RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RUDOLPH M. BELL

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK
and
PAUL CLEMENS

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TRANSCRIPT BY

KATHRYN T. RIZZI

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on August 23, 2010, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Rudolph M. Bell and …

Paul Clemens: … Paul Clemens …

SH: … And Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you, Professor Bell, for coming in to speak with us today. Just for the record, can you tell me where and when you were born?

Rudolph M. Bell: Yes, I was born in New York City, November 5, 1942.

SH: All right. We would like to start by asking you to briefly speak about your family history. Let us begin with your father, his name and where he was born.

RB: His name was Rudolph Albert Bell, and he was born in Dalmatia [in Croatia]. His mother was vacationing there, having come to the United States in 1907, and then went back right before what turned out to be the outbreak of the First World War, and so they scurried back. Although he was born in Dalmatia, his experience was entirely in the United States.

SH: What was his profession?

RB: He repaired air compressors, and after many trials and tribulations, including a business venture with a brother-in-law who fleeced him, he went on his own and ran a very small, one-person business on 53rd Street and Eighth Avenue. He was very satisfied with being his own boss. I think he probably would have had great difficulty working for anyone else. [He] never made much money with it. Back in the '50s, it was standard, well, that you provide money, for running the household, forty-five dollars a week in his case and you put it into different envelopes, and he'd come out short any number of the weeks. So, my mother's mother would lend him money, give them money and so forth. He continued to work until he didn't realize that he was too old to work [laughter], and when he stopped, his health deteriorated rapidly and he really didn't last long. It was puttering around with the work that was keeping him going. That was into the 1980s.

SH: Was he from a large family?

RB: He had five sisters, just one of whom is still alive. She's ninety-six. He was the prize, his mother's pride and joy, of course. Relative to the five girls, he was the oldest, and so he had responsibilities for helping to take care of them, but they grew up in the [Great] Depression. He was born in 1911. They lost their house that they had. Then, after World War II, most of the family just got on a train and went to California, but he was married already and stayed in Queens, East Coast.

SH: Did he serve in World War II?

RB: No, he managed to be classified as doing necessary, some kind of electrical work, and then my sister was adopted in 1941, but that counted as a child. I was born in 1942 and my brother in

1944, so he had many, too many children even in World War II to be drafted, but he had an exemption before that.

SH: What about your mother's family history?

RB: So, she was born in Antwerp in Belgium. She had a brother. Her father was a violinist with the Antwerp Orchestra. My grandmother was a seamstress. They came first to England to escape the German invasion of Belgium, so they lived in England.

Then, in the 1920s, they came to America, and he eventually had to give up being a violinist because his palms sweated too much, or some damn thing like that. She worked as a seamstress in Bound Brook, New Jersey, no less, which I never knew [I] had any connection with New Jersey, but there she was a seamstress. He unwisely invested what money they had in Danish war bonds, which was a very bad choice [laughter] in the late '30s, but he was connected to it. [laughter] So, that impoverished that side of the family as well. He died of thrombosis attack in 1944, and my mother's mother never remarried. I do remember clearly her working as an alterations person at Gimbels, which was a department store that no longer exists, but she was a specialized seamstress. She would go to work and do alterations and then bring more home and so forth. She worked very hard.

PC: You said this impoverished side of the family, but it was your mother's mother who gave money to your father.

RB: Right, because my mother's mother was a cheapskate and came to live with us after 1944.

PC: Yes.

RB: She put the down payment on the house in Queens. They moved from Manhattan to Queens. Then, whenever they came up short, she would fix it, because she was working full-time at Gimbels as a seamstress.

SH: That is interesting. So, you have the two siblings, one younger and one older.

RB: No, I have another brother that I didn't mention.

SH: Oh.

RB: Because we were talking about during the war. I have a sister who was born in December '41 and I, November '42, and then a brother, August 1944, and then a youngest brother, '48.

SH: How did your parents meet? Did you ever hear that story?

RB: My mother was a semi-professional dancer. Places like Roseland [Ballroom], they used to have people show people how to dance, and she met my father and taught him how to dance. Well, I don't know if they were old for the '30s, but they were twenty-six. I think my mother was older. She changed her birthday until it came [time] to collect Social Security, [laughter]

and then she fessed up. [laughter] So, she was two years older than he. So, that was the circumstance in which they met. My father's mother hated this floozy woman that danced in ballrooms and in fact burned all of, the five sisters were bridesmaids, and she burned all of their dresses two days before the wedding …

SH: Before the wedding.

RB: [laughter] Before the wedding. Then, my grandmother, my mother's mother, made all new dresses, and then my father's mother didn't come. She wouldn't come to the wedding.

SH: Was there a problem?

RB: So, they were very pissed off.

SH: Oh, to say the least. Was there a difference in religion?

RB: No, they're both Catholic. My father's mother just thought that women who smoked and danced in dance halls were immoral, and she didn't want that woman to have anything to do with her son. Whether any woman would have satisfied her is another question. She was a real battle-axe. [laughter] I remember her fairly well, and [she was] extremely difficult.

SH: This was because your father was the only son.

RB: Absolutely, he was.

SH: When your mother and father married, where did they live?

RB: They had an apartment right next to Saint Vincent Ferrer Church, so that's 65th Street and Third Avenue. Even though it was the depression, I'm not sure, but even then it was not cheap to live in Manhattan, but they did live in an apartment in Manhattan, whereas his mother and father lived in Brooklyn. They had lost their house, so they rented. My mother must have been getting paid for dancing in dance school. She wasn't a stripper. I never heard of that or anything. [laughter] I never saw any pictures [indicating that]. I'd see pictures, we have pictures of her in her dance costumes

PC: I have seen plenty of pictures of Roseland, and by our standards, it is pretty respectable. [laughter] Do not worry about it. [laughter]

RB: I'm not worried. [laughter] I'm trying to figure out where she got the money to pay the rent. It didn't occur to me before. [laughter]

PC: You said your sister was adopted. How did that happen?

RB: Well, it is unusual. They were married in 1938, and since my mother was not a spring chicken, depending on which of her birthdates you use, she was certainly thirty, which was considered time to have children. I don't think it had anything to do with evading service in the

war. I think it was simply wanting to have children. So, this would have been three years that they were married when this adoption occurred, and then immediately after that, as does happen, there're medical reasons that it happens, she must have become pregnant within two months thereafter, because I'm just eleven months apart from my sister. They never told her she was adopted until one of my father's sisters decided that this was something every person should know, and then so that whacked her out when she was about twenty years old. While she has not successfully done one of these searches for, "Where's my actual mother and father?" she has issues about, "Well, probably, it's really my father, and he had an affair, and this was with some other woman, and that's who I look like, and don't I look a little bit like Daddy?" all of which is untrue, to the best of my knowledge. So, that was very unsettling for her.

SH: I thought maybe there was family or someone that …

RB: No, this was absolutely [a] Manhattan baby that they knew ahead of time they would adopt. I knew more of that from my grandmother, [who] eventually was the one who told her, only after when my sister was twenty, so it's the early 1960s.

SH: Right. That is interesting for that time.

RB: I think adoptions were more often kept secret in that culture than is the case now. Now, with genetic fanaticism and all sorts of other things [laughter], there's no such thing. [laughter]

SH: [laughter] This is true. As far as education for their children, was that important for your mother and father?

RB: It was critically important for my mother but always within a context that nobody would ever have a dime to spend on education. My sister was not a good student, and I don't think my mother was particularly keen that girls had to be educated, but for the three boys, it was simply understood that you would go to Queens College [in the City University of New York (CUNY) system], which was free, at that time. [You would] ride your bicycle to get there, so you didn't have to spend, I think it was only, a nickel [on] the bus. That was simply an assumption that everybody would go to college. It was also in all of my father's five sisters, a tremendously high rate of college graduation for people who were of that generation, much higher than, I don't know what the national average is, but it was very, very high, almost none of them that didn't go to college [and] finish college.

SH: Where did you go to elementary school?

RB: I went to elementary school right through an empty vacant lot from my house, PS 117. Then, I was in what was called SP, skip a year, anyway, you skipped a year to do sixth, seventh and eighth grade in two years, instead of three. So, for that, I had to go to Stephen Halsey in Forest Hills, where all the smart Jews lived. So, I went through Stephen Halsey and did three years in two and then went to the regular district high school, which was Richmond Hill, because they were just beginning to try to balance ethnicity.

This was in the '50s, so this was pretty early, but somehow our house got districted into Richmond Hill High School, which was a subway ride and many stops, very far away, and a rather ordinary high school without anything special. If you had a, I don't know, an eighty-eight average, or whatever, then you got into Queens College, and that was it. There were no tests, I don't remember taking SATs. I don't think there were any then. They started later, I did take GREs, but I don't think I ever took SATs. If I did, it passed me by. I don't remember. [laughter] I don't remember taking them. All I know is you had to have a certain grade point average, and you were automatically admitted to Queens College.

SH: What about after-school jobs? Was that something that you did?

RB: I worked delivering newspapers from when I was eleven years old, and, by the time I was fifteen, I was earning more per week than my father. [I] had a huge operation, I gobbled up newspaper routes, so that I had delivered like 280 papers, and I had a girlfriend, teenage kind of girlfriend, and a couple of kids working for me collecting. [laughter] The biggest problem was not delivering the papers, I could do that, but collecting every week the stupid forty-two cents, and so I used to send them around to do the collections and let them keep the tips in exchange for the collection. So, that was how I was able to run a very large route.

PC: I think almost every kid our age has this story about trying to collect their newspaper routes. [laughter] It taught you people skills. [laughter]

SH: Or other skills.

RB: I did that through college.

PC: Wow.

SH: Did you really?

RB: By that time, I must have been eighteen, I don't know, because I bought a 1960 Pontiac red convertible with my own money. I'd saved that much money from these damn newspapers. [laughter]

SH: Wonderful story.

RB: Three thousand dollars it was.

PC: Yes.

SH: Oh, my. What was the ethnic makeup of your neighborhood where you grew up?

RB: We were only about six blocks from the subway, the E train, so it was a, bourgeois is the word I would use now, but of course, that isn't the word I would have used then. I would have used middle class, and so next door was a pharmacist. Three houses down was a lawyer, and across the street was a salesman of some kind of cloth. The ethnicity was mixed, didn't have any

particular sense, I suppose now, if I think about it, there probably were a fairly high percentage of Jews. It was Briarwood, and I think that was considered an area [in which many Jewish people lived. There were certainly no black people, no Asians, so the others were Protestant or Catholic.

SH: Was English the first language spoken in the home?

RB: It was the only language spoken in the home, except my mother and her mother, my grandmother who lived in the house, they spoke Flemish when they wished to, which was when they wished to talk about things that the kids shouldn't understand, even though I can still understand a little bit of Flemish.

My father's parents had moved to California, so we didn't see much of them, except when they came to visit. My father's mother never learned English, so she spoke only what she considered pure Dalmatian until she died when she was in her eighties.

With each other, one had gone to England in 1916 and the other to America right before the outbreak of the First World War, so their language was English. Both of them could speak the languages of the countries where they were born, but with each other, they only spoke English. They loved America. My mother loved America so much that when she had a small inheritance, when she died, she wanted to make sure it would be taxed, so the money would go to America, which had saved her. She deeply believed in America. She didn't believe in war. She fiddled around with trying to become a Quaker in the 1950s.

SH: Did she really?

RB: Yes, to get out of, during the Korean War, we were ten, she decided there might be more wars, and it was time to convert to being a Quaker so as to get her kids out of the war. [laughter]

PC: Valid reason.

SH: You graduated from high school in …

RB: '59.

SH: 1959. The Korean War was something during which time you would have been very young.

RB: The Korean War is my first recollection of television, when they showed scrolls of the soldiers who had died in Korea. We didn't have a television. We didn't have a television until the mid-'50s, but this was right in the Eisenhower election and I would go next door. They had a television, and so I would see that. My mother didn't believe in us knowing anything about news about war, and so there was none, not in the newspaper, not on the radio, not in our house. [Editor's Note: From 1950 to 1953, the Korean War involved South Korean, American and United Nations military forces fighting against the North Korean military, armed with Soviet weaponry, and Chinese military forces for control of the Korean Peninsula, which is still divided

at the 38th Parallel. Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president of the United States in 1952, during the Korean War, and reelected in 1956.]

SH: Even though you were delivering the newspaper.

RB: No, not yet, not yet. [laughter] It's 1942 [that I was born]. I don't start delivering newspapers until '53.

SH: Oh, I am thinking …

RB: Yes, no, 1950, I remember already …

SH: Okay.

RB: I don't think I remember Truman elected over Dewey. I think I know that just as a later recollection, but I do remember the news of Korea live. [Editor's Note: President Harry S. Truman defeated Republican favorite Thomas E. Dewey in the presidential election of 1948. As Truman celebrated his upset victory, he posed for photographers holding up the *Chicago Tribune* with the infamous headline, "Dewey Beats Truman."]

SH: Did your family become politically active?

RB: They were not especially active. They were Republicans. My father thought that it was disastrous that [Franklin D.] Roosevelt ran for a third term. They had been Democrats until then. His parents stayed Democrats, lifetime, and my father's father would write to his congressman and have letters inserted in the congressional record routinely with his opinions about this or that. Maybe as part of his growing up, I don't know, my father married this floozy dancer and became a Republican. [laughter] They were absolutely solid Republican with signs on the front lawn, with nothing other than that.

SH: Okay. Tell me, when you went off to college, what was your major? What did you plan to do with your life?

RB: I went to Queens College, and I doubled majored in mathematics and history, because I liked them both and I didn't have any particular plans about anything. Queens College was the only choice. If I had been smarter and better, I guess I could have tried for a scholarship at Columbia or something, but that was it. NYU [New York University] was a junk school at that time, so nobody went there. Smart kids, you either tried for a scholarship to Columbia, and I must have had a guidance counselor or somebody that said, "No, you won't get that," so Queens College was it, and that was the only possibility. I had no sense of anything like graduate school, certainly not initially.

I've only had two serious jobs in my life, and both of them were the first jobs I interviewed for, one was Metropolitan Life [Insurance Company] and the other was Rutgers. Doing computer programming for Metropolitan Life was the, well, it was the only job I interviewed for, and I got that and that was what I did. I also wanted to go to graduate school, so I signed up for a Master's

program at Queens College, then, I guess in, that was in '63. Then in '64, they inaugurated the doctoral program, so I guess I was in the first class of doctoral students at CUNY [City University of New York]. Again, it was a matter of it had to be free, and I was working full time, but they allowed that, and unlike our graduate students now, I finished the degree in six years anyway. [laughter]

SH: What was the Master's degree going to be in?

RB: History.

SH: In history.

RB: Yes, no, I had …

SH: You had made …

RB: I wasn't good enough in math to continue to do math. I had finished the major, but it wasn't, I liked history better, and I think I was better at it.

PC: Did you actually take computer courses in college?

RB: No, there were none.

PC: I cannot believe that.

RB: There weren't any, no, no. You took, it was called a MetLife test, and MetLife put you where you placed, everything from picking up waste baskets …

PC: Yes.

RB: … To whatever. So, I placed into this new unit, which was just then, they were converting from vacuum tube computers into the very first Honeywell machines. You had to sit there and write code.

PC: Yes. So, tell us what Queens College was like when you were there.

RB: For me, it was simply bicycle to my classes and bicycle back home and deliver those damn newspapers. I wasn't particularly active in anything. There was no, for me, no campus life. I think for many of the students, there was no campus life. The classes were small. I never had a class larger than about thirty. I had none of these huge lecture[s]. Maybe art history was a big one, but that was probably the only one.

PC: Was there a historian there who got you really interested in history?

RB: There were several that I liked but not one more than another. I remember taking Stuart Prall in English constitutional history, and Julius Bloch was interesting. Weintraub in medieval

history was a terror. Peter B. Golden [Newark History Department] was in the same class with me, but Peter Golden was much better than I was as a student and Weintraub liked him. He didn't like me as much. I wasn't a particularly engaged student.

SH: Was there a type of history that was more interesting to you?

RB: My interest was in medieval history, but the circumstances later of being married and other things that we will probably get to made it impossible for me to continue, so I ended up in American history for my Ph.D., but my interest was in medieval history.

SH: Okay.

PC: Before we get off Queens College, because I do not know much about it. Was it a physical campus?

RB: Oh, yes, absolutely. It was a 1930s, it had been a reformatory of some kind, and they made it into the basis of the college. In 1937, the college was founded, and it had classrooms, an administration building. It had, such as the city schools do, intramural-type sports activities.

PC: Did it have dorms?

RB: No, no dorms.

PC: No, dorms. That is sort of what I thought. [Editor's Note: Located in Flushing, Queens, Queens College is one of the four-year colleges in the CUNY system. Queens College opened its first residence hall in 2009. Queens College's varsity teams compete in the NCAA's Division II.]

RB: Yes, no, absolutely none.

PC: It was men and women.

RB: It was men and women, coed. I can't recall if it was exactly fifty-fifty, but it was probably very close to it, and it was admission purely on grades. It heavily attracted kids from Queens, because if you lived in Brooklyn, you went to Brooklyn College. You didn't waste a lot of time traveling, so it was ethnic Queens kids.

SH: It was mixed …

RB: Yes, yes, absolutely.

SH: … In terms of diversity.

RB: Yes, yes. Diverse, I don't remember that there was a significant Hispanic or African American population, but since it was absolutely blind to ethnicity, that doesn't surprise me in

the context of the 1950s. When I go there, it's 1959. I started in '59. [laughter] Still, even in 1959, this is years before any civil rights movement that hits suburban northern areas.

SH: You were already in college when you had to register for the draft. Is that correct?

RB: Yes, you registered for the draft at eighteen.

SH: Was that something that you were concerned about?

RB: No, it was a perfectly normal thing that you had to do within five days of your eighteenth birthday.

SH: Because I was thinking of your mother. [laughter]

RB: I came to have great problems with the Vietnam War, but her, I just thought she was a little bit nutty, [laughter] her fanaticism about becoming a Quaker and not allowing any news.

PC: You would have been registered in 1960.

RB: [Yes].

PC: There was no way you were going to get drafted.

RB: No.

PC: No.

RB: No. It was a non-issue.

PC: Yes, right, yes.

RB: No, you registered and you were automatically student status.

SH: Yes.

PC: Right.

RB: There was a draft, even in peacetime, but it had nothing to do with me.

SH: When you finished your undergraduate degree, that was when you went to work for MetLife.

RB: Yes, I graduated in, I guess, middle of May, or something, and I started working in June. I already went to the MA program in September of that year, and definitely, I was taking medieval history, because I remember taking Emory's classes, and I was so naïve that I didn't even realize

his very pro-Catholic bias and the way he taught me. It was all the same to me. I was very naïve. [laughter]

PC: Did you leave MetLife because you were bored or badly paid or a combination of the two?

RB: Neither. I was very well paid and I was fascinated with the work. You're jumping ahead of it, but the bottom line is that E. James Ferguson, who was something of a scholar, he wrote *Power of the Purse*. He told me that he would not continue as my mentor unless I at least tried for a job, so I said, "All right. How do you try for a job?" He said, "Well, there's this job at Rutgers. Go interview." "All right, I will," and they offered it to me. It was half the pay that I was earning. [Editor's Note: E. James Ferguson wrote *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961). Professor Bell wrote the *In Memoriam* column about Ferguson published in the December 2002 issue of the American Historical Association's newsmagazine *Perspectives on History*. (http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/issues/2002/0212/0212mem1.cfm)]

PC: Yes.

SH: Was it really?

RB: Yes.

SH: Was that ever a consideration?

RB: I discussed it at great length with my wife.

SH: [laughter] How did you meet your wife?

RB: She put together claims at MetLife, where they had become separated, from people applying for health benefits. So, if the doctor's bill came but not the hospital bill, or you wanted to protest something or other, she was the one that had to reconcile how come the paperwork got lost. One of the areas I was working in was computerizing the incoming mail, which had been done with stamps and manual people filing them by letter of the alphabet or policy number or whatever. She would rummage around looking for pieces of paper that she needed for real claims that we were using to try and understand how the system worked and how it could be programmed, instead of having all these people wandering around putting paper together.

SH: [laughter] Had she gone to college as well?

RB: No. She graduated from high school and went straight to work. She had taken a couple, she was young, she had taken a couple of different kinds of classes but not with any direct, useful intention like, "I want to go to college." She went to college after we were married at Rutgers and graduated from University College in 1977.

SH: Good for her. To back up, in the 1960s, when you were finished with your undergraduate degree and you went to work …

RB: ’63, yes.

SH: 1963, I am sorry.

RB: That’s fine.

SH: When you finished with your undergraduate degree in 1963 and you went to work with MetLife, you were going to school at night for your Master’s degree.

RB: I went to school at night to Master’s courses. I think I took two courses the first year. I might even have taken three, but I think it was two.

SH: Were you still living at home?

RB: Yes.

SH: I am just trying to understand the chronology.

RB: No, no, that’s fine. I lived at home until I get married, so [laughter] no independent living. [laughter]

SH: [laughter] It seemed like you took a hundred-and-eighty degree turn from the actual work you were doing at MetLife. Was this hard, or was it something that you found challenging?

RB: I liked it. I liked them both. I liked computer programming, and I liked writing code and figuring out how to logically put mail together or later it was dividend balances I was working on. I still keep up with some of the people I worked with …

SH: Did you?

RB: … Way back then. I also liked history, and so I did that.

SH: When did you make the decision to go into the graduate program to get your Ph.D.?

RB: I must have made it during that year, the Master’s. I never got a Master’s degree, but there was this brand new Ph.D. program and it was free, and since I was already taking a Master’s, that’s when I took graduate record exams, that year. I didn’t have a very good grade point average. I have no idea whether I had "As" or "Bs" or whatever in the Master’s courses I was taking, but I did very well on the GREs. I remember scoring like ninety-nine in the math and ninety-eight in the verbal and ninety-five in the history, so super high scores, which, given the other things I was doing, is maybe not so surprising, and maybe a bunch of dumb-dumbs were taking it that year. I don’t know, but anyway, I had very, very high scores. [laughter] I was admitted to the Ph.D. program, which had no meaning to me, except that, “I’ll go here instead of there.” By that time, I didn’t ride a bicycle anymore, so take the subway here or there. It didn’t make any difference.

SH: Right.

RB: Working at the Met was on 23rd Street, so I'd walk up to the graduate program on 42nd street.

SH: So, this …

RB: So, I did that.

SH: At CCNY.

RB: No, at CUNY, which at that time was located right across the street from the public library on 42nd Street on the ninth floor. Now, they've moved to the old B. Altman's [department store] building, but they were right across the street from the library.

SH: What kind of facilities did they have there?

RB: They were rented office space converted vaguely into classrooms, and it was the very first year of the doctoral program, so there were just a few elite faculty drawn from all the different campuses.

SH: Oh, really?

RB: It still is that way. One of the great weaknesses of the program is there's very little contact between students and faculty, unlike Rutgers, where I think the contact is great, but it was what I was used to, because I had never done anything in college except show up for class and leave, so this worked fine with me. I had Hans Trefousse in Civil War, I remember that well, and Madeline Rice in U.S. intellectual history and Pearl Kibre in medieval. That was my favorite class, so I must have been taking close to a full load. I know I took Gertrude Himmelfarb. It could be that I took them in two different years, and I don't remember.

SH: That is okay.

RB: Ye.

SH: So, you were still working full time.

RB: Yes.

SH: You were working at MetLife and, again, going to school at night.

RB: Right.

SH: Did you have to go to school on the weekends?

RB: No.

SH: No.

RB: The classes were always in the late afternoon or evening.

SH: What year did you and your wife marry?

RB: 1965, December of 1965. So, we met in the fall of '63 and, no, I said that wrong. We were married in 1964, absolutely 1964. Scratch 1965. [laughter] '64. [laughter] I know it's fast …

SH: Yes.

RB: December '64, okay.

SH: A man with a plan, right?

RB: This year's forty-six years.

SH: The courses you were taking, you said it was this select faculty coming in to teach this. When did this one professor tell you to start looking for a job?

RB: Not until '67.

SH: Ah.

RB: That was further along. I was taking a full course load, and you had to do three fields, three field exams, and you had to do two language exams, so it was a rigorous program. Nobody asked me if I was working during the day; it was my business. I took the classes when they were offered. Maybe they had classes offered earlier in the day; I just didn't take those. I think mostly they didn't, because I think the logic was that many of the students were somehow doing some work some of the time, and so if you're going to schlep from Brooklyn or your home campus, you came in the late afternoon or early evening. I had Gertrude Himmelfarb, too, for British history.

PC: Wow. [laughter]

RB: And Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

PC: Yes.

RB: Okay.

PC: That is neat.

RB: In "Why the Mexican War was a good war." That was the name of the course. No, that wasn't the name of the course, but that what it was really about.

PC: That is what it was really about. [laughter]

RB: So, I had some heavy hitters. [laughter]

SH: Obviously, there was some faculty involvement other than just going in and taking a course.

RB: Very little. Howard Adelson was the chair of the graduate program, and I told him, "I don't have any time to brush up on Latin." I'd had Latin in high school but not in college. He said, "Well, just read a book like the Bible." I said, "Well, I don't really know the Bible, but all right, I'll try this and read that in Latin." "You should be able to pass the exam." So, again, I had very little contact with professors. There was class and very little else. I do remember a couple of the students. I did go to a reunion and was surprised that I could still remember vaguely their names, but it was not an interactive thing.

SH: What was the second language?

RB: French.

SH: Okay.

RB: That I had passed, I think, in the Master's program already.

SH: Had you had French in high school?

RB: French, I took in college.

SH: Had you taken any in high school?

RB: No, I took Latin in high school and not a second language in high school.

SH: Okay. When this professor said to you that you needed to get a job …

RB: He said try for a job. He didn't tell me how to get a job. [laughter]

SH: Try for a job. That was an encouragement.

RB: Well, I knew that some choice was coming at some point, but I was not unhappy in what I was doing. We, by 1967, were already looking at buying a house in Connecticut, no less. I was making over seventeen thousand dollars. We had a child in '67, and that was what got me out of the Vietnam draft. Otherwise, I was really stuck in late '66, early '67. So, that seemed clear and that path seemed perfectly fine to me, that fine, someday I would get a Ph.D. as a dilettante and just hang it on the wall or whatever and not do anything. I didn't feel any need to do anything with it. I didn't know anything about academia. I had no academic background in my family.

None of my aunts or uncles, nor my parents. I had very little contact with any of my professors, so I had no sense of what it was to be in academia. I certainly did have a sense of what it was to be a computer hot shot at MetLife, and basically, it was second level, because the real winners were the ones who did investment banking. Always the computer people, they could be smart as a whiz, but the management just wanted to make sure that the computer people couldn't hide what was really going on with the company. I was part of a group that was trying to do exactly that. So, then that struck me as very interesting to hide from management what was actually happening.

SH: Were you aware of that?

RB: Oh, yes. No, we did it actively. We had a group within MetLife that were doing that to try to obfuscate from management tools that they needed to make decisions so that they would have to come to us to make the decisions, because it was clear that it was Protestant decision-makers that ran the company, not these smart-ass Jews and Catholics that were sitting in the computer division. Anyway, so this seemed perfectly reasonable to me as a life and a career, and I did have a salary that I could have bought a house in Darien or Greenwich or whatever. But Ferguson said, "Well, you should at least make an effort and try for a position." I said, "All right. I'll do this interview." Rutgers, in its normal stupidity, sent me a letter with my name and address on the outside, but the inside was addressed to another person, Robert Swerenga, who is a quantitative historian that Paul will at least vaguely know of. [Editor's Note: Rudolph Bell is referring to interviewer Paul Clemens, who has been a history professor at Rutgers since 1974.]

PC: Yes.

RB: Yes. So, I called up and I said, "I've got a letter addressed to Mr. Swerenga. I wondered what was in my letter. You must have intended me something, reject, whatever." "No, no. We want you to come for an interview." "That's very nice."

SH: Who were you in contact with?

RB: That was Olga Shroba, the secretary at that time, and the chair was Richard P. McCormick. [Editor's Note: Throughout the interview, Rudolph Bell refers to Richard P. McCormick, who spent his career at Rutgers as professor of history, University Historian and Dean of Rutgers College, as McCormick senior or McCormick, the elder. His son, Richard L. McCormick, served at one time as a history professor and later as President of Rutgers University (2003-2012).]

That clearly was, in 1968, the spring of ['68], because I started in July of '68, so this was the spring of '68, they were hot after a quantitative historian. Lee Benson very much was on McCormick's mind, and Walter Burnham in political science had started to do some heavy-duty number crunching, Bill Aydelotte in British Parliamentary stuff. So, the department had decided that one of the few areas, it was a deeply divided department--this was right in the era of Gene Genovese's departure and so forth--that, "These computer people, they don't have any Marxist

bricks. They just do what they do and crunch the numbers. This is how we build a history department."

So, they hired three people that year. It was the late '60s. They were expanding; Peter Eisenberg in Brazilian history and Dan Matishevski, something like that, in Russian history and me. They absolutely wanted someone that did quantitative history, and that was something I knew how to do and I could crunch numbers and run computers and so forth.

PC: Let me stop you and we can back up.

RB: Yes, we've jumped way ahead. You can go as fast as you want. [laughter]

PC: How did you and Rutgers contact each other initially?

RB: Jim Ferguson said he had a candidate. How he knew there was a job was not something I would have been aware of, because I wasn't a member of the AHA [American Historical Association] or anything else and [had] never been to a convention.

PC: Like me, you never applied for the Rutgers job.

RB: Well, I did after they sent me the letter …

PC: After they sent you the letter.

RB: … Asking me to come for the interview …

PC: So, it was …

RB: … With the letter addressed to the wrong person.

PC: It was still very much an old boy's system.

RB: Totally, totally.

PC: Okay. I just wanted to make sure.

RB: No, it was absolutely Ferguson somehow saying to McCormick, "Oh, you want somebody." They would have known each other and their work obviously. *Power of the Purse* was already out. Ferguson was well known. He fell and had a serious brain injury afterwards, so he didn't do anything much, but he was a hot shot. He came from Maryland to Queens College. Clearly, he and McCormick canvassed around, as chair of the department, "Who knows somebody that does quantitative history?"

PC: Yes.

RB: That's what they wanted, American quantitative history.

SH: What was your Ph.D. in?

RB: American quantitative history. [laughter]

SH: I was going to say …

RB: [laughter] Roll call analysis in the 1790s.

SH: [laughter] I had to ask and get it on record.

PC: Did Ferguson know anything about the sort of work you were doing?

RB: Very little. Much of my material was at City College, when they nearly burned the place down in the riots in early '68 [1969]. I had transferred everything, I was running at MetLife as if congressmen were all policyholders and their votes were whether they paid their premium on time or not, so I changed the whole thing around as part of this whole masking of what you could do with it. So, I was running, within MetLife, a roll call analysis, so I didn't lose any of my data, even after you wiped out all of the computer tapes. I think the administration actually stupidly wiped them out. It wasn't the students, who didn't know how to do that. [Editor's Note: Rudolph Bell is referring to the student-led takeover of CCNY in 1969 demanding the open access of CUNY to all New York City high school graduates.]

SH: Oh, really?

RB: So, Ferguson didn't know anything much about that. My bias was heavily against political parties and particularly Jeffersonians, because I thought they were all phony and that, in fact, they were just as warlike as the Federalists. That grew out of a disillusionment with American politics. That was the year of the Martin Luther King assassination in 1968, the Robert Kennedy assassination, so I had come to hate what I was studying, but I'm a finisher, so I was going to finish it. Ferguson, for other reasons, because you know the *Power of the Purse* book, so he also was in the Beardian tradition, which was always looking for where's the money and not very high on idealists, and for what it's worth, the book, which still gets cited and it annoys people, [laughter] which is fine, trashes the party system. [Editor's Note: In American historiography, Beardian tradition refers to the school of thought founded by historian Charles A. Beard.]

Anyway, Ferguson had no objection to where the thesis was going. In terms of its overall conclusion, he had no idea what factor analysis was, which was the basis of the analysis, to say parties never operated as ideologically consistent parties. They always operated based on factional needs, which was exactly what James Madison had said. He was against factions, but he wasn't. That's how he operated, and that was the plan. You see it's a theme that runs through. When Ted Crackel ends up writing a thesis on how Thomas Jefferson is the one who founds West Point, that's part of the same drift. So, it's years later these things show up. [laughter] Jack Reynolds, I try to get him to be more cynical; it's very tough. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Rudolph Bell's dissertation was published in 1973 as *Party and Faction in American Politics: House of Representatives, 1789-1801* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973).]

PC: Ted and Jack are people who came out of Rudy's first light as an early Republic historian. They were graduate students.

SH: Okay.

PC: They've done well, especially Ted, who has gone on to have quite a distinguished career.

SH: Going back to your decision to come to Rutgers, did you and your wife have a conversation before you ever came down to …

RB: Many …

SH: … Rutgers?

RB: Many. I had, in fact, the previous year, because CUNY had a residency requirement, which was not easy to get out of, I went to the Met, and I said, "I can no longer work nine to five like everybody else. I just want to work my own hours, and I'll tell you when I work." They said, "All right." I was doing a sufficiently good job is all I can say. So, I would come in at four o'clock in the afternoon and stay until midnight or not come in or work all night or whatever. I had to put the hours in their building; I wasn't allowed to work at home. I didn't have to punch a clock. I said when I came in, and I said when I left. So, I was one of the few people, by then, I was at the level where I could eat in the executive dining room. I didn't have to wear a tie, because I was a night worker, and so night workers didn't have to wear ties if I stayed around until lunch the next day. So, I had been out of the normal loop for a year already.

I went to them and I said, "I want to try this," and they gave me a year's leave of absence, which was unprecedented. Nobody had ever gotten a leave of absence from Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to go be a professor. I said, "I'll decide after a year whether I like that better than this," and they said, "Fine." They put it in writing, I could decide after a year. I didn't tell Rutgers, "I have a year to decide whether I like you," but I did have a year.

I didn't have my degree yet, so I was appointed as an instructor, and I didn't know that I should have asked for a contract that said, "If you get your degree, you're automatically an assistant professor." It was very interesting meeting, Sydney Ratner tried to have me fired, [laughter] which I know about. I was already good friends with Donald Weinstein and Warren I. Susman and Harold Poor and some of that crowd. [laughter] I was still an instructor and didn't know about this reappointment business, so I was still very naïve. Almost the kind of absentee participation that had characterized my undergraduate and my graduate school was the same.

The first time McCormick invited us to dinner, I didn't know that you were supposed to answer and say whether you were coming or not and I never showed up. [laughter] The dinner was supposed to have the new faculty meet the old faculty. My wife and I never bothered to show up. We just thought it was some stupid thing that you didn't have to go through, thirty people invited or something. So, I did figure out things eventually, but it took a while. So, it was a decision by stages, and in that sense, so my wife and I talked about, "Okay, so if I take a year's

leave of absence, how bad can this be? We've got enough money saved. So, it's half the salary. We'll figure that out."

SH: Where had you bought your home?

RB: We didn't buy a house.

SH: Oh.

RB: We hadn't. We had started looking in that spring. My daughter was born in October of '67. So, it was not until I had a certificate that my wife was pregnant that it got me out of being drafted for Vietnam. I was definitely going to get drafted. I had a low number and was absolutely going to get drafted. I decided no Canada for me; I don't know anything about Canada. So, I decided Air Force is the safest. There's enough lunatics that want to fly a plane that won't be me, so I'll stay on the ground and chart things. I know computers, so they'll like that, and I won't get killed, probably. That was the choice I'd made. Then, my wife became pregnant, and so that got me out. They weren't drafting if you had children. Then, in the spring of '68, winter and spring, but houses go on sale in the spring, paved the way for, "Let's look for a house," but that was at the same time then that Ferguson said, "No, go for this interview at Rutgers." "All right. We'll do that, too." I guess it was March or April of '68 that, "Okay, we'll try it for a year."

SH: Did you take the train down?

RB: No, I drove down once, and I said, "If I take this job, I will never continue to live in Astoria. I will not drive the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway." So, part of this is, "We're moving," [laughter] which we did to a garden apartment out past where old McCormick lived on River Road. We said, "Well, we'll try it for a year," and then we decided, "No, I like this much better than the Met." In fact, people who were that much hot shot at the Met all left and did other things. It became clear that you got to see an insurance company was not the right company. You needed to work for a computer firm. To really be good, you had to be, that was long before any Google or anything, but you had to be able to crack IBM or Honeywell. That was the only place where you could actually get very far. Other than that, you'd be plateaued at a nice salary, but you weren't bosses; our schemes about taking over the place, because they wouldn't be able to find how to run the computers were not realistic. [laughter]

PC: When you left to move out here, you were leaving various parts of your family. What about Laura's family?

RB: Her mother and father lived in Astoria. We did, initially, live a few blocks from them, so this was further. Her brother also in Queens and always in Queens. My family, I was never as close to them as she is to hers. Central New Jersey didn't seem that far.

PC: Yes.

RB: My in-laws regularly came to babysit.

SH: Was your wife working?

RB: She stopped working when our daughter was born in '67, so that had been one income lost, and her earning money was the money that was the down payment for the house. [laughter] Then my salary got cut in half, so we had very much less money, but I liked teaching.

SH: Okay.

RB: The research didn't interest me any more than the computer programming kind of thing. It was that sort of thing, and I was rather disillusioned with the American political system and where that was going, but then, which we'll get to, I got a Fulbright to teach in Italy and that just changed totally what I did. So, I was here. I liked the teaching enormously, and I was doing the research. I'd done the research but working on the revisions to make it a book, which I had figured out is what you do after, [laughter] but not with a passion for it. I was just doing it.

SH: What kind of courses were you required to teach?

RB: So, I taught an American studies course with Walt Besanson, co-taught, and that was a fluffy American whatever, Henry Nash Smith [founder of the discipline American studies] kind of stuff we used to do. Then, I taught "Young Republic," which was two semesters it took to get through the "Young Republic." I wasn't allowed to start with the [American] Revolution, so I had to start after the Revolution, and I wasn't allowed to get into the Civil War, so [laughter] that pretty much defined what that was. Then, McCormick gave me to teach his "History of American Politics" class, so that was the great concession that he decided I actually knew something was that I could take over his "History of American Politics." The second year I was here, I already taught the graduate PDR [Problems and Directed Readings], which only Paul now does that kind of thing, but do the whole thing. [laughter] I'd start with Plymouth Rock and keep going. We didn't do any Indians then, [laughter] but just when the white people came and onward. [laughter] Well, that's the way it was. It wasn't part of the course. [laughter]

PC: Rudy, I am going to take you way back. You mentioned student protests at CUNY when you were there. I do not know anything about it. Tell me what went on at CUNY. You said they burned …

RB: Well, CUNY was one of the campuses where there were major uprisings in 1967 [1969]. They weren't as well known as Columbia, because Columbia had more prestige. If you burned down things there or took over a building, it mattered. City College was one of the places that was heavily taken over by students, and I always believed that the administration in a panic erased all the tapes, because they didn't want to the students to get a hold of the student records and they didn't know what they were erasing. So, they erased all of my dissertation, but I had a copy at MetLife, because I used to cheat, and when I was clocking my hours at MetLife and supposedly doing programming, I was also doing analysis of the same thing, counting them as policyholders. [Editor's Note: In 1969, African American and Latino students at CCNY led a takeover of South Campus to protest the predominantly all-white student body and demand greater admission of students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, so that the student

makeup at CUNY would mirror that of New York City's high schools. As a result, that year the CUNY administration instituted an open access policy, which allowed every New York City high school graduate to matriculate in a CUNY institution free of cost. In the mid-1970s, a fiscal crisis in New York City necessitated the charging of tuition for students, which has continued to the present.]

PC: The tapes were these big …

RB: Big, old tapes, yes.

PC: Yes. What were the issues at CUNY that the students were protesting?

RB: They were exactly the same as at Columbia and elsewhere. It was SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] and black students and access, and that was when the big issue at CUNY, or the entire system, was open access.

PC: Open access.

RB: They gave in and said, "Yes, we'll have open access," and that's when they started York [College] and these other itsy-bitsy colleges and two-year [colleges] and so forth. Eventually, the city gave in, and now everyone can go.

PC: So, open access differs from the policy before. Before, it was free, but you had to get a certain score.

RB: It was free, but it was extremely elitist.

PC: Right.

RB: … While the average floated, it that was always in the high eighties at a time when grades …

PC: Yes.

RB: … Were serious.

PC: Okay. How long did open access last?

RB: It still is.

PC: Really?

RB: Absolutely.

PC: I did not know.

RB: You can't all go to Queens College or CCNY.

PC: No, no.

RB: But everybody goes somewhere.

PC: Really?

RB: It's like California. You go to community college, or you go to four-year college. Everybody goes somewhere, but you have got to pay but not a lot.

PC: Okay. So, the way it works today in New York is if you have a high school degree …

RB: Right.

PC: … You have the right to go to college in New York.

RB: That's correct.

PC: Okay. I did not realize that.

RB: In New York City.

PC: In New York City. Okay, wow.

SH: Wow. I wanted to ask you about the takeover. Was this because of civil rights, or was it an anti-war demonstration?

RB: It wasn't so much anti-war. I think it was much more civil right and access.

SH: Were there any demonstrations or people who were organizing against the war at that point?

RB: There were, and I did do some participation, but it was not, I was very busy. I was working full time.

SH: Right.

RB: So, no, I wasn't. There were, but City University was not a center of such activity.

SH: You talked …

PC: Again, I was going to ask just a quick question, a spacial question. Central to most campus demonstrations is a physical campus …

RB: CCNY had a campus.

PC: Campus …

RB: That's where the …

PC: You were at that campus.

RB: No, no. I was at 42nd Street on the ninth floor of a building that you couldn't do anything with, if you wanted to have a protest.

PC: Right. So, you would be …

RB: I guess you could go out to Bryant Park and hold a sign, but you wouldn't be noticed. [laughter]

PC: The only place it would have occurred would have been on the campus where the undergraduates were located.

RB: It was City [College] that had the biggest [demonstrations]. I thought it was better known. I didn't realize it. City was the huge center of open admissions. It changed totally the character of …

PC: People who probably came up as American historians …

RB: Yes.

PC: … Remember. I did not. Because of my survey lectures, I do not know about it. [laughter]

SH: You talked about coming to Rutgers then, and this was a very divided department. What was it like at that time?

RB: I didn't know about the division until after I got here. It took about two days after being here …

SH: Really?

RB: … To be aware of the division, because you were instantly courted by the various factions, which went from Bishop House to having lunch at Brower Commons.

SH: Can you tell us about those two divisions?

RB: Absolutely.

SH: Who were they?

RB: Well …

SH: What was the issue?

RB: The Young Turks were Lloyd Gardner, Warren Susman, Don Weinstein, Harold Poor, Carter Jefferson, who left the year I came, and then in a fringier way, Sam Baily, but still in that side of things sort of, Phil Greven, also fringy. Then, the old timers, I guess, the oldest of the old timers was Peter Charanis. Henry Winkler was pretty tough, too. McCormick tried to work between the groups, and he had been elected chair. Joe Huthmacher was seen as his, McCormick's, protégé among the younger people who'd been hired in the '60s. They'd started hiring heavily in '61-'62, but they'd lost people. They'd lost Arnold Paul in constitutional history. They had lost Charles Forcey. They had lost John Cammett. They had lost Rudy Vicoli. So, they had lost as many as had stayed, and one of the jokes was they're more distinguished by who left than by who stayed, which, of course, is an ongoing Rutgers joke even now. [laughter] There were those divisions.

Then, Eugene Genovese was much papered over as to what was really going on, and of course, Gene was an extremely difficult person, I got to know him after--I didn't know him when I came here at all--but we became colleagues and friends in other circumstances in the subsequent years. He was in Florence when I was a [Junior Year Abroad] director there and so forth. Gene was just an extraordinarily complicated person, and while Mason Gross won the Alexander Meiklejohn Award [for Academic Freedom in 1966] for supposedly defending Gene's civil liberties in his anti-war speech, Gene was never satisfied that Rutgers had done enough to make him happy and to facilitate his leave and to keep him here. [Editor's Note: On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Rutgers University's Scott Hall dedicated to discussing U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam, history professor Eugene D. Genovese declared, "… I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Amidst the firestorm of controversy that ensued, Rutgers University President Mason W. Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted public pressure to dismiss Genovese and staunchly defended the principle of academic freedom. Genovese, who had begun teaching at Rutgers in 1963, left to teach at Sir George Williams University in Montreal in 1967. (From Thomas Frusciano's *Leadership on the Banks: Rutgers' Presidents*, http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/university_archives/leaders.shtml)]

One has to wonder about these things. Both Winkler and McCormick, who ran things in a way that Charanis didn't, Charanis would huff and puff, but what he said didn't matter anymore, but those two were only willing to go so far and there were things they were doing and enough was enough and if Gene was going to quit, well, goodbye, quit. Maybe Gene was somebody who could never have been satisfied anyway. They had a lot of these young scholars, and if you were given extra leave time or extra whatever-was-really-involved to try to keep Gene, well, then why not Lloyd Gardner. One was further left than the other. I guess Gene was the purist Marxist in terms of theoretical stance, but the rest of them were all on the left and they had lost several people.

So, it was a divided department. You would have department meetings, I think, you know the one from John Lenaghan already where Charanis gets up there and says to Weinstein, "You're crucifying me," and Weinstein looks back and says, "Die, you bastard, right now" at the department meeting. So, these were harsh meetings. I'm sitting there, going, "I'm from New

York. I'm a tough guy. It's okay," [laughter] but even at MetLife, I never heard anybody yell at each other like that. [laughter] Even the boss. You just don't do that, okay. It's the culture around here. [laughter]

SH: When you were a new faculty member in that era, what other political undercurrents were going through Rutgers?

RB: Well, this is after the Newark riots [of 1967], and with McCormick and others playing an active role, so there is a civil rights element, but there's also a deep Vietnam protest group, an effort to abolish ROTC on campus. I was already actively involved in that in my first year as an assistant professor, 1969. Huge faculty meetings with giant student turnouts.

SH: How about the teach-ins?

RB: Well, teach-ins are already back to '65, but we also had teach-ins in '69.

SH: Did the faculty have open meetings so that the students could come?

RB: The meetings of the Rutgers faculty were open, and they were moved to the gym, with the faculty on the basketball court floor and the students in the rafters, where the seats are for watching basketball, so that the students would be aware of which faculty were traitors to the anti-Vietnam cause and which ones weren't. Sidney Simon would get up there and defend the war. Ratner would reminisce about the '30s and saving the world from democracy, and Herb Rowen turned 180 degrees from soft left to hard right. Also, he was having trouble with his kids.

PC: Did Herb Rowen actually take part? I know he was conservative, but did he actually go to these faculty meetings?

RB: Oh, everybody went to the faculty meetings.

PC: Oh, okay.

RB: He wasn't always a vocal spokesperson.

PC: Yes.

RB: But he would go and give lessons on the de Witt troubles from the 17th century. He did the biography of [William of] Orange. [Editor's Note: Herbert H. Rowen, historian of early modern Europe and the Dutch Republic, wrote *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).]

SH: Was it mandatory for faculty to attend this?

RB: It wasn't mandatory, but it was inconceivable that you wouldn't go. It was the same with social interactions and so forth; it was just an expected part of the job. A few people were very quiet, like Peter Eisenberg, but, of course, he didn't get tenure, and part of the reason was his

disengagement from the faculty. It's not fair to say you had to steer a course, because you could have a very clear course like I did and that didn't cause McCormick or Winkler to sabotage me, or you could have a course in that direction, and maybe the lefties were a little more willing to put up with. They didn't hire very many people who weren't of similar persuasion, and that lasted until the mid-'70s or so. I think that didn't, it actually had gotten a little better even before the unification of the three campuses that had taken a slightly different direction, but the really tough times were before I got there, '66-'67, when they lost the people that I had named, all of whom could have stayed. They either had tenure or were about to get tenure, and they just weren't offered enough to keep them. They just weren't happy. This lasted until the mid-'70s.

SH: That first year that you were a lecturer, you said you did not even RSVP to the McCormick dinner. How quickly did you become acclimated with how faculty acted?

RB: Senior McCormick was very kind to me, and he realized after a time that that was a problem. I believe he always had a great deal of respect for me and confidence in my work, but he could see that this kid didn't know anything and it was so different than his own son, who was educated in academia, as he always talks about. I never played with anybody's college football jersey. I think he recognized that and would take me aside and explain. I was so naïve when I went to defend my dissertation, I had my big "Young Republic" class to teach, so I told him, "I have to go defend my dissertation. Would you please take over my class?" He kind of looked, he said, "All right." So, I said, "This is what I want you to teach. Here are the notes, cover it." [laughter] That's all I knew how you did those things. I thought it was fairly responsible of me.

SH: To the chair of the department. [laughter]

RB: What was another one? I got stuck in New York the very first year at one of these, it was a snowfall that got [Mayor John] Lindsay unelected, and I'm there in Queens with a car, this mountain of snow. I didn't know Rutgers doesn't cancel classes. There wasn't even any snow in Central Jersey. I had no idea that the weather was different in Central Jersey than it was in Queens. Telephones didn't work. I didn't call anybody, anything. McCormick said, "Where were you?" So, I said, "Well, I was stuck in Queens." "Shouldn't you at least call in?" So, I said, "I assumed that nothing is working, absolutely zero." "Well, we always have classes here." "Oh, okay." [laughter] He didn't sit and write it up as a report.

SH: No.

RB: When I was short, because my salary was too low to get a mortgage, he raised my salary secretly. There was no union then. [laughter] He just adjusted.

SH: Such power.

RB: It was only three hundred dollars, but still.

SH: But still.

PC: Did you have …

RB: The idea was good.

PC: … From the time you got here, did you have Douglass women in your classes?

RB: Classes were open to women …

PC: Yes.

RB: But there were very few. One of the dumb questions I asked in my interview is, "How come there's no girls around here?" [laughter] McCormick, "This is a men's college." [laughter] "Oh, really?" [laughter] I had never heard of the place actually. [Editor's Note: Rutgers College, a men's college, was founded in 1766 as Queen's College. In 1918, the New Jersey College for Women (later renamed Douglass College) was founded as the coordinate women's college to Rutgers College. In 1972, Rutgers College admitted women for the first time, graduating its first coeducational class in 1976. After the reorganization of undergraduate education at Rutgers-New Brunswick and the merger of the residential colleges into the School of Arts and Sciences in 2007, Douglass College became a residential women's college within Rutgers University.]

PC: I had not either when I was hired.

RB: [laughter] Never heard of it. There were very few women, but there were some.

SH: Was there any interaction between the different faculties of Douglass and the other colleges?

RB: Oh, oh, I see what you mean by faculties. Very little. I was, early on, told that the people at Douglass were all the trailing spouses of people at Princeton, really. Livingston, the only person there was Seth Scheiner, and he didn't seem to be the sharpest knife in the drawer. Then, [Gerald N.] Grob came--and that's how Rutgers was and it isn't that way anymore--Grob was the finalist against Herb Gutman, and I couldn't believe they were going to hire Grob instead of Gutman. I went in and I yelled at the chairman and said, "This is crazy. You've got a brilliant mind here and you're hiring this hack." [laughter] You're going to make these public--you could go in and fight and protest. Basically, Livingston was just another place and not historians of the quality that Rutgers College had. It'd be like Camden.

SH: Was Livingston actually developed in those early years of yours?

RB: Exactly. Livingston existed as a piece of paper already in 1966, but its first faculty came exactly when I did in '68. The dean, Ernest Lynton, was there in '67, but he was a dean with no faculty, and the first faculty came in '68 and then there were rapid expansions in '69, '70, '71. [Editor's Note: The Army's closing of Camp Kilmer in Piscataway and Rutgers University's acquisition of 540 acres of the former embarkation base, adjacent to the University Heights Campus (later Busch Campus), furnished the university with more campus space, albeit in Piscataway. Rutgers University planned to build several undergraduate residential colleges on

the land, although only Livingston College came to fruition. In the years preceding the opening of the new college, the shaping of Livingston's mission evolved in response to crosscurrents in society. In 1965, the Curriculum Planning Committee, under the guidance of founding dean Ernest A. Lynton, undertook the task of designing Livingston College as an innovative, experimental institution dedicated to the teaching of the social sciences. By 1969, after race riots across the nation and demonstrations at Rutgers protesting racial inequalities, Livingston planners expanded the college's mission to emphasize diversity and began to recruit and enroll African American and Latino students and faculty. Under the leadership of Dean Lynton, Livingston College in Piscataway opened in 1969 as Rutgers-New Brunswick's first coeducational residential college.]

SH: In those first years of your teaching, what were you hearing about Livingston and how it was being developed? Was there any discussion?

RB: There were, but it just never caught on the way it was supposed to. It was supposed to be that Livingston could do things differently and ask different kinds of intellectual issues, but immediately, here on College Avenue, the joke was that they put this ghetto for the urban kids out in the boonies, in the middle of the woods there on another campus, and they have them all studying things that are completely irrelevant, like Chinese. [laughter] Well, that was the sensibility, and, "We're Rutgers College, and we're the action." All of the important social actions, the opposition to Vietnam, the push for co-education, civil rights, was all on this campus and all in this faculty.

SH: At Rutgers College?

RB: [Yes].

SH: Really?

RB: That was how I understood [it]. That was how I perceived it.

SH: Were you ever asked if you were interested in teaching at Livingston College?

RB: They didn't do that. There was no cross-teaching until after '81, when they united the faculties [in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences]. [Editor's Note: In an effort to transform Rutgers into a leading public research institution, in 1981, the university merged the faculties of the undergraduate colleges into a single centralized unit, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). Rutgers College, Douglass College, University College, Livingston College and Cook College existed until 2007, when the liberal arts colleges merged into the School of Arts and Sciences, and Cook College became the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.]

SH: Okay.

RB: Nobody would have been invited to teach at another campus.

SH: Were you part of the group that was interviewing people for Livingston?

RB: No. Largely, the search committees, nothing came together. There was what was called the New Brunswick federated department, and Peter Stearns was the head of it until he went off. Well, David Shannon was already, he was the first one, and I was already here with David Shannon, before he went to Virginia. Then, Peter Stearns was internally elected the New Brunswick chair. [Editor's Note: In 1956, Rutgers University established a university-wide section for each academic discipline to coordinate the activities of the multiple departments. In 1967, with the adoption of the Federated College Plan, a New Brunswick chairman was appointed in each discipline to coordinate the activities of the departments at the undergraduate institutions. In 1981, the faculties at each of the colleges merged into the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). Each discipline was consolidated into a single department, presided over by a chairperson.]

SH: I think Sandra's questions was referring to your comment about complaining about not hiring Herb Gutman.

RB: Herb Gutman. There wasn't a Livingston faculty. I see what …

PC: Okay.

RB: There wasn't a Livingston faculty. Peter Stearns was running that.

PC: Got it.

RB: Okay.

PC: Okay.

RB: That's who the …

PC: So, Grob would have been brought in with that first group of faculty.

RB: Right after Scheiner.

PC: Yes, okay.

RB: So, Scheiner was here in '68, and in '68-'69, or maybe it was '69-'70, one of the two, there was a search for a distinguished person in American history who would, it was understood, chair the Livingston department. My point was how open the senior people in the department were to input from--I was an Americanist at that point, so it wasn't completely outrageous, but …

SH: That is what I wondered, at what level you as a …

RB: Right.

SH: … Faculty member of Rutgers College would have input.

RB: I was looking ahead, when there's a sufficient core at Livingston, that there are no longer, it was necessary that the appointments be done out of Rutgers College initially, but then once they had a sufficient core of people. So, by the time you get to Dee Garrison or Phyllis Mack, there was generally not much input. Then, the college decision, Livingston or Douglass, would go to the New Brunswick faculty, chaired by Peter Stearns and then Tilden Edelstein, and there would be the jostling or vetoing each other's candidates, as well as on promotions. Promotion committees were also separate within the college first. Faculty belonged to colleges, not to New Brunswick.

SH: Was there interaction with either Camden or Newark?

RB: We had section meetings, so that in the promotion process, after the department and the New Brunswick section, there was the university-wide section. I think that lasted until 1988 or so, after the Corson [Committee] Report. I remember very early on, because one of my conflicts was with Norm Samuels, so it has to be '70 or '71, no, I have to have had tenure, you're only allowed to go there with tenure, so '72 or '73, fighting about a Newark tenure appointment. [Editor's Note: In 1986, Rutgers University President Edward Bloustein charged an external team headed by Dr. Dale Corson with reviewing Rutgers' promotion process. The team issued the Corson Committee Report, which found the promotion process to be cumbersomely bureaucratic and recommended streamlining the procedures. A subsequent committee headed by David Mechanic took on the task of recommending implementations based on the Corson Committee Report.]

SH: Okay. You talked about being naïve until you became an associate professor. How did that evolve for you?

RB: [laughter] McCormick was an excellent mentor in that, as was, in his own way, Joe Huthmacher. I would say that while my friends were Susman and Gardner and Weinstein, their advice was much more erratic. You really just had to make your way out of it, and I did figure it out. In the end, you've got to write the book, and that's what counts. I knew that. I had lots of space to do what I liked. I'm a fairly energetic person, so I put a lot of effort in teaching. I was the undergraduate vice chair from the second year I was here.

SH: Really? Were you assigned or were you asked to volunteer for administrative responsibilities?

RB: I took the vice chair. Maybe it had a salary compensation even then. I don't remember for sure, so little money. Fifteen percent wouldn't make much difference. I remember Huthmacher telling me, "Don't do that. That won't get you tenure. It just wastes a lot of time." I said, "No, I've got time." I liked doing it, and I did that for, I guess, three years or so. Then, I went on a junior year abroad thing.

SH: That is when you first did junior year abroad.

RB: '76.

SH: When was your book published, and was that when …

RB: The book …

SH: … You got tenure?

RB: No. The book [*Party and Faction in American Politics: House of Representatives, 1789-1801*] was published in ’74, but it was accepted in ’72. I was promoted in ’72-‘3, so effective July ’73.

SH: In other words, you just needed to show that it was publishable.

RB: Yes, that it had been accepted by Greenwood Press.

SH: Okay. Were there the same requirements for Livingston faculty?

RB: I always thought the requirements were the same for all of history.

SH: All of the colleges.

RB: I didn’t have a sense of requirements, there might be articles, rather than books, but I didn’t have a sense that history had a different set of criteria than the English department.

PC: What can you remember, from the first few years you were here, about Warren Susman? What were your impressions of him?

RB: Well, Warren and Joe Huthmacher and I went on a famous, or infamous, I don’t know, quick trip to join a civil rights march in Georgia in 1969, which Terry Butler reminded me of last year. So, he was just a fascinating person, very committed, extraordinarily interesting, absolutely-meant-to-be mentoring and supportive, but he could, if you turned him the wrong way, he’s the one that undid Peter Eisenberg. He wrote to his friend Genovese to ask him, “This guy is not really so good, right?” and that was the kiss of death. He played hard academics.

PC: What was this civil rights trip about?

RB: Well, I had gone to Alabama in the summer of ’64, the same summer the kids from Queens College were killed. [Editor’s Note: In June 1964, Queens College student Andrew Goodman, Mississippi native James Chaney and New Yorker Michael Schwerner were killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan near Philadelphia, Mississippi. The three civil rights activists had been engaged in voter registration activities as a part of Freedom Summer, organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).]

SH: As part of what?

RB: As part of just wanting to go.

SH: You did not go with a group.

RB: No, no, never a group, no, no. One other person. So, there I was, so it's the spring of '68, and I said, "Well, we ought to do this. They're looking for volunteers who are willing to stand up and march, and they want white people, too, so let's do that." Huthmacher and Susman thought, "Yes, that's fine." I said, "I don't have any money. We'll drive down." "All right." Well, by the time we got to Baltimore, Huthmacher said, "To hell with this, I'll pay for the tickets. We'll fly the rest of the way. I'm not going to drive all the way to Georgia." [laughter] It was not untypical marches for that time period. They were fairly, they're dangerous, but they had rallies in churches every night. Mostly, what they wanted the white folks were to gather up a lot of money from them or a little money from the North to support the activities, and then they'd actually go in cars and vans until about two miles out of the next town and then walk into the town and hassle with the police and come back. Susman was a committed person. We talked a lot. He was involved in the foundation of Marxist studies with Gene Genovese, and he was breaking with Gene. That was extremely interesting to watch how that was unfolding.

SH: They actually developed this course together.

RB: Well, not course. It was a journal.

PC: Journal.

RB: Scholarly journal.

SH: They were parting company.

RB: Well, they were the co-founders, and then it broke apart. Gardner never joined it, but Susman was the co-founder. There's the Ann Lane scandal. So, it was difficult, but Susman was always a trusted colleague, to me, even though I then subsequently came to feel that no, he isn't so trustworthy, but with me, it was absolute trustworthiness always.

PC: Did Warren go south more than once?

RB: No, we did this once.

PC: You do not know of any other time he went south. I remember reading in the *Targum* that he was going to go south with, I want to say, Winkler, but it may have been Richard Schlatter, one of the two.

RB: That would have been earlier.

PC: Earlier.

RB: Yes. Schlatter, by the time I got here, was already a provost and very much into conformist kinds of things, but Schlatter was also very much pro-civil rights and on the left, and that could certainly have been in '64-'65.

PC: Yes. So, Warren Susman probably went south more than once.

RB: Yes. He didn't find this to be so unusual.

PC: Yes.

RB: Just, "Oh, let's do this." "Oh, all right."

PC: This was the summer of …

RB: The spring. It was during the semester of '69.

PC: 1969.

SH: Was that supported by the chair of the department?

RB: I don't think we asked the chair of the department, except to ask for money. [laughter]

SH: Did they financially support you?

RB: People made contributions, sure.

SH: It was more private, individual type.

RB: It was individual, yes, not departmental.

SH: Okay. I wondered if the whole department was behind this.

RB: No, I don't think the whole department would be behind anything. [laughter] Not that department.

SH: Fairly fractured. Were there other issues that you remember as a young faculty member?

RB: The key ones were the Vietnam War, what to do about actually making it possible for African American kids to come to Rutgers and do decently. There wasn't much concern with Hispanics, that I remember, nor with East Asians or South Asians. Then, the big fight over coeducation, which ends in '74, but is already going hot from '72 or so, internally, lots of internal debate about that, but with the Rutgers College people uniformly in favor and, "Let's wipe out Douglass."

SH: That was how big a deal coeducation was.

RB: Yes, that it's the right thing to do and that this business of women need a special place is a lot of crap.

SH: Was that pretty generally accepted?

RB: Not by the women of Douglass. [laughter]

SH: No, I understand that.

RB: The history department didn't have any women. We didn't allow them in our department. No, that's a joke. [laughter]

SH: That is my next question. When do women in the faculty of Rutgers College first appear?

RB: Well, in the history department, they don't appear until Angeliki Laiou, no, because we had one when we fired Gruber.

PC: Carol.

RB: Carol Gruber, we fired Carol Gruber.

PC: It was before my time, but I remember the story.

RB: Yes, oh, yes. Susman's the one who was behind firing her.

PC: Yes. She worked on the 1920s …

RB: Yes.

PC: … Which was Warren's period.

RB: Yes, and he decided she wasn't good enough, particularly in the classroom, he didn't like her performance, [laughter] so he shipped her off to William Paterson. The first one who made it was Angeliki Laiou.

SH: When you say made it, she was …

RB: She was appointed with tenure or as a full professor, I guess.

SH: Oh, really?

RB: Yes.

SH: What was she teaching?

RB: Byzantine history, Charanis turning in his grave. [laughter] No, he supported her. [laughter]

PC: The first untenured woman to be hired at Rutgers College and promoted was Martha Howell.

RB: I didn't realize it was that late. Yes, I was on her promotion committee.

PC: She was our first internal appointment. [Virginia] Yans came earlier [in 1978], but she had tenure when she came.

RB: I guess she was Rutgers College, not Douglass. Are you sure?

PC: Rutgers College, yes.

RB: Okay.

PC: She had tenure when she came.

RB: I thought she was Douglass.

PC: No.

RB: Double check that, Paul.

PC: I am almost sure. Ziva [Galili] was the second, Martha [Howell] was the first …

RB: Yes. Ziva's '81. Martha was '79.

PC: Yes. There were women here all over the place, because they were Douglass and Livingston faculty, not in Rutgers College.

SH: When does Rutgers College break the barrier?

RB: I do not recall that gender was an issue in these things not happening. I can remember that when we searched in colonial history, we hired Clemens, then we hired Calvin Martin, that anybody sat there and said, "No, I don't want Gloria Main, because she's female." I think it was just not in their heads. It certainly was not in their heads that they actively did want some gender balance.

SH: Was anyone saying that there should be women?

RB: I don't think so. I don't think so.

PC: The story I remember, and I wasn't there at the time, was being told by someone that when the first woman was hired, and it must have been Gruber, that McCormick sort of huffed and

puffed and said, "Well, then we have to get the couches out of the office." That is the classic story I have heard.

RB: I thought that was Charanis who said it. [laughter]

SH: That is interesting, because the women's rights movement occurred alongside the civil rights movements. It is surprising that this would not be a topic for the Rutgers College history department to address.

RB: It wasn't, nor was the hiring of African Americans.

PC: Who was Carter Jefferson?

RB: Carter Jefferson did French Revolution and he went to Boston University [University of Massachusetts at Boston] in '69. Two people quit the year I came, he and then Ed Yamauchi in ancient history, who went to Bowling Green [Miami University].

PC: I do not know him at all. I do not know him even by name, and he shows up a lot in the *Targum* as a very activist faculty member ...

RB: He was.

PC: … Who was involved in student politics.

RB: He made a big impression on me in the one year that he and I were both here.

PC: Did he go on to have a historical …

RB: No, he didn't go on to, he had done a book, but it was not a major book, and he didn't go on to a distinguished scholarly career.

SH: Going back to the questions of what was important during your first years here, what were some of the other issues that they were wrestling with in the federation?

RB: No, federation of the colleges was not an issue until late '70s, early '80s.

SH: It was not even being discussed.

RB: Not discussed at all. No concept of such a thing. No, they still were committed to having lots of individual colleges, but they don't give that up until the mid-'70s, when it's clear that Livingston is not working and they're not going to do Livingston II, Livingston III, Livingston IV. They have plenty of governors they can name all the colleges after. That breaks down in the mid-'70s in the, to me, in the very earliest of the budgetary crises with this kind of, "We'll have a bunch of small colleges and how lovely it will all be" doesn't work out. Instead, they put their money on Rutgers College, and that's the beginning of letting it grow until it's hugely outsized.

SH: So, it was actually budgetary issues.

RB: I think that the early economic, the oil crisis of '73-'4, I think that, peripherally. Then things get better for Rutgers' budgets in the '80s under [Governor Thomas] Kean, and it's a matter of the whole Rutgers budget is not that big a deal within the State of New Jersey thing. So, there's a big growth in the '60s. Then it tails off really in the '70s, and then it takes off again in the '80s.

SH: Was the history department actively soliciting the state for money, or was it done by the administration?

RB: It was done by the administration. Bloustein comes to Rutgers in '71, and so it's the end of the Mason Gross perceived-as-an-elitist era and beginning of this aggressive we-want-to-really-be-a-state-university and we accept that we're no longer the 1766 charter school, but it runs into economic difficulties. It's already in the late '70s that Bloustein is censured by the AAUP [American Association of University Professors], not over economic issues, but money might have made things go a little more smoothly. I think it was mostly over merit pay, that the union protested that. Individual faculty were drifting away from the sense of community, away from the sense that you had to go to the chair's house for dinner and show up. People started to live further away. When I came here, it was unthinkable that you would live in New York. [Editor's Note: Mason W. Gross served as the president of Rutgers University from 1959 to 1971. Edward J. Bloustein served in the post from 1971 to 1989.]

SH: Oh, really?

RB: Yes, the only person who lived far away was Schlatter, who lived in Neshanic. Other than that, you worked at Rutgers, you walked to Rutgers or drove a car a short distance and it was just expected. That community was already breaking down, I think, in the '70s, and discipline connections across institutions started to matter more.

SH: What was your interaction with Mason Gross? When did you first meet him?

RB: Mason Gross held a party on his lawn for all new faculty and their families with a popcorn machine and ice cream in the very first semester, so early in the fall. He was very good at glad-handing, and so you got a feeling that you would talk to him and that he was interested in what you were working on. I don't know whether anybody from Camden was invited. I assume they were. I wouldn't have known the difference, or maybe he had another reception. That was the initial meeting. Schlatter, of course, was the historian. Schlatter, I think, invited many faculty, he never let them know that he was also inviting others, to lunch at the faculty club, and that was to see whether you could drink more martinis than he could, which was impossible. He could do three at lunch.

SH: Are we talking about Mason Gross?

RB: No, no, Schlatter.

SH: Really? [laughter]

RB: After three or four, you'd give up and say, "No, he wins." [laughter] I think he probably did all the faculty, although it seemed as if, no, this was just you that he was interested in, what you were doing and so forth. Then, Mason Gross was involved, because of things like, "Let's get rid of ROTC," Mason Gross, and also the black students took over his office, and that's when he ordered pizza for them all and so forth. He came and talked to faculty. Now, it may be that that's because he was very close to McCormick senior, and McCormick very early on …

SH: Was McCormick Dean of Rutgers College at this point?

RB: I think he's not yet dean. [Editor's Note: Richard P. McCormick served as Dean of Rutgers College from 1974 to 1977.] He's chair of the department when I am hired and chair of the department when I come, and then the year after that, I guess, so it was '69. It's McCormick, Susman, Gardner, Bell, but as a youngster, outside of it, advising Schlatter, Mason Gross, "This is what we think," and that went on as late as, [later, 1973 or '74] I remember telling Bloustein, he would call in, how he picked these faculty I don't know, but I was in the mix, and the students had managed to chain themselves to what they thought was some communications building over here, and he asked, "What should we do?" and we said, "Give them pizza. That's the Rutgers way." Oh, he was furious; he wouldn't do that.

SH: Oh, really?

RB: No, no, no, no. He believed in law and order. [laughter] Teach them a lesson. He said, "Okay, turn on the radiator. See how they like that." [laughter] It's May. [It will] get very warm in there. So, you had some contact with Mason Gross [Edward Bloustein], but not a chummy relationship.

SH: You brought up the AAUP. Was that already in existence?

RB: No, the AAUP started after I came.

SH: Did it?

RB: Again, the AAUP as a union is 1970. [Editor's Note: In 1970, the Rutgers Council of AAUP Chapters became the exclusive labor representative of the faculty (and graduate student employees in 1972).]

SH: Is it?

RB: I was there signing up graduate students like crazy in my PDR for Doug Sterner and other people who were actively involved, too. So, that was really a very conservative union formation. It was directed against, Mason Gross clearly did not want the NJEA [New Jersey Educational Association], did not want AFT [American Federation of Teachers], and so AAUP, which had given him this goody-goody award [Alexander Meiklejohn Award for Academic Freedom] for defending Genovese and citizenship, that seemed about right to him, so he just unilaterally

recognized the union without waiting for, there wasn't a card check then, but for the equivalent, but the union wanted to drum up support, saying they had all these cards and so forth. The people in it, at that time, were the ones who went on to high administrative positions. Ken Wolfson became the dean of the graduate school. Paul Leath became a provost. So, the founders of the union were heavily scientists.

SH: Really?

RB: Not considered labor lefties of any kind whatsoever, and of course, they very quickly lost out to the serious organizers, like Wells Keddie, and they bagged the union pretty fast. [laughter] Really, all of us who had been involved in that early founding drifted away from it when it took that direction.

SH: Really?

RB: Ye].

SH: So, you did not stay in then.

RB: No, I was still a member, but not active.

PC: Let me go back. You mentioned Ann Lane. One of the things more generally that I think about from my first years here is a history that existed previous to a time I got here, but I heard about all the time, in which the departmental politics, which you have described already, were deeply involved with personal animosities. What are you willing to say on the record about those? What do you recall of them?

RB: Well, if we have people at departmental meetings saying, "Die, you bastard."

PC: Yes. [laughter]

RB: There's a personal level. Mo Lee would never say such a thing publicly, but he was certainly a fighter. Issues that should have had nothing to do with department versus department nonetheless came out that way. Ann Lane was a perfect example, because it was Seth Scheiner, historian in the field, reading and deciding that there had been borrowing without proper attribution, I will call it at this point, being excoriated by supporters of Ann Lane, who, in fact, had become supporters of Ann Lane primarily as a consequence of her divorce from Gene Genovese, which was another nasty business going back to the mid-'60s. So, the battle lines had nothing to do with the scholarly issues involved.

PC: Ann Lane was a graduate student at that time.

RB: No, she was in the Douglass department …

PC: Okay. I do not know.

RB: … As a faculty member.

PC: The name …

SH: Oh, she was teaching then.

RB: Yes, she was a faculty member and up for tenure.

PC: Okay. That is more than I know. I do not know the history of that.

RB: There's a big fight over Mary Hartman and whether this book about women murderesses [*Victorian Murderesses: A True History of Thirteen Respectable French and English Women Accused of Unspeakable Crimes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977] was a serious book or not. Sabra Meservy in Arab world history got fired, I guess, for not finishing a book. Ralph Carter at …

PC: At Livingston.

RB: … At Livingston, African American, that's a little later. I tend to align some of these. There's another French historian at Livingston, John [Wilson], I can't remember his last name. Then, of course, much after your time, Tom Forstenzer and Bob Padgug were the last two of these departmental fights. I think those are the last. I don't believe that from the late '70s, after Padgug and Forstenzer, I believe that departments did not line up against departments.

PC: The Lane case involved concerns that her work was not her original work.

RB: That's correct.

PC: Was there a report that went to that, or was this just an undercurrent?

RB: No, Seth read at the department meeting, "These are the passages, and this in her work, and these are the passages in this other published work …"

PC: Wow.

RB: "… And they are the same."

PC: Wow. That is sort of beyond controversy when you can do that.

RB: No, it isn't. Who's that lefty civil rights lawyer, Mark something-or-other, in New York City? [Editor's Note: Dr. Bell is referring to Mark Lane.]

PC: I do not know.

RB: Very famous. His name is escaping me. Anyway, that's her brother-in-law [brother], and she said, "Well, I'm going to sue you all if you do this." That was the end of the case, disappeared, and Ann got a job at, where, I can't remember where. That was just let go.

PC: Wow.

RB: Mark …

PC: I do not know. Even if you say it, I would not know ...

RB: Okay, no, no, but you will, you will, you will. He's a very, very famous civil rights lawyer.

PC: Civil rights lawyer.

RB: Yes.

PC: I do not know off the top of my head.

SH: We can save that for the next session.

PC: One more question.

SH: Sure.

PC: Your own promotion, your knowledge of it, was there any controversy in any way?

RB: Yes, it was turned down the first year. I came up for promotion in '71-'72, and McCormick, I think he wrote a letter, because I was on Fulbright, and he said, "Rudy, you're better off withdrawing this year. Why don't you wait until next year? You've got a problematic letter." He must have told me, because otherwise, I could not have known that it was from Eric McKitrick at Columbia. I always despised Columbia anyway, well, since they didn't give me the scholarship to go there as an undergraduate. To hell with them. Anyway, [McCormick said], "This would be better off waiting another year."

PC: What year were you in, at that point?

RB: So, '71-'72. I had my first, '69, '70, '71, third year, third year.

PC: So, nobody said to you that there was something unusual about coming up that quickly for tenure.

RB: There wasn't.

PC: There was not, at that time.

RB: No.

PC: That was your sense.

RB: No. I had done an OAH [Organization of American Historians] paper in 1970, which Susman had set up for me, and Greenwood had said they were interested in the book. The book was under contract; the manuscript was finished. I went to Italy to start my other Italian career, as it turned out. I didn't know that's what would happen. They sent the thing around. It would be like we do when we pull a case, because you see there are problems with it. McCormick said, but it might have been Peter Stearns, but one or both, maybe they did it jointly and said, "Just wait another year, and we can do this more effectively." I was promoted in '72-'73 for July 1, '73. It strictly had to do with …

PC: The problem was that there was a letter in your file that might have bothered somebody farther up the ranks.

RB: Eric McKitrick was a dear friend of Mo Lee's. So, McKitrick's letter, in fact, since someone gave me a copy of it, began by saying, "I was afraid you would ask me for this letter when I served as chair of the OAH session, at which Bell presented a paper." I don't know whether there were other letters. Anyway, he seems to have disappeared as a letter writer the following year. The rules were not as formal then.

PC: A case back then would have gone to the whole New Brunswick section.

RB: Which it didn't, right. So, it would've been Rutgers College. Then it would've been New Brunswick-wide, chaired by Stearns, and then it would've been Rutgers-wide history.

PC: Right. It would have also gone to the dean of the faculty.

RB: Right. From the department, it would have gone to Arnold Grobman.

PC: Grobman, yes.

SH: Do we have time to talk about the Fulbright and how that came about?

RB: Talk about …

PC: Sure, go ahead.

SH: Okay. Let us talk about how you became aware of the Fulbright and applied for it.

RB: I received a letter about Fulbrights, because, I think, lots of faculties somewhere on some roster did. I tossed it in the garbage can, and my wife said, "No, that's about Italy. Don't do that." [laughter] So, I pulled it out of the garbage can, and, "Oh, do you really want me to apply?" I'd been learning Italian informally, because she and her parents spoke Italian at home and so forth. I said, "All right. I'll try to figure this out." I applied for a post to teach American politics at the University of Genoa, which I didn't know at that time was because Raimondo

Luraghi, a fairly distinguished Italian historian of the American South, had cooked up a deal to go teach with Genovese at the University of Georgia and leave his class to me with what turned out to be four hundred students, because they had done open enrollment in Italy. So, I'm sitting there with fumble-bumbling Italian, trying to deal with four hundred students who now have a right to not come to class and yet each of them gets an oral exam. [laughter] In any event, I went to Huthmacher, and he said, "This is a bad idea." Of course, this would have been the spring before '71-'72, which was when I was on Fulbright. "It's not good for tenure." So, I said, "Well, I'm interested in doing it. I'd like to do what I like to do in my life, and my wife wants me to try it. She wants to go live in Italy for a year." All right, he'll approve.

Then, it wasn't enough money, so I went to Grobman. He [Huthmacher] said I could go to Grobman. I went to Arnold Grobman and said, "You know my salary's only $9,700 and this is the Fulbright and can I have my salary," and he said, "Okay." I said, "Can I have a little more?" He said, "All right, I'll pay you to go visit the just-founded Rutgers program in Florence, and you'll give me a report on what you think of that program, which is run by Remigio Pane," a distinguished, elderly professor, at that time. So, I said, "Okay, that's nice." So, they gave me an extra fifteen hundred dollars or something to go visit the Florence program and write a report on that. Off I went, although I did my job and taught American politics for the year and gave exams to several hundred of the four hundred students [laughter] who were eligible to take exams, because Luraghi took off improperly …

SH: He did.

RB: Yes, he was supposed to be there. I was supposed to be the visiting guest lecturer or assistant, not do all his crap, run the whole class. That's crazy. [laughter] Explaining American politics to Italians with their wonderful Communist Party and its ideological purity four years before the "Years of Lead" and the Red Brigades and so forth was just invigorating, I assure you, and it made me sick of American politics. So, I said, "I'm not going to stay in this field. I'm going to do something else." I shifted radically to working on, at first, what I thought would be Italian immigration, still in American history, but then it became emigration, so it was on the Italian side. The year of Fulbright with that many students, none of whom knew a word of English that I could ever tell [laughter], very much improved my Italian, [laughter] necessarily. You can't do oral exams in Italian without getting very good quickly. So, that was what I did. [Editor's Note: The period in Italian history from the 1970s to the early 1980s, when the nation experienced rampant violence and severe socio-political strife, is known as the "Years of Lead" in reference to the large number of bullets fired. During that period, the Red Brigades, a Bologna-based, Marxist-Leninist terrorist group, waged an armed struggle against the establishment through kidnappings, sabotage, robberies and other forms of violence.]

SH: So, this was full year.

RB: It was a full-year Fulbright. It was a teaching Fulbright, not research at all, and I didn't do any research that year. I started a new research project in the summer of '74 but based on a decision that I wasn't going to stay in American history. My book came out, and that was fine. I did an article, actually, for the *William and Mary Quarterly*, no less, which used up the second half of my dissertation. It wasn't in the book, "Why the War of 1812 Was Declared." I was still

working on slavery. I had a big quantitative project on slave prices in New Orleans, which was an outgrowth of some work that Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman had done, and I had those tapes here. I was teaching in the graduate program then, quantitative methods, which many of our graduate students and quite a few faculty were very interested in. So, Al Howard and Seth Scheiner and Don Weinstein and others took the class, along with the students.

The first book I did on Italian history was heavily quantitative analysis, but I was on the road to shifting into other things and the Fulbright was the turning point. I had never been, well, it's hard to go east of New York without being in the ocean, but I'd never been to Europe. I had never been anywhere. I think I went, for MetLife once, to Canada to do an installation, but other than that nothing. So, it was just very eye-opening for me, and I adored it. I've been very much in Europe whenever I can for thirty-some-odd years since. I'm eternally grateful that Rutgers is the kind of job where you can do that. I never would have thought of that when I quit the Met, that that was the difference, but that's probably the biggest difference, the control that I have over my life and what I can do.

SH: What else did you do when you were that year away?

RB: Well, I was revising the *Party and Faction* book for Greenwood, the American history book, and I was preparing lectures, which took me a long time for each lecture. I knew American history. That, I could just do it from memory, and I had all these exams to give at the end. We did a fair amount of traveling. We traveled before the academic year, which in Italy started not until December actually, so we did a fair amount of traveling. In the fall, I went, for the first time, to Croatia, where, it was then Yugoslavia, but anyway, the house where my wife was born. I fell in love with that. So, it was just an introduction to something that had never been part of my life in any way.

SH: When you were there, how were you communicating with the university? Were you required to keep some kind of communication open?

RB: Very little. The Italian system was chaotic. It had been for centuries, and certainly after 1968, when they went to open enrollment and no attendance required, I never filed any report to anyone. I think Luraghi did, but he probably just lied and filled out the forms and said something or other. Students had to keep little exams books, and I would write down, "Grade twenty-four out of thirty," or whatever the grade was. They had multiple examiners, so I had to have a commission to run the exams, but mostly they lied. The other commissioners just signed off on whatever you did, because with four hundred students, how are you going to have three people for each exam. It's crazy.

SH: Did you have to communicate with Rutgers?

RB: No, I had very little. I went to look at the junior year program in Florence. Pane was very gracious in hosting us. I had nothing negative to say. Why would I have anything negative to say about the program?

SH: Right.

RB: It was very nice. It was a boondoggle for a few days to go to Florence at Rutgers expense and then write this little report for Grobman, which he knew he's going to ask me …

SH: Right.

RB: … To write a report about that.

SH: How long was it until you went back as a part of the study abroad program?

RB: ’76. I was director in ’76-’77.

SH: Okay.

RB: There were several senior faculty who were very interested in directing the program, and they all went before I did.

SH: Was that one of the first years that study abroad was in Italy?

RB: It started in ‘7[1], the year that I was on Fulbright.

SH: Ah.

RB: ’71-’72 was the first year.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay. This ends our first session, and we will meet again soon. Thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

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