



Oral History Interview with Dick Woodbridge, 08-08-2026

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Dick Woodbridge and Jim Firestone conducted on August 8, 2026. The interview took place at the Princeton Public Library as part of the Voices of Princeton Project.



Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Kim Dorman [00:00:02] My name is Kim Dorman, and it's August 7, 2026, and we're in the Princeton Public Library as part of the Voices of Princeton project. I'm here today with Dick Woodbridge and Jim Firestone.

Dick Woodbridge [00:00:13] I'm Dick Woodbridge and I'm the interviewee.

Jim Firestone [00:00:17] I'm Jim Firestone and I'm the interviewer.

Dick Woodbridge [00: 00:22] First of all, I'd like to thank the public library for giving us the opportunity to speak, and especially you Kim and Janie and Cliff, who can't be here today. It's an honor and a privilege to be here, and I'm flattered that Jim and I were asked.

Kim Dorman [00:00:40] We're delighted you're here. Thank you.

Jim Firestone [00:00:42] Well, I'll start off with the first question, and just let you know that Dick and I have been friends for a very long time, ever since third grade in Princeton, and that's why I'm here today with him. So, first of all, how did you come to Princeton and how was it different?

Dick Woodbridge [00:01:01] Well, I came to Princeton in 1945, right after the war. My father had been an undergraduate here in the class of '39. My dad came back to go to graduate school and got his Ph.D. in organic chemistry. So I wasn't even two when I came back here. So in

terms of what my expectations were, they were very low. All I wanted, like, was something, somebody to feed me, a nice, warm, clean bed, and diaper changes on a regular basis. But as I grew up, it was the things that I remember there are little things. I was at 120 Prospect Avenue, and it's a three-story red brick building. It's still standing, and I remember my mother talking to our next-door neighbor through the dumb waiter. That was sort of fun. It had window boxes on it, and everybody had nice windows. But my dad, for reasons I'll never understood, decided that he wanted to grow corn. So if you ever wanted to find our apartment from the outside, we're the only ones who are actually growing corn. Everybody else had petunias and stuff. I also remember right behind the building there, where the IDA used to be. They had a big hangar, and so there are little remnants of World War II still there. And I remember, as a child - I must have been three or four - seeing these huge, 16-cylinder radial airplane engines back there. So there are bits and pieces of World War II still left over at that time. It was much quieter. It was easier to walk around. It was a simpler time.

Jim Firestone [00: 02:38] So, in a sense, how long have you lived in Princeton? During that whole time?

Dick Woodbridge [00:02:42] No, I lived here from 1945 until 1965, after I got out of Princeton University, Class of '65. I worked for a couple years with Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati in their International Equipment Department as an electrical engineer. Decided to change course. Took a job with the U.S. Patent Office, worked there for four years, went to law school at night, worked in D.C. Came back here in '73, so I lived here physically from '45 to '65, and then from '73 to right here.

Jim Firestone [00:03:17] So, what was, in a sense, has Princeton changed a lot in that time since you first started out here?

Dick Woodbridge [00:03:27] Oh boy, it's changed a lot. And what's interesting about the change is it's so gradual that you don't recognize it on a daily or even yearly basis. But if you look at it from the long perspective, it's huge. So I remember back in the day when my father would drive downtown on Sunday, and there'd be no traffic on the street. Zinder's was open, that's the only place you could get a newspaper. The hardware store in the shopping center, when the shopping center was built, was open so you get your stuff there. It was much more of a mix of blue collar and academic and business types. So when we were in Valley Road School, it was much more of a typical community composition. Right now, it's much more upscale and I think more international.

Jim Firestone [00: 04:25] Tell me more about your formative experiences here in Princeton. What had the biggest influence on you?

Dick Woodbridge [00: 04:31] I think that's a wonderful question, Jim. And the thing - the educational system had a huge impact on me, and again, it's one of those things that I didn't really appreciate until I got a lot older. So when I started going to school, I went to the old Nassau Street School. The building is still standing there. It's 194, 195 Nassau - I've forgotten. My first grade school teacher was Mrs. Griggs and a wonderful lady - a Black woman from the community. I didn't know at the time that they had just integrated the Borough schools, so it

was a mix of kids and stuff like that. And they - Mrs. Griggs influenced me largely by her example. She was very kind, she was very friendly, she was a good teacher - as best a one-year, first-year first-grade student could understand it. And it took a while to sort of appreciate that. Then, when in '53 - '50, excuse me. In '50 or so, when we moved to the Township, I went to the Valley Road School, that's really where I started to understand what the school system was all about. In particular, just to single out one teacher, Mr. Van Arsdalen, who we both had, and he's just an example of the others. They made an effort to teach respect. They taught values. It's interesting. They really taught values. I think some of that grew out of the effort to make sure that the integration of the Borough schools took place in an effective and efficient way. And so it's interesting. He taught respect. He also taught fair play so if you went to a sporting event, you know, if you booed at a sporting event, they would throw you right out.

Jim Firestone [00:06:31] So he was your phys. ed teacher?

Dick Woodbridge [00: 06:32] He was, that's exactly right. He was my phys ed teacher, and there is a woman who also taught the women's phys. ed part of it. But he was also a values teacher. It's really interesting when you look back on it. And then just to go forward just a little bit, I had the privilege a number of years later to meet Chet Stroup. Now Chet Stroup was in charge of the school system after he and [Howard] Waxwood figured out how to put the thing together, and Mr. Stroup was one of the nicest guys I've ever met, and it was fascinating to talk to him about the challenges of trying to make the integration work. And then later on, just as a digression, I took some tutoring with a fellow named Bob Wallace. He lived on Palmer Square, and when I look at them as a group, they really instilled in me the importance of respect for

everybody, listening to opinions, not being overly judgmental, not being afraid to express your opinions either, and especially fair play. And the thing that's always stuck with me, and I still can't quite work it out is - so you couldn't boo at a sporting event. I end up going to a fancy school like Princeton [University (DW)], you know, and there are these kids who grew up in wealthy families and had the best of everything, and they'd go to sporting events and they'd say some of the rudest things I can imagine. And to this day, I cringe when I hear that happen, and that's largely because of the values that were instilled in me in early life. I'm not sure they teach those kinds of values anymore. I frankly wish they did. There are some politicians who could benefit from it. I'll say no more [Laughs]. But you asked me about things that were formative. I think as a group, teachers were formative. Some probably a little more than others, but definitely the educational system. When I look back at it, it had a big impact on me and my personality.

Jim Firestone [00:08:35] I think Van Arsdallen had had a big impact on the whole school because he could bring the attention of the newer, Black kids that were integrated into the school together with the white kids, and they all respected him. So it was all Mr. Van, Whatever Mr. Van says goes, and 'til today, the kids are still some of my best friends.

Dick Woodbridge [00:09:00] Yeah.

Jim Firestone [00:09:00] So it's like, it lasted for a long time, and I think he had that influence.

Dick Woodbridge [00:09:05] Definitely, I totally agree with you, and it's funny about teachers when you come back. I mean, people like Mr. Van, you still have to call him Mr. Van. Other teachers, I come back, right - you know, Mrs. Hunter, and then when I came back, we had her for English, of course. Then it says, "Call me Nellie." Well, I have trouble calling teachers by their first name, but that's sort of what comes out of that particular period of time. And I look back on it with a great deal of appreciation.

Jim Firestone [00: 09:39] So, which of the institutions around you have changed during that time? Looking back at Princeton, how have they changed?

Dick Woodbridge 09:49] Also, a good question.

Jim Firestone 09:52] Start with the library [Laughs].

Dick Woodbridge 09:55] A good example. Well, I won't claim to say I spent all my time in the library, but I do in particular remember Bainbridge House when that was the library. And the thing I remember in particular was you go in the front door, and on the right, right in the back was where they had the kids' books, so landmark books and stuff like that. But to get back there, I looked around, and they had, like, three or four of these lally columns holding up the ceiling, and you could tell, you could see that between the lally columns, the ceilings would bow out just a little bit because they obviously had some kind of load of the upper floor. I remember saying to myself, "When this puppy lets go! It's got to be an avalanche of books," so it's not surprising. But you know, I'm just looking at the wonderful facility here, and I remember

[Thaddeus] Longstreth giving a presentation about how he built the preceding building here, and how ultimately it was designed so that you could actually add an extra floor. Well, that turned out to be more difficult than anybody thought because they wanted to put in the wiring. So you know, to compare this structure that we're sitting here today is a little bit like, you know, comparing the Taj Mahal to the log cabin [Abraham] Lincoln grew up in, you know.

Jim Firestone [00:11:19] It became a first-class library.

Dick Woodbridge [00:11:20] It became a first-class library. I mean, I look around here, and there are places to sit down and get a beautiful view, to use the computers, to access all sorts of stuff. I mean, for a municipal library, I don't know of any that compares better than this. So, that's one institution for sure that's changed a lot.

Jim Firestone [00:11:43] When you were in college here, was it mostly all white males? And what is it like now? Has it changed?

Dick Woodbridge [00:11:53] Oh boy, it's changed a bazillion percent. So when I was in college - so I was at Princeton from '61 to '65, it was virtually all white males. They had a few Blacks. Oddly enough, and they just started to have them, the biggest contingent of Blacks at that time was Nigerians. So when I was a junior, I was asked to mentor a group of 10 kids as part of the Orange Key program, one of whom was a gentleman by the name Ano Ozumba, and Ano was from Nigeria. We became very good friends. I kept up with Ano, and me and several other friends. Well, he went back to Enugu to teach engineering, married an American girl, she

stayed here, have two wonderful kids. He died unfortunately, just almost exactly a year ago, but it's weird that they should have, like, more Nigerian Blacks than locals. So the few that started to integrate had a difficult time integrating, and I would say it was the same experience - it was an experience that was a bit difficult for me too, because having come from a more integrated operation, one where it was mostly white kids, same sort of issues with, you know, some fairly wealthy stuff like that, a lot of stratification. It was interesting. There as an engineer, I probably bit off more than I should have. Princeton going through that experience was more difficult than I expected. Took engineering, struggled for the first couple years. Finally, caught my - got some traction into my sophomore year, junior and senior, but it was difficult. A lot of work at that point in time. I say this somewhat reluctantly, my parents had this split up so the home scene was difficult too. They eventually reconciled but on the other side of the coin I got a lot out of the institution, met a lot of fascinating people, and feel privileged to have been a part of that operation. But it's very different now. Now it's international, obviously better integrated, has different, you know, different.

Jim Firestone [00:14:07] So in a sense, what did you do after college?

Dick Woodbridge [00:14:11] What did I do after college...

Jim Firestone [00:14:13] You know, that hiatus that's in between where you decide what you're going to do with your life.

Dick Woodbridge [00:14:19] I'm still deciding what to do with my life, I have fantasies of being an author. Maybe I should, you know, do some therapy. But after college - interesting - I thought I wanted to be an engineer. Both my father and both my grandfathers were chemists, believe it or not. I was the black sheep, I was an electrical engineer. I backed into politics in the strangest way. I worked at the patent office. I was obviously in Washington D.C. and I got a call one night from my friend Dan Jones. Now Dan Jones passed away last year, and he's buried about 120 yards right behind this building here, but he had a skill set that I envied. He could find a good-looking woman in the Gobi Desert, and I, so I figured if I hung out near Dan, there might be, you know, I might find, you know, might get lucky and find something good. So I got a call one night from Dan. Now, Dan had a sailboat on the Back Creek Marina in Annapolis, and so one day I got this call, sort of a desperate call. It's a Friday night from Dan, and called and said, "Dick, can you help me?" I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "Well, I met these two great-looking women last night. One's a blonde from somewhere, and one was a good-looking redhead from Arkansas." I said, "Well, Dan, what's the problem?" He said, "These girls don't know how to sail a boat. I need somebody to help me crew the boat." Thought for a second. I said, "Could you describe these girls for me one more time?" "Look, it's a blonde from somewhere, and a good-looking redhead from Arkansas," and so that's how I met my wife. Now, my wife at the time was working for a Republican congressman - have I got this right? - no, she was working for the Republican National Committee.

Jim Firestone [00:16:11] Wow!

Dick Woodbridge [00:16:12] And then she worked for a Republican congressman from Dallas, and then, through that, I got involved in the peripheries of politics in Washington D.C. so I volunteered at the Committee to Re-Elect. Met some of the people who got indicted - interesting time. And then in '73, the economy went to heck. At that time, I was working for Baker and McKenzie, at that time, the world's largest law firm. They ran out of patent work. I came back to New Jersey. Now, I really hadn't had any great interest in getting involved in politics, but these things often happen in the weirdest way. They found out when they had the election here in '75 that my wife had worked at the RNC - excuse me, '74 - so they invited her to help out of the local campaign. Well, partway through the campaign, the campaign manager quit. They turned to my wife and said, "Would you like to run it?" Well, at that point, she was seven months pregnant. So they turned to me to run it, and it was a disaster. And then the next year, they asked me to run. I said, "You know, honest to goodness, you really sure you want me to run?" I mean, we're talking about post-Watergate. So, "Oh yeah, you'd be a shoe in." So I ran. I ran with Bob Cawley. Bob Cawley was a popular mayor at the time. So I don't know, I just followed his foot tracks, and you know. So there are four of us running for two spots on the borough council. Come election day, I came in at the very bottom of the barrel, and I was disappointed. I thought more people knew me, but maybe they did but they didn't like what they knew, who knows? So the next year they asked me to run again. I said Christine, I said you know "I don't want - this was embarrassing." She said, "Well, what do we have to do to get you running?" I said, "Let me run my own campaign." So I ran my own campaign, okay, and I did it differently. It was very high touch. I spoke to - did a lot of walking down street to street, and went out. I'll give you an example, I went down Chestnut Street and I ran into Millie Intartaglia, you might remember, and this was like in September, and I had a nice chat with her,

and she grew some beautiful tomatoes in the back area. So we had a nice chat, and I made a note on my little clipboard. I go back home and I write out a postcard, and I date this thing like, November 1. I post dated it, and I said, "Dear Millie, enjoyed talking with you on September 29. Loved your tomatoes. Don't forget to vote on November 7. Sincerely, Dick Woodbridge."

So we did 2,400 of those cards -

Jim Firestone [00:19:00] Woah!

Dick Woodbridge [00:19:02] - and we sent those out. I did walk down, somewhere around 80 to 85 different streets, just knocking on doors. Okay, and then I got a bunch of people - this was in the days when you had the old [Hill (DW)] Donnelly, the directories, the Criss-cross directories, the Polk directories. So they gave you the streets and the telephone numbers and the people, so I had a bunch of friends call out, including Bob Wallace, my former teacher. And so that election, I got more votes than anybody else had ever gotten for a Borough Council race. Now, the funny part is the candidate hadn't improved in a year's time, but it was more of a high-touch, personal type of arrangement. So that's sort of what got me started in it. I served on the Borough Council from '75 to '80 - oh getting in '77 to - towards the end of '87, so almost eleven years - and had the pleasure of - I took over Joe Moore's spot, he had been the police commissioner, so I did that for four years. And then I'd been in the fire department, so I did that. I was a fireman from '75 to '95, so I did the fire commissioner's job for three. Then I did public works, and then I was council president for two years. So I played all the positions, and it was really interesting. It was - the most interesting thing was that when I was council president, there was a split on the Democrats so I was the only Republican there, you know, it's

sort of like the Maytag repairman [Laughs]. But I'm kidding, of course. But anyway, there was a split, so I ended up being the council president because the Democrats couldn't decide what was the lesser of two evils. Eventually, my good friend Irv Urken and I traded off and I stepped out from that position, and so I learned a lot from that, especially the Princeton Colmar project. So I sort of got a little bit of the politician bug, and as somebody once said, "politics is only a disease that goes into remission." Okay, so we - after you built that wonderful project behind our house at 56 Williams Street, my assessed value went up, and the family was getting bigger. And we said maybe it's a good time to think about moving to the Township. So we moved to the Township in '87 to Bertrand Drive. Great location for kids to grow up. And at that time, I started writing columns for The [Princeton] Packet, just volunteer columns on things like Devil's Cave, things that some of the locals knew, and then in '89 something weird happened. The Republicans had two candidates, and one of them dropped out halfway through the primary, and then they wrote my name in to be a candidate. Well, son of a gun - okay, there I am. So I hadn't planned to run, and so when I interviewed with The [Princeton] Packet and others, I said, "Look, the guy to elect is my buddy here. Don't waste your endorsement on me." Well, that didn't work, and so I got elected to the township committee in 1990. And so it was two Republicans, three Democrats. I can't remember the third one, but one was Phyllis Marchand and one was Kate Litvak. I worked with Kate before, when we started up the First Aid and Rescue Squad Committee, which ended up getting the rescue squad paid. And then the weirdest thing happened. The Democrats - we had Griggs Farm became a problem because it went way over budget. There's some other festering problems that didn't work out, and lo and behold, in '91, they elected another Republican. So the way it worked in the Township is, it's not a direct election of the mayor; it's election by the township committee. And by that time, I

was the oldest Republican on there and so I became the mayor by default. Which was sort of cool because I was able to borrow some of the experience I have from the Borough, plus some of the contacts and relationships I had there, and use that in the Township. So that's how we ended up getting the Princeton-Pettoranello program off the ground. Now, in all due fairness, Kate and Phyllis laid the groundwork earlier, but I knew the execution part of it. So the three of us working together were able to make it work, and that I think has given me a lot of pleasure. In 1991, my mother got in a terrible auto accident - almost killed her - and, and the kids were growing up and stuff, and it was pretty clear that I, I just couldn't at that time continue in politics until I squared away the family issues, which I did. I did run again in 2012 when the two towns consolidated against Liz [Lempert] and lost to her, but the town had changed politically a lot then. When I was on the Borough council and the township committee, we ran as different types, we worked together, and these people became friends, and they continued to be friends afterwards. Something happened, I don't know what it was, but over the years, that has become much more polarized, much more national. You know, maybe we get a lot of influx of outsiders who really don't know what's going on on the inside, and so they assume that everybody who's a Republican is like they read in the New York Times, and Democrats are what they read about in the Washington Post or whatever. So it's a different perspective, but there hasn't been a - it's been a one-party system now for what, 32 years. Is that good? I don't think so. But on the other side of the coin is, I'm not pointing any fingers at anybody either.

Jim Firestone [00:25:11] I think a lot of people are in agreement with you that it's not really good that it's just one party, because there's a lot of - between two different points of view, you

help two different kinds of people who are voting for you. You get a much more informed decision that affects the whole populace.

Dick Woodbridge [00:25:31] Absolutely.

Jim Firestone [00:25:32] So that's what that's been so enjoyable about you is you're able to go across the aisle, unlike a lot of other people in the Republican Party today,

Dick Woodbridge [00:25:41] Yeah, I think you bring on a good point, and it sort of is that, going back to the beginning, it's sort of that respect thing, you know.

Jim Firestone [00:25:47] It's respect, yes.

Dick Woodbridge [00:25:48] And it's not just respect because you respect it, but respect because you enjoy working with these people. What you, you know, the fallacy is it's like you know, people are Democrats, people Republicans. It's not like you're born and they turn you upside down, and there's a D and R on your backside. You know?

Jim Firestone [00:26:03] You begin to wonder whether the winner-take-all kind of system is the best system.

Dick Woodbridge [00:26:07] Makes you question a lot of assumptions like that, Jim. I think that's true. So, so you know, sort of segueing how I got into politics, I enjoy politics. I

especially enjoy the people I've met in politics, and I've learned a lot from politics, especially watching people who are good at it in both parties, and also watching some who aren't very good at it too [Laughs]. But it's been fun, and it's been a blessing to have had the opportunity to do that.

Jim Firestone [00:26:34] Do you feel that you'd accomplished what you wanted the set out to accomplish in both parties in the Borough and the Township?

Dick Woodbridge [00:26:42] The answer is yes, at least from an objective point of view. In the, it's really hard to keep a complete list of all these things but some of the things that we did in the Borough, for example, was we were the second town in the state after Newark to require smoke detectors in private dwellings. That came about when I was fire commissioner and had to respond to a fire on Leigh Avenue, and as I came in the door after the first wave went in, I stepped over a dead man. Well, I said, "What happened?" He'd been smoking in bed, and the fire wasn't what killed him. He got to the top of the stairs, but he inhaled so much smoke, he died. And then I got involved and saw a couple other fires, in particular the Value Fair fire down here, which spread to what was then Marita's Cantina, but had been Struve's Bowling Alley, Struve's Cinema, Hudibras, Marita's Cantina, then the Triumph, and that fire was something. And the Benson Building fire, and that was January 5, 1977, I think. That was one amazing blaze, and I - just a short story on that, so I was just getting over the flu. The call goes in about 3:30 in the morning, and we were using the beeper system then. So we, some guys had plectrons, I didn't. So I knew the fire was downtown. So I go down there, I pull on my boots, my Philadelphia helmet, everything else, and I go down there in my blue jeans, and I'm looking

around, I don't see any problem. I walk in the Colonial Diner. I saw Bob Mooney come out, shaking his head. I said "Bob, what's going on?" He said, "It's in the walls." I said, "What?" So I walk around Spring Street, look up, and you could see the fire coming out, the smoke coming out of the cracks of the building, and it was really fascinating and terrible at the same time. It went up the - apparently there were no fire breaks or anything - went up, hit the roof, and it was like it blew the roof off. And Willie Shields, who was our chief at the time, was standing close to about halfway in the roadway, and the cornice just ripped off like a zipper, and didn't come down very far from Willie. I sat on a three-inch line with two other guys, but where do you put the water? At any rate, about 11 o'clock, I tell the chief, I said, "Chief, I hope you can let me go," because by that time they had Trenton and everybody else had come in, and there wasn't a lot more to do. Building was at a loss-

{Phone interruption, voice to text reading}

Dick Woodbridge [00:29:30] Sorry about that. And so I asked if I could get relieved. He said, "sure" so I go back home, walk back home, and my pants were all icy, so I put them off, took them off, put them in the bathtub, stood them up against the wall. I can't make this stuff up [Laughs]. I only wish I had a picture of it, you know. But so the smoke detector thing was one of the things we did. We did institute the first paid paramedics. We really had to because we couldn't get full-time people, and the state was requiring certifications of 100 hours and stuff. You can't do that with volunteers. And that Firematics had changed a lot. You know, when I was first there, you jumped on the back of the truck, said you know, "We lead, others follow" and you got out there. You donned your clothes as necessary, and you fought the fire. Now you got

to get three people all dressed up and ready to go and, by that time, you know. So I don't want to argue that but we did concentrate the Borough on that. In the Township, we had a couple other challenges. One was Griggs Farm, which was hemorrhaging money at that point. The other was the deer problem, that was a big challenge. So Lyme disease was becoming a real issue, and we had one or two fatalities that we were fairly sure were deer related - people going off the roads - so we introduced a deer control ordinance. I think we hired White Buffalo, I believe it was, it was not very popular among some people. We had a number of people coming in from out of town. They, we got calls. My youngest daughter got a life-threatening call from some nut. They actually chained an image of me and Leonard Godfrey to the railings at the Valley Road School, so it's it was, but we did it. It took some courage. It was a difficult thing to do. We did get the Princeton-Pettoranello program going.

Kim Dorman [00:31:34] Can you say a little bit - you've mentioned the Colmar and Pettoranello projects a couple of times. So if you could, for we who don't always know who are listening...

Dick Woodbridge [00:31:43] Well, you probably know more than you realize. So the Colmar and the Princeton Princetonella programs are both sister-city programs. And it's fairly common for European countries to do this. The Colmar program came about when Barbara Sigmund in 1976 - no 1986 - went to a program at the Statue of Liberty. So [Frederic-Auguste] Bartholdi was from Colmar [France], that's where he had his studio. And she met these people and said, "Y'all come on down to Princeton." So they all shuffled down here, and we met these people from Colmar. Well, they invited us to come over and visit them. So in '87, the town council and,

including myself, and a young Mark Freda, went to Colmar and had a great time. Wonderful people. Now we thought this, we thought these sister city programs were monogamous. It turns out they're polyamorous, so we were like their sixth sister city program, but they have a, you know, people who organize this stuff, but it's great. And then the next year, '88, my wife and I went over and we didn't tell anybody about it. We were there for two weeks, and just had a wonderful time, just hanging out, you know, going in the Vosges Mountains and stuff like that. And so I was inspired by - and so we had lots of programs back and forth. I don't know where those programs stand nowadays, but at that time it was a wonderful social experience. Then, when I got on the township committee, and I'd seen that Kate Litvak and Phyllis [Marchand] had done some groundworking work with Camillo Paolino, who is the mayor of Pettoranello [Italy]. Now, Pettoranello is, as opposed to Colmar - Colmar is a fairly sizable town in the Alsace with its own tourist bureau and stuff. Pettoranello is a much smaller operation in Molise province, about, maybe an hour to the northeast of Naples, and sort of right in between.

Jim Firestone [00:33:55] of Rome?

Dick Woodbridge [00:33:56] What?

Jim Firestone [00:33:57] North of Rome.

Dick Woodbridge [00:33:58] Oh no, it's actually south of Rome. So it's actually probably two plus hours, okay, two plus hours south of Rome.

Jim Firestone [00:34:04] I've been there [Laughs].

Dick Woodbridge [00:34:04] Okay, Rome or Pettoranello?

Jim Firestone [00:34:08] I'm the geographer [Laughs].

Dick Woodbridge [00:34:09] Oh, you're right. Well, Jim knows - let me put it this way: it's in Italy somewhere, okay [Laughs].

Jim Firestone [00:34:14] People don't realize that when you go due north of Rome, you're actually north, and you're going up the boot of Italy, and you're not going down the boot. And it was always that part was always considered part of the south also, but it was the far extremity which was reaching up toward Venice.

Kim Dorman [00:34:34] So you're asking a trick question.

Jim Firestone [00:34:35] That's where my grand, that's where my grandfather's from.

Kim Dorman [00:34:37] Oh, okay.

Jim Firestone [00:34:38] Yeah, and I've been there. But anyway, it's, it was really nice to see people do that, to to pull that other little, Italian town in to be because so many people in Princeton come from that region, not just my grandfather in 1903 to dig out Carnegie Lake, but

also all these other people who have come here since, especially in the '20s and '30s, a lot of it was from that one little town.

Dick Woodbridge [00:35:06] Yeah, I think you nailed it, Jim. I think part of the reason why the program was successful is we had people who had either grown up there or were second generation, and they had a natural enthusiasm for it. Yeah, it was -

Jim Firestone [00:35:21] That's why we have Pettoranello Gardens over across Route 206 near Community Park, yeah.

Dick Woodbridge [00:35:25] Exactly right. Yeah, and we had several other exchange programs, and it was a beautiful operation. I learned a little Italian, I ate a lot of good food [Laughs]. Those people can party late at night too, let me tell you. We actually went back a few years later with former Mayor [Phyllis] Marchand and, and some other friends to catch up. It was a wonderful, great experience.

Jim Firestone [00:35:52] So, tell me now what are your, looking back, what are your best memories about Princeton over all the years you've been here?

Dick Woodbridge [00:36:03] I think - well - I think they fall in sort of two categories. Some of my best memories are some of the interesting people I've got to meet or seen. I remember, must have been in '53, my dad used to take me fishing when I was a kid, so we get in his, what was then a Chevrolet, and we would drive down to Brielle, Point Pleasant, and inside the

drawbridge you could rent a rowboat. We'd hire a rowboat, and we get these bloodworms, and we fish, bottom fish for flounder. Oh, I'm sorry, he had a Hudson Hornet by that time. That's - this is important. So we got finished fishing, we were wet from the waist down so we took our pants off, and we were sitting in my dad's Hornet. Now, I don't know if you remember the Hudson Hornet. It was sort of a long sloping back thing. And I think what I remember most about Hudson Hornet was that my dad was a moderately heavy smoker, but it had this velvet sort of lining in the top that held the tobacco smoke. I remember the smell of Hudson Harnett as much as I remember anything else. But I remember the license plate, which was LP81N, just for the record. But anyway, so we're coming back to Princeton, and we're coming over the Carnegie Street Bridge on Washington Road coming into town, and my dad says, "Look, there's [Albert] Einstein." Well, I'm what, you know, I was, what, eight years old at that time. I said, "Oh, that's interesting," but I remember a guy, looked like a shrunk-version of Walter Matthau walking, walking towards Route 1, because he had a sailboat down there, of course, and with a young couple - young guy and a young woman on both arms. And then apropos, you know some of the things that are best memories. I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. [Robert] Oppenheimer and his wife in a rather unique situation where I'd gotten a call from my friend, Carol Estey, who was at the Miss Fine School, and she said, "I need you to do me a favor." At that point, I was a freshman at Princeton. I said "Well, what's that, Carol?" Said "My friend needs a date for junior prom." Well, it turned out to be Toni Oppenheimer, Dr. Oppenheimer's daughter. Very nice young lady, very quiet, obviously very smart, but that's where I got a chance to meet Mr. Oppenheimer. And the thing that stuck in my mind was that I knew he was important. I probably didn't know a full picture of why, the movie hadn't come out at that time [Laughs], but he was - he looked fragile. He looked like one of these kinds of guys, if he shook

his hand too hard, it would, the whole thing would fall off. You know, he was a sort of a nervous smoker. His wife was very, very pleasant. That's sort of all my memories of that. But I had a chance to meet some of those characters. Met every governor, I think, from [Alfred E.] Driscoll on up to, I haven't met [Phil] Murphy or the new incumbent [Mikie Sherrill] yet, but and - so I think some of, and then some of the people who weren't all that, you know, important, but were just plain interesting. So I think that's it. There are, you know, other events that were interesting too. The one I think that was impressive to me was when, in '92, when President Bush came to speak, that is George H. W. Bush, at the Woodrow Wilson School, and we had a chance to meet him. So Mayor [Marvin] Reed and I, who would meet about once a month for cocktails to work over differences and joint budgets, got to meet the president. We had to go through several layers of security. That part was almost as impressive as meeting the president and his wife, and so that was cool. So things like that I remember with a great deal of fondness.

Jim Firestone [00:39:56] I understand that currently you've got a book out that you've written called Three Black Swans, which I had no idea that you would be an author because you were a patent attorney for most of your life. But this thing seems to be connected to all that. Can you tell us a little bit about that? Because I've heard some pretty exciting comments about it.

Dick Woodbridge [00:40:18] So this is not a paid political commercial [Laughs].

Jim Firestone [00:40:20] No, no [Laughs].

Dick Woodbridge [00:40:22] Well thank you, Jim. Thank you for bringing it up. A couple of comments - there's been a lot of change in Princeton. Maybe towards the end we can talk about them in, in general. But the Three Black Swans, in many respects, is about the technological changes that have happened in the last five to six years, that if you really look at them carefully, are really sort of frightening. I started writing a different book, so I didn't - I wasn't one of these guys that had a book burning inside me, but I had this crazy concept about a patent attorney who one day had in Client A come in with Invention A, and a few days later, Client B comes in with Invention B. And, patent attorney looks at and says, "Gee, put A and B together, they could either do great good or great bad." Okay, this was 2019. So I started writing this thing, and I got about 80 to 100 pages in it. I wasn't really happy with what I'd written because patent attorneys don't write those sort of things, so I reconnected with a girl I used to date in college up to my junior year, and she, coincidentally, taught a creative writing course for women in Bar Harbor [Maine] twice a year. And she'd written a good book of her own, and I reconnected with her and I said, "Emily, would you mind taking a look at my first 80 pages?" And she called me back a few days later, and I said, "Well, Emily, what do you think?" I'm not going to use the exact words she said, but she said, it's terrible. I said, "What?" I said, "Emily, please." She said, she said, you know, women do most the reading of fiction. You know, there's no passion. There's no, no. There's no. There's no sex. There's no you know anything to get anybody excited about. I said, "Gee, Emily, I don't, you know, I really not - I must have fallen asleep during Engineering 433 when they taught that part [Laughs]. I don't know how to write that stuff." Said "That's okay, just buy my book." So I bought her book and I got to about chapter fourteen and it said, "How To Write a Romantic Scene." So I read this thing, I got to the end of it and said, "I think I can handle it." Get to the next chapter: "How to Write an Erotic Scene." I

say, “holy [inaudible]!” So I took a cold shower and - and I started to write some stuff in it. And because, what's interesting about this is it shows how the book - shows how, in just the last few years, tools have become widely available to a much broader segment of the world that can do serious damage. An easy example is the explosion of drones. Now, you can buy a drone on Amazon for 495 bucks that'll take an 8 to 10 kilogram load 30 kilometers. That's less than 400 bucks. You could drop an 81 millimeter mortar, which is exactly what the Ukrainians started doing with drones back in those days. They got much more sophisticated, but that kind of technology has exploded. CRISPR technology, which you can use to modify viruses for good or ill, has exploded a lot. There were roughly, maybe 5,000 labs capable of doing primitive CRISPR technology in 2019, there are about 50,000 now, and it's cheaper to get the technology. And then you also have the overlay that we have seen recently of the ability to hack into financial systems, into water systems, into electronic grids, and you can buy this stuff on the dark net. So it doesn't take anybody any brilliance to see that. Whereas atomic bombs and stuff like that were proprietary to the military, these weapons are much more broadly available to a wide number of people.

Jim Firestone [00:44:29] That's very frightening.

Dick Woodbridge [00:44:30] I hope it is because people don't understand how vulnerable we are now, more vulnerable than we were before COVID.

Jim Firestone [00:44:37] That's what's great about reading your book is to see how that comes forward.

Dick Woodbridge [00:44:42] So, exactly, so the book sort of exists at three - three layers, and I think Emily was right. It's - one layer is really trying to heighten people's awareness to our vulnerability and frankly, I've had some people say, "Why did you do that? You're putting out a blueprint." Well, maybe so, but at least maybe people will start to be aware of what they need to defend themselves against. That's number one. In fact, if you remember, recall the president's cage match when there was this - this group that was going to attack with drones and assassinate people until the guy's leader's mother turned the man - but what they did is they went from from TikTok to Signal, which is an end-to-end encryption. So they don't even know how many people were involved in this for sure, and the FBI is not saying much about it. But anyway, so it exists on this - one is this the wider availability of really dangerous technologies to a much greater group of people. Second layer is it's sort of a love story. I think it's a, I think it's a fun love story - that's my opinion. I like several different types of writers, one of which is Carl Hiaasen. I don't know if many people read Carl. He is one of - I read a lot of stuff, and a lot of things that I read. I say, "you know, I could do with all this." That - I read Carl Hiaasen, and I said, "Where does this guy get his imagination?," you know, so it's, you have - if you're going to write a book like this, what happens in the book has to happen to people, has to happen to real people, has to happen to a real type of relationship doesn't mean it has to be a boring relationship. So I have been, I use the word I choose carefully, of being a little racy in the book. If I am, I - I apologize.

Jim Firestone [00:46:32] I don't read science fiction or terror books or whatever else one would want to call it. But I was really impressed with it, and I was really impressed, basically,

with the idea that you bring it to the public, so the public - you're doing a service for the public to be able to see that they should be frightened of what all this technology is, and they should understand it a lot better. And what a, what a guy to teach it like you, somebody who's a patent attorney who's seen the inventions all of his life.

Dick Woodbridge [00:47:07] One of the occupational hazards of being a patent attorney is you're always interested in new technologies, and so this is a near, what I call a near-future technology. One of the downsides of near future technology is that what you write as a mystery can turn into history real quick - history to mystery. And the third level of this is - it's really the discussion about sort of where AI could be going, and so it's really - the thing that drove me was it's a message that really needed to get out, and that's really why I did it and I appreciate your bringing up. You can buy it on Amazon [Laughs]. You can go to my website, [www.rcwoodbridge](http://www.rcwoodbridge.com) - R as in a Romeo, C as in Charles, Woodbridge. No periods - .com, and order it there. It's now, I think it's now 4.7 stars out of 5. So - but thank you for bringing it up - and I think that - and I'm not here to make any money off it. I probably, if I make any money, I'll be stunned. Anyway, if I do, I'm going to divide it between you know-

Jim Firestone [00:48:15] Well, tell me one last thing -

Dick Woodbridge [00:48:17] Sure.

Jim Firestone [00:48:17] - about - what do you think about the future of the town at this point? You've seen it a lot from the inside, from the perspective of both the Borough and the

Township, and all the things that are going now - on now - that are some of which are very disturbing like the affordable housing overlay and the conflict that's going on between the people.

Dick Woodbridge [00:48:39] So, before I answer that question directly, let me start out in an indirect way, and I'll talk about something that you and I chatted about. I've always found this sort of interesting, but when we were in Valley Road School in our eighth grade, we had to find advertisers for The Challenger, which is our yearbook, and -

Kim Dorman [00:48:59] Which he has a copy of.

Dick Woodbridge [00:49:00] Which I just happen [Laughs] - I don't know, I must have packed this -

Jim Firestone [00:49:04] So do I.

Dick Woodbridge [00:49:05] - must have packed this with my lunch or something. But just happened to have one in front of me. Too bad the microphone can't see.

Jim Firestone [00:49:11] It's dedicated to Mr. Van.

Dick Woodbridge [00:49:12] It is dedicated to Mr. Van, indeed. Very nice, smiling picture of him. Remember this one?

Jim Firestone [00:49:17] Oh yeah, [Inaudible]

Dick Woodbridge [00:49:19] Yeah, yeah. So at any rate, so we went out and we got advertisements. We got 89 ads for this, okay, and for the front of it, a few years ago, I went through all the ads in the back. You can see them - Hulit stores, Thorne's Drugstore, Conover Motors, Nassau Oil, Hinkson's. So we got 89 ads, okay, out of those 89 - so Jim knows where this is going. So I'm going to ask Kim -

Kim Dorman [00:49:52] OK.

Dick Woodbridge [00:49:53] - our moderator - out of those 89, how many of those businesses do you think are still active here in Princeton?

Kim Dorman [00: 50:00] Well, I know Hinkson's here. I feel like Nassau Oil Co. may be here. I don't know, let's say five.

Dick Woodbridge [00:50:11] Okay, so that's interesting. I had forgotten about Hinkson's because they had moved there -

Jim Firestone [00:50:13] Moved to the garage.

Dick Woodbridge [00:50:14] - so they are legitimately here. So that actually changes the dynamic a little bit. So you're absolutely right. So you're, you're close, but you're high.

Kim Dorman [00:50:24] Okay.

Dick Woodbridge [00:50:25] High.

Kim Dorman [00:50:26] I was, I was being optimistic. It's -

Dick Woodbridge [00:50:29] So, yeah the answer is three. Now Hinkson's is one. That's - I've got to give you credit for that, that's very good, I missed that one. But can you guess the other two? Now I'll give you a hint, they're in the same line of business.

Kim Dorman [00: 50:43] Well, I mean -

Kim Dorman [00:50:43] [Dick Woodbridge starts singing the theme music to the game show Jeopardy.]

Kim Dorman [00:50:54] - the Nassau Inn. The Nassau Inn. Did you get money from them? They were around [Laughs].

Dick Woodbridge [00:50:59] But they didn't - no, we didn't get money from them, okay. So there are probably a few that are around.

Kim Dorman [00:51:03] I'm at a disadvantage.

Dick Woodbridge [00:51:04] That's okay. I'll give you a hint: they're in the funeral business.

Kim Dorman [00:51:09] Oh, okay.

Dick Woodbridge [00:51:09] Mather Hodge and Kimball's. And Hinkson's - I had, I'd missed that, yeah. But it shows you how fast things have changed. Okay. So in part, to answer your question about the future, the only thing that - if you're going to extrapolate the past is, there's likely to be changes too. So it's interesting to take a look at the long view of Princeton and take a look at some of the things that have changed. It's gotten - it's gotten - we, we've gone through the integration of the schools, teaching of values that we started off with, I don't think they teach values the same way. I'm not in a good position to teach what values they do teach nowadays, but the idea of respect and fair play seems to have dropped out of the conversation. We have less of a blue-collar mix. We are more of an international community now. I'm not so sure that's so bad. Much more congestion, so we see a lot more of that. Now we have parking meters, I don't remember parking meters from when I was a kid. Here's an interesting observation - when we were kids, our parents would shop on Nassau Street or Witherspoon [Street], maybe on Lower John [Street] too. But you had Lyons Meat Market, you had Hulit Shoe Store, you had Wine and Game, and - so it's funny when people think about Amazon and getting things delivered to your house. You know, in the old days, you'd call up and Lyons would deliver, Royal Scarlet would deliver, Wine and Game would deliver, Rockwood Dairy

would deliver. Everybody would read the Philadelphia Inquirer. I'm sure people read the New York Times. Now people mostly read the New York Times and maybe the Wall Street Journal. I don't know if anybody reads the Inquirer anymore.

Kim Dorman [00:53:15] Right.

Dick Woodbridge [00:53:18] Yeah, like that used to be how it is. And politics, as we talked about, has become less inclusive in a real sense. But I'm generally optimistic. I think that even though the university has changed a lot/ There's some aspects of it I don't go along with, especially the bashing of Woodrow Wilson. They brought an international community. I think that's good. We're living in more of an international world. I think kids going out to see what the rest of the world's like, is really important, really important. Not just stuck here in our parochial, little silos. Get the kids out, see what the rest of the world's like. There are some great strides being made in medicine, I think. I've got this cell phone here. It does things beyond my imagination. I remember as a boy reading Dick Tracy, Chester Gould's famous comic, and Sam Catchem had a wrist radio - a wrist radio. A wrist radio. I have - I didn't bring my, I didn't bring my other, my little watch with me - it tells me where I'm lost, it sends me messages, it sends me reminders. This thing - I could lose money on prediction markets. I mean I've got umpteen apps here that do a bazillion different things. So I'm generally optimistic. I think medically things will get better. I think communications will improve. There's obviously some glitches in it. I think internationally things have got to start to improve and I think they will. I'm not sure how we get to that point, but they've got to because some of these stupid wars are really - I'm probably getting to be more of a pacifist than I was when I was younger - but are

really getting to be pretty dumb. So I think overall kids nowadays have a lot of advantages. But the point is, if things - if you can have - if you can go from 89 businesses down to three still going, you know, in 70 years, imagine what's going to be here later on. Now, what you have is - you basically have, you know, upscale stores all, all along here. You know, it could be Swarovski, it could be Ralph Lauren - I'm not knocking them; they're wonderful institutions. But you don't have the mom and pop operation, but that's not unique to Princeton.

Jim Firestone [00:55:29] We also have 100 eateries, and you used to only have about eight, I think.

Dick Woodbridge [00:55:48] That's exactly right. So you had Renwicks, you had The Balt, Viedt's, PJs -

Jim Firestone [00:55:54] When people pile in on the weekends, they've all got an eatery to go to, so we become a destination town, sort of like New Hope [Pennsylvania].

Dick Woodbridge [00:56:01] Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I mean, I can - you probably know better than I, but it's one of the most popular tourist towns in the area. And with a new, wonderful art museum, and I've had the pleasure of sitting on their Community Advisory Committee for a number of years, it's incredible what they - it's even more attractive. And there's been some talk about - I remember talking to the late Herb Hobler about developing the area down by the [Princeton] Battlefield so you could park buses and bring people in so you wouldn't have real congestion because the university obviously is a major tourist attraction. But, you're absolutely

right, it's a tourist attraction but I think the bottom line is, Jim, I'm - I think it will be okay, and I'm - continue to be optimistic.

Jim Firestone [00:56:45] Good.

Dick Woodbridge [00:56:47] Well, thank you, Jim.

Jim Firestone [00:56:48] Thank you, Richard.

Kim Dorman [00:56:51] Thank you both.

Dick Woodbridge [00:56:51] Well, thank you, Kim. Thank you for making it possible.

Kim Dorman [00:56:54] My great pleasure.