ORAL INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH SINCLITICO
FORMER DEAN OF THE LAW SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND
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Dr. Thompson: Joe, I certainly appreciate your coming this morning and we are very thrilled to have this tape for the Historical Resources of the University of Puget Sound particularly as it relates to the Law School.

Mr. Sinclitico: I hope I can be of some help to you, Dr. Thompson.

Dr. T: I am sure you will be. Can you give me a little background? Where were you born and so forth?

Mr. S: I could mail you a vita but if you want I will give you a quick rundown. I was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts on the 23rd of May, 1915. I started grammar school when I was four years old. I was in the second grade in 1921 when my father decided to transfer the family to Italy and I actually never had a complete grammar school education. In fact, when I came back in 1926 I had studied Latin but they had to put me in the fifth grade because I couldn't speak a word of English. Through some special training they finally got me into the first year of high school. The first three or four years were really quite a torture for me because of the language barrier but at any rate I managed to survive. I graduated from St. John's Prep. school where I did a fifth year because of my inadequacy. That is in Danvers, Massachusetts. From there I went to Holy Cross, majored in Philosophy and English - graduated in 1936, attended Harvard, graduated in 1939, passed the Bar in 1939. Practiced law and starved for three years in Massachusetts. Someone asked me how I was doing and I said, "Well, I am doing fine. I have a $5.00 case and two small cases." In 1942 I went into the service - volunteered and went into OCS. I obtained my commission in Anti-aircraft artillery and was then transferred to the St. Louis Ordinance District where
I did legal work and also was engaged in contract renegotiations. I met my wife there. We had our first child in 1945. Mustered out in January of 1946. Started a teaching career in St. Louis University from 1946 to 1949. I was starving to death and couldn't support two children at that time so I decided I would go into business and I held various business positions - executive-assistant to a president, assistant comptroller, manager of a laboratory for the University of Chicago, treasurer of an engineering firm. Then I finally decided that genteel poverty was preferable to making millions so I went back to teaching in 1957 and I stayed in legal education ever since; in 1957 - 1960 at Duquesne University as law professor, 1960-64, law professor at the University of San Diego. I became Dean there from 1964-71. I reverted back to teaching until I had the wonderful offer from the University of Puget Sound to help them establish a law school. (I think you remember those events rather well.) Richard Dale Smith was Chairman of the Search Committee and I understand I was the only one interviewed and they closed the applications. I must say that that was probably the greatest event in my life in terms of my contribution to society.

Dr. T: Well, it certainly was great for us. Tell me now, you were Dean of the Law School at San Diego. Didn't you spend a year in Rome?
Mr. S: Yes, from 1970-71. After some ten years without a break I was offered a sabbatical for a whole year at the University of Rome. I did a year of graduate study at the School of the Philosophy of Law. That was my first love, I guess my Holy Cross influence didn't wear off. Unfortunately I was to get a doctorate of Juridical Science Degree and all of my notes and the outline for my thesis had been approved - I don't know if you recall the famous shipping strike but someone stole four bags with all of my notes, all of my books, bibliography, and library that I had meticulously searched out through all of the second hand book stores in Rome - it was all destroyed in one fell swoop. But I really enjoyed it and it really contributed to my education.

Dr. T: How did we happen to get in touch with you?

Mr. S: I think that you had used Gordon Schaber. He was at that time, and still is, Dean of the Law School at McGeorge in Sacramento, which is part of the University of the Pacific. You had used him as a consultant in the study of the feasibility of a Law School. In the process, of course, it became evident that you would need a Dean and Gordon Schaber suggested my name. I am very grateful for that. They probably overestimated me - but in any rate, he was the one that suggested my name and following that suggestion and the creation of your Search Committee, I was contacted and came here for an interview just before Christmas.
Dr. T: Now as I recall, he was a personal friend of Lloyd Stuckey, too.

Mr. S: Yes, I think so. He had merged the Law School, which was a free standing Law School, with the University of the Pacific. Stuckey came up the first year that I did and had been previously a business man, I think, for the University of the Pacific.

Dr. T: I know that Lloyd and Dick Smith came to me and said, "We think we have the ideal person." That is when they recommended that you become the Dean of the new Law School. Now, can you give me a little bit of input on how you went about organizing and structuring it?

Mr. S: Well, the first problem as I indicated to you was that the AALS meeting was having their annual meeting in Chicago and if you recall I asked if I could attend to start to recruit a faculty because I saw that that was really the major problem. I did and I was able to recruit actually three of the six people that ultimately became our first faculty. I came back hoarse. I was a one-man recruiting team. The way I handled it was that I sat at a desk with the door opened and with a telephone on my left. As I interviewed people - and I interviewed forty five people in two days - I kept an eye on the door for the next applicant. I was asking questions and answering the phone at the same time. I actually came away half deaf and unable to talk but we were successful in recruiting three people in this order - Jim Beaver, Peter Tiller, and John Weaver. That was the
first step. As soon as I went back I drafted, in about a week or so, a bulletin, a curriculum, and academic standards and had that ready when I came up here. I think I came aboard on the 17th of January because I still had commitments at San Diego to grade my papers and give my exams. As soon as I finished those I came here.

Dr. T: Now didn't you set up kind of a semi-office in the Winthrop Hotel.

Mr. S: Yes, I did and it bears repeating that was quite an adventure. I started off with one room which served as my bedroom as well as my office and within a space of two or three months we had expanded from one room to five or six rooms and we had recruited a staff at that time and I think Nelba Griffith needs to be mentioned because she was the first one I hired. She was a tremendous help. She helped me recruit Adele Doolittle and also a third person - her name escapes me. While all of this was going on I was training a staff and at the same time we were looking for a building. We examined, with hard hats at times, about seven or eight buildings downtown. We had the offer from Benaroya and particularly from Peter Wallerich. They were going to put up a new building. They broke ground on March 1st.

Dr. T: I recall that Peter Wallerich called me and said, "Dr. T., you have a problem and I have a problem." I said,
"What is your problem?" He said, "Well, I have a permit to build a building but if I don't start it by the first of March, it will expire and I will never get another one because of the fact that there are no sewers. Let's marry our two problems. I will design the outside of the building. You people design the inside of the building and put your law school there."

Mr. S: There are a couple of interesting incidents that might be of some value. For one thing, I was recruiting faculty people and they would say, "Can I come out and see the Law School?" I would say, "What Law School. There isn't any." At the same time, we attacked the matter of getting students. We prepared a letter and a bulletin and sent it out to all four thousand people throughout the United States who were pre-legal advisors so that they quickly knew about the University of Puget Sound. I guess you know that old joke. When I was in Chicago everyone said, "University of What?" But anyway, we quickly became known. Another thing was we had no place to send out mail and we were getting applications. The way we solved that problem was by establishing a large box at the Post Office. When we sent out the bulletin we put, "For inquiries write to P. O. Box so and so." We never did tell them we didn't have a Law School Building.

Dr. T: Well, you worked a miracle on that one. Now let's see. Didn't you recruit Anita Steele?

Mr. S: Yes, Anita Steele was recruited. She was in the
the graduating class from the Library of Science School that Marion Gallagher (who later became one of our Board Visitors and was so very helpful. In fact that is an interesting incident. She brought her whole class for lunch and I interviewed all six of them. I said, "Well, Marion, which one do you recommend." She said, "I think Anita Steele would serve your purposes." She came with an excellent background. She was a graduate of the University of Virginia and the top student at the Library School at the University of Washington, which is renowned throughout the United States. She really took over. I had tried to enlist the help of an old librarian from the University of Oregon but she had slowed down considerably so we quickly recognized that she was not up to the task so we hired Anita Steele as our librarian.

Dr. T: Now she had a monumental task in building a library. How did she go about it?

Mr. S: We did have the starting of a library. If you will recall Reno Odlin gave us about 13,000 - 14,000 volumes.

Dr. T: Now those had been in the Puget Sound Bank Building for their tenants as I recall.

Mr. S: That is right but there are several aspects of that. One was that we had to design the library and get the equipment in by August 1st. We enlisted the help of Magna Design and used an interior decorator as well.
As soon as we knew the dimensions of the library, we went ahead and laid it out to see what would be the best layout. Secondly we had some connections with two or three major suppliers and we immediately placed the orders in for delivery. That was a matter of logistics - getting the books in at a given time. But we wound up on September 1st with 50,000 - 25,000 more than what we needed. All of the books in place. We also had an assistant librarian who helped catalog. We actually had two assistant librarians but they had to be trained, also. But they were on the ground floor and that really helped a lot.

Dr. T: Now, you said you got three people at your meeting in Chicago. How did you recruit the rest of your faculty?

Mr. S: Really it was just a matter of contacting people that I knew. Of course, if you recall, I was very fortunate, I had lunch with Dick Settle and he impressed me very much. He was also on the Search Committee for Dean and he impressed me by his questions and his attitude and poise. That was number four. Of course, the fact that the Law School was starting was generally known by this time so I was really deluged with applications. It was a matter of searching out people. My son knew about it and he learned of an outstanding person in Los Angeles who was on a clerkship. He learned of the Law School through my son and he applied and Dick Settle and I interviewed him and he was the fifth person. The last person came through an application. He was Governor
Evan's Assistant and he came recommended highly by Jim Dolliver, who is now a supreme court judge. He was the sixth person. Actually I could have done with five but I had a sixth as a sort of backup and also for the purpose of laying foundation for the following year. I thought I had a headstart of one person. One of the things that became apparent was that those people who were applying were either old practitioners, who frankly were disenchanted with practicing law but didn't seem to be interesting people or we had a lot of applicants from other law schools. To me they seemed to be sort of people who were having problems and so I decided at that point to "grow our own". I think as a matter of salaries, you permitted me quite a free hand and I went ahead and spent your money. We were paying $2,000 more a year than Harvard was paying but that is the way I was able to attract the very best of the young people because being a new school, of course, we lacked credibility and I couldn't show them a building.

Dr. T: Well, actually you recruited one of the finest faculties and that got us off to a tremendous start and got us a good reputation. Now how did you go about the miracle of getting us accredited twice, almost immediately.
Mr. S: Well, first of all you gave me a free hand which I think most new Deans do not have. You told me to keep the lower right hand corner in the black and not in the red and I managed to do that. But, I think it was the tremendous assistance of Lloyd Stuckey. He also gave me a free hand in terms of being able to make commitments. Frankly, where I thought things were doubtful, I consulted him. He was a tremendous help. Dick Smith, whom you assigned in charge of the project as the overall supervisor of the project was of tremendous assistance. He was enthusiastic. Really, Doc. Thompson, I must say, and I really mean this, it would not have been possible if you hadn't had confidence in me and I was able to do the things that had to be done and I did them quickly. I wasn't saddled with red tape and policies and so forth. Wherever I was stepping on toes I was aware of it and I tried to go around them. I think that was essentially it. Plus the fact that, I think I was very fortunate in selecting three staff people around me that were extremely dedicated ladies and they worked day and night. That really was it. The rest was just a matter of pushing onward and sitting on the side of the bed at night tired.

Dr. T: Well, in his tape, Lloyd Stuckey said that much of the law school was the brain child of yours, Joe, and much was conceived while you were sitting on the edge of the
bed figuring out and dictating what was going to be the next day's activities.

Mr. S: I must say in all due fairness that I think I was aggressive, I hope not offensively so but I know I really pushed people pretty hard to get things done. But when I look back, if I hurt feelings, I apologize. I want to say that for the record.

Dr. T: No one ever spoke to me about your being overly aggressive. Your aggressiveness was what made it become real and what made it become a reality. Now can you tell me about going back to Cleveland and the American Bar Association meeting.

Mr. S: Yes, we were inspected about the 3rd of November by Millard Ruud who was a consultant at that time for the American Bar Association. He came and inspected us. That was two months after we had opened our doors. I had predicted most of the needs so we were double in spades in everything because the general attitude that I took was that there was not going to be a second time about this inspection and I wanted it to succeed the first time. Frankly, I was very liberal in meeting the requirement. Frankly, I doubled everything to make sure it was all right. He came in and we passed with flying colors. At that point he indicated to me that there would be no problem in recommending it to the American Bar Association Committee and then Lloyd and I, if you will recall, went to Cleveland. We appeared before the
Committee. We had to make speeches. The one thing that I really regret was that at that time I had to draft the law school building by 1:00 the next day and I did. We had an architect who then went ahead and gave us the gothic style that we have here and we planned that it would be placed someplace within the campus. Well, I made representation that I felt that within five years that law school would be in existence. I know you worked hard for that, Dr. Thompson. I wasn't even on board and you were already recruiting funds for it. I remember that very distinctly. But somehow or other later on, the American Bar Association was concerned about a permanent building and I said, "Well, we have a plan." I don't know if you recall but the law school was to generate one million dollars worth of funds by the end of five years. You were to pick up another million from private foundations and another million from the public for three million dollars. Well, what bothered me was that in later years someone said to me, "Well, you were lying to us, Joe." I said, "No, I never did. That is not my style. I was told and that was what I passed on to you." It was true and I think it would have happened except for the fact that the priorities changed after you, Dr. Thompson left, but it wasn't that I did not in good faith make these representations. But at any rate, we went out with flying colors without a hitch.
Dr. T: I still think that would have worked.

Mr. S: Well, if you will recall (perhaps this should be off the record) you said, "Joe, we don't expect any money from you but on the other hand, don't expect any from us.") I had a five year plan. Lloyd knows all about it and except for the fact that as soon as we got accreditation from the AALS, I was told that I would be charged $250,000 - $300,000 administration costs a year retroactive to the time when I became Dean. I don't know why they were charging overhead on me but that wiped us out completely and, of course, delayed everything. But that is another story and all is well that ends well. The new building is beautiful.

Dr. T: Well, I felt that in the change of the administration, the very first thing they wanted a year to study was the beginning of the end of the campus proposition. Of course, we could have built a very acceptable plant and a good plant on that property that we bought over by the fieldhouse.

Mr. S: That is right. I submitted a three-pronged plan and one of them was to have a building on campus here for three to six million dollars. It was in two stages. We would have had 60,000 square feet because you can't do things all in one fell swoop. I thought it was feasible but at that time ...

Dr. T: Part of the problem was that underground parking was added and then a big food service in the building and so on and so on.
Mr. S: We were going to be charged one million dollars for the land and I thought that was a bit steep. I don't know whether you know about that. Somebody said, "Well the law school has to raise enough money to pay for the land." Well, the land was already owned by the University.

Dr. T: Well, that is news to me. Actually there appeared to be some road blocks set up on the thing.

Mr. S: Of course, that was understandable. I am not here to knock anybody. That is not my nature. I think people act in good faith.

Dr. T: Now when was it when you asked for the Sabbatical.

Mr. S: I believe. I will be honest with you. When I heard that the law school was going to be charged with $250,000, I just stated clearly that I could not be the Dean of a Law School that is going to be in financial straits. Everybody was talking about expanding and improving programs and, at the same time, they were taking money away. It just wasn't in the cards and I felt that at that point I had done what I had promised you, and that was to get a first-class law school accredited. Judge Boldt was, I don't want to call him grandfather, that might have a sinister connotation, but he was certainly a wonderful person to work with. I felt that my mission at that point was finished and I felt that I would like to have finished out my years as Dean but I didn't see
that the spirit behind the law school was what it was when I first started and I felt that I couldn't accomplish anything more. I felt that maybe someone else with a different point of view could come in and do a better job than I did.

Dr. T: Well, I was very much chocked and surprised when you asked for the Sabbatical because you had done such a magnificent job. You had started the school going well on its way. So many facets came in that frankly I didn't know about. I didn't know that you were to be charged this $250,000 a year.

Mr. S: Well, let me explain that to you. If you recall the next step was the NALS accreditation which took place in December of 1974 and final accreditation by ABA in February. We had some trouble with that. Trouble because they saw no progress in terms of a building and they were convinced at that time that promises were being made that were not being kept as far as the building was concerned and they felt that the law school, it it met adversity, could be very easily shut down because all we had was a lease and they wanted some sense of permanence and some sense of a future for the law school. As soon as we had final accreditation from the ABA and NALS I received a memorandum saying that the law school should have to pay its fair share of the overhead - which was fifteen or twenty per cent which was somewhere around $300,000 - this was retroactive to January 1st 1972. When I received that I then debated
with myself. I went into hibernation and did some soul searching and examination of conscience and I felt that at that time I could not live with the situation so I made the decision then to advise the President that I was resigning as Dean and would like some time off. I felt I deserved it and said that I would return as a faculty member. So that is how that came about plus the fact that I had begun to feel the vibrations from the ABA that they had lost confidence in the school in terms of not having made progress in our promise that we made initially in the Fall of 1972. It seemed that we were sort of dragging our feet. I submitted a plan to them that as far as the law school was concerned, we were not without a home, that we had a right to renewal for five years and we had a commitment from Benaroya. The ABA was very much upset with us particularly when we sought final approval. It was really a bit of a problem. Here was the NALS which has much higher standards, who had approved us and the ABA was having reservations about final approval which was three years later. The main area of doubt on their part was this matter of an aggressive policy of finding a permanent building. I had proposed to them that we would take over building No. 1. We were in building No. 2. We would take over totally building No. 1. We had designed a way of having all of our faculty and all of our classrooms and administration in Building No. 1.
and that the whole building No. 2 would be devoted to the library. That seemed to persuade the ABA and we got final approval based on that. That, of course, was not the way it was ultimately resolved. At any rate, I felt that I had gone as far as I wanted to go and I didn't feel that I was making a large contribution at that time and I seemed to be a bit out of step with things so that was when I decided that I wanted to spend my last few years teaching.

Dr. T: Did you come back and teach on the faculty?

Mr. S: Yes, I came back and taught full time and I must say I never missed class. In fact, I think, last year I was the only faculty member that never missed a single hour.

Dr. T: What did you teach?

Mr. S: I taught primarily Contracts, Evidence, School Law, and the Uniform Commercial Code. I didn't teach them all in one year. Contracts was primarily the area of my specialty. In anticipation of my compulsory retirement at age 65, I must say that number one, I stayed away from the law school because I felt that old Deans should not be seen. I also had to anticipate my severence from the Law School at 65 and so I tried to develop an area which I love very much and that is being a peace maker because the Lord said that we will inherit the earth. So I try to be an arbitrator. I was at that point where I was probably the number one arbitrator here in the northwest.
I don't say that to be immodest.

Dr. T: I know that that is true. Are you still doing that?

Mr. S: I have just phased it out completely. I did my last one last week. I find that in this arbitration work, I had not foreseen the fact that I would have trouble with the traveling. The traveling is so onerous and so exhausting that I decided I would find a place to teach. The University of Mississippi has been gracious. They have offered me a three year contract at a fabulous salary. I am not saying that I didn't get a good salary here, but I will be teaching there for the next three years.

Dr. T: What will you teach there?

Mr. S: I will be teaching contracts. I must say that I thought I had behind me all of this administrative work but no sooner had I met the new Dean when I went down there to buy a house that he called me in and said, "Joe, I don't know anything about running the Law School. I don't have an Associate Dean - he has quit on me, the faculty doesn't know anything about law schools. Would you please take on the responsibility of acting as Associate Dean." I told him if I had wanted to be Dean, I would have applied for the Dean's position when it was open; but I couldn't refuse him. That is not my style to refuse if he says he needs me and I hope he means it. I hope to make a main contribution there although frankly, I have gotten a little bit too old for that sort of thing.
Dr. T: Well, Joe, now I just want to say as the former President of the University of Puget Sound that you have done a phenomenal job. Really a miraculous job in starting the School, getting it set up, getting the staff, getting its library, getting the fundamental facility and since both of us are gone, it has taken some unusual twists and turns. We are fortunate that it is still in good accreditation and all because I do think that all of the things like the financial end of it, we had figured - Stuckey, Dick Smith, and myself that we would not require anything financially from the Law School until it was completely on its feet and had its facility.

Mr. S: Dr. Thompson, may I say because I like to be a fair man, I do think things were not without some justification. If you recall, all private universities throughout the country and I can quote you eighty three percent are in the red wherein seventeen percent are not in the red. I remember that you said that at one time. I do think that the University here as a whole, and we are part of it, were suffering some really tremendous financial problems. Your word is your word, but, on the other hand there is always room for justification and I like to be kind and Christian about it. I think there is a lot to be said about the Law School helping the University. After all if the University wasn't here, the Law School wouldn't be here.
Mr. S: Well, in the Committee there was Stuckey, Dick Smith, and in the latter part Max Reeves and myself. We actually discussed this and we said that to give the Law School an outstanding start, let's give it five years and not charge any administrative costs. I do know that it was a very easy thing to say, "Well, here we can pick up $200,000 for the general budget." So it was one of those things that was apropos. I want to say again, how grateful we are for it. Really in the live of the Law School, your great contribution is "writ large." It will be more and more as time goes on. It is unfortunate that people like George Boldt grow old.

Mr. S: Yes, but that is the inevitable sequence of events.

Dr. T: You are the great person and a genius in the life of the Law School and in getting it started. I just want you to know how much we appreciate it. These tapes will be part of the primary sources for the University - what we call Historical Resources. As soon as the girls get them transcribed I will give you a copy and you can edit, add, delete, or anything you want to.

Mr. S: Dr. Thompson, before we leave this subject, I don't know if I will ever have the opportunity to say this again. People can only achieve great things if somebody gives them a chance. As I said to the Board of Trustees, I am truly grateful that you gave me the opportunity to be able to do something. If somebody doesn't give you
the opportunity, you can be the biggest whizbang of the world and never accomplish anything. Like somebody said, "Why study corporate reorganization. If somebody doesn't give you a corporate reorganization to do, you are never going to be able to show that you can do it. For that I am eternally grateful to you and the University itself. I am really grateful that I had this opportunity to achieve something.

Dr. T: Long ago I made up my mind as an administrator that I would delegate authority. I would give absolute freedom. I would check up to see that everything was going well and let things develop.

Mr. S: You asked me, "How did I achieve it?" That is the secret. I did have some problems that first year. Do you remember?

Dr. T: Yes, we all did. We are most grateful. Thank you very, very much.