Jay Siegel

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Fred Honhart,
interviewer

Honhart: It's May 5, 2004, and I'm with Jay Siegel. This is part of the MSU [Michigan State University] Sesquicentennial Oral History Project and Ralph Turner Oral History Project.

Jay, you can see we're going to tape-record this. Do we have your permission to do so?

Siegel: Yes, you do.

Honhart: Thank you. Jay, I'd like to start with some background, where you grew up and so forth. Where did you grow up?

Siegel: Washington, D.C. I'm a native of the nation's capital. I was there for my first twenty-nine years. Went to school there, including George Washington University, from which I have three degrees, including a Ph.D. in chemistry.

Honhart: Where did you go to high school?

Siegel: That was in Maryland, in Washington, D.C., suburbs in Silver Spring, Maryland. I was in the first graduating class of Springbrook High School out there.

Honhart: After you completed your degrees at George Washington, where did you go from there?

Siegel: Well, actually, I got a job in a crime laboratory when I was all but dissertation, ABD, and I was looking for a job. I'd had a research grant from the NSF [National Science Foundation], and it ran out. I was just about done and I was looking for a job. My Ph.D. advisor put me on to this crime laboratory run by the State of Virginia not far from where I was living. I went out there and had an interview for a job. I knew nothing about forensic science at the time. This was even before *Quincy* was on TV, so it was a long time ago, on the order of 1974.

I got a job at the crime laboratory analyzing controlled substances. Then I moved on to trace evidence and got bit by the forensic science bug. I really loved the work. I loved the court testimony and the analysis and the crime scenes and all that. I stayed there for three years. When I left, I was doing trace evidence, mostly.

Then I had gone out to Denver for a job interview at another crime lab. My wife and I were interested in relocating away from Washington. I had been there my whole life and it was time to look at something else, and she had family in Denver. So I went out and interviewed at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation for a job and it went very well. They interviewed nine people and they could offer the job to the top three, and I finished second. I remember the interview was like one of these two-hour panel interviews, and when I finished, they asked me if wanted a tour of the lab. I said yes, and I went outside to take this tour, and one of the people who interviewed me for the job chased me out in the hall, and he said, "Look, I don't care if you get this job or not, but I've got a teaching position open at Metropolitan State College, which is

in downtown here." He said, "You have a Ph.D. and you have experience and you're just what we're looking for. Would you go talk to the guy who's sort of caretaking it today?"

So I said, "Sure." So I met with the fellow who was running the program then, Jack Cummins [phonetic], and ultimately what happened with the job at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation is they offered it to this guy and then he flunked the polygraph. [Laughter] So he couldn't take it. And they offered it to a woman, and back then there were very few women in forensic science. She apparently took the job and had a very hard time there with the chauvinism and stuff, and quit.

Meanwhile, I got the job teaching forensic science and analytical chemistry at Metropolitan State College. I always wanted to get into college teaching. That had been my passion, so I snapped that job right up. They had a program there with almost nobody in it, and it had just gotten started and the guy who was doing it didn't know what he was doing. So they got rid of him and one of the chemistry profs was caretaking it. So they hired me on and I built the program from nothing and really enjoyed that.

I ultimately got offered the job at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation and, of course, turned it down. Then they had to re-advertise it and I ended up sitting on the board to interview people for it. Full circle.

But I enjoyed Metropolitan State College immensely and I was having a really good time. Then I was thumbing through *Chemical and Engineering News* one day and I saw the opening here for the forensic science program, that Ralph Turner was retiring. My wife is a Spartan and her family was all around us. They were in Detroit, they were in Grand Rapids, and so we decided to take a flyer, and I came out here and interviewed, and that's where I met Ralph.

Ralph and I hit it off right away. I have fond memories of being in the Kellogg Center. That's where they put me up. Ralph picks me up at the airport at about, I don't know, four or five o'clock in the evening, and we grab some dinner and then we went back to the room and I thought, "Oh, I'll get some sleep here." He was in my room until two a.m. just giving me his war stories, the very start, and telling me about the university and about himself. I will never forget that night. It was just fascinating listening to him. He was a legend anyway, and then just to sit and rap with him for hours was really—it was the beginning of a great adventure, actually.

Honhart: How long were you at Metropolitan?

Siegel: Three years. And I've been at Michigan State twenty-four.

Honhart: Had you been involved in the American Academy for Forensic Science prior to coming to Michigan State?

Siegel: Yes, I joined, actually, when I was in Denver. So it's just about thirty years now, for me, in the Academy. I don't remember going to meetings then. We had no travel budget, so I don't remember going to meetings. I started going to meetings regularly when I got here at Michigan State. But I did join the Academy and I've been a member since about '75.

Honhart: Had you heard of Ralph before you came to Michigan State or knew about the job?

Siegel: Yes, actually, I had, just from contacts and from being involved in the Academy and the like. I had heard of Ralph. At that time the only really decent forensic science program in the country was here. I mean, when you talked about forensic science, it was Michigan State. The one in Chicago didn't exist then; the one in George Washington didn't exist; the one in Alabama; the other major programs did not exist. The only other one that was really functioning was the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. And Peter De Forest [phonetic] was running that and I had heard of him, but I'd also heard of Ralph just through the grapevine, you know.

Honhart: I assume you'd heard of the Michigan State criminal justice program as well.

Siegel: Yes, I hadn't heard much about it, I didn't know much about it. I heard that forensic science program was in it, and I thought that was curious at the time, that it wasn't in a science department. So I knew none of the history until I really got here and delved into it and talked more to Ralph.

Honhart: So I gather you had no problem accepting the job when you were offered it.

Siegel: Well, it's funny. I interviewed here for—I came out by myself; Maggie didn't come because she knew the university, there was no need for her to see it. I came out here and interviewed the whole day, and then I remember going to the labs, which were in the fourth floor of Olds [Hall]. Gee. I looked at those things and I said, "By god, there's nothing in here. There's only a couple of microscopes, and where's all the equipment that I need to do forensic

science with?" After all, I was in a chemistry department back at Metro.

And he was telling me, "Well, we haven't got much stuff." He showed me the storerooms, these two storerooms that were just chock-a-block with all sorts of papers and stuff.

I'm thinking, "Boy, I've got to get some—if I ever came here, I'd have to get some money."

Then he showed me the chemistry building, and then he had to run off to a meeting or something for a little while, and I remember sitting right outside the chemistry building and thinking through the whole thing. Is this something I really want to embark on and really want to do? I was really excited about Michigan State because it has such a great name. It was April 3rd when I interviewed, and the place was just gorgeous. Spring had just sprung around here and everything was starting to be in bloom, and the students were out and it was warm, and it was just a really exciting place to be. So I really thought about it for quite some time, but I had made up my mind when I went back to Denver that I would probably take this job if it were offered.

The one sort of fly in the ointment at the time was that Ralph was going to be starting his consulting year, and so there was no position available at that time. What they were offering was a one-year temporary position and then renewable, if you will, after Ralph retired to a permanent position.

Well, I was leaving—they didn't have tenure at Metropolitan State College. They had something called probationary status and then a permanent status, and after three years you go into permanent status, which is tantamount to tenure. I didn't want to leave a position where I was going to be tenured for one that was uncertain. So when Gwen Andrew [phonetic], who was the dean at the time, called me and offered me the position, I said—no, I'm sorry, it wasn't

Gwen, it was Bob Trajanowitz [phonetic] called. I had interviewed with George Felkins [phonetic]. He was the director of the school when I interviewed, but he left to go to Long Beach, and Bob Trajanowitz was sort of sitting in then and then ultimately took over. He called and asked me about the job and I said, "Well, I'm very interested in the job, but I don't want to take it on a temporary position because I'm giving up a permanent position here."

He talked to Gwen Andrew, and she said, "Okay, we'll make it a tenure-track position."

And then I took it. I remember being in my kitchen in Denver, my mother was visiting, and I said, "Yeah, I'll take the position."

So I really liked the whole position, it was just, of course, the university politics that were the only thing that stood in the way. So then, yes, I accepted the position and never regretted a day of it, actually.

Honhart: So after you came here, what was it like to get started?

Siegel: Well, I had Ralph here, of course, for a year, and he helped me go through all the storerooms and stuff in Olds to see what we had, and he introduced me to everybody. I remember the very first day I was there, he took me over to the Union to the hallowed table at the Union, with Lou Radlick [phonetic], and yourself was there, and I can't remember the other; Byron might have been there, the dean of natural science at the time, I think was there. And Bob Scott came along. Oh, gosh, I can't remember who else was even there. But it was this hallowed ground to which I went to occasionally afterwards, a few times, too. I remember that everybody was really very supportive.

Trajanowitz and I met several times and I told him about the situation and what I thought it needed. He said he wanted an assessment of what the forensics science program really needed to take off after Ralph retired. I told him what I thought, we needed some equipment and the like, but I basically just mined Ralph for as much information as I could get about the program. I learned about the history. It wasn't hard to mine Ralph. All you need is a quiet place. So we spent that first year really talking a lot about the history of this program, and his history and his involvement in forensic science and his passions about forensic science, to get sort of a feel for the program and the students.

I met the students, and I met my first grad assistant, Toby Wolfson [phonetic]. Toby is a DNA analyst with a Miami crime laboratory and has been for going on twenty years. He was my first grad assistant, and he was an entomology major and kind of floundering around; really didn't know what he wanted to do. Then he and I got together and we started putting together classes and the like. Toby and I still are in contact, so he remembered going to undergraduate school and meeting Ralph and taking a class or two from Ralph, also. So that first year was just sort of settling in and learning about the university, about Michigan State, and trying to get to know people who could help in building the program.

Honhart: Then how did you develop after, when you took over?

Siegel: Well, of course, when Ralph retired, you know, he really never retired. He still had an office, and he still was there regularly. And we were in contact regularly, and that was true right up until the time he died. We were still in regular contact and he'd come in and visit, or I'd call

him and say, "Look, we're thinking about doing this, and the school's going to do this. What do you think?" And we would go to Academy meetings, occasionally, together. So I never lost touch with him the whole time he was around.

But my job, as I saw it, was to try to just build up the program. So I started this Introduction to Forensic Science class, just to advertise the program. The first year it had 80 people in it, which was a large class at that time. I should have known, because this last fall I taught it in this building and there were 402 students registered for the course. Actually, we turned away 100 students. So this next fall they're offering it over at Anthony Hall and there's 536 students. So that course, it was really the first thing I did, and we still occasionally get a student out of there every once in a while to get into the forensic science program.

The other major thing that happened that first year was that we had lab up on the fourth floor of Olds and then the floor caved in; a piece of the floor broke. Some students stepped on the floor and it just—

Honhart: Went through.

Siegel: Yes. So I immediately had a discussion with Bob Trajanowitz about it, and he got Gwen Andrew, the dean, involved, and then I learned about something called the Space Committee here, which is run by the Provost's Office. Space, of course, is critical here, and they don't leave those decisions to anybody below the provost.

So Gwen went and talked to the provost. She came and actually saw the lab. She said, "We have to get out of here." She ended up doing some horse trading with the dean of the

College of Natural Science, and we ended up moving over to McDonel Hall, the dorm. In the basement they had some labs there. So we got into a lab over there and set up shop for—I think we ended up being there for three or four years.

At the same time, or during that time, I started to meet Gil Skinner [phonetic], who was at that time the internship coordinator for the School of Criminal Justice. He had two other people working for him, Debbie Cheeseborough [phonetic] and Bob Schultz [phonetic]. I still know Debbie. Debbie is the assistant chief of police at Ann Arbor, at University of Michigan. Gil, still in Lansing and has a private consulting company.

Gil put me in touch with people who had money. At that time, the law enforcement's assistant administration was still operating, although President [James A.] Carter [III] ultimately axed it, and when he did, there was leftover research money and I got to meet the guy who was in charge of all that, Chuck Divoli [phonetic]. I formed an external advisory committee that Ralph was on, and I had Chuck Divoli on it, I had Gil on it, I had a police chief, a prosecutor, a medical examiner; a lot of people on that committee who could be influential. I gave them my sort of vision for the program, and Chuck Divoli had some money that he would invest in it. So he gave me $125,000, which had to me 10 percent match by the university, and that got us started.

We just started getting some equipment and stuff, and he followed it up with some more money, and since then I've been able to get money from instrument companies, and now we have, of course, the technology fund that the university gets every year and we get equipment out of that. So we've grown now to we are the best equipped forensic science program in the country. We have a half a million dollars' worth of our own equipment, and nobody else owns it. We share some with chemistry, but we own most of it.

So the program has morphed a couple of times since Ralph was running it, and it was the premier program in the country when he had it, and it's still a premier program in the country, so nothing has changed in that regard, anyway. So those first couple of years were spent in trying to get infrastructure for the program and get people to start believing in it.

We started a very vigorous internship program with the state police here, and also tried to send students outside. The head of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Barry Fisher [phonetic], was the first lab director to take an intern outside the State of Michigan. Barry was well known, as he still is, and that gave the program some credibility that it didn't have because an out-of-state lab director would actually take an intern.

[Interruption]

Honhart: Okay, we stopped for a second and now we're back.

Siegel: Yes, so those first three years were designed to sort of give the program some outside exposure, and Ralph had already developed a good relationship with the state police, so we had that going. He knew all the people from the state police, he introduced me to everybody there, and that was a big help. So he introduced me to just about everybody on this campus at one point or another that could have anything to do with forensic science those first couple of years. He was really helpful in that regard, in getting me known on the campus.

Honhart: How would you assess Ralph's contributions to the university?

Siegel: Well, I think he had a number of them, including the forensic science program, of course, but beyond that. In forensic science, Ralph was a pioneer. I mean, he was one of the pioneers in forensic science, one of the pioneers, one of the founding members of the Academy, and, of course, so he had all of that. But he was one of the very few people in this country that was really doing meaningful research in forensic science at the time in the areas of gunshots and bullets, and especially in alcohol. I mean, that's what he was really known for. So I think one of Ralph's major contributions during his years here was to get this university known as the place where forensic science research is going on; besides education, actual research.

And, of course, he had so many students that got into crime laboratories here and elsewhere, that that was another contribution. And I think, really, when you look back and you say, well, what is the legacy, this is a land-grant university. This is *the* land-grant university. Forensic science is the quintessential multidisciplinary service program. When I think of programs that are appropriate for a land-grant university, this one is really right at the top of the list. Ralph put it on the map. And so I think in the forensic science field, this was the major thing that he did. He put forensic science, academically, on the map. He gave it some research credibility, especially out in the Midwest where nothing was being done in forensic science. The East Coast had John Jay College, as I said, and George Washington and New Haven were starting up, but out here there was nothing. And Ralph really made this a center for the forensic sciences.

Another thing that I think was a major, and perhaps overlooked, contribution, you don't realize until you spend some time here and learn about Ralph's contributions, he was interested

in far more than forensic science and the science of forensic science. He was interested in forensic science and the law, and how forensic science interacted with the legal system, the public policy side of forensic sciences and their value beyond just the laboratory and the crime scene. That got me interested, and I had never even thought of that, and I have been very interested in that ever since, and I owe that all to Ralph's sort of viewpoint that he took about forensic science; you have to look beyond the courtroom at this field.

And then, of course, he had his overseas adventures, shall we say. I mean, he was known everywhere, all over the world. This university makes noise about its international studies and its international impact now. You know, this is not something that just came up overnight. Ralph was one of a handful of pioneers in this place to take Michigan State overseas. And not just forensic science, the entire university went with Ralph when he went overseas. A lot of the early groundwork of Michigan State as a university, not just a forensic science program, overseas, I think was due to Ralph's influence over there. So I think his contributions, although terrific in forensic science, go way, way beyond that.

And, of course, he was a Renaissance man; there was nothing he didn't know something about.

Honhart: That's true. Or wanted to talk about.

Siegel: Or wanted to talk about. And if you had some time and were willing to listen, the man was a fountain of information about a lot of different things. So I constantly learned from him about a lot of things even outside of forensic science. Some things I didn't even care about. You

know, I'd go to ask him what time it was, and I learned how the watch worked. So, yes, I think his impacts were far-ranging on this campus.

He was a contemporary, of course, of Zoltan F___, who was a real firebrand on the campus, and he and Ralph were always cooking up stuff together and that's how I got to know Zoltan. They really kept the pot boiling here. And that's another thing. I think there's a need for people like that, and I've noticed through the mid-eighties and nineties that the university lacks the Lash Larous and the Ralph Turners and the Zoltan F_____, and people like that who really keep the pot stirring in this place, who are willing to stand up to the president and challenge him, and the board of trustees and challenge them. Michigan State has suffered from a lack of that, I think, in recent years, and I think you can see that today in the fact that all the major decisions being made about this university are being made behind closed doors, and the faculty is—you know, we had this big Senate meeting—

Honhart: Yes, I was there.

Siegel: —at the last minute to scream and yell and provide some input. The medical school move and the reorganization of the colleges are done deals, and they were done deals, you know, before, and there may be some tinkering, but they're essentially done deals. I think twenty years ago the president not only wouldn't have got away with that, he wouldn't have even tried. So I think it's people like Ralph who have a history here, who had a history here, who knew [John A.] Hannah, who worked with Hannah. Those are the people that say, "No, no, no. You can't do it this way. You have to look at this viewpoint or this viewpoint." I think we are sorely lacking for

people like that these days, and they're missed mostly by the people who were here when Ralph and those people were here and knew, could see what the impact was of people like this.

Honhart: How would you describe Ralph's contribution to the profession?

Siegel: Well, there's the obvious stuff. He was the first secretary of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and one of the founders of the American Academy. After he died, I went to the Academy board and tried to get them to give him the Distinguished Service Award for the Academy, and they didn't do it. I was upset with them at the time; I'm still a little pissed off and it's, what, fifteen years. The criminalistic section gave him the Paul Kirk [phonetic] Award, which is the highest award that the section could give, which, by the way, I won this year.

Honhart: Congratulations. That's wonderful.

Siegel: Thank you. They gave him that award, and I accepted it for him because the meeting was way the heck out in Weston [phonetic]. Arnella couldn't make it. It was very touching, and there were a lot of people there who remembered Ralph. But I still think the Academy owed him the Distinguished Service Award, and the excuses they got were there were a lot of pioneers in the Academy. Yes, but there's only one Ralph Turner, you know. There was only Ralph. So that's the obvious contribution, was he helped found the Academy and was very active in it all through his career, in committees and in papers and in just everything that he could do.

Of course, his contributions, he had substantive contributions to the Academy, too; some of

his work, his research presented at the Academy. His organizational skills with other universities and getting them involved, getting education really on the focus of the Academy, because it never was very much when it was founded. It was only through people like Ralph and a few others that education got recognized as being important.

Now, of course, the Academy has gotten to the point where it's partnering with the National Institute of Justice to accredit forensic science programs. I'm on the accreditation committee and we did a pilot accreditation last November, and MSU was one of two graduate programs that stood up for accreditation and got it. So this is the sort of the endpoint of the legacy of Ralph's contributions to education. So I think his contributions to the Academy were not only in organizational skills and development of the Academy and networking, but also in his research and his scholarly work. But making forensic science education a part of the Academy was also one of his important contributions there.

Honhart: How would you describe Ralph as an individual?

Siegel: Where do I start?

Honhart: Anywhere you want.

Siegel: Outgoing, certainly. Anybody who meets him would describe him as that. Extremely smart. Ralph, when you look back, he had this country charm about him that belied a really smart guy, a really intelligent, thoughtful, scholarly person. He wrote extremely well. Reading

some of his book chapters and his articles and stuff, he had a great command of the English language, which I have no doubt was developed from his wide interests in everything and everybody. So at the very top of it, he was very, very smart, a lot smarter than I think some people give him credit for. And you really had to sit down and talk to him and really listen to him and read his stuff to understand that.

His speaking skills were very folksy and very sort of quaint, and that gives people the idea that you're dealing with some sort of hick, you know. In the same sense that some people from the South are treated that way by people from the North. And, as you know, of course, he had to overcome serious speech impediments.

Honhart: That's correct.

Siegel: And there was no hint of that when I knew him. He had that cigar in his mouth, which was part of his therapy, but there was no hint of any speech problems when I met him. So he had significant handicaps to overcome, which he did. So first and foremost in my mind was the fact that this man deserved to be where he got. A great reputation, and deserved every single bit of it.

Then, of course, the next thing that comes to mind in Ralph is his wide-ranging curiosity about things and his imagination about things. He was not a surface kind of person. If something interested him, he dove in with both feet until he learned everything about it. That was his style. Some people, you know, they dabble here and dabble there, they could be a mile wide and an inch deep. Ralph was a mile wide and a mile deep. If he got interested in something, he learned everything there was about it.

He knew more about me and my family and my history than anybody does because he asked. He was never afraid to ask anybody questions. So I think that abiding curiosity and imagination, I think it goes hand in hand with his intelligence, were the most outstanding characteristics that I think of when I think of Ralph.

Another facet of that, on a more personal side, was his human nature. I mean, he was a very kind person. A little blustery, but underneath it, a very kind person. He's one of these people that I would say does not suffer fools lightly. He had very little patience for idiots and people who were acting stupid and foolishness. But he never treated people to their face like that. I never heard him dress down anybody. I mean, to me he would sputter about so-and-so and what an idiot he was and that sort of thing, but he would never go to that person and demean them. He was a class act, I think, in that regard. So although he didn't have much tolerance for people who were foolish, he certainly didn't go out of his way to make them feel badly about it. There were times when I wished he would, but he left that for other people. [laughter] But I think those are the things that I think about when I think of Ralph.

Honhart: Okay, this is a good point to flip the tape.

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Honhart: We were talking about Ralph Turner and his amazing level of curiosity.

Siegel: Yes, yes. Curious about a wide variety of things, and then, of course, because of his

intense interest, when he found something that interested him, he dove into it so his curiosity led to a development of knowledge. He also read a lot, and I like that because I read a lot also. He had a very impressive library, some of which is in the chemistry building and will stay even after I leave, for the next person to caretake. I want the students to be able to delve through that stuff. So he was very widely read.

The Sherlock Holmes thing is just a perfect example of what I mean about him getting interested in a topic, in something, and then becoming an expert in it, and he truly was an expert in that, one of the Baker Street Irregulars and just got very involved in it. He must have driven Arnella crazy with all of his involvements in something. He just couldn't dabble in it; he had to dive into it, you know. He became an expert in Frank Lloyd Wright. I learned a lot about Frank Lloyd Wright just from talking to Ralph about Frank Lloyd Wright, you know. We just visited one of his homes or museums in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Honhart: Taliesin West.

Siegel: Taliesin West. We visited that. My daughter lives there now, so we were visiting that. Couldn't go in there without thinking of Ralph. That was my first exposure to anything Frank Lloyd Wright.

Honhart: Well, of course, his own house is a monument to his interest in architecture and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Siegel: Yes, he had such wide-ranging interests, it was astounding to me how a person could find the time to delve into those things. But he was a quick study and he was smart, and you can do that.

Honhart: How would you say your involvement with Ralph has influenced your career?

Siegel: I think in many ways it's made my career. When I came here, I had three years' crime laboratory experience and three years' teaching experience. I was teaching forensic science and analytical chemistry. And that's not very much experience. I was doing some casework and I testified in court a lot, so I had that aspect of it. But I had really no what I would call unifying sort of philosophy about what forensic science education ought to be and what I ought to be—I mean outside of educating students—what I really ought to be doing and how to integrate all of this and how to think about all of this. Because forensic science is not just science in the laboratory; it's a very wide-ranging field. It has a lot of aspects that are just as important outside the lab in the courtroom as in it. And this huge public interest in it today is, to me, testament to that. There's really something to this.

Ralph, of course, had been in this field for forty years when I got here, and I learned so much from him about not so much the teaching in forensic science. My background in chemistry and forensic chemistry was a lot stronger than his. His formal education had stopped years and years and years ago. So his teaching, a lot of what he taught was based on his own experiences rather than book learning and analytical chemistry. I didn't need that from Ralph, didn't seek it, and he didn't provide it.

What I wanted from Ralph, and what I was able to get, is how you perceive forensic science beyond being a science. It's too easy for people who are trained in chemistry to think of this as, "This is applied chemistry and don't have to worry about the rest of this stuff." And there's too many people who get into forensic science education who have just that mindset, and that doesn't do it in this field. If you're going to properly educate students for a crime laboratory, they have to know something about history, about ethics, about writing, proper writing, proper speaking, about the law, about human behavior, about psychology. You've got to know a lot about those things. And people who are chemists think, "Okay, I can go to a lab and I can analyze this evidence," they don't realize that's only one piece of it. That's what I really learned from Ralph in the time I knew him.

Another thing that I learned was, you know, as a scientist, you're always taught to question things. You don't take things at face value. That got ingrained in me pretty early in the sciences, but being in the School of Criminal Justice as a social science, that was a big adjustment for me, was to come out of chemistry and get into a bunch of sociologists. I was grateful to have Ralph there, and Frank [unclear]. Although Frank was a sociologist, he was also interested in forensic science and still is. But I was grateful to have Ralph because at least he was a chemist like me. But he taught me to question not only the science, but the forensic and the social science parts of this thing. There's an awful lot that isn't known, or a lot of things that are taken for granted that may not be true about forensic science and how it interacts. I learned a lot from Ralph about that.

I also learned to be interested, to get interested in places outside my own backyard from Ralph. I mean, he had wide-ranging international experiences, and from everything I knew, reveled in all of them, even the ones that were difficult. He came out a better person, a smarter

person, a more humbled person in some ways, but a changed person from all of his major experiences. He taught me appreciation for other people and other cultures and you can really learn something. I've spent time in China teaching; I've been in Taiwan; I spent three terms in Australia, including starting programs there; I've been in Europe now. I've really done some traveling that I never thought I would do. And in some ways he made it comfortable for me to do that because of his experiences.

So he had a lot of obvious influences on me as a scientist and as a person, and I think there's also a lot of ones that I can't even verbalize. Just knowing him for, must be more than ten years, just gave me a different perspective on things. He was a one-of-a-kind person, no question.

Honhart: I would agree.

Changing just a little bit, you're now leaving MSU after twenty-four years. How would you like to reflect on your experiences here at MSU and what they've been like?

Siegel: Well, I've been telling people—I think it's important to know the reasons I'm leaving. I'm not being pushed out; I'm being pulled. I was not looking for a job when I got into this thing in Indianapolis. When I was teaching at Metropolitan State College, I had a dean, Stan Sunderworth [phonetic], who left shortly after I did and went to Indiana and was rattling around Indiana, and now is an organic chemistry professor at Indiana University, Purdue University, in Columbia, Indiana. He and I have kept in contact over the years, and when this program started up there, he sent it to me, sent me the proposal, and he gave me their names and gave them my names and he told me, "You really need to look into this. This looks like a really good program."

And ultimately I got contacted and I went down there and interviewed. So it was this contact that got me into it. It turns out the chair of the chemistry department at Metropolitan State College when I was there is now the chancellor of the Indiana University campus in Fort Wayne, so, small world.

As I said, I wasn't looking for a job. I believe that I am absolutely and unalterably convinced that I would not be where I am today, that whatever accomplishments I've been able to make to this field, I would not have done if it weren't for Michigan State University. The cachet of this place, the name of this place, the resources here, human and otherwise, the people, the research, everything about this university has given me the opportunities and resources that I've needed to blossom here. There's no way that I could have stayed where I was in Denver or gone hardly any other place and gotten the kinds of help and push and things that I've needed here.

You really have to get away from this place and look back at it to see what a great university this is. The chairman of the search community at IUPUI who took me around for two days is a plant biologist. He told me that mecca for plant biology research, absolute paradise, is this place right here. One of the other guys on the search committee is a psychologist who has his Ph.D. here from psychology, and said he loved it here, his whole career was made here at this place. And I really believe that. So right from the very start, and, frankly, Michigan State really wanted me to stay. The college, the department, they made extremely generous counteroffer, but it was not the money that was the issue.

I turned fifty-eight last week, a couple of weeks ago, I feel like I wanted a change, a different environment, a different kind of challenge than the ones I have here. You never stop

accomplishing things. I could have accomplished more here, but I felt like this is a point where I could take on a new challenge. There are no forensic science programs in Indiana at all, and so this will be the first one. It's a very multidisciplinary program, and it's a very interesting campus run by two 800-pound gorillas; Indiana and Purdue on either side of it. So it was that; it was being sort of pulled towards new challenges and new environment, and not being pushed at all. I'm always going to be a Spartan. I mean, that's what the bottom line is.

Honhart: Good. Do you have any ideas what's going to happen, your projections as what you think will happen here as far as the forensic science program?

Siegel: Well, yes, I have some ideas. I'm taking a leave of absence for one year from here because I'm eligible to retire August 1st of 2005, and this will give me the months I need to do that. So I'll be on staff next year, except my office will be 200 miles away. I've renounced my claim on the position, so that they could replace me this year instead of having to wait until I get off of leave of absence. So they are going to advertise, like, beginning of the fall, try to bring somebody on as soon as January to replace me.

There's two different directions they can go, and one is to try to hire an experienced person who can direct the program and teach forensic chemistry. Forensic chemistry is their biggest priority; that's what they're missing now. The other way is to hire a newly minted forensic chemist and then have Ed M____ or somebody else sort of run the program. You know, that part of the program that I was doing was handling budgets and supervising people, but anybody can do that. It's the forensic chemistry and the research and the students and the mentoring that

needs to be there.

So they are committed to hiring somebody and keeping the program going. I don't have a monopoly on ideas, of course, nobody does, so I'm hoping that they'll get somebody who has a fresh set of perspectives on it. We were able to hire a forensic biologist two years ago, Dave Foran [phonetic], so he's got labs in Giltner [Hall], he's all set up and running state-of-the-art labs in biology. And then, of course, we have Norm S_____ and Todd F_____ in anthropology who are running that piece of it, so forensic chemistry is the other major piece. And this is the only university in the country that has those three tracks in forensic science, and a student goes through the program now in one of those three tracks. So we need a forensic chemist, obviously.

I'm going to stay active in mentoring the students that are here already that I recruited in forensic chemistry in helping them finish up their master's. I'll come back and chair oral committees and the like. And I will have some say, although I won't be on the search committee, I'll have some say in the new person. I'll probably know everybody who applies or who they work for, so I can provide some vetting of the applicants.

So I sort of am going to be walking a tightrope between being on leave of absence and sort of staying involved and at the same time cutting the ties, and that's difficult to do. I know Ralph had difficulty doing that when he retired. He and I talked a lot, as I said, and we were together a lot, and part of it was his desire to stay involved. He was on the advisory committee and he came to the advisory committee meetings, and more than that, I met with him weekly for a long time. I didn't want him to feel like he was being pushed out, I was taking over. At the same time, he said, "This is your program. You do what you think is best with it."

And I said, "I would, but your input would always be requested." And you had to be

mindful of the legacy. You can't just take something and run off in some other direction. You've got to build on what's there. Ralph ran this program for thirty-four years, for God's sakes. You don't take that and discard it. So we upgraded the lab facilities and maybe upgraded the science in the program, but not the forensic science.

I would hope that the department, when they hire a replacement and in the future directions of the program, would keep my legacy and my efforts in mind, but also Ralph's, because that's the foundations of the program. It's a pyramid. Our foundation is Ralph Turner, and I'm the next building block. It's interesting to me that there have been only two directors of this program. This program has been going on, you know, for fifty years, and there has only been two people that have shepherded it.

Honhart: Pretty amazing.

Siegel: It is amazing, and it's important that they recognize that. And I think Ed M_____ will. He's been a great guy to work for. I think he will recognize the importance of building on what's already there.

Honhart: That's good. Great. Any other comments you'd like to make at this time?

Siegel: No, I think what you're doing here is not only a great idea, but really necessary. I think it's important for people like Ralph to be immortalized in ways other than just his archives, because he was a pioneer and there's nobody like that anymore. He was one of a kind. He's not

just another person; he was a very influential person, and I think it's important that people understand that and learn about him, because he's got a lot of things to say, still, about forensic science and about living in general.

Honhart: Jay, thank you very much for doing this. We appreciate it.

Siegel: Oh, it's my pleasure. Any contribution I can make to this is just great. It's time well spent, as far as I'm concerned.

Honhart: Thank you, and I might be back asking you more questions.

Siegel: I'll be around, and my e-mail address will carry through to me for at least a year, so you can get a hold of me. And I will be back.

Honhart: Good. Thank you, Jay.

Siegel: Thank you. Thanks a lot.

[End of interview]