

Transcripts – KPU Oral – John Baker – Founding Student; First Student Association President

Interviewer – Roger Elmes, Dean Emeritus

Second Interviewer and Camera – Alice Macpherson

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[Beginning of transcript]

JOHN: So, I got a little context from what you sent me. This sounds exciting, right?

ROGER: Well, I'm just trying to capture all of this before people-

JOHN: Die [Laughs]

ROGER: Or forget ..

JOHN: Exactly!

ROGER: And we have lost a few, so.

JOHN: I'm sure.

ROGER: In fact, one just a couple of days ago and so um -

JOHN: Yeah, cause I'm quite curious about some of the original. Is Dr. Wootton still around?

ROGER: George Wootton?

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: I believe he is. I haven't seen him for a while. He wasn't doing too well. Bill Day did an interview about two weeks ago now which was great because he was here before anything existed. He ran the referendum for each school district. So, you were actually in Richmond, weren't you? Your family was in Richmond.

JOHN: Yes, my family was in Richmond, but I chose, for a number of reasons, to go to all three campuses. So, I was in New West, Surrey and Richmond, and because I had a car, I could travel and also, I think to the extent that allowed me more flexibility in terms of choosing the courses and stuff like that.

ROGER: So, we're talking to John Baker. John was founding student at Douglas College, taking as we've just said courses on a variety of campuses and John, maybe you want to talk a bit about how you got to Douglas because it was an interesting background. You were a mature student but you had quite a different background than most students.

[02:02]

JOHN: Yes, because I spent my high school years in Toronto or, Etobicoke. So, I went from high school into the US Navy, and I ended up spending about three years including one year in Vietnam on patrol boats in '68, '69, something like that. I was in the Navy from '67 till '70, and politically speaking, the experience of Vietnam shaped my philosophy, my politics; I was kind of pissed off at the war and I was anxious to get involved somehow. I didn't know what that looked like, but I certainly wasn't interested in staying in the States. So, I turned in my Green Card and then I could go back to Toronto, but in the meantime, my family had moved from Toronto to Vancouver, which is where I was born, but not raised because I think, I don't know if you recall, but my dad was in the Air Force, so we moved around a lot. You were in the Navy, right?

ROGER: Yeah.

JOHN: Yeah. Exactly. So, you know what that can be like. We never really had a place I would call home even though I was born in Vancouver. When I came home, my younger sister she was at UBC, I think, and then my other sister, she went to Douglas too as a mature student, Jane. I think part of it was because I heard what she was doing, and I heard about Douglas. I didn't really know what to do at the time out of the Navy. I also had the benefit of the GI Bill that would give me an allowance if I went to either school or flight school. I even looked into flight school as a possibility. I think it was really my politics that was shaping my choices and so, I looked around and heard about Douglas and applied as a mature student. You're right, I was one of the first students, like a charter student, and I remember my first classes were in elementary and high schools and the different areas until the buildings had been built. I don't recall what the time delay was but eventually we got into the original, or the three campuses.

ROGER: Yeah. The portables.

JOHN: Yeah. Exactly.

ROGER: Richmond had warehousing.

JOHN: Yeah, it did. Yeah. It was like a big box kind of thing.

ROGER: Yeah. A little different.

JOHN: Yeah. Totally. Again, the choices I made, although I remember I was a bit of a rebel, and I was not going to be defined by having a particular major. I was going to just take what I wanted to take. Whatever I was interested in. So, I certainly took some courses from you and other courses with other instructors like Sociology, Philosophy, Political Science, International Relations. I did take an English course as I recall, but for the most part I just took whatever I was interested in and stuff. It was very exciting because I didn't really know what to expect.

[06:09]

But more importantly, what I was really struck by was the fact that- the newness. People were building anew and to the extent you could feel the creative tension in the air. Like everybody was in part of a new thing and part of creating this new, not just experience but establishment, institution, what have you. So, it was very exciting. You can feel it with the profs, the instructors. They felt like they were a part of something new and I think it was also because at that time, Douglas, and one of the reasons why, I mean I could have gotten into UBC or SFU at the time, even SFU struck me as being a bit mainstream. What I remember with UBC, I was even pissed off with the application form that required me to sign to abide by all the rules and regulations, and I thought-

ROGER: Been there.

JOHN: Been there, done that. Not interested in doing that and that turned me off right there. I didn't experience any of that at Douglas because of the newness and what have you. So, even things like the admission office was on Front Street in Downtown.

ROGER: It was initially. Yeah.

JOHN: Who was the admissions officer?

ROGER: Gerry Della Mattia. Not right at the beginning, but shortly after it was Gerry Della Mattia.

JOHN: Yes, that's right because he is the other guy. He was one of the firsts for me too. They had never had anybody who had been applying for the GI Bill before, so they had to go through all the hoops to be accredited by whoever. I guess the US Vets Administration or something to make sure they are accredited so that I could get my monthly allowance. I mean, it wasn't worth much. It was \$160 a month or something. Anyhow, so, that was one of the firsts was that. The other thing that I was struck by too is there were different instructors who had different... Remember Nick Mansfiels?

ROGER: Yeah - Sociology?

JOHN: Yeah, exactly. He just loved having me in his class and largely because everybody else was young and here is a guy who is a Vietnam Vet, and he just loved having me spice up the conversation kind of thing, could give different views. I mean, there is also some stereotypes he had

to overcome because even amongst fellow students, there was a lot of stereotypes about Vietnam Vets and so he had to deal with that. Some of it was good. Some of it was bad. That kind of stuff. I remember, I think in the second year, when I was running for election for student government, there were posters talking about, "Don't elect the baby killer". That kind of stuff from other students. That was not universal. I think most people were intrigued, but there were some people, that I don't know, just had their own thing about it. When I went in, again because of my politics, I wanted to get involved, and I remember saying to myself, "Okay, I want to get involved in the first student

[10:18]

government", and we didn't have one there at that time. We didn't have anything. I remember that Douglas College had been collecting a student activity fee, but they were holding it and they weren't prepared to give it over to anybody until we had a student government. They were pretty generous though because, as I recall, it took us a year and a half to write a constitution for a number of reasons. Very complex. There was a number of people involved. We had never really, again, another first; there was very little available in the library or the literature for how do you structure a government in tri-campus.

ROGER: Multi-campus.

JOHN: Yeah. Multi. And there were a few examples in the States, but I forgot how I got them. I had to send away for them. I said, "Can you send me your constitution?". So, I got a whole bunch of these constitutions together. We could see a lot of them were patterned after sort of like a federalism. You had sort of like each campus had their own little government, but then you had a larger government. I think we basically borrowed or adopted those kinds of constitutions. Again, though, for whatever reason, I think it was just like, there were different ideas about what that would look like. It was a struggle and I think eventually, what we organized was a two-day, almost 24 hours a day work session to write this damn constitution in order to be able to give it to Douglas and say, "Okay, now we can control our own funds", kind of stuff. Having said that, I don't want to suggest that we weren't able to get access. We've got lots of access, but it was conditional. It's conditional, but okay, it's understood that you're writing a constitution to know that you are a legally constituted government.

ROGER: Well, that was a kind of a very different era, let's say, and all those colleges were under the Public Schools Act. The rights of faculty and the rights of students and so on, relationships were very different, and then the BC Labour changed their regulations so that the faculty could unionize, and then GEU, pretty much, they did that quite early because that was accepted, but then the faculty got unionized, and then they came out from under the Public Schools Act, and created a Colleges Act. So, it started to change sort of slowly. But at the beginning I think that there was sort of an

effort to create a concept, a philosophy of student at the centre. I think that you actually were at the infamous Retreat I think at the BC Forest Camp.

JOHN: Yes! That's right. I forgot about that.

ROGER: Yeah, and there was about probably there were 10, 15 students, something like that who attended that as well, and its sort of gone down - it's mythical now, but all of this thing occurred. That was I think part of George Wootton's approach was that he believed that students should be very much involved at the centre was conceptually something he could kind of draw on and think of and work on and so on.

[14:26]

That was kind of at the end of the first year, and the faculty had worked their butts off writing curriculum, driving from one high school to another high school to one in Langley to whatever and finding wherever you're supposed to teach until they got the temporary portable campus that lasted for 20 years.

JOHN: [Laughs]

ROGER: But even Alice -

ALICE: [Laughs]

ROGER: - started teaching in those portables.

JOHN: Oh really. Okay.

ROGER: So, it was quite an era, but at the Retreat, there was a lot of stuff that was done around that idea of student at the centre, and how can we keep students involved and integrated and faculty and how can we keep this sort of democracy of the whole - almost, which was very difficult and it didn't last that long and so that is why people unionized and so on.

JOHN: Right. But it was very exciting because I do recall being surprised because I was expecting a push back when I found the total opposite; very accommodating. I think George had his Principal's Council and there were three seats available for students. I was always sitting at one and maybe one of the other guys from the student government, but it was always hard to find the third. The college and the administration were more accommodating than the students were willing to step up for. The other one was the Curriculum Committee. We had student seats on that. I believe we had two, and I think there was a third, but I don't recall what it was. But again, because there was a lack of or dearth of students willing to step up, I was filling all those. I was in student government, and then I

was with all these committees, and representing the students in Douglas events that were with other colleges and stuff like that. I was heavily involved.

ROGER: I remember one weekend, you came over to Victoria.

JOHN: Yes.

ROGER: And I had a house in Victoria.

JOHN: Yes, that's right.

ROGER: That we had bought and just kept as when I went to grad school because we thought the money we had would be blown away if we don't keep it invested and it will just get eaten up.

[17:02]

JOHN: You were painting it.

ROGER: Yeah.

JOHN: Stripping it.

ROGER: It had these huge overhanging eaves about 4 feet wide. Anyways, you came and you were with a girl, or a young woman who was not very tall but she was writing a lot of poetry. I thought you guys were together and so I put you in the same bedroom.

JOHN: Oh, I forgot about that. Yeah.

ROGER: [Laughs]

JOHN: And we weren't though.

ROGER: No.

JOHN: We weren't. No.

ROGER: I learned that afterwards.

JOHN: No, we were just hanging out, I guess.

ROGER: Yeah, because my kids were in one bedroom and my wife and I were in another. I think you were going to something at, it might have been at Camosun or a student event.

JOHN: Yes, it was Camosun. It was, that's right.

ROGER: Kind of thing. Yeah.

JOHN: It's very exciting but also like, man, talk about involvement. I mean it really was detracting from my studies because I'm so involved in everything else, but it was so exciting at the same time. Like I said, everybody was so accommodating. In some cases, I was a little bit disappointed. I was looking for a fight, and nobody wanted to fight.

ROGER: [Laughs]

JOHN: And stuff. It's like, "Sure, bring it on! We want to hear from ya!"

ROGER: So, also somehow you got involved in a radio station?

[18:36]

JOHN: Yes. That was our second year. That was interesting too. We had one guy on the student government. He had a background in microwaves and stuff like that and radio and stuff like that. That was his vision. He said, "I really want to start a radio station". I thought, "Bring it on! Let's help out.". So, I got heavily involved in that because, geez, I took a fancy to it. It's like, I was one of the DJs. I mean admittedly, one of the things I learned is that when you start a radio station like that, then you can access all these albums. They just sent them to you. So, you get a library just like that. I had a regular shift and the main station was in New West because it was right off the, I think it was right off the cafeteria as I recall, but it was handy and you had all of the equipment. Because we wanted to avail the other campuses to programming, well the technology at that time, what we ended up doing was we had these huge reel-to-reel tape recorders, and we would record a whole day of programming and then take them over to the other two campuses for the next day. There was always a one-day time delay in the programming, but it was so exciting. Even though in Richmond for example, I think where we set up the reel-to-reel was just basically a closet. Then we, I guess we piped it into the speakers or something. Not everybody, but I think in the cafeteria, we had music being pumped in. I remember also we funded getting a couple of table tennis. I don't know why it was Richmond, but Richmond, they were hot for table tennis. They were really involved. So, we did that and that was a lot of fun. Again, it ate into my studies because I had this regular shift on top of everything else I was doing, but I really enjoyed the experience of starting this thing or being a DJ and having some interviews and what have you. I forget what some of the programming was, but it was fun.

ROGER: There were students who were doing quite a bit of that sort of thing. We were just interviewing someone who started as a staff person and ultimately became a VP, but in the process she had interviewed Pauline Jewett at SFU [the President], and Phil Gaglardi [former BC Minister of Highways]. Another student, I forget what her name is [*22:08], oh I know, I was talking to somebody about raw sewage still being pumped into Juan de Fuca. I was saying, 50 years ago, Muni

Evers, a student interviewed him, mayor of New Westminster, was talking about how you should process all this and basically turn it into suitable fertilizer, and that's how you do it, and how nothing had moved ahead. The students were doing a lot of that sort of thing, where they just go out into the community, they interview somebody about whatever fit into the course they were doing, and there was reel-to-reel videotape equipment -

JOHN: I know, to the point I do remember that because I think we were talking about coming to grips with, we weren't calling it global warming, but we were talking about things about limits to growth. Stuff like that. This was back in 1970, '72, '71 or something like that, and it seems that the mainstream is just now starting to, well, maybe in the last decade or something, catch up. But, my god, some of the conversations that we were having back then, they were ahead of their time. That's what I thought. But a part of it was spurred by the young faculty because they were young.

[23:42]

Not much older than ourselves in many cases, and like Nick Mansfield, and I forget the guy who started Douglas 4, the multi-

ROGER: Oh, John Reid?

JOHN: Is that maybe that's his name. Yeah. Beard?

ROGER: Yeah, he taught history.

JOHN: Yeah, that's right because I got involved in that, I think, the second year and that was my first experience of something that was truly multidisciplinary and a different approach to the silos that typically, how we organize knowledge, right? It was just great to be a part of that. My wife, she works at UBC and they are still talking about transcending the silos. Oh my god, it's an old conversation.

ROGER: Very old conversation.

JOHN: [Laughs]

ROGER: But I did a master's in Interdisciplinary Canadian Studies with Pauline Jewett at Carleton. The only place I could go for a PhD in Interdisciplinary Canadian Studies was Rochester.

JOHN: Oh really?

ROGER: University of Rochester, but it is, it is certainly is an ongoing point of discussion.

JOHN: Yes, it is.

ROGER: It's pretty hard to break down the silos because ultimately, anyone who is writing is typically, they are writing to a specific discipline. To really a subset of the discipline, something very specialized. So, it does create challenges and while we did form a Canadian Studies Journal for years, it got some good articles out of it. Everybody was almost all performing still in their silo, but they loved the interdisciplinary approach, so they would write for this interdisciplinary journal.

JOHN: Yes. Yes.

ROGER: Yes. It's how things were structured and because we set up as a university transfer, the courses you were taking, they had to be articulated with one of mostly UBC and SFU, but also UVic, so that you were kind of fitting into their mold or somewhere between the mold of UBC and SFU, and trying to thread a needle between them.

JOHN: Yeah, exactly.

[25:55]

ROGER: It did limit programs like before because of that. So, what do they transfer as?

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: That's the big challenge.

JOHN: Yeah. I could appreciate that. But I think I was a worthy candidate for that kind of stuff because as I said earlier, I wasn't allowing the institutions to make or channel the choices I was making. I think I took a couple of courses that were in the different stream. I forget the instructor's name. He was a short guy who taught journalism or broadcast management or something like that. I can't remember his name.

ROGER: Not Charlie Giordano? [Jim Macintosh?]

JOHN: No, I don't recall.

ROGER: But he might have been a few years after that actually.

JOHN: Yeah. Because we actually asked him for some advice when we were starting the radio station and he was very helpful to us. A very nice guy. That was a different stream. It was not necessarily university transfer, but I was interested in that kind of stuff so I took the course.

ROGER: Yeah, well that's the way to do it.

JOHN: [Laughs]. Yeah, that's right.

ROGER: You guys had a lot more fun.

JOHN: Yeah, exactly.

ROGER: The other person who I think you were trying to remember might have been Okon Udokang who was teaching International Relations.

JOHN: No, the guy I remember, you would remember him because he always wore three-piece suits. He was probably unlike everybody else who was in jeans or whatever. He was always dressed to the nines. The other thing I know he taught International Relations and one of his favourite hobbies was Haiti. He was like a devotee of its history and its development and stuff like, so he'd always go off on these tangents about Haiti, whatever the hell we were talking about at that time. He was even kind of ruddy faced, but he still stood out because of how he was dressed. Really well dressed.

ROGER: Well, when the Principal [George Wootton] would take off his shoes at every meeting, it was –

[28:21]

JOHN: I forgot about that.

ROGER: - it was a relaxed atmosphere.

JOHN: I forgot about that. That's right. Exactly. And there's a couple of times I recall and they're really great, and I can't remember their first name. But Hank. Hank was sort of like a physical-

ROGER: Naylor..

JOHN: Yeah. I loved that guy. He was so approachable and funny. Funny, just funny guy. You know, it's like kind of hard ass kind of guy but I really enjoyed him. And the other guy I enjoyed though he was a little different, I think he was a dean of Arts. I remember, he was a little bit more stoic, but I was struck by the fact, that here's this guy who's obviously intelligent, but he always had a word of the day and he had it popped up on his desk and he had the definition. He had a favourite word. So, every time you went by his desk, he had a new word in there. I don't recall his name, but I remember he sat on the curriculum committee as well.

ROGER: Oh yeah. It could have been McEachern or Barry Leach.

JOHN: No, I remember Barry because of his environmental stuff and the Nicomekl River and Serpentine, and the Habitat for the Geese.

ROGER: Tibetan Refugees.

JOHN: Yeah, that's right. I remember all that stuff. He was British, I think, originally.

ROGER: He was, yeah.

JOHN: And again, I think, I don't know if I took any courses of him, but I know that influenced my thinking about limits to growth and the whole environmental context. It added a whole thing.

ROGER: But he was more of a kind of a renaissance personality because his real field was history and his dissertation had been on the Barbarossa Campaign. Germany into Russia in World War II, and he'd found all these records and he met some of the Generals who were in the general staff of the army and when they were in prison after, because he was in the British army at that point, and he met them and he talked with them and then one day in the war office in London, they were throwing out all these documents. He says, "What is this? Why are you throwing it? Can I just have it?". It was all these records of the Barbarossa Campaign.

JOHN: Oh my god, interesting! Yeah. Oh, cool.

[31:08]

ROGER: So, he ended up at UBC doing a PhD and that is what he did the dissertation on.

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: Yeah.

JOHN: Well, there's a couple of memories I have about you too because I recall that one weekend I joined you over at your place and we watched the NDP Leadership-

ROGER: Oh, convention.

JOHN: Convention.

ROGER: Probably for Ed Broadbent.

JOHN: Yeah, I think it was at the time.

ROGER: Oh, no. It was '64.

JOHN: No, this would have been '70-

ROGER: The theme was, when you're '64 because-

JOHN: Oh, right. Okay.

ROGER: Oh god. His son became very famous and -

JOHN: Oh, I know. Yeah.

ROGER: For the UN and so for.

JOHN: Yeah. Lewis.

ROGER: Lewis.

JOHN: David Lewis, and then his son spoke at my wife's graduation from UBC.

ROGER: Oh yeah?

JOHN: Yeah. So, I went out to see him. He was amazing! He's just a great speaker. Oh my god.

ROGER: Very articulate.

[32:08]

JOHN: Very much so. I really enjoyed it. Very inspiring as well, but anyway. I remember that and I remember another time, and this was the second year. The first year of starting the student government, we were flailing away, figuring out what we were going to do, but I think in the second year, we had figured out that we're going to have these little, sort of like, small government councils at each campus, but then we'd have a larger one. So, if you wanted to campaign for election, for the larger, you had to get around to the other campuses. You couldn't just sit around your own home. So, I remember it was not my class. It was your, with another group. But you invited us to come in to speak to the class about our platforms and stuff like that. It made it real. It was just great. I really enjoyed it. I loved that. We also had a personal relationship too. I think you were a customer of my mom.

ROGER: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: Who by the way, she's still alive. 98.

ROGER: Wow.

JOHN: In assisted living in Toronto.

ROGER: Oh, my goodness. She went back to Toronto.

JOHN: Well, partly. She's a vet right?

ROGER: Yeah.

JOHN: So, the assisted living out here for vets is terrible compared to what they have there. It's with Sunnybrook and here it was George Derby, but we were so disappointed in the quality of care. In fact, I think they were going bankrupt. But anyway, that's another thing. But anyway, she's still alive.

ROGER: Yeah, after a while she moved out towards Fort Langley.

JOHN: Yeah, she did.

ROGER: And this wonderful little place right beside the railway tracks.

JOHN: Yeah, that's right.

ROGER: And I think, "God, how could she, must've been thrown out of bed every time the thing whistled by in the middle of the night. That was not quite as busy as the mainline down by the river. But yeah, she was doing all kinds of antique -

[34:28]

JOHN: Yeah exactly. That's right and I remember I think you bought some stuff. Maybe she even refinished some of the stuff.

ROGER: Well, she taught my wife a lot about refinishing and she did some refinishing as well. Stuff that we bought. The reason we got into antiques was the first house we bought was an old maid and she wanted to sell everything. It was full of - that was our furniture. It was full of antiques, so.

JOHN: Well, my home is the same way. I got stuff that I got from my mom years ago. All kind of stuff. Just kept it around.

ROGER: So, it's amazing. Gosh, is that you?

JOHN: Yeah, it is amazing. We were like -

ROGER: So, you guys had quite a different experience because a lot of the faculty was the first time they really taught. It might have been TAs and so on.

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: And I had done some in the navy but obviously totally different subjects. Navigation, astronomicals, astronomy and navigation and so on. So, it was figuring out all of this sort of thing of all these new courses that weren't yet even articulated with the university, but we hoped they would be. So, we were feeling our way and students were feeling their way because first post-secondary experience for most, and nothing was ready.

JOHN: No, you're right.

ROGER: As you said.

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: It was just like this kind of sea of mud and when they brought in the portables, some of them saying -

JOHN: Exactly. Oh actually, I remember another thing we did was a group of us, we built, it was at New West, in this sea of mud what have you, we built the geodesic dome.

ROGER: Oh yeah.

JOHN: Yeah and I think we were following Bucky Fuller. So, we just used that and built the sucker. It was fun, but like I said, the whole experience was one of feeling like you were building something, and you didn't even know what the hell we were building.

[36:39]

But it was fun because you were creating something. You know how, like once you get some inertia going, it's like every day becomes very similar to the day before, but it didn't feel that way at that time. It felt like we were always doing something new. We were building, creating, you know, and if we were problem solving, it had some context. We weren't just solving problems. We were solving problems to get us closer to whatever the hell we were trying to build. You know, so it was great. I mean, I'm very aware of that because in my work I see so many people that are stuck in solutions of yesterday's problems and because I think the problem-solving paradigm is so deeply situated in our, we are not even aware of and so part of my work is trying to get people to get more creative. What are we trying to create together kind of stuff, and I think that was influenced by my experience at Douglas kind of thing. I don't say it was the only thing, but it was certainly a big one.

ROGER: Well it would certainly be, I would think that the dramatic contrast to your previous three years of experience too.

JOHN: It was although there was a lot of making it up as you go along [Laughs] that too and I don't know if maybe you could speak to this more than others, but I think in some cases, there are some misperceptions about the military. For example, when I think about some of my experience in the navy, counter to popular belief, they do look for imagination. Busting the norms. Just don't get caught. That kind of thing. But they're looking for initiative. You know, and so it's not – yes, it is regimented but within that you can, I think there is room for movement you know.

ROGER: Well, there was a certain level of democracy let's say because when I'm a young officer and the people I'm leading are 40 years old and I'm 20, 21, or 19 or whatever, then it's very unnerving I mean you have to really recognize that you know virtually nothing, and all of these guys that you're leading many of them are very experienced tradesmen who would have been like senior in your career outside of whatever they did and so you have to fit your way into that. Recognize that you don't just go around bossing people around. You have to understand what their limits are and what they can do and what you can do and what your limits are and figure out that whole thing.

JOHN: Yeah, I could see that because when I think about my journey, like in high school. When I got to the end of high school, I hated it there. I just could hardly wait to get out of there. I think here, I didn't really give a shit about it and I could hardly wait to get out and I know the last thing I want to do is go into school because to me that just sounded like there's going to be more of the same and having been from a military family, I thought, I'm going to join the navy and see the world kind of stuff you know and why the U.S? I was struck by the fact they had more ships, more destinations, more places to visit and all that kind of stuff. And I was surprised, pleasantly surprised how much I felt like I was treated as an adult even though I was only one year older or even that, you know like, two months older than I had been in high school and it was like worlds apart and I loved that.

[40:49]

I just loved that. But like you said, the experience in Vietnam just soured me on the whole experience and also coming back as this is well-documented - returning vets were not, I think it stands in contrast from how we do now. They talk about hate the war but love the troops. Well, back then, hate the war, hate the troops.

ROGER: That was a very unpopular war.

JOHN: Totally, and so when you came back, it didn't matter who you are or what you represented philosophically, you were painted as just being one of those baby killers.

ROGER: So, this was quite a different institution and what was interesting about it also was there were a lot of people who were there with the military and the faculty with military background -

JOHN: Okay, interesting.

ROGER: So, Bob Howell was a Vietnam vet, sociology. Ken Moore was a commander in the Canadian Navy. Don Porter, he was the Dean of Curriculum.

JOHN: Don Porter. That's who I was referring to.

ROGER: He was a Major.

JOHN: The guy with the word of the day.

ROGER: That does make sense.

JOHN: That's the guy with the word of the day. Now that comes back.

ROGER: And George Porges who taught history. He had escaped Austria before the Anschluss and so he ended up in Britain where he was a Sergeant-Major in the British Home Guard because they wouldn't take him into the army but they would allow him to be in the British Home Guard. That was his background. So, does- Donovan Jones [PHIL] who'd been a commando. So, there's all kinds of people with that sort of background.

JOHN: Wow, I didn't know that.

ROGER: Any many of those were sort of 35- they were 5, 10 years older than I was. They were just that much, well obviously World War II. I was just a baby. They brought that kind of life experience to the place, and what they were looking for when they were hired was a mixture of people with good life experience plus the academic background to do it and people who were straight out of university so that there would be a kind of mish mash of stuff going on and –

[43:49]

JOHN: It's like our classes were like that too because you had mature students and then you had all these young kids coming in from wherever. So, it was a real mix, but I really enjoyed that.

ROGER: So, my experience with teaching was that it was great because you got people with all this life experience but many of them were afraid of learning. "Oh, I haven't been in school for whatever", and yet they had this wonderful life experience. Many had better writing skills. People straight out of high school could study. They had all these study skills. They could put that all in place very quickly, and they were kind of like facing each other but then after time, your kind of like, "Oh you got things I can gain, I can learn from" and it worked out very very neatly.

JOHN: Yeah, I could see that. You know, as I recall it was great that way. Again, because the institution was so small, there was very little in the way of boundaries between faculty, administration and students. You know, I recall, and I remember you loved this paper, because it was a paper I did for you. I remember I pulled an all-nighter in there and it was in the Richmond campus using one of the secretary's typewriter all night. I'm the only guy in the whole building. Maybe there was a janitor in there. I don't know.

ROGER: And now security would kick you out.

JOHN: Oh yeah. There's no way in hell I'd be doing that and I'm there all by myself doing my paper and just make sure that you lock. They didn't give me a key, but they said make sure the door is closed when you leave. But that was it man, and I got to use the latest in the electronic typewriter.

ROGER: Probably an IBM or something.

JOHN: I think it was. [Laughs]. And I was struck by that. The other thing that I recall too, I mean I forget about this sometimes, but it was part of being with the student government. The Queen came to town on *HMS Britannia*. So, she had a reception for all the student government presidents from all over the province; we had UBC, Prince George... So, I got to meet the Queen, the Duke. Charles wasn't there, but Anne was. I got to kind of hang out with these guys and I was so struck when a brilliant conversationalist the Queen was because it didn't matter, and same with Philip. I remember Philip was so interested in student democracy and he questioned us at blank, blank. He was really curious and so we had a whole group around him and he was just really engaging. Talk about, because a lot of my work right now has to do with employee engagement and particularly with senior leaders of the organization, how to be engaging. I guarantee it, those guys were models of engagement. You know, they weren't talking at you. They weren't just broadcasting you information. They were both interested and interesting. You know, I think back to that experience.

[47:39]

Not stuffy at all. They had their British accent or what have you, but you could take on as being stuffy, but in terms of being intellectually curious about who you are and what you stand for or something like that, nothing finer. Great experience.

ROGER: That was also, of course, the era of the War Measures Act being invoked in Canada.

JOHN: Yes, that's right. I remember that. Yeah. I remember going to bed wondering what the hell is going on here. Yeah. And we think of the time even though, I know in retrospect, there's been a lot of criticism at the time, but I kind of admired at the time what Trudeau did. Because I thought, "My god, you gotta nip that in the bud". Because you know, particularly when they discovered the bodies and what have you I thought, "Geez, my god". But I know in retrospect, particularly from the Quebecois, you look back at that, it's what the hell were you thinking?

ROGER: Well, it was very interesting because out here Bill Bennett or Wacky Bennett said that nobody in the education system can advocate the aims of the FLQ.

JOHN: Oh, I didn't know that.

ROGER: It was the FLQ manifesto and the manifesto was translated into English. It was something you would certainly bring to class and discuss and so, in my brain, this is something that students, agree with it or not agree with it. That's not the point. The point is to discuss it and is this a valid claim? Is this not valid? Get them doing some thinking and research about it. So, on being under the Public Schools Act, the reaction which really surprised me, was "if you're going to do that, you have to have an administrator observe in your class".

JOHN: Oh my god!

ROGER: Or we won't protect you.

JOHN: Wow.

ROGER: And I said, "Well, we're not going to have an administrator observing in my class. So, I guess you're not going to protect me". Well, nothing ever happened.

JOHN: But still.

ROGER: But it is just kind of, it was a good illustration of the power of government and how it can overdo it even so many miles away from any specific threat from the FLQ and British resentment. I don't think so. It was just this kind of kneejerk overreaction.

JOHN: Yeah. Exactly.

[50:12]

ROGER: But students were, I mean when you got into it and they actually could read it and look at it and think about it and think about, so what's the historical record? What's accurate here? What's not accurate? What's the interpretation? What we can adopt.

JOHN: That's right. Because I remember the book I read at the time and I think it was through Douglas. It was *White Niggers of America* [Pierre Vallières, *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (1968)] ,and it was a famous book. I remember that and it kind of gave you some insight about the Quebecois and the situation. My dad, after he got out of the Air Force, he worked in Toronto when I was in high school there, and he was a general manager for a chemical company that had offices in Montreal and Quebec City. I remember him talking because my dad was a bit of a philosopher himself and he talked in length about going into Quebec and Montreal and the very different feeling and particularly with the hierarchy, predominantly Anglo-Francophones and stuff like that. He was very critical of that. I think there's a lot of Canadians who don't really appreciate that even to this day.

ROGER: Yeah. It's two solitudes and the two solitudes were definitely evident at that point, but it's now historical but it's part of what was actually happening.

JOHN: Exactly.

ROGER: In all of our lifetimes.

JOHN: Yeah. Very much so. I mean we had debates about it at home. My sister, Wendy, the younger sister- by the way, she currently co-counsel on the commission into murdered and missing Indigenous women, and so, she's had a whole career of being a crown prosecutor with sexual abuse and residential schools and sexual abuse by priests, by Indigenous, anyways... The point being, I remember she was so law and order when it comes to the events around the FLQ, so in our family, there was a political debate going on that was like in the here and now kind of stuff. Not everybody had the same view, which kind of sucks.

ROGER: No, that's for sure. There was a divisive...

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: I never reach the point, I don't think of what's going on in the U.S. right now.

JOHN: No, thank god.

ROGER: But it certainly was divisive within Canada and created some major problems for quite a while.

JOHN: Yeah. Exactly That's right. But you were influential to me in a time there. I'm sorry I didn't get to see you more of you after, but I remember the time, I think I was struck.

[53:33]

You really, kind of, what do you call it, fostered an interest in politics that I really.... I mean, I was kind of interested, but I mean you just really fostered it. You deepened it. So, it was great. And then again, because of the environment that we were in, it was so exciting. That's why when you asked me, "What do you want to talk about?", breaking new ground because I think we are always doing that.

ROGER: I don't know whether if it happened in your class but at one point, I would go into every class and start up and say, "I am a socialist" and some of the students would come back and some would say, "You scared the shit out of me."

JOHN: [Laughs]

ROGER: And then I would sort of go on and say the point about saying that is only to identify my own bias, but it's so that you can recognize that I have a bias, we all have a bias and we're going to discuss all sorts of topics and we don't have to agree, but we want to do this in a critical fashion. You know, sort of get into the depth of why do some people believe this way? What's the objective of this policy? Does it work out that way? Getting some real good discussions.

JOHN: Yeah. I mean the other guy I enjoyed although it took me a while to get over his accent because I had to kind of climatize myself to and that's Ching Po Shih. One of his courses was comparativisms and we just kind of did an overview of all the isms and I found that very enlightening because you kind of got deeper into each of them and sort of kind of get beyond the labels to explore at a deeper level. He was great. I really enjoyed him. But like I said, it took me about six months to understand what he was saying. Then when I got married in Scotland, we spent a month in Scotland, and my god, the first week there, I had no idea what the hell they were talking about. I could not translate. Even though it was English, it's not English. The accent was so thick and same with Ching Po. The same thing. Great guy, and I just had to get used to it. But he was great. I really enjoyed him as well.

ROGER: He was hired because he had a good solid academic background. He also had a wonderful life experience - well wonderful? He had a very different life experience coming from Mainland China in the 1960s and going to grad school at U Alberta. So, he brought a very different perspective to the classroom for sure. But he was very quiet. Always a gentleman. He just died in the summer.

JOHN: Oh, did he? Okay.

ROGER: Yeah.

JOHN: Sorry to hear that, but.

ROGER: Yeah. But he was very engaged here for – I think he was 35, 36 years old when he came here.

[56:51]

JOHN: Oh my god, really. Okay.

ROGER: He had three daughters all of whom are very successful musicians. Piano, violin and I forget what the other one does. One was part of a quartet that was Musicians in Residence at our music program in Langley. But they are all known internationally.

JOHN: Good for him.

ROGER: Quite a different life experience. He didn't drive when he arrived. So, you can imagine at the campus, he was taking the bus home and all over the place.

JOHN: Oh my god. Oh, geez.

ROGER: First few months trying to find high schools in Burnaby and wherever.

JOHN: I mean, it was hard enough for me. I mean I moved from California because that was where I was stationed to Vancouver, and because I hadn't been here since I was a baby, I had to find my way around. With the money I saved in that one year in Vietnam, I bought myself a '69 bug. Brand new. And that was what got me around. It was a red bug that just got me from campus to campus to campus. I spent a lot of time driving, but like you said, I was really determined to be choiceful and flexible to what I could take, when I took it and I used the car as a vehicle for making that happen. But I really enjoyed. Each campus had its own little culture too within the larger Douglas. I found Richmond was very different from Surrey from New West, and particularly because a lot of the students weren't as mobile as I was. That allowed each campus to get its own little distinct culture. I mean I'd be hard pressed to describe those differences now, but I remember feeling that way. They were all very different.

ROGER: Well they were different communities too. New West was pretty much urban.

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: New West, Burnaby, you know. So, it was pretty much urban. A little bit coming from Maple Ridge. And then Richmond, it is an island after all and you got some from sort of Vancouver, South Vancouver, coming.

JOHN: Yeah. That's right.

ROGER: And then Surrey was, I mean Surrey was a huge geographic community, but very small population base compared to today. It's like four times. So, one guy could ride his bike from Cloverdale to the campus on 140th Street every day and like no problem. No hassles with traffic or anything. Treated very different campuses.

[1:00:05]

Part of it was also that the catchment were different high schools, so to the extent that the students were straight out of high school, they came with a culture that already the high school that -

JOHN: Yeah, I could see that. Yeah because I did find that New West had much more of an urban feel compared to the other ones.

ROGER: Yeah, there was a different, it was almost another level of sophistication which is well, looking back it was. It was a different group of students who were, I don't know, they just had a different feel -

JOHN: Yeah. That was even reflected in the Student Councils at each campus. You could see very different flavor for all of them, but it was great. Still, I enjoyed it.

ROGER: That's very interesting.

JOHN: Cool.

ROGER: Thank you so much John!

JOHN: Oh, thank you for the opportunity. It was great.

ROGER: Learned new information. We never knew that Douglas College student president got on the *Britannia*.

JOHN: Yeah. That's right. I know. Cool.

ROGER: That's amazing.

JOHN: That was great. The last person I had any contact with from Douglas was Bill Day and it was in the early 80s and it was when I was just starting my own consulting practice, about '84. I was looking for people, I would call them trusted advisors. I was looking for people that I could say, "Here's my business idea. I want to run it by you. Tell me what you think." And Bill Day was one of those guys. If there had been other people available, I would have probably bounced off them too, but when it comes to Douglas, I just reached out and said, "Bill, remember me?". "Oh yeah, of course". "I got a thing I want to bounce off you and", and he was so accommodating and in fact, not only was he accommodating, he said, "You know what. I like this idea. I wouldn't mind you coming out here and bouncing off some of our management team". That was great.

ROGER: Well, he certainly remembers you because he remembered you in his interview.

JOHN: Oh okay.

[1:02:19]

ROGER: When we were talking about the kind of early days of Douglas.

JOHN: Yes.

ROGER: And his recollections and so on.

JOHN: Yeah.

ROGER: So, he definitely remembers you to this day.

JOHN: Yeah. Good for him. That's great. I remembered him that's for sure. There's a lot of people I do remember, but there's a lot of people that I don't recall their names, but I do remember they were influential kind of stuff. So are you; you are the main character. You are the main character of my thinking. Yeah. It's just great.

ROGER: Well, thank you sir.

JOHN: Yes! It was always good.

ROGER: That's wonderful.

[End of transcript]