

Oral History, Labors of Waste and the Value of Knowledge
DSNY Oral History Project
John W. Draper Interdisciplinary Master's Program in Humanities and Social Thought

Narrator: Jack Behan

Interviewer: Anna Weinreich

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Anna Weinreich: This is Anna Weinreich interviewing Jack Behan. We're at 14 University Place at NYU in Robin Nagle's office – thank you very much, Robin -

Jack Behan: Thank you, Robin!

AW: It's the 17th of March 2011, Saint Patrick's Day. Are you ready?

JB: Yeah.

AW: Great. Could you tell me a little bit about how you grew up?

J: Born in Staten Island, New York. Lived in all different parts of the city. But until I was probably in my late teens, mid teens I stayed in Staten Island. I started working for the city there. My first job with the city was in 1980 with the Water Department, I was still living in Staten Island. From there - I worked there from October 1980 until April of '84. April of '84 - I went to DOT, drove the ten-wheel dump truck for the highway department hauling asphalt, paving the roads and then in 1987, I finally became a garbage man.

AW: What did your parents work as?

JB: My mother obviously was a home-maker and stayed at home until all of us kids were grown. I have a brother, I have a sister, both younger than me. Dad always worked for the city. Dad worked for the Department of Transportation, with the Staten Island Ferry Department. He was a deputy commissioner. He worked in the office for a good number of years and in later years, towards the end of his career, transferred to a construction office within the Department of Transportation right on Chamber Street, across from City Hall. He retired in 1989, after I think about 27 years with the city. Two years after I started sanitation. I started with sanitation in '87, dad retired from the city in '89. So, he did 27 years with the city, basically the same as I did. I did 27 years myself, I retired in 2007.

AW: And did your dad working for the city as a public servant, did that influence your career choice?

JB: Not so much being a public servant. My father always pushed me for, you know, a city job, basically. Not so much even for the pay, but more so for benefits. Which is one thing, now even being retired I'm starting to appreciate the meaning of.

The perk of a city job is always that you have your benefits for life. Which is the truth. I mean I've used them several times in these four years since I retired. You get medication, you get prescriptions. I still have my GHI, my health insurance, my dental. Nothing changes. And it will be that way until I'm off age for medicare, and that's what? 65 or 60something? So, I'll never have to worry about going to a doctor and having to pay for it. I have my insurance for life. So that was always the main thing my dad tried to instill in me. It didn't matter what the job was, just the fact of working for the city itself and you get those benefits. The pension, obviously. I could live off my pension, you know, money-wise and I have my benefits for life. I wasn't always rich while I was working, but I made it this far, now I have the fruits of all that for the rest of my life. That was the important thing he pushed for.

AW: But as I know, it mattered to you what kind of work you were doing.

JB: Of course! Since I was five years old! I guess I was about four or five years old, I developed a fascination for the Sanitation Department. I mean it started as a young child watching the construction project out my window at two or three years old. I was always fascinated with the dump trucks and the bulldozers. And for whatever reason they were digging up the street in front of my house, I would just sit at the window all day and watch them. And my mother would tell me the stories, and I just one day became fixated with the garbage truck and stayed with that with the rest of my life.

AW: What fascinated you about it?

JB: I don't know. I can't say exactly. It was just the idea of a truck! When I started with the Highway Department in '84, driving the dump truck, that was the first job I really really had driving a TRUCK. I loved it, a big, ten-wheel dump truck. I was just like a little kid with a new toy. But I never really lost sight of, my real love was the Sanitation Department. And one day, you know, I was always raised to believe that if anything was meant to be, and you want it bad enough, you try hard enough you will get it. And in 1987 I did! I was hired by Sanitation. Took all the tests, took enough time with all the bureaucracy, and test-takings, and all that nonsense, all the waiting was the hardest part. But in March of 1987, it became a reality.

AW: Can you tell me a little bit more about what it was like to grow up wanting to become a sanitation worker? About how you got more familiar with the job?

JB: I can't exactly say when it was. I think when we moved into what I consider the family house. I mean it was the first house my parents bought as a married couple with – at that point – three young children. My brother was an infant when we moved into that house in 1963. I was four years old, and I guess I had been watching this construction project I've been speaking of – it went on at the house, I guess the apartment we moved out of to move into the house that my parents bought. So the love of trucks and heavy equipment was already in my mind. And I guess soon after I moved into the house, the family house in Staten Island, the next big vehicle, the next big truck I was able to fix my sights on was a garbage truck. And that was it! And it became routine. I mean, back then they picked up the garbage three times a week, when I was four years old. I remember, whatever the days were – I think Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we used to get the pick-ups - I would wait for the garbage truck and and I just became fixated with the garbage truck. And, it just grew from there. If there happened to be a day when I wasn't at school or that they came early enough before I went to school – I would wait for the truck to come. And I would see the trucks from up the block and there were times when my mother was taking me out or I was going to school, and I said "I'm gonna

wait! I, I have to wait for the garbage men!”

And I got to know the guys on the truck. And as I understood later, as time went on, I understood that you had a steady crew. The crew had a truck. You know, I eventually got to know the men. The regular guy's name was Joe, his partner was Jimmy and the third fellow, I don't remember his name, Sonny I think it was, and the truck was 3-59. 252-359. That was the full truck number. That's again my fixation with numbers. So many different things started to develop within me, concerning the Department. And I got to know that on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I think it was, Jimmy, Joey, and Sonny or whoever the third guy was on truck 359, they would pick up my garbage. And it just grew from there.

Certain days the schedule got thrown off with snow and holidays. It got to the point when I was always out in front of the house, waiting for them. Joe was an old Italian guy, very personable, very friendly. As a public servant myself, later on in the years, you got to know all the regular faces you saw on your routes, you had all the little kids. There were a lot of little Jacky Behans, when I was doing the work, doing my round. Who chased the truck and wanted to help me with my pails. And now I could see how Jimmy and Joe thought of me as a young kid.

And eventually I got friendly with them and we knew each other's names and it became one day that he asked “Do you want to ride in the truck? Do you want to sit in the truck?” And oh my god, that was the biggest thrill of my life! You know, just, whatever, I was six, seven years old at that point – to sit in a garbage truck! And at least for my block, my mother wouldn't let me go off the block when I was a little kid. And then as I got older and she could see my attachment for the garbage truck, she would let me go around the corner and go further and further as I got older and older and she trusted me more. And she obviously got to know people, she knew the guys in the truck as well and it wasn't a problem. And it just got bigger and bigger!

So I don't know how else to explain it. It was just something that I took a liking to. And, as time went on, I was able to get to do more and more. Whether it would be riding the truck, then I went a little further, as I got a little older. One day I threw my, dumped my own pail. Standing in front of my house, Joe would let me dump my own pail and that took me to some place where I'd never been before. It's like I, I couldn't, I still don't know how to explain that, but it was something that just got bigger and bigger within me. And the more I was able to do it, the more I wanted to find out. Watching how the truck worked, squashed the garbage in the back and I became fascinated with the trucks, all the numbers of the different trucks.

And eventually I wanted to see the garage. I knew there was a garage, I knew there was a building where they parked all the trucks and how to get there one day. And as I got older, after school one day, without my mother knowing, I just took the bus and I found my way to get to the garage on my own, looked for and suddenly found truck 359. “That's the truck that picked up my garbage!” I ended up seeing Joe and Jimmy and his partner, and it just got bigger and bigger and bigger.

And whenever I was out with the family, riding every part of the five boroughs, and I saw a garbage truck, I identified it. I got to know the code numbers, the series, the model numbers and I was like “Oh, that's the type of truck that picks up our garbage, that's the truck that Joe drives!” And no matter where I went in the five boroughs, obviously, there was a sanitation truck riding around and I always would find it. And it's something that got bigger and bigger and bigger. 'Till the day I got hired. The day I got on the job, all of a sudden the past 20-somewhat years in my life were all – oh god - coming back to me and I remembered growing up as a kid, and becoming fascinated with the way the truck worked when I was seven years old! And I remembered the day sitting in the truck with Joe on my block and I had to get out at the corner cause I could see my mother looking at the corner. And I gotta make sure that I get out of the truck by the time I reach the corner or my mother would be calling the cops, or chasing after the truck or doing something to come get me, but it just,

it got bigger and bigger. My dream, I was living my dream and it until this day - I'm off the job four years already - hasn't died at all. And I don't think it's going to. Not much else I can say.

AW: Can you tell me more about going to the garage for the first time?

JB: I wish I could remember exactly what it was like. But I think I was afraid to physically go in the building. I mean, again, I was a civilian. It's a city office, a city building. I mean, I understand now how a lot of it works as far as trespassing. It's not like a public building, an office building where you're coming there to do something. You just can't come and walk into a sanitation garage and walk through like it's a public building. It's a city building, but it's not open to the public, I guess I should say. But eventually I would see – I guess the second or the third time I went there, I ended up seeing Joe, the guy that picked up my garbage. And he was like “What are you doin' down here?!” something like that. And I says “I took the bus after school!” I had to come. I was fascinated enough to want to see what the garage looked like, where your truck and everybody else's truck was parked.

And when I became familiar with the job and the trucks themselves and the different numbers, I would see trucks in my neighborhood, which I knew came from the same garage, cause all the district numbers are on the truck and they still are today. I knew that that's all that I wanted. I was just fascinated with seeing everything. I had to get down there, so I could see the way the trucks were all parked in the garage and were all lined up. The empty trucks over here, the trucks that were full and had to go to the dump on this side, or the one's that had broken down and had to be fixed by the mechanic were parked on that side. You know, then I was able one day to get in. I saw Joe and Joe says “Oh, come inside, you can meet my boss” or whatever. There isn't much they could let you do with the equipment. But as far as being fascinated by the job itself, they could show you anything. Show me like the set up boards, where Joe would say, “This is my name over here and this is my truck and tomorrow we'll work in Greenwich Village or in the Lower East Side.” And he showed me how to do the operations boards and the set up, what all the code numbers meant, and the colors, you know, everything is color-coded; the different neighborhoods, which I became to know as sections, cause they're called sections, not neighborhoods. I got to understand a lot about the job and it went on, and on, and on, and for years.

I started going to the garage, take the bus after school, take the bus after work. When I finally got my license at eighteen years old, I got my first little piece-of-junk car, I would drive to the garage, park my car out on the street, park it in the parking lot, because by that time I knew there. I mean, now I've been going there for probably seven, eight, nine years. As a kid after school on the bus, I got know all the men. And each time I went I might have stayed a little longer. One day, the shift changed, you know. And if I was hanging out with Joe, say one afternoon, and the boss of the night shift came in and he saw me sitting with Joe. I got to know him, cause obviously he could see that I was a little kid that was Joe's friend from the route, or something like that I guess I could say. And then one day, when Joe went home, I ended up staying there, because I was friendly enough with the night shift supervisor. And then I started staying at night. And then that opened up a whole new avenue and I started seeing new faces, and I could see that the job had a job at night. I mean, it's the same as it is during the day, but there's a few different functions that they do at night, like running the truck to the dump - they're called relays as I got to know the word over years. Took many a relays myself over the years. But a lot of that work they did at night, even thought they pick up garbage around the clock and at all times of the year, there's certain functions that they do on certain shifts. So by lingering late in the afternoon, early into the evening, I was able to learn a little bit more how the four to midnight shift works. The trucks that they fill up during the day, the four to twelve shift is running them to the dump. A lot of times, when it was maybe a Friday, I might have

stayed all night on the four to twelve shift. And now I got to understand, well at midnight, the shift changed again. Now there's another boss, now you have the midnight boss.

After staying around with Joe in the afternoon late in the day, I met the four to twelve boss and then as I got comfortable over time staying there, I wind up meeting the guy who replaced that boss at midnight. And so now I'm hanging around at the garage at midnight, two, three four in the morning. I only did that, mind you, on a Friday night, which was actually midnight Saturday night, two A.M., three A.M. on a Saturday, only because I wasn't either working or going to school. I was driving, so I wasn't a kid, but still I couldn't be coming home at three, four, five in the morning, even though I was driving myself. I lived at home so there was always rules you had to ride by. My mother and father knew I wasn't hanging out at a corner, I wasn't out drinking, I wasn't causing trouble hanging out in the streets with my friends. In a sense I was with my friends. They were all grown guys like my father, they were sanitation men, but that's where I spent most of my free time. After work, after school – even when I started working. How can I say? When 21 years old and started working for the Water Department in 1980, I was still going to the garage and helping the men. I would work on the truck - I wasn't supposed to, but 'Don't ask, don't tell'. I will say nothing if you won't. And I knew all the men, I knew all the bosses. This, again, it's been going on for probably the last 15, 20 years at this point now, I got to know the whole operation in this one particular garage. I got to know all the men, I got to know all the different trucks, what each different piece of equipment did and where the dumps were. There wasn't much I didn't know. I pretty much learned how the job worked, and when I finally got hired in 1987, there really wasn't much they could teach me.

I had a lot of fun even in training class, cause I mean there were things I was showing the people in the class. That actually made the instructor's job easier.

I remember one point, when I was in training, they were showing us a little bit about how they set up the trucks and the crews everyday, what I referred earlier to as the operations board, and the color-codes and how you paired certain things together and certain partners and certain crew members and what trucks they had and how the color-codes meant certain sections. And the instructor of our class that day was touching on a little bit of that, and said “We'll pick this up after lunch”, we had to take lunch break or whatever. So there were a few people that were interested and didn't leave or didn't go out to get food and stayed there. And I was just – again - fascinated with seeing everything I had been accustomed to in the last 10, 15 years of my life hanging out in the garage. Now it's all reality, all the truck numbers, the tag numbers, you know, Mr. Jones had truck 123 and everybody's names were different colors and what they all meant. And I knew all that already, sitting in the classroom, in training school. I was showing one other guy in the class with me - trainee you want to call it, new employee - and I'm showing him. I says “You know, this is where it all goes”. And I'm talking like someone who's been on the job, and I was talking no different to how any instructor was. And this went on for probably half hour, and I had a little following sitting with me. “Tthis is how you set this up, and this is what it means, and when it's a color-code, this is what the codes and the colors mean, and everything has a tag, everything had a code or a shift on it or they divided the board up into sections and all these trucks worked in one section, all these trucks worked in another section”. And I probably went on rambling for half hour and started to attract guys, cause they were maybe amazed themselves “There's a guy just like us, he's new too. But how does he know all this?” After I'd say about a half hour I turned around, and who's sitting in the chair behind me was the instructor! Watching all of this. Gentleman's name was Nick Giunta, I don't know how to spell the name, but his name was Nick Giunta. He was one of the main new trainee instructors. And he was sitting back in the chair. He had walked in – I didn't see him come back into the classroom – and I'm sitting there showing all the new kids what this all means, and “this is how you do it” and talking about the job in general. And I turn around and he

has been sitting in the class. He says “Okay, you're doing fine!” It was like he was amazed!

But yeah, again, I was 28 years old when I got the job and I had been following the job for about 20 years at that point. I had as much time to know the job, to love the job, to follow the job as a kid, and even as a grown up, as a man I was still working on the trucks with the guys. I wasn't getting payed, I wasn't on the job yet, I was already doing it 20 years! I came on the job as an old-timer! In a sense! I was brand new on the payroll, everything else: I knew.

AW: Can I ask you to tell me the story again of how you forgot about time when you were in the garage one day and your dad actually had called?

JB: I don't know old I was. I don't think I was driving at that point. I remember exactly who I was working with, I remember where I was working in the streets. I was working in Staten Island. I was in the Port Richmond section of what then was district 71. It's now called Staten Island 1. Years ago, the districts all had different format. They started with district one, which was on Canal St. in Manhattan. There's still the building and it's still called district one, but now the districts all have the same numbers of the respective community boards of the five boroughs. And in Staten Island there's only three - there's one, two and three. Brooklyn has 18, Manhattan has 12, and the Bronx has 12, Queens I think has 14. But back then it was district 71, which is now Staten Island 1.

We were working in the Port Richmond section, I was actually right around the corner from my old apartment, where I was watching the construction as a kid when I first became fascinated with trucks. I lived on Treadwell Avenue on Staten Island right off the Hatfield Place, and that's about the area where we were working. And it was a night shift, that I was working, the four to twelve shift. I took the bus after school, went out with the guys on the truck, rode in the truck with them. Back then it was a three-man-truck, but they could squeeze in a 17-year old, 16-year old kid. I wasn't even that old at all, what am I saying? I was maybe 14, 15. And I was out there, I was helping the guys, following the truck, working right there with them – dumping the pails, throwing the bags, picking up the furniture, pushing the buttons, working the back of the truck. And the next thing I know, the foreman roles up, the supervisor roles up behind the truck. He specifically came out, cause he knew pretty much who I used to work with. I would always go out with the same crew. That was, let's see if I can remember their names: That was Bobby, Franky, and Joe. I know their last names, but I guess that's not important. I forget the supervisor's name, I knew him too, but I forget his name. But he says “I gotta take him back to the garage. His father is at the garage.” My father came to the garage, my father had no idea where I was. He knew what I was doing, but he didn't know exactly where. My father was a little upset that I never came home for supper. It was about seven o'clock at night, it was dark. I don't remember what time of the year it was. It wasn't cold. It was just, it was nighttime and I was a little kid and I wasn't home for supper. Every parent would be wondering where their kids are when they don't come home.

You know, but my mother and father pretty much knew what I was doing, they just didn't know where. But my father knew where the garage was, so he went to the garage looking for his son. And they knew who I was “Yeah, he usually works with .. when he was out”. - 'When he was out', I'm talking like I'm a regular! “Yeah, I think he is working with Joe, Franky and Joey and somebody else”. I'm assuming what the conversation was like when my father walked into the office.

So, with the walkie-talkie-system in the building, they must have radioed the supervisor in the field and said “Go if you can catch Frankie and Joey. See where they're working and see if they got little Jack helping them.” And sure enough they found me. And the supervisor brought me back to the garage. He says “your father is waiting at the garage”. I was like “Oh shit!”

So that was that. I got my butt kicked that night when I got back home, but it didn't last. Dad says "You're not goin' down there no more". But, needless to say, I was back a couple of days later. Cause nobody was keeping me away from the garage at that point. I wasn't gonna be told "No", I wasn't listening to my mother and father a lot anyway. It wasn't like I was doing anything bad. I just, again, I caused my mother and father grief, I didn't come home for supper. And as a little kid that's enough to annoy mommy and daddy.

AW: How did they react when you told them that you want to work for the Department of Sanitation?

JB: As far as the job itself, I mean every parent would think that would be wrong or bad. But my father, you know, was pleased. Because, as I said earlier, he would always push the city job, basically for benefits. It didn't matter what job I had. I mean, yeah, you want a job where you're happy and enjoy what you do. But I mean he was working for the city already at that point. He started with the city in 1962, I was three years old. And so he knew the benefits of working a city job and it didn't matter what you did, like I said before. So he was fine with it. My mother just, you know, wanted me to be happy. Whatever you do, a job is a major part of your life. It's a good thing, it's a positive thing when you like what you do! So my mother saw that I had such a love for the job. What parent wouldn't have a problem with that? It goes without saying, it's pretty simple.

AW: But why do you think would anyone have a problem with that?

JB: Maybe because the job is, you know, dirty and diseased. Because you're working out in all kind of inclement weather: ice, snow, the freezing cold. Like the mailman walking down the street when it's zero degrees and in the pouring rain, snowing. You're going to be out there in the middle of the night, picking up garbage in the pouring rain or driving the snow plow. 14 hours, all night long, up and down the block plowing snow. I guess you could look at it as negative. I mean I didn't, because I had a love for the job. I had a love for all aspects of the job. There was nothing I disliked. There might have been a couple of details over the years that I wasn't too fond of. But I don't think anybody likes their job one hundred percent. But you could say, "Well, I don't know if I'd want that job, because I wouldn't want to work nights in the wintertime", which is the case a lot of the times for men with no seniority. At the beginning you're gonna get your feet wet. You're gonna be stuck with the bottom-of-the-barrel assignments, work-wise, shift-wise. But I knew all that. As a kid following the job, following the trucks, taking the bus out to the garage, working behind the truck in the street with the men, I knew what it was all about.

By the time I got the job I was, like I said before, an old-timer. I'd been following the job for 20 years before I actually got on the payroll. When I sat in class there was nothing - and I don't mean to sound conceited - there was nothing they could really teach me. I found training boring, basically. But I accepted it, because there was no way around it. Yeah, you had to sit there in the classroom and listen to Mr. Giunta explain why the color codes and the tickets got matched up this way, and why this truck had to go here, and why the guy with no time on the job had to work nights and I knew what all that meant, but it was alright. But that I guess would give you a lot of cause to say "I don't want that job, cause I wouldn't want to work nights, or I wouldn't want to work holidays. Or if I had to work a midnight-shift, stick beyond the day, a midnight-shift, graveyard, you know, over-night. There's a lot of different terms the men call the different shifts. "What if I had to do a late shift, the overnight-shift and what if I had to go in after a holiday?" And I did that many a year, going in at Christmas night, cause now the new day starts and now it's not a holiday anymore. I did that many a times, a countless number of times. But me, personally, it didn't bother me cause I

wanted to do it.

AW: Can you tell me more about that?

JB: Sure, there was a lot of times, where – again, it didn't bother me, even if I was tired. I would find a way to relax, say after Thanksgiving. A big eating holiday. Who doesn't want to lay down and go to sleep after a big meal? I maybe found the time to get a nap. Later on in the years, my family had a house in the Poconos in Pennsylvania and we would go there for the holidays. I was up there, say for Thanksgiving, but I still had to go back to Brooklyn to work there at midnight. But I still did it. I didn't care, I was going to do something I loved. Me personally, it didn't bother me. A lot of times after the holidays, I volunteered to go on the night shift because there was a lot of work. You'd be picking up garbage that was supposed to be done the day before. But because of the holiday you didn't work and the garbage was still sitting there. So the work was a little bit harder – I always took that because, again, I wanted to do more. I always wanted to do more, always wanted a hard day, never wanted an easy day. Later on in the years, guys would fight to go into certain neighborhoods or because they wanted to go on certain routes, because they were easier. Not too many apartment houses, not a lot of garbage. That wasn't me, I always wanted the hard routes.

AW: And what was hard about them?

JB: Weight, a lot of weight. A lot of apartment houses, a lot of garbage as opposed to going down a block, say Uptown. Nothing but tenements, projects, multi-family dwellings, piles and mountains of garbage on every corner as opposed to driving down a street in Staten Island where I grew up, where I started following Jim and Joey on the truck, where you had five or six single family homes on a block and everybody had one pail, maybe two pails. Or after a holiday, when the garbage was a day late, maybe they had three pails or you had a big family. If I were one of the lazier guys, the less energetic guys, they were guys that got to know: Okay, well in Westerleigh Staten Island, Staten Island 1 where I grew up, was a lot easier than working on the Upper West Side in Manhattan, say in Manhattan 9, where I spent a lot of my years and where Robin even lives. That's harder. But to me, it's easier. There's garbage everywhere, there's piles and piles of bags up and down every block, but I loved that, I ate that up.

AW: Can you maybe give me an example of how one of those night shifts would look like? Because a lot of the people who will be listening to this probably don't know anything about the job. So if you could tell me something about that, that would be great!

JB: It was the same no matter what shift you worked. Yeah, you'd pick up the garbage and the job itself was the same as they are during the day. It's just the fact that it's dark, it's cold, 95 percent of the world is home in bed. The average person might go to bed at nine, ten, eleven o'clock. They've got to set the alarm at six in the morning to get up and have a shower, you know. Jack and Anna are still out in the street picking up the garbage and I might get up at nine, ten at night because my job doesn't start until midnight and that's when I have to be at work at the garage. You're already an hour into your sleep, snoring away and I'm just starting up the truck to pick up the garbage at one in the morning. And I'm going up and down the block, there's very few people on the street, traffic is at a minimum, because 90 percent of the world is home sleeping. I always chose that because I felt it was easier. Yeah, it's a little awkward in a sense, because it changes your sleep habit, it changes your eating habits. The body doesn't know whether it wants to have eggs in the morning when you get home from work or have a hamburger. The mind thinks that when your work day is over you have supper and now you're having eggs before you go to bed. You wake up in the afternoon, you wake up at night to go to work, you're having a hamburger as opposed to having eggs or cereal.

There's a lot of things that are backwards when you work nights, because you change your habits. It takes a long time for the body to get used to sleeping during the day and being awake at night. A lot of times, the average person watches the sun go down when they're in their office, like it is now - four o'clock in the afternoon - the sun is out. Couple hours, it's gonna get dark, that's normal. I did just the reverse: I'm at work, it's dark. You finish your route, you're on your way back to the garage when you finish your midnight shift and the sun is coming up. You're pulling into the garage, life is going to start again, the day is getting busy in the morning rush hour, you're bringing your truck back into the garage, your day is over! And the sun is just coming up. It takes a long time for the mind and the body to get used to that, cause it is quite backwards.

It's not, you know, what I grew up with. It's not what anybody grew up with or understands as normal. But, there are plenty of jobs that go on 24 hours a day, and sanitation is one of them. It's fire, sanitation, bus drivers, you know. Even though the job is the same no matter what shift you work, there's a lot of different factors that can alter the body, that can alter the mind, that can alter your habits in general, just by the hours that you work. The work itself – there's only one sanitation department - you clean the streets and you pick up garbage, and it's done three shifts around the clock, but the body reacts differently depending on the time you're out there.

AW: What about the physical aspect of the job. It's hard work. Can you tell me more about that?

JB: It depends. You, you have to be in halfway decent shape. Anybody can probably lift, anybody can carry. Again, it has a lot to do with certain guys trying to get easier routes, working neighborhoods that don't have as much garbage. Single family homes as opposed to multi-family homes, tenements, apartment buildings. It always kept me in halfway decent shape. It was the best workout and I was getting it everyday. I went to the gym everyday, for seven, eight hours. Constantly lifting, bending, walking. Yeah, it had its days when it was hard. Days maybe when you didn't feel so good, but you still had to do the job, still had to do your route, you still had to pick up the garbage. To me it wasn't too hard. Hard work never hurt me, hard work never should hurt anybody, but certain people are cut out to do certain jobs. Some people are cut out to sit behind a desk, you know. Other kind of people are cut out to drive a truck or to do physical labor, to lift and carry.

AW: How heavy is one of the bags that you would pick up?

JB: Weight-wise, I guess the average bag was probably 30, 40 pounds. When the bag got too heavy, it broke. A lot of that fell on the home-owner, or the superintendent when it was an apartment house. They put too much in the bag, it would break. There were times when I would leave bags, leave cans, cause they were physically too heavy to pick up. There would be plenty of people out there cutting their grass, sweeping their sidewalk and they would shovel up everything into the pail. Now they're leaving the pail sitting out on the curb. And you just shoveled everything, your sidewalk dirt, your grass into one pail. Now the pail weighs a hundred pounds and even King Kong couldn't pick it up. And that was always a problem, and if anything was too heavy, I would always call my partner out "I need your help". And if the two of us had trouble lifting it up, the can stayed there. Cause there was no way in hell I was going to kill myself and my partner, breaking my back, strain a muscle trying to pick up a pail. If I couldn't really pick it up myself – I didn't mind struggling a little bit - but if it was too heavy and two of us couldn't get it off, it was too much struggle for the whole crew, then the pail stayed on the curb. In cases like that, a lot of the bags are made with compactors, they made with machines. The people or even the building's superintendent in the projects, they don't realize a lot of the time what they're putting in the bags. They have the ability to

limit the size of those bags in the projects, they're all packed by machine. And if it was too heavy, the bag would break in the attempt to pick it up and there's the garbage all over the sidewalk. I would try to pick it up - I didn't have to, it wasn't my job. If it broke on the sidewalk it was the property owner's responsibility. I personally wouldn't want to leave a mess on my route, any spot on my route. I would try to pick it up, I wouldn't try and make it spiffy clean cause the bag or the can broke in the first place. You fill up a bag with dirt and rocks, well I don't have to tell you what people put in the bags! You're cutting up your grass and you're sweeping up everything out of the curb, cans, rocks, dirt. Put it in the plastic bag - common sense – when you buy a bag of potatoes, a bag of vegetables in the store, there's only so much you can put in a bag. If you're going put a watermelon in a plastic bag when you're picking it up in the supermarket, it's going to break. Your watermelon is going to fall on the floor. Same with bricks and dirt, you don't put certain things in bags or cans.

But you always just did the best you could. A lot of times, the people, the home-owners, the building's superintendents, they would – I'll stop short of saying they were inconsiderate. They just don't realize that when you put too much in a container or a bag, either it's either going to break, or the sanitation worker is not going to pick it up. I'm not a machine, I'm a human being. I'm not a fork lifter and when I grab the can and it weighs a thousand pounds, I can't just throw it in the truck like it's nothing. I have to physically pick it up with my body. Make it reasonable so that one person can pick it up. I'm a garbage man, you know, I'm not Superman.

AW: I know you're not Superman, but I do know that you once set the record of picking up 17.7 tons one night in BK 14 in Flatbush. Can you tell me about that?

JB: I remember the night perfectly! I was working with my friend Janice, a girl. And we were working the midnight shift, the midnight to eight A.M. shift in BK 14. I'd say about 1995, 1996, since I worked in BK-14 from August of '95 until April of '97, so it was in that time frame. I worked a midnight shift, as usual. I was on my regular truck at the time, 25-BN-154. And Janice and I were working, we did our regular route. Garbage, you know, a lot of project bags, heavy bags, and litter baskets, whatever was on the route. What kind of added to the route, added to the weight was the street sweeper. The street sweeper dumped a couple of times into the truck. Which was common practice. The street sweeper has to dump somewhere. And nine times out of ten, they were probably filled with heavy mud and all, cause they use water to sweep up the dirt and everything else, so that's all laying in the hopper of the broom. And once or twice the broom might have dumped with the truck in addition to the garbage, and everything gets squashed together. You know, and when we finally emptied the truck on shift - which is what I always did, dump while I was on the same shift, I was working and when that was done and I emptied the truck and then my night was over, or the shift was over during the day. But the weight that night was 17.7 tons. If I'm not mistaken, the truck only weight 18 tons.

So we almost picked up the weight of the route equal to the weight of the truck empty. Which was unheard of. That's almost two routes worth of total weight.

The average route usually is around nine to ten tons, give or take. It's hard to say. A lot of the garages in Manhattan are strictly what we call “flats”, “bags”, “bag-stops”: big houses, apartment buildings. And it's easier to get to a high weight, because you're picking up compacted bags, the garbage is heavier. And there's ways to work with that. What they call bale the truck, where you bale the weight b-a-l-e. Which is, while the hopper in the back is squashing the garbage you push it to the back and make it tighter, make the garbage tighter and heavier. And you can actually fit more on the truck, you constantly have to play with the ejector blade, that's called baling the truck. And it enables you to go a little bit further. If you put it all the way in the front of the truck, in my eyes it's

kind of like cheating, cause the truck will fill up a lot faster and will stop working. If you pack it better you can go longer. And in certain areas of the city, a lot of times that's what you have to do. Otherwise you don't finish your work. And if you don't finish your work in most cases, they don't let you come in. You can't just say "Okay, the truck is full" at nine o'clock in the morning when you just started at six. What are you going to do for the rest of the day? You still have garbage in the street, you have to work the truck in certain ways, you had to bale the garbage and try and do your best and finish your route.

JB: That wouldn't be the case in Staten Island, where I grew up. That very rarely happens. But you don't always fill the truck. Either you have the amount of garbage to fill the truck or, like in Staten Island, you do more walking. You cover more ground and that's time-consuming. You either have the garbage to fill up the truck or unfortunately, in Staten Island, lots of parts of Queens, some areas of Brooklyn, you are in residential house areas, a lot of houses, single-family homes, two-family homes, where it's almost physically impossible to fill up the truck. And, not to say the guys don't do a full day, sure they do, cause they're doing more walking, they're covering more ground. Personally, I would rather be in an area like Manhattan, say the Upper West Side, where I worked in Manhattan 9 or in Bronx 4, right by the Yankee Stadium, where I picked up nothing but projects, nothing but apartment houses, "bag stops", "flats" as we call them. You picked up 12, 13, 14 tons of garbage in one shift. Where in Staten Island, you do a lot of walking to pick up eight or nine, maybe ten tons at the most and not fill up all of the truck. I'll rather do the lifting and carrying than the walking. To me, I found that easier. A lot of guys shied away from certain areas, certain routes, certain neighborhoods, cause they felt it was too heavy. Heavy meaning too much weight, too much garbage, I found that to be easier. You know, me being a big man as opposed to someone that might have been in a little better shape that liked to do the walking, I'd rather stand behind the truck and spend five or ten minutes throwing in a pile of bags than walking house to house for a mile and picking up one or two cans here and there. I personally found that easier.

AW: And was Janice your regular partner at the time?

JB: Janice drove the street sweeper. Janice was the regular night-time mechanical broom operator in BK-14 at the time. So the only reason I was working with Janice that night - it was probably a Wednesday or a Saturday - cause at the time, they didn't have a street sweeper. I think it had to be a Friday night on a midnight shift, which would actually be a Saturday. Midnight, Friday night, to eight A.M. Saturday morning, that's probably when I worked with her, cause she drove the sweeper. She was on a midnight shift, but there was no broom, no street sweeper that night. She did whatever job they had for her that night, she had to go on a truck to pick up garbage with me. Janice wasn't my regular partner, we worked on the same shift, the same garage, we saw each other every night but that particular night we got paired up. I think it was the only time I actually physically worked on a truck with her. But we, again, worked in the same building every night with everybody else. And we'd have 10, 15, 20 people working that particular shift. We were all in the same office, all sign in and punch in and you all get to see each other and you all work under the same foreman. And you go out to all different spots with your partner and it just so happened that night we were paired together.

AW: Can you tell me more about your experiences working with women? Cause I know that it's a very male dominated job and their role ..

JB: I could, you know, just there's a lot of different opinions as far as that. I like to work, I mean, I don't begrudge anybody the chance to get any job. You know, if you can do it, it's all that should

matter. A lot of guys say "What does a woman want to pick up garbage for? It's a dirty job, it's a filthy job, it's..". There's a lot of different assignments that a woman could get if she wanted. Could drive a street sweeper, do other details. But, you know, the sex of a person shouldn't keep them from getting any job. That's just not right. It's against the law besides, but if you can do the job. I've worked with a couple of women during the course of my career. Janice was great, you know, Janice was one of the guys, it didn't matter. She fit right in, as it should be. That's the way it should be. You have a hundred workers in a garage, doesn't matter if you have fifty men or fifty women. It's fifty two-man crews you put out the door. The work gets done with who you have. That's the way it should be. It didn't bother me. There were situations and there were certain people that didn't want to do certain jobs, cause "women don't do that". You know, I've heard that comment many times in my career. But I can't really find too much fault with it when a woman says that, cause there's plenty of men that said it, too. So, that's not really a valid comment to pick on a woman, cause she didn't want to do that job or she didn't want to go on that route. Cause there was too much garbage, or that's too heavy, or it's raining, or I didn't want to. Plenty of men said that, too. So, I sure heard all the comments in twenty-plus years. That aspect of the job - hiring females - didn't really affect me. I liked what I did too much. And also, when I wound up working with a woman who maybe couldn't do as much as me, I always felt that it went above and beyond. There were a lot of men that didn't want to do what I did or as much as I did. So I couldn't fault anybody, man or woman for not wanting to do something I usually did. Yeah, if I had to do 55 percent or 60 percent of the work, it didn't bother me. There was a couple of times in my career where I did all the work. One case in point, I had my regular partner for a couple of years, when I worked in East New York, in BK-5, my regular partner Timmy at the time had a problem with his leg or whatever, hurt himself and didn't want to take time off. And I knew that, Timmy was my friend off the job, we even carpooled together, we had the same day off, so we always had the carpool back and forth. And Timmy for some reason didn't feel good that day. I told him "You just drive, if I need you for something I call you". You know, and I did the whole route a couple of times in my career with Timmy like that, did everything myself, 99.9 percent of the work, cause my partner had a problem that day, he didn't feel good. So what? I was tired that day and I slept well when I went home, but it didn't bother me. I did what I had to do. The job always got done, one way or another.

AW: Can you tell me more about the difference of being entitled to a regular partner and working a regular route, as opposed to when you first start the job and that's not the case?

JB: It takes a lot of time. It depends on the area where you work, the area, the district. If it's in a good neighborhood. If it's an easy neighborhood, like Staten Island where I grew up, house to house, single family homes as opposed to working in the ghetto. I don't mean to disrespect people using terms like that, but the job, it's more like a country club in Staten Island. It's more like a real job as opposed to where I grew up in Staten Island. Where I had my best time working, probably cause it was the hardest was in Bronx-4. I worked in Bronx West-4 and I filled the truck twice everyday. In Staten Island they don't fill it up once. But, again, the work was there. Again, it didn't bother me. It was, uh, .. excuse me! I'm going on and on and on and I forgot the question!

AW: It was about having a regular route ..

JB: Yeah, and a partner

AW: How did it change the job for you, once you had that?

JB: You try and get something routine. Once you get seniority, you have the option of getting something steady. You get to working with the same person all the time, you get to develop a bond

with that person, like your brother or your sister. You're always working on University Place, you always have the route around Washington Square Park, say. It's always Jack and Anna, working around Washington Square Park, you know. You get a routine and then it also goes beyond that. You get to know the people on the route that you're servicing, you get to know the people on the street. You know, so-and-so lives in that building, so-and-so lives in this building. We know those people, too. You don't always get to know everybody on your route, but even if you get to know them, it's not necessarily by name. I think it makes it easier, makes it nicer, makes you feel like more of a public servant. I mean, in the beginning, I didn't care where I worked. I just treated everybody the same. But it got to be nice, cause then you know how you're starting your route. How it was to ride the truck with Joe and Jimmy as a little boy. I got to know them and I got to know that after you turn in my block, you turn right and did 1st Street, then you did 2nd Street, then maybe you did 1st Avenue, and then you did 2nd Avenue. You do the route a certain way, depending on where you work. A lot of the times, alternate side parking came into effect, so you do your route a certain way. Because you know that at a certain time the cars moved over. You got to work with the same guy all the time and that got to be good. If you didn't feel so good that day, it didn't matter. You always knew that you had you had a good partner. If you were a little under the weather, you didn't feel so great, you were feeling a little sluggish – you had a partner that would pick up the slack on that day, if you needed that. To me having a regular partner, it got to be more like a friendship and a lot of times it was just that, it was a friendship to that person off the job. “So-and-so, yeah, my friend from work.” We happen to be away for the weekend “Yeah, so-and-so is coming”, happened to be you partner from work. My family, we have a house in the Poconos, since 1972, my parents bought the house when I was 12 years old. I didn't start sanitation until I was 28 years old, I'm 52 now. So we have this house in Pennsylvania for, it's gonna be forty years this Summer. And there were times when I would bring people away for the weekend! And my partner and I were both off, or even when it wasn't my regular partner. When you invite people away for the weekend: “Come to my house and bring your wife and your kids! You know what? My house is on a lake up there, we have a rowing boat, we have canoes. Go swimming in the lake.” It was like a vacation! If I worked, say, in Manhattan-9, Uptown, the Upper West Side of Manhattan and you were my partner. And maybe you lived in an apartment house, you lived in the projects. And know you were able to come away for the weekend to the country. You know, swim in a lake, go boating, go fishing, that was like the greatest thing in the world.

That's not something that a lot of people get to experience. Especially living in the city, maybe in the projects. Not even having a car. There are people living on the trains, going back and forth to work. They still have a family, have wives and kids and husbands and if that's your regular partner, it gives you a chance to still be together with that person, but not on the truck and not in the garage, off the job.

That's nice. Go out after work, go to a ball game with your partner. Or go to a ball game with a couple of your friends from work. Your partner or maybe some other crews from your garage or your sections, wherever you work.

AW: How many regular partners did you have during your career?

JB: I really can't count! Not that many, I've had a couple. I remember a lot of the good ones.

AW: Tell me about them.

JB: Oh god, where do I start? Probably my one friend Timmy, who I already mentioned when once or twice in my career, I did the whole route myself when Tim didn't feel good. Timmy was my

partner, probably my most memorable partner in BK-12. Timmy and I also transferred together to BK-5 and were partners there. We had a supervisor, gentleman named Ray Haywood in BK-12. He was promoted to superintendent and his new assignment as the superintendent of the district was BK-5. So he goes "Oh yeah, why don't you come out there and work for me? I'm the super there and this and that". BK-5 was based in East New York, right off the Belt Parkway by the old Fountain Avenue land fill. At the time, we lived in Long Island. Timmy and I both lived there, we carpooled together, so it actually made the ride a lot shorter, cut in half. So we went there and then we left after a certain number of years, our friend Ray moved on to a different assignment. A lot of the times, the bosses were moved around over the years. But Timmy and I were partners probably a good five years, over two different districts. And we were known for, I don't know, being two wild and crazy and funny guys. I don't know how much of my personal life you want me to reveal?

AW: However much you want to reveal.

JB: Timmy and I were .. we were both gay. We were both friends off the job, so .. Timmy and I were both very open, I guess you could say. We were both very "out" is the word they use today. But, it didn't matter. But we had fun at work, we had the same fun sittin' in the bar drinking at night. We had the same fun drinking coffee on the truck, picking up garbage, or doin' recycling or whatever. Following each other to the dump, doing relays on a midnight shift. Whatever we chose to do, nine times out of ten, wherever I went, Timmy went with me - Heckel and Jeckel. How many partnerships do you hear of in any part of life? It was fun in a sense, cause Timmy was my friend off the job, Timmy was my friend anywhere, and he was my partner at work. Whether we were sitting in a bar, drinking at night, or on the street picking up garbage during the day, we carried on the same. And to me that was fun. The guys in the garage, they all knew I was gay, didn't know about Timmy. But it didn't matter, Timmy wasn't exactly Mr. Masculine. But I had my days too with it. But none of that mattered. It was fun, Timmy was a good partner!

I had others, I had a couple others. I had good partners. I always had good, working partners. Not afraid to work. I had another partner in BK-12 for a short time, a year or two, gentleman named Billy Schiavone. He's still working. Billy came on the job two years before me in 1985, he's still working in BK-12. Billy is just starting his 26th year. He came on in march of 1985, so he just finished 26, starting on 27 actually.

Billy is a great guy, he's a workhorse, never knows when to stop. Never says no when a supervisor needs a favor, or another crew needs help, never says no. Billy is always - like I was - washing my truck at the end of the day, he's got to clean your truck in the garage. Granted, it's a garbage truck, but it doesn't have to look like one where you sit and drive! You still eat your lunch, drink your coffee, eat your bagel in the morning in the truck. It doesn't have to look like a showroom vehicle, but it certainly doesn't have to look like a garbage truck. Take a little bit of pride! And Billy certainly does, I always did. Washes his truck everyday, Billy is up cleaning the hallways, washing the showers, mopping the locker rooms. When he dumps his truck, his day is not over - neither was mine. That's the way he is. I always had partners like that. My partners were never afraid to work. I didn't want a partner that had the mentality "Okay, we'll do our route and if we dump the truck - okay. And if we don't - okay." That wasn't my idea. I always went to work - before I even touched a pail - always had the attitude that I was going to clean my route, finish my route and then I was going to dump the truck. And then after I dumped it, I was going to park the truck, wash it, and if time permitted, I'd find something else to do. Whether it be to run a truck to the dump for somebody, change a flat tire, work in the office doing something for set up for the following day, doing a job on the computer. In the beginning there were no computers, that happened over the years. But I always had partners that wanted to work, I very rarely had a slouch, as they were called.

They were called a lot of things, but that's the only word I will use on a tape, being recorded on a machine.

AW: And what would you talk about?

JB: What do you mean? As far as, my partner? Life in general. Timmy and I - like I say, my main partner Timmy, or any partner - we would talk about the other crews on the job, the other crews in the areas that you were working. How so-and-so worked as opposed to how you worked. They're are a little faster, they're a little slower. This guy, he might work with you in a certain section - every district is divided into sections and each section has a number of trucks working in it, a number of crews. Not everybody worked the same. A lot of times, you had to judge your day by who you were working with. And if so-and-so was working on another truck in your section and they were slouches! Or so-and-so, they did their route, but not as fast as you. You would say "Okay, you know, this is our route, we have that amount of blocks, and so much weight here, and so much weight there. Yeah, well, so-and-so is on that route, and that route is a little difficult or they work a certain way". Or there were times when they got behind - a lot of times, you would go help somebody. Or you'd do an apartment stop for them, or you'd do some regular house-to-house stuff. You know, just to help them. "What are they gonna make us do today?", you know.

A lot of the times it was up to the supervisor in the field to make sure that they did what they were supposed to. So they didn't need help. Or a lot of times, if you had crews that worked a certain speed, did the work - but maybe they had a lot of garbage. So to make everything run smoothly, the whole section work better and look better, to make your immediate boss look better, if it meant doing a little extra, on the arm as they say - something you asked me about. You did it, cause it all came out in the end of the day, it all came out in the wash. Everybody looked the same, everybody did a good job. Did Mr. A do a little bit more than Mr. B? -Yeah, maybe. But it didn't matter cause in the end, everybody was happy, the boss was happy and that was fine. Those are the things you think about or you talk about with your partner. Maybe in the beginning, you don't have a steady partner, everybody works differently. "Today, I'll work with you, Anna. Tomorrow, I might have to work with Robin. Yesterday I worked with Sandy, the other day that I worked with Joe." Everybody works differently.

In the beginning, a lot of the times, you fill-in in certain areas until you get something steady. When is Anna on vacation, or I'll work on that truck when Anna's off. Every time Anna's off, Jack will be on that truck. And that's how a lot of times, you're working to get something steady. If you have the seniority to be in a certain area, every time a worker was off in a certain - say in the Greenwich village area, you're filling in. If a certain spot opens up on a permanent basis, you have the right to get it, cause you have filled in there all along. A lot of the times, guys get steady spots, starts in drips and drabs until something permanent opens up.

AW: You told me that you would get to know the people more and more, working on a regular route.

JB: Yeah.

AW: Can you give me examples of that? Do you have anything in particular which you remember?

JB: My first tour in BK-12 in April of 1989, I was in the job for two years. In April of '89 when I first got to BK-12, I'd say maybe in 1990, 1991. I was there maybe two years, two and a half years, I ended up partnering with a guy named Tommy Gaw, short Irish guy, thinking that today being

Saint Paddy's Day. He was my first steady partner. That was also the opportunity when I first got my brand new, steady truck: 25 AY 3 52.

I learned a lot from Tommy. I was a new kid on the job still. I was only at the job three years, four years when I started working with Tommy. Again, I was filling in when his partner was off. And again it got to the point when his partner went to a different detail for whatever reason. And I had the opportunity to work with Tommy everyday. And I did. And he showed me a lot and I started to see how he got to know all the people on his route. Got to know where Anna lived and "This is so-and-so's house, this is the house of an old lady, Mary. Always put Mary's pail back behind the fence". And you don't have to do any of those things. It was just something I felt was being a good public servant. I was there to take care of Mary and old man Joe and whatever the case was. And I learned a lot from Tommy. I learned a lot about the job.

Yeah, I was on the job already two, three years and I was able to do it. But you know what? For 20 years I learned things. You don't reach a point in your career where you know everything. There's guys on the job with that attitude. They never learn, they just never figure out how to do it right. So I learned a lot from Tommy. How the job works, how you treat people. How you carry on when you have a regular route. When you look at a route, you get a list of streets, figure out if you have alternate side parking, where people move their cars. Makes it a lot easier to go down the curb when the cars are gone as opposed to going down the other side with double-parked cars in the city, in Brooklyn, Queens instead of moving to the alternate side. If you don't do certain sides of the street at certain times of the day, you're going to be dragging the pails and dragging the bags past double parked cars, makes it a lot harder. Just a lot of what seems like little silly things. It made sense. And he showed me how to do that. Do it this way, do it that way. If you see you're going into a block and you have parking on alternate sides of the street, see if it is alternate parking that day. And that the open side opens at six o'clock in the morning, or eight o'clock in the morning, or one o'clock in the afternoon. Don't do this block first, do that block fist. He told me how to read the signs, alternate side of the street. During the course of the day it made your job a lot easier. Going down an open curb or dragging out past two double-parked cars. Those are the things I learned from Tommy.

And again, I got to have the regular truck. That was also nice. Every truck is different. Every truck is basically the same, the way they are made. But every truck seems to work a little different. Some are better than others, some perform better than others. The city might buy 100 trucks, and you're going to get lemons as you do when you buy different cars. You buy a car, it doesn't work so good. Not every truck works that good, things break down, things are defective. You have lemon trucks as you have lemon cars. You get a steady truck, the truck 352 was my first brand new truck. I was the first guy to drive it out of the show room, basically. That was a thrill that I got to experience. Tommy also told me how to take care of my regular truck. You have the same truck every day. Then you get to know the ability of the truck, the same way you get to know the ability of your partner. A truck can hold this much garbage. This is a better truck, this is an okay truck. You had all different kinds of equipment, same as you had all different kinds of workers. And it took time to get the perfect mix. And it was nice to be in the street with a good parter, with a good working truck, in a nice neighborhood with friendly people. And you look forward to certain days of the week as opposed to other days of the week. Cause you know "Today we have to pick up Anna's route". Or "Today we have Joe's block". Or you had a friend off work. Or: "That's where I went to school!" and you got to know your teachers. There were certain people that you saw that just meant something even in your life. Where I used to live, it was funny. My first partner, my first life-partner how ever you want to call it. My first boyfriend.

Where I lived in Brooklyn, on the edge of Borough Park and Bensonhurst, in BK-12. When was

that? I met him in March of '91. I was already working in BK-12 when I met him. And he lived in BK-12. Low and behold, it wound up that the first regular partner I had in BK-12 - that was his route on particular pick up days of the week. I wound up picking up my own garbage when I worked with Tommy!

And that was on our route. Tommy got to know the people I lived with, got to know my boyfriend's parents, got to know the whole family. He always knew that my ex-mother-in-law was a very friendly person, from the South, outgoing. And she would relate to any public servant: Garbage men, mail men. You had regular everything. And when you're a home owner, a resident, you get to know the same faces that are always providing the service. I saw that as a little kid riding the truck with Joe. You got to know what it meant. And I even learned that from my father. It was something my father told me. "Joe is the regular guy." You know who's good. Always be good to your garbage man, always be good to your mail man. They're a public servant, they're bringing you your mail, they're picking up your garbage.

AW: Are people always nice?

JB: Not everybody. People think that because you're a civil servant you're their slave. There's a lot of people with negative attitudes. They think the city workers are, you know, "Overpaid – underworked", things like that nature. And I guess civil servants, a lot of them are not always highly paid. Sanitation was always a good paying job. A lot of people would look down on a garbage man: "You put out our garbage, it's a dirty filthy job", you know. There were a lot of people who put the job down and not so much made fun of the garbage. They don't know what I made! They don't know the pension I'm getting for picking up garbage. Four years later, I'm still driving Access-A-Ride, I'm still working. I don't have to. I could very well live off my pension. I have a brand new truck, my rent is more than reasonable, my bills are okay. I don't have to work. And a lot of people that looked down on the job, "You pick up garbage?! I wouldn't want to do that!" If you knew what I got paid, you'd think twice. No, not everybody was nice. They would think that I'm a public servant, and I'm just that. I'm there to serve you. That doesn't mean I'm your slave. Yes, I'm there to pick up your garbage. Yes, I'm there to treat you with respect and answer your questions if you have any. Wish you a good morning, say hello and if you don't want to answer back that's up to you. Many a time, you'd be in certain neighborhoods, the Upper East Side. And I'm not saying everybody was like that, but there were people that would look down on you, because you picked up garbage. And I would, the best way I can describe it was: "I'm no different to you. Because I make 200 Dollars a week, you make 200 Dollars an hour. I'm a garbage man, you're a lawyer. I still breathe the same air as you do. I still bleed red as you do. I'm no different than you." And, and 99 percent of the time that's how people treated you, like anybody else. There were a select few, based on the area, I would work alongside people that are that way. I let things like that role off my shoulder. I don't expect any two people in the world to be the same. It has nothing to do with your job or your life or where you go to school or anything. There are no two people the same.

And I had to understand that. Being a public servant, I always went to work and did my best, treated everybody the same. You asked me a question about maybe recycling: "Is this recycling? When do I put out furniture?" I have an old sofa." Everyday somebody would ask me a different question. "I'm getting in a new stove, or I'm getting in a new sofa, or I'm getting in a new mattress, my bedroom..." You look forward to questions like that cause I felt like I was helping the people.

Or they'd call, later on when they started recycling. Now the garbage men don't pick up refrigerators any more with the garbage truck. Or cardboard, or this or that. And they would ask you. And I would always tell the people the truth. And they'd say "What do I do with the air conditioner I

have? I've got a new air conditioner." Or they would ask why the garbage men don't take this. I'd explain to them why. "It's, it's recycling and that's why." Or: "First, with the refrigerator you have to call up the district or call up 3-11". There was a program which was called CFC, which was all the cooling ingredients of the refrigerator or the air conditioning had to be removed. All the chemicals had to be removed, before they could pick it up with the recycling truck because it's a metal item. Explain to them what they had to do: "Leave it on the curb." - "When are they going to come? Are they going come when they said?" - "You know, I'll tell you the truth." There were plenty of people were asked and they'd say "Yeah, this is what you do." They would just take it out of the conversation and go about their business. I was never like that. I told the people the truth: "This is what you do. They could come tomorrow, they might not come till next week." - "And I have to leave this thing in front of my house?!!" - "Unfortunately, yeah, you do." I'd rather tell you the truth, man, than tell you a lie to make you feel better, cause the lie doesn't work out the next day, I'm gone, you're cursing me. And if I never see you again, I'd still don't want you to think that of me.

I'd tell you the truth and they respected you for that. No private citizen wants to be told nonsense, lies. I'd rather know I lived my life everyday - and I tell it to my friends and even people I don't know: "Tell me the truth" and it would never offend me. Tell me the truth, I ask you a question: "When are they going to come for garbage?" My regular pick-up day is next Monday, it's Christmas, it's a holiday." - "When are they going to come?" - "Put your garbage out like you normally do. Don't ever assume they're going come right away the next day." Or, "Yeah, but what..?" And a lot of the times they wouldn't accept what you were telling them and then you have to tell them again: "Do you want me to tell you something to make you feel better, or do you want me to tell you the truth?" And nine times out of ten, they understand: "Thank you."

And what could you do? You couldn't make everybody happy. You're a public servant. You're either going to have a great day, which I usually did. You're going to have people that were understanding of what you told them. They wanted information, you did your best to answer it. Though, if I didn't know, I'd say "I'm not a hundred percent sure." Or if I didn't know the answer: "This is who you call". I always had something to fall back on when somebody asked me a question and I didn't know the answer. "When do I put this item out? How long does it take? What's the procedure?" If I didn't know, I wouldn't just give them nonsense: "I'm not a hundred percent sure. Call this number, ask this person. This is my boss, this is the guy that you want to speak to". And it went even beyond. There were questions of people asking me "Well, I live in Bensonhurst, or I live in Sunset Park, or I live in Manhattan" when I worked in Brooklyn. There were certain aspects of the job that were the same no matter where you worked. Different areas maybe had different schedules. There were certain questions like recycling, a recycling questions or bulk question concerning a mattress or a piece of furniture that were pretty much procedured the same in every borough. "I live in so-and-so, I live in this place", and having worked in all different districts and all five boroughs over my career, I knew how a lot of how different places worked.

What was routine in every garage and what was the norm in different districts in different neighborhoods and different boroughs. All because I worked all over the place and everywhere I went, I never forgot. Always remembered how this worked in Bronx-4 or that worked differently in Manhattan-9, or in BK-12.

AW: Can you give me an example?

JB: Certain garbage, bulk items. There was a lot of times, in Manhattan, when there was a lot of garbage, if you had a superintendent of a building where they were getting mattresses. They would

buy 50 mattresses for 50 apartments. Couldn't put them all out on the same day. Or in lot of cases you would say "Put them out on this day". Years ago, bulk items always went out on the last pick up of your week. Certain areas, like in certain parts of Brooklyn, you put it out any day. You know the truck could handle it. You wouldn't fill your truck up all the way. You could take a couple extra mattresses or an extra sofa, or something like that, even if it was on your first pick-up of the week. If I had a regular route, you got to know your people.

They would ask you when. -"You know what? I'm here Thursday", say pick-ups were on Monday and Thursday. And your picking up so-and-so's garbage on Monday and they came out and asked you about a sofa or a mattress and it wasn't the normal time to put that item out for collection. I would tell them "I'm off Thursday. Wait and put it out next Monday. I know for a fact that I'll be here. I'll make sure personally, I promise I'll take it". Again, that fell into having something regular, a steady route, a steady partner. Got to know the people on the route. In Manhattan, you couldn't always take everything the first time around, cause there was just so much garbage, just the volume. If you started taking big bulky things it filled up the truck. Common practice, city-wide, as the week goes on, the garbage gets less at the end of the week. That's why they always would tell the public, to put out your bulk items the end of the week, your second pick up of the week, or in some cases, you third pick-up of the week. Most of Manhattan, most of the Bronx, any big area where you have a lot of apartment houses, they pick up the garbage three times a week.

Naturally, the end of the week, one of those pick-ups is going to be lighter weight in garbage, so that's when a lot of times they tend to put out their big items, that will fill up the truck.

In Staten Island, or in a lot of parts of Brooklyn, if you had a regular partner, if you had a regular truck, you know it was good. "You know what, Anna? Put it out Thursday, or put it out Monday, put it out your next pick-up, I'll be here, I'll take it, don't worry about it."

AW: Do you remember particular instances when you got to know people better on your regular route?

JB: Sure!

AW: And what did you, what did the work tell you about the community?

JB: Especially, working in the one community that stands out, would be working in BK-12, which was largely orthodox-Jewish, Hasidic.

Probably three quarters or better of the district. And you got to know a lot about the religion, the culture, the holidays, the things they couldn't do at certain times of the day, certain days of the week. As I'm talking I'm remembering a whole slew of instances working in BK-12 in Borough Park, working for the Hasidic orthodox Jewish community, there was a lot of things they couldn't do that you and I do everyday. They didn't drive after sundown every Friday and all day Saturday. It was their sabbath, they couldn't do a lot of things, couldn't even bring in their garbage pails. It was against their religion to do certain things, they couldn't touch money after sundown on Friday, couldn't bring in their garbage pails until sundown on Saturday. If I had a route on Saturday morning, and they were, again, regular customers, people you got to know, I put their pails back, cause I'd know they'd sit on the sidewalk all day. They couldn't touch them, where you left them is where they would stay. It's just something nice. There were a lot of things. I'd say probably ten times in my career, working in BK-12, either on a Friday after sundown at some point, or anytime on Saturday, I still to this day don't understand it, but they can't touch light switches, they can't

touch appliances, they can't unplug or plug certain things in the wall. I learned over the years the terminology for what I was on many, many instances. I was called a shabbos, which is the Sabbath - Friday night sundown till sundown on Saturday, I was what was called a shabbos goy. I don't know how to spell it, I'm guessing G-O-Y, like boy. I was a shabbos goy on probably at least ten occasions during my career in BK-12.

AW: What does that mean?

JB: The first time that happened, I was working a Saturday morning, it was maybe about seven o'clock in the morning, I just started my route. Jewish gentleman came out and they had a particular dress-code, the coats, the hats, a lot of them - the older gentleman had the beards - you knew who they were. Gentleman walks up to the truck "Please, please come with me, come with me!". I says "Excuse me, to do what?" - "The lights broke, the lights went off" or something. And he tells me "Come with me!", so I come with him. I was never afraid to help somebody and especially in that neighborhood: when you did good, they remembered you. So I went with the man, going to his house and he says "As you walk in there's a flash light, over here." He says "The power went off." Somehow the circuit went apart." Were not allowed to touch the switch. I walked into a totally dark room. Now he says "pick up the flash light, it's over here on the table".

I pick up the flash light, turn on the light. Now I see there's a whole room full of gentleman, they're all praying. It's Saturday morning and they were all praying. Circuit breaker was over here, on the wall. Put the flash light on, I found the circuit breaker. Sure enough the switch was popped, I flipped the breaker on, the lights came back on. Everybody in the room was giving me a thousand thank-yous. Now they can see what they were doing and I went about my business. I didn't fully understand it. I'd made me feel good, cause obviously I did a good deed for them. But as it kept happening, I understood a little more. Over the years, later on in life, I made a friend on a computer in a chat room, a Hasidic lady who taught me a little bit more. That's how I learned the term shabbos goy, I knew what it meant and now I understood what I was doing for these people.

AW: What does it mean?

JB: You're doing something that they can't. They can't, during the Sabbath, touch that electrical box and put that switch back on and give the men the light in the room to pray. The most serious case that happened to me was one Friday night. I was working the four to twelve shift in BK-12. Right up the block from the garage, I was outside washing my truck, I was working the night shift that particular day. Gentleman comes down the street, yelling and screaming "Please, come, come, fire, fire!". So I dropped what I was doing, I ran with him! He lived right up the block cause I saw the house, I was out in the street, so I saw where he came from. So went in the house, the people, all in fear. I says "What's going on?" He brings me into the kitchen, the burner was on on the stove. I don't know how, either somebody took something off the stove and forgot about it. Now the sun went down, it was near Sabbath time. They didn't remember to shut the burner off after they took the pot off or something. And the flame was still burning on the stove, right against the wall. If this particular incident, if this particular case this night wasn't resolved, the wall next to the stove - I could feel the heat - before that night was over, the house would have caught on fire. Because of the burn, the flames coming out - again - from the stove. And that was right near the wall. I could feel the wall. Eventually, when the heat got too bad, it's going to ignite, it's going to catch fire. I don't know who I saved that night. That part of the religion and the beliefs I don't fully understand. If there's danger looming, which could cause death or injury or harm. But that's their belief, they can't touch that burner and turn that flame off. If it's god's will for them to die, they're ready. I lived through that experience. That was probably the most dangerous. But again, that's what a shabbos

goy is: it's doing anything for an orthodox person that they can't - by their laws - do during the Sabbath. Any other time of the day, other day of the week, they could do those things, but during the Sabbath, they can't do anything. They don't drive, they walk to the temple, they pray. They have to walk, they don't drive, they don't bus, they walk.

Yeah, BK-12 is a very, very different district. There aren't many like it, that are almost fully orthodox Jewish. I mean, there are other parts of BK-12 that aren't Jewish. But when you hear BK-12, you know you're working in Borough Park and nine times out of ten, you're dealing with these customs. BK-1 in Williamsburg is another larger orthodox Jewish community. BK-1, Williamsburg, parts of BK-3, parts of BK-14 and BK-18 in Flatbush have orthodox communities. When I worked in Queens, out in Flushing, Fresh Meadows, Queens-8, there are large Jewish communities. So a lot of the things I learned in BK-12, doing the shabbos goy routine, Friday night till Saturday mornings. I did once or twice when I worked in Queens and when I worked in Flatbush in BK-14. Cause the same rules apply with the faith, you know, now you're servicing the same types of communities and you're dealing with the same situations.

In one instance, even after I retired, I'm driving my Access-a-Ride bus down Avenue L in Midwood, in BK-14. I'm waiting at the red light with my bus and a Jewish gentleman came up and knocked on the bus door. I could see he was upset about something. I say "What's the matter?". He says "Come, the stove, the stove!" So I parked my bus on the curb on the corner of the crosswalk, shut the bus off and went to this man's house. And here is his coffee-pot perking away. They must have had it plugged in, forgot to turn it off before the sun went down that particular evening. If that coffee-pot wasn't unplugged soon, it would probably have exploded, it was heating up, had no water in it. Whatever was in there, heated up and boiled away. All I did, it was just a matter of walking into the man's house and unplugging the coffee-pot. The house was filled with people, eating, praying. It was after sundown, it was in the middle of the Sabbath, services were going on. I left the bus at the curb, I happened to be working the late shift that particular night and I walked in. I was already retired from sanitation. That was an instance, something that I learned on sanitation. Over the years it happened I don't know how many times, and now I'm retired. It was something I experienced and learned while I was on the job and I had the chance to do it again after I retired. I knew what I was. I was their shabbos goy that night. I wasn't a garbage man anymore I was now a bus driver, I was already retired a couple of years, but I had the occasion to be shabbos goy for some family again. And that itself was nice to relive. It was an experience that I had several times as sanitation man. And now that I was retired, the opportunity presented itself again and I was able to do that again.

What you asked about different neighborhoods and the different people and their regularness, you know, having something steady - just as I started talking - it's making me remember a lot of the incidents about the Jewish faith and being the shabbos goy and that's all related to job, it's something related to being a public servant? Does the opportunity present itself to every public servant? Of course not. Every sanitation worker? Of course not. But it happened to me and I am sure other sanitation workers at different points in their career have probably done the same things. I was probably not the only sanitation worker to go and pull a coffee-pot plug or to shut off a light switch for somebody in an orthodox neighborhood. But maybe somebody hears this interview in the future, maybe long after they retire might read this and say "You know what? I did that! That's what I was. Now I understand why Mr. So-and-so couldn't unplug the coffee-pot". It could be something simple as switching the light switch on. The first time it happened to me, like I said, the gentleman showed me where the flash light was, I found the flash light in the dark, and I put the flash light on, I found the circuit breaker. I'm sure situations like that happened to other sanitation people over the years.

It's not something that happens in every district in every neighborhood, but that particular area that I worked in for many years in Borough Park, BK-12, the opportunities were there. And I'm sure there have been many before me, and many since I left that did it because somebody needed help. But maybe if they happen to see this report or hear this interview, or it gets to somebody somewhere five or ten years from now, somebody can say: "Oh yeah, I remember, I did that. That's what I was. Wow!" It's just something that I have to say and that will answer somebody's question later on in their life, and they'll understand. If it's one person, then one person will say "Yeah, that's what I did!". Like I say, it doesn't always have to be in BK-12. Cause there's other Jewish orthodox neighborhoods in all different boroughs, where obviously the same rules and the same faith apply. If it's in Queens, or Brooklyn, or the Bronx, or Jersey. It doesn't even have to be in New York.

AW: I know that's kind of jumping to a different topic, but is it okay if we talk about recycling?

JB: Of course.

AW: The city started gradually introducing it just after you started working for the department from 1989 onwards.

JB: Yeah.

AW: Can you tell me how this changed the work?

JB: It made certain aspects of the job easier. Picking up garbage in the beginning got easier. For years you picked up everything that they put out. They put everything in the same bag. You'd pick up the bags of garbage all mixed up with cardboard, bottles. You picked up the refrigerators with the sofas, and the black bags of garbage and the pails of garbage. Now, if you're picking up garbage, if you're on a regular garbage collection route, you don't have to pick up refrigerators any more, you don't have to pick up washing machines anymore. That all goes on a recycling truck. So if you have a garbage route, you don't have to pick up any of those items anymore . It takes a little bit of weight of your route, maybe. But what it might do over the years, once recycling was being implemented and they saw how well it caught on in certain neighborhoods, it would take away from the garbage trucks and now they weren't filling up. Naturally, they're gonna shorten the routes and they are getting easier. What they did was they started eliminating collection, garbage collection trucks. Now you're putting out recycling trucks. In a sense it didn't really cut jobs, because instead of five trucks picking up garbage, now you might have three trucks picking up garbage. But now you also have a truck that's picking up all the bottles and cans and all the refrigerators and old appliances, and another truck is picking up all the bottles and newspaper and cardboard. All that stuff is coming off the collection routes. But it still has to get picked up. So the city in the sense gets more, From an environmental stand point, or a green standpoint, all this positively environmental stuff. It's not really saving a lot in as far as manpower, but it's reusing garbage. That's what recycling is.

AW: The introduction of recycling was a big topic in the news back when it was introduced.

JB: Sure!

AW: How do you think that changed the way people thought about their day-to-day waste?

JB: It, it made a lot of people think, I feel differently, positively. You know that you could put out all your paper and cardboard in bundles and maybe pick up a coffee-cup or pick up a product in the

store and say "Oh, made from recycled paper!" And the first time I saw that, I understood maybe a little more than the average person, cause I was on the job picking the stuff up. I knew what recycling meant. But now, being like a homeowner or just a resident anywhere - and it doesn't always have to be in New York, most states, most cities recycle. My father does it in North Carolina where he lives now for the Winter, where we have our summer house in the Poconos. Everybody does, most places recycle. But now I understand what it means, cause I put out my bundle of papers or my box of cardboard and stuff like that. And the truck picks it up. It doesn't go to the garbage dump, it goes to a regular factory, where they might bundle it up, then ship it to another factory where they actually make it into something. They maybe shred the paper, whatever the process is to reuse the paper and the cardboard, or the bottles and the cans. I understand, "Okay, instead of me throwing it all in that one big, black plastic bag and putting on the curb and having it disappear, now my newspaper and my cardboard are being reused. My bottles are being crushed and remelted. Or the plastic is being remelted and reformed and they're reusing the bottles. Instead of all the stuff going into a big pile in a landfill, it's all separated. Me as a homeowner, you as an apartment dweller, anybody as a resident of any town in the USA is now separating their garbage into what we can reuse and what is useful

AW: Did people ask you a lot of questions at first?

JB: Yeah, sure. They still do. The people will always ask questions: "What is .. why do they do this?" The people that actually really care, like pro-environmentalist types, different people or just city residents in general that are curious, they want to know. "Why do I have to separate my bottles from my paper, from my chicken bones and my cans?" And every so often you say something and you could tell who the people were that wanted to know and they would just, ask me "Why me?"-questions. "Why do I have to do this?" But you could tell the people that really wanted to know. I remember having a conversation with my brother one day. And my brother lives in Long Island, they recycle there too. And he says "Yeah, this is what they do." And I would tell my father a lot of times "This is where I would take the truck filled with newspaper. Take it to this factory in the Bronx. If I had a truck filled with bottles and cans and refrigerators, all metal products. They go to a different factory in New Jersey, a big recycling factory in New Jersey. This is where a lot of the city's metal and glass products go. It just gets dumped into a big pile and they have all their equipment and their machines that separate and move it around. They reuse everything, nothing gets thrown away." There's always a portion of everything that's useless, even parts of a stove or a refrigerator. They reuse three-quarters of what we used to throw away. Take a refrigerator, it's got metal, it's got plastic in it. There are machines that all of these factories have, where they can melt certain things down or just rip it apart and reuse the metal, melt the glass, melt the plastic. It probably has three, four, five different stops, that plastic bottle. You're gonna put it in a bag on the curb, the city's gonna come pick it up. It's gonna go to a recycling factory. From there, they separate or crush it, they melt it. That product gets picked up by somebody else and taken away by somebody else and maybe in the future that bottle is going to be a laundry detergent bottle or could be a plastic cup. Or it could be something else, you know.

And those are the things that people would ask you. And I'd tell them "You know what? This water bottle you gave me, maybe a month from now, it'll be that plastic cup that you're drinking your coffee out of. That's the whole idea about recycling!" Yeah, of course it's clean, it's healthy, it's sanitized, but it was something you threw out last week, that I picked up and I took it to the recycling factory and it followed its course and somewhere down the road it's come back as a plastic cup that you drink your beer out of in the bar. It's going to have another use in the future. And people asked because they wanted to know. Some were more curious than others.

AW: Do you think it changed the way people viewed sanitation work?

JB: I think there are always going to be people that don't know what you do, don't care what you do. But I think in the long run, everybody sees what we do. Or what I did. And you pick up the paper, you pick up the bottles. I have to separate it. Yeah, most people probably do it because it's the law: "I have to". Yeah, there are some people who have to, and there are some people that have to and want to. And there are others that have to, want to and actually want to know why. And those are the questions that you answered, that you dealt with a lot of times when you were doing a recycling route. Well, you've been picking up garbage and someone goes "When is my recycling day?" or "What do I with my washing machine?" - "It goes out with your recycling. You put it right next to your blue bag with your green can, or your clear bag or whatever it is you put your recycling stuff in. And the same truck that will pick up your bag or bottles will pick up your washing machine. Cause it all goes to the same factory." And from there, it gets ripped apart, and separated. Some of it's done by machines, some of it's done by hand. And when it gets down to the really fine-tuned part of the program, a lot of recycling stuff is done by hand in these factories, where it creates a lot of work, where it gets a new use. That bottle will have a new life as something else. It will get reused in the future. Yeah, of course it changed the job.

AW: Were you discussing recycling with your co-workers?

JB: Sure. I mean, there were days when you'd be going down the street and you're picking up garbage ... That sounds like a garbage truck?

AW: No, it's a tourist bus!

JB: What was I going to say? That's my way of thinking about sounds.

There were days where you were picking up your garbage and somebody would run out of the house with a bundle of papers: "No, I can't take that." - "Why?" - "Cause it's a recycling item". And people a lot of times got confused. They wouldn't remember what their recycling day was and what their garbage collection days were. In some districts, it was the first pick-up of the week. Other districts or other sections of the same district, it was the other pick up of the week. If you picked up your garbage on Monday and Thursday, some areas you did the recycling on Monday, other areas you did it on Thursday. Only one pick up for recycling per week in any district in the city. To my knowledge, no district has two pick-ups a week for recycling. And you would always know. -Okay, I would know, but the people wouldn't.

Sometimes, you would put out your garbage, it would be Monday, but the recycling day was Thursday. It would be the second pick-up in that particular area. The people had everything out on Monday. And you couldn't take it, you'd say "No, that's recycling". There were a lot of times even certain people on the job didn't know everything that was a recycling item. A guy would walk back, or your partner would ask you "What's this? Is this recycling? Why did you leave that?" You and I were working on a truck, you're driving and I'm dumping the cans, or I'm picking up the stuff on the curb. You say to me "Why did you leave that that box?" - "Cause it was full of bottles." Or "Why did you leave that bag on the curb?" - "Cause it was full of bottles." People don't know. They'd put out anything. You're watching your partner, or maybe he needs your help with something, or she needs your help with something. I says "Why did you leave that can?" -I thought maybe it's too heavy. "No, it's full of bottles" or "It's full of cans." or "It's full of paper". Or a lot of times it was mixed. If you were on recycling, a lot of the people didn't sometimes understand. They wouldn't put the bottles and the paper in with the garbage. But they put the bottles and the paper

together. And a lot of people didn't understand that that was wrong.

When you're doing recycling in certain districts, they had the regular trucks to pick up the garbage like they have here, in Manhattan. There are no - they're called split-bodies. It's the same truck with two back hoppers – one for the paper and one for the bottles and the cans. In Manhattan they don't have that cause it's just too much volume of everything. They have the regular big garbage trucks pick up one item. And you'd go down the block and you'd leave a recycling pail and the homeowner would come out: “Yeah, I'm recycling!”. I says “No, you're not. Yeah, you didn't put it with the garbage but you still can't put it together”. They would put the bottles and the cans and the plastic into the same bag with a bundle of papers and cardboard boxes. I says “No, you have to keep those items separate, cause it gets picked up by separate trucks.” Or even if you lived a district where you had the one truck that picked up all things. It goes into separate compartments, cause it goes to different places. To be reused and shifted. Whereas you couldn't take the paper to the bottle and can factory.

If you mixed them together, they would have to go with the garbage. I couldn't take it. And if you repeatedly put out your garbage that way, it would be illegal, it's actually a violation of the law. And you could get a summons from my supervisor. Once you were issued a summons, then I could pick it up with the garbage truck. Cause if you refuse to separate it, it can't stay on the curb forever, it becomes a health hazard. Then it is my job to pick up whatever you put out on the curb, but as long as you had a summons for not recycling or not separating the items, then I could pick it up and put it into my garbage truck. I couldn't pick up something when going down the block - me as a sanitation worker walking down the street, going on my route, picking up the garbage - and I come in front of your house and you had a bag with everything in it. I could leave it. And you come out of the house and say “Why didn't you take that?”. That happened - it seemed like everyday. It's mixed recycling, it's mixed with everything. You can't, you have to separate it. And some guys would just throw it in the truck, look the other way, not ask. I did it, others did it, probably most guys do it. But I could never be told to do it. Certainly not by a home owner. You put out a bag with everything in it and I left it and you chased me down the block, two, three houses past your house: “Why did you leave that bag?” - “Cause it's mixed.” If I was on paper and I left your bag with your paper and your cans in it, and you came out and asked me why, I had to tell you why. Cause you have to separate everything. Recycling doesn't mean taking the bottles and the paper out of the garbage. It means not only that, but now separating the bottles from the paper, so now in a sense it means you have three different bags on the curb. You have your garbage, you have your bottles and your cans - your metal and glass they call it - and your paper. And it gets picked up by three different crews or they use the double-truck that picks up both commodities.

Yeah, so they were the things you had to answer, questions they asked you. Recycling made a lot of things different. Different jobs always raise questions. And it takes time for the public to understand the rules of how the game is played, in a sense, until something becomes routine. A lot of places, a lot of neighborhoods picked it up right away. Some people never get it, some people are never going to get it. Others do it right from day one, that's just the way life is.

AW: I would like to talk about the Blizzard in 1996.

JB: Remember it well...

AW: Yes, I can imagine.

JB: I think it snowed for three - I don't know what day of the week it was. It started I think on a

Saturday night and it snowed till Tuesday.

AW: Where were you working?

JB: That was a period of time where I was in BK-14, the place where I worked with Janice, did the out-of-control weight. That'll happen during the time I was assigned to BK-14 in Flatbush.

AW: Can you tell me what it was like to work then?

JB: All I remember doing for, I would say, probably two weeks, non-stop every day of the week - I worked nights, I worked from seven at night until seven in the morning. I was qualified on the what we call the front end payloader, the front end bulldozer. I remember working in BK-14 that Winter - I'd say probably about two weeks nothing but making piles - and I shouldn't say piles, I should say mountains . mountains of snow along Flatbush Avenue. The stretch of Flatbush Avenue that BK-14 covered. From, I'd say Parkside Avenue in Flatbush all the way up to King's highway. I did nothing but load dump-trucks, private dump-trucks, city dump-trucks from sanitation, from the Parks department. I did nothing but load snow with the payloader, I'd say probably for about two weeks. I don't think they picked up garbage for almost a month. I mean, these last couple of storms in 2011 we had this Winter were nothing compared to that. I don't think we picked up garbage then for maybe two weeks, maybe a little more and I did nothing for 12, 13 hours a day. I'd say for at least two weeks, I was on the payloader every night. It seemed like I lived on Flatbush Avenue. That's all I knew for two, three weeks. And all I did was make piles, mountains of snow. Clearing off bus stops, clearing snow away from fire hydrants, cross walks at the corners, pushing it all into a mountain up the block. And then loading that pile to a line of dump-trucks, city dump-trucks, private carters, private haulers. In a Blizzard like that, when you have to get rid of the snow, the city will hire anybody with a truck. Anybody with a decent-sized vehicle. A container, anything that can haul away the snow.

And that's all I did. The first couple of days you try to plow, you try to salt. - Salting does nothing in a Blizzard cause the snow just blows everywhere and until it stops falling and you get a chance to clear the road, then you can salt it. Salt does nothing in a Blizzard, it's basically plowing and pushing it out the way with a payloader and eventually taking it away. And that's all I did in 1996 for I'd say a good two weeks. Non-stop piling of snow, loading it into the trucks, taking it away. For days, all we did was make the piles. That's why a lot of times after a Blizzard you see the crews out in the street. They block traffic, they block the street off, you're working that block, you clear all the snow off the bus stops. You're talking about some serious mountains of snow. And then you move on to the next block. And then the next day, or maybe even the next shift, somebody else will come down and they'll go right at that pile of snow and they'll line up the empty dump-trucks, trailer dump-trucks, regular dump-trucks, roll-on-roll-off containers, any big thing that can haul away that pile of snow. And that's what I did with the bulldozers, the front arm payloader and loaded it into those trucks just to take it away. Where it went from there? Years ago they used to dump it into the water and that became an environmental issue over the years, so they stopped doing that. I still think it's the best way to get rid of snow, just dump it in the water. Other people, they claim you're picking up too much garbage off the street. Whatever you're picking up you're dumping in the water. They have a valid point, but I mean it's not exactly like the waters in New York are 100 percent clean and pure.

But now they just dump it somewhere, they find a big open field, a big parking lot, some area that's not used and they just dump it and it sits there and just melts, where it's off the street, away from the front of your house, in front of your bus stop, in front of your school or your job, where your

grandmother goes to the doctor or something like that. The snow is off the street, that's the main concern. And that's all I did in 1996, the Blizzard of '96, I was in BK-14, I did nothing but drive the payloader. Probably for two week's straight every day, seven days a week for 13, 14 hours a day. Making mountains and loading the mountains into trucks. It's a lot of work, a lot of hours. I had no life and I did nothing. I was at work so long, I came home and, even after work, you had to go home and shovel your own sidewalk, dig out your own car. You know, you did it at work for 12, 13 hours - now you had to go home and shovel a little more.

It's like it never ended. Yeah, I get payed to do it and I go home and do it again. Ah, it's all right though. It's all part of the job.

AW: Do you think it was appreciated? Your work?

JB: Oh sure. Sure. There are people that will never appreciate anything you do. And there will be people that you serve everyday, that you'll never make happy. But I would say, on the whole, sure. Who wouldn't be happy to finally get their car out of the garage and take grandma to the store - or visit grandma even! Or even get your car out of the garage so you can finally go back to driving to work instead of walking through the snow to the bus stop. Cause it wasn't safe to drive. Even if you had your car parked on the street. In any storm, even in this past Winter with the Christmas Blizzard in 2010, my own personal car sat in front of my house for two weeks. I have remote start. All I did everyday from my window was to start the car. It sat there buried in the snow, I didn't even touch it for a week. I wasn't going anywhere. The road - my particular street in Brooklyn - I live on 80th Street in Bensonhurst, BK-11, wasn't plowed for almost a week. My street looked like a park - between the cars and the middle of the street and the busses. There was a city bus buried in the snow on Stillwell Avenue in BK-11. It stayed there for three days or four days - a bus! I mean that was the trouble with New York with this latest Blizzard, there was no snow emergency declared and that kept every big vehicle on the street. It should have been off the road: ambulances, buses, trucks, everything gets stuck.

There's always a lot of work when it snows. Yeah, of course it was appreciated. I think the average person is happy. When they can finally go back to their normal life, their normal routine. Everybody's style gets a little cramped when it first snows, cause you can't go the store, you can't drive the car. And the people that think they can do everything, at any time of the year, are the people that go out in the snow and the people that get stuck on the highway and the people that unfortunately wind up getting stranded. Cause they don't belong out in the street when it snows. And they go out anyway - they think they can do everything. You can't. And when you do go out in the snow with your car and you get stuck, now you're in the middle of the street. Now the plow can't get down the street, or the snow plow can't get around you on the street. Or if they do go around you, it leaves your car and a pile of snow in the middle of the street, or further out than it would be if you weren't there in the first place. It hampers everything. Even once the snow stops, the sun comes out the next day, the snow starts to melt, sanitation is doing their job or trying to, the people that were out in the snow that shouldn't have been - now have your cars all over the place. It just makes it that much harder. And nobody blames the person that left their car parked in the snow, they blame the sanitation department: "They're not doing their job! They're not clearing the snow! I can't get down my block cause my car's stuck in the snow!". It's not my fault that the car gets stuck in the snow. The person that made the decision to go out and drive during the storm and tried to get from point A to point B but got stuck somewhere in the middle of the red light - all of a sudden now, the car is in the way of the snow plow. It's maybe indirectly my fault that the street didn't get cleared, but there's a reason. The car is in the way I couldn't get down the block. I didn't put the car there. The person that made that decision to go out in the snow and shouldn't have, it makes my job as a

snow plow driver that much harder. Can't clear the street cause the car's in the way.

But the average person that looks down that block and sees that the street wasn't plowed, they're going to call the sanitation department first and ask why. And it's then up to me to say "Well, there's a car at the end of the block, that's why the snow plow didn't go down the block." The initial blame is always going to fall on sanitation. And you just have to have to answer. If you are at fault, you are at fault. But most of the time, if somebody says "Hey, why didn't you plow my street?" - "Cause I couldn't go down the other end of the block." Yeah, you might live on the second or third house at the beginning of the block, but there's a car at the other end of the block. I'm not going to go down the block by myself at three o'clock in the morning with a snow plow in the dark, only to drive down the end of the block and have to back out, that's too unsafe. There's a lot of things you don't do, there's a lot of choices you have to make when your driving a snow plow, during the night.

AW: What can happen?

JB: You have an accident, you back into a car, somebody can be behind you. You're driving a snow plow, or a salt spreader in the Blizzard, especially a Blizzard. Everything is blown around, visibility as bad as it is. Now you're driving down a tree-lined street at two o'clock in the morning in the dark. Yeah, you have street lights but when the wind is blowing the snow in your face or the windshield, you can't see. Vision is a big thing. And there's a lot of accidents that happen because unfortunately, guys don't make the right decisions. You don't go down a block that looks too narrow, or if the cars are parked kind of crazy. Not everybody is a good parker or a good driver, not everybody parks straight along the curb, not everybody parks close to the curb. If one person on each side doesn't exactly park close to the curb - now it snows, now you are driving down the block, you're pushing a foot of snow down the street. It's going to be a pretty big pile of snow you're pushing, and all of a sudden now you're getting down to a point of the block where the cars aren't parked so great and you might not fit through. Cause the snow plow itself sticks out on each side of the truck, it's wider than the front of the truck and now you're pushing a big mountain of snow in front of it. Creates a mountain of snow on the side of the truck when the street gets cleared. Now you're coming up the cars that aren't parked so great, you're not going to get through.

A lot of times, workers get themselves in spots that they really shouldn't be in if they had looked ahead and looked up the block. If you turned in the block or as soon as you turn into a corner where you have the opportunity to back out and not cause an accident or being in that kind of situation. They don't look ahead. The big thing about driving a snow plow in the Winter is looking ahead. I mean, that's a good rule to follow anytime driving a truck. But when you turn a corner, look up ahead, always try and get a bigger picture. Look down the block, if you see a vehicle that's maybe not parked right, or you feel it's too narrow. There's a lot of streets in the city in certain neighborhoods, Downtown Brooklyn, Cobble Hill, BK-6, Carrol Gardens, BK-6, BK-12, Brooklyn Heights, BK-2 - it's tough to drive a garbage truck down on a regular day to pick up the garbage, now it's snowing. There's a lot of areas in the city where they have smaller trucks, pickup trucks, where they put the plows on, cause you can't get a garbage truck in there. To pick up the garbage is one thing, to go down the streets with snow and ice changes a lot of how you do your normal work.

AW: And what was it like chasing the garbage afterwards?

JB: When you finally moved back to picking up garbage, it would seem like you could never get ahead. You'd go into a block, and especially a block where you had a lot of apartment houses like where I lived in Bensonhurst in my block, in BK-11. It's a lot of multi-family dwellings, that's a lot of garbage. I mean, you only have so many cans and bags. You're going to stop buying bags, it piles

up. And if you don't pick it up for a week, you miss two, three pick ups, four pick-ups, now you're throwing recycling, too. Now you have everything piled up in front of your house. It sits there and eventually, when you're going back to pick up the garbage, a lot of people don't dig it out of the snow. Whatever is on the curb, whatever is in your front yard, or at the side of your house, it's stays buried in the snow. There's garbage you won't find for a week or two if you go back to picking it up.

A lot of times, you just pick up what's on top of the pile, but you know there's garbage underneath the snow. You can't dig out every .. that's why they tell the home owners. You know, the city tries their best to announce that they're going to re-start picking up garbage: "Try to dig it out of the snow, get it ready. Don't make the man go digging for it in the snow". Cause you can't spend the whole day in front of everybody's house digging up the garbage.

But it was always an adventure cause there was garbage like there were mountains of snow. And now you're picking up the mountains of garbage and the mountains of snow were still there. You're walking over them, or you're walking around them or you're in front of a house and there's a mountain of garbage and there's nowhere to drag it. You might walk two, three houses to an open driveway or a spot between two cars. It's hard, it's really hard. The job is hard enough, but after a snow is really when, when the job gets serious and when I thought you really earned your money. Either just driving the snow plow or salt spreader for twelve, thirteen hours in a row during the night, when most of the world is sleeping. Or once the snow stops and melts and the roads are cleared and open, traffic is moving, life is back to normal. Now you go back to picking up the garbage that you haven't picked up for a week or two. People don't stop eating for a week or two. The garbage is going to generate, it's still going to pile up. So now you're going back to your normal job, but meanwhile in those two weeks you were clearing the snow, people were still eating and living, so the garbage is still going to pile up. Now it's going to be there waiting for you. Noone is going to take it when your away, nobody's going to steal it!

It's all there and the mountains can be as big as the mountains of snow. In a lot of cases the mountains of snow were in your way. But the garbage has to get picked up, you're going to just have to work around the snow. It's not easy. Definitely not easy. Like I said, you earned your money in the wintertime, you did. This time of the year, the Spring, Summer you're working in a T-Shirt, the weather is nice, the sun's nice, 80 degrees, 70 degrees, 90 degrees. It's a lot different than the middle of January, the beginning of February or the day after Christmas this year. When the snow was blowing in your face and you couldn't see across the street when you're trying to drive a snow plow in the dark. It's a lot different than walking down 5th Avenue past Washington Square Park on a Sunday afternoon doing litter baskets on a nice 70 degree, sunny day, watching all the people in the park: Who's walking their dog and who's hanging out listening to the radio. It's a different job when you're digging out the bag of garbage from a mountain of snow or walking over a mountain of snow, over a car, around a car, slipping on the ice. The job is different at different times of the year, different temperatures, different weather.

AW: Also in 1996, Michael Hanley got killed on the job.

JB: I didn't know Mike Hanley personally. I knew who he was. I'll give you another instance with me and my numbers: I remember reading the article in the paper and I know the truck, his regular truck was 25-BR-155, it was a BK-11 truck. I remember the day that happened. I didn't know him personally, but he was related to my shop steward at the time in BK-12. That guy's name was, I think, Charlie Kurtz.

Everybody knew what happened of course. That poor guy was just doing his job, dumped a pail of

garbage and somebody threw this jug of acid in the garbage in a bag. He didn't know it was there, nobody knew it was there, probably not even the guy that put it there. And even the person that threw it there might not have had an idea what it contained or what could have happened. What did happen. I'm sure the person that put it there didn't know, might not even have realized it was there. But Mike Hanley did because he was splashed with acid. He inhaled it, it got on his body, ate away his skin, he inhaled it in his system. I don't know what the effects were, I mean the poor man died. All because he was doing his job. Somebody put something in the garbage that he came in contact with. And it's upsetting cause that could have been anybody, you know, could have been me.

There were times I got splashed with paint.. Incidents I where – I had just bought a brand new jacket, new uniform jacket that they made us buy – and I was working one night in Manhattan-9, Uptown Manhattan. I was standing next to the truck, not behind it. Cause as an unwritten rule of thumb, whenever you're cycling the back of the truck and squashing the garbage, you learned never to stand directly behind the truck for fear of something splashing out or shooting out. Michael was standing next to the truck, like we know how to do. But when this container of acid exploded, it just went everywhere. On the truck, out of the back, around the sides - it came out of the sides of the hopper. There's nothing you can do, cause it's tight, and it just splashed everywhere. And the poor guy was standing at the side of the hopper, he just got splashed with it. It was potent enough, powerful enough that it basically destroyed the poor guy. Got in his system and - I don't know exactly how it happened. If it stopped his heart, he breathed it in and it burned his skin. You know when chemicals are toxic, they do a lot of different things to different parts of your body.

AW: What are your experiences with the dangers of the job and how do you avoid them? How do you deal with that part of the job?

JB: Certain things I feel are unavoidable. What happened to me, several times in my career, I got my legs cut with glass. A shard of glass, a piece of metal people just carelessly threw in a bag. And you're going down the block, pick up the bag, throw it in the back of the truck. And when you pick it up, it's going to swing a little and maybe it's going to brush against your leg, brush against your arm. Or if your partner and you are both at an apartment house stop, you're both throwing the bags in. You try to watch what each other's doing, you sort of have to concentrate on what you're doing yourself. And a lot of times you're coming in contact. It happened to me a few times, where I literally got slashed with a piece of metal or a piece of glass. Just from doing your regular work, you have to be careful how you pick up the bag, how you throw it, how you bend, who's around you, where's your partner? Can't just pick up the bag and throw it.

There's a lot of ways that you get hurt. Got hit with things that will fly out when the garbage gets squashed in the back of the truck, like a bottle. A lot of times, a piece of wood will fly out. You put in a sofa, it doesn't fit in the back of your truck. You have to put an end of it in, so that the machine at the end of the truck will crush it and break it up. A lot of times, you have to watch if you put in a piece of furniture - a dresser, a table - when the truck crushes it, it shatters. A lot of times the pieces fly. You have to be aware of what you do. Be aware that once you push the handle at the back of the truck, the table is going to get squashed, it's going to break up. You have to watch where it's going to go. Be aware, just don't push the button or hit the handle and turn your back on the truck and walk away, cause maybe the table is going to break, the glass is going to break or the bottle's going to break - the glass is going to fly at you, hit you in the head or hit your on the arm. I was cut a few times in my career, couple of times bad, you know. Sometimes, you go to buy to band aid or something in the store. Or there were times when you'd physically get hurt, where you have to call an ambulance to have you taken to the hospital.

AW: Did that happen to you?

JB: A couple of times I was cut, where you had to go to the hospital, get it stitched. There was one time - I was working in Manhattan - and I got cut with a piece of glass, just throwing the bag. It sliced my leg and I needed a stitch. When there was too much of a gash or it was too big for a band aid. They'd take you right to the hospital. Another time I was working in Brooklyn, East New York in BK-5 and it was a Saturday morning and I got cut. My partner drove the truck, I had a cell phone and called the garage. I told them that I got cut. And my partner at the time, this guy Jimmy, I asked him "Could you just take me right to the hospital? Forget about calling an ambulance, forget about calling the supervisor to come." He took me right to the hospital. And the foreman met me at the hospital and I had a big enough gash where they put stitches in my leg. Cleaned me up, sowed me up and, I was out of work for a week or two until the wound healed. Then the doctor took out the stitches and our medical clinic let me go back to work. I wasn't doing anything wrong, just doing my job, I got cut by a piece of glass. It happens all the time. Can you avoid it? You never going to know everything that everybody puts in a bag. There's certain ways you can work, taking your time, being aware of what you're picking up. Being aware of who's around you, where your partner is, being aware of what can fly out the back of the truck when it squashes the garbage. Can you make a day 100 percent accident-proof. I don't think so.

AW: But are there things that you would like people to be aware of when they're throwing their garbage out?

JB: When you have broken glass, a broken bottle. Things that could injure somebody else, like needles. People that are diabetic and inject Insulin themselves have to package up the needles in certain containers and tape them. There's ways you can go to at least alert the workers about what's in your pail. I remember how my father when I was a child, went even so far as putting a taped note at the top of the can: "Glass in can". When a window in a house broke or something and you have got a piece of glass or even a broken bottle, put it in a container or at least mark the container you put it in: "Glass in pail." Most people don't do it, but there are a lot of people who still do it. You try your best. There are days when you're working fast, you want to get done, you want to get off the street. It's a cold day, it's a rainy day, it's a nice day and you want to get off the street and just relax and enjoy the day in the garage. And you just work fast because you've got to get your work done and get off the street. A lot of times when you work a little faster to get done a little quicker - not to say that you do everything haphazardly - but you don't always pay close attention to what you're picking up and what you're doing. When you start to work like that - which is how I did work, I never liked to be out in the street too long - you do leave yourself open for things like that, you don't always pay attention to everything. And things like that do happen when you're picking up the garbage fast, throwing it into the truck from the curb instead of walking the bag out to the back of the truck. There's things you do, ways you work, but every time you sort of bend the rules to work a little different, it has it's good points and it has it's bad points. And a lot of times, when you rush and you're picking up things quick and throwing them, you leave yourself open for injury. You get swiped with a bag with a piece of glass or a piece of metal. Or the bag will break, or something else will break and you'll get hit with something. Or when you're throwing a bag from the curb, the bag will break and what's in the bag will hit your partner. Or maybe even hit a car or, or damage a piece of property. There's so many things that can go wrong, I don't think you can make a day 100 percent uneventful everyday.

AW: Did you go to Michael's funeral?

JB: No. A lot of guys did. There was a lot of gentleman, a lot of workers that have passed where I

have attended funerals. Would it be on the job, or off the job. Anytime a guy died on the job, it's always a big thing. And it should be. I didn't go to every worker's funeral that was killed on the job. I don't know why I didn't go to Michael's funeral. I remember when he died, I guess I knew he worked in BK-11. Every year, they have an event at the garage, it's a run or it's a car show, or something like that. Something that he was involved in personally. And they have it in it's honor. They renamed the BK-11 to Mike Hanley Garage, in his honor.

AW: I'm asking because I saw the Chasing Sanitation exhibition and there were photographs of a Franks funeral and I found them very impressive.

JB: Yes! I saw it as well. I always felt it was a proper way to say Goodbye to a brother or sister worker, even if you didn't know them. They did the same thing you did. The gentleman that died in Queens, the guy Frank you're speaking of, that happened only last year and I remember hearing of the circumstances. And even now talking about it I'm getting upset, I'm getting emotional and I feel myself starting to cry. Cause that man was out in the street, doing his job, same as I did. He was dumping a litter basket on a corner somewhere in out in Queens, in Astoria, it was in Queens-1. I don't know exactly where, but he dumped a basket and a tractor trailer turned a corner. And where he was - in the position working the back of the truck, squashing the garbage, dumped a litter basket - the guy with the tractor trailer didn't see him, knocked him down. And then with the trailer ran him over. Horrible, horrible way to die. But, that's how that poor fellow died, doing his job. I cried. I was driving Access-A-Ride, I was already off the job three years. But that's something that could have happened to me any day in my 21 years, 20plus years of work.

Poor kid that I knew, was a brand new kid on the job, this kid Louis Albo, again in BK-11, last year or the year before, was working behind his truck picking up garbage right off the Bay Parkway in Bensonhurst. A guy came flying down the block in a van and wasn't watching what he was doing. Maybe he was on a cell phone, maybe got distracted. Louis was dumping the garbage behind his truck and at the very, very last split second saw the guy at the corner of his eye, baring down him full speed. Jumped up, had to jump in the back of the truck, cause he knew he was going to get hit - this guy wasn't watching what he was doing. And Louis got pinched, got crushed against the back of the truck. Lost his leg, cut his leg off. It was surgically reattached, I don't know how functional it is. I'm sure it is, nowadays they can do miracles in hospitals. But that also made me cry and Louis I knew personally. I worked with him once or twice as a brand new kid on the job. I think he came on the job in 1990. At that point I was in BK-12, a neighboring district, he was in BK-11 when this happened. He stayed there his whole career, and Louis was in good shape, he worked out in the gym. Most of the garages have little gyms. He was in good shape, he was an athlete, used to run, was a good worker And probably being in the shape he was in saved his life cause he was at least able to jump up. Even though he was thinking of jumping right into the garbage, he was trying to save his life.

And, even by doing that, it caught his leg against the back of the truck, against the hopper. If he didn't jump up, it would have cut him right in half and Louis wouldn't be here. He would have been the next casualty. But that was also.. that also could have been me. And anything serious that happens, an injury or a death, it always affects you. Cause anything that happens to a sanitation worker could happen to you. If poor Frank got killed in Queens, Louis got hit with the car in Brooklyn. -Could happen to anybody in the Bronx, could happen to anybody in Staten Island. You do the same job with the same equipment, and you deal with the same circumstances. It doesn't matter where you are or who you are. You just always have to be aware. Even if you are aware, there's certain things you just cannot control. Louis couldn't control the way the guy was speeding down the street, or Frank - God rest his soul - he couldn't control where that guy was driving the

truck in Astoria. But we're all there, doing our jobs, like we're supposed to. Doing the right thing, serving the public. And as they say 'Things Happen', they do. Sometimes you can't control them.

Not much to say about that it just always affects you. The only thing you can say is it could be me. Not "It could've been me". It could be me! Cause you're still doing the job. Now it can't be me, cause I'm not there anymore. But also, as you get later on in the years in your career, when you reach the time you can retire, these are all the things you think about. Yeah, you like the job, yeah you love the work, yeah you like to see Mary and Anna and Robin and all the regular people on your route. Yeah, you like working for Jack, you like your partner, yeah, you like your truck. But then again all these things start to weigh in your mind, whether it be the mountains of garbage, walking around and over the mountains of ice and snow, wondering if the next car speeding around the corner is going crash into the back of your truck with you underneath it. Like poor Frank or poor Louis, or you're going to get splashed with acid like poor Mike. You start to think of all these things. And you say "You know what? I have the option, I can go and I can take myself away from all of that."

And even the job itself takes a toll on your body. Even doing everything safely, even if everything does go your way, every day of your career. But your body is going to wear down over the course of 20plus years of picking up heavy things in all kinds of weather, you don't walk away from that the way you started. You don't, it's physically impossible. Something on your body is going to break or something is going to wear out, a shoulder or a knee or a leg. Something is going to hurt after doing that kind of work for 20 years or better. You get to a point where you start thinking to yourself "You know what? Maybe I should think about leaving, I should think about retiring. I'm doing this long enough." Like myself, I decided to take myself out of all the danger, out of all the hazards. Did I stop work? No, now I drive a bus, now I make myself useful doing something else. But there's times in your career where you stop and think, when you reach a point and you say "You know what? I don't have to do this anymore." But the dangers don't decrease after 20 years. The danger is out there from the day you started until the day you leave. There's plenty of men that make their plans to retire and then unfortunate things happen. They get injured and sometimes their injuries, if they don't kill them, they force them to retire and then you can't work. Like I say, I was fortunate enough to get slashed and cut. And not lose a limb, not get crushed behind a truck like Lou did, or Frank who died in Queens. And another poor fellow, when I was working in Queens years ago, was working in Queens 10, in the Howard Beach District, driving the truck down the Jersey Turnpike, doing a relay on a midnight shift one night. The poor guy - I don't know what happened - he fell asleep, was tired and drifted off the road and there happened to be a tractor trailer. It carried steel beams marked with his red flags, cause they're hanging from the back of the truck and this poor fellow just drifted off the road and drifted right in the back of this tractor trailer. The beams went right through him and the truck and he died. Destroyed the truck, killed him. Again, that was a route that I traveled thousands of times. I worked in Queens and did the same thing that poor fellow was doing, driving the truck to the incinerator in Jersey. Until you physically take yourself out of the mix, your chances will be the same from day one till the end, of being hurt., dismembered, maimed. The only way to stop is to leave.

AW: Do you remember your very last day?

JB: Of course I do.

AW: Are you okay to keep going?

JB: I told you I'm not running out of gas! We run out of time, the machine might die, but I won't. I

don't remember exactly, but my last day I was working on my regular truck, 25 CU 317, it was in Manhattan West 2, in the Village, in this area. Actually in the district that covers the area we're in now at the school. And the very last day I was doing paper. I did paper recycling when I worked in this district. It was not easy, it was a lot of work, it always filled the truck. I remember, and I just says "You know what? This is it!" and I had planned that that was the last day I worked. I did paper and it was emotional.

I think it was more emotional the day I decided to retire. Cause then I had to tell people. I called one of my best friends, one of the best bosses I ever had, gentleman's name is Lenny. His last name was a little difficult to pronounce, called Buonpane. He is now the garage supervisor in Staten Island-2. He was my boss in Brooklyn in BK-12 for many years. Until this day, I still talk to Lenny. Go to his house over in Staten Island with his family. We talked about relationships off the job: I have a good one with him, even now after I retired. He's still working. So I called him up and I was crying, and he says "What's the matter?" and I says "It's time to go." I says "I made the decision that I can't take it anymore."

Too many things were changing, to many negative things were happening. The bosses, the rules. The younger generation the city was hiring didn't have the work ethic I was taught, that I grew up with, and that I had. And it just was difficult and it began not to be fun anymore. I didn't retire because of an injury, or anything like that. It just got to be too much to deal with. The everyday nonsense is what it really came down to. I liked to work, I liked to work hard. I got up every morning, every day like it was my first day on the job. And I liked what I did. Most people in this world don't like what they do for a living. They do it because they have to, your job. You have to survive, you want things, you have a family, your kids want things. I'm fortunate to be single, I don't have kids, I was never married. But you have things you just do and it becomes too much, things start to change, people start to change, bosses start to change, the rules start to change. And a lot of times the people in charge really don't know what they're telling you to do. With sanitation, everybody that's a boss came up through the ranks, they were all garbage men like me. And some people just want to be bosses, some people are better bosses than others, some people are better workers than others. But what I didn't like is that the people that have cushy jobs – yeah, they're all sanitation workers on paper like me, but they work in an office - now have the same rights as I do to take the promotion exam to become a supervisor. Now they're put out in the street to tell the guy behind the truck what to do. That guy behind the truck is me. You might be my supervisor but you worked in an office, you really don't know what it's like to be behind the truck in the rain, in the snow, picking up the garbage. -If it's five tons, if it's eight tons, if it's paper, if it's wet paper, if it's garbage that's buried under the snow. You're giving me orders, you have the right to and I have to listen to you, but you don't really know what you're telling me to do cause you didn't do it yourself. And to me that's unfair.

And that's a lot of what the job is becoming these days, people giving orders. And yeah, they have the authority, they have the right and I have to listen to you, cause you're my boss, you're my superior, but you really didn't do it like I am. And it's changing a lot of attitudes and that's one thing that really pushed me to go. I started working for people that really - not only did they not really know what they were telling me to do - they never really did it themselves and I felt that they don't have the right to be a boss. Earn your title, earn your promotion. Passing a test, in my eyes, doesn't give the right to give me orders. I'm sorry. Yeah, it gives you the title, it gives you a bigger badge but, to me, when you really don't know what you're telling me to do, you shouldn't be there. But that's the way the job is a lot of times now today. And I got tired of listening to people that I feel didn't have the right to give me orders as they didn't know what they were doing, didn't know what they were telling me to do. "Go here, do this, do that." - "What are you telling me to do? You don't

even know it yourself.” You can't tell them No, you can't refuse anything, that's insubordination – disciplinary charges. I don't need that. I don't need bad marks on my record.

The only option I had at that point was to just stop doing it for good. I don't have to listen to anybody now. But it's alright. It caused me to leave, my last day was alright. And it was still a good day. I chose to leave while I still liked the job. As much as I grew up loving the job, being attached to the job. From the days of riding with Joe and Jimmy in the truck as a seven year-old kid in Staten Island to a 28-year old man when I started the job in 1987 and being 48 when I retired in May 2007. You're talking 40 years. I really did two tours of duty in a sense, one off the job, one on the job. That's what I told people. I worked behind the truck and chased the truck and rode in the truck since a little kid and I did it for 20 years before I even got hired. Again, I started the job - I said it to you the other day - I started the job as an old-timer. When I came on the job, yeah, I was new on the payroll and I was wearing a brand new squeaky clean uniform but when I walked into my first district - I started the job in BK-18 as a bunch of us from my hinging class - my friend asked a supervisor a question, I forget what it was, it was about a shift or “Can I go here?” or “Can I go there?” And the supervisor or clerk didn't want to put my friend in that position cause he wanted to give it to somebody else, I forget what it was. And I said to him “No, I know this. Listen, this is what they have to do.” I said in front of a few people. And I said right there and then, my first day, first week on the job “Listen, I'm new to the payroll, but I'm not new to the job. I know the rules. I've been following the job.” I didn't have to go into detail about why I knew what I did, but they knew I was right. And they did the right thing, cause they knew I was there to back up my friend. And he looked at me but - you asked me once before about respect - I always got respect cause I always knew the rules. Whether it be “on the arm” or “by the book” and when I had 20 years on the job before got hired, is what I tell people. I started the job as an old-timer.

But I always loved it, I always had fun. But, like I always talked about, as the years started mounting, I talked to my friend Lenny. And he used to always tell me “You'll know when it's time to go. You might work 20 years, you might work 25 years. Who knows how long you're going to work? But you'll know. “ And I did. I, I doubted myself once or twice, but the week after I retired, I remember a day in particular. When I first started doing the Access-A-Ride after I retired, before I took a little a bit of time off. But the first week I was doing Access-A-Ride, I was being trained by another driver there, and we were going down the street in Staten Island, had a pick-up over there. And we're waiting at the red light, it's pouring rain and what comes down the block was a garbage truck, and their picking up the litter baskets on the corner and it's pouring rain and this poor guy gets off the back of the truck, steps into the water that's rushing down the street like a river to get the garbage in the litter basket on the corner. And I said to the guy that was training me on the bus, his name was also Frank, I says “Man, Frank, that was me last month”. I says “No more. Now I'm inside, I'm in a dry vehicle, I have heat, I'm warm, I'm comfortable, I'm not out in the weather.” But I says “A month ago, that was me”.

So there's a lot of benefits for leaving. Being out of the weather, being prone to injury, being out of the street, traffic, crazy drivers, crazy people, there's a lot you can remove yourself from when you do retire. Everything has it's good and bad point but there's always going to be things you miss. There's always going be things I miss, but the job is always going be alive in me. Always. It will die when I die. I guess it's something that I waited too long to do. I had fun every day for 20plus years that I did it. Every day I wanted to work, I went to work, I got up, I got dressed, I was always ridiculously early for work cause I could never get there early enough, I could never do enough. If I couldn't go out and start my route early or pull out the truck early, there was always something I could do - as you asked me once and we laughed about it - “on the arm”. I'd get there early for work. If I did something on the computer in the office, put the midnight form in with the foreman

that gave me my orders and he went home cause his shift was over. Then I come in at the end of the day and I dealt with the day-time form. But anytime my work was done, or even if it was early before I was able to start, I always did something to benefit somebody else. Always helped somebody else, that's how I am. And there's a lot of guys that are the same way: help. That's how things get done. Sometimes the job is a lot, it is too much, or if something happens - you need help and there's a lot of times you just do it "on the arm" as you asked me, as we laughed about. On the arm, it's a big thing. But that's how I was raised, you always help. It always comes back. I feel it does. No good deed goes unnoticed. It's a good way to be.

AW: I think I have two more questions. One thing - and of course you don't have to answer if you don't want to - I would like to know what it's like to be openly gay as a sanitation worker.

JB: I never had a problem with it. I had fun with it. Again, it never bothered me what I was. I wasn't hired because I was gay. I was hired because I wanted to pick up garbage. And what you were, whether it be male, female, gay, straight, black, white, Jewish, Catholic, you're hired to be a sanitation worker. And that's all the city's concerned with. You can do your job? That's fine, that's what they hired you to do. It makes things interesting in different situations. I also think brings out the best in people around you. It shouldn't matter to you what I am. You're my partner for the day, so you know I'm gay.. So what!? We have a job to do. And I did my job, I did my job better than a lot of people, better than a lot of straight people.

Because I liked what I did, because my sexual orientation had nothing to do with the job, or the way I worked. It was who I was, it wasn't who the job was - or what the job was I should say. It didn't bother me. Nobody really had a problem with it. I'm clearly not the only gay sanitation worker. There are many that are in the closet, there are plenty that are out of the closet. I know both. I worked with both. My, my partner for the longest time, he's gay, he's not open like me. I don't think there are a lot of people that know about him. There are some. It's not my business to tell anybody. If he wants people to think he's a certain way, that doesn't affect me. It shouldn't affect me, it's not my business. Were people able to figure certain things out about him? -Yeah I think so. But, again, we were a good team, I was a good worker. 99.9 percent of the people I worked with knew exactly what I was.

AW: Did you tell people straight away?

JB: Straight out? I didn't make it a point at the morning coffee table and say "Yeah, yeah, I'm gay!"

AW: Okay, sorry. That's not what I meant. Were you openly gay right from the beginning of your career?

JB: No. No, only probably the last few years. Until I was really, really comfortable. I didn't care. Something happened. Maybe somebody saw me somewhere. I don't know really what triggered it within me. But I didn't care. You know, men would always kid about, they'd talk about their wives or would talk about girls, or talk about this, that and the other thing. I says you know what "Why can't I talk about guys?". It doesn't change how we do the job. You might like women, I like men. But you know what? You and I have to pick up that garbage. And that's the bottom line. And most guys didn't care. It's not like all of a sudden now you found out I was gay, does that mean I want to sleep with you tomorrow? Or "If I sleep with you, will you do most of the work?" There were all kinds of things that were thrown around, but I even did it myself! And everybody knew it wasn't true. "Yeah, well he lets me do that because I sleep with him". No, it didn't have any factors, and it didn't matter to me. I did what I did, I worked how I worked, I was who I was, I was Jack Behan, I

was a Sanitation Man. I just happened to like men. I was gay. Big deal! I did more work than Joe this guy, or Mike that guy who were straight and had five kids. It didn't matter! There was always one or two exceptions to the rule, you know. A guy here or a guy there that had a problem with it, but that was just it. That was your problem. I don't have any problems with what I am. I had fun with it and most people could care less. That's why it was good. I was out, I didn't care. It doesn't matter. I didn't broadcast it, like I said, I didn't bring it up at meetings or at coffee break!

Guys knew that I had a boyfriend. Once or twice he came to the garage, he came to the garage at that particular time. I didn't care! I gave him a hug and a kiss in front of all the men. Didn't matter to me, didn't bother me. I was going home with him, not you! No, it didn't bother me at all. And I was not ridiculed, I wasn't made fun of, they didn't do things to my locker or damage my car. No, I had no problems with it. Then again, I was a big strapping guy, too. Not that that should matter. People like to pick on the poor defenseless people a lot of times in life, but no, I never had a problem with that. If anything I had fun with it over the years. People were comfortable with it, they knew it. I wasn't going to hit on them, and I wasn't going to try to. You were my friend at work, we worked great on the truck. You went home to your woman or to your girlfriend. I went home to my man. Whatever the case was, we joked about everything. "Who does this better? Who does that better? You want to know? You want to find out?" And there was a lot of it! We laughed, we kid, we had fun! Because it was just that. I was Jack, you were Anna, you were Billy, you were Joe, you were Robin. Everybody was themselves. That's the way live should be! Had nothing to do with the Sanitation Department. Just happens to be that I was there and I was what I was.

AW: My second question is what is it about your work that you feel is most misunderstood?

JB: Good question, I don't know the answer to that!

AW: That's why I put it at the end!

JB: Misunderstood. I don't really think people understand what the Sanitation Department does. I really don't think so. Yeah, we pick up garbage. I think that when people hear the Sanitation Department, they think garbage. And it ends there. You bag your garbage, you take the bag out of the can, you put the bag on the curb, you come home at the end of the day from work or school, and the garbage is gone. Okay fine. There's the truck, you see the trucks working here and there, you know what they do. And that's it. I don't really think a lot of people understand. I don't know why, I don't know what you can do to make them understand.

AW: This.

JB: Yeah. If enough people have the - what's word I'm looking for? - they care, they want to ask, they want to find out. A project like this is good. I think the people need to be a little educated as to what we do. The garbage, yeah, you put your garbage on the curb, you come home the end of the day, the garbage is gone. Where did it go? Nobody stole it. I picked it up. I picked it up with my truck and I took it to the dump. Or I took it to the recycling factory. I think a lot of people don't understand. It is a very physical job. They don't really know what it's like to be out in the pouring rain, or to be driving a snow plow at three in the morning for 12, 13, 14 hours, wearing several layers of cloth picking up garbage in the snow, picking up garbage in the rain. Slipping on the ice with a bag of garbage, with a can of garbage. Yeah, they know it gets done, simply because they know they put out the bag of garbage or the can of garbage when they went to work and when they came home it was gone. They don't know really much about it other than that. Yeah, they know that the garbage man came. "Did the garbage man come yet?" - "No, the pail is still out there." Yeah,

they see us working. I don't think they understand - sure they know. I guess the only way to know completely is to do it. And obviously not everybody can do that. I guess people just need an education. Program like this, something to read, something to watch. An exhibit, like the photo exhibit, the Chasing Sanitation Program, this program. I think there's a lot of things that if people had the interest or the initiative they can find out. I don't think a lot of people care. A lot of people that make comments don't know.

Sanitation Department doesn't exist in most people's eyes unless something is wrong. Unless you come home from work and your garbage is still on the curb: "Why?" Or when the snow comes down and you can't get your car out: "Why?" Where does the garbage go? I'm doing my job, it was a holiday yesterday. We didn't work. That's why the garbage is still out when you come home at night. Maybe the truck broke down, maybe the poor guy that was on your route that day got hit with a car and died. Like poor Frank in Queens, I'm sure there was somebody on his route that day, later on in the day. Or Mike Hanley, the day he died. I'm sure there was somebody on his route that came home that day and their garbage was still on the curb and they wanted to know why. Why? Because Mike died or Jack got hurt or Frank got hit by a truck. There's there's a lot of reasons why, and people don't realize we're out there until the evidence of us not doing our job is there. I think that's really what people see. I don't think they realize for the most part what we do, until something is evident of what we didn't do. You don't think of your garbage after you drop that bag out on the curb as you're walking to your car to go to work unless you come home from work and that bag of garbage you dropped there at six o'clock in the morning before the sun came up is still there at six o'clock after the sun went down. Now all of a sudden you want to call up and complain. And before you complain maybe you should think or ask. Maybe there's a reason. And not just be upset or irate that the truck didn't come that day, or yet that day.

People a lot of times don't understand that the job works around the clock, and if your pick-up day is Monday, Monday starts at midnight Sunday night and doesn't end until midnight Monday night until Tuesday. We could come anytime during that 24-hour period to pick up your garbage and it's on time, cause your day is Monday. You don't get a specific time, you get a pick-up day, not a pick-up time. This isn't a taxi service, we're not picking you up to take you to the airport. You get your garbage picked up at Monday, not at 8.45 Monday morning or 2.30 Tuesday afternoon, it's not a scheduled time, it is a scheduled day. And people are fine as long as the program is going according to plan. They don't see the trucks, they don't see the men. They only see the litter basket on the corner when it's getting piled too high and the truck hasn't come to dump it. Or you come home from work at the end of the day and your bag is still on the curb. "Why?" Not, you come home and "Oh! They came! Oh thank you so much! You took my garbage away!" It's more like "Why didn't you take my garbage?". You never get thanked after the fact, you always get cursed or yelled at or looked at in a negative way when the garbage is still there. If there was anything I wish that people would understand it's there are a lot of factors that a lot of times prevent you from doing your job or there's always a reason. You know if the garbage is still on the curb at the end of the day when you come home from school or work or even when you wake up the next morning. If it's a holiday, we don't work. Bad weather, the truck breaks down, men get hurt. There's a reason. It's not like "You know what? I didn't feel like working today! I sat in the office all day and drank coffee and bagels. And I just wanted to watch TV, I don't really want to pick up your garbage today. Sorry, tough!" There's usually a reason why I didn't do the job, why the garbage is still there.

AW: Having said this, the knowledge that you're sharing with me now is going to be shared with other people. How would you like that do happen? Do you have any ideas about what is going to happen with this recording?

JB: I don't know where this goes, I don't know what's going to be done with it. I know it's pretty much for educational purposes or it's just for knowledge that's going to be there, if somebody wants to go find out. I think there should be ways for people to be informed of the job that we do. Or the job that I did. There are plenty of people that like to pick up garbage. The same as people that wanted to be firefighters or plenty of men and women that dreamed of being doctors. Some jobs are always noticeable, some jobs are never noticeable. And a lot of times, a lot of the jobs that you take for granted are the ones you need the most. Yeah, you need doctors, yeah, you need lawyers, yeah, you need cashiers at the supermarket, but you also need people that pick up your garbage.

You don't always need the cashier at the supermarket, you don't need a doctor all the time. Everyday of your life you're going to generate garbage. You're not going to need a policeman everyday. And you don't need a fireman - god forbid - everyday. But twice a week, you're going to need a garbage man. I don't want to be thanked everyday of my life cause I picked up your garbage. But once in a while. Take the interest to know that there's a lot more to the job than just having that bag of garbage that you placed on the curb when you went to work, have it disappear during the day when you weren't there. There's a story behind it, there's a story and there's ways to explain how it disappeared, why it disappeared, who took it. And in a lot of cases nowadays with recycling, where it goes after the fact. There were people that did care, I just wish there was programs like this, advertisements, commercials, projects, programs, things that would do a little more than advertise. The Internet is a big thing nowadays, that's how I found out about the photo exhibit. How I knew Chasing Sanitation exists and I'm kind of sad that it started after I left the job. I would have been on that wall! Guaranteed! The way I worked, the reputation I had, the things I did. I was a very colorful person, very alive and I loved what I did, which is, to me, what that program is all about. I knew a lot of the people in those pictures. I worked side by side with a few that I saw on the wall, literally. Some are the same type of worker that I am, some of them are there just for the glory of taking a picture to be placed on a wall. I'm not mentioning any names. But I definitely would have been there if that program was alive while I still was on the job. Cause to me the Chasing Sanitation, this program, the Oral History project, it's all about Pro-Sanitation, it's all geared towards the job and it was and it always will be a big part of my life. Not much else I can say!

AW: I think we nearly hit four hours.

JB: Really? Wow! Holy shit! Sorry!

AW: No! It was wonderful. Thank you so much!

JB: You're very welcome.

AW: Thank you for the cake as well!

JB: Oh, stop!

AW: I'm out of words.

JB: I know that there's a lot of good that will come of this. Four years ago, the day when I decided to retire, I was sitting in Sandra McCaffery's office at the clinic Downtown. I was on sick leave, for whatever reason I called out sick. And I'd known Sandy, I had known Sandy many years ago and I was sitting with Sandy the day Robin stepped into her office, that's when I met Robin. The only time I've ever met Robin. And she told me about the book she was writing and we tried once or twice to connect and it just never came to be and I know she's still attempting to finish the book.

But, I think that all things happen for reasons in life and people's passes cross for whatever reasons. And it took four years for this day to come, when I could finally hook up with something. And, I wrote to her recently in one of my little emails on facebook. Or was it maybe you even? I says "This program is me! Cause it is so me!". I told you, and I bet you the last time, that I was not going to run out of gas! I could come back next week and do it all over again.

It's something that took 20 years to achieve and then I practiced it another 20 years. And it'll be something I always admire, it was a job that I wanted since I was a little boy and until the day I die, I can always look at a truck. And say "Yeah, that was me. That's what I did", for I'll tell the guy on the truck, he shouldn't be doing that, or he should be doing it this way, or "You shouldn't be going there!" or "You know what? Good job!". Even now I see the guys that pick up my garbage. I try and put certain things a certain way in the pail, like you asked me before what people can do to try and decrease the chance of an injury. If there's a lot of garbage, like even last night, the building next door where I live in Bensonhurst, there's three, four buildings in a row and I helped the old man next door. He's the super, somebody in the apartment got all new furniture. I took up a parking space, which is like gold in Brooklyn. I put out all the garbage - it was like six pails - and today was our recycling day. And we all take care of the garbage together. This woman had furniture, a sofa, a chair, a table, I put everything in the parking space. All the garbage, separated the recycling pails, and the old man bundles up the cardboard, ties up the boxes with the paper in and all that stuff. I took the furniture, so the men didn't have to walk for it. Didn't have to walk between the cars, carrying the sofa in between cars, banging your legs on bumpers and license plates.

It's just something nice to do, cause you know what? That was me. And it was the dumb little things like maybe tying up the box or putting a note on the can that has glass in it. Or putting the sofa right in the parking space or in a spot where the guys didn't have to squeeze between two cars carrying the sofa out to the truck. Have the sofa right there on the edge of the parking space. The truck pulls up right next to it, two men pick it up, throw it in the truck nice. They don't hurt themselves, they don't bump against the car, they don't drop the sofa on your car.

There's so many things, even now four years later, and I'll always try. Always do. Snowstorms, I don't shovel my snow and throw it in the street. Everybody does. Make a mountain in front of my house, make a mountain on the sidewalk as long as the sidewalk is clear where people can walk. I don't throw the snow in the street right behind the plow. There's people waiting in front of the house, shoveling, the plow was just on the block, the plow is still on the block! And they're behind the truck already digging out their cars, throwing the snow back in the street. There's some kind of blocks where you can just keep going around the same block all the time. Cause that's the way the people think. Throw it in the street. Why? So the plow can come down the block and block in your neighbor? Cause you're snow is going to get shoveled and it's going to be plowed next door. Your poor neighbor is going to shovel your snow. But guess what? Your snow, your neighbor on that side is going to block you in when the plow was in the block. There's this little things I used to do.

I used to drive a plow, a lot of times in the Winter time. I always worked the night shift. I would purposely - and it wasn't really right, it wasn't legal traffic-wise - I would always go down streets - not always, but a lot of times - the wrong way. If it was a one-way street, go down the street the wrong way. It's two, three, four o'clock in the morning. Why? To give the people on the plow-side of the street a break. When you lived on the wrong side of the street, every time the snow plow came down, your car always got buried in, your driveway always got buried in. If you lived on the right, the correct side of the street, you never got buried in. So I used to just drive the truck the wrong way, and give a little pay back to the people that always threw their snow in the street. No cop was ever going bother with snow plows unless you do something really stupid. And down the

block the wrong way, I had a cop stop me one day. He says “Can I ask you why you just came down the block the wrong way?” And I told him, and he was “You know what? Okay!” He got in his car and drove away. I said “I want to give the poor people on the good side of the street a break this time.”

AW: Okay.

JB: Yes.

AW: Thank you, Jack. I am turning off the device now.