

**Transcription of the Interview with Dr. C. John Langley, Jr.**  
**Pennsylvania State University**

**Stock:** My name is James Stock, the Frank Harvey Endowed Professor of Marketing at the University of South Florida. We are here today to conduct an interview with one of the luminaries in the academic discipline of logistics and supply chain management. The purposes of this interview are several. First, and perhaps foremost, is to get to know the personal side of one of the leading logistics and supply chain academicians, a person who has had significant influence on the profession. We often read the person's books and journal articles, listen to their presentations at academic and/or professional meetings, and sometimes, even have individual discussions with them at various events and venues. However, we rarely get to know the person beyond the professional aspects of their careers.

In the field of literature and art, researchers often consider the what, why, how, who, and when of a particular book or painting, short story, poem, and so on. They speculate on what might have motivated the writer or the artist to write the book or paint the painting, to determine the message or the story of the text or art, and the writer's or artist's perception of the contributions of their work. In the same way, through this and other interviews that will be conducted with leading business scholars, as the late Paul Harvey so often expressed, we will attempt to get the 'rest of the story'.

These taped interviews will hopefully serve as supporting material for various university courses where the various works of these academicians may be discussed. They will be of significant impact in courses where history and theory are being examined, since these individuals contributed extensively to that history and theory.

Each interview is based on a set of structured questions using an interview guide. Of course, the interviewee's responses are spontaneous and they may lead to other questions based upon those responses. However, the general format for this and other interviews that will be conducted in the future will be similar. It is hoped that audiences who view these interviews will get a broader and richer view of the people and events that have shaped their disciplines. We hope that you learn from what will be said and

discussed during these interviews and be able to more fully appreciate and understand the significant contributions made by these luminaries in the field.

So let's begin by introducing our distinguished guest. Dr. John Langley, Jr. is presently the Clinical Professor of Supply Chain Management at the Penn State University in State College, Pennsylvania. He holds three degrees from Penn State, his BS degree in Mathematics, which was earned in 1967. He completed his MBA with a concentration in Finance in 1969. His Ph.D. in the major field of Business Logistics with supporting fields of Quantitative Business Analysis and Econometrics was awarded in 1974.

John assumed his first academic position at the University of Tennessee as an assistant professor. He remained on the Tennessee faculty until 2001 where he was the John H. "Red" Dove Professor of Logistics and Transportation. He moved to the Georgia Institute of Technology as Professor of Supply Chain Management and Director of the Supply Chain Executive programs. He remained at Georgia Tech until 2011, when he accepted a position at Pennsylvania State University as a Clinical Professor of Supply Chain Management and the Director of Development for the Center for Supply Chain Research.

Altogether, John has been a faculty member for almost 40 years, teaching and conducting research in Marketing, Logistics and Supply Chain Management. In recognition of his professional standing, John has received numerous awards including the Distinguished Service Award from the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals in 1993, for outstanding achievement in Logistics and Supply Chain Management. John has received the Outstanding Alumnus Award, Business Logistics Program from Penn State in 1992. He was awarded Honorary Distinguished Logistics Professional by the American Society of Transportation & Logistics, AST&L in 2007.

In 2010, he was appointed as the Program Faculty at the Kuhne Logistics University in Hamburg, Germany. John was one of the early members of the National Council of Physical Distribution Management, NCPDM, which was the forerunner of the present day Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, CSCMP. He served as Program Chairperson for the 1984 Annual Conference, General Conference Chairperson

for the 1988 Annual Conference, member of the Executive Committee from 1984 through 1992 and President of the organization from 1990 to 1991.

John also is currently Education Advisor for the National Shippers Strategic Transportation Council (NASSTRAC), and he has served in many other capacities with in the General Motor Global Logistics Supplier Council, Retail Industry Leader's Association, the American Society of Transportation and Logistics (AST&L), and the Transportation Research Board (TRB). Also of significance, John has served as a member of the Academic Advisory Board for a number of prominent logistics organizations. He currently serves as a member of the board of three major corporations including the UTi Worldwide, Forward Air Corporation and Averitt Express.

John currently serves as a member of the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Business Logistics*, *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, *European Business Review*, *South African Journal of Transportation and Supply Chain Management* and *Supply Chain Quarterly*. He has published a large number of articles in all of the top logistics and supply chain journals.

He's co-authored three books in the areas of Transportation, Logistics and Supply Chain Management. John has made significant contributions to the university in the profession. His contributions in development of course materials are extensive. Throughout his career John has taught more than 8,000 undergraduate, MBA, Ph.D., and executive students at Tennessee, Georgia Tech, and Penn State. John has been significantly involved in many executive development programs, both domestically and internationally.

Throughout his career, John has been a value-adding contributor to his university, the students and countless businesses, which have interfaced with him, and scholars throughout the globe. So it is a distinct pleasure to get to know the personal side of this man, so that we can more fully appreciate his significant professional contributions and achievements. John, welcome. I'm glad that we are able to interview you today.

**Langley:** Thank you, Jim. And I'm very honored to have been asked to participate. So I'm looking forward to this, thank you.

**Stock:** I'm honored to be able to do the interview. And so we're using questions that will be similar to all of those who have interviewed with us, and there will be some personal ones specific to you, at the end that we'll ask.

**Langley:** Very good.

### Early Childhood

**Stock:** So we'll start with the easiest one. When and where were you born?

**Langley:** Well, I was born in 1946 and I was born in Camden, New Jersey, which is a suburb of Philadelphia, I guess, but it's on the other side of the river there. My parents, at that time, lived in South Jersey and I spent my childhood living at various locations in Northeast Philadelphia.

**Stock:** Okay. Thinking about your early childhood, we'll start sort of chronologically. Was there anything in your childhood that shaped your present personality?

**Langley:** The thought of my early childhood is an interesting one because to me, my remembrance is that our family tended to move a lot. My dad had a job with a major corporation and he tended to work at one location and another in Philadelphia or in Boston or in New York, for example. And so, we had changed residences a number of times and so, my recollection is that I was continually in a situation where it was time to make new friends when dad got transferred to a new location, and I actually liked that.

I enjoyed meeting people. I think that in terms of something that occurred early in my childhood, the need to continually try to fit in with a new group of people was always an exciting opportunity. It was something that has carried over because I've always enjoyed meeting, talking and socializing with people, and so that's been of great value to me.

**Stock:** Good. Do you think there's a personality trait that you attained early that drove you to be successful?

**Langley:** Well, I don't know exactly what that is; except I would say that I've always been kind of a person who likes to plan as far ahead as possible, for whatever it is. I think that sometimes I drive some people I work with crazy because I try to; whether it's

travel planning or if we're doing a research project- planning it, so you get all the steps to between wherever you are through its conclusion. But I like to look at the scope of an activity or project and have some confidence that I know where we're headed and how we're going to get there.

I think part of that is because I'm a relatively task-oriented person. I like it when I get to the end of things and I like getting on with new things. To say that a little bit differently, things that don't ever seem to have an end kind of drive me crazy at times. But so, I think that that's one trait I have in terms of trying to be orderly. And maybe sometimes a little bit too much because not everything can have a path that you're going to follow and, you got to be pretty flexible sometimes to deal with the realities and whatever it is you're undertaking.

**Stock:** Okay, now if your parents were here and I was to ask them this question, how do you think they would answer? Describe John as a child. What would they say?

**Langley:** Well, I think if you ask them to describe John as a child, they would probably say they loved me very much, but I was probably a handful to deal with. I was always doing something that needed to be adjusted a little bit. I was always a very active child and so I would never get in any trouble as you might say, but I was always doing something, like for example, one snowy day in Massachusetts as a child, I single-handedly painted a neighbor's house that was a white house. I painted it with mud balls that were there and my mother and my grandfather ended up having to clean the house. I don't know why they didn't make me do it, but anyway, that's kind of thing. It's not bad trouble, but it's just little frustrations here and there, but everything went pretty smoothly.

**Stock:** Sounds like normal child activities.

**Langley:** I think so, yes.

**Stock:** Do you have any specific memories from your early childhood that are still in the front of your mind?

**Langley:** Well, it's interesting and maybe it's a function of the older one gets, but I feel like many of the things I enjoyed doing in my childhood- I've got a vivid memory of. I

mean I can recall people, I recall names, I recall things I did. There are a couple of things.

One is I just enjoyed having a lot of friends I guess throughout my years at school. I never found myself only associating with a single small set of people. I was always pretty good friends with a lot of people. But also as a child, I recall and I don't think I could do this today because the world has changed a lot in 40 years or more. But when I was a kid, I used to like to collect coins.

**Stock:** A numismatist.

**Langley:** Yes, I guess that maybe you could call me a numismatist, but I did like to collect coins. It was kind of on a small scale. But at that time, we're living outside of Boston and I was between about 8 and 14 years old, which I think are really formative years, but mom would take me and a couple of friends to the train station and we would take the train or the MTA into Boston. We would go to all the banks down at State street and we would be exchanging roles of pennies and dimes and quarters looking for rare ones and so that was kind of fun.

But the point, I think that's interesting to me, is that I was only 10 or 11, 12 years old. And of course, I'm in an age now where we're proud to say we have 2 grandchildren, but I would never want a grandchild or a child of mine in this day and time, to be in the streets of a major city at age 11 or 12 unaccompanied by somebody that's older. I mean I just couldn't do it. So it's a fun thing to be able to have done.

**Stock:** So how was your coin search? Was it successful?

**Langley:** It was successful. One day I recall going to the bank and I had a dollar bill and wanted to buy two rolls of pennies to check the pennies and one of them was labeled Indian Head pennies on the outside and most of them were actually Indian Head pennies. But I did find the most valuable Mercury dime one time, 1916-D, which I actually got in change from paying an overdue book fine at the library. And later on in my youth, I traded that dime in for a bowling ball, so, just to have the bowling ball.

**Stock:** Should have kept it.

**Langley:** Should have kept the dime, yes.

**Stock:** You should have kept them. Do you still collect those coins?

**Langley:** I still have them. And occasionally, I'd get out my materials and take a look at them. I mean not on a regular basis, but I really think that sometime when I get a little more spare time, that I might like to get back into that again. It's not a big scale type thing, but it doesn't have to be big scale to be a lot of fun to be able to do so.

### Grade School/High School

**Stock:** Sure. Let's move on to your school years. Let's go through your K through 12, although kindergarten may not have been required when you were small. It is now but wasn't then perhaps. What types of schools did you attend?

**Langley:** Well, of course, so I did have half a grade of kindergarten and half a grade of first grade, but I attended public schools my entire career. I don't think I've ever attended or worked at anything other than a public school or a university. But that's just the way things were for our family. And I attended quite a few different schools. I actually attended a year of parochial school in Northeast Philadelphia, which I had the chance to revisit, recently. I recently had a Penn State course we were teaching in Northeast Philadelphia and it was kind of interesting, but I actually drove past the school that I probably hadn't seen for at least 50 years and it was like I had been there yesterday. I recalled exactly what it looked like. Sometimes things change, sometimes they don't.

But I did attend a lot of different schools and it seemed like for a while, I was changing schools about once a year, maybe not that frequently, but once every year to two. And that was fine, I mean it was, I loved it. It's kind of interesting because when you move from one area like Boston to Philadelphia, of course, all the principals are proud of their schools and anxious to tell you how, wherever you came from probably doesn't measure up to the standards of the new school. But I was really privileged, because all the schools that I've ever attended I found to be first class, first class.

**Stock:** That's good, good. Do you have any favorite subjects as a student?

**Langley:** Well, this is what I'm not embarrassed to say it, but my favorite subject was actually math. And the reason that's my favorite subject was, one I was good at it. And second is, and I do regret that I say this, but at that time in my life, it required the least reading. And so, because I remember even in my college days, sometimes with an abstract math course, high-level math course, two pages of reading per night could be, you know, a really challenging assignment.

And I say I regret that because I think that had I spent more time focusing on a broader set of things, including things that I wasn't necessarily good at. That's a mistake some people make I think, well, I don't want to judge other people, but if you only do things that you're good at doing, you're kind of missing the opportunity to learn about other things that might be more challenging, and so, but math was my favorite subject.

**Stock:** Okay, did you play any sports in school?

**Langley:** Yes, I played a lot of sports.

**Stock:** Intramurals or ...?

**Langley:** Intramurals and on the school team.

It depends actually because my high school years, I had transferred to the high school from which I graduated outside of Philadelphia. I transferred there in 10th grade. That's a tough time to take a young guy and put him in a new school, I mean so, it took me a year or two to make new friends and I played some sports there. There were a couple of them on the school team, I think. But I'd played a lot of baseball, a lot of ice hockey. Back in my high school days, I did a lot of bowling actually and I wasn't too bad at that, but it was kind of a fun thing to do.

**Stock:** Oh, yes, you traded in that 1916-D dime for the ball.

**Langley:** That's right, for the bowling ball, so as I said, I still have it.

**Stock:** What is your favorite sport of all of those?

**Langley:** My favorite sport, it has to be either baseball or ice hockey. One of the regrets of growing older is that for most guys, when you get into your college years and

definitely beyond, your love for baseball has to be, unless you're really playing at a competitive level, it's just out of necessity replaced by the playing of softball. And so, I really enjoyed softball but it was never quite the excitement of playing baseball, and ice hockey, I still play ice hockey today. It's something I've continued for a long, long time and I'm the most senior guy in my league, but that just gives me a little reason for guys not to run into me too much sometimes.

**Stock:** Now, how about the school clubs or organizations?

**Langley:** Pretty active with various school clubs, probably more active on the sports side though. But I'm always interested in helping out wherever I could.

**Stock:** Okay. With all those schools, did any particular teachers stand out that influenced you?

**Langley:** You know, I've been thinking about that and I feel like I should be able to name someone that would fit that category, but they were all pretty good. And at the high school level, I didn't really find that there was anyone that particularly stood out in terms of my mind. I was thinking about courses I took, and there was very definitely one that stood out was when I took a typing class in high school. It turned out to be one of the most valuable courses that I've ever take in my life.

**Stock:** A very applied course.

**Langley:** Yes.

**Stock:** Good. Now, how would you be described as a student? If someone tried looking at your career in secondary schools, how would they define you socially and academically?

**Langley:** I think they would define me as a pretty well-balanced, serious student, and also a participant in the school affairs. I was always interested in the subject matter, I mean some courses more than others, but I was always prepared with having done my homework and tests for me were just performance measurement, things along the way and you try to do well in each, of course. At that time, I was in school particularly, as I

**Comment [j11]:** Jim - If possible, I would like the highlighted content to be deleted from the transcription, and the footage removed from the video. Thanks - John

got close to my college years, I was thinking about the fact that however I performed in high school was going to impact my choice of universities, beyond my high school years. And so, I took things seriously. I can't say that every subject I took was as interesting as the rest of them, but there were a lot of courses that I very much enjoyed.

**Stock:** Was typing an enjoyable course?

**Langley:** Typing was. Yes, it was enjoyable, an enjoyable course.

**Stock:** Now, what did you like most about school? What did you like the least?

**Langley:** Well, I think what I liked most about school was socializing with the other students, getting to know them, becoming friends with, and then, of course, there was a lot of extracurricular things including going to sporting events. I would support the teams. If I wasn't playing, that's something I would go to. And I didn't play football but I would go to all of the football games. What didn't I like about it? I liked most everything. You always have little things, little things you would pick here and there that you would change if you wanted to, but generally speaking, I found everything to be pretty satisfactory.

**Stock:** Okay. Did you get any honors while you were in school, like honor society or those kinds of things?

**Langley:** Yes, I made the honor roll. I mean, just kind of reasonable little key kinds of accomplishments that you're proud of.

**Stock:** How about as you looked around your environment, were there any sports figures or movie stars or political folks that you said, "Oh, that's my idol, that's the person I really look up to?"

**Langley:** Well, you know, I thought about that a little bit and I've had my share, of principally athletes, that I kind of look up to in the sense of people who are genuinely good people and also very, very good at what they did. But I thought a little bit about the idol thing and I think that the person that would be my idol was my dad because he had

qualities and characteristics that he was a very hard working person, a very outstanding family man. I'm not sure if I could do what my dad did to be successful in his business.

And by that, I mean, things like we lived in Philadelphia and every morning he got on the train, and he took it to New York City, and where he worked all day then he came home, he probably left home at 5:30, 6 o'clock a.m. and got home at about 8:30, 9 o'clock p.m. but that's five days a week every week. But back in the day, that's what you had to do and so, his determination and his way of doing things and I can't remember him ever complaining about anything, which is different from the way I am. All the people that know me even slightly well, know that unfortunately, I save the good side of some things I see, but I would say that he's the one that would satisfy my definition of an idol, the teen idol.

**Stock:** Now thinking about your teen years, is there anything during that period of your life that people would find unusual, very interesting, startling today?

**Langley:** I don't think so. I was just kind of a normal kid who liked to do a lot of things outdoors and was always pretty active. As I said earlier, I had a lot of different friends, so I was really nothing that would be outstanding or notable, but I had a very enjoyable childhood. I enjoyed the time I spent during those years.

#### **College (undergraduate/graduate)**

**Stock:** What caused you to go to college? Was it parental influence, your own, or was it expected to go to college? What was it for you?

**Langley:** Kind of all of those above and none of those above, in the sense that I'd always assumed I would go to college. My mother is a college graduate, my father was able to attend Penn State for two or three years, and then he had to get a job, so he actually didn't graduate. And it was just kind of assumed that I would go to college, and I do remember one day when I was probably about 12 or 13 years old, we were riding in the car somewhere and this thought struck me; what if I can't get in to college? And it was something that worried me for a long time, but it was just something that wasn't the next logical step beyond high school for me, and that's the way it turned out.

**Stock:** Now, did you put yourself through school? Did your parents support you or combination of those? Scholarships?

**Langley:** Largely, my parents supported me for my undergraduate days and then everything beyond that, I was able to accommodate through assistantships and so forth. But I did work during the summers in a factory, industrial gas factory, kind of interesting where you fill the big tanks of nitrogen, oxygen, and the big things that if you ever, and I never did drop one, but I was told that if you ever feel like you're going to lose one, you let it go and get out of the way because they're just too big to deal with. This often causes me to remember how the time value of money changes. I was earning \$2 an hour, and when you compare that to the value of money today, you get a very different impression of the value of money.

**Stock:** Of course, we'll probably look at it later, but it's almost equivalent to textbook writing today.

**Langley:** Well, it is. It is and that's going to be a challenge as we can talk about that later.

**Stock:** Now, did you live on campus, off campus, dormitories, fraternity?

**Langley:** For my first year, I lived in a dormitory at Penn State. I made a lot of friends there. Then I joined a fraternity. Most of Penn State fraternities are located just off campus, right adjacent to the campus, and I lived in the fraternity house right nearby and spent three years there.

**Stock:** Right, what's the fraternity?

**Langley:** It's Delta Sigma Phi. According to Penn State people, that's the pink elephant, which I'm happy to report at the time of this taping, Delta Sigma Phi's house, has been very, very successful over the intervening 40 years. Although it's had its ups and downs, it's pulled itself up by the bootstraps each time and come back even stronger. So I'm proud to say that the house is still functioning and functioning well.

**Stock:** And how was it functioning when you were a member?

**Langley:** It was strong. It was a very strong house, yes. Although I do remember in my senior year, we had a few of the guys that decided that they needed to move out of the fraternity house so they had more time for studying. I wish I could say that the fraternity house environment was one that was always conducive to studying and being serious about things. But unfortunately, that's probably a big challenge to try to balance the social and the fun aspects of being in a fraternity with the need to do well academically. You know, we all know people in college that, maybe have a little too much fun and never did get the degree that they went there to study for to begin with, and that's just unfortunate.

**Stock:** So how did you end up at Penn State?

**Langley:** I lived in Philadelphia at that time. It was the state university and my dad had gone there and it just seemed like a pretty good choice. And when I visited Penn State on a campus tour, I decided this was the place, that if I were accepted, I would definitely like to go to. I think it's one of the most beautiful campuses you can find. There are other great ones we could talk about that are also very nice to be on, but this is no exception from one of the best.

**Stock:** Okay, did you apply anywhere else other than Penn State?

**Langley:** I did. I applied to Bucknell University. And, you know, it's interesting. We're going to talk a little bit later about other aspects of my career and what I've studied and what I've done, but had I gone to Bucknell, a very different person might have emerged from the college experience, because the kinds of things I studied at Penn State, particularly in the long term, are not among the curricular elements at Bucknell. But we'll never know how that would have turned out.

**Stock:** Alright, you mentioned mathematics was your major as an undergraduate and that you like math because it was less reading and you are very quantitative anyway. What did you envision doing with that mathematics degree?

**Langley:** Well, interesting because when you and I were talking earlier, I mentioned that when I was in high school, right before I started college, I took a vocational interest test

that suggested that my interests had nothing in common with those of successful mathematicians, and that's fully understandable. But I took that a little bit too much to heart and I changed my major when I got to Penn State from math to business, and I thought that would be a little bit of a better move for me. And then I spent a semester in the business school and I thought, at this stage in my career, I think I would like something else, so I transferred to pre-med.

Now normally, people usually drop out of pre-med into other areas, but I transferred from business administration into pre-med and then two or three semesters, or terms as we called them at the time, I ended up back in mathematics where I really enjoyed what I was studying. And that was very helpful to me because the most interesting subject I've studied in math was mathematical statistics, and that was a great entre for me following my undergraduate work to then qualify for an assistantship in the business school of Penn State because I had some understanding of mathematical statistics.

**Stock:** You mentioned that your mother had a college degree. Your father had gone couple of years or so. Was there anyone else in your family that had a college degree?

**Langley:** No, I'm the only one in my family that has a college degree.

**Stock:** You're the only one with a PhD then as well?

**Langley:** Yes.

**Stock:** So your family was very supportive of you going to college. Were they supportive of the direction you took as a college student?

**Langley:** Yes, they were nothing but as helpful as possible during my collegiate years. They supported what I was doing and the selection of majors. That was something that they kind of left up to me. They gave me advice on it, but it wasn't as if they told me what to do. They basically suggested I look at the advantages and disadvantages in whatever decision and kind of make my own decisions. They were supportive of that.

But you asked me earlier about what I was going to do with math and I answered I had no idea what I was going to do with it, whether research or teaching or whatever.

And as it turns out, I think I leveraged the kind of structured, quantitative, analytical thinking into trying to be a person who can analyze business issues and problems. And so, it really paid off. Quite obviously, as you study mathematics, the more abstract it becomes and you get to a point where unless you were going to be a math theoretician, the theory part of it is not something that's going to help you a lot, but most of what I did study was of great help.

**Stock:** Now, where did you get the inclination towards being a college professor? Was that during your undergraduate years or later?

**Langley:** Actually, I was a graduate student at Penn State and I was in the MBA program and I had the distinct privilege of working with some really fine people at Penn State.

And one of them was Professor Jack Hayya, who is now a professor emeritus at Penn State. He still lives here in State college. And Jack was teaching courses in Quantitative Business Analysis and I was his grad assistant. And he had to go on a professional trip one time and he asked me if I'd like to teach a class. And I said, "Sure, I'd love to" and so I did. And that was kind of the predecessor to me.

I actually had my course in QBA that I taught while I was a graduate student, and that sparked my interest in learning more about what professors do aside from what I was observing as a student, and I had a chance to get a good peek at, what they were doing in terms of teaching, research and service. And I liked what I saw and decided then that an academic career was something that might be pretty interesting to me.

**Stock:** So, there's no individual that steered you towards that?

**Langley:** No. No one steered me toward that except for the circumstances, such as qualifying for the assistantship and being in the right place, at the right time, but no one told me that that's what I needed to do or should think about doing.

**Stock:** So you assumed that you would ultimately get the Ph.D., once you started teaching that QBA course and seeing what the other faculty did on the Penn State campus, that sort of thing?

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**Langley:** Pretty much, yes. Not sure what that Ph.D. was going to be, what subject matter it would cover, but definitely, pointed me toward further study.

**Stock:** Did you ever think about using the PhD for non-academic reasons, consulting or business?

**Langley:** No. I thought a little bit about that because if you look at people who hold the Ph.D. degree from different institutions, most of the people getting a Ph.D.- my observation anyway- from business schools tend to go into academic positions. I spent a number of years at Georgia Tech for example, and worked in the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, and it would not be fair to say that most people who get Ph.D.'s in engineering go into the academic work, because I think that the types of job opportunities are broader for Ph.D. graduates in the engineering sciences.

But yes, I never really thought too much about that, but I did think about going into the business world, which in ways, it would be somewhat unrelated to having a Ph.D. But your question related to using a Ph.D. to go in a different direction, no, really only the academic direction.

**Stock:** As you think back, would you have liked to have pursued other experiences, like in business, before getting a PhD?

**Langley:** In an ideal world, yes. And that's what I advise students of all types, that particularly, when you're going to pursue graduate work, if you have the opportunity to gain some practical experience, that's always going to help. And not so much to help with the seasoning, with the experiential kind of thing, but to give you a frame of reference where you've actually dealt with real problems so that maybe then you can look at with an academic perspective on them.

So if I go back, sure. The thing about it is in today's economy; I would have very different advice. I guess the question would be- I wouldn't advise anyone to leave a full time position unnecessarily, because of the way the economy is. But back in the earlier days, I think, the idea of getting some experience would have been interesting, but it wasn't discussed as much in terms of what people would do.

**Stock:** Are there any individuals, faculty members, acquaintances, business people, perhaps, that you think had a significant influence on your development into a Ph.D. and ultimately an academic?

**Langley:** Yes, and it's a pretty long list because I have had the good fortune of being in the company of a lot of really, really good people in my career. As a matter of fact, I would credit anything I've done that may look as being worthwhile as a product of being around the company I've been in for so many years, including not only former professors, but my faculty colleagues. Every single one of them is different from all the rest, but collectively, it's been an environment that I found to be a really great one to be in.

But in terms of specific people, I've got to acknowledge a few people at Penn State. I already mentioned Professor Jack Hayya. And the two or three people at Penn State are Professor John Coyle, Professor Bob Pashek, who is no longer with us, nor is the third one, that was not a logistician, but a gentleman named Dr. Hays Gamble. Those three people at Penn State were highly instrumental in kind of guiding me through my PhD program.

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And the way Penn State treated its Ph.D. students is something I've tried to keep in mind, as I worked with people in my life, because it was nothing but treating the students as well as they possibly could and they've always been supportive of everything that's being done and it's still that way here. And hopefully, I've been able to take at least some of that work effectively with students over my years.

**Stock:** Do you think, in terms of those faculty members, since you have all your degrees from Penn State, were those folks influential when you were in the master's program or just in the doctoral program? And if during the doctoral program, what made you stay at Penn State for a third degree?

**Langley:** Well, what made me stay was that it was a perfectly good place to study for a Ph.D. I was comfortable with the surroundings. It was a first class program in logistics and I didn't really have any reason to look elsewhere. I guess if you were to go back and change anything, you might ask me would I prefer to maybe do three programs at three different universities. I think there's a value in that.

The way it worked out for me though, I spent three different programs at the same university, but if you look at what I was doing, the math program and the MBA and the Ph.D. program were all very different kinds of programs. And so, there was a fair amount of diversity in terms of what I was exposed to.

**Stock:** How about military experience; were you in the military?

**Langley:** I was a member of the United States Army Reserves. And I spent six years in the Army Reserves. It was kind of interesting. Of course, in the 1960's, we had a lot of conflict going on and a lot of people being drafted. I was in school and I had never asked for a draft deferment or anything, but I had what most students had, whatever the classification was as a full-time student. And one of my roommates who was about to lose his student deferment joined the reserve unit and I just called them up and asked them if they needed anybody else, and I joined the Reserves at that time.

**Stock:** What type of unit was it?

**Langley:** The one I joined was outside of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and I'm trying to think of what kind of a unit it was. In fact, it was an administrative services unit, and I was a pay/disbursing specialist. So after basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, I went to the U.S. Army Finance School at Fort Benjamin Harrison (Indiana – now decommissioned), and received really impressive training that the Army had for pay/disbursing finance specialists, and then after active duty for training (ACDUTRA – Army term) returned back to school.

It was interesting because I lived at State College when I joined the Reserves, and we joined the unit outside of Harrisburg (Indiantown Gap Military Reservation), which is two hours away. And before we joined, they said, "Now, we don't want you to join our unit and then go for your training and then come back and transfer to State College." They wanted people who were going to be there. And actually what I did was, I didn't transfer directly to the State College unit, I transferred to a Boston unit and then I transferred to State College.

But in State College, I was a member of a unit that, I don't know that it exists any longer, but it was a light equipment maintenance company. It actually had a very, very

good strategic purpose for the military and each of these units has a certain mission. And so, the mission of this one was managing light equipment for the Army.

**Stock:** So, how many years were you in the Reserves?

**Langley:** I was in for six years. Spent most of your first year in training, basic training, advance training, then you come back and become a functioning member of your reserve unit; so that's what I did.

**Stock:** Did you form any long lasting relationships in that reserve unit?

**Langley:** I don't think there was anything long lasting. Well, actually, let me correct myself in that, there are several guys that were in that unit that I keep in touch with reasonably frequently these days. But for the most part, no, they were just fellow students at Penn State that had joined the Reserves and we would see each other for one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer for our weekend warrior duty.

**Stock:** Do you have any fond memories of that reserve unit you were in?

**Langley:** Well, I do. It was interesting because there was such a devastating conflict going on in Vietnam at that time, but it wasn't like in today's world where if you're in the Reserves, the likelihood of heading over to Afghanistan or somewhere is pretty high, but back in those days, they didn't seem to call up the Reserves as much. But, you know, we were ready to go if we had to. But it was just kind of an interesting opportunity.

I'll tell you one little funny story, we found an extra hour one day and we were trying to find a place to go play bridge, four of us. We had a bridge game in mind and so we found the back of a "deuce and a half," which is a big truck and it was backed up against the fence and we figured nobody would find us in there, so we got the folding tables set up, got the cards dealt out, we're ready to go and somebody goes and starts driving the truck away with us in the back. So we all jumped out pretty quickly.

**Stock:** You didn't finish the game?

**Langley:** No, but the experience of being in the Reserves is one small part of a big military and very, very complex obviously and I thought about this a lot. You know, it's

important to have a lot of different capabilities ready to go. And so, we were just part of a much bigger picture.

**Stock:** Well, I know you have done work as an academic with the military?

**Langley:** We have, yes.

**Stock:** Did it help having the reserve experience?

**Langley:** I think it does help because I spent time at various military installations and I was involved in military logistics before I was involved in the Ph.D. level studying in logistics, which just gave me a lot of insight into things like warehouse management.

I guess one major impression I have from all that is just the enormity of scale of the military and I got my hands dirty with stock-keeping records and that kind of thing and nomenclature for inventory items and it's just something that can be overwhelming. And of course that was 30 or 40 years ago, when the information technologies we had were nothing compared to what we have now, and so, there were lots and lots of paperwork needed to effectively manage things. Hopefully, it's much improved now.

### **Career**

**Stock:** Now, when you finished your Ph.D. degree, what schools did you look at; what made you to go to Tennessee as opposed to somewhere else?

**Langley:** Well, from my office at Penn State- I had my office at one of the research centers- I had a big map of the United States and for no particular reason, I had drawn in the Mason-Dixon Line with a black magic marker and I was going to confine my search of universities to anything north of there. I think the reason was because I hadn't really spent a lot of time in areas south of the Mason-Dixon Line, no political suggestions here at all, just the geographical line. And during the year I graduated, the University of Tennessee was adding to their faculty. As a matter of fact, they added a professor the year before I graduated and they added two people the year I was graduating, including myself, and I had applied there.

But at that time, the University of Tennessee was one of the very few universities in the country that offered a formal program in the disciplines of transportation and

logistics. I mean, there was a handful, maybe five, six or seven, a very small number of logistics programs compared to the number that we have now. And so, that was just a great opportunity and I interviewed and never looked back in terms of the decision to join that faculty.

**Stock:** Now, you've made two changes in your career, from Tennessee to Georgia Tech, and then now, to Penn State. What were the circumstances that led you to make a change after 28 years at Tennessee and 10 years at Georgia Tech?

**Langley:** Yes. It's interesting. I've thought a lot about that and you're right, I have been at three universities. I still live in Knoxville, Tennessee though and the reason we still live there is, we're just part of the community. I do a lot of things there. So we have no reason to want to move.

But my 28 years at Tennessee were extremely valuable. When I started there, I think my biggest challenge professionally was trying to make some headway with the topic of logistics, because I was kind of the new kid on the block back in the early 1970's, and if you say new kid, what was the old kid? Well, the old kid was the study of the functional activities that comprise logistics, but for their own sake, transportation, warehousing, and so forth.

And my take on this is that, what logistics really does in essence is it suggests that if you can manage the functional activities in a collective manner and integrate them, you can make a better decision than if you manage them separately. And the other thing is you do that on behalf of providing a level of service to the customer. That's, in my terms, the simplest idea.

And so, the faculty- I was working with wonderful people who were there long before I got there- and the years I had a chance to spend with them were just remarkable years. But then as time went on, we grew it into a supply chain program and one of the regrets that I have and I think some of the other faculty was that we tried for quite awhile to rename our program from logistics into supply chain and it was a move that really didn't go over very well at the college level (College of Business Administration). And I think that the reason it didn't go over well is because there were some faculty members in

other disciplines that thought it was a power grab on the part of the people in logistics to brand themselves a supply chain.

But if you looked at what we're doing and I think they're still doing it, the University of Tennessee and I think they've changed the name by now. But the definition of supply chain was a very inclusive definition. It was not meant to exclude people from being involved, but it was terminology that I think really facilitated better relationships with other functional areas of business instead of causing the opposite effect.

So, I was on the faculty at Tennessee for 28 years. My interests broadened. I have always been, and still continue to be, interested in the students at all levels. I always like teaching all levels- undergraduate, masters, MBA, Ph.D. students- for different reasons.

But also, I very much enjoyed working with companies. The university involvements I've had, have been very heavy on certain parts of the academic mix, but also include working with organizations that support the programs. And I was a little bit more interested at that time, in not only working with companies that would come back and sponsor our research and hire our students, and attend our forums, but also in trying to do research that was to the extent possible, relevant to the real world problems companies were facing.

And the people at Georgia Tech had been talking to me for a few years. As a matter of fact, I went through a period of time back in the late 1990's where I had four or five universities, that I had talked with over time that wanted me to consider a move, but the one thing that had occurred to me would be any university I might join would be one that I could continue to live in Knoxville, so the Georgia Tech opportunity was a perfect one [3-hour drive to Atlanta]. And it allowed me to really focus more on executive education, on building relationships with organizations; business organizations, government organizations; and also teaching, in selected courses, but not on a full time basis with the teaching.

So it was kind of interesting to me, too, and this would be, I think, insightful for professors as they listen to this video. But my position at Georgia Tech was purposely not a tenure track position. I had lots of business opportunities that I was considering, as

well. And, I think tenure has a great value. At that point in my life, it didn't have high priority. But the other thing that the tenure at Georgia Tech was that I was a faculty member in the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, and that's very analytical. I mean these are the best people in the world in terms of quantitative analysis. And the kinds of things that I was interested in doing and was good at doing weren't really similar to what they were doing on a daily basis.

So you might ask me what I did at Georgia Tech to help row the boat? And part of what I did was provide a practical perspective. I would, from time to time, work with some of the researchers and try to help understand some of the benefits of solving certain types of problems because they are very good at solving problems and they wanted to make sure that if they solved a problem, it would be something that would provide a benefit.

And then, my time here at Penn State, again, several years before I actually left Georgia Tech, I had been contacted by the Penn State faculty to see if I might be interested in a position here. At the time they first talked with me, I said, "This is a great idea, but right now, I haven't been at Georgia Tech long enough to do what I'd promised to do." And so, several years later, that was no longer the case, and it was a comfortable time to leave Tech. There were some new directions that were emerging there, and they have fine and outstanding people at Georgia Tech and I figured that they were very capable of accomplishing their objectives regardless of what direction I took. So, I've enjoyed my time here at Penn State and look forward to continuing in that relationship.

**Stock:** Did you ever have any opportunities or interests in going into consulting or something else?

**Langley:** I had a lot of opportunities. I was once offered the head of the Logistics Practice at Booz Allen Hamilton. I did a lot of consulting work with Mercer Management Consulting and with Accenture. There was one point in time where I thought about heading into that business full time, but Jim, for part of my career I spent it very highly involved with those companies and that's the lifestyle that you got to really understand what you're getting yourself into because there's no limit to what needs to be done and the demands that can be placed on you. And then in a heartbeat, and you've got

to leave and work in Europe full time for the next two years, that's what you do. And so, the loss of control over my own schedule was probably something that caused me to steer away from that.

**Stock:** Also hurting the family time.

**Langley:** Oh, absolutely, it does. As a matter of fact, it's interesting that you mentioned that. I currently serve on a corporate boards, I know this from experience of being a board member. If we've got a big issue under way, like an acquisition or somebody is trying to buy you or whatever, and you hire these investment bankers, we don't have any regard for the fact that you might have a vacation planned or a weekend coming up. It's like for the fees that we're paying you, I wouldn't even say I'm sorry, we expect if it's Friday afternoon this job will be done by first thing Monday morning.

**Stock:** What do you think, now, in this 40 plus years of being an academic? What do you think is your most significant accomplishment?

**Langley:** Well, in general terms, I would say that I have achieved various things of importance in various areas, pretty broad area. In others words, I've talked about the teaching, research and service previously. And I think I've been a pretty good participant in all three of those. I've never been recognized as the most outstanding teacher in the college. I've never been the most prolific researcher in the college. I've never been the most, well, I might have been one of the most highly involved with industry organizations, but I think in terms of breadth of activity and trying to take very seriously what I do in each one of those areas, and having enjoyed it too. I've enjoyed what I've done so I'd say that's probably one of my accomplishments in a very general sense.

But on a more profound level, if you said what have I done in this business over a long period of time that makes it all worthwhile? It's, well, as my good friend who passed away, Bob Delaney, wrote in an article one time on a report that it's all about relationships. And the relationships that I have been able to form with faculty members and professors. But I never thought in advance about the lifelong relationships I would form with students of all types, primarily Ph.D. students. But some of my very best friends are former Ph.D. students. And to me, that's a reward from having had the

privilege of working with them when they were doctoral students, because you just develop a relationship, which isn't bounded by time. And now, I work with these same people. These are people I call if I need advice or I'm looking for something and of course, you know all about the network among professors when you need something, you just send an e-mail out or correspond with a few of them and they'll help you in any way they can. So this has been in terms of accomplishment, as I said, I feel like it's the right place, the right time. And I'm very honored to be able to say that a lot of my good friends are former students or professors.

**Stock:** Now, using this as an analogy, you have probably read the most widely reprinted article ever in HBR, Ted Levitt's *Marketing Myopia*. Is there a Marketing Myopia book or article in John Langley's background that you think really has an impact?

**Langley:** Well, you know I like the idea. I believe that I've tried to be broad in my thinking. I'm not sure everybody I've worked with would always agree with that. They might say, "Well, you think you're broad in your thinking, but you're maybe a little more focused than you perceive yourself to be."

But I do believe that looking at expanding beyond the obvious and I think Ted Levitt's article is the best one I've ever read in terms of an *HBR* article. I use it every chance I get in the course. But it reminds us to think beyond the obvious and look and try to expand. And of course his story that you're very well aware of, was not about trains, but it's about transportation. And he didn't use the word logistics, but I've always said, it's not about warehousing and transportation, it's about logistics, but even then it's not about really logistics, it's about supply chain. It's not just supply chains either, so you can keep getting bigger and bigger on that. But, some good messages there. I like your idea that maybe I should sometime expand on that.

**Stock:** What do you think your legacy is to the profession?

**Langley:** First of all, I think you have to ask other people that because I don't know. I'll speak for myself only; I don't know that I'm qualified to.

**Stock:** What would you like it to be?

**Langley:** What I would like it to be, is that people would think of me as somebody who helped this discipline to move forward in a broad kind of a way, because back in the early 1970's, we had a lot of work ahead of us. And a lot of people pulling in the same direction for a very long period of time and many of the other people you've interviewed—all of them, the people you've interviewed—have set standards in terms of their level of contribution to the profession, their dedication and they kind of serve as setting a milestone for the rest of us.

And, I really feel that we've accomplished a lot in 40 years, but there's still a lot left to do. I think we have this term 'supply chain,' which is like having a tiger by the tail because my feeling was, maybe this is a little bit inaccurate, but I didn't feel that the term logistics turned on a lot of people besides people in logistics. I know it was always a term, we always talked about how difficult it is to explain to your next door neighbor or someone at a cocktail party what you do for a living if it's logistics. Their eyes glaze over pretty quickly. But the term supply chain is more inclusive and I think it gives us an opportunity, not to tell people how important logistics and supply chain is, but to put it in the proper context in terms of the relevance and how an adherence to the principles of those two terms can help better manage our organizations, better manage our businesses.

Part of the challenge, I think, is it's a term and it's a concept- supply chain that is appealing to a lot of people and so different people tend to drag those words into different directions that kind of fit what they're doing. So, we've seen people from other disciplines that over the past 10 years have discovered supply chain. But I don't think that it's limited to an extension of logistics period. It's a pretty multifaceted concept. So the direction it takes in the future, but I think that the fact it's on the table, it's being talked about, it's something that people accept the terminology and probably over time, if we can continue to steer it in the right direction, we can get a lot more mileage, since it's a pretty good concept.

**Stock:** You mentioned people from other areas coming in, because supply chain is broader. Who should set that direction? Should it be logistics people or should it be people from other areas that are part of supply chain management?

**Langley:** I don't think there's a perfect answer to that question, because I think we all have our stake in it. I'm a product of my background, and my background is in logistics and so as much as I might like to tell you that I'm fully understanding of all the other disciplines, I'm probably deep down, a little bit more biased toward logistics.

So maybe what the answer to that is some kind of a collaboration between people who have diverse backgrounds, who are willing to try to be open-minded and figure out what the best kind of direction for this. One of the things we've been through, time after time, is the role of manufacturing. And, I believe there's great scientific aspects of manufacturing technology, things I could never do in manufacturing technology. But I didn't say that extended to whether or not a company should manufacture for itself or outsource or contract or co-pack or other alternatives. And there are still industries today where manufacturing is done by some of the organizations internally, because that's the way they've always done it. And I think it's more useful to look at the alternatives and consider manufacturing part of the supply chain.

So I kind of went off on a bit of a tangent there, but I do think that there's still some time honored ways of doing things like that. I don't have any problem with the company manufacturing for itself as long as it does its own analysis and figures out that's the best way to do things. And I don't think that, that's necessarily the right answer as much as it used to be.

**Stock:** You think there'll ever be a theory in supply chain management?

**Langley:** Yes, I do, or I think there should be. And part of the reason for saying that, is because I had the great privilege at the University of Tennessee, in the last Ph.D. course that I taught for about five or six years before I left the faculty there, was on the history of logistics thought. And we talked about that, should there be a theory of logistics? We started that course by going back to the earliest origins. Well, not the earliest, earliest, but the 1950's and 1960's, writings of key people among which you've interviewed; but people who were the founders of this discipline, if you will. And I think we're at a point now where we need to be creating a better conceptual understanding of what it is, because I'm not a scientist on this topic, but I think that for a discipline to be recognized,

you got to have some theoretical, conceptual underpinnings of exactly what it is and then you build up.

I'm a big believer, although I'm not a theoretician, I'm a big believer that if you have a theory or a model that represents what you're talking about, that you can then add the details on to that. But if you try to add to no theory, it's like executing without a plan. If you got the plan, you can execute. But sometimes, if you execute without a plan, it seems to work but you're just probably lucky. So, maybe this is the right time in the history of supply chain management, I'll call it that, to consider more of a theoretical kind of a theory of logistics through theory of supply chain management.

**Stock:** You think we will do that, if we don't have a consensus definition of what supply chain management is? Because there are lots of different definitions.

**Langley:** Yes. Well, you know, but my key area of research interest is in outsourcing of logistic services and so terms like 3PL, 4PL, LLP, lead logistics provider, all these different terms come up. And when I have the occasion to do so—I don't apologize for it—but I tell people that there are a number of ways of referring to the topic of outsourced logistic services and I could provide a precise definition for each one of them. Not the definition that everyone would agree to for each one of them, but then I also said that I tend to use the words interchangeably at times which may seem to be heresy for some people.

But then, my final comment is that, when someone tells me they're using a 3PL or a 4PL, my first question to them would be to please tell me how they define that, so I can understand. And quite honestly, the last thing I want to do is argue with someone over their definitions, because if that's the way they view things, that's the way they view it and the most important thing is for me to understand what it is they're talking about, and then we can continue our discussion on a one-to-one basis.

**Stock:** As you look back at these 40-plus years of your career, do you have any regrets?

**Langley:** I don't have any regrets at all. Whatever the opposite of a regret is, I guess things you would be appreciative of is, and I've used the term right place, right time, but I have been fortunate. I've enjoyed good health. I've enjoyed the chance to work with

good people everywhere, people that might not even think that I think of them as good people, but I really enjoyed everyone I've had the chance to work with. But I've also been in the company of those that, when I've asked for advice, I've gotten good advice and it has never misled me and I've really enjoyed everything I've ever done.

**Stock:** Are there any things you would like to have done, but have not had the time to do perhaps?

**Langley:** You know my answer to that question, would probably be no and yes, and that would be for the following reason and that is that my academic activities have a place in my life, but that's not the only thing that has a place for me. I've got a high regard for my family life. I tend to travel a lot, just based on what I do, I travel a lot. But I'm actually to the point in life where any trip I would take for business reasons, I would hope would be a pretty essential kind of a trip, because I would rather spend a day at home than a day anywhere else in the world if I have the choice.

And the third part is, I enjoy recreational activities and there's a place in my life for that. I've always thought that it might be fun to get to a point in life when you could play golf everyday if you wanted to, but I've decided that that wouldn't make it as much fun if you could do it all the time, so it's something I enjoy on weekends. But I do have a set of friends that I play golf with and friends I play hockey with. The academic, the family and then the social with friends and peers of mine are of all of equal importance to me.

**Stock:** Who do you think has had the biggest influence on your career? It could be a business person, it could be an academic, it could be anyone.

**Langley:** I guess the people that have had the greatest impact on me are people who are very good at what they do, very good at working with and coaching other people. Not in an active way, where somebody would say, "Yes, he's my coach." But people who just know how to deal effectively with other people, how to help people when they might need a little help, without making them feel like you're being pushed into anything.

I would say a person, like John Coyle here at Penn State, is a good example of someone. There was another professor at the University of Tennessee who we talked a

little bit about earlier, was a mentor and I've never talked with anyone about agreeing to be my mentor, but professor Joe Frye at the University of Tennessee is someone who was definitely a mentor to me and I never told him that but I knew it. And the reason he was a mentor was because he was very good at what he did. He was a railroad man, trucking man. In a legal proceeding, you'd never want to put him on the witness stand because he'd tear you apart. He knew so much, but he lived by a set of principles and always had a good word to say about everyone. And, you know, I look up to people like that. And I learned so much from being around him. He's not with us any longer. But just for the years at Tennessee, when I had a chance to be around him, you pick up little things here and there; that's how Joe Frye would've done it. So those are a couple of people that have really made an impact and of course I talked at length about my father earlier.

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**Stock:** Right. You mentioned Joe Frye had a sort of personal code of conduct. Do you have one that drives you or some conduct code that you follow?

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**Langley:** Yes, well I guess I do. I like to try to treat people as I'd like to have them treat me. I'm human. I'm not so sure I succeed all the time with that. If somebody asks me to do something, if I can do it, I like to be able to help. If I can't do it, I like to be able to let them know I can't do it. And so that's kind of something that I try to live by. Again, I'm not perfect, didn't work all the time, but to the extent possible, I tried to be as considerate of other people as I can.

### **Family**

**Stock:** Now, you mentioned the importance of balance in work, family and so forth. Tell us a little about your family. You're married to Anne. How did you meet?

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**Langley:** Circumstances were that I was a young assistant professor at the University of Tennessee and I had moved into a brand new apartment complex. And a lot of my neighbors were students. And a recent graduate of the University of Tennessee, who became my wife, was advised by one of my neighbors- she was in the insurance business at that time. She got her undergraduate degree in education and she was working for an insurance company. And they said, "Well you should go talk to John, he's a young professor. He might want to buy some insurance."

And so, I got a knock on my door early one evening and she introduced herself and I invited her in and as she tells the story, she said, “You invited me in and you asked me, as you were eating pizza and having a beer and would I like to join you?” So she joined me and that’s how we met and we married several months later. It wasn’t a very long, like we used to say, courtship, whatever you’d call that. But, you know, we didn’t know each other for more than several months, at which point we’re married and we’ve been married for whatever; let’s do the math on this about 38 years this coming September.

**Stock:** Did you buy any insurance?

**Langley:** Yes, I did. And I can’t tell you the details, but I got a very and I still have it, a very interesting letter from my new insurance agent about the benefits of having her as my agent and me as the client. So, I’ll leave it very general.

**Stock:** Okay. Now do you have children?

**Langley:** We do. We have 2 children. We have a daughter, Sarah, who’s 34 years old. She lives in Charlotte with her husband and their young 2-and-a-half-year-old son, that was our first grandson. She’s in the consulting business, and actually been in executive benefits and a CPA accountant. The first for a while, but now she’s working for a Charlotte-based consulting firm.

My son lives in Nashville. He’s 32. He works for Ozburn-Hessey Logistics, which is a major provider of global logistics and supply chain services, and it is interesting that I had never told him to go into logistics. If he had asked me, I would’ve told him that would be a good decision, but he made it on his own. He’s worked for a few logistics companies and has had a nice tenure at each company. But he lives in Nashville with his wife and their daughter, 9-month-old granddaughter. So I have one grandson and one granddaughter.

**Stock:** So as a parent, what was your main goal? What do you try to instill in your children?

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**Langley:** Well, you know, we were very fortunate, just like I was fortunate to go to schools that were all pretty good. We were fortunate to have had two children that well; my wife is the one that end up taking care of them because I was traveling so much and be careful because she'll watch this tape; but we were very fortunate that our children were, for the most part, highly directed in terms of what they did. They were both very good students. They both stayed out of trouble. Although anybody who's been a parent knows that you dodge a lot of bullets. And we came out on the high side of that. We were very fortunate.

And they both went to school at Wake Forest. My daughter, the older one, she and my wife did all the due diligence in terms of where to go to school and my son piggybacked on the existing base of information and he decided to go Wake Forest too. So, yes, he sometimes calls himself the energy efficient man. So that's one way in which he was efficient there. I've been asked from time to time why didn't my kids go to the University of Tennessee, which would've been a perfectly good place for them to go, to the university. But my wife and I had both gone away to school and we placed a value on that.

And they'd not been in Knoxville, Tennessee for almost 40 years and I know one lawyer who in particular grew up in Knoxville, but he went to the University of Tennessee, then he went to the university law school, but then he purposely moved to Memphis for a number of years and moved back just to change the scenery. He said people that don't ever move anywhere, if you have a choice to move somewhere, it's probably a good idea. So we've got one in Charlotte; one in Nashville now.

**Stock:** How do you think you influenced your children the most?

**Langley:** I probably influenced them the most, not by anything I ever said to them, but by the way that we did things in our family. Of course, parents always say things to kids and it's like dealing with students at times. You know, you have to understand that sometimes you're connecting and sometimes you're not. But I think the way I influenced them the most is probably by the way I did things. As I've already talked about, you know, I'm a planner and understanding where you want to go. And they saw me doing things like that.

It's funny when you see your kids grow up, how much you observe about them. It's not too hard to figure out why they did things in certain ways because they picked up a lot from my wife, and my wife's a lot smarter than I am. I'll get some points for that, but she is and she's probably the most thoughtful person I've ever met in my entire life and just a wonderful mother to the kids, and so they've both turned out just great.

**Stock:** How do you think, if I had your children here, how would they describe you as a parent?

**Langley:** They'd probably describe me as maybe too directed, too focused at times. I know what I want to do and I do it. My daughter is very much the same way I am. She does what she wants to do and she's very focused, but they're both successful. My son is a little bit more laid back, but don't read too much into that term laid back. He's a real serious kid when the situation requires it.

**Stock:** How do you think your parents influenced you the most?

**Langley:** I think they influenced me by not only what they did, but also what they said. I mean I remember them telling me the right way to do things and I listened. I didn't always do it the way they said, but I remembered what they said and they never gave me any bad advice; great parents to have. Neither of them are with me anymore, but they knew how to deal with me, because I wasn't always an easy person to deal with. But again, no trouble, trouble types of things, just little annoyances here and there that came up.

**Stock:** So you think you're more like your father or mother?

**Langley:** Oh, that's tough. I think probably a mixture of both. I've got some characteristics of both of them.

**Stock:** Okay, do you think in your family- you have brothers and sisters- are they in similar positions as you are, or what professions do they have?

**Langley:** Yes, I've got a sister who lives in Philadelphia. And now, she has lived in Philadelphia her entire life; native Philadelphian. If you talk to her, you'd pick her out of

a crowd because of her Philadelphia accent. And she and her husband have lived there; both from the local area there and they both have lived in Doylestown community north of Philadelphia for quite a while.

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And my other sister is living in Huntersville, North Carolina with her husband, he's a former chief of police of an Ohio police department and he retired from there. Now, he's down in NASCAR country in Huntersville, where he's the chief and so my sister is married. They have a very nice family and are doing very well.

Also, I did have a younger brother, Bob, who passed away in 1971 at the age of 16. He was a great brother, sports enthusiast, and excellent student. I only wish that I had the opportunity to see him develop into an adult and to see the life that he would have chosen to live.

**Stock:** NASCAR country?

**Langley:** Yes

**Stock:** They did the Daytona 500 yesterday?

**Langley:** I know I stayed up too late watching the end of it.

**Stock:** Saw all the crashes.

**Langley:** And the fire. [Juan Pablo Montoya crashing into the jet dryer truck that caused a massive fire at Daytona that evening.]

### General Historical Questions

**Stock:** Let's shift gears almost completely and look at some questions, probably not relevant for your academic career. One is, if you could live in some historical era other than now, which one would it be?

**Langley:** Okay, because you provided me with some of the questions ahead of a time, but it didn't say other than now. So if I could live in some historical era other than now, I think maybe the early 1900's and I'm not exactly sure why I would say that, except to say that the world was reasonably well-developed by then. We had the advent of the

automobile in the early 1900's. So there was innovation, there was excitement, then we had a big war obviously.

But I'll also answer the question the way I read it, and I'd probably pick- I think we've lived in some of the best years that we've ever experienced. I mean, I can't imagine anything that could've been better than being a baby boomer and growing up in the '50s and the '60s. The way life was back in those days, there is no resemblance to what it's like right now. Everything evolves. And I think some of the challenges that are being faced longer term, I'd feel bad for my children because I don't think they'll have the privilege of living in the same world I lived in because they're younger than I am. But I think the circumstances and the situations that we've lived through in the past 50, 60 years have been really good to live through and I'm just not so sure what the future holds.

But again, to try to be positive about it, there's so much innovation. Once we work our way through things like technology-based societies- I mean it's not hard to understand why a lot of manufacturing has moved offshore. And when you move activity based functions offshore, that displaces people from their jobs and so we're dealing with the need to create jobs. But long term, we'll probably figure out a way to do that; that makes some of the progress we're looking for. It's just kind of hard to see at any point in time on how to do that.

**Stock:** Now if you could be anybody in history, who would you be?

**Langley:** Well, maybe from an academic- I feel like I need to have a pretty profound answer, you know, like Einstein- I might say Steve Jobs, although I've read enough divergent commentaries on Steve Jobs. There's lots of the best of him that I admire and there is a lot that I don't admire if what I read is true.

But I think if I could be anyone, I would probably like to be a prominent professional athlete, probably a hockey player like Bobby Orr or Gordie Howe or somebody like that. I just am attracted to those kinds of things. I enjoy sports. I am part owner of a Minor League hockey team that I have a great interest in and involvement with, so I get to see some of that going on. I think it's just an interesting thing to do, but

I'm sure there are other people I would also enjoy stepping into the shoes of if I had a chance.

**Stock:** Now, if you could be any historical figure in the past, who might it be?

**Langley:** I think, and I'm a little bit biased by living in the timeframe in which I've been living and dealing with issues that are important to people, but I think it would probably be Bill Clinton, former president of the United States. And the reason I say that is, definitely not to make a political comment, but I think in Clinton, you've got a guy that had a pretty good grasp on the totality of what it is to try to manage a country and participate in a global kind of setting. And I think history will probably show that he made some pretty good decisions over time and while my political orientation is not the same as Bill Clinton, what I'm saying is that I'd love to have him back for a few years. But at the time he was the president, I kind of wondered a bit, but I think that that would be an interesting person to get to know.

And the other part of me saying that is because I've met a couple of presidents. I met Ford, I think, and I met one other. But anyway, I think that if you had a chance to sit down and talk with Bill Clinton for 20 minutes, it would be a remarkable opportunity. And I'm sure that I would not say the same about every other president.

**Stock:** What accomplishment; this can cut across academics, family, whatever; are you most proud of in your life?

**Langley:** I'm definitely most proud of having a meaningful, enjoyable family life. You know, kids that grew up to be fine adults and have families of their own and a wife that could not have been a finer person to be married to for all these years. And I've been very fortunate. I mean I just don't think that these kinds of things, just automatically occur for people. And so I've been very blessed in terms of what I've been able to experience in my life.

**Stock:** Is there anything you would do differently? Even though you've had a good life, are there some things you would do differently?

**Langley:** Yes, I thought about that and I've never tried to develop any profound thinking about this, but I guess I feel like if you were to go back in time and change something, the consequential effects of that are what would scare me, because for as long as I've been around, at least according to my standards, things have worked pretty well so far. There are things that if you could adjust here and there, I mean decisions you made, if I go back and make a different decision, but then if part of the deal was going back and changing something is you have to open yourself up to the possibility you may have other consequences that would be impacted; how would they say it? There is no way I would go back and change anything.

**Stock:** Well, you might not trade the 1916-D dime for the bowling ball. That might be different.

**Langley:** Yes, I think you're actually right on that, yes.

**Stock:** This relates to one of your answers earlier. If we were writing as it is, for Don Bowersox and Tom Mentzer, both of them passed away, a lot of people spoke and said, "Here is how we remember Tom or Don and so on." What do you think they would say about you? How do you want them to remember you?

**Langley:** Well, that's a really tough one. I thought you're going to ask me what I would say about them and I've nothing but the highest regard for both of them. I had the chance to work with Tom. I was one of the people who hired Tom at Tennessee. I had the chance to work with him for about 15 years. I can't say that he and I always agreed on everything or that we had the same perspectives on issues, but I have a great amount of respect for him.

Don Bowersox, it's not a regret, again that's too strong of a word, but one of the things that I would like to do differently if I could, is to create an opportunity to have worked more closely with Don in some capacity. He and I got along very well even though we were at different universities. I mean we never worked together on anything of a formal nature, but I always felt as though it would have been an enjoyable opportunity to work closely with him on something of interest.

So what would they think of me? I think that Don would probably say that I've done many helpful things to help move this profession forward. Again, there are a lot of people who have been helping to row the boat, but each of us only has one oar and some people based on the impact they made – seemed like they had more than one oar. But it's everybody's working together to try to achieve recognition not for its own sake, but just the recognition of the supply chain concept logistics for the extent to which it can help improve how we do business. And I think Don would probably say that I was one of the contributors that helped to move that forward.

I think Tom Mentzer would say that I'm one of the people that would fit that first category, but also helped to move the Tennessee program forward. And Tom was a great, very prolific person, obviously. Lot of writing, lot of good research, worked extremely effectively with students. Probably, would say that my pie chart was focused relatively a little more on industry and business relationships, maybe than on the pure academic side of things and that's how we might have actually differed a little bit in our professional perspectives. As I said, I have a great respect for all of his meaningful contributions to our profession.. It was a real loss to the profession with his passing and that of Don as well. And so I have nothing but the highest regards for both of them.

**Stock:** Then what do you think are some of the main lessons you've learned in life?

**Langley:** I think maybe it's a function of age, but one is to be thankful every day you get up in the morning. And I mean that because I think it's a real privilege. When you look around the world and you see, I've seen some of this for myself but not much, when you see the squalor in parts of Mexico City or outside of Johannesburg and you've been to Johannesburg, you've seen those camps and you see what it must be like for those people who are living in plywood huts, some of them. There's a lot worse conditions than that. And so I've not only been spared but I've been living high off the hog in terms of growing up in the United States and enjoying living in a civilized country. So I'm very thankful of that.

The other thing is the opportunity to have had a great diversity of things that I've been exposed to and people and activities. Again, like I said, when I was back in high school, grade school, I had lots of friends. I was never one to stick with only one group

or only one best friend. And professionally, I've got people I know all over the place. It's just a wonderful thing. And I've had people who have made that happen. I didn't mention George Gecowets earlier, but George was president for 30 years of the NCPDM and CSCMP. And he and people like Howard Gochberg did an awful lot to help me in my career. So, you know, I guess what I would say is whatever I've achieved, I've achieved because of the support and the personal interest and friendship of other people. And without them, I wouldn't have been able to do very much compared to what I have been able to do.

**Stock:** One of our earlier videos that will be uploaded, Dr. John Coyle, we interviewed this morning. One of the factoids about him that he said people probably wouldn't know, is that he was an altar boy in the Catholic Church and almost became a priest. Don Bowersox almost became a pharmacist, other things like that. But Dr. John Coyle was saying that the experience he had in Catholicism probably had a significant impact on his concern for students and helping companies, other kinds of things that he was doing. Have you had any experience like that which might be similar?

**Langley:** I don't know that I do have any experience that would be similar in that respect because I'm the guy that, if my students didn't like my lecture, I figured it's my fault. Or if I give the students an assignment that they don't turn in on time and somebody says, "why I didn't give them the right incentive to turn it in." I'm a believer in, it goes back to the Deming philosophy. But when you look at the root cause, I believe that the professor should be the leader in the classroom and also include incentivizing and [make himself] interesting to his students. I don't believe students should be expected to walk into the classroom, and automatically be interested in whatever you're going to say. I think part of your job is. And people would definitely disagree with me on that, but I've always had an interest in trying to help people who have an interest in what we're doing.

**Stock:** What advice would you give to recently graduated Ph.D.'s based upon your experience?

**Langley:** Well, I see the academic world changing so much and the different pressures we've got. I mean the importance of publications, for example, and doing research, is in

a continual state of evolution. 30 or 40 years ago, the research requirements weren't quite as intense as they are now. And I guess one of my concerns, and this would translate into advice for a young graduate, is first of all, I am a firm believer that one of things that distinguishes university level education from other types of education is the creation of new knowledge and that's done through research. And so, like Penn State University, if people here didn't do any research, it wouldn't be much of a university. But that's what one of the reasons we do things because we are equipped to do it. And so it's absolutely essential that newly minted Ph.D.'s have a dedication and commitment to research and the research process.

But the thing that concerns me is that according to my way of thinking, in order to have a successful university, you've got to have expertise in teaching, research, and service, those are the three we use, obviously, and it takes capable people to make significant contributions in each of those areas. And I'm not sure that everybody is as well-equipped to be the ultimate researcher that they may be asked to become, or to be the teacher.

And the other thing is if you focus someone too much on research- I've seen this happen- you can ruin a perfectly good person, who may be more well-rounded by confining their accountabilities so intensely on research that by the time they have met the mark and then are promoted and tenured in research, based on the research accomplishments which is a necessary condition usually. Sometimes, you have made them incapable of becoming as excellent as they could be in teaching and/or in service. So I would say that somehow you have to keep that balance and keep the intensity on the research, because it's an important condition, but make sure you look at it in light of the other accountabilities for professors.

**Stock:** Related to that, with doctoral students coming out primarily in the academic arena, has the market place changed a lot since you graduated, and in what ways do you think it has? What good ways and what bad ways?

**Langley:** I think that it has changed in largely speaking, good ways because there are many more opportunities available today than there were. Of course, there are many more graduates than there were back then, too. So maybe it's still a one-to-one kind of a

deal, but there are a lot of opportunities for students who are capable of putting up a pretty good doctoral record, meaning course work, meaning research while you're a doctoral student in business, and being able to be attractive to high quality universities for a permanent position. They have some choices, and I think they can do a pretty good job of matching their own skills, abilities and interests because all the universities are different, once you start taking a close look at it. So I would say a part of my advice to a young PhD graduate would be to take your time about things. Make sure you understand what it is you're getting yourself into. It's not a destination, it's a journey type of thing.

But it's a journey I mean, and not all parts of an academic career play out the same. And just make sure that at an early stage, you try to get your arms around the direction you want to go in, although you have to be open to new ideas that will come up. You can't say on day 1 of your first job, "I know what the next 30 years are going to look like." Because there's no way that can happen. But to be open to new ideas, but also be able to have kind of a direction you're going to follow and to the extent possible when you ask questions like what does it take to get promoted, what does it take to get tenured, to get the best possible answers to those questions. I think most of the answers to those questions are some version of well, "Here are our standards and we'll see when you get near that point whether you meet them." And I think, you know, the more definite we can be, the better.

### **General Information & Perspectives**

**Stock:** Well, John, the other questions asked so far have been sort of standard for all of the people we've interviewed. Now I'd like to ask you some specific questions for John Langley, which are unique to you. You've been at three universities over your career. We've talked about that and one of the things that you mentioned briefly, but you might you want to talk about more specifically, how do you get a balance between teaching, research, and service? Because we know all universities are different. Some place more importance on research, while some place more importance on some teaching. And should they be of equal importance or should research, as it is at many places, still be the dominant factor?

**Langley:** Well, if I go back for just a moment to what I started to say a few moments ago regarding the different pressures universities are facing; you know, Pennsylvania State University, less than 10 percent of the funding comes from the state of Pennsylvania. So, public institutions all over the place are seeing declining levels of support, which on the one hand is an inconvenience, but on the other hand, may be a long term opportunity that can be taken advantage of. And so I would say that the funding issue is causing universities to rethink how they function, how they're organized, how their resources are deployed.

And as that begins to take hold, I think that universities finally are going to be making more strategic resource decisions than they've been able to make in the past. For example, I think among the faculty, as a whole, is responsible for a broad set of accomplishments- teaching, research, and service. The assumption that everyone on the faculty should contribute equally to all three of those I think is a faulty assumption. If for no other reason, then you find some people who are better at teaching than research, than services. So that's point number 1- if we can do a better job of aligning our resources with our needs in ways that people are doing what they are best at doing and they enjoy doing the most, we should; which might include having people from industry come in and help with the teaching role, provide them with the meaningful faculty position. But I think for someone to contribute in research, I mean there's only one way to do that, that's to be a good researcher. And so, I think it's going to be important to have at least enough people who are capable and competent in the research activity and end up representing the university as well as possible, and that's so that the university can be viewed as a source of research. But to say that everyone needs to participate, then you get into the issues of the idea of what kind of a position could you have if you're not a research track person, so there's lots of details to be worked out.

**Stock:** Tough choices.

**Langley:** Tough choices.

**Stock:** One of the things that we've sort of touched on, at least tangentially, is that you've been involved in business organizations. You've done consulting, you have been

on directorships with different companies, how do those activities align with the academic responsibilities of the faculty member?

**Langley:** Well, they align in a number of different ways in the sense that they help to create- and not just for myself, but anyone else who's involved with industry in some way- it helps to provide some real life perspective on what we're teaching. And by that, I mean people who are aware of the function and after all, we are a school of business administration, so it's important to people who are representing themselves as professors in business administration to have some knowledge of how businesses actually function. But from a more practical point of view, I think contact with companies results in interest in companies who hire students, interest by companies who sponsor research projects, and all the universities I've been on the faculty of, we've all had a very, very successful outreach working with the companies coming to these universities- Tennessee, Georgia Tech, Penn State- to come together with their industry peers, and the university facilitates that.

And the rationale is kind of different. For Penn State and Tennessee, one of the major attractions for companies is access to the high quality students that we have here. And I can only speak for the Tennessee experience, because that's where my formative years were academically. I was a student at Penn State, I wasn't a faculty member here early on. But using the students to attract companies was good for the students because they got jobs out of it and that we built relationships with the companies.

The Georgia Tech experience was kind of the opposite, in that Georgia Tech has been the #1 ranked school in industrial engineering for the past 20 plus years. They didn't need to worry as much about getting companies to interview their students because they were the best source of students. And so they developed relationships with companies for other reasons, and then eventually began to use that to work effectively with students.

You've asked me questions about what people would say about me. There might be people who would say, "Well, you know, he did too much consulting," and I've done a lot of consulting, but I've done a lot of consulting that has been the source of data and information for academic articles, for Ph.D. dissertations, etc. And so I think if you

handle it correctly, you can actually parlay the content and the fabric of consulting work into your lecture notes, and into your research agenda.

Interestingly, I haven't done any management consulting that I would say is totally separate from the academic positions I have held... But, there are some academics who would say that if you spend any time with consulting activity, you are taking time away from other more important activities. This point of view is at odds with policies at many universities (including all at which I have served) that advocates consulting by its faculty members and even specifies a percentage of one's time that may be directed to consulting activities.

**Stock:** We haven't talked much about this, other than in passing. You've been involved with CSCMP, CLM, NCPDM; tell me how you got involved with that initially, and is there a progression over the years with that organization, and highlight some of the things you did with them?

**Langley:** Sure.

**Stock:** And did you envision the organization as it is now?

**Langley:** I can say yes, let me just clarify that, but I started that in the mid-1970's, new faculty member at Tennessee and all three universities I've been at are very supportive of involvement with professional organizations. And so, the NCPDM was the conference to go to and the educator's conference was on Sunday and you and I have been at those conferences for many, many years, probably almost the same number of years.

So Tennessee was supportive of me being involved with NCPDM. And I went to the annual conferences and so I got to know the people. And then in 1984, I was asked to be the program chair for an annual conference, and then subsequent to that, I was asked to be on the executive committee. They had a pattern, you could tell, because the people who were on the executive committee tended to be involved in other ways with the organization. I've seen people that have been on the executive committee who really, probably shouldn't have accepted the assignment because it was clear that that wasn't really a very high priority for them, but I've seen a lot of people for whom it was a priority. And I was also fortunate being an academic, because I think I was the first

academic who was the president of the Council of Logistics Management. I think that's true. The only other person who is an academic who was president was Don Bowersox. But I think Don was president before he was an academic.

I think I'm maybe a little fuzzy on that details, but I have been followed by other people who are academic, which is wonderful. So for me, the NCPDM, CLM, and CSCMP are organizations that for me were like a home away from home, because I got to spend time with my academic friends and also my industry friends. You know, I've always stayed through the duration of these types of conferences. A lot of the academics, however, come in for the educator meeting on Sunday and then they have teaching assignments or whatever so they leave and they miss the industry part. And I would only encourage them to the extent that their circumstances permit, to stay around for a day or two and get to meet the industry people. They don't bite, they like professors and they like spending time at universities and if you take the time to try to develop the relationship, they are usually pretty good at reciprocating.

**Stock:** Now, you've got textbooks on your resume. What piqued your interest in writing textbooks? And, you are continuing to do that? What are your objectives with those textbooks that you write and co-author?

**Langley:** I'm privileged that when I was a grad student here at Penn State, I studied under the original manuscripts for the first edition of Coyle and Bardi's *The Management of Business Logistics*. And then with the fourth edition, they asked me to come on as an author. I'd never even thought about writing a book before. I just figured it would be a lot of work, which now 6 editions later, I know it is. But it's an opportunity to communicate with people in the profession. Although many academics do not view book-writing as research, I do believe that taking knowledge and organizing it in a way that can help others to understand what supply chain and logistics is all about – most definitely represents a significant contribution to the profession.

Also, I had the chance to travel extensively around the world on various projects, and it's not unusual I go somewhere- Singapore or Europe or somewhere- and someone will pull a copy of our textbook [Coyle, Langley, Novack, Gibson, and Bardi, *Supply Chain Management: A Logistics Perspective*, 2013] off the shelf and it's just a reminder

how many different people you can touch by what you write. I can assure you, if you're writing a logistics book, we earn royalties but they are not sufficient to change your standard of living for sure. But I think the standard that does change, is it kind of gives you more visibility in terms of what's going on and then also I think it's kind of nice to have the name of your university inside the front covers so when people say, "Who is this and where is he?" they'll get an answer that resonates and looks good for the home university.

**Stock:** You know, textbook writing is interesting and certainly changing in terms of the technology.

**Langley:** Well, I wish I had a crystal ball to figure out how that was going to go because the price of these textbooks are very expensive for students these days, so they'll look at other options. And then of course, the e-books have been around for a while and now there are companies that are getting into the business, I mean if you want to talk numbers at this point in time, maybe the textbook hardback may cost \$200, you can get an e-reader or something for \$49. And also, if I was a student today, I'd certainly rather have something on my Kindle or my iPad or my whatever than a big thick hard book in the back of my backpack.

So when you start looking at impacts on retail prices like that, then you've got to say, "What's going to be the effect on royalties for authors?" And again, fortunately maybe this is one way to look at it, but fortunately, there's not enough money at stake to make it a huge kind of a factor. But if you are writing a best-selling marketing book, for example, you can be talking about quite a sum of money.

**Stock:** We all hope for that, but not many succeed unfortunately. In your career, you've done lots of things, but you were never a journal editor. Why not?

**Langley:** Well, first of all, I have the utmost respect for people like you, who have been editors of professional journals. I wouldn't call it a thankless job, because I've thanked editors, but it's an incredible amount of work and requires just an unending amount of dedication to be a good journal editor. And I never felt as though I had the critical mass of time to devote to being an outstanding editor. I think our profession has made a lot of

improvement in the areas such as responsiveness to authors who submit manuscripts. I love it now, when I get a manuscript to review because it has a deadline that's expected to be met. And the author has expectations- the author knows when they're going to get meaningful feedback from the editor, and in a timely manner. I think that that's a wonderful thing to do.

But I really feel as though it's the importance of detail- maybe back to my earlier comment when I said I'm kind to task-oriented- I think the job of a journal editor and you're an expert on this, but must feel like it's never going to be done because it's never done, you always have things to do.

**Stock:** There's always a next issue.

**Langley:** So I apologize if maybe part of my agenda or involvement should've been to take my turn in the barrel as a journal editor. But the people that I've known who have been journal editors, including yourself- other people too- Tom Mentzer, John Coyle, and other various people have taken it very seriously, that I give them a lot of credit for what they've done.

**Stock:** So what do you think in your experience now, what's the single most important issue that faces academics today in the logistics supply chain arena?

**Langley:** Well, let's say a couple things. One is to continue to provide high quality useful education for students at all levels and to maintain the dedication to the interest of the students who, are coming to the university to learn things and hopefully in supply chain. We're very fortunate in supply chain and logistics that a lot of the students that we get are people who had never heard of those terms before they came to college and they see where the action is and they end up studying logistics. So I hope that we continue to provide what they need to get, from an educational point of view, I think.

Second is that we maintain and enhance our commitment to research, particularly in terms of- while there's a need for theoretical conceptual research, I fully understand that- but I think that if we're going to research a problem, it should be a relevant problem and the extent to which we can work on real problems is only going to ease the transition of the knowledge we create, into action by managers to improve things. It doesn't mean

to say that we shouldn't be researching things that are theoretical or conceptual at all, but we ought to be making sure that it's got a practical bent to it if at all possible.

And the third thing is to do what we can to maintain and enhance the support of all of our external constituencies, because whether it is state government or federal government or the industry based in an area- I'm going to take a trip in late April this year to a university that's got a growing supply chain program and they're trying to impress the businesses and industries in their state, in their area in terms of what they are doing- they're trying to generate a lot of enthusiasm and I'm proud that they've asked me to be their keynote speaker. But more importantly, I'm going to be one small part of a process that's really trying to establish that program and I really hope that they do well in the future, no reason why they shouldn't, but it's something that they've got to target as an accomplishment.

**Stock:** Take the other side of the coin of the practitioner. What do you think are the most significant issues facing them?

**Langley:** Probably the most significant issue, and this has been with us for a long time, is the reluctance to implement some of the more recently developed tools, technologies that we have at our disposal. I mean I've often thought that, you know, the company that would really be successful will be the one that implements everything we've got in our arsenal of tools and techniques and models and technologies right now. Let alone what we're going to be developing in the future. But if you look at the problems we're trying to solve in supply chain and logistics today, some of those problems, we were trying to solve 20 years ago, and that's just kind of crazy.

And then I hear, this term collaboration, which I'm a strong proponent of the idea- by working together, you can accomplish more than working separately- and I don't mean just from a "Hey, let's put our arms around each other's shoulder," and enjoy working. I'm talking about the process of collaboration which is much more dimensional than just the relationship part of it. And yet, I still hear a company saying, "Well, we tried that" or "that doesn't work," and I just want to say, "Well, what better idea do you have?" And so I think there's a lot of things like that that, there are success stories today, but we need to have more adoption of things that we know are successful.

**Stock:** So from all of the things you've said and I think the viewers will sense this, you're excited about supply chain management and my guess would be you believe the future is very bright?

**Langley:** I am very excited about supply chain management. I think the future is very bright. I would encourage young people of all interests to consider supply chain and logistics as a career path, whether you're talking about the industry side- I think there's going to be a continued need for capable people in industry. And also from the academic side, I've already said, I think that the academic opportunities are very attractive and more and more universities now have supply chain programs and so hopefully that will continue.

**Stock:** And all of us baby boomers are going to be retiring.

**Langley:** Well, we'll make a little room for other people at some point in time.

**Stock:** So John, we've covered lot of topics. Is there something we've not covered that you'd like the audience to hear from you before we end this interview?

**Langley:** Well, I think we've covered quite a range of different topics. I guess I would just conclude by saying, I kind of alluded to this a little bit earlier when I was talking about the people who are unfortunate in various parts of the world, but I would just say that we're probably living in one of the greatest times you could live in, certainly not without its challenges. We all have things we'd like to change a little bit or a lot if we could do it. But, by and large, we're all very fortunate to be in the positions we are and to be talking about the kinds of topics Jim and I have been talking about for the past while. And so I would just say to keep that in mind every day and be thankful for what we've got and be thankful that we have this opportunity to continue to contribute to the development of a profession that I think is well worth it and is headed in the right direction.

**Stock:** We thank you, John Langley, for participating in this interview and we also thank you, as the viewers, for watching us. As mentioned earlier, these videotapes of various

people in the logistics supply chain arena will be available for your viewing on the University of South Florida website. It requires no cost or a password to access. And so we encourage you to look at all of the videos which are there. And our plan is to include an average of two per year and so as time progresses, we'll add more and more individuals to this august group that we have. So thank you John.

**Langley:** Thanks Jim.