professors, and four assistant professors, of a total tenure-line faculty of sixty-two. During these years, women historians nationally were part of a broader critique of universalist assumptions about history and society that included significant contributions from Berkeley faculty. Feminist scholars, in particular, were integral to the radical changes in subject matter studied, methodology, and modes of discourse in the profession.<sup>5</sup> The new intellectual and

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<sup>3</sup> The Brucker lecture and May response, with an afterword by David Hollinger, are published in *History at Berkeley: A Dialog in Three Parts* (Chapters in the History of the University of California, Number Seven), Carroll Brentano and Sheldon Rothblatt, editors [Center for Studies in Higher Education and Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998].

<sup>4</sup> Adrienne Koch was a faculty member, 1958-1965.

<sup>5</sup> Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York, London: W.W.

programmatic directions associated with an increase in female faculty were accompanied by sometimes contentious battles at Berkeley as elsewhere over the evaluation of academic work, teaching priorities, and curriculum development.

The second phase of the project on the Department of History at Berkeley focuses on the women faculty who came to Berkeley in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2003, Natalie Davis was interviewed during a visit to the campus, and in 2008 we launched a three-year project to document seven more of Berkeley's women historians. As in earlier interviews, we explore the faculty member's contribution to her scholarly field, examining the development of her intellectual project and working methods, and probe experiences relevant to understanding the development of the discipline and the department. In addition, we discuss challenges facing women in the academy over the course of their professional careers.

The organizers of this project are grateful to the Department of History and to the many individual donors that have made these interviews possible. The considerable interest in the fruits of our project to date confirms our initial premise that departmental histories and personal memoirs are essential to the unraveling of some knotty puzzles: What kind of a place is this University of California, Berkeley, to which we have committed much of our lives? What is this academic culture in which we are enmeshed? And what is this enterprise History, in which we all engage? As one of the project instigators reflected, "Knowing what was is essential; and as historians we know the value of sources, even if they are ourselves."

Carroll Brentano, Coordinator  
University History Project  
Center for Studies in Higher Education

Gene Brucker  
Shepard Professor of History Emeritus

Ann Lage, Project director  
Regional Oral History Office  
Berkeley, California  
May 2009

January 2009

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT BERKELEY**

- Bouwsma, Beverly Hancock. *Observer of Campus and Community Culture, Berkeley Department of History Faculty Wife, 1956-2001*. 2008, 136 pp.
- Bouwsma, William J. *Historian of European Culture in the Early Modern Era, University of California, Berkeley, 1956-1991*. 2008, 137 pp.
- Brown, Delmer M. *Professor of Japanese History, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1977*. 2000, 410 pp.
- Brentano, Robert. *Scholar and Teacher of Medieval History, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-2002*. 2005, 370 pp.
- Brucker, Gene. *Historian of Renaissance Florence, University of California, Berkeley, 1954-1991*. 2005, 211 pp.
- Jordan, Winthrop D. *Historian of Slavery and Race Relations in America, Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, 1963-1982*. 2009, 194 pp.
- Keightley, David N. *Historian of Early China, University of California, Berkeley, 1969-1998*. 2003. 163 pp.
- May, Henry F. *Professor of American Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-1980*. 1999, 218 pp.
- Malia, Martin Edward. *Historian of Russian and European Intellectual History*. 2005, 229 pp.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. *Professor of Russian and European Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1957-1997*. 1998, 310 pp.
- Schorske, Carl E. *Intellectual Life, Civil Libertarian Issues, and the Student Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, 1960-1969*. 2000, 203 pp.
- Stamp, Kenneth M. *Historian of Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1983*. 1998, 310 pp.

Donated Collection:

Borah, Woodrow W. *Woodrow W. Borah interview : oral history transcript*, by James W. Wilkie and Rebecca Horn, 1983. Transcript in Bancroft Library.

In process:

Davis, Natalie, Early Modern Europe

Halperin, Tulio, Latin American history

Herr, Richard, Early and Late Modern Europe, Spain and France

Levine, Lawrence, United States cultural history

Litwack, Leon, United States history, African American history

Wakeman, Frederic, Historian of China

## INTERVIEW HISTORY—Winthrop D. Jordan

Winthrop Donaldson Jordan, a New Englander born and bred, came to Berkeley in 1963 after attending Phillips Andover Academy, Harvard University for a BA in social relations, Clark University for an MA in history, and Brown University for his PhD in history. When he arrived in Berkeley he had completed the research for and had determined the “fundamental shape” of the manuscript of his landmark history of racial attitudes, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (University of North Carolina, 1968). Jordan taught at Berkeley for nearly twenty years, departing in 1982 for a position in the Department of History at the University of Mississippi in Oxford.

Jordan was interviewed for the Department of History at Berkeley oral history series during a visit to Berkeley in July 2004. We met for nearly eight hours over a three-day period, first discussing the important influences of his family background, with women’s rights, abolitionist, and Quaker heritage and his education and teaching experiences before Berkeley. He spoke of the genesis, research, conceptualization, writing, and reception of *White over Black*. He provided an insightful perspective on the Department of History at Berkeley when he arrived as part of the large cohort of male historians hired during the sixties, the department’s response to the social and political turmoil of the sixties and early seventies, and a diminished collegiality in the later seventies and eighties.

With his interest and scholarly background in racial attitudes, Jordan was called on to take an active role in campus governance, particularly in efforts to increase diversity in the student body and during the racially charged events surrounding establishment of an ethnic studies program on campus. He discusses in the oral history his efforts as the first associate dean of the Graduate Division for Minority Group Affairs, 1968-1970, his experiences and observations during the Third World Strike in 1969, and his involvement in the early years of the Afro-American studies department.

Lastly, he discusses leaving Berkeley for the University of Mississippi, life and teaching at Ole Miss, and the research and writing of another prize-winning book, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press) in 1993.

Winthrop Jordan died in February 2007. He did not review the transcript of his oral history, presented here as it was recorded. Audio files of the interview are available for listening at the Bancroft Library.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. A major focus of the office since its inception has been university history. The list of completed oral histories documenting the history of the Department of History at Berkeley is included in this volume. Most of the interviews in this and other subject areas can be found online at <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/>. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in the Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections, and audio files of the

interview are available for listening in the Bancroft Library. The Regional Oral History Office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Richard Candida-Smith.

Ann Lage  
Interviewer, Project Director  
Berkeley, CA  
March, 2008

**Interview with Winthrop D. Jordan****Interviewed by: Ann Lage****[Interview #1: July 15, 2004]**

[Begin Jordan, Winthrop 01 07-15-04]

01:00:00:45

**Lage:**

Now, I want to identify our oral history: this is the oral history of Winthrop Jordan as part of our study of the history of the history department of Berkeley. And today's July 15, 2004. We're just getting started. You're visiting, our schedules only overlap for two days, so we're trying to compress a lot into two days. Let's start with personal background. The historians at Berkeley have an amazing diversity of personal backgrounds and it always seems to affect how they write, what they write. So let's think about yours.

01:00:01:25

**Jordan:**

I grew up mired in an extended New England family. I grew up on the campus of Clark University in Worcester, where I was born, Worcester, Massachusetts. With a lot of family in the Boston area, and the family originating from Maine and Massachusetts. I grew up on the Clark campus, the house was right next to the main building at this very small but good university.

01:00:02:07

**Lage:**

Let's go a little more into your family. Was your father a professor?

01:00:02:12

**Jordan:**

My father [Henry Donaldson Jordan] was a professor and for a while a dean.

01:00:02:13

**Lage:**

Of?

01:00:02:14

**Jordan:**

He was a professor of English history. His father was a professor of bacteriology at the University of Chicago and my other grandfather was a pediatrician, of the first generation.

01:00:02:38

**Lage:**

First generation?

01:00:02:39

**Jordan:**

First generation of the specialty of pediatrics.

01:00:02:41

**Lage:**

Oh, I see.

01:00:02:42

**Jordan:**

He was the class of, the medical school class at Harvard of 1890. Most of the family had gone to Harvard.

01:00:02:53

**Lage:**

Including your father?

01:00:02:54

**Jordan:**

Including my father. He got his undergraduate degree and then his graduate degree. I went to a small private school, the Bancroft School, which was the only one in the city, because the public schools were so crummy.

01:00:03:14

**Lage:**

Not named after our Bancroft here, I'm sure.

01:00:03:17

**Jordan:**

Not the same Bancroft.

01:00:03:22

**Lage:**

George.

01:00:03:23

**Jordan:**

George Bancroft rather than Hubert.

01:00:03:25

**Lage:**

Right.

01:00:03:28

**Jordan:**

And that school has moved, but it's still flourishing.

01:00:03:34

**Lage:**

Was it primarily a school where the university faculty sent their children?

01:00:03:38

**Jordan:**

No, because most of the Clark faculty couldn't afford it. Clark was not a wealthy institution and still isn't. But my family was able to send me there, and an older brother and sister went there. My father was of just that age where he served in the First World War, and also in the Second. Like a lot of historians, he went into the OSS [Office of Strategic Services] in the middle of World War II, and went overseas. I went to live with his mother for a year and then went to Andover for what ended up being four years.

01:00:04:40

**Lage:**

What grades were these?

01:00:04:42

**Jordan:**

I was thirteen when I got to Andover. I was one of the youngest boys there. I was there four years and I graduated from Andover at age seventeen.

01:00:04:56

**Lage:**

Why do I have you at Phillips?

01:00:04:58

**Jordan:**

It's called Phillips Academy, Andover.

01:00:05:02

**Lage:**

Oh that's why. I thought it was—is there Phillips Exeter and Phillips Andover?

01:00:05:07

**Jordan:**

Yes, but that is technically called The Phillips Exeter Academy, and Andover is Phillips Academy or PA, Andover, but usually called Andover.

01:00:05:23

**Lage:**

Are they related?

01:00:05:23

**Jordan:**

I got a wonderful education there. They were founding cousins, both named Phillips.

01:00:05:28

**Lage:**

I see.

01:00:05:31

**Jordan:**

Right after the American Revolution. They are very old, very big, and wealthy schools. They're less social and more heavily academic and demanding in that way, and because they're wealthy schools, both Andover and Exeter, which are often linked, two of the biggest of the New England prep schools, I was on partial scholarship. About 25 percent of the class was on scholarship. I got a very good education there. I nearly flunked out my first year there, I think partly because I was thirteen.

01:00:06:28

**Lage:**

A little young.

01:00:06:30

**Jordan:**

On the young side for it.

01:00:06:32

**Lage:**

Now *what* year was it—I think we’re going too far, I want to get back a little bit more to your boyhood—but you started there about ‘45?

01:00:06:39

**Jordan:**

I started in, let’s see, must have been the fall of ’45, yes. The war had just ended.

01:00:06:48

**Lage:**

So your father was—

01:00:06:48

**Jordan:**

My father was still overseas actually and came back about the time I went up to Andover.

01:00:06:58

**Lage:**

Let’s talk a little bit about the kind of boy you were, what your interests were, what kind of family values were evident.

01:00:07:09

**Jordan:**

Well, I was the youngest of three with a considerably older sister, and a brother who’s three and a half years older than I am, who is still living; my sister is not. The family I knew best, my mother’s grand—her parents. My mother’s name was Lucretia Mott [Churchill] and—

01:00:07:39

**Lage:**

Is that related to a well-known figure?

01:00:07:41

**Jordan:**

Yes, and my grandmother’s name was Lucretia Mott, with different last names, but they used the middle name as well. In the family, that name is still alive. My grandmother remembered *the* Lucretia Mott.

01:00:08:03

**Lage:**

Now, what is *the* Lucretia Mott known for?

01:00:08:05

**Jordan:**

She was a Quaker woman, a very well-known figure in American history, born in 1793 on Nantucket and she married a James Mott and became a leading women’s rights advocate and anti-slavery.

01:00:08:30

**Lage:**

Well, that's quite a heritage.

01:00:08:32

**Jordan:**

Nearly a generation older than people who are a little bit better known, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton. But she must have been a very powerful woman, she was very short, but a powerful woman, because my grandmother talked about her. She called her Grandmother Mott, and remembered her as a teenager. My grandmother, when she became senile, started recalling her childhood memories and she was in her nineties then, and told me about what a nice man William Lloyd Garrison was, and how they'd go over in the carriage to his house and he used to bounce her on his knee.

01:00:09:34

**Lage:**

Oh my.

01:00:09:34

**Jordan:**

I went back, I was in graduate school at the time, I went back and checked whether the dates were possible, and yes, she would have been about twelve years old or thirteen when Garrison died.

01:00:09:52

**Lage:**

And there was a connection?

01:00:09:54

**Jordan:**

The Motts were—they knew each other, Lucretia Mott and Garrison—she was older than he, but they were fellow abolitionists and Garrison was something of a women's rights person although her interests in that were much more prominent. Not suffrage then, so much as women's rights in general, property rights, rights over what we would today call child custody and this kind of thing.

01:00:10:26

**Lage:**

So was this kept alive in your family?

01:00:10:29

**Jordan:**

Very much.

01:00:10:29

**Lage:**

By more than the name, continuing the name?

01:00:10:32

**Jordan:**

Very much. The famous statue of a colored regiment of troops led by Colonel [Robert Gould] Shaw stood over my grandparents' fireplace, and there were these armed recruits in the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment, and I only later learned that my grandmother's great uncle succeeded Shaw in command of that black regiment, northern black regiment during the Civil War, after the assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina.

So I grew up in a kind of an abolitionist atmosphere, and also important, I think, was that my grandparents, in the late thirties—and I was born in 1931, so I was pretty young, but I do remember it very much—had several families of Jewish psychiatrists, psychoanalysts actually, Freudian people who were pupils of Freud, who got out just in time from Austria. Doctor Feider I remember particularly—this would have been 1938 or 1939 and he lived with my grandparents for a while.

01:00:12:07

**Lage:**

So did they sponsor them?

01:00:12:09

**Jordan:**

Yes.

01:00:12:13

**Lage:**

And I wonder why—

01:00:12:14

**Jordan:**

And like a lot of the first generation of pediatricians, many of them were very interested in this new psychoanalysis because it emphasized childhood experiences.

01:00:12:25

**Lage:**

Oh I see, so this is the connection, that your grandfather was a pediatrician.

01:00:12:29

**Jordan:**

Yes, yes. He had no psychiatric training, and Freudianism was very new, but it was very much child-oriented. So Doctor Feider and my grandfather would sit talking about the coming war, which they regarded as inevitable, and what was going to be done about the authoritarian German family.

01:00:12:59

**Lage:**

Fascinating. Done about it?

01:00:13:02

**Jordan:**

Done about it, yes, what could be done. Because they regarded Nazism as rooted in the authoritarian German family. They would talk in front of me—it was clear that I wasn't to

participate in the conversation—but they would talk in front of me. My grandmother would come into the room and this Viennese, elderly—not elderly, he was not elderly—I don’t know, he seemed pretty old to me.

01:00:13:31

**Lage:**

You might have thought he was then. [laughter]

01:00:13:33

**Jordan:**

He probably was sixty-five, that old. He would rise and want to kiss her hand, and he would change the topic of the conversation to the weather. She had grown up in a family where women didn’t do—where women talked about serious things.

01:00:13:56

**Lage:**

Right.

01:00:13:57

**Jordan:**

And I could practically see the smoke curling out of her head, because she was a Quaker and absolutely determined to love everybody no matter how much she disliked them. [laughter] So she wouldn’t say anything, and he was incapable of changing, he was a Viennese gentleman of another era.

01:00:14:16

**Lage:**

And yet he was talking about the authoritarian German family!

01:00:14:19

**Jordan:**

Yes, in front me, but he would not talk about it in front of her.

01:00:14:24

**Lage:**

But it was also sort of evidencing it. [laughter]

01:00:14:26

**Jordan:**

Yes, definitely. Exactly. I was old enough to be conscious of this tension between her and him. He didn’t understand her and she didn’t really understand him. I was old enough to know that there was this kind of clash. My grandfather had these long serious talks with him.

01:00:14:48

**Lage:**

Would your grandfather try to be an intermediary at all? Or explain?

01:00:14:53

**Jordan:**

No, she would have talked him down right away, because she did talk back to him. [laughter] So the entire family used “thee” and still does, many branches of it.

01:00:15:08

**Lage:**

So it is a Quaker family, on your mother's side.

01:00:15:11

**Jordan:**

On my mother's side, yes. My brother is a Quaker and so am I, but relatively recently. I did not go to Meeting as a child—because I had a good singing voice and loved to sing, I went to a Congregational church in Worcester because they had the best choir director. But my parents went to the Unitarian church because the local Friends Meeting decided to get a minister and my mother was furious.

01:00:15:55

**Lage:**

I thought that was part of—

01:00:15:59

**Jordan:**

There are Quaker meetings now that are essentially Quaker churches that have ministers, but many of them don't. But there's quite a large number—there's both a Quaker church here that has a minister here in Berkeley and there's two Quaker meetings that do not. So the Quakers was partial, but there, and my brother and I and his children still call each other "thee." The grammar comes automatically, it's just a singular view.

01:00:16:40

**Lage:**

But you did return, or go back to the Quaker faith or practice?

01:00:16:47

**Jordan:**

Eventually. I absorbed more of it than I realized at the time, and if asked I would have said I was a Unitarian.

01:00:17:01

**Lage:**

At what point?

01:00:17:01

**Jordan:**

At Andover I thought of myself as being Unitarian and not as a Quaker. Quakerism has come rather gradually—the actual practice—that's a later development.

01:00:17:17

**Lage:**

Well, we can get back to that because it's interesting. Now you mentioned the family structure, the authoritarian German family structure—what kind of family did you have?

01:00:17:27

**Jordan:**

It was a fairly traditional kind of family, but there was a kind of ongoing assumption about equality of women that didn't need to be spoken about. My mother—there was a long time as a

young child when my father and mother seemed to me to be part of the same person, there were no differences between them. In fact now, I later began to see they were very different kinds of people. My father grew up in a very heavily verbal situation. His brother was a physician, and his sister was a physician who did cancer research, never practiced, but also was a published poet. In his family there were just a lot of people, including some businessmen, who were wordsmiths. I grew up being told to look up words in the dictionary. I'd ask what a word meant and be sent to the dictionary at the dinner table. Early on that sort of devotion to words from my father's side really I know had an influence on me. I'll never forget as a child announcing at the dinner table that I had found a word that was not a perfectly ordinary word, it was not in the Webster's unabridged dictionary. My older brother and sister were there, and I said, "I know it's not in." They said, "What is it?" I said, "It's guarantee. I've been through all the G-A-Rs." [laughter] Of course they laughed and laughed, I got a very hard time from them. My father finally said to them, "Go read a book." My mother was a remedial speller and I still am.

01:00:19:52

**Lage:**

Now what do you mean by remedial speller?

01:00:19:54

**Jordan:**

Well she had a sign posted over the downstairs telephone saying, "Emergency numbers" and it began I-m-m-e-r-g-a-n-c-y. My father let it stay there, it was up for years!

01:00:20:10

**Lage:**

You'd think that would grate on your father. [laughter]

01:00:20:13

**Jordan:**

No, it was just a monument to her inability to spell. I seemed to have inherited it and not a strong streak of artistic ability of which my mother had a little bit and one of my children is now a professional artist. But my grandmother's sister was an artist.

01:00:20:39

**Lage:**

On your mother's side?

01:00:20:40

**Jordan:**

On my mother's side. And that has cropped up most certainly not with me. I have a tough time, as my mother did, with names and faces. I've never been dyslexic, but I am a remedial speller. What it did was to send me into dictionaries, which I didn't realize at the time turns out to be a handicap that has been of enormous use.

01:00:21:14

**Lage:**

Because it does send you to the dictionary.

01:00:21:16

**Jordan:**

Sent me to the dictionary. And I wasn't content with just the spelling, I'd look up derivations of words and the little Latin I know comes from reading English rather than—I had a couple of years and flunked the first year of Latin at Andover. I learned Latin mainly from learning English.

01:00:21:41

**Lage:**

Looking up words. Was your mother college-educated? She must have been.

01:00:21:44

**Jordan:**

She was, she went to Radcliffe. My father and mother met when they were in college, when he was at Harvard.

01:00:22:02

**Lage:**

Did she pursue any kind of a career?

01:00:22:04

**Jordan:**

No, she never did. She did some community work, she was very active with the YWCA, and actually when Clark went co-ed out of necessity during World War II, it had been all male, she became for a year the first dean of women. She decided that in order to—she said these students would not go off campus, the new female students, without hats and gloves. [laughter]

01:00:22:47

**Lage:**

That's a telling regulation. [laughter]

01:00:22:51

**Jordan:**

So that stuck and lasted only about a year.

01:00:22:55

**Lage:**

That's something definitely from another era, but also growing from a certain social group I would think.

01:00:23:01

**Jordan:**

She was born in 1898 and my father was a year older, so they came from a different era. I grew up very conscious of this. The war for them really was much more World War I than World War II, which was my war. I was too young to be in it, but I had a paper route in Worcester and I remember the headlines very much, particularly the war in Europe, Stalingrad, the headlines would change every day, "The Russians have retaken two blocks," "Nazis have taken six blocks." Stalingrad went on, which was actually interesting because it turned out to be the turning point of the Nazi final defeat in Russia.

01:00:23:57

**Lage:**

Was your father overseas?

01:00:24:00

**Jordan:**

No, not then. He didn't go overseas until 1944 and I suspect, though he never would say, that he was doing cryptography, because he'd done, believe it or not, cryptography for the State Department by mail in the 1930s.

01:00:24:18

**Lage:**

Hmm.

01:00:24:19

**Jordan:**

He was enough of a word person, and codes were of course much simpler then, and the State Department used to farm these things out on a chance that somebody throughout the country—and you would have volunteers to do this work on unbroken codes. The State Department was hoping that someone would hit it. This was in the late 1930s when international tensions were growing a great deal and there were a lot of codes the US would have been delighted to have. Many historians and other disciplines in academia went into the original OSS, which later of course became the CIA.

01:00:25:11

**Lage:**

Did your father talk much about what he did? It sounds like he didn't discuss it.

01:00:25:13

**Jordan:**

No, he wouldn't. He was an ambulance driver in 1916 on the western front, and then came back when the US ended the war in 1917 and was at an army camp, and the great flu epidemic hit that camp and he got it. My grandmother went to go see him because she got a telegram, and he obviously survived, like a great many victims. It was particularly in army camps with all of their crowding.

01:00:25:49

**Lage:**

Right.

01:00:25:53

**Jordan:**

But he wouldn't talk about his experiences on the western front as an ambulance driver, which couldn't have been much fun.

01:00:26:02

**Lage:**

No.

01:00:26:02

**Jordan:**

But he would not talk about that.

01:00:26:03

**Lage:**

Did you try to get him to talk about that?

01:00:26:04

**Jordan:**

A little bit. I tried a little, but it was something he just did not want to talk about. He would not, I think just out of principle, say what he was doing with the OSS. I strongly suspect, because he went first to London and then after the surrender went to Germany and came back and worked for the State Department for half a year and then came home.

01:00:26:31

**Lage:**

Came back to his professorial—?

01:00:26:32

**Jordan:**

Yes. It's only since then that I realized that there were probably a number of historians of that generation who had gone to Harvard or one of the major graduate schools, there were so many fewer then. The profession was very much a men's club, and so to some extent the OSS and that branch, not the people jumping behind lines, but the older generation was to some extent a boy's club and they knew, a lot of them knew each other.

01:00:27:17

**Lage:**

He must have been an officer.

01:00:27:19

**Jordan:**

Yes, he was the equivalent. When he went over on the *Queen Mary* in 1944, the *Queen Mary* and—the two queens, the *Queen Elizabeth* were the only ones that crossed without a convoy because they were faster, much faster than any other ships afloat, and they carried an entire division of 15,000 men. The bunks were hot—I mean, there weren't sheets—they were carrying an entire 15,000-member division. He went across and he was given the rank, he wasn't in the military but he was given the temporary rank of major.

01:00:28:06

**Lage:**

I see.

01:00:28:08

**Jordan:**

But he never was actually in the army a second time. He had been in the army in the first war. It was a very narrow age bracket where he actually was able to participate, because he was in his mid-forties when he went overseas, mid to late forties.

01:00:28:27

**Lage:**

He never would have been drafted at that age, with family.

01:00:28:31

**Jordan:**

No, no. He was over forty-five, which is eventually what the draft came to in World War II.

01:00:28:39

**Lage:**

Then you went to live with your maternal or paternal grandmother?

01:00:28:42

**Jordan:**

His mother. Paternal.

01:00:28:44

**Lage:**

And why was that?

01:00:28:45

**Jordan:**

My mother and I went to live with her.

01:00:28:51

**Lage:**

Oh both, I see.

01:00:28:52

**Jordan:**

And my older brother was already at Andover and had Boston relatives to stay with at Christmas and other vacations. My sister had married a naval officer—dropped out of Smith, much to my father's distress, after her freshman year. His mother, my grandmother Jordan had been president of her class at Smith, and Bobbie dropped out after one year and got married during World War II to a naval officer in 1942 at age eighteen. My family was horrified. She married into a reform Jewish family. That wasn't a problem at all.

01:00:29:44

**Lage:**

They didn't object to that?

01:00:29:46

**Jordan:**

No. The wedding was at home in this house on the Clark campus and it was going to be a joint ceremony with the Unitarian minister and a reform rabbi in Worcester, but the rabbi got the mumps. [laughter] There was no religious difficulty, the rabbi and the Unitarian minister had fun doing a wedding together, they knew each other anyway. Their theological differences were not very great. That wasn't a problem, but it was a problem of marrying someone six years older, who might be shipped off, never was, overseas, and at age eighteen having dropped out of college. She never went back.

01:00:30:33

**Lage:**

She was expected—oh, she never went back.

01:00:30:36

**Jordan:**

That I think was—she was a wonderful person. She and I were very, very close.

01:00:30:41

**Lage:**

She broke that long line of educated women, it seems.

01:00:30:45

**Jordan:**

Yes, she did. [laughter] All my grandparents went to college. There had been a member of my family graduating from Harvard for every generation since it was founded.

01:00:31:03

**Lage:**

Wow, that really goes back.

01:00:31:05

**Jordan:**

I still have the—my mother traced that.

01:00:31:09

**Lage:**

Is that on either, one or the other side? Or is that your father's side?

01:00:31:11

**Jordan:**

That was my mother's side. That's sort of where I got the name Winthrop and there have been about four Winthrops in the family alive, not all using it as a first name. I have a son whose first name is Winthrop but he's called Eliot.

01:00:31:30

**Lage:**

So you carried it on.

01:00:31:30

**Jordan:**

Hopelessly locked in, in a parochial way, to New England.

01:00:31:36

**Lage:**

Right, very New England. I think that's important to establish.

01:00:31:43

**Jordan:**

I didn't get out of New England until that year in Chicago with my grandmother Jordan.

01:00:31:51

**Lage:**

That was the first—

01:00:31:52

**Jordan:**

First time I'd ever been outside of New England. Then the next time, the first time I was ever in New York City was on the way to go to England for a year at Marlborough College, which is not a college at all by US terms, but turned out to be one of the best of the English public schools. I mean, private boarding schools.

01:00:32:25

**Lage:**

Let's go back to Phillips before we do that.

01:00:32:27

**Jordan:**

Sure.

01:00:32:27

**Lage:**

Did Chicago make an impression on you?

01:00:32:32

**Jordan:**

Not particularly. I went to the Chicago Laboratory School, which was a progressive school. That's one of the reasons I had difficulty my first year at Andover. I'd never had movies in class before, and we had movies in the class all the time, because it was a progressive school. It was actually physically on the site where my father had been born at home, his father being a bacteriologist who started—in the University of Chicago's new medical school, my grandfather Jordan started the department of bacteriology. I always wondered until I figured it out why my father was born at home when he obviously could have been born in a hospital. That was because my grandfather being conscious of the new research just with the coming realization that there were things even smaller than bacteria but not the technology to photograph them or see them. I'm speaking of viruses. My grandfather thought hospitals were more likely to be germ-ridden with bacteria than home was.

01:00:34:05

**Lage:**

Well, I'm sure he was right.

01:00:34:07

**Jordan:**

This was in an era when childbirth—my mother with my older sister was kept in bed for three weeks after the birth, a normal birth. It's no wonder she felt weak.

01:00:34:20

**Lage:**

Yes, that was the standard, I guess.

01:00:34:21

**Jordan:**

By the time my brother came along four years later it was five days in the hospital and then you came home and you can be in bed some but you can get up. Now you know what it is. [laughter]

01:00:34:38

**Lage:**

You hardly get a chance to have a minute's rest.

01:00:34:39

**Jordan:**

Exactly.

01:00:34:42

**Lage:**

Okay, so then let's talk a little bit more about Andover, if you can. One thing we didn't talk about, what were your interests as a boy? To go back—you liked dictionaries, I've got that.

01:00:34:57

**Jordan:**

Most of the people, most of my classmates lived on the other side of Worcester, and I lived on the—Clark was located in a working-class part of the city. I used to bicycle around alone. I played a lot by myself, a little bit with my older brother.

01:00:35:21

**Lage:**

There weren't a lot of children on the campus.

01:00:35:23

**Jordan:**

No. Mainly they were Irish working class in the area, some French, went to another Roman Catholic Church.

01:00:35:39

**Lage:**

I bet the lines were pretty well drawn.

01:00:35:40

**Jordan:**

But they were, and so that a lot of the time I was on my own as a kid, which I think had a lasting effect, but I think it was also partly my preference. Essentially, when I went to Andover I was leaving home at age thirteen and I was delighted to get away from home, even though I failed two courses my first year. [laughter]

01:00:36:16

**Lage:**

Which you attribute to that progressive school.

01:00:36:19

**Jordan:**

Yes. Not me. [laughter] So I never lived at home since I was thirteen. I improved my grades my second year a good deal, so I was, for a long time—at Andover you knew exactly where you

stood. The class was, say, 212, and, “Mr. Jordan,” you were told by the registrar, “You are fifty-first in a class of 212.” I was at the bottom of the top quarter my last three years there. Then when I learned about this possibility of an exchange year in England at an English school, I started to work hard, and I got as high as I ever would have. I got to be fourth in my class.

01:00:37:25

**Lage:**

And was this mainly motivated by the desire to—

01:00:37:28

**Jordan:**

Go to England. I started really working. I worked hard and I got, by the standards of the academy, which are very high, I got good grades.

01:00:37:39

**Lage:**

Did you have teachers that inspired you?

01:00:37:41

**Jordan:**

Some, yes. Particularly when I got there at age thirteen, English and history were sort of the queens of the courses. Four years of each. Unlike at an English school where the best students go into Latin and are more specialized. At age thirteen I was confronted with having to write a theme, at least one page and it got longer as the year went on, every day, and then correct the one that was handed back the next time. The teachers had—it was limited to eleven students and the academy’s teachers of English had only four classes so they had a total of forty-four students in class and they sat on you. You wrote—the first one by tradition, everybody got below a sixty [60 percent] which was failing. Grades at Andover then were numerical but divided so that seventy was a C minus, eighty was an honors grade, was a B minus. The class average was seventy-four point something.

01:00:39:04

**Lage:**

Oh my goodness, this is all very precise.

01:00:39:06

**Jordan:**

Very precise, and totally unaffected by grade inflation. There are a lot of bright kids at Andover.

01:00:39:16

**Lage:**

Sure.

01:00:39:17

**Jordan:**

Then and now.

01:00:39:20

**Lage:**

So it must have been hard with your spelling, I would think, to do this theme and get it all spelled—I’m sure spelling was—

01:00:39:27

**Jordan:**

It was. I got a straight A on one. I took it home, I had great pride, I got a ninety-five on it. He circled three misspellings. He said, "I don't think your teacher's graded it very well."

01:00:39:39

**Lage:**

This is your father?

01:00:39:40

**Jordan:**

Yes. [laughter] That took the wind out of my sails. I was so proud of it. Well, one of the things that—my father read aloud a great deal, a great many things. The Bible on Sunday, there was always a little pull and tug between my mother and father because my father would pick out passages with a lot of blood and gore to them, and my mother said, "There's too much of that." He's selecting, I think, things from Daniel and the lion's den and things he thought would be appealing—

01:00:40:20

**Lage:**

To children.

01:00:40:21

**Jordan:**

To children, after Sunday dinner, midday dinner. My mother always said, "Donald, there are other things in the Bible." [laughter]

01:00:40:35

**Lage:**

Would midday dinner include family? Extended family?

01:00:40:39

**Jordan:**

Not all days, yes. We had a maid, usually Irish but occasionally Swedish, a live-in maid, a cook basically. The house was a great big old late Victorian house, now torn down, but the house was something like seven or eight bedrooms and two and a half baths total. Built in a very different era.

01:00:41:19

**Lage:**

But it was on the campus?

01:00:41:20

**Jordan:**

Yes, right next to the main building at Clark. I climbed every tree on the Clark campus. I once went back there and gave the opening address for fall convocation and I said, "I don't think there's a single tree except a few young ones planted recently that I haven't climbed on this campus." I said, "I'm probably the only person in this auditorium who can say that."

01:00:41:46

**Lage:**

That's probably very true. How did your father happen to live there, your parents, on the campus? Was that standard?

01:00:41:55

**Jordan:**

There were several faculty houses on the campus. Clark began in the 1880s in the new wave of graduate work, when Hopkins was getting going with graduate work, followed by Harvard and Yale and Princeton. Like Hopkins, Clark was founded as a graduate school and it limped along for about three or four years and then realized that they financially couldn't do it without undergraduates. So it became an all-men's—during World War II it went coed. It is still a small research university. They got good faculty, partly because of the location and the availability of sources, and just a strong academic tradition.

01:00:43:16

**Lage:**

Now, I diverted you from Andover, I'm sorry. It sounds like an intensely competitive life.

01:00:43:27

**Jordan:**

It was a very competitive place, and in some ways intolerant. People who were good at sports were sort of automatically the good guys, and somebody who played the violin was sort of out of it, and in that sense it was an intolerant institution. In terms of family background, it didn't matter at all. Those on scholarship were under no—and there are some students from very wealthy families. The school is not a wealthy one by accident. The alumni loyalty is extremely strong, like most schools. By prep school standards the endowment is huge. So they are able to have a large scholarship program, and there's absolutely no stigma among the students.

01:00:44:21

**Lage:**

Was it of an era yet where they were looking for diversity?

01:00:44:26

**Jordan:**

Not yet, no. There was one Negro and he and I were in the same fraternity. Believe it or not, they had fraternities, and I was in the best one, and he was in that. He was not athletic but he was the manager of the football team, I think.

01:00:44:47

**Lage:**

Some status there.

01:00:44:48

**Jordan:**

Yes. The intolerance was, oddly enough, of artistic achievement. Music or art. In fact the students could be quite intolerant.

01:00:45:07

**Lage:**

Was there the kind of bullying and nastiness that you hear of in the all-boys environments sometimes?

01:00:45:13

**Jordan:**

No, no. I think some people didn't like it, but I grew to like it very much. I knew I was getting a very good, rigorous education.

01:00:45:28

**Lage:**

Did you do sports?

01:00:45:29

**Jordan:**

I did. I ended up doing varsity wrestling. I'm not a terribly good athlete, but I did get my letter in wrestling. That's all. But sports of some kind, intramural or varsity sports were required courses. It was one of the ways that you handled teenage boys: you kept them well-exercised.

01:00:46:01

**Lage:**

Right. [laughter]

01:00:46:03

**Jordan:**

Handle the raging hormones with a lot of exercise.

01:00:46:05

**Lage:**

Did they also teach social skills and polite behavior and that kind of thing?

01:00:46:13

**Jordan:**

Yes. Andover was more liberal in the way it handled the boys in some ways because faculty had their own dining room and the boys ate by themselves in a large cafeteria. I worked in the kitchen doing dishes as part of my scholarship for a while. All the scholarship people worked for their scholarship, they were partial or—there were only a few people on a full scholarship. The same was true of Exeter, Phillips Exeter Academy where I later taught. I know both schools. They are really quite similar and rather different from the rest of them.

01:00:47:12

**Lage:**

How are they different?

01:00:47:13

**Jordan:**

They're bigger, they're the biggest of the well-known New England prep schools, any of them, I think. They are more diverse geographically and now ethnically. The school already at that time was looking around, and to Andover diversity meant geographical diversity. It was not exclusively New England boys; there were boys from New York and New England.

01:00:47:49

**Lage:**

Did they have representation of the South and West?

01:00:47:53

**Jordan:**

Some, not a great deal.

01:00:47:56

**Lage:**

Tokens. [laughter]

01:00:47:57

**Jordan:**

Yes. Well, they thought of themselves as being a national institution rather than just a New England one, and the school motto, which was talked about a great deal, was *non sibi*, not for oneself alone. That is still present among the enrollment, and it's an impressive list if you look at the alumni news, the amount of people who have made a bundle of money and are doing and putting a lot into it. Not just being chairs of boards and charitable organizations, but are actually doing, setting up programs and so forth. There's a kind of ethic of public service, not necessarily public in the political sense, civil, but often private public service to others. That ethic was quite strong.

01:00:49:04

**Lage:**

How was that communicated?

01:00:49:07

**Jordan:**

Oh, at assemblies, the dean of students or the headmaster would start out by talking about *non sibi* and what it meant, and it kept the—it was talked about that part of a successful career was not just for yourself. That ethic, you'd think it would be terribly hard to instill but from having just come back from my fifty-fifth reunion—and of course it tends to be the people who liked Andover as well as those who are physically well enough to go, who go to these reunions. Same is true of the fiftieth, even, which is the big one. A great majority of them are engaged in work—one of my roommates, my senior year roommates, I had actually three of them, is—well, he's a venture capitalist but he spends most of his time raising money for, since his wife died of cancer, he's been raising money for cancer research, and he's very good at it. He's not extremely wealthy himself, he's made enough so that—he made a million and then lost it. Back when a million was a lot of money. That ethic did get communicated to the students and it's been remarkably lasting among the alumni.

01:00:51:07

**Lage:**

That's nice that you can see—

01:00:51:08

**Jordan:**

And alumni giving is, by college standards very, very high in terms of percentage of the alumni who give to Andover, even if it's only fifty dollars for a year. Their fundraising, they try and get

a high percentage, and they do. They get percentages that—80 percent say, which is extraordinarily high.

01:00:51:39

**Lage:**

Yes it is, a lot of loyalty.

01:00:51:42

**Jordan:**

Much more than most of the colleges. Dartmouth and Princeton tend to have the highest percentages of the Ivy League. Harvard's is well below 50 percent of alumni giving.

01:00:51:59

**Lage:**

That kind of surprises me.

01:00:52:00

**Jordan:**

The education at Andover, it was a rigid place in many ways. I mentioned the grading system. If you were caught, say, smoking, and you went on smoking prob [probation] That meant certain quite serious restrictions, and the second offense while on prob meant you were out.

01:00:52:29

**Lage:**

Wow. Smoking cigarettes?

01:00:52:31

**Jordan:**

Permanently out, you didn't go back, you didn't come back, the people who got fired for disciplinary reasons. Liquor I don't think was a problem, drugs were not a problem at all. Owning a radio would get it confiscated and get you on probation.

01:00:52:52

**Lage:**

Just owning one?

01:00:52:54

**Jordan:**

Yes. There are no distractions other than, there was a band. I was head of the band, glee club. There were things.

01:00:53:07

**Lage:**

You'd think during the war like that—well, it was sort of the end of the war.

01:00:53:11

**Jordan:**

This is after the war, it's all postwar.

01:00:53:13

**Lage:**

Postwar. But it's just surprising that they didn't want you to keep up with what was going on in the world. Maybe radio wasn't seen as a way to do that.

01:00:53:21

**Jordan:**

I think that was—no, I think that was assumed. I don't recall any boys not knowing about, for instance, the revelation of the Holocaust by the time they got to Andover. They tended to come from much more informed families, obviously. The one screening process was, these were families interested in education. In many ways I grew up in the shadow not only of the atomic bomb but also the revelation of the death camps, which didn't come as a great surprise.

01:00:54:19

**Lage:**

And how did you experience that?

01:00:54:22

**Jordan:**

Because of this experience with—I wasn't told in detail about the persecution of the Jews, but I was aware that even New England had anti-Semites and they were bad people, just the way slave owners were bad people.

01:00:54:41

**Lage:**

Right. Well, having the refugees in your home must have had an impact.

01:00:54:45

**Jordan:**

Sure.

01:00:54:46

**Lage:**

And what about at Andover, were there Jewish students?

01:00:54:52

**Jordan:**

Sure. There were about fifty out of a student body of slightly over 700. But there were about fifty Unitarians.

01:00:55:04

**Lage:**

Catholics?

01:00:55:04

**Jordan:**

About fifty Catholics. There was a school Protestant chaplain, and there was required Sunday services, which were sort of interdenominational, and I think even the Catholic kids, well, I think everybody had to go to it.

01:00:55:24

**Lage:**

Even if they were Jewish?

01:00:55:26

**Jordan:**

Sure, and the Catholic kids went off to Mass. The Jewish kids, I doubt there were Orthodox Jews. I don't remember anybody wearing skullcaps. These would have been reform, probably.

01:00:55:40

**Lage:**

Did you detect anti-Semitism there?

01:00:55:42

**Jordan:**

No, there was none. There were students known as Jews—I said there was none, that's not entirely true, a little bit in the student body occasionally, but it got squashed pretty fast. It was not fashionable to be anti-Semitic, because somebody would make a remark and somebody else would immediately sit on it.

01:00:56:10

**Lage:**

That's all very interesting. Okay, anything else about Andover? Or should we kind of get—

01:00:56:19

**Jordan:**

It affected me later, because I had not realized what a very high-powered education I had had there until I got to Harvard and this was just prior to the beginnings of advanced placement courses in various schools, which was done by groups of faculty from three institutions: Andover, Exeter and Lawrenceville.

01:00:56:52

**Lage:**

Who devised this system?

01:00:56:54

**Jordan:**

Who devised it precisely because graduates from Andover and Exeter were going to college and dropping out.

01:00:57:03

**Lage:**

Oh I see.

01:00:57:03

**Jordan:**

And were getting bored. I could see why. When I taught at Exeter I would see—well, we had some of our best students go to Harvard, even with advanced placement, and leave after their freshman year or the winter of their freshman year because they'd had it all. I went to Harvard, I went through some history lectures. I didn't take any history at Harvard, but I went to these history lectures and I knew it all. I'd heard it, and discussed it in small classes, and now here's

this jerk who it turns out I realized was supposed to be terribly distinguished, but you never get to see him anyway, so I didn't take any history courses. I majored in social relations, which is a broad-based social science major, essentially.

01:00:57:59

**Lage:**

Was that kind of experimental at the time?

01:00:58:02

**Jordan:**

It was actually a department created in 1946, I think. This is moving away from Andover, but I began to realize, I took French there, and after three years of French at Andover I was fluent in reading, and I got to France and I discovered after the shock of the first few days I could speak it as well as understand it.

01:00:58:33

**Lage:**

That's nice.

01:00:58:34

**Jordan:**

Right from the first day at Andover, we were taught French in French. The dictionary we had had no English in it at all. And the conversation in class, you weren't even allowed to go to the bathroom without asking *en Francais*. [laughter]

01:00:58:53

**Lage:**

That's the way you learn.

01:00:58:54

**Jordan:**

That's the way you learn. So that kind of rigor, and rigor about writing, when I got to school in England, they assumed, when they discovered I knew less Latin than their entering thirteen year olds, and here I was, seventeen, having graduated from supposedly a good school in America—I was the only American at this wonderful school Marlborough. They were so horrified that I didn't know any, effectively, no Latin, they put me not in the classic sixth form, but the one for the dumber boys, the modern sixth, which meant history and geography. I discovered that I could write much better than any of my fellow form-mates.

01:00:59:51

**Lage:**

Well, that's very interesting.

01:00:59:50

**Jordan:**

So I won the form prize without difficulty! [laughter]

01:00:59:53

**Lage:**

And you didn't have to worry about Latin.

01:00:59:56

**Jordan:**

They treated English as sort of parsley on the steak. Latin was what a good boy in England, what good boys did. It was a school [that was] heavily Church of England but about the size of Andover, and it is one of the best, I think it is probably much better academically than Harrow and Eton. Eton is better than Harrow, actually.

01:01:00:28

**Lage:**

And it's called college?

01:01:00:30

**Jordan:**

It's called Marlborough College. It's o-u-g-h, I had to learn how to pronounce it. When I called it Marl-bor-ough, I got ragged on.

01:01:00:39

**Lage:**

Now how do you say it?

01:01:00:39

**Jordan:**

It's Mawl-bro. I don't know how you spell that, but that's the way Marlborough is pronounced, Mawl-bro. It was a wonderful school and I had very good friends, and wonderful, wonderful teachers there. I got some history, which meant my fifth year, and Harvard gave me credit for my freshman year because they were under the illusion that a year at an English public school—which was not necessarily more rigorous, it was just more specialized—so I entered as a sophomore and saved my father a year. Then my only expenses were none at the school, hitchhiking during the vacation, visiting various friends, and a little bit on the continent, and my passage over and back.

01:01:01:45

**Lage:**

Because you go the scholarship.

01:01:01:47

**Jordan:**

Yes.

01:01:01:47

**Lage:**

How did you get interested in doing that? Did you father encourage that?

01:01:01:52

**Jordan:**

I got interested because I got to know an English student at Andover who came from an English public school—it's called public school, meaning private. I got to know him, and he told me about his schooling in England. I said, "I want to go there." And so that's when I started to work hard and I wanted Andover, one of the prizes they reserved for graduation day, after prize day, one of the six most important prizes, and mine was the most ambiguous of them all.

01:01:02:25

**Lage:**

And what was that?

01:01:02:26

**Jordan:**

After they gave one for best scholar athlete and so forth, I got the fifty-dollar improvement prize.

01:01:02:35

**Lage:**

Ah! [laughter]

01:01:02:37

**Jordan:**

But if you flunked two courses and had to make them up over the summer, Latin and algebra, then—

01:01:02:48

**Lage:**

That was freshman year.

01:01:02:49

**Jordan:**

That was my freshman year, and then ended up fourth in your class, you—

01:01:02:54

**Lage:**

That is the best improvement.

01:01:02:55

**Jordan:**

Yes. But it's a little bit of an ambiguous prize. [laughter]

01:01:03:00

**Lage:**

Were your parents terribly disturbed when you flunked those two classes?

01:01:03:05

**Jordan:**

Well, my father tutored me in Latin and said I could not go take my boat, my little twelve-foot cat boat to the Edgartown Regatta from southern Cape Cod, sail it to Martha's Vineyard. I couldn't go if I didn't do a certain amount of—he was going to give me a test in Latin. So with that added motivation I passed an exam and got into Latin II. I also made up the algebra, and passed an exam and got in and then managed to pass that. I was so much more verbal than quantitative in orientation. When I hit geometry, all of a sudden I went from seventy-five to ninety in grades. I learned something fascinating about education when I was at Exeter. They, in forming their honors sections in English, the English department discovered that the single best predictor was not previous courses in English but a course in geometry.

01:01:04:27

**Lage:**

Isn't that interesting?

01:01:04:29

**Jordan:**

Because geometry was then with its theorems heavily visual but also verbal.

01:01:04:36

**Lage:**

Right. I've always heard that people can do well in algebra and not in geometry and vice versa.

01:01:04:42

**Jordan:**

Yes. The dean once hauled me in and said something he never should have said to any students. He said, "You have the largest gap between verbal and quantitative in your scores that I have ever seen." Of course, all he's doing is confirming what experience had already told me.

01:01:05:06

**Lage:**

Do you think that affected how you went about your career as a historian?

01:01:05:11

**Jordan:**

I already knew it.

01:01:05:13

**Lage:**

No, I don't mean his telling you, but this habit of mind.

01:01:05:16

**Jordan:**

To some extent. He confirmed something that I had very well learned by experience. When I was out of college and got into a semi-quantitative field at the Prudential Life Insurance Company in the home office management training program, I had some training in punch cards, screwed that part of it up. [laughter] Then when I told them I was leaving they said—that I would be leaving the year's program—and they said, "All right, you've done all right. We want to get some good out of you since you're going to be leaving this training program. We want you to set up a class for the high-school-graduate level clerks who write business letters, and show them how to write a decent business letter." So I ended up with these people from high school in the Newark area, one year out of college, barely, and worst of all, Harvard College, teaching them, who had been doing it since they graduated from high school, how to write letters.

01:01:06:44

**Lage:**

This must have been socially difficult.

01:01:06:45

**Jordan:**

It was something that required a lot of tact. I pulled it off. I kind of enjoyed it. That was my first teaching experience. [laughter]

01:01:06:56

**Lage:**

A challenging one. This is very interesting. I need to take a break.

01:01:07:00

**Jordan:**

Sure, I could use one.

[End Audio File 1]

[Begin Audio File 2]

02:00:00:01

**Lage:**

We're going to start. There we go. Now we're on the second disc, but continuing the same interview after a short break. We had pretty well gotten you through Andover, and you want to talk any more about Marlborough College and what that did to shape you in any way?

02:00:00:19

**Jordan:**

Well, I had a wonderful year, wonderful masters, and wonderful boys. They were much more interested in things like music than—not in singing, they knew more about classical music than I had ever gotten at Andover. English was treated the way art would be treated, as a sort of parsley on the steak. That's when I discovered that I knew how to write English better than—I thought of Winston Churchill. I visited other English public schools where there were also Americans on this English Speaking Union exchange program. When I went there on the *Queen Mary* there were fifteen of us, going to various schools. I met many of them at these schools and they were not nearly as happy as I was.

02:00:01:32

**Lage:**

Was that because you fit better? Or the school?

02:00:01:33

**Jordan:**

Partly it is school, and I had a master of English at Andover, had been at an exchange with a master at an English public school, he told me to either go to Rugby or Marlborough.

02:00:01:55

**Lage:**

So you got to pick.

02:00:01:56

**Jordan:**

Ordinarily you didn't. But he wrote a letter to the English Speaking Union and I put a strong preference for those two. He was absolutely right. I had a first cousin, a younger one, who did the same thing after he graduated from Exeter, and he went to Rugby on my advice. This exchange program still exists—I believe it does, in fact I know it does—run by the English Speaking Union, and it's a wonderful, wonderful program. As I said, my first interest in it came from, not from the master who recommended Marlborough or Rugby, but from the boy from a less well-known English public school who was at Andover on this exchange. There was Walter Kaiser, who is a professor now of English at Harvard, he was also on the same program. Actually, I think there were three of us from Andover who went over to difference schools. I

went with the rugby team whenever it had a—the varsity rugby team which I was not on, I went with them on the bus to other schools at away games and met the Americans.

02:00:03:36

**Lage:**

Oh, I see.

02:00:03:36

**Jordan:**

And discovered that a lot of the Americans were not happy, and I was very happy at Marlborough, which was a bit bigger and more academically oriented than a great majority of them. There weren't—there was one Jew in the entire school at Marlborough, and he was a victim of anti-Semitism.

02:00:04:11

**Lage:**

You'd think they'd be so sensitive with the Holocaust having just occurred.

02:00:04:18

**Jordan:**

I just found it really—Marlborough though was the first, it was a rather special school in many ways. They were the first school to give up fagging. When I was there, there was no fagging.

02:00:04:32

**Lage:**

Now, what is fagging?

02:00:04:33

**Jordan:**

That's when the youngest boys have to wait on the prefects. What we would call seniors. I was made a prefect after a term there. It meant only that I wore a white necktie instead of a black one. [laughter]

02:00:04:49

**Lage:**

But you didn't get waited on?

02:00:04:50

**Jordan:**

I didn't get—at the other schools, the prefects—they tended to be seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old—they would say, "Fag!" And then one of the little boys would have to come run and make their tea or polish their shoes or something. Marlborough had given that up. They couldn't understand—they still had beatings with a cane, canings.

02:00:05:20

**Lage:**

Oh they did?

02:00:05:22

**Jordan:**

And I thought it was barbarous. Done by prefects, always with a witness. Or by the housemaster without a witness. But I said, “Well, I’ve never been beaten.” They said, “You haven’t been beaten?!” I said, “I will witness, but I’m not going to beat anybody,” when I became a prefect. I did witness and I didn’t like it. They thought, when I told them about probation, and throwing people out, they were horrified.

02:00:06:00

**Lage:**

They thought that was barbarous.

02:00:06:00

**Jordan:**

They thought that was barbarous, exactly.

02:00:06:05

**Lage:**

There you got a little cross-cultural take on things.

02:00:06:08

**Jordan:**

I did indeed.

02:00:06:10

**Lage:**

What form did the anti-Semitism take?

02:00:06:13

**Jordan:**

Oh, not only remarks—mainly remarks about him and to his face.

02:00:06:22

**Lage:**

And he was British? Or was he—

02:00:06:26

**Jordan:**

He was an English Jew, yes. And his name was Lazarus. One of the masters I had was not Church of England, I think he was probably Methodist, and he stood out. It was heavily [Church of England], most of the board of trustees were bishops.

02:00:06:47

**Lage:**

This was a limited—

02:00:06:48

**Jordan:**

It was very limited. When I said I was a Unitarian, they thought, “Oh, he’s a dissenter.”  
[laughter]

02:00:06:57

**Lage:**

That's so interesting. Did you bring anything back? When you started Harvard, was the Marlborough experience shaping in any way?

02:00:07:06

**Jordan:**

Well, I think so. It gave me a whole lot of history, plus a lot of geography, which is close enough in many instances that—I took the English higher certificate then, as it was called, which amounted to—I could have gone to Oxford or Cambridge. I got honors in history on that.

02:00:07:36

**Lage:**

On the exam?

02:00:07:37

**Jordan:**

On that exam. There was no question, at Harvard that meant that I skipped the freshman year, which meant, A, I got out of compulsory athletics, and never did anything athletic at Harvard except learn how to play squash. And it also meant that—then all the freshman were housed together on the yard. I went in, my roommate was somebody I got just by paper matching, he was a Korean War vet, an American multi-engine pilot who was older than I was, and is still a good friend, and then eventually a third roommate who had been my older brother's former roommate. I had very little loyalty to a particular class at Harvard because I was there in Lowell House at Harvard for only two years and then got married and lived in an apartment nearby, and with a wonderful address that sounds so elegant, but it was actually overlooking the car barns, the subway, the service car barns. It was Two University Road. I got some paper from the American Stationery Company and had it made up, "Winthrop D. Jordan, Two University Road, Cambridge." [laughter] That building is still standing actually. But one of the results of having had this high-powered education was that I ended up not going to class a lot at Harvard. I got, eventually I nearly got a magna, but not quite; I didn't, I got a cum laude, and by that point, a third of the class got a cum laude. I did most of the reading for my courses during the reading period.

02:00:09:56

**Lage:**

It wasn't that challenging?

02:00:09:57

**Jordan:**

No.

02:00:09:58

**Lage:**

And why social relations? Why did you pick that instead of history?

02:00:10:01

**Jordan:**

It was the loosest major and allowed you to take a lot of other courses.

02:00:10:07

**Lage:**

And what kind of courses did you take?

02:00:10:08

**Jordan:**

I took economics, I took government, I took a wonderful course called Music I, which was famous for being a disaster for some bright students who had tin ears and couldn't pass the exam because they couldn't hear a symphonic form because they had tin ears. I got very into—I got into, right away, a relatively new singing group which is still growing, and I've been back to reunions of it, the Harvard Krokodiloes, which was a, there were anywhere from twelve to sixteen of us over the years. I was in that for three years.

02:00:10:50

**Lage:**

Is that a cappella?

02:00:10:50

**Jordan:**

We were a cappella. A very good group, trying to catch up at first with the Whiffenpoofs [at Yale], now, in some ways I think less tradition-bound, and still— But it required a lot of time, because we rehearsed from 5:00 to 6:30 five days a week, and on weekends we often had concerts to do. So that took—I spent most of my time singing. I did go to some classes which I really found interesting, others I just didn't go to class very often. A few were so bad that I just didn't go to class. Since I could pass them anyway and to get a decent, dirty old cum [laude] I took quite a variety, and the major was quite loose. It ranged from individual psychology to social psychology, sociology and social anthropology. So it was very broad-gauged kind of major and I got a considerably variety of post-World War II social science.

02:00:12:25

**Lage:**

Now was this helpful to you in later years?

02:00:12:28

**Jordan:**

Very, very. And not having majored in history, the reason I got into history was happening on a job after I left the Prudential and having graduated cum laude at Harvard, which is not hard to do. I got this job at Exeter only because I bumped into the chairman when I visited there. I was shopping around at New England schools when I decided the life of an insurance executive was not for me.

02:00:13:08

**Lage:**

Had you really thought that might be what you would do?

02:00:13:12

**Jordan:**

I thought so.

02:00:13:13

**Lage:**

You didn't have an urge to go on to graduate school at that point?

02:00:13:16

**Jordan:**

No, none at all. When I got to Exeter I ran into younger faculty that were not only—Exeter told me, “Go get an MA,” and so I went to Clark and started work on an MA. They had somebody leaving in the middle of the winter term, and I took over his classes.

02:00:13:36

**Lage:**

At Exeter.

02:00:13:35

**Jordan:**

At Exeter. Three classes of senior, American history, and a class of the lower middlers, sophomores, doing English history. There, with the roundtable system there was a maximum of twelve students per class, any class, there's no more than twelve students. I had the traditional four classes. And you were expected to work those kids hard, and those are the brightest students I've ever had, were these seniors in American history.

02:00:14:17

**Lage:**

So they were working you hard, too, probably?

02:00:14:19

**Jordan:**

Oh yes. I was only a step ahead of them in the textbook. [laughter] I got interested partly because I loved the teaching, and they had told me to start working on an MA, and I got some very good faculty people who opened up my eyes to a new way of looking at history at Clark.

02:00:14:44

**Lage:**

At Clark, okay.

02:00:14:46

**Jordan:**

And Clark was very small.

02:00:14:48

**Lage:**

Let's talk about that.

02:00:14:49

**Jordan:**

Clark had a history department of four and half people. My father was one, so I had to take a course with him.

02:00:14:58

**Lage:**

That must have been slightly uncomfortable.

02:00:15:01

**Jordan:**

I worked very, very hard, and he finally said, “Well, I’m going to give you an A-.” [laughter] But in order not to embarrass him I worked my tail off on English history from 1760 to 1900. It turned out later to be extremely useful, learning something, particularly the eighteenth century part, for the field I ended up in. I exhausted Clark’s offerings.

02:00:15:38

**Lage:**

Now who did you—you said you encountered some teachers there that opened up new ways of looking at history.

02:00:15:45

**Jordan:**

Mark Raeff, who actually later went to Columbia, taught Russian history. I took European intellectual from him. He’s a brilliant man. He made me think on a kind of level about history that I’d never had. I had mostly had a very meat-and-potatoes kind of historical training, but a lot of that.

02:00:16:12

**Lage:**

Now tell me what you mean by meat and potatoes.

02:00:16:13

**Jordan:**

Well, not a great deal of conceptualization.

02:00:16:20

**Lage:**

I see.

02:00:16:22

**Jordan:**

At Marlborough I did have—it was the Methodist teacher—we spent the entire year on twenty years of English history during the English civil wars, seventeenth-century England. We actually read some primary sources, that was unusual. My other history teacher was the school chaplain and he dictated notes in class, which was much more traditional—terrible. I had this wonderful teacher, who was the only dissenting one in the school that I know of, and I learned an enormous amount about which I had never had at Andover, this concentration on twenty years of history.

02:00:17:10

**Lage:**

And using, getting into the sources.

02:00:17:12

**Jordan:**

Yes.

02:00:17:13

**Lage:**

So that was one.

02:00:17:14

**Jordan:**

That course in its own light was worth going to Marlborough for. Also the geography, which was well-taught.

02:00:17:24

**Lage:**

How were they teaching geography?

02:00:17:27

**Jordan:**

Well, it rings all the way actually from geology to environmental change—it wasn't called that—as well as human geography—where people—there was a lot of map work of various kinds, relating crops to human populations, so a lot of it was human geography, but also meat-and-potato things like why rivers meander—old rivers do and new ones don't. The result being I know a great deal more about geography than most historians. I find it very useful. This included climate, geography broadly defined.

02:00:18:21

**Lage:**

I can see, I think we're building a picture here of a broad-based historian that you came to be, looking at so many different aspects.

02:00:18:30

**Jordan:**

I was lucky not to have majored in history at Harvard. When I was at Exeter I had the influence of a number of the younger faculty were going on and getting PhDs, some of them staying—several of them left. When I went to the headmaster, Bill [William] Saltonstall, and told him that I loved it so much I wanted to go on and get a PhD, and could I have a leave of absence—the person I had to replace for half a year had come back but I stayed on the next year and they were very happy with me, and he told me so. I said I wanted to go on and get a PhD, and asked if I'd be able to get my job back. He was a wonderful man, he said, "Well, will you guarantee to come back?" I said, "Point taken." So I left after not a year and a half, but a half and then a full year. I left to go to Brown, having applied to Harvard and not getting in.

02:00:19:55

**Lage:**

I see.

02:00:19:55

**Jordan:**

It's the luckiest thing that ever happened to me.

02:00:19:57

**Lage:**

Was there anyone else at Clark you want to mention?

02:00:20:01

**Jordan:**

Not particularly. My major professor let me skate along and do a master's thesis, which I would like to have burned except the Clark library—

02:00:20:12

**Lage:**

What was the topic?

02:00:20:13

**Jordan:**

It was Robert C. Winthrop and the opposition to the Mexican-American War.

02:00:20:19

**Lage:**

And was this a relative?

02:00:20:21

**Jordan:**

Yes, that's why I picked it, and there were Winthrop papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

02:00:20:27

**Lage:**

That sounds like an interesting topic.

02:00:20:29

**Jordan:**

I learned a lot writing it. A good twentieth-century historian named Robert Campbell supervised this.

02:00:20:43

**Lage:**

And you got into sources again.

02:00:20:45

**Jordan:**

Well, I got into primary sources. He made me, in a way that I never had before. I got to know people at the Massachusetts Historical Society quite well, simply by using the Winthrop papers there. I don't know what kind of relative he is, it's the same family. My family, they're using it as a first or middle name. At any rate it was, it gave me a very good start, but I had pretty well exhausted Clark's possibilities. I'd taken everybody in the department. So there was general agreement at Clark and with myself that I would have to apply elsewhere.

02:00:21:39

**Lage:**

And your father, was he also encouraging you?

02:00:21:41

**Jordan:**

Yes. So I left—it was a big gamble because I loved Exeter. Now in retrospect those were the best students I've ever had.

02:00:21:51

**Lage:**

Isn't that interesting to be able to say? And you applied at Harvard. Kind of a family tradition?

02:00:21:58

**Jordan:**

Well, yes.

02:00:22:01

**Lage:**

Now why do you say it's lucky you didn't get in?

02:00:22:04

**Jordan:**

Because I think I would not have been outstanding there. I would have been—the competition among the grad students would have been much keener than at Brown. Yale—I couldn't go to because they required knowledge of two languages before you even came, and I only knew one. So that was out. I wanted to go to some New England university with a PhD program because I didn't want to get too far away from Exeter. [laughter] Which doesn't make a good deal of sense.

02:00:22:56

**Lage:**

And you were married by this time, too. We can come back to that.

02:00:22:58

**Jordan:**

Yes. I was married my senior year, before my senior year in college, I was married at age twenty to a Radcliffe woman I had known since childhood on Cape Cod, Phyllis Henry. I am now remarried. We were divorced but we still maintain friendship, and not only contact over the kids, it goes further than that. My current wife and Phyllis Jordan are very close friends. It's one of those unusual situations.

02:00:23:48

**Lage:**

And Phyllis was someone you had known, was kind of in the family constellation?

02:00:23:52

**Jordan:**

Every summer, I'd known her since either of us can remember from this small summer community where my grandparents retired to, the pediatrician family, retired to on family—they inherited this place at Bass River, just five miles beyond Hyannis. It's a sailing port mainly, it's largely a summer place, and [they] spent most of the year except the dead of winter down there, and I would see them there a lot, and that property is still in the family. Phyllis lived an eighth of a mile away at her family's place there. We had a sort of Boston—she went to a private day school in Boston and so it was very much an in-house kind of marriage. [laughter] And a very happy one. We still have three boys out here, that's one of the reasons—

02:00:25:19

**Lage:**

They all three live here?

02:00:25:20

**Jordan:**

One in Berkeley, one in Santa Cruz and one in Davis. They're all here.

02:00:25:23

**Lage:**

They all turned into Californians.

02:00:25:25

**Jordan:**

Yes. They essentially grew up in California. None were born here, two in Providence and one in Williamsburg, which about killed me, because it was the first part of my family that had ever been born south of the Mason-Dixon Line. [laughter] We named him Winthrop Eliot and gave him two names—I've pointed out to him many times, and he doesn't particularly appreciate it: he has two houses named after him at Harvard. We're getting away—

02:00:25:58

**Lage:**

We're at Brown.

02:00:26:00

**Jordan:**

At Brown. I got into Brown because I'd done very well at Clark. I got in and I did very well my first year there, it was a tiny department. There weren't enough graduate students so there weren't many seminars, so I took a lot of lecture classes, but then they piled on huge amounts of reading and written assignments on top of it for the small number of graduate students.

02:00:26:28

**Lage:**

You'd be taking lecture courses that undergraduates are also taking.

02:00:26:32

**Jordan:**

Yes.

02:00:26:32

**Lage:**

But doing extra.

02:00:26:33

**Jordan:**

Brown then had a department of thirteen. Twelve or thirteen. It was very small. The undergraduate part was not nearly as prestigious or difficult to get in as it is today. This is really before Brown got on the map educationally, but there were some very good people on the faculty, including my dissertation supervisor who then moved to Harvard, Donald Fleming. Brown permitted him and me—even before I started my dissertation, even though he had just moved to Harvard from Brown and he was in the history of American science, I wrote my dissertation with him while I was still at Brown and he was at Harvard. It's only an hour and a half drive to go up and take him a chapter and see how he'd torn the previous one apart. [laughter]

02:00:27:46

**Lage:**

Now was your dissertation in science, something about science?

02:00:27:48

**Jordan:**

No. It contains some history of science in it—that was partly his influence. It was about American attitudes about the Negro, which was my own choice.

02:00:27:58

**Lage:**

Which turned into your—

02:00:27:59

**Jordan:**

It was the first half of the book.

02:00:28:03

**Lage:**

Is there more to say about the training there, the graduate training?

02:00:28:10

**Jordan:**

I had a seminar with David Lovejoy, in early American history, and then he left. I got into early American history mainly because of the presence of the John Carter Brown Library, the world's greatest collection of Americana, rare books, banned. At the time it was much underused. I'd go there daily when I wasn't reading newspapers on microfilm in the main library. I'd walk over after two hours of microfilm to those wonderful leather-bound books and sit in this huge reading room with Oriental rugs and be the only person there. It's no longer true. It had been run by a bibliophile, who really didn't like having people come in asking to read the books.

02:00:29:14

**Lage:**

I've heard stories about librarians like that. [laughter]

02:00:29:17

**Jordan:**

He had just retired and he still came back. He used to whistle through his teeth. He still had the key to the locked cases that lined the reading room, and would pull books off. I don't think he read them, I think he looked at them.

02:00:29:33

**Lage:**

Touched them.

02:00:29:33

**Jordan:**

Yes, touched them, exactly. It was a wonderful source material because they defined Americana as any book that mentioned America, the Americas.

02:00:29:50

**Lage:**

From what time?

02:00:29:51

**Jordan:**

From the beginning of printing. They have very few manuscripts, only the Brown papers. There was a professor at Brown, James Hedges, who was in economic history but wrote a two-volume wonderful history of the Brown family. It's the oldest family fortune that still exists, it dates before the American Revolution.

02:00:30:20

**Lage:**

How did they make their money?

02:00:30:21

**Jordan:**

They started out in shipping, which was the only way you could make a lot of money, and they tried at one point to corner the market in spermaceti candles, shipping to the West Indies. They failed, they were thwarted by some sharp Quakers on Nantucket, which was then the dominant whaling port. Spermaceti candles come from the head matter of the sperm whale and they have the great advantage of not smelling. So they were highly valued. The West Indian planters could afford to have them and pay for them. So the first Brown generation, a couple of brothers, made a lot of money. Then there were four at the beginning of the American Revolution; one of them engaged in the slave trade on one voyage and lost money. Brown is still struggling with that fact because they ended up giving money to a new Baptist college that got named after them. Another brother became Quaker and anti-slavery. This slave-trading guy though, he'd made only one slave-trading voyage, because he'd lost money he didn't do it anymore. But when he went to what became congress then, very early along after the establishment of the US Congress, he got up and defended the slave trade. Horrifying, but people from Virginia and other places saw it as being a perfectly reasonable thing to do. That is added to Brown's current—

02:00:32:13

**Lage:**

You must have found things in these papers too, the books and—

02:00:32:17

**Jordan:**

No, I never used the Brown papers. Hedges did, but he was—they had old wooden spindles with sharpened points and the documents were crumbling as he took them off, so they could only be read once. He'd take one off and it would just completely fall apart. He was given permission; he was a senior man, a wonderful, wonderful man. The kind of person who—he wrote an entire lecture in his economic history course, which I audited, for undergraduate study, on the rise of the shoe industry—filled the huge blackboard with statistics without any notes. He knew Jimmy Foxx's batting average in 1933, and 1934, and everybody's. He had one of these kinds of minds. He'd gotten special permission to use the John Carter Brown [papers], only manuscripts.

Otherwise, they've got a wonderful collection of maps, early maps of the Americas. Because their definition of Americana was so broad it included world geography, world travels, collections, so that there was a lot of material that included Africa. I was able to get a lot of sources of surgeons and captains of vessels who were on the coast of Africa, and then of course dealing mainly with the West Indies, and use those. They don't pretend to collect African materials, but if there was the slightest connection, as there often was, they had a wonderful

collection of primary materials. So I was there many hours as a graduate student working on my dissertation there. That's why I went into early American history, because of the sources.

02:00:34:46

**Lage:**

And you had them right there. Now why did you go into the topic that you chose? How did that come about?

02:00:34:47

**Jordan:**

I think partly because of family background, growing up in part from this abolitionist tradition, which came across, it was only then that I began to realize how strong that tradition had been. I just grew up with it and it seems perfectly normal to have over my grandparents' fireplace this photograph of the statue that's opposite—the frieze that's opposite the state house in Boston of these black soldiers with this white man on a horse leading them. That I learned that my grandmother's uncle had been in this regiment of these Negro troops raised in the Civil War. Several of them had been members of Quaker meetings and were put out of meetings because they joined the army.

02:00:35:47

**Lage:**

Oh that's right, they joined the army.

02:00:35:48

**Jordan:**

I mean, a lot of Quakers were torn, and Quaker meetings were torn between anti-slavery and pacifism. But the John Carter Brown Library just meant that I went into early American history. The topic was influenced in part by one course I took at Harvard—undergraduate honor students at Harvard could take a graduate seminar. I took one in social relations called “the dynamics of prejudice.” It was mainly about—it was taught by two professors, Gordon Allport in social psychology and Daniel Levinson. It was mainly about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and about anti-Negro prejudice. I was one of two undergraduates, then there were about fifteen graduate students. I liked both instructors very much, it was one of the most interesting courses I had taken at Harvard.

02:00:37:09

**Lage:**

You didn't miss that one.

02:00:37:11

**Jordan:**

I didn't miss any of those. But it was a terrible love-feast, it was an “ain't prejudice awful”—all the graduate students knew that I was one of the two undergrads who had somehow smuggled their way into this thing. [laughter] And I remember most clearly when I finally said, “Well, this so-called stereotype of blacks as being musical, there could be some basis in fact that for cultural reasons there is a particular interest in music.” Students jumped all over it. Allport, who had written a book called *The Nature of Prejudice* (still read today), Allport came to my rescue and he said, “Wait a minute,” after these people jumped all over me for what they were feeling was heresy—

02:00:38:20

**Lage:**

To acknowledge possible difference.

02:00:38:21

**Jordan:**

He said, “We don’t know until it’s studied that there isn’t some basis for this.” He essentially backed me up, essentially—I could have kissed him. I didn’t. [laughter]

02:00:38:38

**Lage:**

That might have been jumped on.

02:00:38:41

**Jordan:**

But that—I took that because I’d sort of always been interested in racial prejudice.

02:00:38:53

**Lage:**

Did it shape your thinking at all? Or was it too much of a love-fest, was it not analytical enough?

02:00:38:59

**Jordan:**

Well, I learned a lot, particularly, about psychology of anti-Semitism and a bit about—I did learn some. I found the discussions interesting. It’s hard to say how much I learned, but I liked it a lot. Also it was my only contact with senior professors at Harvard.

02:00:39:24

**Lage:**

That seems like a sore point with you, that the professors weren’t that accessible.

02:00:39:27

**Jordan:**

Yes. At one point one of my senior year roommates—I’m still in touch with him, he majored in English at Princeton—our vacations, spring vacations, didn’t coincide, so I went to visit him at Princeton and he was getting a much better education there than I was at Harvard. I lived with him for about three days, slept in his housing, ate at his eating club, and went to class with him. One of his classes was with a full professor of English and there were only six of us students in the man’s office. I’d never—I was astounded. At Harvard I took a class with a man named Perry Miller. I’d never heard of him, it was English 1, and I got an F on the midterm because I hadn’t done all the reading, partly, and I couldn’t understand why this man was spending so much time—this was at my first or second year—

02:00:40:43

**Lage:**

A small class?

02:00:40:46

**Jordan:**

It was a huge lecture course. I went to him about having gotten an F on the midterm, to ask him what I was doing wrong. I went to his office. He looked terribly surprised and said, “I didn’t read

your paper, you need to go talk with the TA.” I said, “The what?” I didn’t know anything about Harvard’s system, I thought you went to the professor—no, you don’t. [laughter] He hadn’t read my exam, and I ended up doing all right in the course, I got something like a B plus or something. It wasn’t until I got to Brown that I realized that he was next to a deity in early American history. I did wonder why he was spending all of his time with these obscure seventeenth-century poets. [laughter]

02:00:41:49

**Lage:**

That’s wonderful.

02:00:41:50

**Jordan:**

I had fun with that experience at Brown, where we read everything Perry Miller wrote. I had fun there, because I said, “I had a course with him.” I said, “I’m sure it was the same Perry Miller—he was very nasty to me.” Bill Bouwsma once told me that when Bouwsma went to Harvard, he lived for a year in Miller’s house. He had all kinds of reasons to say that Perry Miller was not a very nice person.

02:00:42:30

**Lage:**

And you’d seen that in that one brief encounter.

02:00:42:32

**Jordan:**

Very brief indeed! He essentially brushed me off, “Go see the TA, I haven’t read your paper.”

02:00:42:41

**Lage:**

This must have affected how you taught when you—

02:00:42:45

**Jordan:**

I think so, I think it did.

02:00:42:46

**Lage:**

Even though you ended up—

02:00:42:48

**Jordan:**

This visit to Princeton was very important, where my friend, Andover friend, was getting a much better undergraduate education. Not that younger people can’t be good, because some of the teaching assistants were very good, and some weren’t, in social relations. The man I did my honors thesis with, he’s now a professor at Hopkins.

02:00:43:16

**Lage:**

And was he a TA?

02:00:43:17

**Jordan:**

He was an assistant professor. He was very good, and I saw him a lot. I did it on the voting preferences of Harvard students in the election of 1952. I did it on an IBM—

02:00:43:38

**Lage:**

That was a long way from colonial.

02:00:43:39

**Jordan:**

I did it on an IBM sorter, and then wrote it up.

02:00:43:45

**Lage:**

It was very quantitative.

02:00:43:48

**Jordan:**

It was. I was doing correlations on a sorter. It was quantitative, and it's not a masterpiece of any kind. Finding the job at Exeter is what got me into history, because I had written around to headmasters so I wouldn't get turned down. I said, "Can I come and talk with you about teaching in a prep school?" I wrote a letter and sent it around to about ten schools in New England, prep schools. I got favorable responses from about nine of them. "Can I come and talk to you?" I didn't say, "Do you have a job?" I said, "I am qualified to teach English, French, history, physics," I think I threw in physics. I'd had one year of physics at Andover, and one year at Harvard, and I did okay. My medical career, my distinguished medical career ended with a D minus in Chem 1A. [laughter]

02:00:45:06

**Lage:**

Was that anything you'd aspired to?

02:00:45:07

**Jordan:**

I was going to be a doctor.

02:00:45:09

**Lage:**

Oh you were? You didn't mention that.

02:00:45:10

**Jordan:**

Oh, well, when I went to Harvard I was going to be—

02:00:45:14

**Lage:**

So you were kind of following in a certain line of the family. And going to Harvard was family tradition.

02:00:45:19

**Jordan:**

Yes, yes. I was going to go become a doctor. Probably a psychiatrist or a pediatrician. But then I ran into—not even organic, which was famously tough, this was Chem 1A, and I had to go to the lecturer for permission to drop it, otherwise you had to take 1B even if you—and I got a D minus, which was passing, but not promising, and I knew I couldn't pass 1B.

02:00:45:52

**Lage:**

Was your family concerned about all of that, or upset?

02:00:45:56

**Jordan:**

No. I think they weren't terribly surprised. [laughter] I went to him and I thought, "Is he going to let me drop it?" He had to sign a form to let me drop it with credit for a D minus and not take 1B. I told him I was majoring in social relations and that I loved his lectures, they were very entertaining—he created pills and froze cranberries, threw them out into the audience, a flamboyant lecturer, but I didn't understand anything. The only reason I passed was the lab work. I didn't pass a single exam, and there were a number of them, and I flunked them all. He said, "You don't belong in chemistry. I'll sign it, sure. You don't belong in this." So that was the end of my medical career.

02:00:46:57

**Lage:**

Just as well.

02:00:47:00

**Jordan:**

I was going to be—yes, by that time I had decided I was going to be a physician, when I went to Harvard.

02:00:47:06

**Lage:**

Well, when did you decide you were going to be a historian? After the teaching at Exeter?

02:00:47:11

**Jordan:**

When I got the job at Exeter. Because if they had given me a job teaching English, I probably would have ended up probably teaching—

02:00:47:20

**Lage:**

Wanting to go on in English, do you think?

02:00:47:20

**Jordan:**

Probably.

02:00:47:22

**Lage:**

This makes it sound like happenstance rather than—

02:00:47:25

**Jordan:**

I backed into it.

02:00:47:28

**Lage:**

Your father was a historian.

02:00:47:29

**Jordan:**

Yes, and that's one of the reasons I think I was reluctant to go into it.

02:00:47:32

**Lage:**

Oh really.

02:00:47:32

**Jordan:**

Because I didn't want to do what he'd done, it seemed.

02:00:47:37

**Lage:**

But you loved teaching history.

02:00:47:39

**Jordan:**

I loved the teaching at Exeter. I had these young people that were only—well, I was only five years older than the boys I was teaching. Then there were a bunch of guys in their mid twenties and late twenties who were getting PhDs.

02:00:47:59

**Lage:**

Who were teachers.

02:00:48:00

**Jordan:**

Who were young teachers at Exeter. Really first-rate people who were getting PhDs. It was their example, as well as I really fell in love with this subject, teaching it.

02:00:48:16

**Lage:**

Fascinating.

02:00:48:16

**Jordan:**

They had told me that I had to start working on an MA, and I had most of it done, but not the thesis, when I arrived there in January. Exeter was a wonderful school, a little more relaxed and little more—there were differences with Andover, but the Andover-Exeter history faculties met once each year at one place or the other. Both headmasters had some experience as historians, masters in history and such. So we met with the headmasters and the history departments jointly. That was in its own right interesting. The schools were really quite similar with the student body ranging from backgrounds of great poverty to extreme wealth, Rockefeller. I was responsible at

Exeter for a guy who kept getting out of line in my dormitory, the floor that I was on, so I was responsible for him. I called him outside the building at night after hours and I had to tell the dean of students about this, and it came up at the faculty meeting, and it turned out other people were getting up and talking about offenses. He was a young—he came from the Kohler family, with Kohler plumbing—he was told to take the next train out that afternoon, by vote of the faculty. I was a little horrified, but this kid was a trouble maker, and Exeter was in a position and Andover was in the same kind of position, that no matter what kind of money somebody had—

02:00:50:21

**Lage:**

They followed those rules.

02:00:50:21

**Jordan:**

He not only was out after whatever it was, eight o'clock at night, ten o'clock, but he lied about it. Then I did a little detective work and then I went to the dean and said there was a serious problem with this Kohler fellow, who had been in some problems before, it was not just the one offense. The tradition at both schools then was, you took the next train out of town. It wasn't like Harvard—there was no reinstatement—once you were gone, you were gone.

02:00:51:10

**Lage:**

Let's see what else—

02:00:51:12

**Jordan:**

We're kind of bouncing around.

02:00:51:12

**Lage:**

I know, but that's important. Brown, Brown and your dissertation, and what kind of history was being done there, how did you change as you developed?

02:00:51:28

**Jordan:**

I did a lot of English history, and Renaissance and Reformation. It was a very small department, and American history, particularly early American history, and took as my—Brown then had four equally weighted fields, two in American history, one four year PhD or prelim exams, orals only, no written ones—in late America, early America, and then I did England since 1485 to the present, and then the history of political thought, which was ostensibly an outside field, but actually it's history from Socrates to Stalin. Brown was extremely rigorous. I wanted to do a second language, I wanted to do Spanish because of its relevance to the Americas, colonial Americas. They said, "You know French anyway, you've got to do—do something that's different, German or Russian." I ended up doing German and unless you're in Pennsylvania history—I don't know it anymore.

02:00:52:54

**Lage:**

It wasn't useful to you.

02:00:52:55

**Jordan:**

No. But Brown was very old fashioned and very rigorous, but very small. It was a very small graduate program. It did have an American studies program, and the year I got my degree they awarded two PhDs in history and two in American studies, and that was an unusually full year for them. The library was wonderful at Brown. It is not huge, but it was then over a million volumes and it was very much under-used. It was a small history faculty and a very, very small graduate program.

02:00:53:44

**Lage:**

So that must have made fairly good attention for you.

02:00:53:48

**Jordan:**

A lot, I knew every faculty member quite well. I stayed on for a year as an instructor because I had done well, I'd gotten their biggest fellowship after a year there, and I'd gotten straight A's. I was sort of their star pupil. I stayed on for a year, and then I had a postdoctoral fellowship which my dissertation got for me at Williamsburg, at what was then called the Institute of Early American History and Culture, sponsored by the restoration at Williamsburg and the College of William and Mary. They've had this postdoctoral fellowship program which is mainly for turning dissertations into books. Their main application is your dissertation. So I had two years of teaching one course one semester a year in the survey at William and Mary and the rest of the time free.

02:00:54:53

**Lage:**

That was quite interesting.

02:00:54:57

**Jordan:**

Their library was good for early American history, but I was then through most of the sources.

02:00:55:06

**Lage:**

Oh, you were?

02:00:55:07

**Jordan:**

But I started work on the second half, which was a post-revolutionary half of the book.

02:00:55:14

**Lage:**

Now, did your dissertation cover the first half only?

02:00:55:17

**Jordan:**

It stopped at the end of the American revolution in 1784, for no good reason. Fleming and I agreed that it was an artificial stopping point—Fleming was wonderful about the dissertation. He said, "Well, there was a lot of good information in this and it will make an awfully good—" He

said, “I’ll sign it, but it’s going to sit in the archives and people will be mining it for good information for years.” That’s what he told me.

02:00:55:51

**Lage:**

Now what did he mean by that? That it lacked something?

02:00:55:55

**Jordan:**

That it lacked any conceptual—and I began to add the conceptual material partly because Donald Fleming had been so nasty about it.

02:00:56:07

**Lage:**

[laughter] And then you had the whole second half, too.

02:00:56:10

**Jordan:**

Yes, yes. I rewrote some of it, a little bit of the beginning, but when I got to Berkeley it wasn’t fully finished, but I finished in—I went there in fall of 1963, partly based on this dissertation, or by then it was a much longer manuscript. I’d already done much of the research for the second part, but for dissertation purposes we just—Fleming said, “We’ll just quit at this arbitrary date of the end of the American revolution.”

02:00:56:48

**Lage:**

It strikes me that there was a tremendous amount of research that went into it, just looking at the first half.

02:00:56:55

**Jordan:**

Yes. There was. I didn’t even really, when I was in graduate school and during my post-doc, I never even read the newspaper, let alone watched the television. I did nothing but work.

02:00:57:10

**Lage:**

And you had a family.

02:00:57:11

**Jordan:**

And raised three small boys.

02:00:57:14

**Lage:**

Did you get involved with childrearing?

02:00:57:16

**Jordan:**

Oh, yes.

02:00:57:17

**Lage:**

So you did have time for that.

02:00:57:18

**Jordan:**

Yes. I remember when I was at Berkeley, Henry May, who was chairman, asked me for a report in connection with a merit increase after two years. He didn't tell me that this was a crucial turning point in my career. I learned that only later. He should have told me, but he didn't. I remember concluding this report for my merit increase after I'd been there for several years as an assistant professor. I remember the sentence, I said, "Perhaps there is some merit in helping to supervise three small boys." [laughter] I would not have put it in there if I had known what an important document I was writing.

02:00:58:03

**Lage:**

Well, it sounds to me like you were ahead of your time, to kind of demand that that be looked at.

02:00:58:09

**Jordan:**

Well, I thought it was very important.

02:00:58:13

**Lage:**

I'm wondering if this is a time to break and have some lunch. Would that be good for you? I don't know how long you'd like to go on sitting here.

02:00:58:22

**Jordan:**

I'm willing to go further now or break for lunch, either one is fine with me. I have no idea what time it is.

02:00:58:29

**Lage:**

It's 12:13. I could go further. I would want to talk more about how *White Over Black* developed, which seems terribly important to know.

02:00:58:42

**Jordan:**

It's, well, it's twenty past twelve, I think I'll go have some lunch, why don't we do that?

02:00:58:54

**Lage:**

It's hard to talk too long at one time, you kind of lose track of things.

**Interview #2: July 15, 2004**

[Begin Audio File3]

03:00:00:02

**Lage:**

Okay, we are now recording. We are back after noon for our second session of the interview with Winthrop Jordan. Still July 15<sup>th</sup>. Okay, when we broke off for lunch we were sort of in the middle of Brown and the idea for your dissertation and how it was shaped, and what Brown—

03:00:00:26

**Jordan:**

Well, let me just say about the dissertation, I started out to do—I think the attitudes came from my undergraduate training and perhaps from my seminar about racial prejudice. I was going to do Indians and, as the term was then, Negroes, attitudes toward them. I realized that there had been a little written about the Indians, practically nothing about attitudes towards blacks, which, in retrospect, is kind of surprising, but there wasn't. You could read what little secondary work there was in an afternoon. I was going to do both, and then I realized that I'd better do one or the other. I thought to me the more interesting and probably more enduring and more important one—

03:00:01:37

**Lage:**

Were you guided by any of your professors in this?

03:00:01:38

**Jordan:**

No, this is all my own fault. I was casting about when I took my oral exams, and I had for prelims or whatever they're called, I had no idea what I was going to do. Then I got this idea and was going to do both and dropped the Indians. Then I kept discovering that Indians were coming back in sort of the backdoor.

03:00:02:13

**Lage:**

Into your—

03:00:02:15

**Jordan:**

Into the discussion, because the people who wrote about blacks also wrote about Indians and they were underlining a great contrast between the two.

03:00:02:26

**Lage:**

In the attitudes.

03:00:02:27

**Jordan:**

Yes. So if one looks in the index there's a lot about attitudes towards the Indians which I realized I had to deal with, given what I was finding in the sources. Well, I wasn't looking for them. When I left from the institute I had a draft. I had done much of the research when I was a lecturer

at Brown, I had one year with not very onerous teaching. So I had a pretty near complete manuscript. There was a little more writing to do but not much. It was mainly a matter of—now, I must have had more than that, because I spent two years of nearly free time working on it and rewriting it. The second half turned out to be just about half, so it ended up being twice as long. It was a moderately long dissertation.

03:00:03:36

**Lage:**

Now let me get this straight, when you went to William and Mary, and the institute, had you turned in your dissertation?

03:00:03:45

**Jordan:**

I had my PhD, and I taught with a PhD as a lecturer at Brown.

03:00:03:51

**Lage:**

Okay, so the dissertation was just about the first half? After the Revolutionary War?

03:00:03:54

**Jordan:**

Yes, up through 1784, after the peace treaty that closed the revolution. It served to get me this postdoctoral fellowship, which is combined with a mutual commitment that they publish it in their publishing program through Chapel Hill, and you're committed—your only commitment there was to teach one section of a survey during one semester each year. Then it's a three-year fellowship. I only had two because this job offer came up.

03:00:04:41

**Lage:**

So you did a lot of research to get that second time period.

03:00:04:45

**Jordan:**

Yes. I did a lot of research.

03:00:04:49

**Lage:**

Did you have to travel for that?

03:00:04:49

**Jordan:**

I did, I made one trip to Philadelphia and New York, but not counting both Worcester and the Antiquarian Society in Massachusetts and the Boston area, Holton Library and the Massachusetts Historical Society—it's a wonderful triangle for American history, and it is about an hour and a half triangle, forty-five miles apart. I had most of the work done, certainly through the chapter on Jefferson, and I wasn't doing much primary research, but digesting notes and thinking and redoing a lot of things, and the dissertation very badly needed rewriting, it still did, I thought, when I heard about this job here and I went to an interview. I'd published several articles while at the institute, and I got this, had this interview at a sherry party where they interviewed all the candidates for a colonial history job at Berkeley.

03:00:06:08

**Lage:**

A sherry party?

03:00:06:08

**Jordan:**

At the AHA meeting, or the OAH meeting. I met Ken Stamp, who came up and introduced himself, said, "I want you to know that I began my book well before the Supreme Court decision." I'd said something in an article that remained a point of some soreness with him. I'd implied the opposite and I ought to have known better, that his book was triggered by this. I hadn't meant to say it but I nearly said it and he hadn't taken kindly to it. His book on slavery revolutionized the field. I met Charles Sellers, who was chairman of the committee. Then nearly took a job at Ohio State but decided I would turn it down because I had this chance at going to Berkeley, which I would much prefer. I had actually visited Ohio State and I turned down a job as an assistant professor there without a guarantee of coming to Berkeley, but pretty good prospects. Sellers, I think, who must have been chairman of the search committee wrote me a note no one ever should have written. It said, "Our committee is recommending you but you are first of two recommended to the department." So I sat there for weeks knowing that they had a second choice offer and that there must be some doubt on the committee's mind. Usually they don't do that. I don't think he should have told me that, but at any rate, I would rather have no news.

03:00:07:59

**Lage:**

Was the implication that they were still deciding between two people?

03:00:08:04

**Jordan:**

Yes. But I was the top choice. My guess is there was a two-to-one vote or something, I don't know.

03:00:08:13

**Lage:**

Was the department chair involved at all? Do you remember? I think Carl Schorske was the department chair then.

03:00:08:19

**Jordan:**

Yes, he was, and he wasn't much involved. My correspondence was largely with Sellers, and there wasn't a great deal of that. Except for that note—I thought, "That isn't a very tactful thing to say to a candidate."

03:00:08:33

**Lage:**

Well, what did Berkeley mean to you then? That was a long way out of your circle.

03:00:08:37

**Jordan:**

I just knew it was a prestigious appointment. I hadn't liked Ohio State much. I didn't like the people, I didn't like the atmosphere. I had accepted orally in the morning and I had to call them

back. He asked for a letter in writing accepting and I heard by the old boy network that Berkeley was looking for an historian of early American history, and it was at that point that I called up Ohio State and I said, “I’m very sorry, I know I gave you my oral word that I would come, but I’m not going to be able to write the letter.” So actually, it was more of a gamble, but I had backing me the possibility of another year of my postdoctoral fellowship, so I wasn’t going to starve. It was later that Sellers wrote me, after I’d sent my manuscript which was then pretty—I had a manuscript to present. I sent it to them, and at least part of the committee liked it.  
[laughter]

03:00:09:58

**Lage:**

This is a difficult position to be in.

03:00:10:01

**Jordan:**

Then I got an offer, and I accepted it. I think I know why there may have been reservations, because when I got to Berkeley it was made very, very clear by some indirect remarks by people in European history who pointed out to me that I was welcome aboard, and “Where did you go?” The question was, graduate school. I said, “I got my PhD at Brown.” They said, “Oh. Oh?”  
[laughter] I remember looking in the catalogue to see where—some document that showed where people had been on the faculty.

03:00:11:06

**Lage:**

I think it is in the catalogue, actually.

03:00:11:08

**Jordan:**

Okay. Where they’d gotten their advanced—D. Phil or PhD. They were all either Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, or a D. Phil from England. I was the first person not from those three colleges.

03:00:11:33

**Lage:**

Well, that’s interesting [but not accurate—ed.].

03:00:11:37

**Jordan:**

I knew that I was replacing Bridenbaugh who had left to go back to Brown. He had been at Brown for a while and left amidst a lot of very hard feelings.

03:00:11:53

**Lage:**

Was he at Brown when you were there?

03:00:11:54

**Jordan:**

No. He had moved to the institute. When I got to Williamsburg he had left for Berkeley. There was a lot of emotional wreckage left by Carl Bridenbaugh, the purportedly distinguished colonial historian, who Stamp mentions in the interview that you sent me. There was a lot of emotion in a very small atmosphere at the institute in Williamsburg. Then I came out here and a man came

around to introduce himself, Bob Middlekauff. I had heard that they had—I was going to be a second colonial historian, they were planning to have two. I thought, “Ah, that’s wonderful.” Bridenbaugh leaves, and he’s not all that good a historian anyway.

03:00:12:46

**Lage:**

But he had big ambitions.

03:00:12:48

**Jordan:**

He had enormous ambitions, and he was going to be replaced by two people. Bob Middlekauff came around and he and I hit it off. I liked him immediately and we’ve been very close friends ever since, since I first met him, which is not always a good sign, but it was in this case. He told me in that first thing, he said he had been hired the year before and had not been told that they were going to hire somebody else. It had not been made clear to him that I had been told that they were hoping to have two. I arrived and, so far as he knew, we might be battling it out for a single post.

03:00:13:38

**Lage:**

Oh I see!

03:00:13:40

**Jordan:**

Then it became clear, I told him what I had been told, and he said, “Oh, that’s better, isn’t it?” I said, “Yes, it’s a lot better!” [laughter] I later met Bridenbaugh personally for the first time when I went back to Brown one summer. I was doing a little research and summering on Cape Cod, and I met him and introduced myself in the library. He is a very unpleasant man. He had left emotional wreckage here, or maybe not emotional—Williamsburg is emotional. Everywhere that man left bad tastes in people’s mouths.

03:00:14:25

**Lage:**

And also—was it the AHA? Or the OAH that he made his famous speech?

03:00:14:34

**Jordan:**

That famous speech—Larry Levine blew up about it, and it was pretty bad—that to study early American history, you have to come from that background, which I thought was outrageous.

03:00:14:44

**Lage:**

Well, how do you feel about that, considering you did come from that background?

03:00:14:49

**Jordan:**

Well, I thought it was an outrageous thing to say, absolutely outrageous. It’s as if to say that nobody can write outside of, well, biography would be the obvious one—that you have to be Russian to write Russian history.

03:00:15:09

**Lage:**

You have to be a Middle Easterner to write Middle Eastern history.

03:00:15:13

**Jordan:**

Yes, exactly. But it was made clear—it was clear that Brown was an exception. It probably might have been a barrier to the committee or some member of the committee, and also the fact that I wasn't an undergraduate history major. What turned out in the long run I think to be a good advantage for me, having majored in this weird field called social relations, which no longer exists at Harvard. It was a department that turned out to be a rather temporary one, partly for personnel reasons, personal reasons. But it made a wonderful broad-gauge social studies background to historical study, and I profited in the long run from that a great deal.

03:00:16:08

**Lage:**

Was the kind of history you were doing in *White Over Black*, looking at attitudes, was that something that challenged the establishment, the historical establishment?

03:00:16:18

**Jordan:**

I think so. Taking them [attitudes] as discreet entities to write history of is something that was a bit unusual, and obviously stems from a kind of social science orientation that these attitudes are real, that they can be grappled with. They're different from ideas in the sense that they have a very powerful emotional content, affective content. So when it is on the borderline between history of, actually, emotions as well as ideas, and it's a cultural phenomenon, and what I had found in the dissertation was evidence showing that, essentially, anti-Negro feeling and thought was much, much older than most people had assumed. Some social scientist had dated it from the invention of the cotton gin, as if slavery came first, and there were no signs of this, and then—the cotton gin wasn't invented until the 1790s—as if it was a sheer function of slavery. That was at a time when it was assumed that slavery existed forever in this country in its classical form of the final thirty years. As if that institution itself had not changed over a period of two hundred years.

One of the things that Stamp's book has, and he'd be the first to admit it, is that its sources are all from the last thirty years of the institution, thirty or forty. The study of slavery in the American colonies is something that—one of the first persons to do one was one of the earliest dissertations that I supervised. I told the student that there is a topic—if he wanted to do history of slavery in colonial Virginia, the sources would be there. I said I hadn't read them all, but I knew they were there because I looked around at them, I know of their existence. I said, "There's a dissertation topic." He picked up on that. His was the first and along with another one supervised by [Bernard] Bailyn on South Carolina—this one was on Virginia—were the first of the two colonial slavery studies. Now since then, people wouldn't dare touch—oh, a good deal has been written about this—or a mistake was being made for so long of ignoring the first three quarters of the existence of an institution, which obviously no historian is going to expect, that it underwent no evolution over a period of two hundred years. It was for a long time treated as if it existed as at the time it became controversial. And for more than a century when it wasn't the slightest controversial at all, it was very much in existence. That was one of the perspectives that

the book brought, was drawing attention a little bit more to the early years of slavery than people were accustomed to. That wasn't my intention, my intention was to deal with white attitudes.

03:00:20:20

**Lage:**

That's right, you were really focusing on white attitudes.

03:00:20:24

**Jordan:**

And I didn't realize how much there was about—Bob Middlekauff said, “You know, there's a lot about Negroes in your book.” I said, “Well, there's not really meant to be.” He said, “Well, nonetheless, you can't write about peoples' ideas about them without to some extent writing about them.” My interest had been in the attitude of white culture and thinking that attitudes—although a small number of historians would disagree outright, a great majority I think would not—that attitudes are something one can, in fact, write about. They have sort of dual components of affect and intellect behind them. Anything that involves sex and race involves an emotional fray in this country.

03:00:21:39

**Lage:**

And you found the two combined, often—the attitudes.

03:00:21:41

**Jordan:**

Yes.

03:00:21:44

**Lage:**

Was that something you expected? Or something you saw in the sources?

03:00:21:48

**Jordan:**

Sure, sure. I saw it in the sources, but I more or less expected it. The social science orientation lead me not to think of ideas as floating independently in society, and to think also about emotional levels at which it seemed to me the racial beliefs, the science, was sort of wildly irrational, that if you were writing an intellectual history, to dismiss it is just bizarrely wrong, when, in fact, there is a driving force underneath it where people want to find certain answers and find them scientifically.

03:00:22:50

**Lage:**

When they tried to apply science to race, you mean?

03:00:22:52

**Jordan:**

Yes. A benevolent physician, Benjamin Rush, one of the nation's most famous physicians at the time of the Revolution, thought that the Negroes would gradually whiten in the new, non-tropical climate, and this would help end the problem of slavery. Perhaps it could be hastened with the application externally of the juice of unripe peaches. In the history of medicine, that's scarcely a scientific breakthrough. [laughter] But it's a matter of his desire as a person of great benevolence

to make a case that this problem is a problem, but it's going to go away, and focusing on slavery. So writing about the semi-rational, and underlying all this is the economic demand for bound labor.

03:00:24:06

**Lage:**

So you brought together this kind of psychology but you didn't dismiss the economic?

03:00:24:13

**Jordan:**

No, I tried not to, although I think some people thought the book overly psychological. In fact, I know they did, I've been told.

03:00:24:21

**Lage:**

I've heard the comment, how do you leap from a psychological analysis of a person who might be present in the source, to a social?

03:00:24:32

**Jordan:**

There are social ideas, and most surely racial attitudes are both personal, and they're also social, where either approved of or now disapproved of. They exist at a social level, and they also exist at a personal level. Hence they vary enormously by individual. They are, of course, idiosyncratic, but they're also social, cultural phenomena as well. If what people are reading and absorbing and interpreting in terms of their cognitive assessments is governed by certain things floating in the general culture that makes certain assumptions—if Negroes smell, that's because Negroes smell or it's because they don't have any access to washing. These are two very different explanations for why they smell, because I have no doubt—and this is something I did run into—I accepted the notion that there was a basis for saying that the slaves smelled. There probably was a very real basis for that; you would, too, if you couldn't take a—you simply had very limited access to water and what that was used for was boiling, drinking and cooking. How that got turned into a racial characteristic is—and that's been remarkably pervasive, continues; it's not dead in Mississippi, even though blacks now have much better access to things like showers, and running water than they did thirty years ago. There are parts of Mississippi where they don't; there are also some poor whites in Mississippi that don't still. There are rural slums still in Mississippi. One of the things I had pretty well decided by the time I had got to Berkeley was that I hadn't heard a single locker room or living room assertion about blacks that I couldn't find prior to the American Revolution. One of them—you can always tell somebody with mixed blood if they've got any purple at the base of their fingernails.

03:00:27:26

**Lage:**

You've heard that?

03:00:27:27

**Jordan:**

That was the last one to fall, I thought that's one that, I've heard it in twentieth century living rooms, my parents-in-law said that to me once, rather casually. My family never would have said something like that, they didn't have suspicions that they didn't back. But my father-in-law was

a male chauvinist, and that sort of thing mattered to him. He told me that. Or maybe it was my mother-in-law. At any rate, I finally found a reference to exactly that in some colonial written source.

03:00:28:11

**Lage:**

That's amazing.

03:00:28:14

**Jordan:**

One of the reasons that the book came as something of a surprise and made a splash because of the deep-seated quality of these assumptions, and the presumption that something so long-standing is not going to change over night. Hence, I was much more pessimistic about the changes that were going on with the civil rights movements than a great many of my colleagues were, simply because—

03:00:28:49

**Lage:**

The changing—

03:00:28:51

**Jordan:**

Changing this kind of attitude—you can change peoples' behavior and what they say in public, that's what's happened in Mississippi, but there are still people who—Now a lot of that public change made an enormous amount of difference to the victims. But still the attitudes are perhaps considerably modified and certainly much less publicly held, but they are still there.

03:00:29:21

**Lage:**

That's very interesting. I was going to ask you, since you brought up civil rights, and also Ken Stamp's taking issue with you about the influence of civil rights on his book, what about the context of the times in which you were writing this? How did it affect you?

03:00:29:36

**Jordan:**

I suppose I was influenced by them, but not much. For one thing, I didn't read the newspaper or watch television. I tried quite deliberately—you couldn't help but be aware of civil rights marches and so on, but I deliberately kept away from reading much about them on the grounds that the better—I'll do better if I remain immersed in the actual sources and not try and slip into—rather than slip into the trap of trying to write the background for what is happening today, because I think that's the wrong way to write history, writing it essentially backwards. Hence, the book arises much, I think, pretty successfully, directly from the sources themselves, and isn't a child of the civil rights movement. For one thing, I began it, my interest in this subject is of much longer standing than the modern civil rights movement.

03:00:30:54

**Lage:**

But you were conceiving of the book about the time, let's look at dates, I'm terrible with dates.

03:00:31:01

**Jordan:**

Well, I chose a dissertation topic in 1958, summer of 1958. That was after Rosa Parks, and the modern—

03:00:31:19

**Lage:**

*Brown v Board of Education.*

03:00:31:22

**Jordan:**

Yes, so in that sense it was in the air. But I'd already learned from social science as an undergraduate, about the segregation of the army during World War II. And during the Battle of the Bulge, the blacks who had been confined to doing transport work and stevedore work were thrown into the Battle of the Bulge never having held a rifle before, and performed very well when integrated in small numbers in these white units. The expectation being that blacks wouldn't fight properly.

03:00:32:03

**Lage:**

So this was all studied at Harvard?

03:00:32:05

**Jordan:**

Yes. That was a standard part of social science literature.

03:00:32:10

**Lage:**

So your interest came more out of, partly your family background, but out of the literature and your studies, rather than current events, it sounds like.

03:00:32:20

**Jordan:**

Yes.

03:00:32:22

**Lage:**

Was Robert Coles acknowledged in your work? I thought I saw his name.

03:00:32:27

**Jordan:**

I think so, he should have been. Yes. He stopped by in Williamsburg when I was on the post-doctorate, and we sat up twenty-four hours talking. I've lost contact with him, but we had a wonderful twenty-four hours, just fascinating each other.

03:00:32:49

**Lage:**

Now he was a psychiatrist, right?

03:00:32:50

**Jordan:**

He was a psychiatrist, yes. We talked about racial prejudice. He'd done work with the effects, he'd done a lot of work with black children, in which they'd draw men, men drawn without arms. We talked about this. He was a young man, just beginning his since-distinguished career. It was the only time in my life I've ever stayed up for twenty-four hours talking to somebody. He'd heard about me and came through Williamsburg on his way back up to—I don't know where he was going, up north. We just hit it off enormously well.

03:00:33:50

**Lage:**

Was he interested in your historical perspective?

03:00:33:51

**Jordan:**

Yes, he was.

03:00:33:53

**Lage:**

Or you in his psychological?

03:00:33:54

**Jordan:**

We just exchanged perspectives, but we seemed to talk very much the same language. A very bright man. He was interested in the historical work I was doing, I was interested in the psychological work that he was doing. We covered a huge amount of ground, he's not a shy man. But I've lost contact with him unfortunately. It didn't last—I think it was so intense.

03:00:34:30

**Lage:**

Twenty-four hours, I'll say.

03:00:34:31

**Jordan:**

Yes, we didn't go to bed. [laughter]

03:00:34:37

**Lage:**

You also—another thing that seems to distinguish it is the broad context, geographical—you went way beyond the United States.

03:00:34:47

**Jordan:**

Well, I thought that starting at the gangplank in the United States is not a very good idea anyway, and I started looking at the expansion of the English overseas, which means going back into the sixteenth century. I started reading sources I had never read before, things I was able to find through the John Carter Brown Library. I was able to do an entire chapter before getting across the Atlantic. I knew at the time I was cutting into a seamless web of time, that I could go back into the Middle Ages, but I didn't know anything about that.

03:00:35:33

**Lage:**

And they weren't in that library. [laughter]

03:00:35:36

**Jordan:**

Exactly. I just realized, well, I've got to start somewhere, so the beginning of English overseas expansion in the 1550s, the middle of the sixteenth century, seemed to be the best place to start. I've found negative attitudes even then, stereotypes, ideas about blacks. I was quite surprised. But I found them and I kept finding them. However important that was prior to labor exploitation in the New World, there were attitudes. When I talked about Shakespeare's play, *Othello*, a guy in the English department, a young guy, I showed him that section.

03:00:36:39

**Lage:**

Here at Berkeley?

03:00:36:41

**Jordan:**

Here at Berkeley. I've forgotten his name. He said, "Well, I don't really agree with you because *Othello* is the hero." I said, "Well, yes, he is the hero, and he's a Moor, he'd not fully an African, but isn't he shown on the stage"—and that's certainly doing some research—yes, he was portrayed as a sub-Saharan African even though he was a Moor according to Shakespeare's language. When Iago taunts him by saying, or who taunts, I've forgotten, and refers to a black ram tugging your ewe, Desdemona, there is—it's clear that there's something going on and it's sexual, and it has to do with racial difference. Why call him a black ram? I just disagreed with this guy's reading of the play—he read the play just totally differently than I did. It was one of those things. I still think he was wrong. [laughter]

03:00:37:59

**Lage:**

I saw—I haven't found a copy of the article, but reference to an article of yours, or maybe it was a paper you gave, "Time, Sex and Money."

03:00:38:09

**Jordan:**

That's the one I'm working on now.

03:00:38:09

**Lage:**

Oh you're working on it now? I thought this was way back.

03:00:38:11

**Jordan:**

I'm turning it into an article. It's an old talk.

03:00:38:15

**Lage:**

Yes, an old talk. Well, what is it? It was so intriguing, time, sex and money.

03:00:38:20

**Jordan:**

It's about sixteenth-century English culture in more detail, and the development of capitalist—partly capitalism and the relevant, the break with the Catholic church and the introduction of rigidity in terms of control and precision concerning time, sex and money. Those are the unifying three. Also I am talking, I have to admit I'm finally putting technology in the title. It spoils the trinity, which is capsulated in a wonderful remark by Mae West, the famous vamp, who was also herself a real wit. Her line was, "If you've got the money, honey, I've got the time." [laughter]

03:00:39:09

**Lage:**

Right.

03:00:39:11

**Jordan:**

The connection—I said, for those readers who think there's no connection between the three, I simply offer that quotation, let it drop, because it says what I wanted, all I needed to say.

03:00:39:25

**Lage:**

Does race enter in there, or is this a new topic?

03:00:39:28

**Jordan:**

Race does enter in some, but I'm not really talking about racial attitudes, I'm talking about the nature of the culture, and the way in which it was becoming a controlling culture, controlling sex, controlling time, controlling money in a way that—partly through technology, the four of them actually interact—what I'm trying to get at is the question of why English attitudes, and to some extent, the Dutch, who were also capitalists and Protestant. Why did those attitudes resulted in a more rigid definition of slavery and of race than in the Latin countries, France, Portugal and Spain, were the other major colonizing powers in the Americas, and enslavers of Africans. What I'm trying to get at is comparative of the five major Atlantic European colonizing nations. England I am convinced, this sort of mode of rigidity and control—

03:00:40:51

**Lage:**

Which comes out of the birth of capitalism?

03:00:40:54

**Jordan:**

Partly. That suggests that capitalism is fundamental. I argue that capitalism is part of a cultural revolution, that capitalism is not necessarily the moving force underlying all of these changes. It is one very important aspect, but it itself is a way of looking at the world.

03:00:41:17

**Lage:**

And is there a basic one? Is Protestantism the basic one?

03:00:41:21

**Jordan:**

No, I don't think there is a basic one. I think they're all interactive with one another. Once you start thinking this way these—but technology does enter in because people at the time were conscious of the fact that there were three major inventions that had revolutionized their world. One was printing, the other was gun powder and then the third is the compass. All three were borrowed from China, but adopted most enthusiastically by the Dutch and the English, the two powers that emerged as major maritime powers in the long run.

03:00:42:19

**Lage:**

What happened in Portugal and Spain?

03:00:42:22

**Jordan:**

Well, they had navies and so forth, and adopted all three of these new inventions, but not with the same devotion that, and rigidity, I think, and extent—the article I'm doing based on the "Time, Sex and Money" talk is really the summary of a book.

03:00:42:50

**Lage:**

I can't wait to read it. [laughter] I won't make you go into the whole thing, it just sounds so fascinating. Did you thesis change as you were writing the book at all? Did you have any major breakthroughs, or re-considerations?

03:00:43:15

**Jordan:**

No. I kept finding more of the same, not to say there weren't changes in that, because there were important changes over a period of a couple of hundred years. But not great changes. I think that those didn't come until the nineteenth century. I found more and more of the same, in some ways culminating with Thomas Jefferson—it was not in my dissertation, but I'd already done enough work on him to know. When I was a lecturer at Brown I started the first chapter. He's the only person who has a whole chapter, because, more than any other American, he wrote about blacks, negatively and at length. He's since made himself quite famous for the Hemings.

03:00:44:23

**Lage:**

Well, I see that you dealt with that in that book.

03:00:44:26

**Jordan:**

I did, and I thought it about 65 percent likely that he was the father of several more of her children, but not all of her children.

03:00:44:40

**Lage:**

Based on the timing?

03:00:44:42

**Jordan:**

And on his psychology. Obviously not on the DNA evidence, which just came out a few years ago—I have an article reviewing that, it’s probably in the book that emerged from a conference at the University of Virginia about the DNA evidence about his probable fatherhood of those children. I just thought it was a matter of probability, historical probability that he was probably more likely to have been the father than not, but nothing to prove it in any sense, and what do you mean by proof anyway, historical proof? Is that 99 percent certain? [laughter] I just thought that given his own personality, given his culture, and given what he had written that it was perfectly likely—more than likely, more probable than not. I settled on 65 percent in my own mind. I think I didn’t use the figures because that’s silly, but essentially historians quantify all the time when they say “most” or “few” or “many” they’re doing quantification in a fuzzy sense, which is just as well because too much historical quantification is done with more precision than the original data warrant. There’s no point in rounding things out to three decimal points if your data is terribly sloppy to begin with.

03:00:46:31

**Lage:**

But now you seem to have reassessed your percentage based on the current—

03:00:46:36

**Jordan:**

It went up with the publication of—who’s it by? There’s a book at UCLA, she wrote a biography of Thomas Jefferson.

03:00:46:50

**Lage:**

Fawn Brodie?

03:00:46:51

**Jordan:**

Fawn Brodie. It went up, I thought maybe it’s more like 70 percent. Then the DNA, I would say now it’s 95 percent. Not certain.

03:00:47:06

**Lage:**

No, but that’s getting close.

03:00:47:07

**Jordan:**

Yes. [laughter]

03:00:47:09

**Lage:**

Which is really quite a fascinating—

03:00:47:14

**Jordan:**

There were a lot of people who were denying the possibility on up to the DNA evidence. They had to ask me to participate in this conference because I had—clearly I had allowed for the possibility that the accusation, which was by a scandal-monger, had a basis in fact. I didn’t care,

it doesn't affect what he wrote in the Declaration of Independence one way or the other—I just don't care whether he did or didn't in a moral sense. He would have been perfectly normal for his class if he had.

03:00:47:53

**Lage:**

Because you knew that went on a great deal.

03:00:47:56

**Jordan:**

Sure. There's plenty of evidence of masters and their sons and their visitors, male visitors, fathering slave kids. That's well known. Jefferson was a widower. And he was a particular sort of person, so I spent a chapter—I read everything Jefferson wrote about blacks, and Indians, because he wrote some about Indians and made this drastic contrast between the two people. He thought blacks were probably inferior and the Indians were not.

03:00:48:42

**Lage:**

To me, for people to hold these attitudes and then father children—

03:00:48:47

**Jordan:**

It's very paradoxical.

03:00:48:47

**Lage:**

It is very paradoxical.

03:00:48:48

**Jordan:**

But psychologically it makes perfect sense. [laughter] And also, Sally Hemings was one-eighth African and seven-eighths European in background.

03:00:49:02

**Lage:**

Oh, she was only one-eighth African.

03:00:49:03

**Jordan:**

She was. One of the descendents, Sally, the mother, Sally Hemings, was mighty near white. In that sense was a—even though we have the one-drop rule in this country, typically with the rigidity that doesn't exist anywhere else in the Americas.

03:00:49:32

**Lage:**

There's your rigidity concept.

03:00:49:33

**Jordan:**

One could be very anti-black and still have a—and it would be easier if one's "black mistress" is not conspicuously African looking, but just a little bit. That makes perfect sense, it seems to me,

psychologically. None of it makes sense in terms of the statement “all men are created equal.” But we then began—that is explicitly male. What happens later with the entitlement of women’s rights and abolition and suffrage—for years in this country, black men got the vote long before white women did. Which is a paradox.

03:00:50:38

**Lage:**

A paradox, I must say.

03:00:50:42

**Jordan:**

If you don’t like paradoxes, you shouldn’t do history. [laughter]

03:00:50:44

**Lage:**

I know! You seem comfortable with them.

03:00:50:46

**Jordan:**

I love them.

03:00:50:48

**Lage:**

Right, you have to. I’m looking for a quote I read about something you said about the impossibility of ever really finding the truth.

03:00:51:01

**Jordan:**

Oh.

03:00:51:02

**Lage:**

I think you put that right at the beginning of your introduction.

03:00:51:05

**Jordan:**

Yes. We’re never going to know for certain about a lot of things. More than most historians, I think in terms of probability, which itself is a modern notion. It dates from the sixteenth and seventeenth century—both in mathematics from just seventeenth century. But the notion of things being probable doesn’t exist in the medieval world where God is disposing of everything. God just disposes of it, and one doesn’t say, “Well, something’s likely to be so or not likely.” One doesn’t guess about God’s intentions. It is with the secularized world where one talks of, “Well, the chances are or aren’t.” We think so automatically, we’re so deeply immersed in it, and non quantitative historians—as I’ve just suggested, [they] quantify all the time in this vague and suitable way, in prose, rather than in numbers.

03:00:52:10

**Lage:**

Like geometry is to math. Here’s what you said, actually. I found my little note here. “I’ve assumed the task of explaining how things actually were, while at the same time thinking that no one will ever really know.”

03:00:52:22

**Jordan:**

That's right.

03:00:52:23

**Lage:**

Since you like paradoxes, you were okay with spending ten years of your life—

03:00:52:30

**Jordan:**

Yes. [laughter]

03:00:52:33

**Lage:**Well, let's talk a little bit about the reception of the book [*White Over Black*]. I'll let you say all the awards it won.

03:00:52:41

**Jordan:**

Well, the first one I heard about was one I've never heard of, and that was the Phi Beta Kappa's Ralph Waldo Emerson Award. I went to an awards dinner. I was invited, I'd been told I won this prize I'd never heard of. That was the fall of 1968, and at that awards dinner was a man who was becoming rapidly the most prominent black historian in the country; later he became president of national organizations, John Hope Franklin. He made an eloquent presentation to me at this dinner. At the dinner were all people who'd been Phi Beta Kappa in college, which I had never presumed to even try. [laughter] I could tell, walking down the halls which of my colleagues were Phi Beta Kappa because they got in *The Key* magazine, I think it's called, *The Key*—

03:00:53:54

**Lage:***The Key*—

03:00:53:56

**Jordan:**

I didn't get it because I hadn't been Phi Beta Kappa. I wasn't, and had not been a member, but they say, "Congratulations on your prize!" I said, "Well, thank you," and I could tell who was a Phi Beta Kappa and who wasn't—not something I'd ever inquired about.

03:00:54:15

**Lage:**

Oh, that's funny. So that was the first. And then there were a series of others; it was really quite remarkable.

03:00:54:20

**Jordan:**

Series of others. They all happened in the spring, and then one after the other, the spring of 1969. The National Book Award. Norman Mailer was there.

03:00:54:54

**Lage:**

At the Kennedy Center?

03:00:54:56

**Jordan:**

Yes, the Kennedy Center, on this polished stage floor, he's up at the podium, we were all in a line of the different categories for the National Book Award. He was reading his pre-written—it was a lucky thing, because he was slightly drunk [laughter] and he had been standing during the applause, smoking a cigarette at the podium. He dropped his cigarette and ground it into the polished wood floor and gave his acceptance speech. Then the Polish novelist—he won the fiction prize, Norman Mailer won for non-fiction, mine was the history and biography. Norman Mailer had been previously at some award [ceremony] and had been very naughty about Vietnam and they were scared stiff he was going to do something. He was upstairs in the room (they took us backstage before the ceremony) with two of his wives, one legal and the other—well, they were two of his wives there, I'm not sure of the status. Then we were gathered in the wings waiting to be told when to come out by the National Book Committee people. I was talking to him and he suddenly turned on his heels and went out a door to the stairs, a fire door. I went over to one of the National Book Award Committee people, and I said, "I don't know whether you're interested, but Norman Mailer who is scheduled shortly to go out on stage, Norman Mailer has just gone out that door." She ran around asking, "Where does it lead?" Somebody said, "The street!" [laughter] She bumped into him coming back up the stairs. He'd gone out to take a leak on the landing.

03:00:56:51

**Lage:**

Oh! [laughter]

03:00:56:56

**Jordan:**

So he was not naughty on the stage this time.

03:00:57:02

**Lage:**

It wasn't a publicly—it wasn't a government award, it's a private—

03:00:57:06

**Jordan:**

It's private, it's by the National Book Committee who pushed to sell the books. Then the Bancroft Prize, which is elegantly celebrated in the old library, a black-tie affair.

03:00:57:24

**Lage:**

Who gives that award?

03:00:57:27

**Jordan:**

They give three Bancroft Prizes a year in American history. It's named after an historian, Frederick Bancroft who is different from George and different from Hubert. He was a historian whose brother made a lot of money. Columbia administers it, and it is a very desirable prize and desirable. There are several winners in the department—Sellers won it, Middlekauff won it, maybe some other people. They have an elegant ceremony where the audience is composed of friends of the Columbia libraries and you're sitting the same room, before you have to get up and give a little talk, or a little acceptance speech, with a whole lot of New York millionaires.

[laughter] Which is kind of fun. The Francis Parkman Award, I was especially gratified because it is given primarily for style by the Society of American Historians which also has its—its magazine intending to—its magazine, hence society, intending to popularize history. I think it's only for first books, primarily for style. I later served on one of their juries because I was held up by—the chairman was a professor at Columbia and he said to me on the way out, “By the way, we always ask our winners to serve on a jury the next year.”

03:00:59:28

**Lage:**

That's a big job, I'll bet.

03:00:59:30

**Jordan:**

Well, under the circumstances you can't say no.

03:00:59:36

**Lage:**

Right. [laughter]

03:00:59:38

**Jordan:**

So I did. It's kind of fun because what you're looking for is writing primarily. The book has to have some substance.

03:00:59:46

**Lage:**

That's gratifying to know your writing—

03:00:59:48

**Jordan:**

It's very gratifying, particularly because I had started deaning and it helped mollify criticisms from faculty that this new dean who's handling minority affairs, the first such dean in the graduate school, that he wasn't interested in quality. I didn't have to use it personally, but people made inquiries, informal inquiries of the chairman of history and so forth, “Who is this guy, Jordan?” They'd tell him, “He's won a bunch of prizes.”

03:01:00:28

**Lage:**

That helps.

03:01:00:29

**Jordan:**

So it was very useful, very useful indeed. It strengthened my hand greatly in dealing with the various faculty members that I was dealing with about admission of minority students.

03:01:00:45

**Lage:**

We'll get to that. Don't worry, it's on the list here.

03:01:00:49

**Jordan:**

The prizes are wonderful. I was a little staggered by them, but at the same time I went into the deaning just about—I was the dean when I learned about these prizes, I was deaning already. My being dean meant that I had a slightly less rigorous teaching load. My teaching was suffering, but I was able to go to all four of these receptions and get the prize with all the ceremony that goes along with it. Your way is paid.

03:01:01:28

**Lage:**

That's really extraordinary to get so many at one time.

03:01:01:31

**Jordan:**

Well, it is. It was easier then than it is now, because there are more titles published now than there used to be. But it's a confidence builder.

03:01:01:42

**Lage:**

Yes, I'll say. Now what about your cohort, your peers at the American Historical Association? There was a session, it seems to me, on *White Over Black*.

03:01:01:55

**Jordan:**

Yes.

03:01:01:55

**Lage:**

Were there any intense criticisms? Or what do you remember from that?

03:01:01:58

**Jordan:**

No. Let's see, there have been at least two.

03:01:02:06

**Lage:**

I saw one in 1998 at OHA.

03:01:02:09

**Jordan:**

Yes.

03:01:02:10

**Lage:**

And then 1970, which would have been right on the heels of it.

03:01:02:13

**Jordan:**

Yes. Maybe it was only one. I've been to some private celebrations of the thirtieth anniversary of it.

03:01:02:24

**Lage:**

Well, that must have been the 1998.

03:01:02:27

**Jordan:**

Yes. But there was also one when my parents were still alive, and that was about the book, and I gave a response to the critics.

03:01:02:38

**Lage:**

That might have been the one in 1970.

03:01:02:40

**Jordan:**

The critics haven't been very tough.

03:01:02:43

**Lage:**

You haven't had too much trouble defending work.

03:01:02:46

**Jordan:**

Not really. With the exception of a few Marxist scholars who say writing about attitudes is just superficial, this is class interest, it rose out of class exploitation, and that's it. I think that class is as much of a fiction as attitudes. I think actually they both have a basis in reality because people believe in them, and that's what makes them real.

03:01:03:21

**Lage:**

Are they social constructs? To use the current term.

03:01:03:24

**Jordan:**

Well, that gives me the willies, because when somebody says, "Race is merely a social construct," my objection is to the "merely", because it is a biological fact of life—the people who write that, and say race is merely a social construct, show they don't know beans about evolutionary biology. Race is a way station on the road to speciation. I've read a lot since on evolutionary biology, an exploding field, and races clearly exist. Even biologists are reluctant to use the term. They will say "varieties" or "kinds" of species. But species don't suddenly spring out, new species don't develop overnight. With sufficient geographical isolation and sufficient time you get raiation, a process which is really a way station, and eventual speciation, and the definition of species is still when you come right down to it, the modern one is the same as it was in the eighteenth century, and that is, are the offspring themselves fertile. That was the definition of race in the eighteenth century and it still is, whether you're talking about fish or anything.

03:01:05:01

**Lage:**

Of species, not race.

03:01:05:02

**Jordan:**

Of species, yes. But race is our potential species.

03:01:05:10

**Lage:**

If they continue—

03:01:05:11

**Jordan:**

If they continue with sufficient isolation from other members of the species, and sufficient time, they will diverge sufficiently so they no longer are interfertile to produce—they become a separate species. Racialization is better thought of not in terms of an iron-clad thing but as a process. In this country we're undergoing a process of de-racialization through contact and besides, human beings have very long life spans and generation spans as animals go, so they take a very, very long time to become another species. If there was sufficient isolation and you give them 20,000 years, that would be one thing. But human beings haven't been human long enough to—

03:01:06:08

**Lage:**

Or isolated enough.

03:01:06:10

**Jordan:**

They've been isolated to some degree, but they haven't had long enough to become separate species, so the human kind constitutes one species.

03:01:06:23

**Lage:**

Well, that's interesting, because I think there are people who would argue that point with you.

03:01:06:26

**Jordan:**

Yes, well they don't know beans about the biology of it, and that's why in recent years I've gotten very interested in evolutionary biology for this reason alone. No matter how you try and say, "Well, race doesn't exist," or it's just a social construct—it is a social construct, and my whole book screams that it is, but it also, it's a biological reality.

03:01:06:56

**Lage:**

But when you talk in terms of Sally Hemings being really only one-eighth black, that sounds like a social construct when she's—

03:01:07:05

**Jordan:**

Sure, of course it is, that's a social construct, and races have meaning only as a social construct, but to say that they are merely that—they are also a way station, not a permanent—on the road toward speciation, and if you rigidly separated human beings long enough and kept the separation rigid, one group from the rest of the species, you'd develop a new species. But it would require, in the case of human beings whose reproductive cycle to produce a new generation is just a very long—even as large mammals go, we're slow. It would change—and

certainly in five digits of years, tens and tens of thousands, scores of thousands of years to produce a new species. The chances of isolating people like that are gone completely now.

03:01:08:17

**Lage:**

Do you think that there's sort of a silencing of discussing race in terms of genetic difference?

03:01:08:28

**Jordan:**

There is in some quarters, yes. There is in some quarters. I'm very sorry to see that going on, because I think above all, whites would like it to go away, they've been trying to make the problem go away now for fifty years.

03:01:08:44

**Lage:**

The problem of?

03:01:08:45

**Jordan:**

Of racism. One of the things you have to do and you've got to be writing and talking about is ask yourself about your own racial attitudes. I had to ask myself a lot—and it's a very personal kind of inquiry—do I have any prejudices? Well the answer is yes, I do. And you face those. You may not like them, but they need to be at least faced internally, and most certainly before you start writing in public. I think I was quite successful in facing them and to face them is in part to overcome what the culture is constantly feeding you, meaning a steady diet of Aunt Jemima and Lady Clairol. You grow up with that, you can't avoid it, just walking down the supermarket aisle. Now Aunt Jemima looks very different than she used to. [laughter]

03:01:09:53

**Lage:**

Yes.

03:01:09:55

**Jordan:**

And Lady Clairol's blondes are no longer the only color women are supposed to have on their heads. But these—one of the reactions to the book was very interesting, and which I was not expecting at all, and is very strange, it's a strange feeling to meet somebody who thought you were black.

03:01:10:16

**Lage:**

Oh!

03:01:10:16

**Jordan:**

Assumed you were black, and be very surprised, but also sometimes very angry. Or slightly angry.

03:01:10:24

**Lage:**

Tell me about that.

03:01:10:25

**Jordan:**

There are a number of incidents that have happened. I had one drunken graduate student across the dinner table tell me finally that he was going to kill me.

03:01:10:37

**Lage:**

Here at Berkeley?

03:01:10:38

**Jordan:**

No, this was at a historical conference—he wasn't going to kill me across the dinner table at a restaurant.

03:01:10:45

**Lage:**

Right. But was he surprised that you were not—

03:01:10:47

**Jordan:**

He thought I was black, and had counted on my being black, and I wasn't. When he met me we shook hands and he stared at me. A lot of people have later told me, "I thought you were black."

03:01:11:03

**Lage:**

Was this particular graduate student black himself?

03:01:11:07

**Jordan:**

Yes. It's blacks who assumed I was black.

03:01:11:12

**Lage:**

And then are angry with you?

03:01:11:13

**Jordan:**

I may be—by their one-drop rule, I've no idea. It seemed unlikely, but I don't care.

03:01:11:20

**Lage:**

But after all, you were writing about white attitudes.

03:01:11:23

**Jordan:**

Yes. I grew up culturally white, so I can't claim to be black in any real cultural sense. If I happened to have an African ancestor, which is conceivable—not very likely, given where I grew up, but it's perfectly conceivable—but I wasn't brought up socially black; I was brought up white.

03:01:11:51

**Lage:**

You think that affects the kind of book that you wrote?

03:01:11:54

**Jordan:**

Probably. Sure. But could a black person write it? Yes. Could they come out with the same sort of book? It think to be reasonably honest they would. So in a sense I'm arguing that the book is not colorless, of course I have my prejudices. One of the prejudices I had to overcome was an anti-southern bias, which was built into my abolitionist background.

03:01:12:20

**Lage:**

Yes.

03:01:12:22

**Jordan:**

The book would have been a disaster if I had tried to write this as attitudes in the South, because we've got plenty of evidence from the twentieth century and even the twenty-first that these attitudes are not confined to the South. There was a time when abolitionists liked to think they were, but there was a lot of anti-black feeling among many abolitionists. My branch of the family, the Garrisonian ones, and Lucretia Mott—the Motts were one of the few abolitionist families who had black friends to dinner, and stayed with them overnight, and believed in social—

03:01:13:09

**Lage:**

Did you find that from the sources or from your family?

03:01:13:12

**Jordan:**

I've learned that since I wrote the book.

03:01:13:13

**Lage:**

From your family oral history?

03:01:13:16

**Jordan:**

Well, I just—not that specifically, but I found that historically since. I just always knew that racial prejudice was a bad thing.

03:01:13:31

**Lage:**

Hold on one minute here, because—

[End Audio File 3]

[Begin Audio File 4]

04:00:00:01

**Lage:**

Okay, I'm going to start the recording, and we're continuing with stories about people thinking you were black.

04:00:00:08

**Jordan:**

Okay. Well, the story is this, that I received a letter from the University of Saskatchewan, whether from a graduate student or possibly a faculty member who wrote me, and I can virtually quote it, "I've read *White Over Black*—in order to understand your book I must find out whether you are white or black, please take this request seriously as I am determined to find out."

[laughter] I couldn't believe it. So I finally figured out what to say back to him. I wrote to him and I said, "If you would explain to me why, in order to understand the book, you need to know whether I'm white or black, I will be happy to tell you. Sincerely."

04:00:01:05

**Lage:**

Did you hear from him?

04:00:01:06

**Jordan:**

I never heard from him. That was the end of it. There was no name attached to this inquiry. I remember, that was the only mail I've received from the University of Saskatchewan.

04:00:01:20

**Lage:**

Isn't that something. If you wrote that same book today, what would be different about it? Would you talk more about women, for instance?

04:00:01:43

**Jordan:**

A little bit, although when I came to index the book I realized there was a good deal more about women in there than I had set out to do. I think there would be somewhat more about women, but I'm not going to go off into gender theory, which is terribly theoretical. I don't understand it and I'm convinced that many of the people who deal with it don't either. [laughter] And there's a tendency to parallelize racism and anti-female biases. There's good reason for the parallel, it's a very old one, it goes back into the nineteenth century, it's that old certainly.

04:00:02:36

**Lage:**

You did it a bit yourself when you said that your father-in-law made a remark that was maybe a bit racist and then you called him a male chauvinist.

04:00:02:47

**Jordan:**

Oh, he was terrible.

04:00:02:48

**Lage:**

But, you know, you were implying that it fit together somehow.

04:00:02:52

**Jordan:**

Yes. Well, yes, he was also anti-black and anti-Jewish. He was a very nice man, but he had his limitations in those respects. They were just limitations in the same way I was very—in many ways I had an extremely fortunate background to produce a kind of sufficient detachment to write about this without having an extremely strong axe to grind. If there is an axe to grind, it is a social sciences bias.

04:00:03:35

**Lage:**

It is your own—

04:00:03:36

**Jordan:**

My bias toward cultural history and against—it's very much against economic determinism. Discussing these cultures as given, in the case of the colonies, that the economic demand for labor in a recently settled land where Indians were disappearing through disease and other methods, mainly through European diseases, there's a huge demand for labor if the colonies are going to be profitable. Without that, the whole story would have been completely different, but once you've said that, once you've taken that as a given, there's not a great deal you can say that is terribly interesting if you take that as a fundamental fact of what's going on. That does not mean that it is the sole base of cultural attitudes because the extractive mentality that we're going to go to the New World and extract things from it—this wasn't the original idea. It was to trade with people, trading goods in the Orient. But when they couldn't find any gold or silver, the English started trading the crops they grew, like tobacco and cotton and eventually cotton and sugar. That sort of acquisition for the metropolitan power, some may argue, that, yes, that's capitalism. I would argue that yes, it is, but capitalism is also a cultural stance. Europe was not capitalist in the middle ages and these are—capitalism somehow developed. If you assign the energy alone to capitalism, I have problems.

04:00:05:47

**Lage:**

You have to explain capitalism.

04:00:05:48

**Jordan:**

Yes, how that arose.

04:00:05:50

**Lage:**

Of course some people take that as a given.

04:00:05:53

**Jordan:**

Yes, and I disagree with that. There isn't a great deal I would modify about the book. There are some particular points I would change, that I've been shown to be not right, and there a few

things I overlooked. There has been so much research now. People have found certain things that I didn't know about and I wish I had, but there was nothing about it in secondary literature. I could not read everything. I grounded it as thoroughly as possible, dealing with all the colonies, not just some of them—it's a big job to do that. Much more is known now. I would place more emphasis on the cultural difference between the Africans. Much more is known about the cultures, plural, of West Africa that migrated to the New World than was known when I was writing. Very little was known.

04:00:07:07

**Lage:**

Between the Africans and the Europeans.

04:00:07:10

**Jordan:**

Yes. I think sheer language difference was important.

04:00:07:15

**Lage:**

Rather than the blackness.

04:00:07:16

**Jordan:**

I would emphasize that cultural distance, not rather than blackness, but in addition, as helping to establish a sense of social distance. As the cultural distances began to disappear, especially the religious, but in many, many ways, just in body mannerisms and so forth, particularly linguistically—as those disappear, this tends to place more and more reliance upon the one thing differentiating, aside from social status: color and physiognomic appearance. So there's much more emphasis, and this is a much longer process. This is not full-blown, what people now call racism, a word I try to avoid using. So the development is a very long-term process, and it's so old, and so long in developing that it's very hard to get rid of it overnight. Just because people have stopped saying "nigger" doesn't mean that everything is okay.

04:00:08:25

**Lage:**

Now you say you avoid the word "racism." Why is that?

04:00:08:28

**Jordan:**

I did, and I had to use it in the shortened title of a book and I still sort of regret doing so, and yet I couldn't think of a way around that. The book, called *The White Man's Burden, the Origins of Racism in the United States*, was published by Oxford University Press—Sheldon Meyer virtually owned the history department there, and he persuaded Phyllis Jordan, my wife, and eventually persuaded me to do an abridgement. It's one third as long and that's all it is, is an abridgement of *White Over Black*.

04:00:09:11

**Lage:**

For a more popular audience?

04:00:09:12

**Jordan:**

Yes. It's sold, and still sells copies, thousands of copies every year.

04:00:09:20

**Lage:**

Did you have to make your argument less subtle?

04:00:09:23

**Jordan:**

No. Mostly what I had to cut were the quotations from primary sources. Those, I found, were the hardest to cut. It was easier to cut my golden prose than the sources. So I cut a lot of block quotations. I cut some of my own, and that's hard. I got down to only 100,000 words left to cut, and I stayed up pretty much three days with only naps, doing it. No, it was 70,000, getting it down to one third as long as the original. It's not as—it's no where near as good a book, but it's a lot more manageable. And it's assignable in an undergraduate course. It has sold a lot. But the original is still in print, and most scholarly monographs aren't still in print thirty-five years later. That I've become inordinately proud of, the fact that it has had the kind of durability in terms of—and not just being influential for ten years and then disappearing, which happens to a great many books. The fact that it is still in print—Chapel Hill just let it go out of hardcover because they now have taken over doing an unabridged paperback version, so it's still in print. And it still sells, several thousand copies. The shorter volume by Oxford University Press that I got talked into, that sells many more copies because—very few people can inflict a 600-page book on undergraduates in a course. It just takes too much of the reading. A 200-page book they can, and that's what the *White Man's Burden* is. Sheldon Meyer and my former wife, I'm grateful to them for making me do it.

04:00:11:50

**Lage:**

Right, especially if it's still selling and still being used.

04:00:11:54

**Jordan:**

And the original is, the 600-page *White Over Black* is still selling and I'm increasingly gratified—the more it goes on the more gratified I get by that fact.

04:00:12:06

**Lage:**

You always think of historians as working very much on their own, but there are influences, the discussions you have and people reading your book. Was there anyone here at Berkeley who shaped it in any way or got you to consider something new?

04:00:12:27

**Jordan:**

No.

04:00:12:31

**Lage:**

Because you were working on it for about, what five years or so?

04:00:12:36

**Jordan:**

When I arrived I'd been working on it about five years. No, I knew—its fundamental shape was there when I arrived, and I had a lot of rewriting and polishing to do and then I wrote a long introduction, which is a spin-off from the dissertation on a book which was published in 1963 or 1964. Then I was through with it in February of 1966, and it wasn't published until 1968. Chapel Hill had it for twenty-six months. When a book is published is not reflective of when it was being written.

04:00:13:30

**Lage:**

No, that's right.

04:00:13:31

**Jordan:**

Or even finished. I sent them what I thought was a completed manuscript, everything but copy edited, and then I had trouble with their copy editor. It was copy edited in Williamsburg by an employee of the institute, who was an idiot.

04:00:13:45

**Lage:**

[laughter] I've heard that before!

04:00:13:47

**Jordan:**

I finally had to fly East because she couldn't get some certain things straightened out. She'd correct one thing to make it conform to their style and introduce errors. So I finally flew East at my own expense and spent the day with her.

04:00:14:04

**Lage:**

Were these issues, little issues of capitalization?

04:00:14:07

**Jordan:**

Footnotes.

04:00:14:08

**Lage:**

Oh, footnotes. Oh boy. Okay, maybe we've mined *White Over Black*. Do you think? Have we left anything out that you should comment on?

04:00:14:19

**Jordan:**

I don't think so.

04:00:14:20

**Lage:**

How do you feel about going on from here, or do you want to—what we have now are the Berkeley years. The life and politics on campus.

04:00:14:31

**Jordan:**

What have we got for time here?

04:00:14:32

**Lage:**

It's close to 3:00.

04:00:14:33

**Jordan:**

Oh. And we started about 1:20?

04:00:14:36

**Lage:**

Yes.

04:00:14:40

**Jordan:**

If it's close to 3:00 and we've got a bit of morning and a bit of afternoon tomorrow?

04:00:14:48

**Lage:**

Right.

04:00:14:50

**Jordan:**

I would think that would be enough.

04:00:14:51

**Lage:**

I think we can cover your teaching, but also your activities on campus and in the department and relating to things like the deanship—

04:00:15:04

**Jordan:**

Yes. I've told you a few things about my initial years, initial reaction in the department, just a little bit. I was taken around by Bob Middlekauff who took me under his wing and introduced me to a lot of the new people who had come in the same year that he had, which was the previous year.

04:00:15:30

**Lage:**

A lot of people were hired in that time.

04:00:15:32

**Jordan:**

We were conscious—at that time and then the next year—that we were part of this enormous wave. At one point there was a publication, I think it was done by the newspaper but I'm not sure, it was their confidential guide to courses in the various departments. The introduction said, "The history department is composed of forty year-old white males." I looked at the catalogue list after that, and it was close to being true. There were a few older people and a few females, very few of either it seemed, especially of females. There were a whole bunch of people who

were hired in the very late fifties and early sixties, early to mid-sixties, in this massive wave when Jerry Brown was supporting the university's expansion and Berkeley's expansion.

04:00:16:35

**Lage:**

Pat Brown, because Jerry didn't. [laughter]

04:00:16:36

**Jordan:**

Pat Brown, oh yes, I'm sorry. Pat is the father. There's a tremendous cohort which is now dying off all of a sudden. So the department is changing very rapidly because of this skewed age structure which resulted from this wave of hiring. In 1955 this was not a distinguished history department.

04:00:17:09

**Lage:**

No, I know.

04:00:17:11

**Jordan:**

Then it became one, and partly at the insistence of Carl Bridenbaugh, who, if nothing, just put his foot down and said, "No." He ended the sort of in-house appointments of automatically getting Berkeley graduates.

04:00:17:30

**Lage:**

Now that was before you arrived.

04:00:17:32

**Jordan:**

Yes. And I was part of the wave—

04:00:17:35

**Lage:**

The story was told?

04:00:17:36

**Jordan:**

Yes, that he was partly responsible, as unpleasant as he was. He had done the department a real favor. They had already made appointments that had been very controversial—like Bouwsma was controversial as to whether or not he was good enough to be—ah!—and Brucker. A number of major appointments like that. These guys had come in the late fifties, mid-to-late fifties. Bridenbaugh had been insistent about quality. The notion of someone like Bill Bouwsma having been a controversy over his qualifications—you just—now, in retrospect it is amazing. Evidently there was. These are echoes of things I heard about. There was a real bunching. We came to realize this towards the end of the sixties, that the department's age structure really was bunched into exactly the way these student evaluations and introductory paragraph said it was.

04:00:18:45

**Lage:**

And there really weren't any women, and you're not remembering, till later.

04:00:18:50

**Jordan:**

Yes.

04:00:18:50

**Lage:**

So maybe we can talk a little bit about that.

04:00:18:53

**Jordan:**

Yes.

04:00:18:54

**Lage:**

I know you got involved in—

04:00:18:55

**Jordan:**

I got involved in a search that ended up with Paula Fass and Jim Kettner as a secondary benefit. It wasn't necessarily for a woman—but my position on that was clear in my mind and I said so when asked, that everything else being equal, then I thought the post ought to go to a woman. Provided everything else is equal.

04:00:19:35

**Lage:**

And was that—

04:00:19:36

**Jordan:**

And that stops conversation. [laughter]

04:00:19:38

**Lage:**

Right.

04:00:19:40

**Jordan:**

People will say, "Well, how equal?" I'd say, "Equal."

04:00:19:45

**Lage:**

How do you judge equality?

04:00:19:46

**Jordan:**

Exactly. It's a rather subjective matter, isn't it?

04:00:19:49

**Lage:**

Yes it is. [laughter] There you go with your paradoxes.

04:00:19:53

**Jordan:**

So, and she asked me whether she was being hired as a woman, and I said, “No.” I told her, “You’re being hired, and I have publicly said—well, in the department, not publicly—I’ve said in the department what my position on it is.” I told her what it was. She said, “That’s a real relief.” We remained good friends. I thought she was the best of the people who turned up.

04:00:20:24

**Lage:**

And did you work with her on courses in the family?

04:00:20:31

**Jordan:**

I’d already, with Natalie Davis, worked on setting up a graduate field in the family broadly defined, to include—Natalie would have said women’s history, and I said I would be included if we included women in the family, to talk about familial roles, which would include, of course, gender roles. It was just that I didn’t want to get mired in what was some of the early women’s history, resurrecting every neglected woman who had ever lived and writing about them. I wanted to stay away from that. We managed to make a very profitable transatlantic field, Natalie and I did—this was primarily before she left for Princeton—mostly a combined field of early modern France, early modern Britain, and early modern US, and have them read on women in the family in those three countries. She handled mostly France, and I handled the American colonies, the English colonies in America, and we both handled England. But we pretended we knew, and we did in fact learn, some about the other work done by the *Annales* school in France and so forth.

It was a field that became quite popular as a PhD field. I argued during job crisis times that this was a very good field to have on your resume, that the transatlantic quality of it, the western family, western European and its branch offices like the United States, this is not something that has national boundaries. An international, transatlantic approach toward this field in the early modern period, broadly defined without dates, is going to be a plus for your résumé. A lot of students ended up in this field because they were interested, or for résumé purposes, probably. Three of us, or two of us and somebody else, sometimes Paula Fass, would examine them. But it started out by a conversation Natalie and I had originally at a party, I think it was. We sat down and got a little more serious about it and got permission from the graduate committee to offer this as a minor field for the PhD.

04:00:23:42

**Lage:**

And what drew you to it? I can see what drew Natalie.

04:00:23:49

**Jordan:**

Age and gender relations have always interested me for the same reason that racial attitudes do. They have both rationality and a lot of irrationality to them. People are more willing to admit it with relationship between—and sort of necessary issues of dominance. I mean, nobody’s pushing for the two-year-old vote. [laughter] We make certain assumptions about age differences. I was more interested in things like life cycle than most of the gender historians. And this is before the gender theory had really taken off.

04:00:24:37

**Lage:**

Because that didn't grab you.

04:00:24:38

**Jordan:**

Pardon?

04:00:24:39

**Lage:**

That didn't grab you.

04:00:24:40

**Jordan:**

Not particularly, and I've given you one instance, my reaction was somewhat negative towards it. It's in many ways been very profitable but there's also a lot of garbage that's been written. I have not followed it all. I've read enough garbage that I didn't want to read any more. But that's a development since I left here, not long after it started really taking off as gender theory. I think sometimes it can be useful and informative. I think as an interpretation of racial attitudes you have to take sex into account, but—and gender roles. One of the most important differentiations against blacks from the beginnings was that women were assumed, black women, were assumed to be competent to do heavy field work. Well, that's I think enough said about that, but the department's age skewing was very conspicuous because this wave of hiring almost all, with one or two exceptions, were with tenure, and hence the department had this—if you graphed it, it would be really startling.

04:00:26:17

**Lage:**

Yes? Maybe we can talk more about what effects that might have had.

04:00:26:23

**Jordan:**

Sure.

04:00:26:24

**Lage:**

So why don't we close off and start fresh tomorrow.

04:00:26:28

**Jordan:**

All right, and I'll be here—

[End Audio File 4]

**Interview #3: July 16, 2004**

[Begin Audio File 5]

05:00:00:13

**Lage:**

Okay, now we are recording, and today is July 16, 2004. This is the second day of interviewing, the third session with Winthrop Jordan, discussing the department of history at Berkeley and you as a historian. We were just getting to Berkeley yesterday. You had arrived, you'd been hired. I'd like to know more about what your first impressions were. How did you kind of become a member of the department and the campus community?

05:00:00:43

**Jordan:**

Well, my first impression is that there were a lot of other young people my age, and then it turned out the next year that there were even more of them, that there already were quite a number, that I was one of a large gang. I think in retrospect that was an accurate perception.

05:00:01:11

**Lage:**

And you'd come from a very small department.

05:00:01:13

**Jordan:**

And I had come from a very small department. The history department, it took me a while to learn everybody's name. [laughter] There was something on the order of fifty-five or sixty people. That seemed enormous. Dwinelle Hall has the architectural layout of the Pentagon. It's a good deal smaller than the Pentagon, but the layout is roughly equivalent, except it's a square, it's a quadrangle.

05:00:01:44

**Lage:**

And confusing.

05:00:01:44

**Jordan:**

Yes, very. People would knock on my door and ask where the classrooms were, and I'd say, "You're in the wrong part of the building." After a week or so in somebody else's office they put me in an office that was mine for the nineteen years I was here, amidst a whole bunch of people in the linguistics department who I overheard talking in the hall quite often, just to go upstairs to the history office, and I couldn't understand a word they were saying because they were so heavily mathematical in their orientation toward linguistics.

05:00:02:30

**Lage:**

So history got so big it sort of moved into—

05:00:02:35

**Jordan:**

English was still in the building, and so on one side of me a historian and on the other side somebody in the English department. Then the two big departments, history and English, were given the choice of one moving to Wheeler. History didn't want to and English did. So that opened up a lot more office space for history. This is long before the new floor, which was being built while I was later a visitor here. The notion of expanding Dwinelle hadn't been thought of so far as I know when I left in 1982. But the department I found very welcoming, the morale very high among the young people. We often had bag lunches in somebody's office, in fact, normally did. So a group of us, assistant professors, not always the same people, but pretty much the same gang, brown-bagged in one of our offices.

05:00:03:45

**Lage:**

And were these just friendly get-togethers or were you discussing historical matters?

05:00:03:49

**Jordan:**

Well, I'm sure we discussed history some, and discussed departmental matters, but it was general relaxation among equals, all of whom were working hard—very hard indeed, finishing up, for the most part, almost all, working on manuscripts, working on first books.

05:00:04:18

**Lage:**

Did things get shared? Did someone ask you to read a chapter of their work? Did you?

05:00:04:23

**Jordan:**

A little, there was a little of that. Not a great deal. There was a good deal of difference in field. Colonial history traditionally, and I was the second colonial historian, Middlekauff had been here a year. There was a little sharing but not a great deal. Quite a number of people turned out to be squash players, and I had played a little squash, and I loved the game. It was a five minute walk over to the old gym, and normally you had to sign up for a court the day ahead, so I played squash five, sometimes even six days a week.

05:00:05:18

**Lage:**

Who were the squash players?

05:00:05:20

**Jordan:**

[Richard] Abrams, [Gunther] Barth, both of whom were much better than I. Middlekauff, who hadn't played before, and I, [Sheldon] Rothblatt—it wasn't all US history. There were quite a number of people who played really pretty good squash. Not excellent, but really—you could go over there to the squash courts and get enough exercise so that you were really exhausted, physically, and be back to your office in less than an hour, and showered and everything in less than an hour. It was a great plum. As I say, I played a minimum of four times a week, and sometimes even six or once seven. Many of us, not all, worked in our offices in those very early years, on weekends, Saturdays and even Sundays.

05:00:06:31

**Lage:**

Working on your research and writing?

05:00:06:33

**Jordan:**

Yes. Several of us knew we could count on seeing so-and-so, at least on Saturday, perhaps not Sunday, Sunday was quiet but there was usually somebody else in the building. I went into the office many Sundays but not all. I remember somebody asking me, "Well, do you ever work on Sundays?" I said, "Well, yes, quite often." I did sometimes come in seven days a week. I had three small boys about two years apart. The youngest when we arrived was only about six months old, and the oldest I guess was still five years old.

05:00:07:27

**Lage:**

So they were raised in Berkeley.

05:00:07:29

**Jordan:**

They are California kids, very much. Very much Berkeley kids.

05:00:07:33

**Lage:**

Did they go away for school, or did they go to the Berkeley schools?

05:00:07:36

**Jordan:**

No, they went to combinations. All of them were in both private and public schools. On principle we would have liked to do the public schools, but the oldest one, there was only a private nursery school, so we sent them to that. Then they went to the public schools for a while, and then to a private one because we didn't think they were getting enough stimulation. Then at the high school level or junior high we sent, with the bussing, the school authorities had decided what anybody who had any experience should have known better than to do—put all the seventh graders in a west campus school—one campus, and there was nobody older, there were no eighth graders.

05:00:08:46

**Lage:**

I think it was all the ninth.

05:00:08:47

**Jordan:**

Ninth, all right, excuse me. I may have the grade wrong. But at any rate, they were all fourteen and virtually on their fourteenth birthdays my children who were integrated and grown-up people, their egos fell apart for just about a year at that age, at their fourteenth birthdays.

05:00:09:13

**Lage:**

Connected with the west campus experience?

05:00:09:15

**Jordan:**

Well, he had a terrible experience there, getting shaken down for lunch money. They were in and out of private school. Two of them ended up graduating, one from Royce and I don't think—well, at any rate, two from private school, one from Berkeley High.

05:00:09:43

**Lage:**

But you didn't send them East?

05:00:09:45

**Jordan:**

No, they all went to school in Berkeley, and they all had some combination, depending on what happened to seem right for that given year. Always one or two were in public and the other one or two were in private school. We had no particular ideological hang-up. I'd never been to a public school in my life. Not out of principle, but out of historical accidents mainly, and the ability to—my family's ability to barely afford a private school. I've never taught in a private institution, I've taught in public universities only.

05:00:10:34

**Lage:**

Right, except for Phillips.

05:00:10:36

**Jordan:**

Except for Phillips, yes. I've never taught at a private university. At any rate, the morale was very high among the school people. Then there came a time, as time went on, in the sixties, people—it was pretty clear that almost everybody was going to get promoted.

05:00:11:10

**Lage:**

You weren't competing with each other? I've never heard that.

05:00:11:15

**Jordan:**

No. There was no, there wasn't a sense of competing with one another at all. There was the realization that eventually, the latter part of the sixties, that eventually we as a sort of age group were going to be running the department.

05:00:11:38

**Lage:**

And what did you think—

05:00:11:42

**Jordan:**

Well, it was because there were starting to be retirements who used to—when people like Henry May and Kenneth Stampp, et cetera, began retiring, then they, people of my generation essentially composed close to a majority of the department.

05:00:12:18

**Lage:**

Yes, of course. Now, were there social interactions as well?

05:00:12:24

**Jordan:**

A good deal.

05:00:12:25

**Lage:**

Dinner parties, formal or informal? How was that?

05:00:12:29

**Jordan:**

There were a lot of—we had a party at our house once where we had the history department faculty, most of the department was there. It was a big party. I had my old set of drums out, I hauled them out of the basement.

05:00:12:48

**Lage:**

I didn't know you had drums.

05:00:12:49

**Jordan:**

I grew up playing the drums, and I earned a little money when I was in college playing in a band. When I wasn't singing I did that. We set up the drums in the living room and all night I remember the history department getting in a conga line. [laughter] Snaking around the downstairs of our not terribly large house. Not in the hills. We were one of the few people who didn't particularly care to buy a house in the hills. We didn't. We were at the very north end of Milvia Street, just before the hills start going up.

05:00:13:29

**Lage:**

Was that a conscious choice?

05:00:13:33

**Jordan:**

We rented it, and then had the option of getting out or buying it. We bought it for the grand price, then, of \$28,500—it was not a huge house, but it did have three and a half bedrooms and one and a half baths. Nobody would build a house like that today. It was built in the early 1920s, and it's the northern-most block of Milvia Street, which had a lot of lovely elms on it, totally different from most of Milvia.

05:00:14:14

**Lage:**

Oh wow.

05:00:14:15

**Jordan:**

When we bought it, that seemed like a lot of money.

05:00:14:20

**Lage:**  
Sure.

05:00:14:22

**Jordan:**

I wrote the biggest check I had ever written in my life and I thought it was a staggering—it was a five-figure check.

05:00:14:32

**Lage:**

Pretty staggering, today—

05:00:14:34

**Jordan:**

Yes exactly.

05:00:14:35

**Lage:**

It wouldn't even be a down payment.

05:00:14:37

**Jordan:**

Exactly. My former wife is still in that house.

05:00:14:43

**Lage:**

Oh I see.

05:00:14:43

**Jordan:**

And it's got the problems that a house that is now sixty years old—it was built right after the Berkeley fire in the early twenties. We've got some wonderful old photographs. A previous owner came around, the daughter of the—or granddaughter I guess, of the architect who designed this house and built it out in grassland.

05:00:15:18

**Lage:**

Just open area.

05:00:15:20

**Jordan:**

In an open field out there. She had some pictures which she gave to us. She rang the doorbell one day and said, "You're living in my father's old house which he had built and designed after the Berkeley fire, in north Berkeley, in what was really quite far from downtown."

05:00:15:44

**Lage:**

Yes it would have been then.

05:00:15:46

**Jordan:**

And it looked as if it was in the middle of a hay field from the photographs.

05:00:15:54

**Lage:**

It wasn't all that long ago.

05:00:15:57

**Jordan:**

I know it. Now the lot sizes as you know are very small by most urban standards. In Oxford we have a lot that probably would have three houses on it in Berkeley.

05:00:16:12

**Lage:**

That's right, they are very small. From the beginning they seem to have been small.

05:00:16:16

**Jordan:**

Yes.

05:00:16:18

**Lage:**

Okay, so you felt a part of the department, it sounds like.

05:00:16:24

**Jordan:**

The morale was very high, and in many ways it was an extremely happy ship. There were dissenters. The FSM meant that people, quite a number of—I say quite a number, but a few people were unhappy and would have been not awfully happy with the new crop of newcomers, who seemed very—they didn't deny that it was a very able group, but for various reasons, not terribly happy.

05:00:17:14

**Lage:**

You mean new, kind of radical young professors?

05:00:17:17

**Jordan:**

Yes, partly it was political, although at one point somebody told me they had been sitting around wondering if anybody in the department had voted for Goldwater, in I guess this would be 1964. They decided that I might have, because I was probably more conservative than some of my colleagues.

05:00:17:45

**Lage:**

But had you?

05:00:17:46

**Jordan:**

No. [laughter] I had not considered it. I broke up laughing.

05:00:17:53

**Lage:**

Well, we haven't discussed politics at all. Your political kind of upbringing. Was your family political?

05:00:18:00

**Jordan:**

No, they were not, and they often in Massachusetts voted Republican, but those were for—Republicans were the good guys.

05:00:18:12

**Lage:**

Was this still tied to the Civil War feeling about Republicans?

05:00:18:14

**Jordan:**

No, it was tied to the Irish [Democratic party] machine politics.

05:00:18:18

**Lage:**

Oh I see.

05:00:18:20

**Jordan:**

So the Republicans were often anti-machine and New England Republicans tended to be much more moderate, as now today. You get people like Kerry, who is a Democrat, but who might well have been a Republican. There were a lot of them in Rhode Island, in Connecticut, in Massachusetts. Lodge and Saltonstall were Republicans in Providence. You were voting against a Democratic machine, essentially. So the reform candidates were Republicans. John Chafee, who I played squash with. Before coming here I learned how to play squash while I was a graduate student because the local university club near the Brown campus had given discounts to graduate students at Brown. You would pay \$50 a year to belong to this private club and play squash there. So I played with interesting people like John Chafee, who later became secretary of the navy, and I think senator from Rhode Island. He was a Republican but a liberal Republican.

05:00:20:01

**Lage:**

There were a whole bunch of them.

05:00:20:02

**Jordan:**

I was not a particularly political person and I never have been.

05:00:20:07

**Lage:**

It seems that way, from other things that you've said about not following the news very closely.

05:00:20:14

**Jordan:**

That's right.

05:00:20:14

**Lage:**

You didn't get swept up in the civil rights movement, it sounds like. Or did you?

05:00:20:19

**Jordan:**

No, except I had very strongly the feeling that my contribution was best done, rather than marching, was to do the history I was doing. I had a kind of therapeutic sense of—almost therapeutic in a medical sense, that what this cultures needs to do first of all is recognize the depths of the problem that it's got, and that it's a patriotic duty on my part, and if I can contribute in any way it is to write about this. And being a rather private person just by temperament anyway, it never occurred to me to go to the South and march. I was too busy doing something that I thought was of some importance. In the same cause.

05:00:21:19

**Lage:**

Right, I can see that. How did you react then—it seems temperamentally you wouldn't have fit too well with all the tumult on campus, starting with the Free Speech Movement.

05:00:21:31

**Jordan:**

I'd go and stand at the edge of the crowds and listen to what was being yelled into the microphone. I never would have thought of participating or speaking. Charles Sellers was very active in doing that. It was rumored that he had had a political change when he flew over the Rockies from North Carolina. [laughter] An alternation. He was close to being a Marxist.

05:00:22:09

**Lage:**

In his historical analysis?

05:00:22:14

**Jordan:**

To some extent, yes. It affected his history and I don't think altered it for the good. But when Reggie Zelnik arrived he was a—the year after I arrived, this young man in Russian history, whom I loved dearly as a person. He got away with being—supporting the Free Speech Movement very strongly and publicly although he wasn't a public speaker kind of guy, but right from his first arrival he was sort of very active in a public way and earned the admiration of, I think, even some rather conservative people such as Nick Riasanovsky who presided over Russian history and had for years and years. Here he had in his hands this very able, and everybody, I think, even Nick would say, perfectly rational guy who—Nick hated his politics—but liked the man very much. It turns out that I'm not the only person who admired Reggie as a person enormously. He never stopped making sense. I might disagree with him, but he always made sense. So disagreements on that level worked just fine.

05:00:24:02

**Lage:**

There was respect between the individuals.

05:00:24:04

**Jordan:**

Yes. Mutual respect certainly. I disagreed, and my contribution on campus was a very private one. The moment I finished my book essentially I got into this minority deanship in 1968 through 1970, for two years.

05:00:24:27

**Lage:**

Let's talk about that a little bit, but I want to—is there more to say about your own personal—what I'm trying to get at, you came from a small—you've always been a New Englander, right?

05:00:24:40

**Jordan:**

Yes.

05:00:24:41

**Lage:**

And kind of the smaller schools. And then you come to this big public university where shortly after you get here, the whole place erupts. What was it like?

05:00:24:50

**Jordan:**

Well, I had one quiet year and then in the fall, the FSM movement. I was not the only person who was surprised and I remember watching the huge crowd gathered around the police car with the guy locked up in the police car, and then finally he got out and got on top, and then refused to move, and then there was the sit-in in Sproul Plaza, Sproul Hall. I never liked being in crowds much anyway. I'm not claustrophobic about it but I don't like it much. I and a lot of other faculty went down to the courthouse, I remember, and everybody who had gone into the hall, who was arrested inside Sproul was taken out, taken off to Santa Rita?

05:00:25:55

**Lage:**

Mm-hmm, Santa Rita.

05:00:25:58

**Jordan:**

And we learned about this, there were a lot of phone calls at home and so forth about what to do. I ended up doing what a lot of other people did, which was to go down and talk with the judge. There was a long line, I had to wait. Finally got to talk with a certain judge, and I'd already been shown a list of names of the arrested people, was there anybody I could agree that the person would be released under my supervision, essentially. I'm not sure—it wasn't too clear about the law. What they were doing was checking off various prisoners if they had some professor to vouch for them. I had in one of my small undergraduate seminars fifteen kids, one of them was Margaret Lima. So, she was on the list of arrested students and I told the judge that I knew Margaret and she was okay, she was in fact a nifty person and a good person, and they should all be released. [laughter] So she was. It was only later that I discovered, and this is just a minor matter, that her father, who was Mickey Lima, had been chairman of the North California Communist Party for years.

05:00:27:29

**Lage:**

Yes, that's right.

05:00:27:30

**Jordan:**

I didn't know that! [laughter] And it wouldn't have made any difference once way or the other. I knew Margaret and she was—

05:00:27:38

**Lage:**

She was a good student.

05:00:27:38

**Jordan:**

A good student.

05:00:27:42

**Lage:**

So you did take part and you must have had some disturbance—

05:00:27:43

**Jordan:**

In that sense everybody—I say everybody—a great many people did. I may have been a little conservative in the sense that some people were saying, “Oh those students never should have been arrested.” I thought they should have been arrested and I said so, and people thought well—that might have been the origin of the Goldwater speculation. Because I thought they should have been arrested.

05:00:28:17

**Lage:**

It's part of civil disobedience.

05:00:28:18

**Jordan:**

Yes. Exactly. The FSM now looks quite mild in terms of the troops, the civic and military forces called out, compared to the Third World Strike and the invasion-of-Cambodia strike—it doesn't really seem to have much of a name that I can remember. In 1970 I think it was.

05:00:28:56

**Lage:**

Right, that was it.

05:00:28:58

**Jordan:**

Those were—there was no tear gas in 1964, with the FSM. The campus wasn't yet used to tear gas, which is not very pleasant. So with the FSM, it settled the matter. It was settled so that it permitted these people to set up desks, and you couldn't get through Sproul Plaza after that at the lunch hour without ending up with a fist full of fliers. Henry May was chairman at the time and some years later he said a number of people have been collecting these scattered, ephemeral documents—they're just daily fodder, they're hot off the mimeograph machine, printed that

morning before the noon hour, there's enough theatre about this, so the noon hour rule about the microphone going on. It was scheduled, 12:00 would ring in the Campanile and the microphone would go on on Sproul steps as things worked out. And the desks were all set up throughout Sproul Plaza and there were handing out, walking around, you couldn't walk through, either you kept your hands in your pockets or you came through with a bunch of—I was struck by the leftist literature, that their target was not just conservatives but much of the time they spent quarreling with each other. So the Maoist were quarreling with the Stalinists and both with the Socialists, and spending more of their time—of course, it's no great surprise, but it was confirmation of what I had heard and assumed—you can see the reasons why it worked that way, that they were mainly concerned with deviations from the line, the correct line, on the left.

05:00:31:23

**Lage:**

You didn't finish a sentence about Henry May talking about the leaflets.

05:00:31:28

**Jordan:**

Oh, Henry sent out a memo to the entire department saying, "Quite a number of people I understand have kept leaflets that have been picked up," and he was going to undertake a little project and donate them to the library, a collection of them, because this is the kind of fugitive material that never gets into a library. I thought it was a terribly good idea and I just turned over my entire—I just had a huge folder of several files, and they were just in a filing cabinet—I'd thrown some of them out, but I'd thought these might be something to save for somebody some day. They ended up in the library because Henry took the initiative, collected them, had a graduate student go through and throw out the vast number of duplicates, then ship them off to the library, that's my understanding.

05:00:32:33

**Lage:**

They're now in the Bancroft. It's called the Social Protest Collection. Plus Henry gave—I believe I'm right about this—he had also collected them during the thirties when he was a student.

05:00:32:44

**Jordan:**

Had he?

05:00:32:45

**Lage:**

So he gave his collection of the thirties documents.

05:00:32:48

**Jordan:**

Wonderful.

05:00:32:49

**Lage:**

So it really was an interesting—

05:00:32:51

**Jordan:**

I knew I wasn't the only one who had saved them, but historians tend to be this way, as you know. I mean, they have archival instincts. It's the kind of thing, the issues of the *Daily Cal* and so forth, we knew were going into the library anyway, no matter what happened really. That certainly is something that is going to make its way to the library. But this stuff is very fugitive. The wastebaskets outdoors were filled with the stuff. People would take them and drop them three feet later on. I tended to hang onto them, glance at them, throw them in the drawer. So I gave my files to Henry when he suggested this. I told him, "I think that's a great idea." He said that he was going to see if he could get somebody to—and I think he did get a graduate student to go through and at least start weeding out the duplicates. Because I wasn't the only person doing exactly the same thing out of just sheer historical archival instinct, knowing that these fugitive documents are usually the kind of thing that doesn't get to a library because no library can undertake systematic collecting. The groups themselves don't keep archives. They had no sense—they're running off mimeographed things to make the noon deadline.

05:00:34:23

**Lage:**

[laughter] Yes, that's interesting. Then we had the anti-war movement. Did you get at all involved in that scene?

05:00:34:30

**Jordan:**

Yes, but marginally so. I was personally very grateful that my children were too young to be caught up in it.

05:00:34:47

**Lage:**

In the anti-war movement or the draft?

05:00:34:49

**Jordan:**

In the—well, they saw soldiers at a time when I wished they didn't have to see them. They saw fixed bayonets in the Berkeley streets. I didn't think it was very good for six- and seven- and eight-year-old boys to see that. I was somewhat concerned about that, when the National Guard first came in and there were blocked streets with armed National Guard. I was careful which way—I tried to avoid that when I was driving the kids to school or such. But I was opposed to the war and the—well, it was very hard to find people who were not opposed to the war, find them on the faculty. But the FSM and the war a little bit meant that some of the really more conservative people like—others left when Tom Kuhn left, that was—

05:00:36:13

**Lage:**

But that was not over—

05:00:36:14

**Jordan:**

That was over personal issues, more brawls, I think with Bridenbaugh, perhaps. I really don't know. I did not get to know him because he left quite shortly after I arrived.

05:00:36:30

**Lage:**

But did people leave over this campus—

05:00:36:33

**Jordan:**

But Perry Curtis left.

05:00:36:38

**Lage:**

To Brown, didn't he?

05:00:36:39

**Jordan:**

He went to Brown. A number of these people went to Brown. Bridenbaugh had gone to Brown, and Brown is not, never has had the reputation of being a conservative place. In fact, if any of the Ivy League places have a tradition of radical fiddling with the curriculum and some radicalism in the faculty—so I thought Brown was a very strange place, but Brown of course was happy to get these Berkeley professors. There was still another.

05:00:37:15

**Lage:**

Lyon, Bryce Lyon?

05:00:37:16

**Jordan:**

Bryce Lyon went also to Brown I believe.

05:00:37:19

**Lage:**

I think so, I'm not sure.

05:00:37:21

**Jordan:**

And Hunter Dupree. Did he go to Brown?

05:00:37:23

**Lage:**

I'm not sure.

05:00:37:25

**Jordan:**

He left, Hunter was very disaffected.

05:00:37:29

**Lage:**

And was he disaffected by the events on campus?

05:00:37:32

**Jordan:**

Yes.

05:00:37:32

**Lage:**

Or by the department?

05:00:37:34

**Jordan:**

And the department. He disagreed very much indeed. I got my first taste of—he was a person who occasionally lost his temper in department meetings or committee meetings and I thought in a totally inexcusable way. But at one point quite early on, the first PhD exam I sat on, I can't say who all the committee members were, I believe he was chair of it. The outside reader, outside member of the five-person examining committee was Henry Nash Smith in English. We voted to fail a candidate, mainly—Smith was very unhappy with the candidate's performance, and I, not having much to go on, this being my first exam, and I was very unhappy with it. We both voted against it, and persuaded one or two others. I got this telephone call at home over the weekend, this was a Friday, a telephone call, saying—from Hunter Dupree, saying, "I've talked with several other members of the committee, and we decided to approve the candidate and pass the candidate." The others were tenured professors, I was the only assistant professor.

05:00:39:21

**Lage:**

The others were history, except for Henry Nash Smith.

05:00:39:24

**Jordan:**

Yes. He said, "We're going to meet again Monday and vote again." He said, "Three of us think we should have passed the candidate." I got to the meeting, having really thought about it a great deal. I thought it was, for one thing, out of line bureaucratically. And that once you've reached a negative decision, you shouldn't decide over people getting together over the phone with each other, to change their votes to passage. It developed, we had to inquire, the committee met on a Monday, I refused to change, and Henry Nash Smith, whom I had not known before, also refused. It was three to two. We discovered very rapidly that in that case, where the case had been an irreconcilably divided committee everybody has to write a letter to the graduate dean. I sat down and wrote a letter, partly protesting the procedure, but also saying that I did not think the candidate had passed. But I also thought that the procedure was a real violation of due process for the student. Smith and I had agreed also on the procedural matter as well as the quality of the exam. So then it went to the graduate council and at that time I had no idea what on earth that was. I later served on its executive board, but at the time I didn't know what it was. They voted to uphold the minority.

05:00:41:37

**Lage:**

Oh they did?

05:00:41:38

**Jordan:**

Yes. Which they should have.

05:00:41:42

**Lage:**

Was there politics in this at all? Was this person a student of one of the other three?

05:00:41:47

**Jordan:**

I didn't get that sense.

05:00:41:51

**Lage:**

Or any liberal-conservative?

05:00:41:51

**Jordan:**

It was three people whose judgment—I thought they'd had a really weak case. I thought the student really hadn't passed. If I had been alone, I don't know what I would have done. I probably would have written a letter protesting the procedure and abstained.

05:00:42:10

**Lage:**

Since it was your first service on the committee.

05:00:42:14

**Jordan:**

Yes. Abstain on the basis of experience. But I don't think I would have been willing to say, "That's a passing exam," because I thought it was a very weak exam. I didn't think the person was ready to go on and write their dissertation. The student was a nice person and all, but the performance on the oral exam was terrible.

05:00:42:35

**Lage:**

Would a person like that get another chance?

05:00:42:37

**Jordan:**

I thought he should have another chance, yes. That was possible. I don't think a third was, but retaking it was, yes. Some people came into those exams and they simply hadn't read enough. You could flunk them with a recommendation that they take it again. Or you could recommend that they not. I just thought it was—if this institution is awarding PhDs to people and that's the best they can do on their orals then something's wrong. Hunter Dupree was very strongly for.

05:00:43:21

**Lage:**

And he was a forceful person, I understand.

05:00:43:25

**Jordan:**

He was, he was. But I wasn't about to be railroaded about it, and I think it would have been railroading. I think that the business of changing the vote over weekend telephone conversations he was not privy to—that was not a way for a committee to proceed. It's an ad hoc committee that is made up for purposes of administering this exam. I wouldn't have minded if he had said, "I think we need to meet again on Monday." If it hadn't been that he'd asserted, "I've been talking with some people on the phone and they think we were a little too harsh on this student." Well, that is not a way for an examining committee to operate.

05:00:44:20

**Lage:**

Was that unusual? Did you run into that at all again?

05:00:44:23

**Jordan:**

I never ran into any case like it again, no. I wouldn't have—well, it just never came up again. I wouldn't have put up with it at all, and I would have felt more confident. It was my first exam, and I think this was the end of my first year, spring of my first year, if not it was my second year—I didn't feel terribly confident because it's only after you've given the exam a number of times that you feel you really know what a passing exam is and are absolutely certain. But I just thought that if you ask the question, should this person be going on to doing a dissertation and getting a PhD from Berkeley—no.

05:00:45:21

**Lage:**

You held fast, and it sounds like the graduate council upheld your sense of the matter.

05:00:45:27

**Jordan:**

Oh, absolutely. I was pretty darn sure they would when they heard about the procedure. Because that is, I thought, really indefensible. I don't think—I was quite convinced—I would have been horrified if they had agreed with the, by then, three-person majority.

05:00:45:50

**Lage:**

And the others were tenured faculty?

05:00:45:52

**Jordan:**

Yes.

05:00:45:53

**Lage:**

That's kind of a hard position for a young assistant professor to be in.

05:00:45:56

**Jordan:**

It is, but I didn't think my career hung on that. My uncertainty lay more in my lack of experience with these exams. My only experience previous to that had been my own oral that hadn't been all that good either! [laughter] But it was better than that.

05:00:46:21

**Lage:**

Well, over all, did you feel that the students were strong in the graduate program?

05:00:46:26

**Jordan:**

Not terribly. Having taught at Exeter I got spoiled for life because I had the ablest students I had ever taught.

05:00:46:36

**Lage:**

Now are we talking about undergraduates here? Or graduates?

05:00:46:39

**Jordan:**

Undergraduates. There were some first-rate graduate students and there were occasionally, of course, the very best of the undergraduates that you got when you got to know them not in big lecture courses but in the required seminars, usually for fifteen students. Several of those were really first-rate. But the general level was most certainly higher than William and Mary and was perhaps at the same level as the undergraduates at Brown whom I had taught when I was a lecturer. They were quite good but not very good, not as good as the students I'd had at Exeter.

05:00:47:22

**Lage:**

At the high school level.

05:00:47:24

**Jordan:**

Yes, well, I was teaching seniors, eighteen-year-olds at Exeter, and I was five years older. They were an extremely able group of people. The floor was higher at Exeter, for one thing.

05:00:47:37

**Lage:**

You mean the entry, entrance exam.

05:00:47:38

**Jordan:**

The students, the worst of the students were better than the worst—that floor, that sense. The best students, you can find really good students almost anywhere at the strangest institutions, including Old Miss, where the floor is much lower, but the ceiling is still there. There are still people at the top. Those tend to be—this is commonplace among college, university educators—that students everywhere, the very best, are very, very good, no matter where they are.

05:00:48:23

**Lage:**

And that makes it fun to keep going.

05:00:48:25

**Jordan:**

Yes.

05:00:48:25

**Lage:**

Well what about the social class and background of the students you encountered, versus what you encountered—

05:00:48:34

**Jordan:**

In some ways California seemed classless, and lacking in the kind of ethnic politics which I had grown up with in Worcester and in Providence and in Cambridge, where the Irish and the French

and, in Rhode Island, the Portuguese and the old Yankees, and not usually a large Jewish—the Jewish folk tended to vote with the Yankees. They were—Orthodox Jewry was not very strong in New England. There was a big either Reform, or at most, Conservative. In Providence the Unitarian church was probably—half the people there who were at the Unitarian church were formerly Jewish. There was a temple, a very nice one, which I had been to a concert in, not a worship service. That was a reformed congregation. But what struck me was the lack of ethnic politics, of Italian and—. [Pause to check recording equipment] Well, I was struck by the fact that the ethnic politics in the Northeast sense doesn't really exist in California, and that, increasingly, the campus was becoming racially polarized. The Asian students when I first came, almost all of them were in the sciences. It was rare to have an Asian students in the history class—one or two in a big lecture hall. But already there were signs of an increasing number of undergraduates, African Americans, there was a program for them, I've forgotten its name, but there was a program of encouraging undergraduate minorities to come. And also Chicanos.

05:00:51:55

**Lage:**

Of course the politics were heating up around these ethnic identities.

05:00:51:58

**Jordan:**

Yes, they surely were. Eventually I got very closely involved in the crossfire. That is a little further down the road. One could see that coming.

05:00:52:18

**Lage:**

Did it make it an interesting mix to teach?

05:00:52:22

**Jordan:**

I found it interesting. I thought—by and large the undergraduates were quite competent and very adequate, but not, as a group, very bright. There were some, a few very bright individuals, but as a group they were good, but not very. Nowhere near the level of the people I had gone to college with at Harvard. Brown was rather different. It was so small. When I taught the undergraduates they were good but not very good. There's a wonderful story Bob Middlekauff told me—shortly after the FSM movement itself was over, he and I were probably more faithful than anybody else, not out of collusion, but we just independently did this, would have these seminars out to our house at the end of the semester. We did that every semester automatically. Then we'd have the graduate students, usually separately, because otherwise it got too big.

05:00:53:52

**Lage:**

As a way to kind of bridge the gap?

05:00:53:54

**Jordan:**

Bridge the gap and celebrate the end of the semester. He told me this wonderful story about, at the end—he'd had a group of undergraduates out to his house. I said, "Did you have 103 people [the history 103 seminar] out at the end of the spring?" He said, "Yes." I knew that Bob had had problems, so I said, "How were your students out at the house?" He said, "Oh, they were fine.

But I must say that it annoyed me a little bit, and there a certain irony in fact, to hear two people drinking your best bourbon, sitting on the couch together, complaining about the impersonality of the university.” [laughter]

05:00:54:43

**Lage:**

[laughter] That’s very good!

05:00:54:47

**Jordan:**

That is a great line! Absolutely. This was when Mario Savio was saying, “Throw your body on the gears,” because the university was an impersonal machine.

05:00:55:04

**Lage:**

Drinking your best bourbon!

05:00:55:04

**Jordan:**

Yes. That’s the way he put it. It was a wonderful line, and one I obviously remember. He would not be ashamed of it.

05:00:55:14

**Lage:**

That’s very good. Well, did you get caught up in this Third World liberation strike? It seems like you were called on because of your professional interest in the development of racial attitudes to sort of—

05:00:55:29

**Jordan:**

When the Third World strike was coming I had just agreed—I was a baby dean—when Dean Knight from the physics department was the L&S dean—letters and science, wasn’t it called L&S?

05:00:55:52

**Lage:**

Yes, that’s it.

05:00:55:53

**Jordan:**

He asked if I would like to come and be a dean, and all you did was go once a week and see students. When I was first brought in by one of the associate deans of liberal arts, he showed me the temporary desk I had there, and there was a box of Kleenex—that was all that was on there. He said, “That’s there for a reason.” I said, “Oh.” And it was used. People would come and—

05:00:56:25

**Lage:**

So you were like an advisor?

05:00:56:28

**Jordan:**

Yes, people arrived in crisis, academic crisis. That was kind of interesting and I liked talking to the students. Sometimes you ran into real crises, a young woman who missed classes because she'd been raped on campus, at night.

05:00:56:46

**Lage:**

And were you the first person she dealt with?

05:00:56:50

**Jordan:**

Well, I think maybe she had gone up to the hospital. I'm not sure she had been to the police. I've forgotten the details of it. She said, "I was attacked." She clearly—that's the word she used, and it was clearly rape.

But I also ran into other interesting—there was a basketball star whose name I do not remember—very tall, a basketball star. His name was on my list, and the secretary told me about this—because you get a whole series—you'd try to see the students for only fifteen minutes, and some you handle in that time, and others took half an hour. This student came in, and all he wanted to do was change from the school of agriculture to the school of liberal arts. I thought that was fine. She said, "The next student is so and so and he wants to change into liberal arts." I said, "Well that sounds pretty easy. What's the problem?" She said, "I don't know." I said, "Wait a minute, this is a familiar name." I said, "Is he the," and I named him. She just looked up at the ceiling and said, "Yes." [laughter] He walked in and it was clear which sport he played if he played any. I asked him, "How did you end up majoring in agriculture when you don't like it in agriculture?" He said, "They told me to, over at the gym." I said, "You mean, the athletic tutor?" "Yes," he said. Whoever was in charge had told him to major in agriculture.

05:00:58:55

**Lage:**

It was harder to flunk out of the college of agriculture, at that time.

05:00:58:56

**Jordan:**

Sure. Well, obviously the motivation—this is a real taste of exploitation—he happened to be black, but this was as much a matter of exploitation of athletes and trying to get them into passing courses. He wanted to take some real courses in liberal arts. I was very angry about the situation. There was nothing I could do about it except saying, "Of course I'll sign this." So I had the power to admit him, to get him out of agriculture. I signed the page, she got him into liberal arts, so he could major in something in liberal arts. He may have picked a bunch of easy courses; that was fine. It seemed to me that he had been pushed around by the basketball people. So this was kind of interesting. Then Sandy asked me—

05:00:59:54

**Lage:**

Sandy Elberg.

05:00:59:57

**Jordan:**

Elberg asked me to be associate dean. He said, “Perhaps one of the things you could do would be to handle a growing number of minority students.” He said, “They’re taking too much of my time.”

05:01:00:16

**Lage:**

This was associate dean for the graduate division?

05:01:00:18

**Jordan:**

In the graduate division. That one was more time, it was meant to be one-third time. I said, “Sandy, I will do it if you will let me do the minority students and nothing else.”

05:01:00:40

**Lage:**

Was this a special program?

05:01:00:41

**Jordan:**

No. It didn’t exist. It existed only in that he had given a faculty wife \$30,000 to hand out to minority students who requested it. She was a benevolent person, but bureaucratically this was not the way to manage even \$30,000. And this was just—Sandy always had a little spare change in his pocket. [laughter] And liked to keep it that way. So I agreed only on the basis that I would handle nothing but minority students, because I knew damn well that once I started doing it, and it was announced that there was a dean who did this, that I was going to get overwhelmed.

05:01:01:33

**Lage:**

Now when you say, “Who did this”—

05:01:01:35

**Jordan:**

Well, who handled minorities—whose business it was that you went to see if you were a minority graduate student, who you went to see. If they all started coming to me I knew there were going to be more and more. As it was, they hit some dean they didn’t know, or they hit Sandy Elberg and he was having his time increasingly taken up. He wanted the problem taken off his hands. So I said, “I’ll do it, but not as a sideline, because it’s not going to be a sideline, it’s going to be—”

05:01:02:06

**Lage:**

I see, you realized.

05:01:02:08

**Jordan:**

I knew perfectly well by then, I knew enough about campus politics to know very well the moment it’s known—the grapevine is enormously efficient—that there is an associate dean, somebody with a little clout in the graduate school, then graduate minority students are going to come there. He was just as happy to have me play catch-flak.

05:01:02:39

**Lage:**

What kind of issues did you come up with?

05:01:02:42

**Jordan:**

The first thing I did was to get a hold of that \$30,000, and that didn't prove to be too hard. Then I started raising money internally, and I set up something I called the Graduate Minority Program and made up my own form for applications, and I set up office hours, I got myself a person—I promoted a black secretary in the graduate school, I got her an administrative assistant. She was off-the-scale bright.

05:01:03:23

**Lage:**

Now say that again.

05:01:03:24

**Jordan:**

She was off-scale bright. She was only—she only had a high school education, but she was one of these people who just naturally—and she was also bi-dialectical. People would call her on the phone, and professors didn't know they were talking with a black person, and yet she could speak street black English. She could code switch. She was a very, very bright person, extraordinarily. I was savvy enough to get her on board first as my only assistant, and then I got her promoted to administrative assistant and then got a secretary, a Chicano secretary because that was a politically—it had to be Chicano. Here you've got this white dean running a graduate minority program which is a new program, there had never been such a one, and there was a formal application. There was something about a student's background in it, what courses they were taking, their progress towards the degree, questions I thought were pertinent. They could either get some grant money or not, and then I went around with my hat in my hand raising money internally. I was not effective outside.

05:01:04:53

**Lage:**

When you say internally, among the faculty?

05:01:04:56

**Jordan:**

No, within the administration.

05:01:04:58

**Lage:**

Oh, within the administration.

05:01:05:00

**Jordan:**

And my strongest supporter—Elberg was delighted—I had very early on, one episode in which I had turned a student down for a grant, with what I thought was good reason. The student went over my head to him and Sandy saw him and said, “Well, maybe I can find you something.” I had to go to Sandy and I said, “Look, you have to back me up on my decision—because if you overrule me in one case you're going to be flooded.” He said, “I'm sorry.” Because he knew

perfectly well that I—so I threatened him to that extent. [laughter] We were by this time very good friends. I said, “You will be flooded if you start overruling me.” So he never did again. Minority students couldn’t get seen by the dean of the graduate school—not on a minority matter. They had to see me and it had to stop there.

05:01:06:18

**Lage:**

And was this primarily issues of fellowships and grants?

05:01:06:22

**Jordan:**

Grants.

05:01:06:23

**Lage:**

Not progress towards their degree?

05:01:06:26

**Jordan:**

Well, it was progress towards a degree. If somebody wasn’t making progress then they didn’t get a grant.

05:01:06:32

**Lage:**

But they didn’t come with special problems of—problems they were having with professors?

05:01:06:38

**Jordan:**

No, they were mainly financial problems, and for quite a large number of them it was a matter of staying in school financially. These were older people, many of them were married and had kids. These were people who were, oh, in their early thirties. It’s a different generation, they were quite different than the undergraduates. They were a different generation, they talked about the kids on campus. These are people who had been out in the world doing other things, almost all of them. They all had college degrees but very, very few of them were straight out of college. They had been off doing something else. So a lot of time was spent talking with them.

Then I arranged this formal procedure with an application. I made the eventual decision, they handed the applications to May Dyson, my administrative assistant, and she screened out some who couldn’t possibly qualify, and then I did a review—largely on the basis of paperwork, but I tried to meet every single one. I would get them in for an appointment and talk with them and see whether this was real or fake or whether there’s any parental support. Often there wasn’t. In some cases there were no parents left. With people in their mid or late thirties—there weren’t many over forty. There were a handful of them over forty. Mainly in their thirties and not many under thirty. Very few who just graduated. Then I worked on the problem of admissions, which is a major problem. That meant getting to talk with the chairs of admissions committees in the various departments.

05:01:08:47

**Lage:**

You mean encouraging admissions of more minorities?

05:01:08:51

**Jordan:**

Yes, and then raising money, and the strongest supporter for that—I've gone off the track today—the strongest supporter for raising more money for graduate students—there had been money appropriated within the university for undergraduates, none for graduate students. The faculty was complaining about it, saying, “We can't hire any black professors or Chicano professors because we can't find any.” The answer to that seemed to me to have the faculty start training some. Increase the number of minority graduate students. This was my goal, very specifically, to meet an expressed faculty demand for a larger pool so that they could get people who might be qualified to teach at a university—maybe this one, maybe some other university. Then it became a matter—the person who proved most enthusiastic, and he was just the right person, was the only non-academic with whom I had a lot of dealings, and I had a great many with him. It was Errol Mauchlan, who was a Scot, who was the chief financial officer in the administration. Errol was the only person in the administration who really knew where all of the money was. [laughter]

05:01:10:29

**Lage:**

I've heard about Errol Mauchlan. [laughter]

05:01:10:30

**Jordan:**

You have.

05:01:10:32

**Lage:**

But tell what you know.

05:01:10:34

**Jordan:**

I learned that very fast, and he was an enthusiast of this new program which I called the Graduate Minority Program, frankly, openly. I said, “We're going to call it the Graduate Minority Program.” He liked this and was a very strong supporter of what I was doing, and hence I got more and more money.

05:01:10:58

**Lage:**

So he found little pockets of money.

05:01:10:59

**Jordan:**

Eventually I had a budget, starting with the \$30,000 I got out of the purse of a faculty wife who had no other university status, which is not the way to run a university program. By the middle of second year, I was administering \$1 million in grants and was proud of that.

05:01:11:31

**Lage:**

Now did this help support students who might not have been able to come?

05:01:11:36

**Jordan:**

Yes. Well, no, or continue. A lot of people take courses for a while and then they'd run out of money because they'd give up their job to come. There were some deadbeats. Then, also, a large part of my time was spent in negotiating with departments and trying to educate departments—as university administrators traditionally do, I had more trouble with my own department than with any other.

05:01:12:15

**Lage:**

Talk about that some.

05:01:12:17

**Jordan:**

That is just a universal rule among temporary deans, is that if you're going to have any department that gives you a problem it's your own. [laughter] I don't know. I think the reasons are pretty obvious, that there also were a lot of people who were much more conservative than I. There was a general tendency in the history department—I've been on its admissions committee—to do admissions on the basis of past performance, as a reward for good undergraduate performance at a good institution. So if an applicant went to a good Ivy League college or a good state institution like the University of Michigan or Chicago or such, and they did well as undergraduates, they automatically got in, no question, not too much attention paid to their SAT scores, or their—

05:01:13:28

**Lage:**

GRE.

05:01:13:28

**Jordan:**

GRE, the GRE. But what I found was in this general tendency that admissions decisions were essentially being awarded on the basis of past performance.

05:01:13:49

**Lage:**

And the school you went to.

05:01:13:50

**Jordan:**

And the school you went to. Here, having had this, been given this sense of being in something of a minority, having gone to a not clearly first-rate place, Brown, turned to my advantage—well, I looked at admissions in a different way.

05:01:14:11

**Lage:**

Stop right there. [laughter] I have to change the tape.

[End Audio File 5]

[Start Audio File 6]

06:00:00:04

**Lage:**

And now we're on again. This is the sixth disc we're doing here, continuing the interview with Winthrop Jordan.

06:00:00:11

**Jordan:**

And I said that Larry Levine is voluble. You've made me sound like it. [laughter] Cora Jordan said to me this morning when I was talking with her, she said, "This good interviewer you're telling me about, and you're talking about yourself all day and getting a little tired from it, as you were last night, but it's over and you're talking now more this morning than you ever do!" [laughter]

06:00:00:43

**Lage:**

It does get to be a habit, right? Well, that's what we want.

06:00:00:46

**Jordan:**

And I'm going to see my former wife this afternoon and she's going to be confronted with me continuing to babble at her.

06:00:00:54

**Lage:**

Right, because once you start thinking about the past I think it opens up a lot.

06:00:00:58

**Jordan:**

It does, it does indeed. That story about—she reminded about that story about Bob Middlekauff, about the two undergraduates complaining about the impersonality of the [university] in his living room, sitting on his living room couch. [laughter]

06:00:01:18

**Lage:**

Okay, well, we are back on now. You were in the midst of telling me about the difficulties with the history department, particularly, in encouraging graduate minorities.

06:00:01:29

**Jordan:**

Yes. I ran into this because I later chaired the fellowship and admissions committee, which was a seven-person committee and a big committee in the department. I still had problems with this, this tendency to reward attendance at "good" institutions and to be very dubious of even very good records at weak institutions. David Hollinger almost didn't get in to the graduate school. I later went and looked at his folder because he turned out to be so good.

06:00:02:04

**Lage:**

And where did he come from?

06:00:02:04

**Jordan:**

He went to LaVerne College, which is in southern California. Nobody had ever heard of it. I went back and looked at his admissions folder and the notes in it. There were a lot of negative comments about “Who’s ever heard of LaVerne?” He’d done very well at LaVerne. He turns out to have had quite a good career since he has—

06:00:02:27

**Lage:**

Yes, he has—now he is a chair-holder.

06:00:02:32

**Jordan:**

Yes. He was my first research assistant when I arrived here. I remember saying to him in the research seminar, “Well, this draft, the research is very good, but it is miserably written.” I wouldn’t have dared say that to most students for fear of destroying them. He took it the way I was pretty sure he would take it, as a challenge. I knew that he had the ability to do much better, so I thought he was a guy that I could push, and so I did. When I announced that, you should have seen other peoples’ faces when I said that, because that’s not language I usually use.

06:00:03:23

**Lage:**

Oh, so you weren’t that harsh ordinarily, not that that was actually harsh.

06:00:03:27

**Jordan:**

No, well, you don’t say to most people, “This is miserably written.” But it was! So I said so. Most graduate students, I wouldn’t say that to them, because it would be too devastating. And I sensed he would not be devastated but would be encouraged.

06:00:03:47

**Lage:**

Would you go beyond that? I don’t mean in this particular case, but in general, to actually give writing advice? Correct in detail?

06:00:03:59

**Jordan:**

Yes, history, I think, probably more than the English department, teaches writing at the graduate level. I still do, or did till I retired. In seminar you got the reputation for being more interested in style than substance, but I think that’s unfair. My argument was that if I can’t understand, if you’re writing in a way that I can’t understand what you’re saying, let alone be elegant or eloquent, then what’s the good of my discussing content, unless you can make what you’re saying clear, at least, clarity as a minimum.

06:00:04:42

**Lage:**

Sometimes it’s related, I think.

06:00:04:45

**Jordan:**

Yes. I had a problem with this tendency to reward people who've been successful as undergraduates at "good" colleges, and that affected what I did as minority dean, because many of these people did not go to good colleges.

06:00:05:05

**Lage:**

Did they go to the traditionally black institutions?

06:00:05:08

**Jordan:**

Some of them, yes, had been to traditionally black, or hadn't done all that well in school, and maybe had gone to a state institution. Many of these people were the children of people who—so many of them came from the same southern states and their parents had migrated here during World War II from Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas, during the west coast migration, to Oakland, Richmond, and this area around here, and also in southern California. These were the children of those migrants. They, in many cases, hadn't had any ambitions, hadn't done all that well in school, and later with more maturity, they'd worked various jobs, various levels, all the way from—I had one guy majoring in business who had been a nickel-and-dime pimp for a while.

06:00:06:27

**Lage:**

And he put this on his application, or you came to—

06:00:06:30

**Jordan:**

No, I got to know him quite well. [laughter] I got to know him very well actually. It was only then that I realized that—he seemed so middle class, one would have thought that he was entirely from a middle class background. He wasn't. I had to get to know him very well before I began to dig this out of him. We got to be good personal friends. I found myself getting to be good friends with a number of people—these people were not much younger than I was.

06:00:07:05

**Lage:**

That's right.

06:00:07:06

**Jordan:**

I was perhaps five years older than many of them, and in some cases not any older at all. I was in some cases younger.

06:00:07:13

**Lage:**

Was there a cultural divide that was hard to bridge? This was the time when black power was in the air.

06:00:07:19

**Jordan:**

Yes, it was. But they had their reservations about the undergraduates who they thought tended to be blowhards, or were led by blowhards, and in many cases I agreed with them. So, we got along

extremely well. I'll talk more about that later. On the admissions policy, it was a matter of—because I couldn't admit a student, I couldn't tell a department to admit—that's a decision made usually by a committee.

06:00:08:00

**Lage:**

In the department.

06:00:08:00

**Jordan:**

In the department. I got to know the chairs of admissions committees all over campus, including the professional schools. There were a lot going into social work, and I discovered that the key in many cases was to get some individual, often on the admissions committee, to work toward raising the number of minority students. The most conspicuous example was in sociology, was Bob Blauner. And he was almost running his own campaign within the sociology department. He took in a graduate student who had gotten close to the bottom first percentile, believe it or not, on the GRE. This was at a time when there was still hostility on the part of many of these minority students toward the exam itself, this multiple choice, because they argued that it's culturally biased against minorities. So they felt that they should not do well on it, and often didn't. That's one of the things I had to do was persuade many departments, if I could, to pay less attention to the GRE. Fortunately Gene Hammel was working for Sandy as an associate dean, and I got to know him through that way only.

06:00:10:04

**Lage:**

Was he the Hammel—

06:00:10:05

**Jordan:**

Professor of anthropology who was very interested in statistical matters and started keeping records about progress of graduate students that Sandy had never had access to before, and the graduate school never had had before. He was doing it on a computer. This was back in the late sixties. He was doing it on punch cards or whatever, and was finding out what is the average length of time it takes to get a PhD. Well, 3.1 or 3.2 in chemistry, English it was more than eleven years, history is over ten years. This is the mean, average time from beginning graduate work to completion of the PhD.

06:00:11:03

**Lage:**

Seems extraordinarily long.

06:00:11:05

**Jordan:**

Well, what I tried to get the committee to do was to see that the GRE, even if it was low, wasn't a terribly good indicator. Hammel had the data to show that it had its great limits. I said, "Rely on letters of recommendations and the candidate's own letter, or own paper." Are you willing to go as far and appeal to their side on the matter and say, why not go a little extra mile and read his, ask the students for—applicants, to give a very long letter of application, or a short paper they had written and use that as evidence as well as grades. I pointed out to them that if you

admit somebody who's a magna cum laude at Harvard and scored in the ninety-fourth percentile on the GRE and you admit that that is a promising candidate and he'll get into your department with no trouble, if he drops out without every writing a dissertation you made the wrong admissions decision. If you admit somebody who gets in the second percentile out of one hundred on the GRE, who went to a college you had never heard of and did B's, and he comes into your program and not only passes everything but gets his degree on what you think of as a good schedule, you've made the right admissions decision. To look at a decision this way, rather than as a matter of prediction, and I said an interview with a student can often give you some idea whether this student is serious and has the kind of inner guts to want to persist at this and isn't going to drop out part way through or drag on forever.

06:00:13:34

**Lage:**

And was this persuasive? And with whom did you have the most trouble?

06:00:13:39

**Jordan:**

Well, I had some problems with history on the matter of distinguished records at minor colleges. I said, "Look, if they come here and successfully get a PhD here on a good schedule, you made the right decision." If somebody comes here, as would happen, they knew, they all had experience with this, people who came in and for one idiosyncratic reason or another, they never got their degree. They went off and were writing their dissertation and ten years later they were still writing their dissertation.

06:00:14:26

**Lage:**

Of course, that's hard to predict too.

06:00:14:27

**Jordan:**

It's very hard to predict. It's hard with minority students, but your admissions criteria need to be more flexible and I realized that the question—I was speaking about minority students but I was bucking a whole way of looking at admissions—past performance is of course a good predictor of future performance, but the college at which it takes place is less of a good predictor. We get these very high-achieving, high-powered people from high-powered universities, and they sometimes work out. I said, "Do you know any cases when it didn't work out?" Of course everybody—

06:00:15:18

**Lage:**

It sounds like you were a good salesman.

06:00:15:22

**Jordan:**

Well, I was a salesman, I was all that.

06:00:15:26

**Lage:**

Did you make progress in the history department?

06:00:15:28

**Jordan:**

I made some. When I later chaired a committee I had still that same battle to fight with some people on the committee. One of them was Gene Brucker, who was a person who always made sense; I admired him greatly for it. He was a very good chairperson when he was chair, and then, it was after he had been chair that he was just on the committee because he had to do something the several years that I was chairman of the admission fellowship committee. It wasn't always that we tended to agree about candidates, but he always made good sense, and that wasn't true of all my colleagues who sometimes didn't make any sense at all.

06:00:16:16

**Lage:**

That's discouraging.

06:00:16:17

**Jordan:**

Well, I didn't find it discouraging, it's just some people did and others didn't.

06:00:16:22

**Lage:**

Was this sort of the early years of an affirmative action program without being called that?

06:00:16:29

**Jordan:**

Yes, it wasn't called affirmative action. At one point I was hauled down to University Hall and questioned by the suits down there.

06:00:16:37

**Lage:**

The suits!

06:00:16:37

**Jordan:**

Well, I went down there and never felt more professorial in my life because I had on a sport coat, I had this kind of uniform on.

06:00:16:44

**Lage:**

A sports coat.

06:00:16:47

**Jordan:**

The moment I got in the building, all the males were in suits. Even the chancellor who—what was his name?

06:00:16:55

**Lage:**

Chancellor Bowker by that time?

06:00:16:56

**Jordan:**

Bowker. He dressed this way, like me, with tweed, and he was sort of almost notoriously ruffled, he didn't even wear suits. So you had the atmosphere in University Hall—I'll never forget that visit. They hauled me down there questioning the legality of what I was doing.

06:00:17:21

**Lage:**

Was this under president [Charles] Hitch?

06:00:17:24

**Jordan:**

Yes, I guess so.

06:00:17:26

**Lage:**

It must have been.

06:00:17:27

**Jordan:**

It wasn't Kerr. Was Hitch the next guy?

06:00:17:31

**Lage:**

Yes.

06:00:17:31

**Jordan:**

And then Bowker?

06:00:17:33

**Lage:**

No, Bowker was chancellor, and Hitch was the president.

06:00:17:35

**Jordan:**

Oh, chancellor, but president of the university.

06:00:17:40

**Lage:**

And then Gardner.

06:00:17:42

**Jordan:**

No.

06:00:17:46

**Lage:**

Or Saxon, Saxon was in there.

06:00:17:49

**Jordan:**

Saxon.

06:00:17:49

**Lage:**

So maybe—you didn't get called to the president's office.

06:00:17:51

**Jordan:**

No, not the president. I think the vice president of something or other, with some distinguished title.

06:00:18:03

**Lage:**

And they were questioning what you were doing.

06:00:18:05

**Jordan:**

It reminded me of working for the Prudential Life Insurance Company, the dress.

06:00:18:09

**Lage:**

[laughter] That's an interesting sort of cultural observation.

06:00:18:13

**Jordan:**

Which was not a tweedy place. And University Hall, which was then immediately across the street, across Oxford Street from the campus, where the male dress for those in authority was practically a uniform. I didn't wear a suit when I was dean, I think, ever. I always wore a necktie, I owned one suit, but that was mainly for funerals.

06:00:18:40

**Lage:**

Oh dear!

06:00:18:42

**Jordan:**

Funerals and weddings. But at any rate, they questioned what I was doing. I said, "Well, it is called the Graduate Minority Program and I named it that because it's aimed at a problem this university has and that is the under representation of minorities at the graduate student level. This is a social problem and an academic one that this university needs to meet, and so it's frankly called that. Minorities have preference. When I find a white student as disadvantaged as the minority students are in their background, educational background, then I will consider that person for a grant. I considered one and she didn't come, she was from Appalachia, she was Caucasian." I lectured them, these vice presidents, about this. I said, "She didn't learn how to read until she was eighteen years old." I thought, "Well, she might not be a racial minority but she fits into educational disadvantage." I was fully prepared to give her a grant but in the end she decided to go elsewhere, so I didn't. I said, "The only people who hold these grants are minorities. Being a minority in this country is a disadvantage in its own right."

06:00:20:14

**Lage:**

Did you give them your book to read?

06:00:20:16

**Jordan:**

No, but the prizes helped enormously, as I think I said. I referred to yesterday.

06:00:20:21

**Lage:**

You did. They knew you had high standards.

06:00:20:27

**Jordan:**

Yes, and with the departments, the prizes gave me real clout. Word got out that there was this guy who was running this graduate minority program and who is he, some kind of radical? They'd call up Delmer Brown, who was at the time a chairman. Delmer told me that he'd gotten some inquiries about me as "this dean trying to lower standards." These are people who think of themselves as completely liberal on race, and the kind of faculty—even somebody like Ken Stampp was surprised when the undergraduate program for attracting blacks, which name escapes me, but there was a program in the sixties for attracting more black students, but they were only undergraduates—it was a grant-made program. With the increased number, particularly with black and also Chicano students, many faculty, including Ken Stampp, I think were disappointed, surprised and disappointed; they thought every tenth chair would be occupied by a colored person, and they discovered that they all sat together. I thought, "Oh my gosh, these theorists are so devoted to integration that they've lost touch with reality." Because they did tend to sit together, with damn good reason. So that kind of expectation a little bit horrified me, that liberal expectation of true integrationists, no matter how good-hearted, to expect that they would all just sort of be every tenth chair in their classrooms, with the equivalent social life to go with it outside—that's just totally unrealistic.

06:00:23:04

**Lage:**

And some of the same kind of thinking I think went into the Berkeley schools' integration and the surprise at the course that it took.

06:00:23:12

**Jordan:**

Oh, sure, it did. Well, at any rate, I had some success with individual departments. I had some where I was successful, some where I wasn't. I did very little paperwork once I established a form—it was a very short, simple, easy form that students had to fill out for the graduate minority program. It wasn't all that big. Even \$1 million doesn't go very far once you start grants. The struggle often was getting departments to use their own money—not having somebody who they would have admitted anyway, who was colored, Chicano or black, and their tendency was of course (as bureaucracies, I learned very quickly, tend to do) to use other people's money to do something so they could save their fellowship money for something else. So I would go to them and say, "Why aren't you giving this person an assistantship or a fellowship?" They say, "Well, you've got money." I'd say, "So do you! I know perfectly well what your budget is."

06:00:24:34

**Lage:**

You were on the ball here.

06:00:24:37

**Jordan:**

I learned a lot about how bureaucracies work because any bureaucrat fights so that somebody else pays for it. I was trying to get the departments to devote some of their discretionary fellowship money to minority students, maybe not as a graduate minority program, which was less tied to quality, but not to push them off on me and say, “Look, we’re going to admit this guy and why don’t you fund him?” I’d say, “I think admitting him is terrific, why don’t you fund him?”

06:00:25:15

**Lage:**

Had you had a lot of contacts on campus before you did this?

06:00:25:20

**Jordan:**

I was learning very fast day by day.

06:00:25:23

**Lage:**

You were meeting people all across the campus in a way that a lot of professors don’t.

06:00:25:29

**Jordan:**

Yes, yes, I learned a great deal how the campus operates.

06:00:25:33

**Lage:**

And what departments were troublesome for you.

06:00:25:36

**Jordan:**

Yes, exactly. I had a delegation come down of deans from the law school. They came down to me and said, “We hear good things about your graduate minority program.” Like most law schools they like to be independent from the university they’re at. This was true at every university I’ve seen where there was a law school. They like to go their own way. They said, “Why don’t you just give us a block grant and we’ll administer it?” I said, “No. My responsibility is to the campus as a whole and that includes the law school.” But occasionally I’d get—that was just a matter of sheer power, and the law school acting like law schools, these lawyers, very bright, nice people, but all I had to do was say no. I couldn’t make anybody do anything, I could say no.

06:00:26:43

**Lage:**

You couldn’t make people admit students.

06:00:26:45

**Jordan:**

No, I couldn’t do much in a positive way, but I could say no a lot and I did. [laughter]

06:00:26:51

**Lage:**

Was history really one of the most troublesome departments?

06:00:26:54

**Jordan:**

Not really. They tended to think, “Well, Win Jordan’s got his hands on some money so we’ll—” Middlekauff and I pushed through a resolution saying that the history department would take extra effort and make extra time for graduate students admitted, minority graduate students admitted. We got that one pushed through the department and voted on with a very strong majority.

06:00:27:26

**Lage:**

So not just to admit, but to pay some extra.

06:00:27:28

**Jordan:**

Well, and to devote such department funds as were appropriate, such wording. We worded it carefully.

06:00:27:37

**Lage:**

Was it controversial?

06:00:27:38

**Jordan:**

A little bit, but we pushed it through and it eventually got a very comfortable majority. That was in, I think, 1968, just before I started deaning. I got Bob because Bob’s word was taken very seriously by everybody, more so than mine, and rightly so, I think. We did it together, introduced it jointly, and the department adopted it.

06:00:28:12

**Lage:**

Was the university at that time, when you were in that graduate division, under HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] scrutiny?

06:00:28:22

**Jordan:**

Not much under the gun, this was prior to the Bakke decision [in 1978]. This was what the lawyers were worried about. What I was doing later became illegal.

06:00:28:34

**Lage:**

But even before that, I guess the pressure was on the hiring of faculty, HEW was looking at the ratio, the poor ratio of women and minorities.

06:00:28:45

**Jordan:**

Yes, and affirmative action with the government peering over the shoulder was just beginning to develop. I remember it hitting the ceiling when I finished deaning, was back in the department,

and was hiring—it was the year that Paula Fass emerged [1974]. I was chair of the search committee and we had 300 applications because the US historians couldn't agree on anything, except “any field in US history except diplomatic history” and we got 300 applications—that was the result of not being able to agree on some specialty within American history.

06:00:29:22

**Lage:**

Oh, they left it open.

06:00:29:25

**Jordan:**

And so we got it down to twenty-two, an initial short list of twenty-two. I sent over to the affirmative action officer by then, there hadn't been one before. By this time you had to report to some affirmative action officer who was trying to satisfy the federal government's pressure on the university. This concerned women as well as minorities, so I had to identify women and minorities. I gave this list, names and addresses of twenty-two, we then pared it down to six and then two, in order A and B, and ended up with both Paula Fass and James Kettner. We ended up with a woman, a white woman, and a white man. I sent over through Delmer the names and addresses of the twenty-two people on the initial short list of 300 applications. Back came a request that this was insufficient. It came to Delmer and he related it to me, knowing what my reaction would be, I suspect. He said, “They want all 300 names.” [laughter] I said, “This is not affirmative action, this is bureaucratic record-keeping.” Delmer worked out a compromise. He said, “You still have all the folders, don't you?” I said, “Yes, some of them are incomplete, but there are 300 labeled folders in my office in cardboard cartons.” He said, “We'll find a closet for them. But we have to keep them. That's the compromise.” We never did send them all 300 names. I blew up, I said, “This is not affirmative action at all! It does nothing to increase the number of women and minorities on campus, not the slightest.” I was furious. This was shortly after I had been doing, I thought, some actual effective enlargement of the minority population at the graduate level, and for hiring purposes, you're not going to increase the number of women, which badly needed doing, or the number of minority professors by having some office whose sole purpose was collecting 300 names and addresses, which they will put in a closet.

06:00:32:23

**Lage:**

Yes, right.

06:00:32:25

**Jordan:**

But the deaning was quite interesting. The economics department came to me, they were very proud of this—some movers and shakers in the department, two or three of them, came over the group to me, when I was deaning, and said, “Well, our department has decided to devote some resources to increasing the number of minority students.” I said, “Terrific! I'm so glad to hear that.” They said, “What we're going to do is set up a program and admit ten MA people, minorities, and support them all. We'll admit them at the MA level and then maybe we'll get two or three of them that will be qualified to go on at the PhD level.” I said, “You're going to announce this program that way? That this will be uniquely for minorities? You won't get any support from me, don't do it. That is a way to guarantee failure, to say that ‘We're admitting ten of you, three of you might, at best, succeed.’” I said, “Do you expect graduate students could do

well under a system like that? To be told, ‘You’ve got a three in ten chance of making it here because you’re a minority student.’?” So I had to shoot that down.

06:00:34:17

**Lage:**

What department did you say it was?

06:00:34:19

**Jordan:**

Economics. I don’t remember the individuals. I didn’t know them before or since. They came to me with this program they thought was terrific. I had to tell them, “No, it’s not terrific.” May Dyson was horrified, and she was delighted that I—I didn’t throw them out, I just told them, “Don’t do that program, you’ll get no support whatsoever.”

06:00:34:45

**Lage:**

And did they not do it, do you know?

06:00:34:47

**Jordan:**

No, they did not end up. I didn’t tell them I thought it was outrageous, I told them it just is not a way to encourage graduate students.

06:00:35:01

**Lage:**

Now you were in that position for two years.

06:00:35:03

**Jordan:**

Only two. I promised to do it two, and I knew that that’s about as long as I would last.

06:00:35:10

**Lage:**

Was it a big time-consumer? And when you say as long as you would last, what did you mean?

06:00:35:14

**Jordan:**

Well, I knew politically I was—

06:00:35:19

**Lage:**

Making too many enemies?

06:00:35:20

**Jordan:**

And in my second year there were a lot of calls for a minority person.

06:00:35:23

**Lage:**

Oh, I see.

06:00:35:26

**Jordan:**

And there came to be a new associate dean who was black man, who was a new faculty member.

06:00:35:34

**Lage:**

Associate dean of—in the graduate division?

06:00:35:36

**Jordan:**

In the graduate division.

06:00:35:40

**Lage:**

And who was that? Do you remember?

06:00:35:42

**Jordan:**

I've forgotten his name, he may have been in social welfare, I don't recall. I've forgotten his name. I never got to know him personally, particularly, just to say hello. At any rate, there was a lot of pressure, and actually, the Graduate Minority Program continued after I did it but it ended having two deans, one black and one Chicano.

06:00:36:14

**Lage:**

Oh really, so just politically it was required.

06:00:36:16

**Jordan:**

Yes. I had to deal with organized student groups, I was under a lot of pressure, and yet in a way I was fortunate to be white. A number of faculty people assumed I was black and they called May Dyson, my administrative assistant who was there all the time, and I was there ostensibly only part time, although it turned out to be a full-time job, and my teaching suffered. I was spending 90 percent of my time—I'd run to seminar and I'd be ten minutes late to my own seminar, which is not something I had ever done before. This case, May told me about this, she'd get these calls from people who assumed they were talking with the white secretary—she spoke the King's English when she wanted to, and normally did on campus—and then ask her about what's it like working for this black boss of yours? [laughter] They simply assumed because I was in charge of minority affairs that I was black.

06:00:37:36

**Lage:**

But did you also get flak from the liberal professors that you were putting so much pressure on?

06:00:37:45

**Jordan:**

Well, it was disagreement. Some of my close friends in the department really disagreed with the frankness of the minority program. They had doubts about giving money to people one of whose qualifications was being minority. We remained friends for the most part, and agreed to disagree. I was in a small minority in the history department who was willing to go as far as I'd gone. Yet, I didn't think of myself as being radical on the matter, though I felt very firmly that the social

need was there, the educational need. The institution needed it, and students needed it. The profession of history or sociology or whatever—the students tended to be bunched in the social sciences and social work, that was a tendency of interest on the part of—less in the humanities and literature, counting history in this case as a social science, and less in the natural sciences, physical sciences, although there were some. Much more often either in the professions or liberal arts and social sciences. That was scarcely any wonder, given the backgrounds they came from. In many cases, they chose careers dedicated to the betterment of their own people. There was a lot of politics that I learned about, about the interracial politics, which I knew about, hence I knew about the Third World Strike, coming well before it actually started.

06:00:39:58

**Lage:**

I'd like you to talk—I don't know if I'm holding you too long before lunch, but I'd like to get into that topic. Should we do that now?

06:00:40:05

**Jordan:**

I think we might do it now. I can say rather quickly that I became, along with Blauner and other white faculty members, called upon every time there was an impending crisis, let alone a real one, and there were others in various departments whom I got to know only through these reasons, and not know all that well, but who were sort of interracial types and had an interest somewhat similar to mine. We'd get put on committees for negotiating purposes, and meetings with faculty, and meetings with students and so forth. So with the Third World Strike—

06:00:40:57

**Lage:**

You say you knew it was coming before it came.

06:00:40:59

**Jordan:**

Yes, yes.

06:00:41:02

**Lage:**

From the students?

06:00:41:02

**Jordan:**

From the students, sure. I had access to the black grapevine, and to a lesser extent, the Chicano grapevine, because they operated politically very differently. Chicanos had something blacks didn't have which was if something happened at UCLA at a meeting in the evening among Chicano students, the Chicano students on this campus knew it the next morning. Blacks didn't have that—they operated politically quite differently. I went to one meeting of Chicanos, I agreed to meet them on a Saturday because they wanted to discuss the Graduate Minority Program, they thought that it was too heavily oriented towards blacks. Because May Dyson was the administrative assistant—by that time she had a secretary—a Chicano secretary who was hired because she was a Chicano. I went to that and I had been told there were going to be guns at the meeting, and I remember walking up to it thinking, "I hope there aren't guns at the meeting."

06:00:42:19

**Lage:**

Was it on campus?

06:00:42:20

**Jordan:**

It was on the edge of campus. I forget what building, it was a place I'd never been to before, I had to find it Saturday morning, late Saturday morning. So I went in and they challenged me about the program's bias toward blacks. I just said, "Look, you're going to have to take my word for this, but there has been no discrimination in favor of blacks as opposed to Chicanos. I can say that with confidence because I know there hasn't been. It's a small program. Because my administrative assistant is black and my secretary is Chicano doesn't mean there has been discrimination; that was the historical order in which they were hired. Are you going to object to the fact that May Dyson got promoted from secretary to administrative assistant?" I said, "I did that because she is extremely able. And when she came to hire a secretary, she hired a Chicano for the Graduate Minority Program. It seemed appropriate to both May and to me. In this program, there has been no discrimination in favor of any group, any minority group at all. You can say whatever you want, but I can tell you there has been none."

06:00:43:51

**Lage:**

And how did they receive it?

06:00:43:52

**Jordan:**

They accepted it. I felt very strongly about it and I knew there hadn't been, so I told them there hadn't been and they believed me.

06:00:44:07

**Lage:**

That's gratifying.

06:00:44:09

**Jordan:**

Yes. I expected—when I say something like that I expect to be believed. [laughter]

06:00:44:15

**Lage:**

Of course, maybe that's why they did, you said it with that expectation.

06:00:44:20

**Jordan:**

But there was a lot of that politics, and I made a number of—I went to some Chicano parties in apartments, graduate student parties, and that was fun. I went to otherwise all-black parties, which I'd never been to before, and for the first time realized what it was like to be one dot, and how so many of the blacks that I knew must have felt in seminars where there was one in ten graduate students.

06:00:45:01

**Lage:**

Did your wife go with you?

06:00:45:06

**Jordan:**

Sometimes. More often I went alone. She wasn't unsympathetic, but she was mainly busy with three boys, who were by this time in middle school. They were born in '59, and the last one in '63. So she wasn't in a position to be going much out to parties. My home life suffered some as a result of this. There was a lot of emotional strain, I was perfectly aware of that. My teaching suffered, I know that. The notion that this was one-third time was a joke; I was getting something like \$3,000 extra and I was getting some course release. But I was still teaching. I was spending about 90 percent of my time over, first in Sproul where, during the Third World Strike, where I first smelled tear gas. You had to make a decision, or a decision had to be made by Sandy or somebody. We were in offices on the top floor of Sproul that first year that I did this, overlooking Sproul Plaza. My office, at one point, had plainclothesmen police officers, some authority, who sat in my window hefting a tear gas canister. He was wearing a pea jacket, I'll never forget it. [laughter] It's very hard to do business talking with student advocates while this guy is sitting in the window, in a chair by the window, looking out at Sproul Plaza hefting a tear gas canister.

06:00:47:14

**Lage:**

Did you feel the need to be defended?

06:00:47:18

**Jordan:**

No! He wasn't defending me! He didn't ask to use the office, he just came in and sat down by the window. I asked him what he was doing, he said, "I have to be here." He was observing.

06:00:47:33

**Lage:**

Was this when the students were setting up strike lines?

06:00:47:36

**Jordan:**

Sure, early afternoon when there were people who hadn't disbanded at one, and there were a lot of millings around. Crowds looked at with a semi-bird's-eye view, I learned a lot about crowd behavior. At one point some people were pushed into—the crowd itself pushed people at the edge through several of the big panes of glass on the student union. It was accidental; it was not a police charge that did it. It's just that a crowd of people is an animal in its own right. It has its own physical dynamics. I knew some people who got arrested by the police and I had to—one of the more conservative black guys got arrested because he was tall and handsome and he got photographed a lot. [laughter]

06:00:48:35

**Lage:**

He was one of your graduate students?

06:00:48:37

**Jordan:**

He was one of the people who was in the Graduate Minority Program and one of the most successful, and academically was doing awfully well, and came from a partly middle-class background anyway, but wasn't getting parental support. His family couldn't afford to have him

do more than just college, and he wanted to go on in sociology. He got himself arrested as leading the line of marchers into Sproul Plaza at two o'clock in the afternoon. He never had before in his life been arrested. They spent time searching for a criminal record. He was this man of very conventional American values who wouldn't have been at home on the streets any more than I would. So we had to deal with individual crises like this. A lot of the work I did, when I stopped deaning after the two years—I said, "I'm going to be resigning after two years," and that was important politically, because it meant, "Well, we're going to put up with Jordan for—" Then there was warfare between Chicanos and blacks as to who was going to succeed me. I said, "I am leaving after two years no matter what happens."

06:00:50:11

**Lage:**

So Sandy Elberg had to come up with your successor.

06:00:50:15

**Jordan:**

Yes.

06:00:50:15

**Lage:**

Did you and Sandy do well together?

06:00:50:17

**Jordan:**

We beame very good friends. When I was back here in 1989 I had a wonderful dinner up at the Faculty Club with Sandy and Errol, the three of us. We had a wonderful time.

06:00:50:30

**Lage:**

I interviewed him also.

06:00:50:32

**Jordan:**

Oh you did?

06:00:50:32

**Lage:**

Yes, so I got to know him a little bit.

06:00:50:34

**Jordan:**

We got to be very good friends. He strongly supported what I was doing. Errol Mauchlan led this—he had a lot more financial clout than anybody knew about—he was also very supportive. They liked each other, and they both liked me and I liked them. It was a wonderful working relationship. Without that, I would have had a very hard time. If I'd had a dean that wasn't supportive and a financial officer who wasn't supportive, I would have had serious problems getting anything done.

06:00:51:21

**Lage:**

Did you get drawn into the controversy about the ethnic studies program, establishing that?

06:00:51:26

**Jordan:**

Yes, that was the Third World Strike. During the strike I was just beginning to teach a course, the first—Leon [Litwack] and I had long since scheduled the beginnings of a jointly-run course. I would teach the first half in the history of black people. I made Leon add to the title, “the history of black people,” and I added, “and race relations in the United States.” We split it.

06:00:52:02

**Lage:**

Why did you want to add race relations?

06:00:52:04

**Jordan:**

Because I knew more about race relations—I knew much less about the history of blacks than he did. We split it at 1865. He knew a lot about post-1865, I didn’t know anything. And I had to learn very fast some standard black history that I had not known before.

06:00:52:26

**Lage:**

Well, that’s interesting, with all you’d done.

06:00:52:27

**Jordan:**

Especially in the antebellum period, having been trained as a colonial historian. I had to learn about, and start keeping up, which I’ve since done in a serious way, about slave culture, and this in a time when we didn’t know it, but the field was about to explode professionally. That began at the same time that the Third World Strike began, so I was confronted with what was I going to do? Start this course, and being in some ways a conservative, what I ended up doing was I taught it on campus and also off campus. I taught it in two sessions. I told the group when I met them, I said, “The Third World Strike is coming next week and we’ve got a decision, and some of you aren’t going to be able to come on campus and I recognize that. I feel that I have to teach the course. If it’s scheduled it’s my university obligation, I have to teach it on campus. But does anybody have a large living room where we can do it off campus?” I said, “I’m going to teach it back-to-back, two sections, and people can come to whichever they like, they get equal chance of getting an A or an F in the course.” So I taught it back-to-back.

06:00:53:59

**Lage:**

You found a large living room?

06:00:54:02

**Jordan:**

It’s interesting. This one guy volunteered; he said, “Where I live has got a great big living room.” It turned out that he was the only black member of an otherwise all-white fraternity up on—what’s the name of the street?

06:00:54:24

**Lage:**

Piedmont Avenue?

06:00:54:25

**Jordan:**

On Piedmont. I announced the address at the first meeting of the class, the strike was just about to begin. I announced that anybody who felt they couldn't come to the class on campus could come to one that I was going to hold off campus. A few whites came to it, and almost all of the black students came to it. I remember, I gave them this address. I didn't know it was a fraternity house, so I just gave them the number of Piedmont Avenue. I was a little surprised when I got there. There was one great big, perfect room to meet in, their room on the first floor near the front door. I gave lectures there. When students came to the first one, I remember they'd look at the number, at their notepad, on the number on it, and then look at the house. They'd come in with very surprised looks on their faces, mostly black undergraduates. That's where I held it all semester, and then I held it on campus as scheduled, so I taught it back to back. That was my own personal compromise of how to deal with that.

06:00:56:07

**Lage:**

It seems like you were sympathetic with some of the aims of it.

06:00:56:12

**Jordan:**

To some extent it was, although I had a lot of reservations about the Third World College because that involved creating a new college, I didn't think was the business of students anyway. I also knew perfectly well that this so-called "solid alliance of third world people" wasn't solid at all. There was a great deal of friction, especially between Chicanos and Asians, who were not much of a political factor at that time on campus, because they were all taking chemistry.  
[laughter]

06:00:56:43

**Lage:**

They weren't in the social sciences then.

06:00:56:45

**Jordan:**

Fitting into all the stereotypes about Asian students at that time. The tension between the blacks and the Chicanos was pasted over for purposes of this strike. But with the teaching a new course with Litwack—

06:00:57:10

**Lage:**

Two white men.

06:00:57:11

**Jordan:**

Two white men. Levine taught it once, and only once, because he made a huge mistake. He spent the opening class explaining why he thought as a white person he thought he was competent to teach it. He had nothing but problems, he only did it once. He taught the second half, I heard about this.

06:00:57:35

**Lage:**

Now tell me why that was a mistake.

06:00:57:37

**Jordan:**

It's a horrible mistake to get up in front of any class and apologize, or explain why you think you're qualified to teach it. You assume you're qualified or you wouldn't be there. The students do, too. They're going to jump on somebody who has enough doubt about themselves—it's asking for the kind of trouble you're trying to avoid.

06:00:58:05

**Lage:**

Did you ever get direct challenges on that?

06:00:58:08

**Jordan:**

No.

06:00:58:09

**Lage:**

Nobody—

06:00:58:10

**Jordan:**

I wouldn't have tolerated them. [laughter] That came across pretty fast. I also used an abridgement of *White Over Black* and that helped a good deal. *The White Man's Burden*, they were reading that first, because it's chronologically the first. They'd read that, and that one was very helpful.

06:00:58:37

**Lage:**

So they knew that you had the background. And Leon Litwack said that he was never challenged directly.

06:00:58:41

**Jordan:**

No, no. He knows much more about black history than any of those kids do. He at least didn't apologize about it. It's not something you go in and apologize. "I know you students doubt my ability to talk about twentieth-century international politics in Europe and the rise of Nazism—"

06:00:59:11

**Lage:**

Because I wasn't a Nazi.

06:00:59:12

**Jordan:**

"I wasn't a Nazi, and I really can be impartial on this." You don't start out courses that way.

06:00:59:21

**Lage:**

That's interesting. Did you ever talk to Larry Levine about that?

06:00:59:25

**Jordan:**

No. I don't think Larry was very happy with it. He never taught it again to my knowledge. But it was Leon's and my baby, essentially. We agreed to do this jointly. The beginning, having it begin during the Third World, the same semester, the same quarter, the winter quarter of '68, was an unfortunate way to get this course off the ground. I ran into a lot of exploited black athletes in that course.

06:01:00:07

**Lage:**

In what respect, now?

06:01:00:09

**Jordan:**

For instance, I ended up tutoring six guys on the football team who were all getting F's on the first two midterms. They were all flunking. I ended up giving an all-black tutorial to them in a class that ran ordinarily about fifty-fifty white and black. These guys, you could tell which sport they played just by looking at them. I've had to call up the athletic department, call the head tutor over there. I said, "Don't think that black students already know this subject because they're black. They don't. This is not an easy course. It is assumed they know something about American history, that they've had the survey course. This is an upper division course. Don't send me freshmen and sophomores who are not history majors, who've had no other history." In their patronizing way, they thought, "We'll give them an easy course. Oh, here's one, the history of black people!" They send over these marginal students who had been admitted not for their color but because they could play football. I was furious about this exploitation of them. They were black but they were being exploited as athletes. The assumption being that they already knew black history, that will be easy. I pointed out to them, "You're going to have some people with F's, is that what you're trying to do?" That was the end of the football players, after the first year.

06:01:01:57

**Lage:**

Did you get this group through?

06:01:02:00

**Jordan:**

About half of them got D's and the rest got F's. They just weren't—were so badly prepared. And some of them really didn't belong in college. They weren't here to—they weren't particularly interested either.

06:01:02:25

**Lage:**

That's too bad. It would have been a chance to really give them a good course.

06:01:02:29

**Jordan:**

I had problems like that, the little places, bumps you'd hit. In that case I wasn't speaking as a dean, I was speaking as an instructor in this course. I was sort of aware vaguely that athletes, especially black athletes got exploited, but I hadn't dealt with the results directly until I ended up—I spent a lot of time outside of class with these guys. I tried to help them. Several of them

really had the potential; their educations were terrible. They came from really crummy schools, they probably had, by then, a little black history, like having heard of Booker T. Washington and maybe Frederick Douglass and they thought that was black history. Well, this wasn't just the history of famous blacks who achieved something. Particularly, you start in the colonial period, there aren't any. So they hadn't had enough American history, so they didn't know whether the Civil War came before or after the American Revolution.

06:01:03:55

**Lage:**

That's pretty hard to deal with, isn't it?

06:01:03:57

**Jordan:**

Yes.

06:01:04:00

**Lage:**

Maybe we should break for lunch, because it's getting to be a long session for you.

06:01:04:03

**Jordan:**

Sure.

[End Audio File 6]

**Interview #4: July 16, 2004**

[Begin Audio File 7]

**Lage:**

We're back on after lunch. I'm calling this session four. It continues to be July 16, and you continue to be Winthrop Jordan and I'm Ann Lage. So now we're all identified. We talked about the Third World Strike and you gave your view from Sproul Hall.

07:00:00:40

**Jordan:**

Yes, and also from the classroom, because I was teaching this new course which was pertinent—I had reservations about a separate college, which I kept pretty well to myself for political reasons as dean. It wasn't something I discussed much.

07:00:01:06

**Lage:**

Did you think academically it wasn't a good idea?

**Jordan:**

Well, I had academic doubts of an overly politicized department. For a while black studies was a total scandal, until Bil Banks stepped in with some academic standards. They were running off with typewriters, and stealing equipment, and it wasn't a serious operation, of course, until he came in.

07:00:01:36

**Lage:**

And he came in because Chancellor Bowker summarily got rid of Ron Lewis, I understand, and hired Bil Banks.

07:00:01:44

**Jordan:**

Yes.

07:00:01:46

**Lage:**

All of this done in the chancellor's office, which wasn't the Berkeley way.

07:00:01:50

**Jordan:**

No it wasn't. But it needed to be done because it wasn't working out to be a reputable department. The departments came to split and were virtually not talking to each other, and then competing for—

07:00:02:10

**Lage:**

The various ethnic—

07:00:02:12

**Jordan:**

Sure, which everybody anticipated.

07:00:02:14

**Lage:**

Oh, they did?

07:00:02:15

**Jordan:**

I wasn't the only one who thought it would be contentious, and the Third World people were pretty sure it would be, despite all the rhetoric of cooperation.

07:00:02:27

**Lage:**

Were you called in as an advisor?

07:00:02:31

**Jordan:**

No, not in any official way. But I got to know Bil very well, and I was very supportive.

07:00:02:38

**Lage:**

What was his field?

07:00:02:39

**Jordan:**

Sociology. He was not an historian. I think if anything it would be kind of broad-gauge sociology, and a little bit of psychology along with that. He and I hit it off personally very well, and he was interested in making this a reputable operation. At one point he was under a lot of threats. I spent a night at his house because his personal safety was in question. I spent a night over at his house and we slept in the same big bed together. So there was a time when I got to know him very well.

07:00:03:36

**Lage:**

I would say so! [laughter] Was this to kind of defend him, or he needed the moral support?

07:00:03:43

**Jordan:**

Both, both. He needed plenty of moral support and I was able to give it to him in a way that he could accept.

07:00:03:52

**Lage:**

Who were the people who were threatening him?

07:00:03:55

**Jordan:**

Oh, part of the original gang, since he was an externally-appointed head of the black studies wing.

07:00:04:07

**Lage:**

Were they students, or were these community members?

07:00:04:10

**Jordan:**

Both. Some who I didn't push him too far on. There were things he didn't tell me, a lot he did tell me. By that time I had access to some of what was going on in the black grapevine on campus and I had had that access for some time. Very efficient on this campus only, as I indicated, but it had its limitations. The politics were—they did hire some good people. Al Raboteau was a very conventional man, a black historian of religion, a very good one. He ended up with a half appointment in history, a joint appointment, and eventually went to Princeton where he is in the department of religion, but always a historian. He went to an all-black Catholic university in New Orleans. I still keep up with him. I've lost contact with Bil, unfortunately. Last I knew, he had had twins. That's the last time I saw him, which was a number of years ago. But there was a time when it was a very intense relationship, because he was under enormous pressure. But he was a lot of fun to be with. I'll never forget, there was a reception for some purpose over in the chancellor's house, and it was waited on by the usual waiters. They came around with crème de menthe on trays. Bil said—he'd picked up a glass of crème de menthe, and he said, he tasted it and said, "Ack, I'm going to talk with one of the brothers," meaning one of the waiters, "and see if I can't get something instead of this green shit." [laughter] He went over to talk to one of the waiters, and came back with a nice glass of scotch.

07:00:06:52

**Lage:**

Oh that's great! [laughter]

07:00:06:54

**Jordan:**

[laughter] I said, "You did that very nicely, and I kind of agree about this green stuff." But that isn't what he called it.

07:00:07:07

**Lage:**

Yes, that's great.

07:00:07:08

**Jordan:**

We had a wonderful time. But under enormous pressure—I was in favor of the idea of a black studies department, but I was very interested in having it academically respectable, and I thought, because it was an all-black operation, as part of the Third World arrangement, that it could be academically respectable. That's what he wanted to do, and so I supported him as much as I could.

07:00:07:54

**Lage:**

It did get moved over to L&S, at his initiative, I guess.

07:00:07:58

**Jordan:**

Yes, it was his initiative. It began with the appointment of people like Raboteau, who was not the only one. He was the only one the history department was able to consider, because he was basically an historian, although an historian of slave religion, originally. He was a Roman Catholic, his second book was going to be on Roman Catholic blacks, but the then archbishop of New Orleans refused him access to the diocese's archives. So he never wrote the book. I understand, only by tenth-hand, that the new archbishop has opened those archives. Without access to that diocese's archives, a project on the history of Roman Catholic blacks can't be done. The archbishop, for some reason, didn't want to have it done, didn't want to open the archives, even to a black scholar from Berkeley with a PhD who was teaching at Berkeley in a joint appointment in black studies and the history department.

07:00:09:23

**Lage:**

What was your thought, and the thought of other historians as far as you know, about concentrating all the black studies in one department instead of having the kind of courses you were teaching in history—

07:00:09:36

**Jordan:**

There was a national movement going on. Berkeley's was only one of many, and there was a very successful and active one at Harvard, which has had all kinds of success and money, and well-known people. This one has been less conspicuously successful, but I had no great objection with it. I feel I am kind of ambivalent. I kept my mouth shut about it; it would have been untactful for me in my deaning job to say that I was against it. I knew the coalition wasn't going to hold together, that was just political rhetoric, for public consumption. There were a whole lot of tensions with these various groups.

07:00:10:27

**Lage:**

What were the tensions, was it based on who gets what money?

07:00:10:30

**Jordan:**

Partly that, and disagreement—the Asian studies thing was so politicized it was nothing but a left-wing kind of cell for people with political credentials.

07:00:10:45

**Lage:**

Political credentials?

07:00:10:47

**Jordan:**

Political credentials. The Indian one was struggling under lack of Indians on the campus, the native American one. Eventually there came to be some serious people connected with that. With the Chicano ones there were a lot of—there were a lot of tensions within the so-called Chicano one because they weren't all Chicano at all. Many of them were not Mexican at all, they were Central American or Colombian, or Hispanic. Not many West Indians, who didn't identify much with the Mexicans at all. In fact, there were traditional fears about Mexico as being a possible

imperial power, as well as the Nord Americanos, who were the real imperialists. But Mexico dwarfing the others in population, the Central American countries, and even Colombia. So they weren't united. The blacks were being run by a bunch of crooks who weren't serious at all until Bil came in and was a strong enough person so he accomplished a real coup d'etat. I helped him participate in that in a very quiet way. There was nothing he could do to appeal to me publicly.

07:00:12:22

**Lage:**

When you say you helped him?

07:00:12:25

**Jordan:**

I helped him personally, that's all.

07:00:12:28

**Lage:**

Did you do any recruiting for him?

07:00:12:31

**Jordan:**

No, but I supported him just in a personal way. Not really publicly, although people knew Bil and I were friends. We couldn't deny that. I'm not a public person by instinct, I'm a private one. I'd run the Graduate Minority Program as probably shorter on publicity than it should have been, because I'm not good at that. I'd much—I just operate better alone than with a large group of other people. It's not a compliment to me, but it's the way I am.

07:00:13:23

**Lage:**

Did you do any sort of politicking for the [Afro-American Studies] department with your fellows?

07:00:13:31

**Jordan:**

Well, yes, I resisted some of their claims that it was going to become nothing but a ghetto. At first their accusations of what it was going to become were born out completely. Then when it became part of L&S under more serious leadership, under Bil's leadership, and people like Raboteau began accepting appointments there it started to change peoples' minds about it. When it comes down to it, I'm an integrationist at heart, but much more comfortable with segregated institutions, black institutions, much more comfortable than many of my colleagues. Many of my colleagues have never been in an all-black church, and I've been to a lot of black churches, or been the only non-black person at a party, for example. Or for that matter, been mistaken as black. I cannot code switch, I cannot speak non-standard English, but at least I understand it. [laughter]

07:00:15:03

**Lage:**

You haven't tried to pass.

07:00:15:05

**Jordan:**

No. No. I wouldn't be able to. Given my background, it just wouldn't work, and why try to fake it? So there was a time—Bil said, "I've finally found a word that describes you." He said he'd done some work in the dictionary about this, I had to look it up, "Withy."

07:00:15:40

**Lage:**

Withy?

07:00:15:40

**Jordan:**

Withy. At first I thought it was a slang. It's w-i-t-h-y. It is a word. It means, it comes from a kind of reed, which means strong but flexible, bends but doesn't break.

07:00:15:56

**Lage:**

That's a nice—

07:00:15:57

**Jordan:**

I said, "Bil, that is a very flattering thing to say." He said, "Well, I finally found a word that describes you."

07:00:16:04

**Lage:**

That's very nice.

07:00:16:05

**Jordan:**

That's his style, and it's an enormous compliment.

07:00:16:09

**Lage:**

What a nice—sounds like you really had a nice working relationship.

07:00:16:13

**Jordan:**

We did, we did. We admired each other. Our talents were different, and we weren't the same sort of person, were not the same sort of background. He was never going to become a distinguished scholar himself, but he was serious about his scholarship. He admired serious scholarship. He was also a powerful person. A little bit eccentric, but somebody has to be eccentric in a position like that.

07:00:16:48

**Lage:**

I'll say.

07:00:16:50

**Jordan:**

And to take not only the public, but also the private abuse that he was getting. Had to run around, spending the same night in bed with other men. [laughter] But I did that night.

07:00:17:07

**Lage:**

It must have been a frightful night.

07:00:17:10

**Jordan:**

Yes. We didn't know who knew where he lived. His address was not public knowledge, I will say that.

07:00:17:20

**Lage:**

Those were frightening times on the university campus.

07:00:17:22

**Jordan:**

I got private directions as to how to get to where he lived. He wouldn't even give me the address, he just gave me directions.

07:00:17:29

**Lage:**

You don't think of that connection with the university campus.

07:00:17:32

**Jordan:**

No you don't, but it was real. These people weren't above thuggishness.

07:00:17:43

**Lage:**

You've talked—is there more to say about those tumultuous times?

07:00:17:47

**Jordan:**

I don't think, I really don't think so. I learned quite a lot, it was part of my own education. I learned the internal bureaucratic workings of the university and of student politics and so forth. I learned a great deal from a very particular angle, not a very broad one, from a rather narrow focus. I learned about odd things like how crowds behave. The theatrical aspects of these strikes, what kind of violence is it that always begins at the same hour every day. There are limits here, and they are in part theatrical limits. There are also limits of the observers, and that's because otherwise there's no audience until this hour which is more sacred at Berkeley than at most campuses; it always had been. Even the first year I was here, I was struck by the observance of the hour from twelve to one, a separate hour; there seemed to be no classes scheduled then. That seemed to me odd, that was new in my experience. At Harvard and Brown there were classes, there was no standard time to have lunch. Here you say "lunch," and around here it meant noon.

That was true of the FSM business. We never had any action in the morning. You knew when it was going to begin, if there was going to be trouble on campus, if there were going to be police of various kinds, ranging all the way to the Blue Meanies and the Alameda people, and even the National Guard. I had a one-o'clock seminar that got gassed by the helicopter that flew over and gassed everybody—an outrageous display of force. All the students came in, their eyes streaming, and we had to wait while they went—I was in my office and hadn't known about it. I

said, “What the hell happened?” They said, “They’ve flown a helicopter over and released a cloud of tear gas.” I said, “You’re kidding.” They said, “No, we got hit, we were on our way here.” It began at one, the seminar was supposed to, and we began about fifteen minutes late because people were down in the bathroom washing out their eyes at the faucets with paper towels.

07:00:20:40

**Lage:**

Did you take part in any of the faculty protests against that kind of thing?

07:00:20:44

**Jordan:**

Yes. I went to the faculty senate meetings. This was before the faculty senate was representative, and when the entire FSM, you’d have a meeting, there’d be more than 1,000 faculty there, which was unprecedented at the time. Those were quite interesting meetings, because some faculty were quite good public speakers and all of them were used to speaking in public. But some liked to get up and make speeches, and it tended to be the same people fairly frequently. So they took on a rather predictable air.

07:00:21:33

**Lage:**

But in response to things like the tear gas, I’m thinking—

07:00:21:36

**Jordan:**

Well, the tear gas is something you try and avoid. The problem with my second year, the chancellors finally moved some of the administration out, they moved the chancellor’s office over to California Hall and the graduate division was on the ground floor. The problem that came the next year, I guess it was 1970, it was perhaps, with the Cambodian—somebody would phone in bomb threats, so we could only work there in the mornings, because they locked the building. So we grabbed papers and went over to Kips and spread out over the table, get a pitcher of beer, and do paperwork.

07:00:22:29

**Lage:**

Kips, the hamburger place.

07:00:22:32

**Jordan:**

Yes. They had big tables upstairs, and some beer. We did some of the paperwork of the office that we’d carry over there, because we knew we couldn’t get in the building at one o’clock.

07:00:22:49

**Lage:**

Quite the times, weren’t they?

07:00:22:49

**Jordan:**

Which is no way a university runs a university.

07:00:22:57

**Lage:**

Now did this make you discouraged with Berkeley? You didn't leave for a long time after that.

07:00:23:02

**Jordan:**

No, not really. I knew it wasn't going to last forever, and it didn't. That sort of thing doesn't, it's not that fundamental. There were still a lot of people who made sense. Nobody liked the tear gas. The police were sometimes not in good control. The helicopter incident being the most dramatic of some instances. Some of it bordered on police rioting. There was a lot of provocation and fault on both sides, and you could see incidents on the fringes of where police and students were being arrested, and the selectivity of that, of physical location. Looking down bird's eye from the top floor of Sproul in that case, California Hall, where my office had no view at all. In that sense, I stopped learning about crowd behavior. But then the bomb threats went on for six weeks or something. You couldn't work there in the afternoon. We just knew that lunch was going to be at twelve o'clock, our work day was going to be just a morning day, so we started fairly early in the morning because we knew that the day would be over, effectively the office would be closed after noon.

07:00:24:39

**Lage:**

But there never were any bombs?

07:00:24:42

**Jordan:**

Never any bombs, but you can't—

07:00:24:44

**Lage:**

You can't play around with it.

07:00:24:45

**Jordan:**

No.

07:00:24:47

**Lage:**

Did living through this period and being sort of involved affect at all how you looked at the past? Did it change the kind of history that you did, or how you analyzed things?

07:00:25:02

**Jordan:**

No. But I had withdrawal symptoms—and I've heard this from a few other people who had a similar reaction, and mine was a very distinct one. I found it hard to concentrate on reading and taking notes and doing research and writing for nearly a year afterwards, because all of my deaning was not paperwork. It was personal one-on-one discussions, always highly charged, whether I was talking to students or faculty or administrators. There was always a considerable amount of emotion because there's a lot at stake and tensions build into relations, because it was about race and ethnicity. So as far as women were concerned, the women's movement was concerned, I remember being asked to talk to a women's faculty group at the Women's Faculty

Club, and I gave a talk explaining what this Graduate Minority Program was. Professor [Herma Hill] Kay in the law school, whose first name I didn't know—she got up, I knew her only because I had seen her speak at senate meetings—she got up and asked me, “What are you doing about women?” I said, “Well, I think there's a serious problem with women. All I can say is the Graduate Minority Program can't deal with that.” I said, “I agree that there's a serious problem, I agree that there are parallels, I do not think that they are the same problem. I think they are different qualitatively. I can do only one thing at a time or I'm going to end up doing both very badly.” That's the way I offered my defense on what was an attack on, “You're attacking only one of two equally important problems.” I was resisting a tendency, which I heard at historical meetings, to say they're equivalent problems. There are strong similarities, and strong historical connections, because most of the people who went into the women's rights movement were also abolitionists, a great number of them.

07:00:27:36

**Lage:**

As was your ancestor.

07:00:27:37

**Jordan:**

As Lucretia Mott was, yes. The connections are there all right, but it is not the same problem. Women at that time, some women were saying, “Well, it's just the same problem, only with women and they don't get any attention because they're women.” I said, “There are important similarities between the problems, and important serious results of disadvantage, but they are not the same problem.”

07:00:28:10

**Lage:**

How did you see the most important difference?

07:00:28:12

**Jordan:**

Well, there are differences at a level—all kinds of fundamental day-to-day levels. On this campus, the genders are separated in restrooms, the races are not on this campus. Now, in the deep South, in the days before segregation was gradually killed, fairly rapidly killed, there were four restrooms instead of two. Now there are two. Except in places where we have integration and nobody comments about it whatsoever, on airplanes, where nobody calls those unisex johns, like they have at Santa Cruz or Davis and so forth—and where it's a deal to have a unisex—nobody talks about the lavatories on airplanes as being unisex. I've never heard them called that. But I have heard the bathrooms be called such at both Santa Cruz and Davis, where I had children, and protests about this from parents and sometimes even from students. It's a different problem, the historical roots of it in some ways—patriarchy is much more universal and much older than the kind of racial attitudes that emerged out of the expansion of western Europe overseas with darker skinned people who looked different, had a different physiognomy, and were different in some cultural and linguistic ways. That's rather different, although there are a lot of parallels. There are a lot of similarities, but there are a lot of differences at the same time.

07:00:30:22

**Lage:**

They were often linked. I see you were on the Committee on the Status of Women and Minorities.

07:00:30:28

**Jordan:**

Yes. I remember being at a meeting where one of the speakers—it was an historical meeting—was saying that essentially black women had been twice as oppressed as black men, because they had been oppressed as females and oppressed as blacks. So they suffered twice as much. My response to that was that this was not a matter of arithmetic adding, that isn't the way things work. I said, "The great majority of the people who were lynched were not black females. I think you'd have a hard case saying that black females had it twice as bad as black men."

07:00:31:30

**Lage:**

That's interesting, yes.

07:00:31:31

**Jordan:**

I remember at this historical conference, saying, "I just ask you to pause and think, who was it that got lynched in the period after the reconstruction, in the reassertion of white power in the deep South? It was not, by and large, black women who were being lynched. If they had things twice as bad it would have been they who were being strung up and it was not. There are dynamics here that make it more complicated than adding two and two." [laughter]

07:00:32:03

**Lage:**

There always seem to be people who like to make clear and simple statements. And I can see you don't let them get away with it.

07:00:32:13

**Jordan:**

No. Neither problem is clear and simple.

07:00:32:18

**Lage:**

Well, did you find yourself naturally drawn into some of the issues regarding recruiting women faculty? Or did you feel more sensitive to it?

07:00:32:29

**Jordan:**

To some extent, I have this interest in the family for reasons I think I explained—my interest in affect.

07:00:32:47

**Lage:**

Now say that again—

07:00:32:50

**Jordan:**

It's to do with emotional as well as intellectual matters. The minute you start talking about men and women and start including children and age difference, which hasn't received—the whole aging process hasn't received the sort of historical treatment and attention that it deserves—but very few people are writing histories of two-year-olds. I was sympathetic enough about the need for more women, because the place was being run like a men's club, and it was greatly improved with increasing coeducation. We didn't call it coeducation, but the fact is, by the time I was leaving, it was becoming more balanced. The same thing was happening, even at a totally different place like Mississippi, which, when I went there, had just hired the second woman in the entire history department. Now there are an appreciable number.

07:00:34:31

**Lage:**

Well, I looked at the dates, and what did I find out? Natalie Davis was the first woman after an experiment in the fifties—she was hired in 1971.

07:00:34:45

**Jordan:**

Yes. I couldn't have named the date, exact year.

07:00:34:49

**Lage:**

Then Diane Clemens came in 1972 and Paula Fass and Lynn Hunt in 1974; it was such a big department.

07:00:34:57

**Jordan:**

Well, the appointment of Paula Fass, that was the one that I believe I mentioned. I was just squiring her around campus as I was chair of the committee. She stopped me and said, "Am I being hired as a woman?" I said, "No. I'm trying my best not to have any barrier. As long as I'm chairman of this committee, there won't be a barrier, but the hiring is not going to be a man or a woman predetermined."

07:00:35:40

**Lage:**

Now, was there resistance at that point among the faculty to hiring women, would you say?

07:00:35:48

**Jordan:**

Well, the kind of statement that I heard a professor at Brown make, that so-and-so, a female graduate student, didn't deserve a fellowship because she was just going to go off and get married—that kind of statement was disappearing and pretty well dead by—I didn't hear it much. I think there may have been a few people.

07:00:36:12

**Lage:**

What about hiring, you know.

07:00:36:14

**Jordan:**

Hiring—partly it was a matter of needing to raise people’s consciousness, which was what women were talking about the need for. How heavily male, how all-male these places were.

07:00:36:36

**Lage:**

Well, I did interview Natalie Davis. She didn’t remember them clearly, but she remembered some very hurtful comments made, and difficult times over the hiring of women.

07:00:36:54

**Jordan:**

I don’t remember that it was a major issue. When we came up with Paula’s appointment, her gender was not an issue.

07:00:37:03

**Lage:**

And you were the head of that committee.

07:00:37:05

**Jordan:**

Yes—I didn’t have the feeling that, “This nomination’s going to be in trouble in the department or further on up,” because of her being a woman. I did not have that feeling that it was going to be a battle to hire her. I did have the feeling that we needed to hire more women. On my father’s side, his younger sister had gone to medical school in the twenties, and she was not a political person. She did cancer research, and she was a published poet. I was very close to her, she was a wonderful woman. She wasn’t really puzzled, she understood it, but she had not—when she was in medical school a whole bunch of women were in medical school with her. There were more women doctors graduating in the 1920s than in the 1950s; things had changed. By the sixties and seventies she was a little taken aback, a little wondering what all the fuss was about, because she had run into no difficulties about this in the 1920s.

07:00:38:47

**Lage:**

I wonder what changed.

07:00:38:50

**Jordan:**

Partly the 1950s and G.I.s coming home and establishing suburbia—women no longer working in a war plant—the new housewife ethic that prevailed in the 1950s—I grew up with it and my former wife grew up with it and revolted against it. My present wife grew up with it to some extent and revolted against it.

07:00:39:16

**Lage:**

Did your former wife work?

07:00:39:19

**Jordan:**

No, and she didn’t expect to. After we separated she became the head paralegal for one of the biggest law firms in San Francisco. It wasn’t lack of ability that prevented her from doing that

kind of thing earlier—it was lack of expectation. Her family had no expectation of the two girls and a lot of expectation for the two boys. In my family it was different, and that's why my sisters dropping out of college horrified our parents.

07:00:39:58

**Lage:**

Okay, well maybe that's enough said about campus politics, unless you have more to say?

07:00:40:03

**Jordan:**

I don't. Things in the eighties quieted down in a lot of ways, and I'm sure I could dredge up incidents that might be of some interest, and it's not a blank to me, but it was nowhere near the adventuresome times. It became more relaxed. As time went on, by the late seventies I sensed the high morale, now that most in this group had been promoted. And the morale of the department was high because it really was an improving department and establishing itself as really a front-rank department of history in the country as a whole. That had been done. I had the feeling that, and this happened, that the department was no long quite the happy ship that it had been by the late seventies. Paula Fass I've had dinner with several times in the last ten years, during the summer, has told me, "What did you sense, how did you know, before anybody else did, that this was happening?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "Because it is happening." Some of the women's difficulties have resulted from difficult personalities.

07:00:41:53

**Lage:**

Now what do you mean, the women's difficulties?

07:00:41:55

**Jordan:**

Well, there have been difficult women here who have created difficulty about women.

07:00:41:59

**Lage:**

I see.

07:00:41:59

**Jordan:**

And there's also the issue of lesbianism and who is a real woman and who isn't.

07:00:42:05

**Lage:**

Oh my! And how does this play out?

07:00:42:07

**Jordan:**

Well, at some universities it turned out to be a major issue in the department, where non-lesbian women have been very badly discriminated against by female faculty members.

07:00:42:24

**Lage:**

Who are lesbians?

07:00:42:25

**Jordan:**  
Yes.

07:00:42:26

**Lage:**  
My goodness.

07:00:42:28

**Jordan:**  
I know of a situation, it happened in a department of something at the University of Minnesota. I know of a woman who is married and has children, and the majority of women in her department are lesbians and have given her a very nasty time about it. She's not part of that club.

07:00:42:54

**Lage:**  
And has that gone on here to an extent?

07:00:42:56

**Jordan:**  
Not that I know of. But when I came in back in 1989 I found a lot of changes.

07:00:43:03

**Lage:**  
You were visiting professor.

07:00:43:03

**Jordan:**  
Visiting professor for the spring semester, stayed at Litwack's house, because he was at Ole Miss teaching, out of interest.

07:00:43:17

**Lage:**  
He did an exchange, sort of.

07:00:43:18

**Jordan:**  
Kind of an exchange. I, for the first time, ran across racial tensions in the classroom. There were a lot of Asians there and the tension partly got aimed at me, but the tension was mainly hostility on the part of blacks for the Asians.

07:00:43:40

**Lage:**  
Hmm! And were you teaching this history of—

07:00:43:43

**Jordan:**  
The same black history course. I had one particular hostile older woman who I had to keep putting down, a black woman.

07:00:43:51

**Lage:**

And was she hostile to you as a white man?

07:00:43:54

**Jordan:**

Yes, that's the first time I ran into it. That was partly her, also, but this was when blacks were starting to feel tension about all the success of Asians that had occurred by then and has continued since. How much the tension has increased, I don't know. I've increasingly lost contact with the department. It is no longer the happy collegial ship that it was in the sixties, I know that.

07:00:44:27

**Lage:**

Do you have a sense of why?

07:00:44:29

**Jordan:**

I don't know exactly. The circumstances in the sixties I can more easily explain: there was this sudden turn-around from being a very mediocre department with a few key appointments, partly at the insistence of this very nasty man, Carl Bridenbaugh, bringing in people like Bouwsma and Brucker, and then the success of a large wave of people my age, over the course of maybe four or five years—Jerry Feldman, and very different kinds of people, but with the kind of collegiality and the kind of brown-bagging in one another's offices—the athletic portion of them, which didn't include us all. I remember Bob Middlekauff and I used to play squash a lot together, and he and I, we knew things had deteriorated at the last faculty meeting—George Stocking later left to go to the University of Chicago—he was in the history of anthropology. The departmental discussion got down to be about the color of the upholstery and the drapes in the new faculty lounge. This was a department that was seriously discussing this on a hot June day, the last department meeting of the year. Bob and I got up and left, because we had a five o'clock court open, and we left, and everybody knew where we were going. I was glad for an excuse to walk out of here, because here you have this collection of prima donnas, all of whom have something to say on the matter, and they're talking about the color of the drapes! [laughter] It cannot be settled by a meeting of fifty people. There were a bunch who were not there because they were on leave. The leave policy was wonderful here, and helped strengthen the entire university. But that's not a good sign when that happens. At least people realized it, because that became a rather famous meeting in retrospect.

07:00:47:15

**Lage:**

Was this in the eighties, before you left?

07:00:47:17

**Jordan:**

This would have been around—no, this would have been around the mid-seventies, after the turmoil was over.

07:00:47:24

**Lage:**

So maybe you knew the real issues had come to the fore.

07:00:47:28

**Jordan:**

I knew that disagreement had to be about something, and free speech is one thing, and Third World College might be something worth talking about—well, maybe not worth tear gas—at least worth discussion. The color of the drapes is not to be decided by a committee. I'd turn it over to the departmental secretary and she could decorate it, or he, one of the male staff, or I wouldn't mind if the chairman had. One of the reasons that Gene Brucker was a good chair, for instance—I believe in departmental democracy and the rotating chairmanship; Mississippi has a long tradition of administrative autocracy, and that works very badly. One of the strengths of the department was its essentially democratic nature. Gene Brucker was a very good chairman because he had the good sense, when it came to the organization of the departments into social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and physical sciences—history was given its choice as to deciding whether it was going to be in humanities or social science.

07:00:48:46

**Lage:**

That would be a lively issue.

07:00:48:47

**Jordan:**

Gene Brucker had the sense not to raise it in the department, because if he'd raised that question it would still be on the agenda for the next meeting, because there wasn't anybody in the entire department that didn't have an opinion about the matter. That discussion would still be going on today if he had raised it. Instead he very quietly talked about it with a few people, including me. Including people that he wanted to talk with about it. I'm sure he talked to Bob Middlekauff about it—not with people in positions of authority. He was chair, but he knew enough not to bring this one up. This was not a matter for democratic vote—because that's something historians can go on forever about, and given this group of prima donnas, they would.

07:00:49:41

**Lage:**

So where did it end up? Did Gene make the decision?

07:00:49:44

**Jordan:**

Yes, and he made the right decision, and it was for political purposes only—history went into social sciences. There was a very good reason for it. If it was humanities, the biggest department in the humanities division would be the English department, which was even larger than history. The third-largest department was history, the second-largest was math, and the largest department was the English department, in all the liberal arts. So by going into the social sciences, history was by far the biggest, which has weight in the dean's office, by sheer weight of numbers.

07:00:50:24

**Lage:**

So this was political rather than an intellectual decision.

07:00:50:28

**Jordan:**

The only reason why history is under social sciences is for administrative purposes, because it's the largest department and had the choice of deciding that for those purposes, it would be—

07:00:50:40

**Lage:**

That's a very interesting tale.

07:00:50:42

**Jordan:**

Well, Gene may interpret it differently. I think he was pretty clear; I know he didn't bring it to the department and I thought that was very smart of him.

07:00:50:51

**Lage:**

Did anybody object? He'd have a good reason.

07:00:50:56

**Jordan:**

Well, nobody called him terribly arbitrary. The reasons were pretty clear. [laughter] I may be making too much of it, but I think—I know from some people you get the same story, those who think about these things—some people don't think much about them.

07:00:51:20

**Lage:**

Were some of the other reasons for not being as happy as a department have to do with history itself kind of morphing in different ways?

07:00:51:29

**Jordan:**

Well, history has changed, and it has undergone its own sorting into specialties, and there are a lot of subspecialties. As a profession, history is a much more diverse—it's no longer a choice between social and political history—there are all kinds. The tendency is to slight politics now, slight diplomacy, slight military, and do various cultural developments. This, by and large, in my opinion, has improved the practice of history in general. I don't think that has been fundamentally the reason. Some of it is just circumstance of personality. But morale is a very precious and delicate commodity that enlarges or shrinks in very subtle ways. It's dependent on a great many things, including personnel and situations and age profiles and gender profiles. There was one disastrous chairman after I left, and there had not been while I was here. There had been nobody who wasn't a good chairman in all the chairs that I'd been through and that must have been at least a half a dozen. Say, roughly about three years, and I was here nineteen years.

07:00:53:13

**Lage:**

I have a list of them here somewhere.

07:00:53:14

**Jordan:**

There were six or seven chairs. For a while Bill Bouwsma was, Bob Middlekauff, Henry May.

07:00:53:21

**Lage:**

Did you ever come up to be chair? Or think about being chair?

07:00:53:25

**Jordan:**

No, I was only acting chair when Bob Brentano was gone one summer, and that's the only time.

07:00:53:33

**Lage:**

Here's a list of some of them, I don't think it's complete.

07:00:53:35

**Jordan:**

Riasanovsky, and Bouwsma. Oh, this isn't all. This is prior to—

07:00:53:41

**Lage:**

No, this is just some of them.

07:00:53:44

**Jordan:**

Brucker was on here.

07:00:53:46

**Lage:**

He's on here 1969 to 1972.

07:00:53:49

**Jordan:**

That's when this reorganization was made and Bob became provost—I mean, dean of social sciences—before he became provost of liberal arts.

07:00:54:00

**Lage:**

Now who did?

07:00:54:01

**Jordan:**

Bob Middlekauff.

07:00:54:02

**Lage:**

Oh he did, I didn't know.

07:00:54:04

**Jordan:**

He was dean of social sciences, and history was part of social science. He had difficulty with the history department. We shared that. [laughter] He can tell his own story about that. What I'm going to do with Bob is tell him—confirm that your reputation of being a good interviewer is very well deserved and that I've told stories about him without regard to truth, and that if he wants the record set straight, he'd better go correct me and stop postponing his interview.

07:00:54:37

**Lage:**

Very good, I'll appreciate that.

07:00:54:39

**Jordan:**

I'm going to email him to this effect when I get back.

07:00:54:42

**Lage:**

Let him know various things you've told me on his behalf.

07:00:54:44

**Jordan:**

I'm not going to tell him what I've told, but just mention things I know he will want to correct.

07:00:54:51

**Lage:**

That's great. Let's see, we do have time limitations, so let's not get too happy here. I'm looking to see what we have covered, that I wanted to cover. We've done *White Over Black*, *White Man's Burden*. We haven't talked about writing textbooks. Is that worthy of discussion?

07:00:55:16

**Jordan:**

I'll say just very briefly that I got into doing that partly by accident. Leon got asked to join a standing text book and decided he couldn't do the whole thing, a revision of an existing text book for Prentice Hall, called *The United States*. And he asked me if I'd like to do the first half chronologically. As with the African American history, we split very nicely about 1865—he could do Reconstruction, and I stopped there. I'd long since have made the decision in favor of Africa and the Caribbean, and continuing sixteenth century Western Europe—abandoning US history after the Civil War. So we split that and did quite independently our two chronological parts of that text book. Then pretty much by accident I got involved in a high school text book.

07:00:56:29

**Lage:**

Oh.

07:00:56:30

**Jordan:**

From there I got involved in a junior high text book.

07:00:56:36

**Lage:**

Did you do these because you thought it was a great need?

07:00:56:40

**Jordan:**

Yes. One of the things that doing the college text book got me interested in, more interested in undergraduate teaching, I agreed for the first time to give the first half of the survey, which I had never given before, and taught it here for my last maybe eight years.

07:00:56:58

**Lage:**

And you hadn't had to do that—

07:00:56:59

**Jordan:**

I figured I couldn't write the first half of the text book and not teach the survey.

07:00:57:03

**Lage:**

I see, yes.

07:00:57:06

**Jordan:**

So I ended up at one with fourteen teaching assistants, and lecturing up at the physical sciences lecture hall, with the TV monitors and the whole works. I was pretty good at it, nowhere near as good as Leon was, as a public lecturer. He was hired partly to teach the survey, and he loves doing it, he's devoted to it, and he's terrific at it.

07:00:57:30

**Lage:**

And he's still doing it.

07:00:57:33

**Jordan:**

Yes. I had never had that devotion, nor that skill, the way he is—he's very, very good at that.

07:00:57:42

**Lage:**

Do you think it's a good method of education?

07:00:57:46

**Jordan:**

Well, not the best. I think smaller classes are better for the students, but you can't educate a very large number of people with small classes without putting yourself into a—without having a faculty-student ratio that taxpayers would not fund.

07:00:58:11

**Lage:**

That's true.

07:00:58:11

**Jordan:**

Tuition has gone up high enough. You would need to double the size of the history department, or triple it, and that's not in the cards. It's a necessity at a large university.

07:00:58:24

**Lage:**

But you felt comfortable with the lecturing?

07:00:58:27

**Jordan:**

Yes, and it was the first time that I, as lecturer, lectured three times a week, and I insisted on teaching a section, and I told the department I wanted credit for two courses because I was going to teach my own section, because I didn't want to be telling the TAs, asking them, the twelve or fourteen TAs, what problems they were having in their section once a week, and meet with them, which I did, once a week, and not be teaching, have my own section. So I taught one section, they each had two.

07:00:59:09

**Lage:**

You knew the students.

07:00:59:09

**Jordan:**

And knew some of the problems that they were having, and what was being missed out of lectures, out of total obscurity on my part, what had gone well and what hadn't, and so forth. I enjoyed that. I was working on a text book for the first time, having to cover topics that I knew diddly about, and educating myself more generally about the delivery of American history in the antebellum period. We earned some money with it, that was part of the motivation. Although in the long run, I made much more money from the high school text book. That I got into somewhat by accident. Once you get involved, from there it goes to—well, “We've got a seventh, eighth grade book that's ongoing, would you like to take over as co-author?”

07:01:00:21

**Lage:**

So you revised, basically.

07:01:00:24

**Jordan:**

Well, you write differently for people in junior high than you do for the juniors and seniors, and differently for college freshman and sophomores.

07:01:00:36

**Lage:**

But I mean, you took an existing book and revised it?

07:01:00:38

**Jordan:**

Yes, it was in each case, although with the high school one I actually wrote the first half from the ground up. That was kind of fun. But by then it wasn't very hard, because I'd been revising every four years the one that Litwack and I were doing.

07:01:00:59

**Lage:**

Which was the Hofstadter one?

07:01:01:01

**Jordan:**

Yes, originally. Hofstadter died, and Miller and Aaron wanted out, and Miller was the major author actually, and he was getting old, and just wanted to stop. So Prentice Hall went looking

and they found Leon, and Leon decided he would like to do it, but not the whole thing, and asked me whether I'd be interested, and hooked up and did it jointly, but actually operated quite independently. A lot of consulting with each other, but we wrote our own text and chose our own pictures. Of course he had a much better deal there, was much more interested in the visual aspects, and good at finding. But until the invention of photography, you're much more limited as to what you can put in a text book. Just so many Stuart portraits of George Washington.

07:01:01:54

**Lage:**

Did you change the subject matter though?

07:01:01:57

**Jordan:**

In some cases, considerably. A wonderful example: I was talking about the decline in the birth rate, which was totally new to the text book, and the connection with the shrinking family size, and the status of women in the 1830s, and the development of birth control. I got that in the first revision, and then the publisher quietly sent me a pre-publication copy and they'd excised the section on birth control. Evidently some state board, a text book adoption board, objected to it. I blew up, and they put it back in, I have both editions, one with and one without the discussion, which emerged as very much from a major fact of life. There is an historian, old-fashioned, much older than my generation of historians, who would not have paid any attention to what was a steady decline throughout the nineteenth century in the rate of birth for women; per 1,000 women, the rate of birth was going down. There are connections with the status of women, and the structure of the family is changing, and there is a fundamental demographic thing going on that most people have paid no attention to whatsoever, although you can see it in any census publication. The steady decline—every decade it goes down from 1800 on. It starts then, and it drops every decade until things start going haywire in 1930 with the Great Depression and World War II. Then we've got these funny bulges—baby boomers. You take all these millions of men out of the society, throw them overseas and then bring them back all at the same time, no wonder you get a birth pattern that looks like that, suddenly starts going like that. That's what we're dealing with now. Plus the fact that medicine means that life expectancy at birth is a great deal longer now than it was a hundred years ago, mainly as a consequence of developments in public health, but also advances in medicine.

07:01:04:27

**Lage:**

So to do this—as you would teach a class, you had to look at your whole conception of what's important in history.

07:01:04:37

**Jordan:**

Sure, yes.

07:01:04:37

**Lage:**

And was it very much different, aside from that example, from what Mr. Hofstadter, et al, had put?

07:01:04:41

**Jordan:**

No, it was a good text book. The prose was very sort of 1950s and that's hard to describe, but it was written in such a way that I did a lot of revising of prose, and it was a good book. But it needed updating on certain subjects. Nothing about women and the family, for instance. I had to insert that. There was some pretty old fashioned stuff in there, incidents that seemed important then, and no longer did; we cut them out. Leon had a job I didn't, and that's why he got 60 percent and I got 40 percent of the royalties, because he had to add chapters. Also, the publishers were, as a result of the market, constantly pushing for shrinkage of the colonial period. Shrinkage of the coverage. I resisted that as strongly as possible. The books were getting too long, too fat, and in some cases too heavy for students to carry around, and too expensive to produce, the publishers said. But when they added a chapter on recent history, they didn't want to expand the book, they wanted to cut. They say all that business about the American colonies is not pertinent. I think it's pertinent to realize how radically different life was in the seventeenth century than it was in the late nineteenth century, and that life was very, very different indeed. The population of the United States, including the slave population, on the eve of the American Revolution, the thirteen colonies, all thirteen combined, had a population of the present day population of the state of Mississippi, 2.5 million plus.

07:01:06:53

**Lage:**

That's amazing.

07:01:06:56

**Jordan:**

It's a different world. I think one of the purposes of history, and this is an argument that anybody in, say, colonial American history or anybody in pre-modern history would argue—one of the lessons that history has to teach is that human beings haven't always necessarily lived the way they do today, on a day-to-day basis, or even thought or felt in quite the same way they do today.

07:01:07:27

**Lage:**

That would be a great lesson of history, if you could just get that across.

07:01:07:30

**Jordan:**

Yes, exactly.

07:01:07:35

**Lage:**

Okay, I guess one thing we didn't cover in talking about the times in Berkeley, the times of troubles as some people call them. Other people call them the times of great excitement and fresh ideas. Was it hard to research and write? Did it slow down—

07:01:07:53

**Jordan:**

It slowed me down, but that was the deaning. Otherwise, I don't think it did much damage on slowing productivity down. That's a little surprising to say. A lot of people stopped working in their offices and starting opening up essentially a home office. A lot of people went home. I never did to the extent that some people did.

07:01:08:14

**Lage:**

But you were able to keep your regular work, and you worked on the text book.

07:01:08:19

**Jordan:**

Yes, and I came to the office. That's one of the things you noticed with the decline in the tension on campus—less collecting of people on campus. I don't think Saturdays, if you went over to Dwinelle now, you'd find many people there, and you used to.

07:01:08:39

**Lage:**

Sometimes not even on Fridays.

07:01:08:40

**Jordan:**

Okay. This may have some connection with the morale, the fact that—

07:01:08:48

**Lage:**

And also people live further from campus.

07:01:08:49

**Jordan:**

Sure.

07:01:08:50

**Lage:**

Because of the cost of housing.

07:01:08:51

**Jordan:**

Sure, yes. And parking anywhere near the campus, let alone on it, is hard to find.

07:01:08:57

**Lage:**

And maybe the cost of housing affects morale.

07:01:09:00

**Jordan:**

That may as well also, surely.

07:01:09:03

**Lage:**

The other thing I heard mentioned was the importance in those years of social gatherings—you've talked about this—and the wives didn't work, and they put on dinner parties.

07:01:09:15

**Jordan:**

Yes.

07:01:09:17

**Lage:**

Do you think that had its place?

07:01:09:18

**Jordan:**

It may very well have. I got to know many people not in US history at dinner parties, yes, at parties at people's houses, and there were a lot of them. Sometimes not just a sit-down dinner. We had this party where people ended up—I've forgotten what the excuse for it was, but it was a party at our house. And then there was the first party I went to where I unwittingly had the first pot that I ever—I was so ticked off that I wasn't even told about it—it was in the brownies.

07:01:09:56

**Lage:**

It was in the brownies, in the history department, too.

07:01:09:59

**Jordan:**

I just thought the host should have told us, because my driving going back was terrible.  
[laughter]

07:01:10:09

**Lage:**

Was that a common occurrence?

07:01:10:12

**Jordan:**

No. There were only one or two faculty members who would have done that. That was groovy for a few people. I didn't think it was groovy. I didn't so much disapprove of it, I just wanted to know what I was ingesting.

07:01:10:31

**Lage:**

Do you want to say anything about graduate students that you taught?

07:01:10:35

**Jordan:**

Well, I got to be personal friends with almost all of the ones that wrote dissertations with me. We had a big reunion of them, for them, at our house a couple of years ago. I was still recovering from liver surgery, and I wished that I had been more up, but almost all of them came. All that were able to, certainly, came. We not only had a party at our house but then we had a kind of open, unprogrammed seminar meeting of these people, some of whom had never met each other. Most of them knew of each other, or were acquaintances, but hadn't overlapped, because this was over a period of—well, there had been a few at Ole Miss, so it included a few of those.

07:01:11:35

**Lage:**

Oh, it did include Ole Miss.

07:01:11:36

**Jordan:**

But the majority were Berkeley PhDs. Some of them are close personal friends that I've kept up with since—they became lifelong personal friends. I value that enormously.

07:01:12:04

**Lage:**

Did you oversee in a lot of areas?

07:01:12:08

**Jordan:**

Primarily, I spilled over into the antebellum period because sometimes—but I never passed the Civil War. I turned one guy down because he wanted to do something on Reconstruction. I said, “I can't do it, because I'm ignorant about it.” He didn't believe me, but what I said was correct, it was true. A very able guy. I've since gotten to know him quite well. What was a great strength here and a weakness at some institutions, Wisconsin, conspicuously, was there was not a sense of ownership—so that people could in some cases change major professors. Major professors didn't feel that they owned a student, the students did not feel owned by the major professor. Hopkins, where I seriously considered moving to when I started getting job offers in the wake of *White Over Black* coming out—Princeton, and Johns Hopkins—I did not like their system where you're admitted to somebody's seminar and you would go on with that person, and work with them and write the dissertation—effectively, a graduate student, from the moment of admission, is somebody's student and belongs to one person. That was not true at Berkeley, and I always thought it was a great strength of the department. How that operates now here I do not know. I think it probably is similar; it was so strong here a tradition that—

07:01:13:59

**Lage:**

You don't have to hook up with someone.

07:01:14:01

**Jordan:**

One is not admitted to a seminar here. One is admitted to the department. Then you talk with your advisor about what seminars. Just because somebody takes a research seminar with you doesn't mean that either party is committed to do their dissertation with you. Hollinger took a research seminar with me, ended up doing a twentieth century dissertation with May.

07:01:14:24

**Lage:**

You would hope people would change as they studied.

07:01:14:29

**Jordan:**

Sure.

[End Audio File7]

[Begin Audio File 8]

08:00:00:04

**Lage:**

Okay, now we're back on.

08:00:00:05

**Jordan:**

And now I'll be auspicious. [laughter]

08:00:00:08

**Lage:**

Yes, now you're going to say something very intelligent. Okay. You were talking about graduate students. Do they choose you, or you choose them, or how does it work?

08:00:00:19

**Jordan:**

They essentially do the major part of the choosing. I only once suggested a topic to a graduate student who came to me. This was Patricia Cohen. I thought it would be right for her, and she thought it was an odd topic. She was an extremely able person, and I suggested it because she was one of the few people I knew who fundamentally understood culture, but at the same time was comfortable with numbers, as I was not. She wrote a history of the development of numeracy in early America.

08:00:00:59

**Lage:**

I ran across that in your bio bib, and I thought that was fascinating.

08:00:01:04

**Jordan:**

It's a wonderful study. She's at Santa Barbara and has been the head of women's studies there, although in some ways she doesn't regard herself as a women's historian. She's a cultural historian. She wrote about numeracy, but she had to read a lot of—

08:00:01:23

**Lage:**

Now what is numeracy?

08:00:01:24

**Jordan:**

It's the ability to handle numbers. In a sense it's parallel to literacy. I asked her, "Why is it that we are so locked in with numbers that we do everything in percentages?" Our sports—it isn't just baseball, it's spilled over into basketball and now even football—the percentage of the successful passes completed, et cetera, all of this.

08:00:01:50

**Lage:**

Is that an American cultural trait?

08:00:01:53

**Jordan:**

Yes, but the whole modern world, the industrial world, is becoming Americanized in that sense. I said, "People didn't used to be that way, how did this change come about?" She didn't exactly invent the word, but it was much less commonly used then than it is now, the sense of numeracy, the understanding of numbers. She read a lot of childhood textbooks for kids, about handling the rule of three, and methods of doing arithmetic. The sheer fact of counting is an artifact of modern culture—having a census of people, counting up people. That in itself is, let alone census of manufacture or agriculture or such. That instinct is so part of our culture, we think it is normal behavior. It is really a very odd way for human beings in our wide human history to behave, to run around counting everything. Once you know it, once you get it down in numbers, then it is real. It's this reification of numbers. We're now so attached to numbers, we each have an individual one assigned to us now at birth. It used to be during your first job, and now Americans can't live, American citizens can't live without, what is it, a seven-digit Social Security number?

**Lage:**

I count nine.

08:00:03:44

**Jordan:**

We all have them, we think that's normal. There are a great many people still in the world who live and die without being assigned a number.

08:00:03:54

**Lage:**

So this was something that you had noticed?

08:00:03:57

**Jordan:**

Yes. One of the reasons I think I've been reasonably successful is that I ask stupidly basic questions that don't interest most people because they simply assume that it is a simple question. Sometimes simple questions have rather complex answers. Why did it become normal for a population to know how to do this? And even interested in a sport that lent itself to statistical summary?

08:00:04:45

**Lage:**

Right, why is baseball the American sport?

08:00:04:47

**Jordan:**

Yes. Why? It's connected with other certain cultural attributes. It is not the way human beings have always been. If one takes a somewhat longer view of history, it's really very recently in human history; 5,000, 10,000 years ago, prior to writing, people were doing it. Writing didn't create numeracy. It began to create a literate class in various cultures, and writing, everyone would agree, is a major breakthrough. Printing didn't create it. Computers certainly didn't create it, because it started well before that.

08:00:05:35

**Lage:**

So did she answer it to your satisfaction?

08:00:05:37

**Jordan:**

I think it's a very good job.

08:00:05:40

**Lage:**

Because I noticed it was a much broader topic than some of the thesis topics.

08:00:05:49

**Jordan:**

Yes. They tended to be. Ron Walters' dissertation was a discussion of the entire abolitionist movement, a review at it, which when it was published was very fresh, and the best survey by far of the entire abolitionist movement. And it remains a very good book. Chuck Cohen's book on Puritanism—he liked *White Over Black* so much that he wanted to write a very good book. He was very capable of doing so. He wrote a wonderful book on a subject that everybody thought everything had been written about, Puritanism. He wrote about Puritan conversion, which is central to Puritanism, but nobody had ever tackled it. People like that are just a joy to know—they vary some in their abilities, and in their interests.

08:00:07:14

**Lage:**

Did you have many African Americans as your graduate students?

08:00:07:17

**Jordan:**

Not particularly. The group that came, one guy, who I wasn't really—Barth was the actual director because his topic was too recent for me, but I think I must have been the second reader with Douglas Daniels, who is also at Santa Barbara, an extremely able African American who I first got to know when he took a research seminar. He wrote his research paper on, of all things, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Did a wonderful job. He was so surprised, he had heard about that book, had heard the phrase "Uncle Tom." I said, "Go read the book." He'd never read it, none of the graduate students had. So I told him, "Go read the book." He was astounded. Then I said, "Go read the novels that were published in response to it." He read them. That's asking someone to do a real chore, I've looked at some of them. [laughter] If *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not a first-rate novel, these are tenth rate. Doug came to Oxford.

08:00:08:35

**Lage:**

Followed you there?

08:00:08:36

**Jordan:**

No, to this party.

08:00:08:39

**Lage:**

Oh, the party!

08:00:08:39

**Jordan:**

The party for me.

08:00:08:40

**Lage:**

Oh, the party was in Oxford! Somehow I pictured it here.

08:00:08:42

**Jordan:**

In Oxford. These people paid their own ways to come to Oxford.

08:00:08:44

**Lage:**

Oh that's wonderful.

08:00:08:47

**Jordan:**

We did our best to put them up, but there wasn't—we gave them a nice dinner and got a room for a nice morning seminar. I was still kind of post-operative, it wasn't very long after surgery. I was sorry that I wasn't in better shape. We had a wonderful time.

08:00:09:12

**Lage:**

That's very nice to hear, I hadn't known. Well, let's talk about going to Mississippi. Some people were surprised that you would leave Berkeley.

08:00:09:22

**Jordan:**

I know, a lot of people were surprised. I was a little surprised myself. I went to visit for a semester.

08:00:09:32

**Lage:**

As a visiting professor.

08:00:09:33

**Jordan:**

As a visiting professor, and I thought that would be fun, so I went to visit.

08:00:09:38

**Lage:**

Had you ever spent a lot of time in the South?

08:00:09:40

**Jordan:**

I did—my first time in Mississippi was when I went to a symposium there in 1975. Their first symposium they held on slavery and I had written about slavery, most marginally of all who were there. But I ended up being invited, and I liked it then. Then when I visited I liked the history department. It was the strongest department in this tenth-rate university. I had long before then decided that I wasn't sure I wanted—even though I had turned down other offers and I liked

Berkeley very much, I sensed that it wasn't always going to remain as happy as it had been. That I think I did know. But I didn't want to spend my entire professional career at a single institution.

08:00:10:44

**Lage:**

So that had some merit.

08:00:10:44

**Jordan:**

It was my first full-time college job, as a university teacher.

08:00:10:50

**Lage:**

But you did have offers from, did you say, Hopkins?

08:00:10:54

**Jordan:**

Hopkins and Princeton. Princeton went through this elegant dance of saying, "If you were offered the job would you accept it?" [laughter]

08:00:11:06

**Lage:**

About when was that? Right after *White Over Black*?

08:00:11:09

**Jordan:**

Yes, it must have been around 1970.

08:00:11:11

**Lage:**

So you were deep in the throes of—

08:00:11:13

**Jordan:**

I went there twice, and at Hopkins I got to the point of looking at houses.

08:00:11:17

**Lage:**

And why did you say no to them?

08:00:11:20

**Jordan:**

Well, I liked Berkeley better. With Hopkins I did not like this ownership of graduate students, which I mentioned. Princeton had a lot of attractions, but it seemed rather more of the same. Ole Miss had a great advantage of being a very pronounced change, a very, very different kind of place.

08:00:11:45

**Lage:**

And you were ready to make another big change?

08:00:11:49

**Jordan:**

I thought, if I'm going to make a change, why go to a place that's rather like Berkeley? Why go to Hopkins, why go to Princeton? They're not the same place at all, but they're kind of like them. Why don't I go to a place that is really a crummy university? But with aspirations to something better, and particularly in the history department, with a highly collegial group in the history department, no matter how weak it was in scholarly terms. A graduate program I might be able to do something about, and it's now ten times what it was, and they have some students who belong in graduate school. Prior to my going there, it wasn't like that. It's easier to make a difference at a place like that than at a place like Berkeley where one person can't make that amount of change. Also, my research had turned directly to the history of slavery and I was working on a problem specific to Mississippi.

08:00:13:03

**Lage:**

Were you working on this—

08:00:13:04

**Jordan:**

That ended up as *Tumult and Silence* [*Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: an Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (1993)]—

08:00:13:06

**Lage:**

Were you already involved with that?

08:00:13:08

**Jordan:**

It took me twenty-five years to do that, and I'll never do local history again. I thought doing three counties over six months would be a shorter job than three centuries over three continents—one reviewer said that in a review of *Tumult and Silence*, “He's reduced his focus considerably, from three continents and three centuries to three counties over a half a year.” But there were so many dry holes. I dug and dug and dug and came up with nothing. There's always a detective quality to it that I got interested in. From a single document that an archivist showed me when I was doing research on general plantation documents—I saw this one document and it intrigued me. I Xeroxed it, I'd get it out about once a year and I'd look at it. I still couldn't make anything out of it and then finally—The book is as much about historical methodology which I have been teaching to graduate students at Mississippi ever since I went there, and I got kind of interested in. Not as theoretically as some people would, because I'm not very theoretically comfortable. Instead I proceed more anecdotally but also by asking students questions, which can be deceptively simple.

08:00:14:48

**Lage:**

And this book sort of lays bare the way you went about it?

08:00:14:52

**Jordan:**

Yes. It lays it all out all there. Virtually all the evidence I have is in the book, just in the appendix. I stuck it in there. It's about the nature of historical influence, given such and such a document, what can a historian say?

08:00:15:09

**Lage:**

And how much you have to know around your topic.

08:00:15:12

**Jordan:**

Around your topic.

08:00:15:17

**Lage:**

That's very interesting. Has it had good reviews?

08:00:15:22

**Jordan:**

Well, it won a couple of prizes. It got a hostile review in the *New York Times* but I'm not the first person—

08:00:15:30

**Lage:**

You and Bill Clinton. [laughter]

08:00:15:32

**Jordan:**

Who has written a prize-winning book that got trashed in the *New York Times*, as somebody pointed out. They claimed that the conspiracy never existed and that it never was a real conspiracy, that it was just white panic. I think that's a real possibility but I think it's about 90 percent—I would argue, once again, in terms of probabilities, that it's probably about 90 percent the case that it was initiated by the slaves. I think there's just too much detail about it, and the book gets down into the details of who said what about whom, identifying people that it would take me months to find out who the hell they were, and find out relationships. They were talking about a planter class that even by that time was intermarried, and still is. Natchez is famous in Mississippi as not really being part of Mississippi, it's a different culture. It's got by far the biggest collection of antebellum mansions in the entire South, because it surrendered to the Union gunboats without resistance—there was a lot of Unionist sentiment. It was one of the wealthiest counties, Natchez and its environs.

08:00:16:58

**Lage:**

There was Unionist sentiment?

08:00:16:59

**Jordan:**

There was Unionist sentiment there, and the city was populated by millionaires, who owned not just one plantation but several in the surrounding area, in Adams County. And plantations in other states, which quite surprised me. Tracking those down proved to be time-consuming. A lot

of research in there, but it doesn't look like so because a lot of research turned out to be fruitless. I never found answers. But I found a lot about a conspiracy that nobody knew beans about, all from one original, very puzzling, document. It's no wonder that nobody had ever made anything about it, because I couldn't make anything out of it. I kept my Xerox of it in the drawer for years. An archivist showed it to me when I was just there on a general research trip in 1970.

08:00:18:06

**Lage:**

Oh, that long ago.

08:00:18:07

**Jordan:**

It wasn't until I got to Mississippi and got pursuing it more and visited some people in Natchez, got talking with them, that I really got rolling on the project. Partly I did no research, and I fell behind in reading, and teaching and deaning and then a year withdrawal, I got behind doing that. Then behind doing textbooks. So I wasn't entirely idle, I wasn't lying on the beach, but it did take me twenty-five years between books, and that's too long. But I've never written books—I never expected to write a whole bunch. I didn't think I had it in me. Prizes are much harder to win now. It won another Bancroft, and that's either unprecedented or only happened once before.

08:00:19:19

**Lage:**

That one author would—

08:00:19:22

**Jordan:**

Right, would earn two Bancrofts. I get various answers from Columbia—they sponsor it. One person says I'm the only one, and one person says, "There's another one but I don't know who it is." [laughter]

08:00:19:37

**Lage:**

That's quite a compliment really. So did U Miss take a lot of time up in terms of teaching and working on the department matters?

08:00:19:52

**Jordan:**

Yes, a considerable amount. I no longer have the energy and stamina that I did when I was in my twenties and thirties, which is not a major revelation, I think. [laughter] I also do think that I read the newspaper, which I abandoned.

08:00:20:09

**Lage:**

You have a life, maybe.

08:00:20:12

**Jordan:**

One of the effects of not working at Harvard was that when I went to Brown, for the first time in my life except for the year at Andover I decided I wanted to go to England, the first time in my life I worked myself very hard.

08:00:20:29

**Lage:**

At Brown.

08:00:20:31

**Jordan:**

At Brown. And I was very successful, really surprisingly successful. Surprising to me, and I think maybe to other people. There is a tendency—write a very successful book, such as I had with my first book. A couple of people have pointed out to me that it doesn't seem like a first book. However, it was. I think I was a little staggered by the reception. That much praise is not good for people. Certainly it's not good for me. I don't need that. Well, there's something in me that likes it and there's something in me that dislikes liking it. [laughter]

08:00:21:33

**Lage:**

That's very candid of you, I would say. [laughter]

08:00:21:38

**Jordan:**

But I decided, if I'm going to make a career change, let's make a real change. And it sure is. It's a totally different—it is really a tenth-rate university and will never be a first-class university, but it's a lot better than it used to be. It was still struggling with the aftermath of the 1960s, when two people were killed in rioting. Berkeley riots weren't serious. When good old boys start coming from the countryside in their pickups with the gun racks, that's serious, and two people were killed on campus. Now one person was killed here on Telegraph Avenue—I don't think it was a student—by a sheriff shooting on the rooftop. So you could argue that this happened at Berkeley. Mississippi has a long history of racial violence. The fact of integrating one student, the first black student, into Ole Miss created two deaths right smack in the middle of campus, not being sure which way the state police were going to shoot. There were a lot of state police. The federal government ended up sending—the population of the university then was about 5,000 students, the population of the town of Oxford was about 5,000; the number of National Guard that was sent there was 30,000. Robert Kennedy was just persuaded that it was much safer to overwhelm.

08:00:23:24

**Lage:**

It's almost like sending troops to Iraq.

08:00:23:25

**Jordan:**

Rather than sending too few. Exactly.

08:00:23:28

**Lage:**

30,000.

08:00:23:30

**Jordan:**

Yes. They camped out near the airport. They couldn't fit on campus.

08:00:23:36

**Lage:**

This must have still been quite alive when you first went there.

08:00:23:40

**Jordan:**

When I first went there, there were people who were on the faculty then—former son of a Baptist Mississippi minister who was very much a Reconstruction guy, who was chairman of the English department—he had been there and been one of the few faculty members who had dared open his mouth in favor of Meredith's admission, for which he took a lot of flak.

08:00:24:08

**Lage:**

And what was the predominant feeling on the faculty by the time you got there?

08:00:24:15

**Jordan:**

It had started to Yankee-fy by the time I got there.

08:00:24:21

**Lage:**

You mean a lot of Northerners teaching?

08:00:24:23

**Jordan:**

When I got there most of the black students knew each other still. Now, there are so many, up around 12 percent, which is a good deal higher than Berkeley's numbers.

08:00:24:34

**Lage:**

Yes indeed.

08:00:24:35

**Jordan:**

And this is a critical point, although it's not usually talked about this way: the black students now no longer all know each other. Of course, by 1970, I know they all knew each other because there were only seventy of them in an institution that had then grown to about 9,000. Now the enrollment is growing, it's growing too fast, to 12,000. It's a small state university. It's a much smaller institution, a much smaller campus, than Berkeley.

08:00:25:11

**Lage:**

It's very athletically involved.

08:00:25:14

**Jordan:**

Football is much bigger time than it is at Cal. The alumni are good old boys, and wealthy planting daddies. Many of the kids belong to fraternities or sororities. The Greek system is very powerful. You walk or drive down sorority row—the ladies there, their daddies give them a car, it used to be on their fifteenth, now it's their sixteenth birthday. Sons of delta planters get their SUVs when they turn sixteen, they come to campus with them.

08:00:26:00

**Lage:**

It seems like it's a wealthy student body.

08:00:26:02

**Jordan:**

It's both wealthy and poor.

08:00:26:06

**Lage:**

What's it like to teach?

08:00:26:07

**Jordan:**

Because there are a lot of wealthy people in the poorest state in the country.

08:00:26:11

**Lage:**

Right, but they do go to the public university. They don't send them off to private institutions.

08:00:26:16

**Jordan:**

Right. A few that are talented go to college elsewhere, go to a good school. And there are other—the state has eight four-year institutions, only three of them PhD-granting. But still, that's too many—

08:00:26:39

**Lage:**

For that state.

08:00:26:39

**Jordan:**

That's partly a legacy of segregation. We're siphoning the best off from the black colleges, and they're starting to limp, and are still not well funded, the historically black institutions. Now there's a few whites attending the black colleges, and recently more blacks are attending the white universities. It's hurting the quality of the old black schools that were legally created for blacks only. A poor state with the same population as Iowa can't afford eight four-year institutions and three PhD-granting institutions.

08:00:27:35

**Lage:**

They need a master plan. [laughter]

08:00:27:37

**Jordan:**

Yes. Well, it's not about to come about. Mississippi politics is still heavily rural, and good-old-boy.

08:00:27:49

**Lage:**

How do the students react to what you're teaching? What do you teach there?

08:00:27:54

**Jordan:**

Well, I teach the same half of the African American history course, the same one I taught here. I've had enrollments running, usually 60-40 black majority. The white students are self-selected and they're the ones who don't need to take it. The ones who need to take it, the white students who need to take it, don't take it—they won't. The fraternity boys don't take it. The ones who don't need to take it, the white students, do take it; the others are interested black students, who received pretty bad educations from pretty weak schools, many of them.

08:00:28:41

**Lage:**

Do you have any different kinds of interchange with them than you would with California students?

08:00:28:47

**Jordan:**

Well, they are different. Many of them are born-again Christians, they know the Bible much better. They're much less well-educated. Some of them are just terribly badly prepared because they went to Mississippi public schools, all of which are bad. Some of which are better than others, but the best ones tend to be in university towns, by no accident. Oxford High School isn't bad. But where Mississippi State and the University of Southern Mississippi are, those are pretty decent schools. Oxford is overwhelmingly, as is the whole state, is overwhelmingly rural. There's only one real city and that's Jackson, and that's the size of Worcester, Massachusetts, or a little smaller. Then there largest tier of cities are cities of 50,000. Oxford now is about 12,000. It's the biggest town for an hour's drive.

08:00:29:51

**Lage:**

You're in a different place.

08:00:29:53

**Jordan:**

It's rural, it's small town, although it's growing. It's becoming a retirement community; it's got a built-in Faulkner cottage industry. There are a lot of writers, and a strong tradition of Mississippi fiction. That helps raise the tone of things. Alumni are—when they convert an old building built with federal funds back in the expansion of the fifties, the Sputnik generation of dormitories, they're now tacking on porticos with columns on them, and either use them still as dormitories or are turning them into some computer center, or something like that. But by adding a portico with columns on these what are generic dorms, they've made the campus "beautiful."

08:00:30:55

**Lage:**

That's so funny. Well, here you are, a real Yankee, down in the South.

08:00:30:58

**Jordan:**

Yes.

08:00:31:00

**Lage:**

And you've built your second life there.

08:00:31:01

**Jordan:**

By now, only the administration is heavily Southern, and heavily Mississippian, and it will remain so for the foreseeable future. The faculty is heavily Yankee-ified. I think easily a majority, 60-70 percent are. The history department, we have about two people who could be said to have been born in the South.

08:00:31:25

**Lage:**

So you weren't a controversial appointment—already that had been breached.

08:00:31:30

**Jordan:**

No, I was unusually expensive for them and unusually well-known. On the other hand, I'm paid much more than anybody else in the department. There's been no resentment about that, I think—I think my presence has actually benefited other faculty.

08:00:31:55

**Lage:**

Does it make it easier to hire a good faculty once you get—

08:00:31:58

**Jordan:**

I think so. The quality of the younger faculty has gone up dramatically. So it's now becoming—I say tenth-rate, it's no longer the same rate it was twenty years ago. It's better. It's improved noticeably. And history is probably the strongest department in the whole university.

08:00:32:27

**Lage:**

We shouldn't leave out your wife Cora.

08:00:32:31

**Jordan:**

I met her the day she graduated. She was going through a divorce with three children. I met her and her mother at the same time, the day she graduated from Ole Miss Law School, which at the time was the only law school in the state. She never took the Mississippi bar exam, and she's still an attorney. She's a licensed Mississippi member of the bar, because they didn't have a bar exam.

08:00:33:01

**Lage:**

You don't have to, you just go to—

08:00:33:01

**Jordan:**

You just went to Ole Miss. Down there, now there is a second law school, there is a bar exam. She hated the law in many ways, and its usages. She'd been brought up as a Southern belle, in

one of these 50,000 person towns, Meridian. She got involved when she was in college in civil rights, did things she wasn't supposed to do—she met Medgar Evers when he was alive, and just generally made trouble, at a time when it was dangerous. There were threats that her mother was going to be fired from her teaching job, school teaching job, and threats about pictures being taken through the window, and blackmail. It was a very tense time, the early sixties, when she was in college. I'm nearly ten years older than she is. She had not been diagnosed, but when we married we knew, we were quite certain that she had MS. She has the remitting, relapsing, kind, not the steady decline kind. She has been in a wheelchair some, but for the most part she's on her feet. She still has MS.

08:00:34:41

**Lage:**

And has had for some time.

08:00:34:43

**Jordan:**

Yes. Once you get it, there's a lifetime of it. But, she's not confined to a wheelchair, or to her bed, as happens with some kinds of MS. There are various kinds. So she has become an author. As a result of my visiting out here in '89, here in Berkeley, she got a job. She felt so much better, the climate made her feel much better, she felt well enough to go down and talk her way in. She was overqualified for it, answering the phones at Nolo Press, which is a legal self-help publisher.

08:00:35:26

**Lage:**

Right.

08:00:35:27

**Jordan:**

She's now a Nolo author and writes from Mississippi. She's done two books, both very successful. One is on neighbor law, and her ambition, her orientation is to keep people out of court, and use mediation if necessary, and get along with each other. Then, she's done one on planning your own estate, which she is less interested in, but there is an increasing number of billionaires—and this aims at people who only have \$1 million, rather than \$5 million—it's an interesting matter, keeping up with the changes in the law. She's very, very good at it. But she practiced for a while, for a few months after law school, as a prosecuting attorney for the welfare department. But the MS prevented practice. She can work at home, when she's got sufficient energy. We're hoping for a cool day, cool enough so she can go down to Nolo, and I'll drive her down to Nolo Press, which is nearly in Emeryville, and see some old buddies, some old Nolooids down there. [laughter]

08:00:37:04

**Lage:**

Nolooids, that's good. [laughter]

08:00:37:06

**Jordan:**

That's what they call each other.

08:00:37:08

**Lage:**

I'm going to ask you one more question, since you mentioned religion, born-again Christians. You said you came back to your early orientation as a Quaker.

08:00:37:22

**Jordan:**

Yes, and Cora, who grew up as a Methodist, has joined me in this. We, together with a couple of other people who were Quakers elsewhere, decided to start a little worship group, and it's grown. It started out with sometimes being only three people. Then it grew to be five or six, then eight or ten. Then we finally became under the care of another established meeting, we became a full-sized member of the Friends General Conference. We're the kind of Quakers that have no ministers, and so there's no real hierarchy, but there is an organizational pattern. There are yearly meetings governing various regions. There's so many meetings in Pennsylvania, there's just the Philadelphia, and then there's a New England yearly meeting, and there's one for the east coast and the South. But for a quarter century, Mississippi had been the only state in the union, and had been for a quarter century, that had no Quaker meeting in it. Ours is the first one. We're now a full-fledged Quaker meeting.

08:00:39:02

**Lage:**

And what pushed you to start this?

08:00:39:06

**Jordan:**

Well, neither one of us is a fundamentalist, and Baptists are very dominant. You could go to a Presbyterian, or the Anglican church.

08:00:39:21

**Lage:**

Are there Unitarians there?

08:00:39:23

**Jordan:**

There's a small university group and they've just bought a building of their own, a UU, Unitarian Universalist group. There aren't enough Jews to have a house, or a rabbi, they have a former cantor who leads a small group of Jews. That tells you how many Jews there are at the university. The Quakers were heavily university, too heavily university, but we have a wide age span, we have kids and we have first-day school for them, Sunday school. We're meeting currently at our house because we live in the biggest house. The meetings in summer tend to be small, but in the winter a meeting for worship every week is anywhere from eighteen to thirty people. It's an adequately-sized, substantial, but not very large Quaker meeting. Unprogrammed services vary. Some are rather talky, and none of them are totally silent. Rising to speak is permitted in all, but some get rather talky.

08:00:40:56

**Lage:**

You mean some—

08:00:41:00

**Jordan:**

Some individuals stand up and go on too long. Ours tend to be on the quiet side with very little of that. We'll have many meetings where nobody speaks at all, and just an hour of silence. It looks as if nothing happens. There is no liturgy, there's no minister, there are no intermediaries, we have no ecclesiastical authority to report to.

08:00:41:3008:00:41:30

**Lage:**

Do you read the Bible?

08:00:41:33

**Jordan:**

Many do but some do not. It's not required. There are Bibles lying around in the room.

08:00:41:41

**Lage:**

Why does it appeal?

08:00:41:43

**Jordan:**

It's plainness—it's very, very direct. Also, everyone is interested in what they do outside the meeting for other people.

08:00:42:00

**Lage:**

That's part of the approach.

08:00:42:03

**Jordan:**

That's assumed, that's part of the approach. Two of them are—one couple is very active—actually he gets some of his income working for the UN—international slave trafficking, which is still going on. A lot of it's sex trade, but not entirely. There's still slavery in weird places, and occasionally in Western Europe and the United States. When you get Chinese textile workers housed up in a place they can't leave.

08:00:42:46

**Lage:**

You hear reports of it.

08:00:42:46

**Jordan:**

That's his definition of slavery. If force is involved, and people are not able to leave, what else is it? We can presume they're not being over-paid under such circumstances, when the doors are locked. So it's not dead, slavery, though people think it doesn't exist anywhere. It's open quite frankly in some African countries. It's pretty open in India. It's theoretically gone in China, but it's closer to gone in China than it is in India, where some of it is pretty blatant. They are very active in the international modern anti-slavery. He has a PhD, so he's going to be teaching a course as a visitor this fall—it will be very interesting—in modern slavery. Since the abolition of old slavery in the new world and in Brazil in 1888, taking that as his starting point, what's happening with world slavery, throughout the world.

08:00:44:00

**Lage:**

And he's teaching it in the history department?

08:00:44:02

**Jordan:**

He's visited some of these countries and he's had the guts or lack of caution to take pictures.

08:00:44:16

**Lage:**

That can be dangerous.

08:00:44:16

**Jordan:**

In Mauritania, where sub-Saharan Africans are enslaved on a regular basis by Islamic Arabs—same thing that has happened in the Sudan conflict, essentially. Slavery is partly involved there.

08:00:44:45

**Lage:**

Well I think that I've run out of questions. Is there anything that you wish we had touched upon?

08:00:44:52

**Jordan:**

I don't think so. I think that pretty well covers things. We covered a little about Ole Miss. Exactly why I went, it boils down more to seeing this opportunity for a major change in my life, sensing that I didn't leave Berkeley because I was unhappy here. I did think that the next twenty years aren't going to be as exhilarating as your first twenty have been.

08:00:45:28

**Lage:**

In a way it's a hard act to follow, those first twenty years.

08:00:45:31

**Jordan:**

Yes. And so I sensed that things were changing. I've been told, especially by Paula Fass, that things have changed. She said, "How did you know this was going to happen?" [laughter] She's asked me that directly. I said, "I didn't know, I just felt that something wasn't going to be as good as it was." She said, "Well, it's happened."

08:00:46:06

**Lage:**

So you look back on it as a golden age, as does Gene Brucker.

08:00:46:10

**Jordan:**

In a way I do.

08:00:46:14

**Lage:**

Well, that's a good way to end.

08:00:46:15

**Jordan:**

Okay, fine.

[End of Interview]