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Remembering Erving Goffman

Russell Dynes:

Had the New President, So I Said, "OK, Erving, I Am Sending Over a Reporter"

This interview with Russell Dynes, professor emeritus at the University of Delaware, was recorded over the phone on February 4, 2009. Dmitri Shalin transcribed the interview, after which Dr. Dynes edited the transcript and gave his approval for posting the present version in the Erving Goffman Archives. Breaks in the conversation flow are indicated by ellipses. Supplementary information and additional materials inserted during the editing process appear in square brackets. Undecipherable words and unclear passages are identified in the text as "[?]".

[Posted 05-19-09]

Dynes: Hello, this is Russ.

Shalin: Greetings, Russell. This is Dmitri Shalin from the University of Nevada. How are you?

Dynes: OK, how are you?

Shalin: I'm OK. Is this a good time to talk?

Dynes: Yes, sure.

Shalin: Wonderful. I want to ask you if it is OK that I record, transcribe, and then send to you the transcript of our conversation for further revision, redaction, and so on?

Dynes: Sure.

Shalin: Wonderful. Did you have a chance to look up at any interviews or memoirs?

Dynes: A couple, yes.

Shalin: So you have an idea what the project is about.

Dynes: Yes.

Shalin: If you don't mind, perhaps you can start with the circumstance under which you met Erving, what opinion you had about his scholarship, and we shall take it from there.

Dynes: OK. Actually, our relationship was somewhat unique in a sense that my contact with him was primarily when he was president of the ASA, then

right before he died. There were certain similarities – you can make the decision on how important they are . . .

Shalin: Everything is of interest to me. So whatever comes to mind. . .

Dynes: OK. Well, there are certain similarities between Erving and myself. We were both born in Canada. My grandfather migrated to Saskatchewan, and then lost most of his family. My father was orphaned at ten. I used to spend summers in Canada. I believe that Erving got a degree at Toronto [where] my mother earlier got a conservatory degree in music. So we had a certain historical family background, although I don't believe we ever talked about it extensively, except that we were both born in Canada. I don't think we had any long-term discussions about that. Also, in terms of our careers, I think we were quite different in a sense that my career was interspersed with administrative activity, which I don't think Erving was involved with. I chaired a graduate department at Ohio State. With a colleague I formed a research center that became internationally known. Also, I was involved in associational activities that redeveloped the North Central Sociological Association. I was involved with the sociology of religion group and so forth.

When I went to ASA, I was a first person who had a five year term [appointment]. There were a couple of other people who may have taken a year off or so to work in the office, but I was the first person with a five year term. That meant that I worked with four or five other presidents before I got to Erving.

Shalin: And your position at the ASA was that of an executive director.

Dynes: Yes, the executive officer. . . . The association was constructed [in such a way that it] had an administrative officer, who was very good, but some people thought that she was perhaps too elitist [**laughing**]. That was during the 70s, so there was a certain amount of . . . I was to make a transition while I was there to make a modification in the Association toward more academic input and so forth. I worked with a number of presidents during my time, very diverse people – Milt Yinger, Tad Blalock, Pete Rossi, William Foote Whyte. So I had been there a while. Erving was totally unfamiliar with the ASA, and also, I think, with the associational activities. He probably gave papers but he wasn't involved in the nitty-gritty of how you put together a meeting and that type of things. Some of the other presidents involved in ASA and other groups were more familiar with day-to-day routines and activities that were necessary. So my career to a certain extent was more administrative than Erving's.

The other thing was that when I entered the field, Erving was there for only . . . We got our degrees at a roughly the same time. When did he get his Ph.D.?

Shalin: Erving got his Ph.D. in 1953.

Dynes: OK. I got my degree in 1954, but I put four years in the military before then, and I don't think Erving was in the military.

Shalin: No, he was not, so far as I know.

Dynes: We were roughly the same age and far along in life.

Shalin: Erving was born in 1922, and you?

Dynes: In 1923. . . . I was going to say that when I am on my 86th birthday. . .

Shalin: Congratulations, you've made it that far.

Dynes: I knew Erving's work before he became president. I was familiar with *Presentation of Self, Asylums*, those types of things. My interests were more in the area of social organization, religion, later – disaster in the context of organization. I was aware of his theories and generally very positive toward them, but it was beside myself, so to speak. Now do you want to shift to . . .

Shalin: That was a nice historical outline. Now, you said that Erving was something of an elitist – perhaps you can elaborate on that.

Dynes: Well, I think in the context of his vocation he was an intellectual and not a departmental member. And he was not involved in maintenance of the discipline, so to speak.

Shalin: He was a pure academic, in other words.

Dynes: Yes, yes. Now I think maybe elitist is a bad term, but I think he was not involved. You can say he was aloof.

Shalin: What is the word you used?

Dynes: Aloof from what was going on.

Shalin: I see.

Dynes: Actually, most of our contacts at the ASA were essentially . . . they were interactional, but on the other hand they were somewhat personal. He was not very knowledgeable about ASA. I think somebody said that he saw

presidency as a culmination of his career – I think this is probably true. He wanted to be a president, but on the other hand, he was totally unfamiliar with what was involved. Let me talk a little bit about the ASA if you don't mind.

Shalin: That's perfectly fine. Go ahead.

Dynes: As I said, I worked with other presidents. I was in my last year and I was going to be leaving. I had to figure out what I wanted to do [**laughing**], whether I wanted to stay in Washington, whether I wanted to be a provost or a chair, and so forth. I'll come to some of that later. When somebody was elected, we would run it in the *Footnotes*. I would usually ask somebody to do a story or biography of the new president and do it in a way that we could move away from the usual "He got a degree in X, Y, and Z." I may have asked John Lofland to write a piece on that. He refused [**laughing**]. I said, "You don't need to make a critique. All I need is a personalized view of Erving." My recollection is that he said something like, "You better say something positive or he would be irritated."

Shalin: The request to prepare a biography went not to Erving but to someone else?

Dynes: To someone else. [I wanted] to get away from the usual degree count.

Shalin: Something different than a resume.

Dynes: Now, I may have asked somebody else after that, I am not sure. It soon became apparent that I couldn't get a more personalized story. We had a publishing deadline, so we ended up with a standard resume account that he was this and that. It startled me that no one would do a personalized story about him. It seemed to me they were afraid that whatever they say, Erving would have been critical of it.

Shalin: Were they afraid of consequences?

Dynes: Yes. Now, when he was elected . . . [The usual sequence is that] first you have a president elect who then becomes president, and then past-president. To an extent, you become involved for three years. He showed up after he was elected at a meeting – and I cannot remember where it was, maybe in New York – introduced himself, and we chatted briefly. About that time, reporter from some paper, and I don't know which, came in looking for an interview. I had the new president, so I said, "OK, Erving, I am sending over a reporter." In ten or fifteen minutes he came back. He growled at me and said, "Don't ever do this to me again."

[Laughter]

Dynes: My wife, who often helped me the functions, meetings, and so forth, said – and she is rather outspoken, knew sociologists very well – she said, “Erving, you agreed to run for president – this is it.” And I think, looking back at it, this sort of structured our relationship. In other words, you’ve got certain obligations, you are not on a free ride, so to speak. You’ve got certain things you should do, including interviews, and so forth. I think that structured our relationship in the association. I don’t think that Erving as president had any agenda. Some presidents come with – I don’t know if “agenda” is the right term . . .

Shalin: . . . interest, program, ideas.

Dynes: Interest. Tad Blalock, even though he was a methodologist, had a strong interest in teaching programs. Bill Whyte and Pete Rossi were interested in what could be called “applied sociology.” [They produced a book] on applied sociology reflecting their interest. It was outside the annual meeting. That type of things. You do what reflects the interest of the presidents, what they wanted to do. I don’t think he had any idea what he wanted to do. He was not overly interested in ongoing activities the ASA. . . . If you are dealing with the issues of programs, budget, and so forth – he was not particularly interested in that. He assumed certain ritual responsibility. For example, he obviously chaired [ASA] council. He was not very good at chairing council. When I say that [I stress] that most sociologists are not very good at chairing council.

Shalin: Was it the way he ran the meeting, acknowledge participants?

Dynes: It was not structured very well. To run the meeting you need an iron hand. If you have 15 sociologists with varied interests, sometimes you need to run it pretty efficiently. He would get interested in certain discussions. He would participate in them, sometime even going over time. He’d get interested in it, would carry on a discourse with other members, and forget the time. Often I would have to, after maybe 15 minutes or so, press him and say, “Look, we have to take a break.” And he would rather indelicately suggest what people might do during the break [**laughing**]. He would get involved in the meeting intellectually.

Shalin: He took a real interest in certain things.

Dynes: That’s right. He was not . . . The other thing is that I don’t think he ever was involved in the ASA before.

Shalin: He attended meetings and presented papers.

Dynes: He didn't know what was going on, why certain things were important. I cannot recall specifically, but there may be a member of the council who had a particular bias that you had to sit on. He wasn't familiar with the personnel . . . which interests they had. He was simply not familiar with the broad activities, and I don't mean to say he was necessarily neglecting [his responsibilities]. He had an interest in certain things, occasionally picked on something that sounded interesting, and then could go on too long[**laughing**]. . . .

Now, a couple of incidents that happened, episodes – I don't know how to call them.

Shalin: Episodes, anecdotes – whatever you can remember.

Dynes: We lived in Washington fairly close to the office. The DuPont Circle, if you know where it is.

Shalin: Yes, I do.

Dynes: That was our neighborhood, so to speak. And one night, after the council meeting or before, we took a group of people out for dinner, probably six people. We went to a favorite restaurant of ours. As I was walking I recalled stories about Erving and restaurants where he would be guaranteed to create chaos. As we were walking, it suddenly dawned on me that since this was our favorite restaurant, I didn't want him to screw things up. So as we walk in, the maitre d' greeted me, and I said, "Emilio, I want you to meet Erving Goffman. He is food critic from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*." The other people behind us woke up, I think.

Shalin: Goffman already was part of your group you took to the restaurant?

Dynes: You know, Erving could screw things up for all of us. The maitre d' recognized me, and I think he picked up the fact that I was joking. On the other hand, the service was tremendous, the food was very good, and even as we were walking out, Erving said, "You know, the food was very good" [**laughing**].

Shalin: He said it to you?

Dynes: Probably to others. I was partially protecting myself because I didn't want him to mess up our engagement at that time.

One other thing that occurred later – in fact many of those things took place during the meetings, eating at the hotels, things like that. We were at some meeting; it may have been a council meeting, and we are having

lunch. Erving, I and JoAnn Ruckel, who was an administrative officer at the time, were sitting at a table, talking about what had to be done, [how to insure] the continuity of the organization. A friend of mine from Southern Cal – he was not a sociologist – stopped by the table and started chatting. The conversation went on a little longer than I was comfortable with, so I decided I better introduce him to other people at the table. You know, “This is JoAnn Ruckel, this is Erving Goffman.” And my friend says, “Not *the* Erving Goffman?!”

[**Laughter**]

Erving, who was sitting there patiently while we chatted, turned very quickly and told my friend that we were doing business and he was interrupting us. But the important thing was my friend’s remark – “*the* Erving Goffman.”

Shalin: What was Erving’s reply?

Dynes: He said, “Well, inform our friend that he is interrupting us.”

Shalin: I see.

Dynes: . . . Several other things. He hadn’t had a problem with the staff. He was always very courteous. He wouldn’t ask me what they do. . .

Shalin: He was not a strict taskmaster with the staff.

Dynes: No. One other thing occurred to me last night that I didn’t think about before. He became ill before the meeting and presidential address. As I indicated, we were in the process of moving to Delaware. In fact, we probably [already] bought a house up here. When we had a meeting at Washington, I would bring up my own wine because hotels will charge you an arm and a leg. I brought up some wine, and in talking to him I said I had a store in Delaware where [I got it]. It wasn’t an expensive wine, pretty cheap wine. Anyway, in the course of the conversation Erving says, “It’s pretty good wine.” Then we moved, and it may have been at the time of the meeting or at the beginning of the academic year when Erving was not around for the meeting.

Shalin: That was the 1982 meeting where Erving was supposed to have delivered his presidential address?

Dynes: Yes. We were moving at that time. I had to start the academic year up here. Anyway, before I came here, I checked around several positions of

provost and chair . . . Helen Gouldner, Al Gouldner's ex-wife, was a dean here.

Shalin: At Delaware?

Dynes: Yes. In fact, she came in as chair, moved up to dean, and wanted me to come there. She came to Washington sometime trying to recruit me. It seems an appropriate place to be. Our kids were on the East Coast, we have another son in Virginia, which is convenient.

Anyway, we came here, bought the house, and I bought some wine that I took back to Washington and served to Erving. I said to him, "It's not an expensive wine. I had discovered this wine store which looks like a truck stop, but they probably have the best collections of wine I'd ever seen. Now they advertise themselves as the fourth largest beer distributor in the country. Looks like a truck stop but they got great wine. . . . Anyway, I wrote him after I got here, "I got the wine that you like, I bought me a case and I bought you a case. The case is only 70 bucks but I will charge you \$100 for delivery because I have to go across two state lines with alcohol." He wrote back, sent me a check for the wine and a long essay on how you move alcohol across state line – how you'd put it on the running board, cover it, and then he said, 'Oh, that's right, cars don't have running boards anymore.'" Anyway, he died soon after that. So here I am with this case of wine, and I have never met Gillian. In fact, he was very private. I am not sure he ever mentioned her.

Shalin: Do you know when they had married?

Dynes: No, I don't know. I think it was during that year. I think they had a baby.

Shalin: Yes, they did. She must have been born a few months before Erving died.

Dynes: Yes. Whenever presidents show up at the meeting, they usually bring up spouse, but I had no clue about her. So I was trying to figure out what to do with the wine. I had already cashed the check. I finally dug her address and wrote to Gillian, explained her the situation, saying Erving paid me for the wine, I would be willing to contribute what he paid me to some fund at the ASA. She never responded. Six months or so later, I go down, pick a bottle of wine, and saw that, "Well, this is Erving's, but I'll drink to that." He was very private about himself, his family, and the whole range of things.

Shalin: You never met his son.

Dynes: No. He was obviously aware that I was born in Canada, but I don't remember any extensive conversation with him about that, which is probably too bad. My grandfather with his ten children moved to Saskatchewan. That was somewhat parallel to Erving's family moving to Manitoba.

Shalin: His mother came to the U.S. from Russia in 1913, and his father did the same around 1917. Erving was born in 1922 in Manitoba, I think. They moved to Dauphin, then back to Winnipeg. He studied in Toronto and then went to Chicago for his graduate work. I meant to ask you if you see any connection between Erving's and your – and others like Hughes, Gillian – Canadian roots and the work they did, professional interests, and so on. It might be an idle question, but do you feel you could speculate on that?

Dynes: It maybe that immigrant's status was more common in Canada. For example, my great grandfather came from Ireland, but protestant Ireland. So in Ontario, in rural areas there were protestant towns and catholic towns. There was a good deal more, if you will, of the Protestant-Catholic conflict than you would experience . . . well, you might experience it here in the Northeast. But the farming economy may have pivoted the migration and may have created more of the interaction problems than we have here in the US. I know Everett Hughes was, I think, from Quebec.

Shalin: Didn't he teach at McGill?

Dynes: Yes. And McGill was a protestant equivalent of . . . Well, the University of Montreal is the Catholic-French connection, and McGill is the protestant one. My great grandfather came from Ireland and worked on the [?] Erie Canal, he was planning to buy a farm. And then his kids, my grandfather and most of the other kids stayed in Ontario, but my grandfather migrated to Saskatchewan because railroads were connected and the railroads were probably giving away the land. I think they moved that way. My father ended up in North Dakota, an uncle [?] had rescued him after a while. Most of the kids moved into the Northern tier. My father's oldest brother was in Minneapolis, another one in a Miles City, Montana. My father ended up in Fargo, North Dakota State, and so forth. I think that later migration was more Eastern European. At any rate, it was different than the earlier migration, particularly in Ontario where it was pretty solidly protestant.

Shalin: There were four brother and four sisters in the Averbakhs, Erving parents' family. Erving's mother was the youngest in that family. They migrated to the U.S. I recently attended a birthday party for Erving Goffman's sister, Frances Bay, where I found family albums, with some of these materials now posted on the web. If you are interested in Erving's ancestors, you can find it there.

Dynes: What did his father do in Winnipeg?

Shalin: His father owned a department store in Dauphin, Manitoba, although they often visited Winnipeg and eventually moved in there. The store sold things like clothes, dry goods, other stuff. Father did quite well for himself; mother stayed home and took care for the family. Erving was a very precocious, some might say today, a “hyperactive” kid. According to the family album, relatives used to say he would grow up to be either a gangster or a genius.

Dynes: [Laughing].

Shalin: He seemed to fulfill the promise by becoming an intellectual genius-gangster – always probing, violating conventions, checking how the social world works.

Dynes: Yes. My contact with him was generally very positive. A lot of the people you talked to were probably students or colleagues that had a different power relationship with him.

Shalin: This is very important. Could you elaborate? Did you feel that the two of you were on the same footing?

Dynes: Yes, I think so. I wasn’t trying to match him intellectually, but in terms of my career I accomplished certain things. I wasn’t anal. And because I worked reasonably effectively with other presidents who had different intellectual and philosophical bases, he couldn’t . . .

Shalin: . . . intimidate you.

Dynes: . . . intimidate me. No.

Shalin: You weren’t likely to exclaim, “*the* Erving Goffman himself?!” Erving was reasonably accommodating in his interaction with you, right?

Dynes: I was partially preventative [laughing]. In the restaurant I was preventative because I didn’t want him to screw things up. I think he enjoyed the fact that he was introduced as food critic. So his relationship with me and my wife were pretty open. We were in the academy too long to be intimidated by him.

Shalin: Russell, is your wife with you?

Dynes: She died five years ago.

Shalin: She also knew Erving.

Dynes: Oh, yes. In fact, she would usually help at the office. When we entertained, she would be the one to. . . . She had a vast knowledge of the sociological community and so forth.

Shalin: She must have been a great help to you.

Dynes: On both national and international levels.

Shalin: Do you remember how Erving came down with the cancer diagnosis? When did you learn the news?

Dynes: He may have missed one council meeting before that. After that meeting I wrote him a long letter, not the minutes but what had gone on. And I assumed that time that this illness . . . that he would be there for the annual meeting. You might get this letter, it might be in the ASA archives [you mentioned].

Shalin: Bill Gamson, who told me about his experience with Erving, wrote a letter to ASA main office, telling them that the Goffman archives is a serious undertaking, that he sees no point holding back the Goffman file, that he expects everything related to his presidency to be available to serious scholars. The ASA sent me Goffman's resume which he must have submitted when he ran for presidency, plus two obituaries. There may be more at the Penn State University, I hear from Alan Sica. I am trying to find out what is available.

I understand that there was a petition drive organized on behalf of Goffman to make sure he is on the ballot.

Dynes: Yes, I think this is true.

Shalin: It would be interesting to see if any of those letters of support have survived.

Dynes: I thought about that. The 70s was the period when there was, I don't know, a good deal of dissatisfaction.

Shalin: The civil rights movement, the free speech movement and so on.

Dynes: There was a sociologist, I am blocking on the name – Lee, who was a petition winner and who got support from a lot of people who were dissatisfied with different things.

Shalin: Are you talking about the head of the association for humanist sociology – McClung Lee?

Dynes: Alfred McClung Lee.

Shalin: He was also drafted for presidency?

Dynes: Yes, he was the first. There was a drive to look for people who were overlooked. I think William Foote Whyte was on petition too, and then Erving. I am not sure who generated that. McClung Lee was a pain in the ass, but there was a reaction to look for, not radicals (although you could question whether Lee was a radical), certain people like William Foote Whyte and Erving who had been neglected. They made major contributions but were never recognized. I think Erving was a beneficiary of that.

Shalin: I think I've read somewhere that John Lofland might have been involved with the petition drive.

Dynes: Right.

Shalin: My understanding is that Erving was involved with planning of the ASA meeting, the session allocations, and so on. So far as the annual meeting's theme, it wasn't so much that Erving didn't bother to announce one, but that, as a matter of principle, he did not want to impose on the membership any particular theme.

Dynes: Yes, that's probably true. When I said presidents have an agenda, I didn't mean that [they decide the program]. The program committee sets that. When someone comes in, the program committee might decide to have a special session on whatever the president may be interested in. William Foote Whyte made his reputation on *Street Corner Society*, so they may have a special session on . . .

Shalin: . . . urban ethnography.

Dynes: Right. The program is standardized and bureaucratized, there is not a great deal of flexibility to change it dramatically, let's put it that way.

Shalin: To come back to his last year, when Erving missed the council meeting, it was because of his illness.

Dynes: Yes.

Shalin: Then the word must have gotten out that Goffman was sick.

Dynes: One person you might want to talk to is Joan Huber. She was vice president at the time. Later on she was the dean at the Ohio State. She is married to Bill Form, and they are living at the First Community Village at Columbus.

Shalin: Do you know how to reach them?

Dynes: You can call the department there.

Shalin: Yes, she must know about Erving's presidential address.

Dynes: She probably negotiated with him. That would be her job. I never talked to her specifically about that, but I assumed that once it became apparent he wouldn't be at the meeting, she would have the technical responsibility as the vice president.

Shalin: I thought it was John Lofland who read Erving's address, but you say it was Joan Huber?

Dynes: That's my recollection.

Shalin: Erving died in November of 1982, the ASA meeting was in August 1982, and that is where somebody delivered his address. If you can think of anybody else who might have known Erving, please give me a word, but Joan Huber would be an excellent person to talk to.

Dynes: You know that the ASA has published a history [of the organization] from 1981 on. I've looked at it, and there is not much in it on Goffman. The other thing is that Joan Huber's husband, William Form, was a long time secretary at the ASA, and he is pretty knowledgeable. Bill is 91.

Shalin: He is alive.

Dynes: Yes. In fact, Bill did a book on his academic career and the ASA, but I think he talks more about . . . When I was there, Jim Short and the other guy who had disappeared . . . Actually, in the ASA the most important job is the secretary. Bill hired me at that time. But Joan was vice president. . . . For some reason I draw a blank on his [Goffman's] presidential address.

Shalin: It was delivered in the absence of Erving. I may misremember it, but I've heard it was Lofland who delivered it.

Dynes: Well, it could be. I have no idea why I draw a blank. Bill D'Antonio came in that year. My academic year started on the first of September; it

could be that I did not go to the meeting. I mean, to the presidential address.

Shalin: You were transitioning to Delaware.

Dynes: You can call Joan.

Shalin: I will. Going back to the last year of Erving's life, he missed a council meeting, and the word must have gotten out around that time that he was seriously ill.

Dynes: When he wasn't there at the annual meeting, there was a notion that he was sick but I don't think there was a perception that it was [going to be] fatal. He was simply sick. . . . In fact, the correspondence I had with him about the wine would have been sometime in September

Shalin: By the way, do you still have any correspondence with Erving?

Dynes: I don't think so. I am in the process of moving all the time. Also, I am working on taxes [**laughing**]. . . . I do recall that the only long letter I wrote to him was about the council meeting. And I recall the letter about the wine, but I don't think I have that.

Shalin: Erving didn't reply.

Dynes: Right.

Shalin: Do you have any idea about Erving's Jewish background, whether it played any special role in his life and work?

Dynes: I was probably aware of this, but there were a lot of sociologists who were Jewish; you treat them in the same way as if they were Catholics or Protestants. It's not really a factor, unless you make it one. . . . One of my colleagues was a Jew from New York with some typical humor, so you knew where he came from, but that was not really a [factor].

Shalin: You didn't notice any Yiddish expressions?

Dynes: Not really. No.

Shalin: You mentioned the stories about Erving in restaurants – was he known to be impish, playful?

Dynes: Yes. He was critical of waiters and food and service and what people were doing. At least that was the perception I got, although I am not sure

where I got that. In a couple of instances I had seen something like that. In other words, he would be hostile to waiters or service people, or at least more cutting than what you would do [when you encounter] bad service.

Shalin: How did you interpret this tendency – was he just being humorous, trying to get the conversation going, or was he genuinely upset? My pet theory is that after discovering the ceremonious aspect of life, he encountered a dilemma how to presents himself in public. I surmise that he tended to violate conventions to show himself and others that he was not going to be mastered by the rules. See where I am getting at? That was his way of remaining authentic in the world of spurious rules and oppressive conventions.

Dynes: Yes. He had that reputation, which was partly why I introduced him [in a restaurant] as a food critic. But I didn't see an awful lot of that. In terms of his relationship with my wife and staff, he was . . . everybody is different. Other sociologists who were aware of that had to adapt too. In the association's context, while he was the president, he didn't have any power [**laughing**] over people. In certain situations I observed him [acting out] but not as much as I would have anticipated from his reputation.

Shalin: He didn't try to wield power with the heavy hand.

Dynes: No.

Shalin: Since you had some meals with Erving, did you notice any food preferences? You said he enjoyed your wine selection.

Dynes: Nothing in particular. He had a reputation of being a wine snob and a food snob. That's where the wine incident [comes in]. I drink cheap wine, but I usually call it "inexpensive wine." When I gave him to taste that wine, I told him it wasn't too expensive. Later on he said it was very good, and that is why I bought him a case.

Shalin: Once the word got out that Erving died, do you remember the reaction in the sociological community?

Dynes: The fact that he was ill, that he didn't attend the meeting, [meant] it was not a surprise. If we take Delaware, there weren't too many people here who were very close to him at that particular time.

Shalin: I already took a lot of your time, Russell. We will be winding down shortly. You said that you had a chance to observe five ASA presidents. That was Peter Rossi, Tad Blalock. . .

Dynes: Milt Yinger, Tad Blalock, Peter Rossi, William Foote Whyte, Amos Hawley.

Shalin: And Goffman.

Dynes: The last three were Peter Rossi, William Whyte, and then Erving.

Shalin: You were in a unique position to observe these people as they were taking their job. The ASA is thinking of starting an oral history project; the materials I collected for the Goffman archives came to their attention and they are thinking of using it. So I have expanded the project beyond Goffman to include sociologists of his era. I wonder if you can, perhaps some other time, to give your snapshots of the ASA presidents you had a chance to see up close. Or else, when I sent you the transcripts, you can expand on those characters.

Dynes: The ASA may be doing something like that. This morning I had a note from Pat Martin from the Florida State, and she asked me about the origins of the Jessie Bernard Award. The ASA is asked to document that [award] which goes back maybe to '82 or something like that. The point is that the executive officer and the ASA maybe doing more of this.

Shalin: Right. My project is a bit different. It goes beyond institutional history to collect personal stories along with what kind of scholars and teachers those people were. This is why what you tell me is so valuable. So if someday you can reminisce about the ASA presidents you dealt with, that would be very interesting.

Dynes: OK.

Shalin: Russell, that was wonderful. I am grateful for your recollections. If anything else comes to mind when you edit the transcript, please feel free to add more. Where should I send the transcript?

Dynes: You got my home address.

Shalin: I don't have your home address, only your office.

Dynes: The office is OK.

Shalin: I'll do that. It will take time, as I have a backlog of interviews. And your office address is . . .

Dynes: < . . . >.

Shalin: OK.

Shalin: Bye.

Dynes: Take care. Bye.

[End of the Recording]