Rick Wright Interview

May 15, 2014

Rick Sinding: Hello, I’m Rick Sinding. It’s Thursday, May 15, 2014, here at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. With me today is Rick Wright, who, among many other experiences that he’s had in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, was first Associate State Treasurer and later Chief of Staff in the administration of Governor Jim Florio. Rick, welcome.

Rick Wright: Nice to be here, Rick.

Rick Sinding: Let me begin by introducing you by your full name which is Richard LaFollette Wright. Now, anybody who’s watching this or reading the transcript is going to immediately have the question, if they know anything about American political life, where does that middle name come from?

Rick Wright: That was my mother’s maiden name. She came from a political family that served in several different states-- members of the family. The most famous of that family is Robert La Follette, who was a Senator in Wisconsin, back in the-- well, first governor, then Senator of Wisconsin about hundred years ago. But other members of the family served elsewhere. And my mom’s grandfather, who was Robert La Follette’s cousin, had moved to Washington State and was the Congressman from there. And when Bob La Follette and my great grandfather were living in Washington serving together, they all shared the same house. And when I grew up, my first trip to the east-- I grew up in the west -- I had visited my aunt Suzanne La Follette in New York, who took me to her brother's apartment-- Chester La Follette, he was an artist. And it happened to be 1959, the year that five great Senators’ portraits were hung just outside the Senate. And Suzanne took me to Washington, D.C. to see Chester’s picture-- portrait of his cousin Bob. And so from a young age I was seeing all this stuff and riding around with Suzanne, who was one of the great writers of her generation, living in the Chelsea Hotel for all those years. But that’s it. I come from a very political family. They’re very outspoken. We represented many different spectrums of politics...

Rick Sinding: But it’s safe to say that you come from a progressive background.

Rick Wright: I do. I do - at least a background that wants to question everything and try to find the right answer, not necessarily for oneself but the right answer for everyone.

Rick Sinding: You mentioned that you grew up in the west, California to be precise, but you did come east for your education. Let’s talk about that.

Rick Wright: I did. I grew up right near the Stanford campus. Both my parents had gone to Stanford. And when I was looking at colleges, I came back and actually stayed with the aforementioned Suzanne La Follette and she brought me to Princeton and a couple of other places. And that day in May in 1959 in Princeton, it was what we call a California day. It was a beautiful day.

Rick Sinding: Yes, we used to have those in Princeton <laughs>.
*Rick Wright*: I came home thinking, “God that’s just the most beautiful place I’ve ever seen.” And when I was lucky enough to be accepted, I decided to come to Princeton ... instead of going to Stanford or Berkeley or something like that. And that’s why. It was a nice day in Princeton in May.

*Rick Sinding*: Had nothing to do with basketball?

*Rick Wright*: No, it didn’t. I actually had been recruited by a lot of colleges in basketball. … I got an academic scholarship to Princeton and I didn’t want to have to play if I didn’t want to. I wasn’t sure I wanted to play. And in fact, I don’t think the coach knew I was coming. But I ended up leading the freshman team in scoring. And then, of course, the next year Bill Bradley showed up and I found myself on much greater teams than I would’ve been on had I gone to one of these places I’d been recruited to.

*Rick Sinding*: And I guess whatever scoring title you had had as a freshman was broken by Bill Bradley.

*Rick Wright*: In fact, you know, it’s interesting because I actually didn’t break the record.I led that year and I was close to the record... But by the time I was a sophomore playing on the varsity team-- the way it worked at Dillon Gym in those days, the freshmen played first. Dillon Gym would be packed for the Bradley freshman team and then people would start to leave as the varsity would come on.

*Rick Sinding*: I could just tell you as I saw it a few years later, being a member of the class of 1967 at Rutgers, the same thing happened when Bob Lloyd came to Rutgers.

*Rick Wright*: Yes. <laughs>.

*Rick Sinding*: The freshman games were packed and then everybody left when the varsity came on.

*Rick Wright*: You know my favorite story about Butch van Breda Kolff is in my so junior year -- Bill’s first year as a sophomore, I made a pretty good move, I thought, and made a bucket, and he called a timeout and said, ”If you can get open like that again, please make sure that Bill’s not open before you take that shot.” So, I learned to be a passer pretty quickly. Bill was just a great shooter.

*Rick Sinding*: Now you and he became pretty close during the time you were at Princeton.

*Rick Wright*: We did. We became teammates who rode the busses and suffered through losses together...

*Rick Sinding*: Not too many, as I recall.

*Rick Wright*: Not too many but we became good friends, yes.

*Rick Sinding*: But you did leave Princeton and went to law school back on the west coast.

*Rick Wright*: I did. I actually spent a year in between studying languages in Munich. I lived in Munich for a year and then went back to Berkeley, very close to my home, for law school. Graduated in 1968 and that was, of course, during the time of great turmoil in
Berkeley. There was the Free Speech Movement with Mario Savio and the Black Panthers were next door in Oakland. When I think of my law school days, it feels as though we spent as much time in the various protests as in class—and the Viet Nam war was going on. The ships were leaving from the harbor there. Half my friends were in the Marines going over and the other half were protesting. It was quite a time.

Rick Sinding: What was your intention when you went to law school? Did you intend to practice law? What were you mapping out for your future?

Rick Wright: I had no idea. I was studying languages, and I thought I was going to be going to the diplomatic corps. And someone talked me into taking the law boards in Munich. And I went to an army base there and I did well on the law boards and I decided to go to law school—because I still hadn’t decided whether I wanted to be a diplomat or not.

Rick Sinding: What happened on your way to becoming a diplomat?

Rick Wright: I think that the politics of the time got me much more interested in what was going on in this country. I became very involved as a volunteer in Bobby Kennedy’s campaign in 1968. And it had a very great effect on me, his death and what happened afterwards that we’re all very familiar with. And I became much more interested in seeing whether I could do something here, rather than overseas.

Rick Sinding: So what did you do on graduation from law school?

Rick Wright: ... After the Kennedy death and the election of that year, I was really discouraged. I was really discouraged and I took a guitar and a backpack and basically travelled the world for a year, living wherever I could. I came back to New York City and then began working in campaigns. I hooked up with—there was as Lawyers Against the War group that had been formed just as I arrived in New York from Africa. They’d raised a lot of money by virtue of the fact that they’d all—this is after the Cambodian bombings. There was a huge backlash amongst the establishment in New York. They had hired a train to go to D.C. to protest. These were the people who were—had supported Nixon before, who were now very much against what he and Kissinger were doing. And the guy who was in charge of chartering the train got a price, thought it was one way, and doubled the price. Everyone paid up, and they finished the trip with a lot of money in the bank. They decided to put together a group to try to lobby for candidates who were going to stand up against the war—both sides, both Democrats and Republicans. I happened to arrive in New York a week before all this happened and got called into a meeting. I remember it was in a law firm down on Wall Street with a few of these really senior lawyers—Roswell Gilpatrick, TP Plimpton -- George’s father who was a lawyer---and Beth Webster. What I most remember about the meeting is I didn’t have any shirts to wear. I had no shirts at all because I’d been traveling. The only shirt I had that looked like a button down, I’d cut the sleeves off. And so I had to borrow a coat from someone. I go down there and it was really a hot summer day, and they all take their coats off and they say, ”Why don’t you take your coat off?” And I couldn’t take my coat off.

But anyway, I got hired for that and that got me involved in raising money for anti-war candidates. And it was interesting in those days because there were lot of Republicans as well, Pete McCloskey from California and-- but I started traveling around and raising a little bit of money. And we got involved in a lot of campaigns -- we helped fund Joe Biden’s first campaign, when I look back on-- a guy named Abourezk from South Dakota. But I got going on that a little bit and then I joined something called NCEC. That’s the National
Committee for an Effective Congress, -- as a fundraiser.I learned a little bit about fundraising, got married and moved to Washington.

**Rick Sinding:** As a full-time employee of NCEC?

**Rick Wright:** Of NCEC and then, as I was doing that, I was getting to know a lot of people around the country. I got a call from---- I think it was from Rose Styron and Sally Lilienthal who were very involved in Amnesty International. I had met them during some of these processes, and they wanted to set up a Washington Office for Amnesty International. And I had dinner with them and decided to do that, and so I became the first director of Amnesty International in Washington.

I journeyed to London, learned about the institution and saw what they wanted to do. Basically, they wanted to get an Assistant Secretary placed in the State Department who would then fight for human rights. They knew there was never a forum for that before --- so I did that. I was running Amnesty International and actually helping the Carter campaign only in the human rights area. There was a lot of stuff going on in Chile, which was pretty, pretty bad. There was a-- I don't know if you remember; there was a diplomat killed when his car blew up in Washington, D.C. It was pretty hairy. It was quite an interesting job.

I got a strange call from a friend of mine who I’d met in the southern Sahara. He said, “Look, I want to come meet with you in the morning.” Now he was, in those days, working for the Defense Department but he’d been at CIA before. He came over to my office and said, “I want you to go to work with us down in the White House.” I said, “What are you talking about?” What was unknown to me was that Carter had recruited Jim Schlesinger, who was a conservative Republican, to be his Energy Czar. My friend from the southern Sahara was one of Schlesinger’s top aides-- had been, before. And he knew that from my Amnesty work, that I knew many of the Democratic chairs and all the committees, and they didn’t know any of them. And so it was really as simple as that, the reason I was asked to do that. And so I found myself joining the White House Energy Task Force.

**Rick Sinding:** So that was your introduction to energy which has, as I understand it, become a major part of your activities over the next 25/30/40 years.

**Rick Wright:** That was a real concern of mine going in. It was a real concern. And someone said to me, which I believe is absolutely true is, “Look, as long as you know the verbs, the nouns are pretty easy to remember.”

**Rick Sinding:** <laughs>

**Rick Wright:** And it was true because we had enormous expertise … and the trick was to figure out how to get through the various committees and get legislation passed and all. And that was virtually my role. For the first few years, I was in charge of the Senate and then when they changed some people in the administration, I moved up to become the Director of Congressional Affairs. And then when Schlesinger was removed...

**Rick Sinding:** This was in the Department of Energy?

**Rick Wright:** I’m in the Department of Energy now. The first thing we did was we formed the Department of Energy.
Rick Sinding: Right, because originally it was a task force of the White House, wasn’t it?

Rick Wright: It was a White House task force and it was making something out of, I think there were seven or eight different agencies where energy components were. It was bringing them all together, trying to figure out how to put all these cultures together. I mean, the difference between making weapons, for example, which is in the Department of Energy and addressing various environmental issues to whatever. It was quite an interesting group of people. Very smart, very dedicated in all areas, each with their own constituencies, bringing them together as a department. And Carter was 100 percent behind it and Schlesinger was fabulous at doing it. I mean, he was such a force. He was a real intellectual force.

Rick Sinding: Am I making this up or did Jimmy Carter put on a sweater and sit in the White House and do an appeal to Americans to turn down their thermostats?

Rick Wright: He did. He did and I look back on a lot of the stuff that we did during those days and realize, if you look back through the energy act—and even the one we passed, that we had to negotiate—the one that we actually wrote, it’s there. They’re still discovering a lot of the stuff today that we said should be done. And I feel if Carter had been reelected, and managed to get a lot of that stuff going, it would be a very different economy right now. So we put solar panels up on the White House. And I don’t know whether you know what happened, but as soon as Reagan came in, they took them down and the panels ended up in some college in New England and they’re now back at the Smithsonian. But—and as you know, solar is becoming a larger and larger force—but all the numbers were there then. And everyone understood just from an abstract point of view even what—I didn’t understand, as a young person, I didn’t understand the power of the vested interest and the money that was already sunk in and whether it was good or bad for society in general. It was a difficult fight. Schlesinger was removed during that difficult period when Carter went to Camp David. And we were all on our way out with Schlesinger. They asked me, because I was doing the legislation, if I would stay on for a while. The new secretary was a man by the name of Charles Duncan who’d been the Deputy Defense Secretary. He’d run Coca-Cola before that. He’d been an executive—run a big company. And for me, it was very interesting because he was a very different kind of manager. Schlesinger knew Washington very well and knew how to use pressure points. But Duncan was just a great, great manager, and I learned a lot from both those men. But particularly from Duncan how to look out and see what the effect of different things were going to be. And we passed a lot of major legislation during that period.

Rick Sinding: So you stayed on during the Carter administration?

Rick Wright: I did and it’s kind of an interesting story because the main aide that Duncan brought over from Defense was the unknown Colin Powell. And they were going to bring someone over from Defense to take my place—the Defense/Congressional Relations was pretty much cookie cutter. You would go to a couple of committees and you’d just do it and it was—and they started to realize that what we were doing—we had all these different committees. There were probably 20 committees and subcommittees in both houses, plus the various constituencies were there, oil, coal, nuclear, natural gas. And each one of those has their own constituencies plus the weapons people, plus the environmental people. It was a really complicated—for whatever reason they decided not to switch. And I can still remember Powell coming into my office and saying, “Will you stay on?” And I had just had my second baby at that point and was hoping to get a salary beyond two weeks.
Rick Sinding: <laughs>

Rick Wright: I was happy, but I was very lucky because I got to experience two different secretaries and learned a lot. And I think we passed a lot of great legislation.

Rick Sinding: Now in the meantime, back in New Jersey, your old college teammate has decided to run for the United States Senate.

Rick Wright: He did and that was interesting for me because in those days, when I was-- I lived right on Capitol Hill and Bill would come down to Washington. He used to travel with a woman by the name of Susan Thomases who was helping him in those days. And Susan would stay in some friend’s house in Capitol Hill and Bill would sleep on my couch. And then they would go off and do whatever they were doing, during the day. Gave a fundraiser for him there that Larry Lucchino, who was another one of our teammates, who’s now running the Boston Red Sox...

Rick Sinding: General Manager of the Red Sox.

Rick Wright: Right. He and I gave it together and we raised-- I think the total-- I can’t remember but it was definitely less than $3,000 total.

Rick Sinding: <laughs>

Rick Wright: And-- but we thought it was a great success. And I knew nothing at all about New Jersey politics and we were just trying to help Bill out at that point.

Rick Sinding: All right. The Carter administration ends, 1981. What did you do for the ‘80s?

Rick Wright: Yes, well, I should say before I finish with Bill, you know, when he got elected, it was interesting because he went on to the Energy Committee. So he became one of my constituents, in a way.

Rick Sinding: <laughs>

Rick Wright: And I got to know his staff very, very well which I, years later, got to appreciate more and more because he recruited such an unbelievable staff of people. I don’t want to just name names because there were so many of them but he had a great staff. And he had a wonderful mentor in the energy area, Scoop Jackson [Senator from Washington State], who was the chairman of the committee in those days, and I did a lot of my work with him. So we ended up doing a lot of work together. And ...- it was kind of fun.

Rick Sinding: And you obviously stayed in touch through the ‘80s.

Rick Wright: And in the ‘80s what happened is I had learned about photovoltaics when I was working at the Department of Energy and became convinced, just on the economics and the science, that eventually this idea of digging up old dinosaur bones and, you know, putting it through a process of everything was kind of crazy when you could just move molecules and atoms around and get energy. And began talking to some of the-- lot of the scientists about it and real cost-- going to real cost not just the way they kind of put things together on spreadsheets and all. And I decided to take a real chance with a small
photovoltaic company that was basically a spinoff from RCA up in New Jersey. And most of my friends in Washington thought I was absolutely crazy but I came up and joined a company where I think I was the only person who spoke English as a first language. There were all these really smart physicists and chemists who were figuring out how to-- make more of a Silicon, produce enough energy that you could basically take sand, make energy out of it with light and run things. And nothing toxic. It was-- and it was a period that-- the initial period was of great rejection because I used to walk around Wall Street with a little tube of amorphous silicon. You’d just get tossed out of offices on a <laughs> regular basis.

But eventually the company became successful and I worked for that company for a number of years. And it’s really gratifying for me now to see all that’s going on because-- and the fact it’s kind of being embraced by the society in general because the numbers have always been there. It’s just been the various pressures that have kept it from being there. And they’re still-- the fights are still going on and the vested interests are going to continue to try to extract whatever they can get before-- but I think that these thing that we were working on all those years ago are becoming much more mainstream now.

So when that ended, I actually did something that really affected me a lot. I took a year off with my wife, to renovate a house. And while I was doing this, this was in 1989, I wasn’t doing anything politically here in New Jersey at all-- even though Florio was running. I had kept a little bit in touch because of Doug Berman who I had met during the early Bradley years. And then when Doug had run Bill’s 1984 campaign, I had volunteered to do the Get Out the Vote. I was always interested in Get Out the Vote, sort of that level of campaign, just helping to organize that.

Rick Sinding: Had you had any interactions with Florio when he was in Congress?

Rick Wright: Not really. Little bit... I would give a talk or something or he would. We’d just say hello. But it wasn’t-- he was-- it was really not Florio that brought me to Trenton. It was Doug Berman. And the reason I was going to talk a little bit about the year I took off is I used to pick my kids up at school every day and there was one other man there. And we got to be friends. We would be sitting around talking before school would let out. And neither one of us talked about what we did. He said, “I-- doing something in Trenton” and I said I was renovating a house and that was about it. We were talking about kids issues. ... I’d talked to Doug during the campaign some, had thought he was-- came to admire his talents and all and we developed a friendship during that period. But I was really surprised to get a call from him when Florio got elected saying, “Could you come down? I’ve got something I want to talk to you about down here.”

And I arrived down in Trenton and he starts talking about this insurance reform that Florio had run on and they needed someone just to sort of...

Rick Sinding: It was part of auto insurance.

Rick Wright: Auto insurance, exactly. And they needed someone to help clean it up and I said, “Sure, you know, I’d be happy to take a look at that and work on it.” And as I was sitting there, in this transition office, the door opens and my friend from Princeton who I’d pick the kids up with walks in. It was Nate Scovronik.

Rick Sinding: <laughs>
Rick Wright: And we started laughing out loud. So Doug has brought these two guys who were sitting outside of a grammar school together down, and he has this plan that goes beyond me just working on auto insurance for a short period of time, which I was willing to do—of dividing up the Treasury into two parts. And having Nate, who had done all this work for years in Trenton and knew Trenton inside out from a legislative point of view, do the taxation and the budget side. And I would manage all of the other things, whether, you know, GSA or leasing or the lottery or the pensions or the investments or whatever they were. This sort of outreach part. Because, unbeknownst to me, I had not, at that point, read the New Jersey Constitution— I went back and read the Constitution and realized how I might really be of help beyond just a short-term consultant to do this. I had no intention of doing it until Doug presented the idea. And I knew Nate well and thought it would be an interesting team.

And so I find myself, probably eight weeks after the first call from Doug, in the Treasury of the state of New Jersey and thinking it's one of the greatest experiences I ever had. Actually, it's a great organization. It's a wonderful way to have organized the state and I think that Florio really understood how it worked and I was the benefit of his understanding about how that worked. And to also have Doug, you know, allowing the opportunity to take place because he was very involved always in the political side of things and I wasn't involved at all in the political side of things. I was involved in the managing of the department.

And what happened shortly thereafter was—it was sort of organic but it led to me thinking that Florio was one of the great managers I've ever worked with. And, you know, keep in mind I'd been with some companies on the outside as well as watching people like Schlesinger and Carter and, particularly Charles Duncan, run things. And they were having some problems down in Camden with an aquarium project that Governor Kean had started. And Doug asked me to go meet with him and Florio and they decided they were going to put me in charge of working with that program. Which I did, and it really— it led to a whole series of things.

But I should back up just a bit, say that they— to me, the most important decision we made early on, that Doug and Nate and I made that Florio blessed, was keeping on the core of the Assistant Secretaries that had been hired by Feather O'Connor, the State Treasurer under Tom Kean. Governor Kean had hired people like Caren Franzini and Laura Sanders and Ron Maxson. Not only—we decided to keep them on for continuity to try to figure out various budget issues but also just for their experience. And just to focus on those three for a moment, you know, Caren when on to-- we moved her over to the EDA. She went from...

Rick Sinding: She ran the EDA for 30 years.

Rick Wright: Yes.

Rick Sinding: Twenty years, at least.

Rick Wright: Right and Laura is now a— is the chief administrative judge for the state. And Ron, you know, joined me later on the Bradley campaign. He’d been at Otis, at the computer thing. And in fact, ... the whole internet raising came through what we did at the Bradley campaign later. And Ron <laughs> it's jumping way ahead [to Bradley's 2000 Presidential campaign], but all of a sudden -- we were getting $10,000 a day. “What's this?” People think it was the Dean. It wasn’t at all. (During that campaign), as you know, we ended up out-raising Gore.
But anyway, back to—we kept a lot of people intact—including Dick Leone at the Port Authority, who Tom Kean had also appointed. And there was enormous pressure from the political people to replace all these people. And I think a really wise thing that Florio allowed to have happen was to have that continuity and his whole thing was, “Are these people good? Do they know what they’re doing?” And that was always his position on things. And when they— he sent me down to Camden—the first meeting I had down there with Len Lieberman, who I had never met, who was also a Tom Kean appointee, led me into a kind of a development mode that hadn’t been part of the original agreement I had entered into to manage these parts of the department. And it was a very complicated contract between the State of New Jersey, the Philadelphia Zoo—there were huge financing issues.

We decided right away to keep Lew Thurston, who’d been Kean’s representative down there, on our staff to keep working on it. And I began working very closely with Len Lieberman, who was the chairman. He’d been made the chairman of that effort by Governor Kean.

**Rick Sinding:** Was he chairman of the Economic Development Authority?

**Rick Wright:** He was the chairman of the Camden aquarium project.

**Rick Sinding:** Ah, I see.

**Rick Wright:** And of the aquarium itself. And that’s what led to me beginning to poke around in Camden and learn a little bit about it. And as we began realizing that, not only was the aquarium going up in the middle of it, just an absolutely desolate area but the remaining company there—two companies—were General Electric and Campbell Soup were on the verge of pulling out completely. And I found myself, almost immediately, meeting with the heads of those companies, trying to figure out ways to keep their presence in Camden because Camden had lost, almost entirely, its tax base. It’s just that you couldn’t pay for police. You couldn’t pay for fire. You couldn’t pay anything. It was just—there was just no revenue coming in. And I began looking around for other places to get revenue. And places that we could sort of coalesce around. And I met Joe Balzano over at the Camden Port, who’d been there forever, and Tom Corcoran at Coopers Ferry, a non-profit, who were both trying to do things. In Joe’s case, he was being advised by Cliff Goldman, who’d been the State Treasurer under Brendan Byrne before. And we began figuring out ways to get money from these organizations to the city. And then we also were able to get Peter Burke down to the DRPA, to...

**Rick Sinding:** That’s the Delaware River Port Authority.

**Rick Wright:** Which is the equivalent of the Port Authority here in New York. Down there and there’s a charter to do— with a— by state— and there’s a charter to do good things on both sides of the river. And everyone has to vote on it, et cetera, et cetera. Anyway, without getting in too deep into the weeds, is that I began recruiting people to a staff that had nothing to do with Treasury. We were still doing all the Treasury stuff. But some came from Treasury and others came from other places. And I found myself <laughs> recruiting people—I won’t name who they are. But in retrospect, I’d hear other cabinet members complaining about so-and-so being too pushy or too that. Those were the people I wanted. And I would say, “Well, you—I’ll take him off your hand or I’ll take her off your hands.” So we put together a group who were willing to go into really tough areas and try to negotiate things. .. Camden became a whole thing in itself. We did a number of different projects there but we were in cities all over the state and...
Rick Sinding: I was going to say, economic development, now, really became your portfolio.

Rick Wright: Yes, and we moved Caren over to EDA. So she left my staff at Treasury and moved over there. And we-- Dick was up at the-- up in New York. Peter and Paul Drayton were iat DRPA-- we various places that we could find money for doing things. We had all the-- within Treasury, building and construction, leasing, things like that that I was able to use a bunch of those people and also people understood how those financings worked to put things together. And in essence we became a little investment bank. No one knew anything about it. It wasn’t official. But before long, teams-- and I tried to put a Democrat and Republican together in each situation-- would head out and-- into these areas and we’d start negotiating buildings, ideas, whatever all over the state.

Rick Sinding: This is all happening at a time when-- for most people thinking back on the Florio administration and thinking of Treasury, what comes to mind is income tax increase, sales tax increase, backlash, recession, dreadful times for Treasury, for the Governor. And yet you’re now painting a picture of a whole series of activities that are taking place within the Treasury Department that most people don’t relate with the Florio administration.

Rick Wright: It used to drive me nuts. We would show up at construction sites that we had created out of a lot of effort. And when we’d finally get going, we’d bring Governor Florio and then-- he’d be booed by the people who were actually on the job. And the two who took the brunt of those bad times-- the reason for those bad times was the state of the economy and the state of New Jersey’s budget at the time we came in. And it was what we inherited. And the people who took the brunt of it were Doug and Nate because that’s what they were doing.

In the meantime, I was off trying to jumpstart stuff that was going to help us later on. But those two were on the firing line for the headlines in that period of time.

Rick Sinding: Give us some other examples, besides Camden, of other projects that you were involved in.

Rick Wright: Well here in- here at Rutgers, or in New Brunswick generally, the buildings around the- where all the downtown stuff is, we did those financings. What most people remember is all the financing we did on the Rutgers campus for the stadiums and all, to the stadium. We did four different venues at once. And the way we did those was we worked through the Sports Authority, which had bonding ability-- you know? And again, Cliff Goldman comes back into the picture because he was also advising Bob Mulcahy up at the Sports Authority. So Cliff and I worked an awful lot. And I would really be remiss not to say Dee Solan’s name because she had been Cliff’s secretary when he was Treasurer and he had recommended her to me. She was unbelievable at helping me navigate people and all. But the way we did that-- we did that financing with the Sports Authority, off in Atlantic City, all the- the Convention Center and everything which is there--

Rick Sinding: Let’s talk a little about that Atlantic City Convention Center because that was a major, major redevelopment effort.

Rick Wright: It was huge, it was really huge; although not any bigger in my mind than some of the stuff we did on the Camden Waterfront, which people just think was always there. But what went on there is that Bill Gormley, who was the elected official down in those days, was--
**Rick Sinding:** A Republican State Senator.

**Rick Wright:** Yes but he was very good, working in a bipartisan way.

**Rick Sinding:** Also you'll be quick to remember, the only Republican who voted against the repeal of the Assault Weapons Ban, which made him an enemy of many of the Republicans in that area.

**Rick Wright:** Right.

**Rick Sinding:** But something of a friend to the Florio Administration.

**Rick Wright:** And he was a real friend to the people he represented, and realized that we really wanted to do something. He'd seen what we were doing in other places. It was extremely complicated from a legal point of view, transportation point of view. Tom Downs, who was at that point in charge of transportation for the State, was extremely helpful. He had been very- he was very knowledgeable. Like me he’d had federal experience before and had had different kinds of experience.

**Rick Sinding:** And after; if I recall he had an Amtrak effort.

**Rick Wright:** Afterwards he was the head of Amtrak, yes. He’s very talented. He actually started with Bill Clinton down in Arkansas as a young guy. He has many, many-- he had a very interesting profile, Tom does. But the-- he was extremely helpful. We had to move rail lines, we had to do stations. There were all sorts of local issues that we had to deal with. Jim Whelan was extremely--

**Rick Sinding:** He was the mayor at the time.

**Rick Wright:** He was the mayor at the time; was extremely happy. I remember walking into those- some of those offices in some of these places and you’d see the pictures around the wall; and the first thing they’d tell you is how many people had gone to jail for this.

**Rick Sinding:** Well actually that’s something that Atlantic City and Camden have in common.

**Rick Wright:** Yes.

**Rick Sinding:** I guess.

**Rick Wright:** You should know that on my team I always had- on that point, I always had two members of the Attorney General’s office; in this case Betty Renard and Chris Steinberg were with me at every meeting I ever went to. And I always had an open door policy; and liked to get my legal advice while things were happening. And they were an intimate part of everything that we did from beginning to end. And I think it’s not a bad way to go actually, to try to figure out what you can and can’t do as you’re doing it. And then of course people like Cliff were just invaluable beyond belief because he’d been through so many of these kind of financings before. And I still think they should be naming the Rutgers soccer stadium the Goldman Stadium, rather than whatever they named it. It was-- no one would know- until this, no one knows what he did. But it was-- I remember the day he came into my office and he said- he said, “We can do this.” The football stadium was the main thing;
but there was some other stuff as well. “And if we can get some matching money we can also do the soccer thing.”

**Rick Sinding:** I think Yurcak Field is the name of it.

**Rick Wright:** Uh-hm.

**Rick Sinding:** I honestly don’t know who Mr. Yurcak was.

**Rick Wright:** I think he was a great lacrosse player who-- and so it had-- and I think that he went-- it was a matching thing and we got the money. I don’t think Cliff cares at all that his name isn’t on it.

**Rick Sinding:** No. He doesn’t strike me as the type who would. So you had Atlantic City, you had Camden, you had New Brunswick; you had a number of other--

**Rick Wright:** Yes; I mean, we could just sort of tick off the cities. In Trenton we did a number of different things. The one that people most remember probably is the baseball stadium and that whole area of redevelopment down there. The idea was always to try to get people to go into really difficult areas, build some kind of anchor and get people to start coming back into the area and revive it.

**Rick Sinding:** And you’re doing this with very, very limited state financing I bet.

**Rick Wright:** No, everything was a project financing, what’s become known in the-- where the whole trick was to get things- get different sources of money close to diving in, and then getting them all to dive in at once. And which really became my job at the end or Florio’s job or other people when we would need to call people in. But the staff of this SWAT team, that sort of informal investment bank, they were out putting together these deals. I’m trying to think.

We did things like the Waterloo Village for example; we spent a lot of time on Waterloo because it was also-- we did- we spent a lot of time with the museum in Newark. There were a number of projects in Newark that we were working on at the time. .. When I left Trenton I put everything in boxes and put ‘em into a barn on my property. And I was just digging through them; and I’ve got almost all the stuff that was in my office when I left at the end. ..

**Rick Sinding:** Well I wanted to ask you about something called the Economic Recovery Fund that was put together in I think 1991/’92, somewhere in that neighborhood, which was to spur jobs in economic development. Was that part of your portfolio?

**Rick Wright:** Yes... But that stuff would originate on the other side of Treasury and then it would run through the legislature. But where Nate was particularly helpful around getting these various urban zone tax issues- tax abatements or suspensions or one thing or another; so you got investment money to go in. And that was all part of that. And the-- in the end we would use any combination of things to have it work. But yes it was part of that, it was part of that.
Rick Sinding: Meanwhile in 1990 your old friend and former teammate almost loses to Christie Todd Whitman in his re-election campaign. Have you been in touch with him? Were you still actively involved either in his fundraising or in his Senate activities or--

Rick Wright: I couldn’t because I was working for the state at the time. But as a friend I was talking to him. And on Election Night I went up to the hotel, up opposite the Giants’ stadium there, whatever that hotel is, just to help him celebrate. And I walked in-- I hadn’t paid any attention to it, I hadn’t listened on the radio, nothing; and then walked in. And there was this kind of gloom downstairs. And I went up to his room there, and there was one couple sitting there. It was-- I always remember, they were kind of sitting like this. It was the Eisner’s who were big backers of Bill’s in those days. And Bill wasn’t even there. And I finally found him in his bedroom; and he was going-- he was pretty upset because no one had understood that this was going to happen. And when I looked at it in retrospect I think it was a lot of the tax stuff that we did that allowed all that core of support that he’d had just to kind of vote the other way. Yes and so I would say- just on a friendship basis I was upset that that had happened.

But he had understood that there was no way we would’ve done all those taxes if it hadn’t been absolutely necessary to do, from a-- just a-- keep in mind, we were triple-A in those days. And we kept-- that was a big item of discussion of keeping our ratings- bond ratings. I mean, I can’t-- I would have no idea how long they’d run. I just read that under Governor Christie they’ve been lowered for the sixth time. I mean, that would’ve been a huge event. It was- with Florio that was so important to keep the- to keep the ratings high so you could keep the interest rates low so that we could do all this stuff. You know? I mean, it was on the other end of it. But yes, I was in touch with Bill; and that was a- that was an interesting moment.

Rick Sinding: Do you think that that experience changed him in any way?

Rick Wright: Yes I do, I do. I think that he became much more skeptical of what all the pros were telling him about things; amongst other things like that. You know, Bill’s pretty inscrutable about a number of things but I think that he had just-- I think the polls had him winning by-- what was it?-- 12, 15 percent, something like that. I mean, I literally got there late. Just I was going to go spend kind of half an hour and leave. And I didn’t live through the next portion with him because I was working for the state. But I know that he was changing staff in D.C. and doing a number of different things like that. But I think it did make him think about life differently, yes.

Rick Sinding: In Governor Florio’s 1993 State of the State Message, he talked about launching an initiative to make New Jersey the environmental technology center of the world.

Rick Wright: Yes.

Rick Sinding: Again, was this something that you were actively involved in or would be implementing were it to come to pass?

Rick Wright: Are you talking about the speech he gave before the legislature when he--

Rick Sinding: Yes.
Rick Wright: Yes. Actually I still have the original of that. I found it when I was looking- when I knew I was coming here. I have it with the Xes that we were marking off. Yes, I was involved in that.

Rick Sinding: Do you think that this was a serious initiative that he-- were there actions taken to implement this; or was this primarily the beginning of a re-election campaign say?

Rick Wright: Yes. No absolutely. No absolutely the former, not the latter. It was what we'd been doing all along, and he was about ready to make it more widespread. We were coming out of the bad economic times and it would-- he had every intention in the world. And it’s- from my perspective it's too bad it didn't happen because there would’ve been a number of different ways to stimulate it. And he was extremely creative. The great thing about Governor Florio from that economic development perspective is that he was really- he really understood how you had to get different constituencies together; and he understood- he understood motives. And I think that- I think that it would’ve been-- right out of the box. I know a number of things that we had planned to do, a number of things were going to happen right out of the box; various initiatives in various places. I mean, I can’t even-- I think about it now, just thinking about what we were planning to do up at the- up in New Jersey City where the- we were working on stuff actually with Disney. And it was-- it was just another-- everything just disappeared. You know? It was gone.

Rick Sinding: Now Doug Berman in the meantime has left Treasury to go and run the re-election campaign. And a couple of months later you were tapped to be Chief of Staff.

Rick Wright: Yes that was a difficult time for me because, as I’ve said, Doug was extremely instrumental in- to us helping setting this up, that led to this job that I had. And I’d always viewed him as a friend. And he was gone. And of course Nate, who I’d gotten to be very close to and found to be invaluable in terms of just giving advice to me was gone as well. And I worked for awhile just continuing to-- nothing changed. I was just doing the same stuff that had always-- that was going on. But there was-- the office was turning into a campaign mode and there got to be some difficulties in the front office during that; which didn’t affect what I was doing at all, and I wasn’t even reading the headlines.

Rick Sinding: You were perfectly happy to continue doing that I assume.

Rick Wright: I think it’s one of the great jobs anyone could ever have. I mean, it was just like running an investment bank with the complete backing of the chairman on what we were doing. And I think that we kept building one success after another. And this team that I had put together, like all teams, as we were getting more- they were getting more and more successful. And I think if you talk to any of them today about what we were doing back in those days, they would-- their eyes would kind of light up and they: Can we do this? And I’d talk to some people; and if we could do it we would do it. And what happened there is that when the Chief of Staff resigned, I got a call from Florio to go to Drumthwackett to meet; and I thought we were going to meet about some economic development things. And he asked me to be chief of staff. And I was really reluctant to put-- he--

Rick Sinding: You don’t say no.

Rick Wright: You don't no; actually you don't. Because I thought-- but he told me I could keep that portfolio with me. And so what actually happened is that-- Karen was gone by that time; she was over at EDA. But Laura and Ron actually became my deputies at the
Chief of Staff; and two of those DAGs, the lawyers, were always in the office. Dee moved over with me but everything else stayed the- stayed the same. And I changed one big thing in my life at that point, as I started having weekly meetings with- in private off of- off away from Trenton with Dick Leone and Cliff Goldman and Bob Del Tufo, who’d been the attorney general. Because these were-- I was having to deal with a whole series of issues I’d never had to deal with before and--

Rick Sinding: But Leone was no longer at the Port Authority.

Rick Wright: He was no longer at the Port. He had become the chairman- was the chairman of the Century Foundation.

Rick Sinding: Right, right.

Rick Wright: And Bob had moved on from being Attorney General to-- he was working for a law firm. And Cliff was still basically doing public financing in different places.

Rick Sinding: So you have two former State Treasurers and a former Attorney General.

Rick Wright: Right. I think it was every Thursday morning early we would meet somewhere, and I would just take them through the things I didn’t understand about what was going on; mainly with structure and people. And they were-- they gave all their time and were extremely helpful to me in that new role. Because part of the problem of being Chief of Staff, you know, is you get people coming at you from all sides, for all kinds of reasons. And I basically had an open door policy where I had someone in there with me at all times working on things.

And I found working close to Florio to be one of the great-- it was just- it was fantastic; because he’s so smart and he makes decisions quickly. And one thing about Jim Florio is that when he makes a decision and you’re involved in it, he’s going to back you forever. And you know that about him. And so there’s no kind of equivocation when you decide.

And our offices, you know they were- they were-- we literally were walking through each other’s office all the time. So it was- it was a- it was a very trying year but a tough year; and of course the campaign became sort of the over- overriding thing; and often, the last two, three months, you know, he was out campaigning all the time and I was just there trying to take all the phone calls.

Rick Sinding: I’ve often wondered whether the Chief of Staff-- I’m sure the last couple of months of an election campaign is actually running the government.

Rick Wright: Yes it’s true, it’s true. One of the main focuses that I had during that period, besides just making sure everything was going okay-- there were a lot of issues beyond the development issues that we were trying to deal with. But the-- this kind of brings Len Lieberman back into the story. The aquarium has opened, it’s very successful. We’d brought Governor Kean down. We named it after Kean, at Lieberman’s suggestion. But he’d been involved for many years in trying to get this performing arts center going in Newark. And I had started meeting with Larry Goldman, who they’d brought in to head that up. And it was an impossible thing to do; it was an impossible thing to do. But we figured out a way to do it. And we actually broke ground during the campaign. I was really happy about that because everyone said it was impossible; and we did it.
And it was fun for me because we brought Jane Alexander, who was a good friend of my mom’s, in to be the-- she in those days was the head of the-- was it the National Endowment for the Arts... She came; and so she was this old friend I’d known for years. She was down there with her shovel digging. But yes, in terms of what I was doing, I basically was in Trenton from seven in the morning until eight at night. And we divided up the- we divided up the office so that there was no political activity at all. We were just doing the business of the state. And when Jim would come in, we’d meet- I mean, when Governor Florio would come in, we’d meet and discuss things.

Rick Sinding: I think you can call him Jim in this context.

Rick Wright: Sorry.

Rick Sinding: Now up until that point, certainly the time that you were in Treasury, you had obviously had some regular meetings with the governor; because he was, as you said, actively involved in the decision making of trying to put some of these deals together. But now your relationship with him takes on a whole different perspective when you become the chief of staff.

Rick Wright: That’s right.

Rick Sinding: And you’ve hinted a little bit about his management style in the sense that he would make quick decisions and that you knew that he would then stand by.

Rick Wright: Right.

Rick Sinding: What other characteristics did you notice about Jim Florio’s governorship style that you would say was either unique to him or was something that you would want to pass along as being particularly important in the way in which he governed?

Rick Wright: Well I would say that-- first of all, I should say when I moved over to Chief of Staff, coming with me I was able to get Scott Weiner who’d been the head of the DEP to come over and become the chief counsel. And he was extremely important during this entire period. Scott and I spent a lot of time together because we were both in the State House many, many hours every day, when- particularly towards the end when Jim was gone. And but on something like that, for example, I asked the Governor-- I had a couple of different people I had in mind but I really wanted to have Scott take that job; and his answer was: Fine. I already knew about him in terms of hiring people because one of the agendas that we had set up earlier in Treasury was that there weren’t nearly enough women, there weren’t nearly enough minorities in key positions. And I never once went to him with a suggestion that he didn’t- once he looked at the résumé- didn’t accept. And there were some unusual choices; I mean--

Rick Sinding: Did he have to pass on every one of those decisions?

Rick Wright: He didn’t have to pass on them. There was a lot of politics; people putting their people they wanted here or there. But because of the kind of decisions that I was recommending, I would go in and talk to him about them.

And the first one I can remember is Marge McMahon who came in as the head of Pensions, replacing Doug Forrester who did not want to leave. And I was given a whole series of
people to interview from a variety of different sources. And this woman came in. She was up here at Rutgers some place, in some portion of the Rutgers Health Care, managing about 20 people. And it was a pro forma meeting. And she was really very alert; had a number of interesting ideas. And when the meeting ended we started— I just started asking her some personal questions. It turns out she’d raised, while she was at this job here at Rutgers, seven or eight kids at the same time. And she starts telling me about all of her kids. And I started thinking: Jeeze, you know, if you’re a really good manager you only need to manage about six or seven people well; and she can certainly do this. And so I recommended her; and I got amazing flak. Doug stuck behind me. But I went and talked to Florio -- I talked the whole situation through with him; he said, “Fine.” And Marge McMahon, if you talk to people in Pensions, she was an unbelievable person over at Pensions.

Moving Caren to EDA; moving Lana Simms to be in charge of Purchase and Property. Lana Simms was a black woman who’d marched with King; and she was down in the bureaucracy somewhere. She knew everything but she was-- her whole career was going to be in the bureaucracy. Moving Maureen Adams over to be in charge of Building and Construction; a woman in charge of building and construction. These were all discussions I had had with Florio. It reminds me, earlier on we kept Mike McKittish on as the head of GSA. He’d been with Kean first in Treasury at GSA. And when he left us he joined Kean at Drew. He was fabulous, he was really fabulous. These were decisions that Florio was involved in; and from my point of view, from a management point of view, they were fantastic. I would say that he was-- he’s really tough on you when you’re presenting an idea. He asks a lot of questions; makes you defend the ideas. And then once he wants it to go-- as I said before, you couldn’t have a better boss, could not have a better boss. I had many times when things got tough; particularly politically because many of the things I was doing would go against some of his constituencies. And never once did he not step in when I needed him to step in.

Rick Sinding: So Election Night 1993, not a pleasant memory I’m sure.

Rick Wright: No it wasn’t. We were ahead in the polls. And I remember coming home from the night before-- we were at some meeting-- and my wife had been watching TV; and she said, “Have you seen these latest Whitman ads?” And I said, “No I haven’t seen them.” She said, “She’s looking pretty good.” I think she was dressed in a blue sweater with an American flag behind her. She was- and she was making some pretty- pretty sort of stark statements about taxes and stuff like that. And anyway I took my family to the hotel and we were going to have a victory celebration and move on. And it was a tough night. It was a tough night, and I had to take my family out of the rooms and bring them back home.

And met the next morning with Peter Verniero and Judy Shaw, who were the two people in charge of the transition for Whitman, and began overseeing the transition.

Rick Sinding: What was your-- I’m asking you a two-part question. What had been your anticipation going into the election of what you would be doing in a second term if there were a second term? Second part of that question is: Now that you knew that there wasn’t going to be a second term, what were your plans?

Rick Wright: Yes. Well first of all, we had a number of things already set up as to who was going to go into certain Cabinet positions; this, that and the next thing. But we were going to really focus very much on these economic and environmental issues and bring a lot
of the individuals who’d been in the background doing all the work into a more formal structure. And I was really looking forward to the first couple of years. I didn’t know what was going to go on. But I knew-- I could see the first year or so out being very, very busy. If I could’ve gotten myself back into just the economic development part and out of the Chief of Staff part, I would’ve been happy to have done it. That’s a tough job; you know, you have to meet the world’s most important person every five minutes.

Rick Sinding: At least in their mind.

Rick Wright: That’s right. And then what I did afterwards is, after recovering, I spent the first year with my old compatriot there in the Governor’s Office, Scott Weiner. We put a little consulting firm together where we worked on mainly energy issues. And at that point we both split off to work full-time for firms that we had been advising. I ended up going into the energy efficiency area-- which is another area that had always interested me and continues to be an area of great interest in terms of jobs and the future-- and worked at that for a couple of years, until I was-- I knew that Bill was going to run for President for sure; and then got rid of everything I was doing and got ready for that campaign. But I was not planning on being his fundraiser. I thought I was too old for that. I was starting to- - he really- really needs someone who can spend all their time on the road. But one thing led to another, and I ended up being in charge of his fundraising; and spent all that- I spent basically the entire year just on the road.

Rick Sinding: This was for the 2000 Presidential.

Rick Wright: Yes right. And it was- our effort was successful. We outraised the Vice-President Al Gore; who really needed Bill Clinton’s help to get past us. I never understood why Gore didn’t use Clinton more in the general because he never would’ve gotten through the primaries without Clinton’s help. But anyway that was an interesting experience. And I think it’s probably another story.

Rick Sinding: I can imagine. I’m not sure we have enough time to go into that. So then another unsuccessful campaign, sorry to say.

Rick Wright: Yes.

Rick Sinding: And since then what have you been up to?

Rick Wright: Well since then-- unfortunately for me I got some diabetes during that last campaign and I really had to slow down quite a bit. I worked a little bit as a consultant but found that to be even too difficult. When Corzine- Jon Corzine - was elected governor in 2005 he appointed Dick Leone to be the head of his transition; and Dick called me up and wanted me to come down and head up the energy part of the transition. So I spent some time in Trenton with that group; and we wrote a transition report for energy. And it was interesting. And I got to know a few of the people down there at that point.

And when Gary Rose decided to go in to be the head of Economic Development for Corzine, he asked me if I could come along and help him a little bit. And I explained my circumstances that I couldn’t do a full day’s work anymore but I’d be glad to help him. So I had a new experience in the State House because I moved upstairs to where all the Policy people were. And I’ve got to say about that, it’s a very high I.Q. group, it really is. It’s really wonderful people who are putting together policy all the time, under any
administration. They just-- that’s sort of how they-- I really, really enjoyed that until it became clear that this Energy Master Plan was really coming out of the BPU, with Jeanne Fox, who of course had been with me during the Florio years. I’ve been remiss in not saying that when Scott came from DEP to become General Counsel, Jeanne became the head of DEP.

... But so we ended up writing an Energy Master Plan basically upstairs there in the Governor’s Office. Jeanne had one of her top aides, Lance Miller, come down on a daily basis; and we were able to bring in people from all over the state - stakeholders. And I worked for a couple of years on that.

And then actually I think one of the more important things I ever did of lasting importance when I was in the State Government happened almost by chance; because there was going to be a merger between Exelon and PSE&G. I don’t know whether you remember all that. It was going to be the biggest merger in history. And it was pretty much completed by the time Corzine came into office. But Corzine asked Gary to take a look at it, Gary Rose. So Gary and I started going to some meetings on it; they weren’t-- and finally were joined by Victor Forkowitz who’d worked with Jeanne Fox up at the Commission. And we began to sit down with the various leaders and began analyzing the economics of it all. And it was-- they were horrible economics for ratepayers, just horrible; something like six-billion dollars they were going to transfer. But then we discovered that the entire state, whether you were Democrat or Republican, was in favor of this merger and everyone had been lined up.

And Gary and I spent-- I don’t think anyone knows this story. Gary and I spent probably three months negotiating head to head with the chairman out there and all the various stakeholders here. And in the end Corzine stood up and stopped the deal. And I think we’re a much better off state to have our own utility, that we’re controlling ourselves, etcetera, etcetera. But that was an extremely-- talk about chess. That was basically a couple of us against-- we’d sit down, there would often be 20 lawyers and a couple of chairman across the table.

It would be interesting to get the people together who worked on that; because it was just very bad economics. It was a good deal for the shareholders of both companies; and there are arguments of efficiency. But it was just bad economics for ratepayers. And today the way things work around here-- you guys know about this-- is that the day we killed the deal, we killed it in a hotel. People didn’t know where the meetings were taking place. They were taking place away from Trenton in a hotel. And as I was walking to the hotel-- I was dressed the way I am right now, just casually dressed-- I ran into a lawyer who was very involved in this thing. He had no idea that these negotiations were going on. And I asked him what he was doing. And he took 15 minutes telling me how he was affecting this deal and what was going to come out, everything else. We said goodbye. And to this day he doesn’t know-- if he ever sees this he’ll know. He has no idea that we walked in and when we walked out some hours later the deal was off. And it caused a lot of havoc at the time. But again I think that for the state it was an extremely important thing to happen.

**Rick Sinding:** Have you remained involved in energy issues at all?

**Rick Wright:** Not myself. I’m pretty much retired. I’m a farmer now. But both my kids are, I’m happy to say, in energy issues; and the kind I think are important. And I’m happy for them that the playing field has moved from being kind of crazy ideas to I think this is where- regardless of what’s happened, I think short-term politically this is where the
country is going. We’re going to be more efficient. We’re going to use more moving molecules to do things. We’re going to be smarter. We’re going to use computers. We’re going to use existing things.

There was an old Princeton physicist by the name of Al Rose. I found recently a paper he wrote back in the ’50s, The Real Economics of Energy. And it still holds true, it still holds true. And we just-- if you look at the utilities’ finances, none of them put the money in that has to be there to clean things up at the end. As everything is always put off for future generations while they’re living nice lives. People-- it’s just-- but strictly just thinking about a point of view, like a Florio point of view, thinking about it, it’s not smart. Let’s be smart. That’s how I would- I would- I would- what I would say about Jim Florio is he was- he was gutsy enough to always say: Let’s be smart; and if we have to fight some people, whether they’re for us or against us politically, let’s have that fight, to be smart-- for the country, for the state, for the community; whatever it is.

**Rick Sinding:** I can think of no more appropriate finish to this interview than that statement.

**Rick Wright:** Well I was very lucky to have had that experience, to work with Jim.