

**John Zalesky**  
**Narrator**

**Cole Steinberg**  
**Concordia University, Saint Paul**  
**Interviewer**

**Thanh Huynh**  
**Concordia University, Saint Paul**  
**Transcriber**

**July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**Minnesota**

**CS: Cole Steinberg**

**JZ: John Zalesky**

**CS:** This is an interview conducted as part of a larger faculty and student research project initiated by Dr. Julie Luker of Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today is July 13th, 2022. I'm with John Zaleski. My name is Cole Steinberg, and I'm an undergraduate student at Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today, I'll be talking to John about what life was like growing up in the Twin Cities. During this interview, I'm going to ask you to reflect on your childhood life experiences as they relate to a variety of social topics from that time period. For the purposes of this interview, we have defined childhood as birth through 17 years of age. To begin, please state and spell your full name.

**JZ:** John Zaleski. J-O-H-N Z-A-L-E-S-K-Y.

**CS:** Please identify your race and gender.

**JZ:** I'm a male, and I'm white.

**CS:** Please state your date of birth.

**JZ:** January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960.

**CS:** Finally, please share where you grew up, such as the name of the neighborhood or a nearby street intersection. Include any major moves you made during this time period.

**JZ:** No moves, whatsoever. I grew up. I was born in 1960, as mentioned. I was right on Jessamine Street. Probably the best way to describe it is the Maryland and Arcade area. So, a few houses off of Arcade Street. I lived there all the way until I was 25 years old.

**CS:** Okay. I'd like to learn more about your family life. Let's begin with the memories you have for immediate and extended family. Please share some memories that you have about these relationships.

**JZ:** Growing up as far as the family specifically is concerned, we took a lot of walks in the neighborhood. We used to sit on our porch and watch the people walk by and have conversations with them. Listen to maybe the Twins game on the radio. TV Back then, we had a TV, but it was pretty rare that we utilized it. So, most of the time was spent with the family. Going even sometimes

down to Lake Phalen. Spent some time down there with my mother. My father always bringing me down there, to go get water from one of the artesian wells down there, the waterfalls. We spent some time walking around the lake down there. Otherwise, or specifically with the neighborhood, there's a lot of different neighbors that we spent some time with gathered in their backyard or front yard. There was a lot of respect for everyone. Everyone was known as Mr. Tarnowski, or Mrs. Pawloski or Mr. Pawloski. It really didn't change even until I was well beyond my teen years. They are always created as sets of individuals. So, our family was quite tight niche if you will. Spent a lot of time at the Polish American Club, which is right down on Arcade streets, with various weddings and various celebrations. My father was tied in with Saint Casimir as an usher. So, there's a lot of events that took place within the usher's club that was a part of my upbringing. I was very close to all my cousins. A lot of times we spent time with them. My mother and quite a few of my first cousins or even aunts, they had various card clubs that they got together with all the time. Spent some time in individuals' homes, playing cards and just having conversations just about life. A lot of time was spent with weddings. I come from a very, very, very large family. Most of those weddings were with my mother's side. My mother grew up on the east side there. Where my father grew up on the west side of St Paul. We hung around his family but not as often. My mother and how close they were to the neighborhood. My mother's brothers and sisters, they were all just blocks away. But down the street on Maryland, where the Burger King is right now. Burger King is on Maryland and Arcade there. That was where my mother grew up. There's a house there. And they took that house, and they moved it right next door to our house. It was an empty lot next door to us, and they moved it right next door to us when I was probably five years old, six years old. So, it was basically 1965, 1966. So, for my ma it was really nostalgic. Basically, she died at the home that was I was born in. But to have a home right next door where she actually grew up and spent her entire childhood as well. But no, I had a great family. We had a very loving family. Spent all kinds of time together. Still very, very, very, very close to my sisters and the rest of my family, first cousins, second cousins, aunts, etc.

**CS:** Did you have any family pets? If so, please describe them.

**JZ:** Yeah, it was a cat; the cat's name was Tiger, [Laughter] which was interesting. I'll describe Tiger a little bit. As it grew up, I had a paper out when I was twelve or thirteen years old, and that cat followed me. Back then, our paper routes were morning and afternoon and then just once on Sunday. So that cat used to follow me every single morning. Gosh, what was that about an eight-block paper route? A cat. It was interesting, that cat was always about hundred maybe two-hundred feet at most behind me, all the way through my entire paper route. Primarily in the morning, in the evening not so much. But otherwise, that was the only family cat ever had. That was the only family pet that we had. Otherwise, I don't want to call it pets, but I had mice and turtles that I caught at Lake Phalen, that I brought home. Brought gophers home from Phalen. I don't want to call them pets because they don't last too long in my family because my parents didn't really care for me to have things like that. They were domesticated type types of things like the cat, etc. But that was about it. It was the cat.

**CS:** How are household chores divided between members of your family?

**JZ:** I grew up with two sisters who are almost eighteen or nineteen years older than me. So, I grew up pretty much as an only child and I was a child that wasn't planned for; I would put it that way. So, growing up as a single child, I have to say I had very few chores because I was-and my sisters would attest to this--I was very spoiled. I had maybe chores of cutting the grass, but that came later in life. My father and my mother, through their love languages, really did a lot for me. I reflect back and look back and state a simple fact that, I wish they would've thrown more chores at me. Granted, I was a very disciplined child growing up, and I am right now as an adult. However, I really didn't have a lot of chores. I was taught really briefly how to change my own. My father was a mechanic.

So, he changed my oil all the time, and took care of my car. He did it. He never came over whenever he called me over and said, "Hey. John, let me show you what I'm doing here." So, I look back and I really wish he would've because it would help me out immensely. But he did a lot for me there. Otherwise, it was just maybe rake in the yard a little bit. But there weren't any structured chores. I was picking up the garbage every once in a while. Otherwise, my mother was involved with doing the dishes. We were close knit, in that regard. With the five love languages, I think both my parents' love languages were just acts of service and they were just servicing. As a young kid and young adult, I probably, as any natural kid is, not going to want to do chores and I kind of took advantage of it. So, they kind of let me do what I wanted to do. But I still had a strong love for my parents. I reflect back, and there really wasn't a strong structure there. It was all good. It really worked out. Worked out well. They love me and I love them. That was the most important thing.

**CS:** Next, please describe the ways in which your family's economic status influenced your childhood.

**JZ:** Oh, wow, this is huge. I hope I don't get too emotional. My parents were very, very poor. Granted, they had their own home, but they, as my mother described it, pinching pennies to be able to afford the home that they had. They had a mortgage, and I have no idea how long it took them to pay that off. But going out and having a special dinner was going to a place like Burger King or White Castles. Very, very seldom and I could say once every maybe year we went to we'll call it a fancy restaurant. Let's just go into an Asian buffet restaurant. So, with the way that was instilled in me, I started working at a very, very, very young age. It created in me a very strong work ethic, a very strong work ethic. So, my mother stayed at home. She had a part time gig here and there, but my father was an auto mechanic-was not getting paid very much at all. I almost want to call it slave labor because I remember when I was sixteen years old working at Country Club. I worked at Burger King for six months and worked at a country club after six months there. I remember looking at my paycheck and comparing it to my father. I was actually at age seventeen, after I got a promotion to produce. At age seventeen, I was making more than my father. And that brought tears to my eyes. But my parents. When they were ringing me up, they really, really, really, really taught me the value of money. How to be careful, how to save, not spend foolishly. My mother never charged things. She had money that she saved on a regular basis. She got everything with coupons and put money in a jar to save for various trips. Every summer, we had a trip there. We took it up to a lake. So, it was like a week, spent time on the lake. My parents were poor, we were poor. They got me involved with sports at a very young age. I'll never forget. All these kids had all their hockey equipment, and my parents for shin pads; I had magazines that I wrapped around my arm, wrapped around my legs to protect my legs because they could afford shin pads for me. It helped immensely because it really affected me, and it really changed my life.

**CS:** Now I'd like to know about your experiences with religion such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, etc. Describe what you can recall about your family's religious practices when you were growing up.

**JZ:** Oh, perfect. We were we lived like about a block down from St Casimir. So, we attended church every single Sunday and eventually at Saturday services, but that wasn't until I was a little older. But my family never had a Bible in the house. It was a very strong Catholic, very strong Catholic upbringing. My father, like I said, was an usher. So, he served, which created that serving attitude in me. I serve at the church I'm at right now. Mainly different kids' ministries, but that really helped me out immensely. We went to church every Sunday, never missed. We didn't have a Bible in the house, which I look back on and reflect, that's probably one of the reasons why I changed from Catholic to maybe non-denominational believer right now. We had a strong Christian upbringing, but it was based on the Catholic Church. I was an altar boy when I was old enough to be. I spent a lot of time with the priests because they took a liking to me. Nothing was done. You

know those old stories. So, hear those stories about kids being molested, but there was nothing like that going on at all. But I was very close to the priests and had breakfast with the priests because I was an altar boy that they respected and they could call me at the last minute because we had a schedule, but they can call me at the last minute. I grew up in the St Casimir's Church School as well. So first through eighth grade, I attended that at grade school. They didn't have a kindergarten. So, I had religion classes virtually every day as well. So, it was a strong upbringing in the Catholic religion. And that changed when I turned thirteen years old. Where instead of going to Hill-Murray, I ended up going to Johnson High School, which I shared with Julian yourself. But where I grew up with Johnson High School was based on all my all my friends wanted to go there, even though my parents really wanted to go to Hill-Murray and follow the path my sisters took, which was going to Archbishop Murray. For a change to help. Very, very, very strong Catholic, very strong Catholic upbringing.

**CS:** How important or relevant is religion to you now as an adult?

**JZ:** Oh, it's really important. I am in several Bible studies. I attend church every single every single week. I never miss. I always go live once it became available to be able to go live during this covid thing. I was one of the first ones there, of course, with a mask. But I don't miss the service. I have Christ in my life. I'll do morning devotionals as often as I potentially can. I am a small group leader at church; I've been doing that for twenty years. Working with the youth, I've started with a group and they're all in first grade all the way up until right now, they're all twenty-two, twenty-three-year-old kids. They're all seniors and senior in college. I still keep in touch with that. I've known quite a few of them since first grade. They started over with sixth grade boys. Now, those boys just graduated. So very, very strong in my faith with Christ. Very, very strong with the youth of today because it brings me to tears my childhood, and it took some very bad, potentially very bad directions, but God had a plan for me. This is all part of my praise to God. I was able to do what I had to do with the youth of today, who now especially need someone in their life who can truly teach them about The Word and give them direction and be there for them. A lot of these students will reach out to me without even talking to their parents, which puts a lot on my shoulders. But with suicides, and gender identity difficulties, and concerns about not being sure if they're gay or not; I have a very open heart for all that. I'm a strong believer when you look at the truth to love spectrum. I was really strong on that truth side, but I'm moving more and more and closer and closer to the love side over the years because of my experiences. My upbringing really, really changed me. Gave me the foundation that I needed to open my eyes to having that relationship with Jesus.

**CS:** I'd like to learn more about the neighborhood which grew up. If you move during childhood, you may wish to reflect on more than one neighborhood. This is fine to do, but please indicate as you do it. Please describe what comes to mind when thinking about the neighborhood in which you grew up.

**JZ:** I was in the same neighborhood. I think my parents built the house. They saved money like crazy. They built the house in 1956. I was born, like I said, in 1960. They rented and just saved and saved to have this house. And like I said, my mother died in a house not too long ago. But I was there; I left for college, but then kind of came back until I got married. So, I was there my entire life. We're looking at from what we'll say it from birth to what, eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. So, while in the neighborhood I had yard working jobs. Again, I think I shared with you my upbringing, which was an insanely, insanely poor family. So, I had a yard working job that I worked just cutting people's lawns and also shoveling their sidewalks. I did that at a very, very young age. And I had a paper route for a couple, two or three years. That was at age twelve or thirteen. I shined shoes, went up and down Arcade Street and shined shoes. I went into various bars and as a twelve- and thirteen-year-old, going into various bars, strip arcade streets. You would

never do that now. You would never walk around and be a mile from home, for that matter on the east side right now. So, I shined shoes. I also sold lemonade at lemonade stands. I used to go to the Phalen Golf Course and dive in ponds with friends to get golf balls and sell the golf balls to the golfers. So, I had funny little silly jobs like that just to be able to get money. I bred mice and sold the mice to the pet store to earn money that way. Then when I was thirteen years old, I also was a caddy at Hillcrest Golf Course. I caddied from age thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen. So, for three years that I worked my way up to being an A-caddie and caddied in the Pettinger Golf Classic, headed for the pros at Hillcrest. Made a lot of money. Basically, when I caddied, I biked all the way to Hillcrest Golf Course. The bike ride from the Rock and Roll East Side, as I call it, on Jessamine all the way to Hillcrest Golf Course. Oh, my. It's got to be probably about a five-mile bike ride, a thirteen-year-old biking that far in that neighborhood way back then, it's insanely safe. I look back at it, it's like, oh my gosh, I can't believe it did that. I would never, ever let our thirteen-, fourteen- or fifteen-year-old even bike go across the street, for that matter, in the neighborhood that we're living in right now. So, things have changed over the over the years, but it brings back the structure that had really empowered me with my work ethic. When I first turned sixteen, I started working at Burger King. Worked there for six months. It was very underpaid. Found a job at Country Club and the job at Country Club, which was a block away. I worked my way, after eleven months I got promoted from carry out to produce. [unclear] To make good money there. I was seventeen years old, looked at my father's paycheck and saw that I was making more than my dad. It brought me to tears. The neighborhood itself, especially from hanging around with your friends, playing ditch doorbell, did silly things like that. Going to the playground and playing hockey, playing soccer, or playing baseball with your friends down by various neighborhoods and various playgrounds, and getting together for football and football games. I mean, it was a great neighborhood. Really tight fit neighborhood, at least that regard. That pretty much covers it. It was just everyone watching out for each other. We had all the friends that I had. And again, it was more associations with just the various playgrounds. I grew up playing sports. I still play, I still play hard despite the age I'm at right now. So, it was just like a lot of hockey, football. A lot of great memories play with the various playgrounds, with hockey and football and baseball, etc. as well.

**CS:** How well did the residents in your neighborhood know each other and what were some of those relationships like?

**JZ:** Oh yeah, like I said, we were tightknit. We all knew who everybody was, whether it be the next door neighbor, or the neighbor across the street, or three or four houses down. The Dexheimer's, the Gidlin's, the Gundeck's, the Pawloski's, the Tarnowski's, the Urbanski's, the Zellmer's, the Scrapeck's. You knew everyone in your neighborhood from the next door to... there wouldn't have been a home within a block radius where you didn't know the person that was in that house. It was definitely a more tight fit then, and even the different communities that I grew up with and owned homes. Various [unclear] that I experienced. So, it was tight in that regard, for sure.

**CS:** Next, I would like to learn about the values shared by your family and your neighbors. Values are principles or standards that help guide behavior. What memories come to mind that demonstrate what these values were for your family and your neighbors?

**JZ:** My parents were very strong on making sure that I abided by the Ten Commandments. You know, just making sure that I did things according to according to God's will. The neighbors themselves, there's individuals that you respected. If you walked on Emil Truskolaski's lawn; Emil would yell at you. And I respected Emil, and I respected every one of my neighbors. I'll never forget, there were times when we kicked the ball in somebody's yard and we were playing kickball or whatever. We were overly concerned about going in their yard just to go get a ball. I had that respect for making sure that if we looked in the house, make sure if they were looking at us. You know, just give a little wave and just to let up and point to the ball and go grab the ball and bring it

bring it back. There was there's a lot of respect with everything that we did and each and everyone's yard. There were the of the times with the parents that really taught that if I got in trouble and the parent came to our house, my parents would believe not me, but believe the parent that's talking about what little Johnny did. Same thing with growing up at the church. If the nuns or the teachers saw that I was doing something inappropriate, and they discussed it with my parents. My parents believed the teachers and the nuns. And of course, I was disciplined. That was part of my upbringing, bringing in the values that were overall instilled with me. Quite different today than it has been in the past. That's for sure. But those were very strong values that I want to say that I've taken with me with the best I can with our kids; we have as well.

**CS:** In what way were your values similar to or different from others who lived in your neighborhood at that time?

**JZ:** Well, they were very consistent. When I started expanding my reach of friends beyond the neighborhood. And I started hanging around with kids that were-maybe I was probably back when I was eleven or twelve years old-once my parents met them. If they had values that my parents didn't see, my parents spoke out to me and told me very bluntly that, no, you shouldn't be hanging around with so and so. We just don't like their values, what have you. So, my parents, just like I explained with knowing everyone within that block and a half radius, so very well. The parents and of course the kids, and they trusted the parents to know that they're going to discipline at the same kind of values that they did with me. Once I got beyond those blocks, and once I got into five, four, five, six, seven blocks away, once I started a friendship that way, those values that were instilled in me. My parents changed my changed my view of quite a few people that I was hanging around with. So, it was strongly enforced.

**CS:** Now I'm going to ask you all about leisure time. Describe some of the ways in which you, your family and your neighbors engage in leisure time when you were growing up.

**JZ:** Yeah, there were a lot of picnics, especially with the ushers. We were really tight with the ushers at St Casimir. So, there's a lot of things that we did with the ushers. My father was an usher and did all the services and seating and collecting, doing the collection plate. But he was also involved with, they had Thursday night bingo, and he was involved with the Thursday night bingo. But we did a lot with them. We also did a lot with our family there. And some of the families were close enough in the neighborhood. The neighborhood was tight in that we've always had conversations and with the church together. They knew each other because of because of church. So, there were various occasions that we did get together. They had for the kids to have the opportunity to play. But I guess the best way to describe it is there wasn't a lot of having everybody come to a certain person's yard and bring something. It was more like you're going for a walk or just mingling on the way to church, doing various things. We had an opportunity to have conversations on the sidewalk or as people passed by. We're sitting on higher ups on our porch. That's the best way to describe that. That's the best memory that I have with regards all that.

**CS:** Describe some of the activities engaged in when you were with your friends.

**JZ:** Yeah, I think elaborate on some of those as well. It was like playing the playing, playing ditch, playing kickball. Again, a lot of... actually when I was four years old, my parents brought me down to the playground and started playing hockey. So, I started hockey at a very young age. So, it was always hockey games, played football at a very young age, played baseball at a very, very young age. So, it was always gathering friends in the neighborhood, and I was always that instigator and get on the phone and calling everybody. I was like, let's gather at so-and-so, play at Lockwood playground or Duluth playground or Phalen playground or Arlington or Wilder. It didn't matter what playground, and play a softball game or I'm sorry, a baseball game, or go to that sandlot that

was right off Hawthorne and play a baseball game there, or again play a football game where if you touch your tackled. So, there was a lot of activity of playing hockey. I remember calling all the different rinks to find out they just got flooded. So, it had good ice. Got together and played a hockey game there, pickup games there. Otherwise, it played a lot of organized baseball and organized football and organized hockey as well throughout the neighborhood. That was really instilled in my upbringing, especially with my I was with my mother. My mother was an athlete. My father was a gymnast. So, he was more involved with individual sports. But my mother was very involved with team sports. So, she instilled in me that love that I still have today playing competitive hockey, competitive softball, etc. Great, great upbringing with the sports I was involved with. I still love it. Embrace it to this day.

**CS:** What types of toys did you play with growing up?

**JZ:** Oh, probably one of the ones that come to mind is my Moterrific, playing Hot Wheels. Moterrific was a game that I played with a couple of the neighbors. One specific neighbor, but a couple of the neighbors. It was just a racetrack that we set up and we had matchbox cars or Hot Wheels cars that we drove around and created sounds like an ambulance because there was an accident. But otherwise, we played with army men. Not so much cowboys and Indians. But it was more army men. That was that was a big one. Otherwise, as far as other games are concerned, it was playing Risk, that one, that game comes to mind. We had gatherings with some friends doing that. A little bit with Monopoly, but the one that really comes to mind that really brings back the best memories is just playing Moterrific and playing with the Hot Wheels and the Matchbox cars with the neighbors, for sure.

**CS:** Okay. What bands or music genres were your favorite?

**JZ:** So back in that era, oh my. Now you are hitting a... I still am a band junkie today. The first the first concert I saw, I think that's what started it all, when I was either fourteen or fifteen years old. I went and saw the Bay City Rollers and saw them in concert. I think that's what started it all. But I was seeing concerts, and I kept the journal. This journal I started when I was twelve years old. And I kept that journal, and I wrote into every single day, kept all my concert stops. Since we're on this topic all the way up until I was like twenty-three years old. So, I had gotten years of the things I did from morning to evening that I still have today, all these different journals. But I went through it, not too long ago just for nostalgic purposes. And I remember seeing concert after concert after concert. I am a concert goer where I'll get front row, or if it's a general admission I'll be up the front row. So, I saw the likes of Freddie Mercury from ten feet away. I saw Queen, ACDC, Styx, Ted Nugent, Van Halen, the list goes on and on and on and on. And again, a lot of these bands, I was seeing once a month at these various venues: the Xcel Energy Center, or Wilkinson Auditorium, or at the Met, or Uncle Sam's, which is now First Avenue. You know, the likes of Alia and Billy Squire. But my childhood from first band I saw, the Bay City Rollers when I was sixteen. I saw concerts from sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, whatever, twenty, quite often. Like I said, once a month, once every two months. The likes of say Journey, I mean, it goes on and on and on and on. I've seen Journey three times and Steve Perry, Kiss. So, to this day I love my new music. And it started with my upbringing and even the upbringing going on when I wasn't old enough. There's a lot of bars that I was able to still get in because they didn't really card back then. But I saw the likes of Chameleon, Dare Force, and Rocking Horse, these are bands that when I was old enough to follow. I used to go watch those various bands, oh my, probably three or four times a week. So, my music upbringing and going to hang out at a bar. Granted I wasn't you don't get drunk all the time, but I just went to a bar because I just love my music. I absolutely love it again. Even to this day, I still enjoy my music immensely. That started with a lot of the music that I grew up with and the concerts I went to from the rock and roll east side. I call it the rock and roll east side. The pain reliever comes to mind [Laughter] when I talk about the rock and roll east side.

**CS:** Um, with that era of music. It was sort of considered controversial. Did that conflict with your parents' values or did they encourage your exploration into music?

**JZ:** Grant Yeah, you're right; that's secular music. They could see that I enjoyed it, because right now I go to a lot of Christian concerts, but then again, I still I still go to a lot of different venues that have music, that plays music from the seventies and eighties where I grew up. But my parents they never had an issue; They trusted me. And I'm glad they did because I felt I was a well-behaved boy. Again, like I shared with you that part of the reason why I do youth ministry right now is because there were there's a few things that I'm not proud of. And what I did when I was sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, whatever, nineteen years old. That I could have gotten in a lot of trouble or could have taken some very, very bad paths. So, I want to say God was watching out for me. But my parents allowed me, and they never had an issue. Granted, I remember them yelling in the basement because... I was eventually when I was old enough, I had my own stereo. Bought my own stereo. I was sixteen years old. I was making a lot of money from that perspective, and I had my job. So, when I was twelve, thirteen years old, saved that in my savings account. I went and bought a lot of things on my own. I bought a stereo and I used to crank that music in the basement and just remember my parents just yelling down the stairs, you know, turn down the music. That was about it. They never really had a comeback by saying, you shouldn't be listening to the devil's music. They never really said that. Maybe they don't understand the lyrics, but I don't think it really influenced me to do anything wrong, let's put it that way. Because music can influence you, it really can. But it never really did. I think that's because we went to church every week. I was going too. It was part of my part of my upbringing. So, it was kind of like that, we'll call it that balance between, right now even have that same balance, between my love for my past with my secular music, and then my love for Christian music. Listening to Christian music on T.T.I.S and seeing a lot of different Christian artists live as well. Because my love for a of music and going to church and listening to phenomenal worship music at the church I go to.

**CS:** Next, let's discuss your experience with schooling. Please describe what it was like going to school as a child.

**JZ:** Like I said, I went to St Casimir. Just had a walk there. So, it wasn't the old, I had to take the bus, or I had to walk uphill on the way back and kept on the way down. So, it's just a block walk for my first eight years of schooling. And working with the disciplining of the nuns and the disciplining of the teachers, what they said was the rule. And if little Johnny did something wrong, you know, the teacher or the nuns reported it to mom and dad and little Jeremy was disciplined. So, the schooling upbringing changed when I started with my sports friends and my different friends when I was thirteen years old. Instead of going to Hill-Murray, which reflecting back, I wish I would've. But then again, my parents allowed me to go to [unclear], went to Cleveland, then I went to Johnson. And I never want to say I made a mistake, but it felt like I went back a year from going from eighth grade at a parochial school, St Casimir, going to Cleveland in ninth grade. I was just like, oh my gosh, I learned to stuff when I was in seventh grade. So of course, I'm not going to speak up because I was not a very good student back then. That changed over the years. So, I actually have an undergraduate degree. I went back for my master's, so I changed over the years. So that's why I reflect back on to state the simple fact that I wish I went to Hill-Murray because my academics would've improved much better, of course. But then again, I turned out pretty dog gone good. Thanks to God's direction and just thanks to just kind of, let's say, waking up. But it was there's a lot of religion instilled. And the nuns made sure that you did indeed learn. They disciplined you, making sure that you had that opportunity to learn. And they made sure that you did indeed learn. They forced it on us pretty much look at it that way.

**CS:** Which teacher stands out to you most in your memory and why?



**JZ:** Wow, let's see. That could go back from the parochial days of St Casimir or even high school. Boy, there's a lot of them. A lot of them that really, really, really, really stand out. Oh, man. Let's see what. There are different ways I can talk about the various impacts, whether it has an impact on the change my lifestyle or the impact that really helped me academically. That could be a lot of ways. And so, I hate to elaborate. Hit it on various teachers. So let me let me start with just going and I'll just hit with just one because I just remember encountering her, and she reached out to me after several years. That was my kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Evenson. I went from mom and dad. My mom stayed at home. So, my ma taught me a little bit here and there to Mrs. Evenson, and that kind of began my structure into learning and to really develop that that additional discipline. Because again, discipline was also partially taught by the teachers and nuns, etc. So, Mrs. Evenson took a liking with me and spent some extra time with me. I really felt that she... granted was my first experience with school, so maybe that's what's really kind of stands out. But there was a lot that she did for me. That even a couple, two or three years, I was in first, second and third grade just in coloring her; she seemed to ask me questions about, you know, how are things going? You know, are you still working on such and such? She seemed to have an impact, but it may have been because it was my initial first time at school, but I remember when first, second, third all the way. There's various there's various teachers that all had a strong impact on me. But I think I would just reflect back rather than elaborate on so many. It would probably take a long, long time. I'll just reflect back on her. She really kind of jumps out because again, I think it was my first experience with something other than my parents. Let's put it that way.

**CS:** For a final topic, I'm going to ask you to reflect on local and global issues such as war, poverty, discrimination, social unrest, etc. In your opinion, what were some of the biggest local or global issues affecting the people in your neighborhood when you were growing up?

**JZ:** For me, for sure. It was the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War had a very strong and large impact on me. My brother-in-law was involved with it. I'll never forget seeing the accounts of all the dead that died during the during the war and never having to go enlist for the draft and thinking I was going to be going there as well. So that had a strong, very strong impact on me. Otherwise, it was for our neighborhood, there was a lot of influence from my sisters. Who were quite a bit older. My sisters are pretty much old enough to be, I think, when they used to bring me around me some people thought that I was the son of one of my sisters all the time. So, my sisters incorporated the peace and make love, not war. You know, they kind of grew up in that area. So, there was a lot of the peace initiative that was there. My family had a love for everyone in the neighborhood. So, there wasn't really any discrimination at all in our neighborhood. Granted said our neighborhood was all white. But the one place that I remember going to well, like I shared with you, going a big day, going out to an Asian restaurant. There was an Asian restaurant on the Selby Dale area in the Selby Dale area. That area growing up was a very, very high crime area. East Side was not. So, I remember my parents going over there. We had an Asian food, so there were never any really true concerns even back then. I think my parents just instilled a love where all children were [unclear] and just instilled love in me. Other than that, you know, my parents were not really political. I know where my parents stood back then, and I know that that changed over the years. But I'd have to say they weren't really one to protest or anything like that. They just lived in their neighborhood, and they loved their neighbors, and they went to church on a regular basis, and just kind of kept to themselves. That's probably the best way to the best way to describe it as far as those memories. If I were to open my diary and maybe it was a journal and started looking back at pages, and when I started as 1972, 1973 and maybe some of the comments that I made way, way back then, maybe some things that would still my mind. That would be really interesting to bring that to light. Read captions to you guys or read captions that I thought would be worthwhile reading to you because there's a lot of my memories; my daily memories were in those in those words. And again, like I

said, I had my diary from 1972 to 1982, 1983. Every single day I wrote in that thing about all the activities that I was doing and what was going on in the world, what was going on in my life and the things that I did. But anyway, yeah, that's I can't think of anything from that perspective that I'll say that there that stands out.

**CS:** Did your family or your neighborhood have a bomb or fallout shelter in case of a nuclear war? If yes, where was it and what was it in?

**JZ:** We did have it at that St Casmir. There was a fallout shelter. We went through those drills back then as we're talking about the sixties. And it was funny. I just remember it's like, okay, if we have this drill, tuck your head down and put it underneath your desk. It's like, oh, boy, that's really going to do a lot. I reflect back and laugh, but the bomb shelter was in the basement of St Casmir, which was, like I said, about a block away.

**CS:** This is the end of our interview. Your responses are invaluable, and we really appreciate that you took the time to do this today. Thank you so much for participating.