

Name of interviewee: Jean Paul Valles
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Name of interviewer: Steve Velasquez
Length of interview: 58 minutes

SV: Today is December 12th, 2014. My name is Steve Velasquez with the Smithsonian Institution. Good afternoon.

JPV: Good afternoon.

SV: For the record good you please state your name.

JPV: Jean Paul Valles.

SV: And Mr. Valles can you tell us when and where you were born?

JPV: I was born in 1936 in Paris, France.

SV: In Paris, France. Can you tell us the name of your parents please?

JPV: My parents was Simone and Jack Valles. He was an MD.

SV: An MD. And they lived in Paris their whole life?

JPV: No. When I was six months old we moved in a small town called [inaudible] like the musician and I was raised with my brother in [inaudible] for my whole youth.

SV: Um-hum. And your older brother?

JPV: My older brother too.

SV: Growing up – I'm going to mispronounce Saint-Saëns – did you ever come to the United States before your first –

JPV: No. To make a long story very short, on my mother's side, my grandfather walked from Slovakia, Poland to Paris when he was 12-years-old with a violin under his arm and became the master violinist of the French opera for 42 years. But his sister and brother and parents came to the United States in 1896. He was the only one who stayed in Europe and moved from Poland to here. He had a lot of family here. He came to this country to visit them in 1903 and the next time in 1948. That's the way I got accustomed to America and then of course during World War II, I was raised in Normandy.

My father was a prisoner of war from '39 till '42. He escaped in '42. He came back home with false papers and both my mother and father became top people in the French underground. They got the highest decoration of World War II. My mother was the first elected mayor of France, female mayor.

SV: In Saint-Saëns?

JPV: In [inaudible]. And for the last six months of the war I had two American pilots airmen shot down hidden in my house. And one is still alive actually. I saw him recently. They were hidden there and my mother hid and transported hundreds of American during World War II. I got to know them very well. They love America of course. Then my grandfather did the grand tour of the United States and the family in '48 and told me all of the stories of his trip in '48. And I was starting to note that although he was very successful in France but all his brothers and sisters literally live the American dream in America where all were extremely successful in their career they selected, all of them.

I was always intrigued by that. In the meantime, the war years were bad years. The year after the war was also very difficult because we had to go to boarding school--state boarding school--there was no school in town. There was no heat, no windows, no food, it was a terrible period. But education did not interest me whatsoever. I was a very good student until I went there and for the next five years I couldn't care less. I wanted to be fed and warm. Then I decided to be a good student again. That period we decided to go to America and to make another long very long story the person we stayed the last night with is a first cousin of my mother and the husband is a cousin of Caroline. That is the way I met her when I came here in '56 for the first time.

SV: Did you decide to come to the United States in '56, did you come with –

JPV: I came as a tourist to visit New York and get a feel for America and learn America. Then I had to take the stupid type of competition to enter the top school in France so you have to prepare for this exam competition. At the last minute, I decided that it would be a waste of time to prepare in France so I decided to learn and improve my English so I stayed another few months as a student at Columbia University. Then I went back to the exam, brilliantly passed so I stayed and finished and got a Master's there

in France. The thing that was amazing – the story continues – I had a difficult choice to make in 1961.

That choice was to be drafted in the tank division in Algeria and fight in Algeria or to come to New York University and be the research assistant to the guru of management. His name was Peter F. Drucker. So I decided that was wiser. So I came here and did a Master's in nine months. Then I was drafted and this time they sent me to the Air Force. I served in the Air Force. But before I left I wanted to know how business worked in America. I had an internship at the company called W. R. Grace, so I worked there for a while. Then I took a trip and they wanted me back so I went back for months and then I was drafted. I served there.

I was very lucky because De Gaulle signed the peace so instead of doing three years I did only 18 months. I got out with all my friends who did three years. Then I was looking for a job. I had several good offers in France. Then I voted “America Company,” and I got a letter from Peter Grace saying, “Dear Mr. Valles, you have a Master in France, a Master in the United States and we are expanding in Europe. So why don't you come and work for us and you have a great future.” And almost as a second thought PS if you want we will also finance your doctorate. So I said “Hey, I'll come.”

As for things that happen in life: when I came to work for Grace, I was absolutely certain that I would work for the international group of W.R. Grace. I could go back to France then. They put me in charge of the west coast of Latin America. So I never worked for them there. I finished the Ph.D. –

SV: While working.

JPV: While working. I still have the record in NYU from the time I started to the time I finished, working full time. I did it in 27 months.

SV: Oh my! Oh my, oh my.

JPV: Not bad. This is a side line. I have to tell you my Ph.D. is in economics and my advisor for my Ph.D. said, “Mr. Valles, you have the ideal Ph.D. dissertation.” He said, “You will make a major contribution to a very minor field and it will become a book.” And if I tell you the title, I have yet to see somebody not laugh. It was called *The Economic Outlook* – not bad for a Ph.D. in economics – *For Bananas*.

SV: For bananas.

JPV: And there is a reason, then, that for four years all the bananas of the west coast of Latin America were shipped by W. R. Grace. So they had to make a decision. Should we get rid of the banana business and stop the Grace Line or not? So they asked me to do the big study. So I did that big study. So Grace was very nice allowed me to use that big study as my Ph.D. dissertation. So it became a book because nobody ever wrote that study of the business. And Grace went out of the business.

SV: Oh, so he decided to stop selling bananas.

JPV: Yeah. So after five years of that, Grace loved me and gave me a big increase. But every time I wanted to go back to do something else he would veto it because he was so happy. So I decided to leave. The fellow that I mentioned earlier – Peter Drucker – was a good friend of mine, so I went and saw him. I saw his daughter. I gave him some news. He said, “Well, how is Grace?” I said, “Not good.” I said, “I like the job but I’ve been doing exactly the same thing for five years and I don’t want to do that for the next five.” I said, “I’m looking for a job.” I said, “I’m going to change jobs.” He said, “Where are you going?”

I said “I have no idea.” He said, “Well, I know somebody - I won’t tell you the name – who is looking for somebody and I think he would like you very much.” The next day I got a call from the chairman at Pfizer Inc. and he said (by his secretary said) “By any chance are you free tomorrow?” He has a meeting in Washington that got cancelled so he can see you at 2:00. I said, “Sure.” So I studied where Pfizer was...I had no idea. I saw him at 1:00 and I was still with him at 5:30. I knew I had the job. I worked for him, the CEO of Pfizer, for three years. And I worked for the next CEO for 19 years. The next CEO for three years.

Then came a new company out of Pfizer. I became the CEO of that. So the hilarious part about it was when my grandson asked me a couple of years ago how many countries I had visited during my business career, I had no idea. So I counted them. It was interesting that I had been to 78 of them. I had never been once to Pfizer France or Grace France in my whole career. So much for my French background. One thing that is marvelous in America, really marvelous--when I was 36 knowing nobody when I came to the United States. Having not a penny to my name except for the education and I become a top guy at Pfizer Inc.

I knew on that day that there is no way I could go back to Europe because even if they made me president of Pfizer France or Pfizer Europe it would be a demotion. So I couldn't go back. So that's why I decided since I liked to bitch about a lot of things including government, that it was time to become a citizen.

SV: At 36.

JPV: That's when the idea [inaudible][00:12:32] make very short. I applied when I was 36 and for the probably yeah, 36 and for the next four years – they lost my file and wouldn't tell me they lost my file completely. So I got mad because that lady I mentioned there came to my office said I'm going to [inaudible][00:12:54] and see your parents and I said yes. They said, "Oh I have great news. I'm a U.S. citizen." So I said, "Congratulations." I said "When did you apply?" She said, "Six weeks ago." I said "What do you mean six weeks ago? I applied four years ago and I'm not a citizen yet." So I got mad. So I got very good at contacting Washington.

The next day I got the call from the head of Immigration in New York City. He said: "Dr. Valles we have good news and bad news. The bad news is we have no trace of you having ever filed to become a citizen. The good news is you will be a citizen in six weeks." Well, that was a lie. I'm an expert, when I was a student in '56, I had to register for the selective service and be exempt as a student. So I did that. They asked me for my Selective Service card of '56, which I had by the way. They said well, you were a class 4C that means you were either a student or conscientious objector.

Well I said "I did apply as a student. I can prove it." Well that's not good enough. I said "I'm also a veteran of the Vietnam War." That's not good enough. We need your file. Well the file has disappeared. So I got a call and they said, "You cannot become a citizen until we find the file. And it is unlikely that we will find the file." So I happened to know the former head of the computer operation of the Pentagon, so I called my friend there and the next day I got a call. He said "Dr. Valles for your case there's only one man on earth that knows where your file is and that's me. And I guess that it's some place in the warehouse in Texas."

They said we will get it to you or to Immigration within five working days. If you don't hear from them let me know. About two days later I got a call from the lady at Immigration in New

York City. She said, “I don’t know who you know but we got your file.” That never occurred. I became a citizen.

SV: This is in –

JPV: I became a citizen in October 6, 1976.

SV: 1976. After that long journey how did you feel?

JPV: Well, I believe by all stretch of the imagination we live the American dream. I have a job I love. I changed...the world will be different and America will be different after I die, when that time comes. I revolutionized two industries. We revolutionized medicine at Pfizer and research; we created two magnificent companies. We created a lot of jobs. I built 54 plants in the world. I revolutionized the paper industry in the world completely. All the paper, all this paper completely revolutionized by me--all the paper mills. Now we’ve replaced in the U.S. about 20 percent of the pulp by pressed particle carbonate and in the Europe and Asia about 20 to 25 percent.

They make paper like this one which will never become yellow, brittle that has [inaudible][00:16:23]that I can control etc. Even the Library of Congress refuses paper unless it’s PCC paper. We still have a dominant share of the market in the world. We have over 90 percent. We built all of these plants in the middle of the paper mill.

SV: That’s from Mineral Technologies.

JPV: That’s from Mineral Technologies. Then the other industry we revolutionized was the steel industry, which is very hard to do. They are both industries that are very hard to revolutionize. It took me seven years between the time we discovered PCC to the time it was adopted. It took me a lot of time also in the steel industry and what we do is interesting. We make mud.

SV: Mud.

JPV: Mud. And in the old days when you make steel you [inaudible][00:17:17] each line with refractory brick. Slide the refractory brick and they have to stop the bethel, knock down the brick by hand, take about six weeks and everything is down. So now it’s never down again. What we do – and invented – is we make a mud of magnesia with binder in it and now it’s all electronic control and as it pools the steel we have this big...like a

fire lance...and it spreads inside and the mud heats the brick which is 2500 degrees Fahrenheit. It makes like a glue to the brick. The slag takes down the lining, not the brick, so as a result of that we never have to stop and reline. They do that in torpedoes all the time and everything works. So the two major contributions of technology to the world. The sad thing about it now is somebody invented a new tree.

SV: A new tree?

JPV: Yeah. Which is a disaster for the U.S. and it's a eucalyptus a whole 12 inches in diameter, 60 feet tall in three years. And as a result all the big, big paper mills in the United States are closing down and being moved. So I am closing my plant which is in [inaudible][00:18:38] and all the new plants are being built in China, Indonesia, where you need hot weather and water. It was interesting to create that company. We started at, about in '92, at \$350 million sales and now it's about two billion.

SV: Who did you start it with? Who did you start the company with?

JPV: The company was when the last CEO I worked for at Pfizer, his name was Bill Steere, come over. He decided that Pfizer should be a pure pharmaceutical company. So anything that was not pharmaceutical had to go. I'm the one that literally sold all the nonpharmaceutical business, one after the other, and the one that I just mentioned was unsellable. Unsellable because the paper side was an outstanding business but the other side--the refractory business--was a mediocre business financially, but also had the bad news of having over 273,000 lawsuits on its back because they sold a tiny product that contained asbestos.

And since Pfizer had a deep pocket, and all the other companies had filed for bankruptcy, they all sued Pfizer. The key to create the company was to leave all the suits back to Pfizer Inc. not to take them with them. So it would be virtually impossible to create a company and do that unless you made an independent company. They decided to make it independent. We are looking for a guy to make it independent. The syndicate said well, the ideal guy would be you. At that time I intended to retire early and go teach at NYU. I said well, I've never created a company. It must be fun to do an IPO. So I went, and did the IPO, and it was fun.

The beginning was a little tough. I remember in three days – thank God Pfizer gave me a company plane – I gave 60 speeches in five countries in three days. That was a lot of speeches. We did that

for the secondary, but the rest is history. It was a very successful little story. By the way there is no substitute for luck, but you make your own luck. After the split, on the same basis, MTI went public in 1992 at \$8.00 a share and as of last week it was \$78.00. Pfizer when I left was \$50.00 and as of yesterday it's about \$31.00. Good timing. Good timing.

SV: Very good timing.

JPV: My wife enjoyed it. Shoot.

SV: I'm just kind of curious about when you decided to stay permanently here why New York? Why the United States? Why?

JPV: Even though everybody has a choice I keep saying one of the big problems of growing up in France, and the key reason I moved here: I'm willing to take risks and seize opportunities. If you're not willing to do that you shouldn't come to America. You should walk to France. The ideal country not to take risks and can't see the opportunity. You have good food, good support, free medical health, free education etc. six week vacation and 35 hours a week. That's where you should live. But if you want to take risks and seize opportunities, there is no country like this country. After I joined Pfizer I couldn't go back because that's where the job was. That's where headquarters was. Then I got married – in France – and we came back with her. We had three children. I wanted to live in the middle of nowhere, so we live in a suburb. But not really a suburb, it's really in the middle of nowhere. I got involved very much with the community there. So we decided to stay there.

SV: When did you guys get married?

JPV: We got married – oh my God – 55 years 1959; July 2nd, 1959.

Female Speaker: I went to France in '58.

SV: Okay.

JPV: Yeah. She decided she found the prize so she wouldn't let me go. So she decided to study French in France.

Female Speaker: When we got married we thought you were staying in France.

JPV: That's true.

SV: Oh yeah?

JPV: Yes. That was the plan.

SV: So what did you think of the decision?

Female Speaker: I liked this decision. I always thought that he would do better in the States than in France. The jobs he was offered in France when he got out of the service were not very prestigious jobs.

SV: Um-hum. So you decided to live in the middle of nowhere? Was there a reason for that?

JPV: Yes. I work very hard. I sleep very little. But I work very hard. But I wanted to – when I was hired by the first CEO we made a deal. I said, - by the way I always called him Mr. Pals, all my staff called him Jack. In France I can't call my boss by their first name so he was always Mr. Pals until he retired. I said, "Listen, I work very hard. The purpose of life is to do what you are supposed to do as fast as you can do it and as well. However, I'd like you to know when I will leave the office – unless emergency – at 5:00 every day, take the 5:44, have dinner with my kids, stay with my kids and my wife and from 9:00 on I will work at home until it's finished."

So from January till September I work usually from 9:00 to 1:00 every day and from September to January I usually work from 9:00 to 1:00 between 1:00 and 3:00 a.m. I got up at 6:30.

SV: My goodness.

JPV: But I was always home. Then the goals I got **[inaudible]** **[00:25:19]** I never knew my parent, my father, except for the one month vacation he took. He always took a great trip with the family every month. One of my golden goals was all the family, we always took a minimum of 14 days as a block. Always took trips somewhere, someplace. One of my goals was for all the states in America to be a tourist, 50 states. But we travelled a lot with the kids and my kids still do it. I always believe that at least two weeks usually, or better three weeks' vacation with the family, you really got to know. And my children have continued that tradition of my parents and mine.

They all take a block of vacation. Which I think is a great idea to recharge your battery. I told everybody I'm fine and that worked

for me. I'm amazed to this day at the number of Americans that don't take their vacation, take very little vacation. Take three, four, five days. When I became VP of Finance at Pfizer I made a rule – which is a very good rule – by the way if you are in finance: you have to take two weeks of vacation as a block. I would say over 50 percent of the crooks that I caught were doing the two weeks on vacation. It's very hard to turn off the faucet.

SV: It certainly is.

JPV: And somebody else starts to ask questions that should not have been asked if he was around.

SV: Yeah. So that kind of gets me to another series of questions about you growing up in France, you starting a family. Did you consider yourself French? Did you consider yourself American at that time?

JPV: One of the interesting things when I decided to become a citizen, the ultimate final decision was when I went to France for Christmas with my wife and children. And I used to know – my father was the MD and my mother was a former Mayor and she was a top lady in education etc. – so I knew everybody. Everybody. Everybody knew me. I knew everybody. I went home to Christmas with my family. And when I arrived there I realized home was not Saint-Saëns, it was Bedford. I knew very few people. The world has moved on without me. I knew some people, but it was a different world.

It was no longer “home.” It was a different world. That's when the final decision well, I'm going to apply for U.S. citizenship. We came back and I applied for U.S. citizenship. Home was Bedford, not Saint-Saëns.

SV: Did you try to instill the language in to your children?

JPV: No. That's one I've thought...I never regret anything...but if I had to do it again, I probably would do it somewhat differently. I spoke French to my oldest, he spoke French before he spoke English but he lost a lot of it. I came home at about 7:05 and I saw the kids every night until 9:00 and then on the weekends sometimes. I worked also on the weekends at home too. But it annoyed them that I spoke French. For all of their little friends English was the language. So I had little time, very precious family time, so I never tried to impose the French language even though Caroline is fluent in French.

We spoke English to them. So Anna learned to speak French moderately well. I have to tell you a parenthesis which is not a lie. One day the big boss of Pfizer, for 19 years, said J.P., he said: "In order to improve..." – I was vice chairman of Pfizer; there were three of them – "...in order to improve your chance to become chairman, I've decided to hire the best linguistic lady from Columbia that's going to improve your French accent." I said: "I'm game." So she came. We started talking. Then she gave me these tapes; she gave me these things, so I started to repeat the tapes, etc. and after three weeks of that she said: "I would like to talk to Ed Pratt with you."

I said: "Sure." So we went there. She said: "Mr. Pratt." She said: "I have some bad news for you. I'm absolutely willing to continue the lessons with Jean Paul, but I'd like you to know his French accent is not improving whatsoever, and my English accent is getting worse." So that was the end of the lessons. So they gave up for that. And the second one had the misfortune of having an absolutely atrocious French teacher, atrocious. The worst. And he was a minority. It took me four years to get him out. And he wasn't really getting out, he was put in administration. He couldn't speak French. He couldn't speak French. His major was Spanish. He was African American and spent his summer – for tax deduction purposes – taking pictures in France and during the whole year he would show his pictures to the class. That was this French course. So somewhat the youngest will speak French, but... So it's absolutely a regret. So that's a regret. We have not done that. They are not bilingual. But the thing that's **[inaudible][00:31:36]** I have a grandson who is French by law – by law all my grandchildren are French, by law –however he has to prove it. He works finishing a Ph.D. in England and he wants to be French so he can work without a permit.

Well, for the last four months it's also my citizenship lost in the bureaucracy, so that **[inaudible]** be useful to him. But there is no doubt that I still have a great interest in France. I'm very depressed about France, and depressed about the family that is there...the young family. How they have literally outstanding education, outstanding all of them. And absolutely zero ambition. They really believe that the government should provide everything. Actually my nephew was a controller in the company and the day I saw him he just bought a house the week before and quit his job. I say, "You have a new one?" I was sure he had a new one. He said no but the government will give him two years pay and his company four years. But it's really strange. First...the first year he

worked...he was allowed ten weeks of vacation. Ten weeks' vacation.

The first plant I opened abroad was in France. It was a big paper mill near [inaudible][00:33:07] and I had lunch in New York with the minister of finance and he thought I was insane. I looked at him and said: "I have two questions for you." So I looked at him and he said "yes." I said: "the first question is: how much is three times eight?" He looked at me insulted said: "what do you mean? 24."

I said: "Now, the second question: how much is three times seven? He said: "21." I said that's why the biggest paper mill of France will close. I said I work three shifts a week, seven days a week in France and now my staff – by the way it was mainly a union plant – refused to work midnight to 7:00 for a week then 1:00 a.m. to 8:00 the next week. They want to work the same shift. Midnight to 8:00 all the time. So I had to pay them twice the salary for the additional and three times on weekends. The interesting thing I was lucky because I couldn't pass my cost to the paper mill. So the trouble with the paper mill is it's a world market.

They couldn't pass the increased cost. So guess what? Exactly what happened. Two years later they closed the biggest paper mill and moved to Poland. You know France doesn't realize that, even today as we speak, that the big debate is about the 35 hour week. You can't compete against the Chinese with 35 hours a week. So either you want to be global or you don't. Now, there is still a great quality of life.

SV: Next I'm going to try to bring it back a little bit to this issue of being an immigrant and you fitting in. Did you ever experience that feeling that you are an immigrant and you don't fit in?

JPV: Never felt that. Never felt that one minute. Actually that is the beauty of America; this was the beauty of Pfizer, which is an international company. This is the beauty I never ever... The joke, once in a while about many things: I like wine but I'm not an expert, and Pfizer's top people were experts of wine. So it was always a big joke. But there were few funny stories that make me feel that I was French not American. No, I was part of the crew and never feel outside of the top management. I was part of top management. And when I became the big boss at MTI technology I made sure that everybody felt that way.

There were people from various countries working for me all the time, and it was never an issue. That was very fortunate and that was the beauty of working for a fast growing international company that operated in 104 countries. And we operated in about 70 when I started. No, it was no problem. And in the question of promotion, job etc. it was never an issue ever. So we were very fortunate. I know there are a lot of companies that are not like that. But the worst of the worst in France they have a terrible education system which is called Le Grandes Écoles – which we enter by competition – and it is a mafia in the world, if you are from [inaudible][00:36:34] technique all the top people in the government, all come from Reynel. There are whole companies that are actually controlled by my school and there are other companies that are controlled by the other school. I should say it's a very tight, you know, depending on who you know rather than what you know.

I've never in the U.S....I've never in all the work I've done, even in the not-for-profit organization I was involved with...really what always mattered to me was: what can you do? And not where you come from, your background etc. Even my accent was really not a big barrier here.

SV: Did you get that sense as you were a student in New York, too?

JPV: Oh yes. When I was a student in New York doing my master's, I was full time research assistant to Peter Drucker and it was no issue either. I felt really welcome with open arms every time I was in any place, anywhere. Even the thing that amazed me actually in my position, I had to deal many, many times with government, and I was surprised how few people, Senators and Administration etc., made me feel, "well, of course you are French." Or, you know, it was never a big issue...except...there's always exceptions, a couple of exceptions. It was never an issue.

I thought I was – that's the thing I find sad today, and I've said to many people that work for me, particularly the people who are of Latin American origin, I explain to them: Guy I really like you, you are a great guy, but I am telling you it's your decision. If you don't learn English in this company you are going to be significantly handicapped in your career at MTI or Pfizer. Significantly handicapped. And you know that is the price you have to pay if you don't want to learn English, it's very hard to have – unless you have a Spanish business – if you are an international company, and you are somebody that speaks only

Spanish and no English, and you work in New York, that makes it very difficult. But even then, we really try, you know, it was for the job that they had [inaudible][00:39:03] turned out to be my chauffeur later – good friend – good friend actor from Puerto Rico I offered him to take courses free of charge in English, and he refused, so I explained to him fine with me. I'm very happy with you in the mail room but, I am telling you you probably need to get out of the mail room. That way I believe in education. I am a great believer in education.

The deal that I'm making for my employees and education were spectacular and very disappointing, very disappointing. I offer free education in college courses to all the secretaries in my group, and I made a mistake. I was flabbergasted. I made it on company time, but I made it compulsory. And the other thing, I made...I took all the secretaries to the opera once a year; to a concert once a year, and to a Broadway play once a year, and I got a revolution on my hands. A revolution. The petition, they didn't want to do it. I was flabbergasted. That was the biggest disappointment of my life during my business career. They did not want it. They were happy to be secretaries. They wanted to go home at 6:00; they didn't want to go and see a Broadway play. At 2:00 they said: "Well, I would take an hour, count it against the bachelors. However, when I finish, I have more work to catch up because I took out an hour." I made it voluntary and I had something like 34 – I forget the number – I had three left that took the course. I find that so sad. But that's the problem.

SV: Do you think that notion, that idea that you are trying to build is that a French thing to go –

JPV: No. It's a Valles thing. It's a Valles thing. All our family on both sides. My philosophy for all of my children has always been the same. It doesn't matter what you do, what you have in life you have to do, you have to be good, very good at what you do and like it. Then the rest doesn't matter. I could never have worked 12 or 13 hours a day if I didn't like it. The thing that my nephew in France, his wife's eight hour job she [inaudible][00:41:32] I said: "Wow. I can't do that for the next 40 years. That would kill me." Mediocrity, that's what's set up. No. Even in my staff I had big problem with some top people. I keep explaining to them that the key to success in business, remember that it's to hire people that are better than you are at what they do and delegate.

I'm amazed at the number of people that hire dummies so they think, "I want to shine." Never works. Never worked. Education

is really a tradition, Valles tradition. My mother etc. we all believe in education. By the way, I think, I personally believe strongly that the problem of the minority – I taught in a ghetto school for six months – and I’m telling you, I could pick out of 28 students I could pick ten that will never make it. They were all searching. Would never make it.

- Female Speaker: They weren’t necessarily immigrants though.
- JPV: No. They were not immigrants.
- SV: Do you know what year you taught school?
- JPV: Yeah. Through Junior Achievement.
- SV: Oh Junior Achievement.
- JPV: I taught for six months.
- SV: In New York?
- JPV: In Harlem.
- SV: In Harlem.
- JPV: So education is the key to upward mobility especially in this world where the middle class was basically based on manufacturing and these jobs are disappearing. That’s really key to specialize and be good at what you do. Higher education is the key. The key. I keep telling all the 28 students, I said: “Listen, you quit school at 16, you are doomed. Period.”
- SV: How old were you at this point teaching the students?
- JPV: When I taught school I was still at Pfizer, so 1990 I was Vice chairman of [inaudible][00:43:23] of New York. We saved them.
- SV: I only have a few last questions because I know we all have to get out of here. What are you most proud of and what do you see has been the most challenging part of being an immigrant and starting your business? Kind of four questions.
- JPV: Being an immigrant, I honestly can say – and a number of exceptions probably – I have never seen any major challenge that an American in my same boots would have had. I was really

always treated equal. My biggest accomplishment was in the non-profit and for profit is really...if you look at the business when I go...I've created a lot of business, a lot of jobs, lot of plants, change to the industry. The world will be different from what it was if I hadn't been around. Pfizer: When I joined Pfizer to the Pfizer today is a different world. It has changed medicine and made major contributions in the not-for-profit.

The town of Bedford where we live will be dramatically different because we live there than if we had not lived there. Particularly in my passion, which is the environment, even though there are a zillion of nuts in that field, trust me. But that's why I am concerned. I've contributed to preserve the medicine [inaudible][00:45:14] in Bedford, 14 miles from Manhattan. I have saved a 1772 farm and restored it, the barn and put an easement on it so it will stay that way forever. Forever. My wife has the same passion with synchronized swimming. So we try because we have been very successful. We try to make a difference in business and outside.

I think that in general if you look...if I were you (I wish I was I would be young and intelligent and the future would be ahead!) but if I were you, in the work that you are doing, you have to be careful about generalizations. I think that there are two classes of immigrants. They are completely different and face completely different worlds. Even Obama [inaudible][00:46:18] has understudied the contribution of the highly educated, specialist, innovating people that came here because they want to take risks and opportunities make a major, major contribution to this country. You take any field...major contributions.

You find a number of CEOs, you find a number of people that make innovation. You find them everywhere. You find a number of Asiatic etc. that come here well-educated and become American citizens and make a gigantic contribution. That is the minority of the immigrants, and they make a major contribution to science, art, technology, and business. I'm one of them. Modesty put aside, one of the greatest qualities of mine. So modesty put aside. Then you have what I call the large percent, the people that come with no education, poor education, and they tour with a visa and overstay their period trying to find little jobs here and there.

And illegal immigrants who come through Mexico, or even try to become legal or even become legal, or children of these immigrants. So these people are facing a completely different set of circumstances and if you ask the same questions as you asked

me like: How do you feel being an immigrant? Do you feel that people resented you or your people? You will find exactly the opposite answer. And I know it. I'm lucky to be in that part. So all the questions in your exhibit, if I were you, I would try to differentiate between what I would call those that made it and made a major contribution and live the American dream, and there are a zillion of us, and those that did not do it, did not achieve that dream.

And I think personally that it is tougher and tougher to achieve that dream today than it was when I became a citizen. But it is my education, etc. that gave me a key to success that many immigrants got, and become citizens, and make a major transition. That percent...the other group...is a world apart. Completely apart. It's a much sadder world, a lot more discrimination, people that come here are no education, doesn't speak English. I mean, you know, we got 60 kids dumped in Bedford school from these illegal immigrants that crossed the Rio Grande.

What do you do in Bedford with a kid who is ten years old, doesn't know how to read, doesn't speak one word of English and is dumped in a majority white school in Bedford? What do you do with him? I mean do you put him in first grade to learn the alphabet? Do you try to teach him English? They become a gigantic burden on the school because No. 1 was not better than No. 2. You have to take this kid. He has a right. They have a right to education. But their probability of success of the American dream, I wouldn't bet on it. It's a different world. Different world. You have two – in your presentation I don't know the ultimate message you want to give, but I would be careful to stick with what I call the facts.

A small percentage of a large population of immigrants made a major contribution to American and continue and will continue to do so, especially if the U.S. is smart enough to recognize that fact and correct a major problem. For example somebody that got a Ph.D. from MIT on a student visa under the law has to go back home for two years. Well, that's the most insane thing I ever heard. If we train him, he should stay here. If he wants to stay here. But you have some problems. These people, these high tech, high education people make major contributions. This is a different world. We are speaking to my world; that's my world.

Then there's the other world. So in your presentation...I'm telling you, coming from Guatemala, nine, getting a green card under the law, staying there, then becoming a citizen...these people do not

have the – I'm very sorry to say – do not have the opportunity that people like I had. It's a different world. Now we try to make up for it. I help as much as I can and continue to do so. But still it is a different world. You have two, in your many voices there are very happy voices, very happy voices – I'm one of them – then there are a lot of voices that are happy in the middle, but there is this tail. This tail. And this tail is so sad. When you see these people living in – where we live in Bedford – every fall the cops hire another copter. So they go in the woods and they can't see these camps. After the leaves fall down then they raise them out. This is a different world from mine. That's my advice. Be sure you make a distinction.

SV: That's a very good point and that is something that we're thinking about.

JPV: How you do that is difficult. I think at least somebody that walked here – well, I would hope if I were you... When I come to visit you, if I'm still around or alive, I would like to go out by saying that immigration... So the illegal immigration, be careful about the distinction there too – the legal immigration has really made a major contribution to the United States in all fields music, science, business, etc. in the past; it's doing it in the present; and if managed properly will do it in the future. That's message No. 1. I would leave, I want people to see. Message No. 2. Why did all these people come here?

Because if you are willing to work, take risks, seize opportunities, there is no country like this one to make it. None. Second message. Third message. If you come here and don't want to truly become an American, don't want to learn the language, don't want to improve your education, don't want to take risks, and seize opportunities, you should immigrate to France. The French government will take care of you. And as of today, last year 65 percent of the gross national product of France was spent by the federal government, 65 percent.

That is significant. It's a different world. But you know this is a tough country. They have to realize it is a tough country. So you know everything I know.

SV: Well, I think those are some good ideas to think about and to end on those three ideas. I think that's a very good ender.

JPV: I'll make an offer that is too good to be refused. But you can refuse it. If you want to bounce an idea on me, since you have my

e-mails, and send me e-mail if you want some more information about anything I said, send me an e-mail that I provided to you.

SV: We will.

JPV: We'll talk about documents. I'm still a little confused about documents. I'll think about it and give you some suggestions and see if you are interested in some of them.

SV: Oh yeah. We'll get back to you.

JPV: I'm not going to give it to you, but for example, when I came here I brought German almanac, French almanac, British almanac and my American almanac, that came with me. My fireman's almanac. Knife. I brought with me – I probably I could give it to you in my will, I don't imagine anyone would like it. The two airmen that were hidden in my house and made beautiful toys for **[inaudible][00:55:30]** by hand –

SV: Yeah. That's a whole other series of interviews that we can do about that I think.

JPV: These came with me when I immigrated. They will never be left behind. Ever.

SV: That's actually I would love to talk a little bit about that. A little bit more about what you brought. You mentioned your aluminum suitcase.

JPV: I'm also different because I knew the United States well when I decided to come permanently. In 1896, when those born 'ansky', (by the way talking of immigration) they go to the line and the guy said what's your name? Bolansky. He said we don't like Polish names he said, where were you last. He said Berlin and they all became Berliner. Right on the spot. By the way do you know that's the same thing today?

SV: No. It's not.

JPV: Oh. I became a citizen in New York City. It was a comedy affair. During the last ceremony, all those who want to change their name to the left of the court and those that want to keep their name to the right. About half the people wanted to change their name right there. So I walked down there and the guy said: "What's your name?" I said: "Jean Paul Valles." He looked at me and said: "You really want to keep that name?" I said: "Yes, I do."

SV: Oh wow.

JPV: The guy next to me – I never forget – Pedro Rodriguez and the guy said: “What name do you want?” Jack Kennedy.

Female Speaker: They became Kennedys.

JPV: I know she wanted to become Kennedy. I thought it was Valles. So I stayed Jean Paul Valles.

SV: Well, thank you very much for your time.

JPV: You are welcome. I will send you a couple of ideas about things that I brought here.

SV: We’ll work from there.

JPV: If you have any questions let me know.

SV: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[End of Audio]