RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH LYMAN AVERY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Lyman Avery on May 17, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler. I guess I would like to begin by asking a sort of very broad question. You had really strong New England roots. You were born in Boston and you grew up in Massachusetts. I normally don't ask this as the first question, but you came to Rutgers and I think that might be a good way to start, because there must be quite a story there.

Lyman Avery: Well, the story begins in Canada. My mother and dad ... were married in 1917. I was born in 1918. My dad ... was one of the first naval aviators and he went through MIT, graduated and ... became a second lieutenant in the naval flight school in Pensacola, Florida. He, my mother, and I moved to Florida and, in Florida, they had another child, my younger brother, Paul. Within six months of that birth, my mother and dad were divorced. My mother and my brother went to Canada, where my mother was a citizen. ... We stayed there for seven years. And, for some reason unbeknownst to me, even until this day ... she's dead [now], but I never had the courage to ask her. She wouldn't let us start public school, so we didn't have any schooling until I was eight years old and my brother was six and a half. We came to Dedham, Massachusetts, and settled there when my dad bought a house for my mother as part of the divorce settlement. ... I started school at ... age eight. ... When I was in the seventh grade, I started to shave. I was a 9th grader at sixteen years of age and was almost twenty when I graduated from high school.

KP: Because it's interesting, a lot of the people I've interviewed have had the opposite experience. I think Stan Klion, he came to Rutgers at an early age. I did not interview him, but his brother talks about how young he was.

LA: Yeah, he was a ...

KP: The other opposite...

LA: He was a baby, but John Ragone and I -- ... you've interviewed John, or somebody's interviewed him -- we're the old men of this class. John is, ... let's see, he'll be 80 in January and I'll be 79 in September and ... so therefore he's got me by a year plus. But ... it was the best thing in the world that could have happened to me. My mother didn't know it, and I didn't know it, but if it hadn't worked out that way, I would've never come to Rutgers. I probably would never have following the career I followed, all because of this one happenstance of the fact that my mother kept me out of school until I was eight years old. ... When I was a freshman in high school, I weighed 116 pounds and I was just about the same height that I am now, about 5'7", and I went out for the football team. The coach looked at me and he said, "I'm sorry son ... but, ... you're too small to play this game." And he broke my heart. But anyway, I went home and this good friend of mine who was a freshman, and made the team, called me and he said, "Hey Lyman!"... His father was a manufacturer of sporting goods. He said, "If I can get my Dad to get a size shoe and pants and jersey for you, why don't ... [you] hang around." He said, "See what happens." And that's what he did. ... I wear a [size] eight shoe and I had a size eleven shoe on. And for that freshman year, the first part of the freshman year, I think for about, well ... probably the first eight weeks, I stood on the sideline. The coach let me dress. ... He told me, "I admire you because ... after what I told you, ... you should have gone farther away, but there you were

everyday." He said, "I'd see you standing there with those big oversized shoes." Well by accident one day, they were having a what they called a "run the gauntlet." ... I don't know if you know what that is, but ... the varsity was running through the gauntlet, about eight players. And they were running through and ... one of the ball carriers fumbled the ball and it flew away and it ended up right at my feet. ... I picked it up and I started to throw it back and the assistant coach says, "Hey you, ... I haven't seen you run yet. Get over there!" He really snapped at me, so I'm scared to death, so I got over there. Well anyway, to make a long story short, I ran through that gauntlet four times and nobody touched me! Nobody touched me. ... The other people said later on, "You should've seen the coach's face." He said, "My God, where'd this kid come from?" ... Anyway, ... from then on I got a uniform, I got shoes that fit, and I began to play football. ... In fact ... the last two games of my freshman year I was the starting left halfback.

To make a long story short, as far as ... [my] high school career in athletics is concerned, I made All-State two years, my junior, senior year[s]. Al (Twitchel?), who used to be athletic director here at Rutgers graduated from Dedham High School. He had a friend up there on the staff, (Jodi Connors?), who was an algebra teacher. And somehow or other my name got mentioned about maybe I'd like to go to Rutgers. ... I had no intention of going to college because my mother had no money. She was making, hundred dollars, she wasn't making that, it ... was her alimony for two sons and herself to live on. ... Even in ... the Depression, ... even then, hundred dollars, I suppose, went a long way, but not very far. And I needed a scholarship if I was going anywhere. So Jodi talked me into applying to Rutgers and he also talked me into applying to Brown and Harvard. I wasn't a bad student. I was accepted to Harvard and Brown and I wasn't at Rutgers. I wasn't denied acceptance here. Somehow or other my papers got lost and to this day I don't know what happened. But I know, (Twitchel?) called the house and talked to my mother and he said, "What happened to Lyman's application? Doesn't he want to come to Rutgers?" And she said, "Well, I think he made one out. I know he made one out for Harvard and Brown ... because he's been accepted to both of them." So Red says, "Well I don't know, but I'll see if I can find out." Well, ... to make a long story [short] ... I went through the whole process again with Rutgers. ... I'd been down here and I'd visited and I enjoyed it. I liked it, of course. Red was a great guy, anyway. They reprocessed, I was accepted, I turned down Harvard and Brown, and came to Rutgers.

KP: Why did you turn down Harvard and Brown?

LA: Harvard I thought was a snob school. ... And they weren't very encouraging as far as my athletic ability was concerned because I was still small. I weighed 149 pounds, but I still wasn't very big. And Brown, I think I would have gone if the Rutgers thing hadn't come up, but I ... just felt so comfortable here. Oh, and the other thing was, remember I'm coming from a very poor family and I, somehow or other, ... could see myself fitting into Rutgers and not worrying ... too much about money, Ha. Ha. But so ... to finish the story, I came to Rutgers and never regretted it.

KP: It is interesting you say that because I did interview someone else who had actually even gone to Princeton, was accepted and even went to Princeton for a week and he saw people move in, with how much they had, and he realized, "This is too rich for my blood. I think I'm going to

go to Rutgers instead." He actually left Princeton and came to Rutgers. It sounds like you had a similar ...

LA: Yeah.

KP: A similar sense about Rutgers.

LA: The interesting part of that though is that after I got here ... I was living at Pell dormitory and I was ... pledged by the DKE fraternity. ... I was asked over for dinner and ... that's not for me. I didn't want to be a fraternity man. I felt that ... this was too much money. I just couldn't afford anything like this. And ... then I think the pledge chairman told me they were going to pledge me and I said, "I'm sorry, Ted." It was Ted Commons was the name. I said, "I'm sorry, Ted, but I can't afford it. I can't." And I said, "I don't really want to come." Well, he envisioned [and] got a job for me as a waiter. ... This took care of all my meals. Man, it wasn't the fraternity that sold me. It was the fact that I had a job taking care of my meals. ... I was talking to John Ragone yesterday [and telling him that] that I ... came to Rutgers weighing 149 [pounds] and at the end of my freshman year I weighed 116 [pounds]. So, I didn't have any money, ... I couldn't afford to eat. I had a meal ticket. Once in a while I could afford to buy a meal ticket. I wasn't getting any money from home. I was on an Upson scholarship, which was a tuition scholarship and that's all it was. ... Thanks to that, that's a selfish way to join a fraternity, but I have to be honest, that's why I joined the DKE ... because they offered me a job, not because I liked them because I didn't. ... I ... ended up as president and treasurer of that fraternity and, even at that point, still wasn't comfortable with the set up.

KP: Why weren't you comfortable and you were even president?

LA: It was wealth. There was an aura the DKE had. ... Well we had too much money anyway.

KP: Yeah, but there were slogans for the different fraternities.

LA: Yeah, everybody ... had something or the other. ... I won't go into some of those. You've probably heard some of them. But anyway, it was just a fact that this was a strata of society that I was not comfortable with ours. And I came from a poor setting and I said, ... "Even though I had been president of my class ... well I was president of the sophomore class.

KP: We have the yearbook, and you were quite a man about campus.

LA: ... Yeah, I wasn't any shrinking violet around here and I got really involved in campus life. ... But the other interesting part I think in my senior year, I'll guarantee you, that we were here 180 days. Of the 180 days, the only time I was in the fraternity was to serve meals and sleep. ... I studied in the library and I spent a lot of time in the Kappa Sig house because I was a friend of Vinny Utz, who was a legendary character.

KP: Yes.

LA: ... Who died. You've probably heard about Vinny before. And, Bob Haber, who was ... in the Jewish house, Sigma Mu, and he is also dead. ... I can remember being criticized by the brothers in my fraternity for spending time with a Jewish group, but that didn't bother me. I mean, ... I just couldn't understand it. So, that was ... how I came to Rutgers.

KP: Which is a very interesting story.

LA: I don't know if it's worth anything, but that's how I came. I didn't come because I planned to come here. I do admit, I enjoy the campus life. It was a good place to be.

KP: Going back to your parents, how well did you know your father growing up?

LA: I met my father ... for the first time when I was eight years old, that I can remember. Of course, ... he was around a little bit when I was a baby, but I didn't know him. So I met him when I was eight. I remember he came up from Florida to Canada. I guess the reason that he came up was not to see me or my brother, but to settle the things with my mother. And I guess, to be kind, I was less than impressed, in fact, because I didn't know a father. He was a stranger to me and it was just like some man who walked in off the street. And he had no warmth. He was, pardon me, a typical naval officer who married somebody and had some responsibilities he couldn't handle. ... Well, anyway, the next time I met him I was 21 years old and he was terminating the so called alimony from my mother because I now was graduating from college and my brother was not in college and, therefore, he didn't have to provide any support. ... Those were the only two times in my life that I met him. ... The next time I saw him, he ... had died of a cerebral hemorrhage in ... Lake Wales, Florida and I went down ... for the funeral. And that was it. So, I have never ... had any male influence in my upbringing except for the athletic coaches that I had. Other than that they weren't there.

KP: As a single mother, it sounds like your mother had a tough go with it at times.

LA: We were talking about that the other night. I said, “How is it?” my wife and I were watching something on television about how some youngster had gone wrong and had good parents and so forth. ... I said, “How is it that my mother brought up her two sons and we both [turned out okay]." By the way my brother came here, too. He lasted one year. ... Well, that's another story. ... You can ask me about that later. ... But my mother brought the two of us up. She never laid a hand on us. We were never spanked, ... not a bit of physical [punishment] ever on her part to keep us in line. And yet we never, that I can remember, except once, I remember we shot all the windows out of a house from the backyard with a bee-bee gun because we had bottles lined up on a ridge and we didn't realize the house was on the other side. ... We were firing away and the next thing you know, we had police at the door. “Does your son own an air rifle?” “No, he doesn't own an [air rifle].” And I didn't. I had borrowed one from the kid next door. But even that, that bad time, all she said was, “You know you've done it. It's wrong. You're never to do that again.” ... The punishment was she denied me something, I've forgotten what she denied me. And that's all she ever did. I used to say, “One look from my mother was enough to chill you.” ... She spent all her time bringing us up because she never went to work. She was not employed ... and when she was getting of the age where she should draw social security I had to go and see if I could get some social security for her because she had never had

any work experience. But she did a masterful job in bringing up her two sons without a male influence and being criticized, in those days, as being a divorcee in a very established ... Swedish-Norwegian environment.

KP: There was much more of a stigma towards divorce, even into the early 1960s Nelson Rockefeller was criticized for being a divorcee.

LA: Oh, yeah, my mother ... was afraid at one point to go to parent-teachers meetings because everyone knew that. ... By the way, I didn't know my mother and father were divorced until I was sixteen years old. Even though I had met him, once.

KP: What did your mother say?

LA: It was very simple and we were naive enough ... to follow it. ... She didn't lie. She told us the truth. She says, "You're Dad is in the navy. He's a flier and he's stationed in the Philippines, in that theater, and he doesn't come home very often." ... We knew that was true because we saw some pictures of him. In fact, I've got some pictures at home of him on the first naval plane that ever flew ... over Burma. ... He was the pilot [of] a two-wing biplane or whatever that was. ... So we bought that.

KP: Do you want me turn the machine off? ...

LA: The marriage went wrong because ... it's also in what I was telling you about being here at Rutgers and not being satisfied or being unhappy with the Deek fraternity. The same thing happened to her. This was a young country girl from Canada who was working as a telephone operator at the Faukner Hospital, Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, just a part of a suburb of Boston, who met this man at a naval dance, or something like that, and they got married. Well, my father came from northern New York, was a college graduate, had a lot of wealth in his family and they never, other than that physical happening ... they weren't compatible at all. He wanted her to stay in Florida with him because they had military barracks and she wouldn't because she didn't like the naval caste system for the wives. But really it was because she felt inferior. So she came back home to Canada and I shouldn't mention that she had a nervous breakdown there and that's why, I guess, probably, is the reason that we never came to the United States until I was eight years old. ... But that was the history ... they just didn't see eye to eye. I think ... to the day she died she still loved him, but couldn't live with him.

KP: It sounds like it was almost the classic World War II story, but it is not unique to World War II. World War I is ...

LA: Same thing.

KP: War-time that brought them together.

LA: ... Actually the same thing, different wars that's all. ...

KP: Under normal circumstances, they never would have probably met.

LA: And I did the same thing that she and my father did. After going into the service I married a girl in England, which ... would be something that would be completely unexpected. I mean, I have a G.I. bride. We've been married for 52 years ... and when I look back on how we met and how my mother and father met, it was almost the same story.

KP: But your marriage endured.

LA: Ours lasted.

KP: It has been far better, 52 years is quite a long time.

LA: ... Because, I think we found, ... we did find things that were compatible and ... she has the same kind of inferiority that my mother had and she still exhibits that in our relationship socially. I mean, ... if I said to her, "Why don't you go up to the reunion with me?" Forget it. Forget it. And when I was the superintendent of schools and when I was the principal in high school or anything that I had to attend that was social, ... she'd go, but be utterly ... miserable. ... She just was unhappy and she speaks with a very distinctive [ascent?], I don't know if you've heard her on the telephone anytime when you've called, but she has a very distinctive, soft English accent. ... Everybody loves the way she talks on the phone. I don't even notice it unless, I mean, I live with her, ... but if I picked up that phone and called her now, I could hear her English accent. But I don't when I am with her. Isn't that strange?

KP: I had the same experience with my mother, who has a slight German accent. For me, when I was growing up, I hardly noticed it, but now that I've lived away from home for several years, now when I talk to her I can really hear the accent that I never could hear.

LA: No, I don't hear it, unless I'm ... talking on the phone with her.

KP: It sounds like your earliest memories are growing up in Canada because you were there until age eight.

LA: ... That's part of my life, I think ... that's hard for me to describe. ... Somewhere or other I think I've blotted it out and I ... really don't know whether it was because of my ... mother's nervous breakdown, ... which we didn't realize that she had until long after we came back to the United States because her sister and her mother and father were there and they sort of, evidently, must have shielded us. ... All I can remember is just growing up as two kids, just the two of us, and we had very few friends. I can remember using sleds and snow shoes, being taught by my grandfather and going out in the (dory?) lobster fishing with him, but the rest of it is [vague]. Oh, and one little other thing, probably the most important, I almost forgot. My mother taught both of us how to read so that when we started first grade, if the school system that we were in didn't have a policy, we would have both been promoted. I would have gone to the third grade and he would have gone into the second grade. We were so well advanced and she had done it, which is another thing that my mother did that we express our appreciation very well, I suppose, at the time, but certainly grew up to be thankful and realize[d] what a great thing that she had

done. But other than that, that's all I remember about those ... eight years, seven-and-a-half years, that we spent down there. It is sort of a block.

KP: You grew up in Dedham?

LA: Dedham, D-E-D-H-A-M.

KP: Yeah, I sometimes butcher some of the Massachusetts pronunciations.

LA: It's alright. That's understandable ... it's named after Dedham, England and if you ever went to England and you called Dedham, England, 'Deedum' they'd put you on a Channel boat or in the tunnel.

KP: I often confuse it with Needham because ...

LA: The next town.

KP: Next town, because we have good friends who live in Needham.

LA: Oh, is that right?

KP: Some friends of my wife. So I've spent a lot of time in the area.

LA: Oh, then you [have]. ... Because where we lived in Dedham ... the boundary line was right [next to us]. I used to walk into Needham.

KP: Yeah.

LA: I played high school football against Needham and so forth. ...

KP: Growing up in the 1930s, what do you remember about Needham?

LA: Dedham

KP: I'm sorry, yes. Excuse me.

LA: What do I remember about it? I can remember about a man I got to know later whose father I first met when I saw him using a pick and shovel digging a trench for the sewer line on our street, which was the pride of the WPA, which was started by Roosevelt. ... That's a very vivid memory because none of us, ... well not me, I wasn't working, but ... no one was working. There wasn't any work to be had. And Joe, that is Joe Pagliuca, the man I'm talking about, he had six kids. ... How he ever did it, I don't know. How ... all those kids turned out well, ... I can remember, [but] that's one of the things that sticks out in my memory.

The other is the friendships that we made as kids with the Norwegian and Swedish because we were in a three street section exclusively Swedish and Norwegian. ... If there's anyone more

clannish than Swedes and Norwegians, I don't know who they are. They stick to them[selves]. They talk about other races, but no one even mentions the Swedes and I grew up with them. Man, if you didn't agree, forget it, they'll just shut you off like a knife.

KP: And you're in this neighborhood, but you're not Swedish in background.

LA: ... No. It was just a happenstance that ... my grandfather, paternal grandfather, he picked Massachusetts, other than the fact, I guess my mother must have said she wanted to live in Massachusetts. ... He picked out the house so that when we came up from Canada, the house was already bought, already paid for. What was it 7500 dollars, I think it was. It was a two bedroom house and it was okay for us. Paul and I slept in the same bed when we were boys, so it didn't make any difference anyway. But that's how we, and nobody in those days, that I can remember, no one picked their residence by investigating the neighborhood. Nobody seemed to care that much. ... When I was involved in high school in athletics and so forth, of course, there were no blacks, but there was a vast variety of other races. ... We never ... thought of it as any distinction one way or the other.

KP: So it sounds like you had a heavily Swedish and Scandinavian populated neighborhood, but the town in general had a diverse number of ethnic groups.

LA: Yeah. Well, for instance, when ... we were playing football in my junior year, the captain of that team was a fellow by the name of Toti. [He was] Italian, of course, Salvador Toti. ... His mother used to make the greatest spaghetti and every Saturday night after a football game, we would go, ... eleven of us on the football team, would go to her house. ... She had six kids, and she'd prepare a spaghetti dinner for the football team. ... The football team was composed of almost 50 percent Italian[s]. The rest were Irish and two Anglo-Saxon Protestants from Canada, I and my brother, who also played. ... Yeah, it was a diverse neighborhood and it was a good neighborhood to grow up in. ... I think, probably, that was another asset ... when I came to Rutgers, even though it was difficult to adjust to a completely [different environment], because people in New Jersey aren't quite the same as they are in Massachusetts.

KP: No, no.

LA: I came back from here after Thanksgiving vacation and ... my friends up in Dedham said, “Where in the hell did you ever get that accent!” ... I [said], “Parkin' my car, yeah.” They couldn't do it. But I think that was part of what helped us in growing up, ... the diversity of the neighborhood.

KP: You mentioned athletics was pretty important to you. You started ...

LA: Yeah, I started and then I switched, didn't I?

KP: Well, one of the things is that you played football. You told the story about football. Was that your big sport in high school or did you play other sports, too?

LA: I did. But let me come back to what I said, because I dropped it. I got up to that point and I dropped it. Remember I said that if my mother ... had started me in school when she should have, that I would have never played football because I wouldn't have been big enough. ... If I was a 116 pounds at sixteen years of age, I was probably 90 pounds, ... if I'd gone in the regular time. ... I also had a greater maturity as a result of being older. I think some of the kids that I associated with looked at me as being the older brother or the senior citizen. ... The fact that I could be class president for four years and president of the student council and all the other jazz that went on in high school was because I was older. ... The other thing of course, because I was involved in athletics. ... No, football was the first sport I went out for because that was the first season, but I also was a track man and I ... held the record in the 300-yard dash in the state, up until I guess about ten years ago, indoor 300 and outdoor, the 220. So, I was a sprint man and a broad-jumper, not a very good broad-jumper, but I was not bad at sprint. So when I came down here it was with an Upson scholarship, but I think with the understanding that I was going to be involved in football and track as well. And ... [if it wasn't for] freshman year and ... without the athletics and the good grades, no, I would never have gone to Rutgers or to Harvard or to Brown. I was just ... fortunate.

KP: It sounds like you had also some very good teachers growing up. You mentioned the coaches.

LA: I had some good coaches. ... I had some good teachers. I mean, teachers that you look back on and say, “God, why when I was a superintendent didn't I have teachers like them working for me? What happened to them? Where did they go?" I remember having a geometry teacher and a Latin teacher. They were sisters from Biddeford, Maine. Old maid sisters or I suppose, ...

KP: But at the time, you didn't think that.

LA: We didn't, that wasn't part of it. I mean, ... strange, they never got married. They were both pretty women, but they were just the greatest teachers. I mean, they ... not only taught you the subject, but you got so that ... you were able to communicate. You could come in after school and talk with them about, it didn't make any difference what it was. It could be geometry, it could've been Latin or it could've been anything else. ... The same was true of an English teacher I had who decided that ... she was going to make me a thespian artist. I'll never forget it. ... She decided that I and a girl, who was supposed to be ... the prettiest girl in the class to graduate, ... take the Shakespearean [route and perform], just one scene in Hamlet, ... in which Hamlet and his wife are involved in this one scene. ... That was the whole thing. ... It was presented to the high school audience. Well it's very, very serious and high school audiences in those days didn't go for that kind of a [thing]. ... I came out on the stage and ... I had very rosy cheeks when I was growing up and they had used powder so that I was practically chalk. I was a senior in high school. I was captain of the football team, I was captain of the track team, I was president of the class, [and] I was president of the student council. [Now], here I am out in this Shakespearean performance. They howled. Oh! It was the hardest 25 minutes that I've ever spent in my life, because every ... line we uttered, it was a laugh. Well, ... the principal of the school, ... after they threw the curtains, said. [He was] a very stern man, but he was very fair. He said, “No one moves.” And you know what he did? He said, “I'm sorry that I don't have a high school that has the intelligence to understand what Shakespeare is all about. But for those of you who think they

do, you are to report here at two o'clock this afternoon when school closes and we will run this play again. For those of you who don't, you may as well catch the bus and go home. But I'll see you in detention for the next five days." The auditorium at two o'clock was full. Nobody went home. So we put it on again. No laughter. Everybody clapped. [laughter] That was the end of that. That was also the end of my thespian role. So that's [that]. ... He was another man, you know, we talk about influencing [you], he was another one who I didn't realize it at the time, but he probably influenced me more than anybody else because he was an administrator that I could trust and he was a great educator. ... We knew he was tough and we knew he was honest, but he'd always be fair. ... When I became ... a principal and a superintendent, that's the way I wanted to operate. ... In fact, ... I was a principal under him when he [was] a superintendent. So yes, we had some real good ... [teachers]. The Rutgers professors didn't make that kind of an impression on me [in] the history and the political science class[es]. The only one that really made an impression on me was because I used to hate his guts, was Professor George.

KP: Oh, yes, yes. His name has come up quite a bit.

LA: He was a constitutional law professor and ... Ronny Jarvis and I at the 50th reunion, you ... had an interview with Ronny.

KP: I interviewed him out in Kansas City and I really enjoyed it, he was ...

LA: Well, ... I don't know if Ronny has ever said anything about Prof George, but we had a ... constitutional law class together and we studied for that together. ... Ronny was a real bright student. ... He was a good athlete, bright, and he was a good leader. ... He was the best student in our constitutional law class. ... Bob (Haber?) and I both knew it and Bob [would] say, "If we're gonna pass this damn course we better get together with Jarvis." So we spent the whole two nights before the final exam ... cramming with Ronny. And we passed. We got Bs, or twos or whatever the hell it was in those [days]. Twos, I guess, it was. And Ronny and I, when we got together on the 50th reunion, he said, "Remember that night?" And I said, "Yeah, I remember that night." I said, "That bastard." And he said, "You never really cared too much for him, did you?" I said, "No I didn't. He was the most ... opinionated man I've ever met." He was a staunch New-Dealer and he wouldn't let you say one word against Roosevelt. You know, he'd jam it down your throat. And I ... came from New England and it wasn't, at the time I grew up, it wasn't completely Democratic like it's been recently.

KP: No, in fact it was a very divided state in that way.

LA: Yeah, very divided. And I wasn't sympathetic to anything that-- ... but he made a impression upon me, ... no question about it. But if I look at all the other professors I had, I draw blanks. Except, and I can't remember his name, the man who taught public speaking. I took public speaking for two years.

KP: Yes, I cannot think of his name either, but I know who you mean.

LA: Slight, dark haired. ... It begins with an `A' but I can't, I'd say Akers, but I don't think that's it. But anyway, I liked him. ... He and I did well together, I guess. And ... the course I had with

(Soup Campbell?), music appreciation, but the others, no, and I was a history major, political science.

KP: In high school, your mother wanted you to go to college, but there really was not the money, it sounds like.

LA: I don't think she cared.

KP: Really?

LA: No. I don't think she really cared. She knew that we didn't have the money. ... She used to go and see me play football, but never went to see me in track. ... She let us go through high school, ... we didn't have guidance counselors in those days, ... and she knew nothing about the American education system. So ... Paul and I picked out the courses. Well, somebody said, "Well, maybe you'll go to college. Why don't you take a college prep course?" So we took college courses. We didn't know why we were taking them. As Paul said after he flunked out of Rutgers, "You know, if they'd only told me that ... my mind was not geared for business administration, that I was more an engineer, I'd have made it at Rutgers." And he would've. ... Finally, after he came out of the service and went to work ... in construction ... [he] became a foreman and could build his own house, which he did and do all of that stuff. ... He knew math better than most ... but it was because we didn't have proper guidance.

KP: Did your brother ever go to college?

LA: One year here.

KP: That was it?

LA: [He] came here for one year. [He] had a Upson scholarship. We got Upson scholarships at the same time. And he came here the year after I did and joined the Phi Gam house, was first string end on the freshman football team ... and at that time he was the only end in Rutgers football history who had a minus yards gained against him on defense. I don't know what's happened since then, but that was a long time ago. But ... he was good. I mean the ... varsity players, ... would tell you that he was a tough guy to get around. And he was a lot bigger. He was 6'2" and weighed 220 and here was this little skinny brother who didn't weigh quite that much. ... I mean, if it comes to success as far as athletics are concerned at Rutgers University, I wouldn't consider myself a success. I had an argument with Coach Harman at that time, when I was a sophomore, and [I] told him he could shove it and I switched to 150 pound football. ... I did all right at 150. I was an ... All-American for two years, but ... I don't think [that] really pleased me that much.

KP: I have heard a lot about the different coaches, Rocky Rockafeller and Harvey Harman. What was the argument that you had?

LA: ... Harman was an autocrat. As Vinny Utz would say, "He was a stubborn bastard who didn't understand what the hell ... was going on." I don't [know] if that was quite true. He knew

what was going on, he was just a plain stubborn bastard. We had gone to Sea Girt, ... I don't know if they still do, but we went down to Sea Girt for fall practice, in August. ... I'd come off of a good freshman year. I had done well ... on the freshman team. ... I was being slated as either the second left halfback or the first left halfback on the varsity. ... The first, ... and I don't know if you've interviewed [him] or not, Otto Hill or not. Did you interview Otto Hill?

KP: No, not yet, unfortunately.

LA: Well ...

KP: But, I've heard a lot about him and Vinny Utz.

LA: Well, yeah, you would. You mention one you mention the other. Otto was on defense and I was on offense and I broke through the line and I was going down the field and Otto tackled me and it was just one of those things. My ankle turned on me and I had a badly sprained ankle. So I was laid up, that was about the second day of training, and I was laid up then for the rest of the ten days and ... couldn't play. [I] came back up here and went out to the stadium and went into the locker room to change and I was now ready. My ankle was back and it was strapped. ... Harman came in and he said, “Oh, Hi Avery.” He says, “How do you feel?” I said, “I'm all ready to go.” He said, “Okay, report to the junior varsity.” And I said, “Report to the junior varsity?” He said, “Yeah, you've missed too much time.” He said, “We can't spend any more time.” He said, “Go down there they'll sharpen up some things down there.” So I went to the junior varsity and the coach shall remain nameless, but we were talking about it, John Ragone and I were talking about it today. He was one of these coaches that taught you all the shortcuts, how to knee somebody, how to trip them, how to hook 'em. And that wasn't my cup of tea. So I came, the next day I reported to Coach Harman. I said, ... “Sir, I'm not gonna play junior varsity. Either I'm with the varsity or I'm gonna play 150 pound football.” “Oh, is that so?” And I said, “Yes.” He said, ... “Why not?” I said, ... “There are ten of us out there on junior varsity, doesn't even make a team. And, pardon me, but the coach doesn't know what he's talking about.” “Oh, you think you do.” He said, “Well, I think I know more than what he's telling me and I'm not gonna play that way.” “Well,” he said, “Suit yourself.” So I left, turned my stuff in, went over to Tom Kenneally and played 150 pound football. And to make the end of that story about my junior year I was, I don't know if they still do, but we used to go by bus from the old gym up here and out to the stadium for practice. ... We'd sit on the steps waiting for the shuttle bus to go back and forth. ... I was sitting there with Vinny Utz ...

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LA: And he said, “Well, what are you doing here?” ... I said, “I'm waiting for the bus.” “Well,” he said, “Why don't you wait with your 150 pound friends?” ... I thought Utz was the guy that was gonna get up because he was, I could see him and I ... just hung on to him. I said, “Forget it.” And that was it. But later on Vinny told me and Otto confirmed it that Harman several times had used me as an example of a guy who was a quitter, who couldn't stay with the big guys and wanted to go and play “little ball” as he called it, “little ball.” So needless to say, I was never too much of a friend of Harvey Harman. And that was, well, as far as I'm concerned, that was

his fault. ... As far as track was concerned, I lost interest in track. Plus the fact that I ... got heavier and ... Coach Bernie Wefers, at that time, wanted me to run a 440. ... I said, “That's too ... much for this short, stubby guy.” I said, ... “I can't really stride out on a 440.” Well, anyway, I finally said, “Ah, the heck with that,” and I went out for 150 pound crew. And I rode 150 pound crew for awhile and then in my senior year I got too busy with ... a lot of other stuff. ... I was manager of intramural athletics, president of the house, ... treasurer of the student council, ... honor society president, and so forth. I was having too much fun to get involved with track.

KP: It is funny, one of my interns next semester, Eve Snyder, I don't know if you remember her from last night, the tall woman.

LA: Oh, yes, yes.

KP: She's on crew.

LA: Oh, is she?

KP: I didn't know you were on crew. Otherwise, I would have mentioned it among the many things you have done, it did stick out because she would have been interested in interviewing you.

LA: Yeah, it was just that one year.

KP: Yeah, but you would've still loved to have talked to her because she ...

LA: The most brutal sport, and I'm sure she'd love to hear me say this, without a doubt. ... They can talk about all these sports that are brutal to practice and so forth, there is none, none worse than crew.

KP: She has made it clear that it's tough.

LA: When I can remember getting in the boat and, coach said, "Now we're going ... two miles up the canal, the river." I said, “Two miles up the river!” I'd never been in a boat before. We pulled oars in that dry machine they had down there, but boy, ... I still can remember that. Then I rowed with the 150 pound crew at the University of Pennsylvannia ... what's the name of the river in Philadelphia? Oh, it's muddy. It was muddy and dirty then. I suppose it's just a creek now. But I caught a crab. Do you know what that is?

KP: No.

LA: You lose the rhythm and suddenly you find out that instead of going with all the other oars, you've lost it and that oar hits you in the middle of the stomach. Threw me right out of the boat, you know, in the middle of the river. [laughter] Well, I lasted the year, but I shouldn't have. [I said,] "I'm not going back to that again.” So you can tell ... your friend one guy that's not too enthusiastic about crew. They can have it.

KP: Did you practice early in the morning?

LA: We practiced whenever you decided, yes, real early in the morning.

KP: Yes. Because she describes six o'clock practices.

LA: You used to jog from here down there. There wasn't any bus or anything. ... You had a workout before you even got to the boat. ...

KP: Ralph Schmidt described the Upson as basically a football scholarship, which might not be fully accurate, but he describes ...

LA: I think he's wrong.

KP: Yeah, but it did strike him when he got to the football field because he thought, "I have an Upson scholarship," and then he looked around and there were all these other people on the football field with Upson scholarships. So he deduced, you know, "Well, I'm partly here to play football." But I would be curious because you left the football team. I just was wondering if that had any scholarship ramifications.

LA: ... No, no it didn't. ... I think Ralph is wrong. ... I admit that I had the same feeling. I came down here an All-Stater from Massachusetts, [a] big shot from a small puddle really. [I] came down here and looked around and saw Ralph Schmidt, William Evans-Smith, Lyman Avery, Joe Puleo, Vinny Utz, Bob Olson. ... [On] that ... freshman football [team], there were only ten Upsons given. And on that freshman football team there were nine. So Ralph is right to assume that, you know, it was really a football scholarship. But it never, never affected me. And Bob Olson did the same thing. He left football because he couldn't stand Harman either and ... who else was there, there was somebody else. So it ... was a scholarship that was academic and athletic. ... You had to have a certain grade average. It wasn't a case of walking in here.

KP: No, that was also very clear because I know in the case of Ralph, besides being a great athlete, he was really a good student.

LA: Was a great student, yeah. And Ronny Jarvis.

KP: Yeah, Ronny Jarvis too.

LA: And ... Ronny was an Upson, too, but Ronny got his Upson I think the second year. That happened, ... Bill Frost, yeah, Bill Frost was the other one. ... No, that makes ten. There were ten Upsons on that football team. ... Bill Frost, was my DKE brother, had to leave because his Dad died and his Mother had to pull him out of college. So he gave up his Upson and I think ... that's how what's-his-name got it. ... But it was a good scholarship. I think we had a lot of respect for the scholarship, but it wasn't ... tied into football or any athletics for that matter because in my junior and senior year I was really [not involved with athletics], with the exception of 150 pound football, and who's gonna give you a scholarship for 150 pound football? No. As long as your academic level stayed up, that was it.

KP: You mentioned that you have a distinct memory of someone working on the WPA project, but it sounds like you were a little ambivalent towards Roosevelt and the New Deal.

LA: ... Yeah, I wonder why? You're right. And I've never thought of any reason why, why was I so ambivalent? ... [Now], to this day, I'm not a staunch supporter of Roosevelt. I think he did what was needed to be done, he pulled us out of it, but if it hadn't have been for World War II, we wouldn't have the ... same feeling about his regime as we do now, because World War II was what got us out of the Depression of the 30s.

KP: I did a small biography for a new reference work, the American National Biography on Curley.

LA: James Michael Curley?

KP: Yes, who to me was fascinating. It was a really short piece, it was only about 1000 words, but it was fascinating to do all the research on him. I wonder about your memories of Curley because it seems in Massachusetts it's hard not to have memories of him in your era.

LA: Yes, we did, we did. He was a crook. [laughter]

KP: You thought that at the time.

LA: Well, ... that's what was bruited about. He was a crook and he was, well, he went to jail. He controlled the politics of Boston, the Irish Mafia hierarchy. Sometimes when blacks say they haven't had a chance and so forth, I say, well, I lived in the vicinity of Boston where most of the Irish, at one point, all they did was the [work as] servants for the White-Anglo-Saxon. They were the drivers, the chauffeurs and the maids and so forth and yet look what they did. They ended up controlling the police department, the fire department, the politics and the state because of ... their efforts and they were skilled at it. [They] still are by the way, even if Joe Kennedy has got a little problem. But, ... we as kids, ... I don't think we really paid that much attention. When I got into college and started thinking about history, then ... we did become a little more critical of what was going on with Curley and that the Boston politics were rotten and we lived in Dedham so that didn't affect us. ...

KP: Yeah, it didn't affect you but ...

LA: It affected us. We didn't realize it, but it did.

KP: In going to college, what career did you hope to have?

LA: Yeah. That's another thing. What dreams we fools have away at a college, at least in those days, because we had ... no assistance. Nobody was guiding us. There wasn't even a placement office here to go in and talk about, “Well, what am I gonna' do now?” Well, anyway, I came down here and I think it was Jody Connor, that teacher in Dedham High School who brought me down here to see (Red Twitchel?) who said to me, “Lyman,” he said, “You're so interested ... in

student government, in civic government, in the town of Dedham." He said, "Why don't you ... take a program in history of political science? Maybe you might become a lawyer." Good enough for me. So, when they said, "What do you want to major in?" I put down history and political science, whatever, and took the necessary courses. ... As ... I got going along in my career at Rutgers, I began to realize, "Hey," I said, "This might be the right way to go." ... I was involved in the college politics and was interested in [state politics]. I was interested in the state politics more in Jersey at that time than in Massachusetts. ... I used to work [in] the bankers school ... at Rutgers during the summer and I got talking with some of them, they were lawyers as well as bankers. ... It was an interesting life so ... that's why I think I stayed with it. ... When I left here, I was going to go to Penn Law. I was admitted to Penn Law, but I didn't have any money, plus the fact we're now at the war stage. ... I said, "It's about time I start earning some money to help Mother with her problems," because my brother had already gone in the service. So I went to the placement office here for jobs and I was interviewed for assistant personnel manager at Armstrong Cork in Millville, New Jersey. ... That's where I went from Rutgers, not to stay very long. But, ... what I had planned to do, since that was just below Camden, I knew I could commute back and forth to Penn Law School. I said, "If I can get established, then I'll start Penn my second year."

KP: So it almost sounds like World War II really changed your career path.

LA: Oh!

KP: You might very well be a lawyer today.

LA: Changed the whole thing. Changed my whole life because, you remember, I was single ... and I had a good job. Assistant personnel manager with Armstrong Cork was not a bad job. And I was very fortunate to get it. And I was all set and I'm going to law school and you know, it looked pretty good. ... Then one day, I had to go to New York to interview a candidate because, for some reason, he couldn't come down. So I took the train from 30th Street Station in Philadelphia up to New York in [the] middle of February 1943. And guess what I found on that train? I was the only single citizen, male, on that entire train. I walked the whole train to find out. It was nothing but a few women and the rest were all kahki clad or navy whites. And I felt terrible. And I felt as if I was standing like a beacon in front of that whole group. And I said, "Jeez." So, when I came back to Millville and I was rooming in a rooming house at that time and I said, "I can't." I said, "Everybody else is going, I'm going." ... I had been deferred because of my eyesight. I've got a history of bad eyesight. I'm going [blind], that's why I stumbled the other day, I'm going blind at the present time. But we'll get to that later. But ...

KP: So you had a deferment.

LA: I had a deferment, yeah. I would never have gone into the service if I hadn't had ...

KP: It sounds like you never would have made it before the war, into the service, because people have talked about failing the eye test.

LA: I couldn't get into the ROTC here.

KP: The advanced?

LA: They wouldn't let me in basic.

KP: Because almost everyone had to take basic.

LA: No! ... What they did was if you didn't take basic ROTC you took a substitute, which was a phys. ed. course for two years. And I did. I remember working with Joe Makin over in the back of the old gym running around like a damn fool. But anyway, ... I couldn't get [in ROTC], my eyes were that bad.

KP: How interesting.

LA: And so ... I was one of these people who were here at Rutgers from 1941 until the end of ... '42. ... I graduated ... and had no fear of going in the military. Everybody else was going. Vinny Utz and Otto and everybody and Stew Hurlbert and Ronny Jarvis ... some of those guys were in the advanced ROTC and they were already practically there. But I didn't have that problem. I didn't think it was a problem. And then when I ran into this and I said to myself, "I can't, I've got to get in there somehow." So I applied navy for a reserve commission and I had it. I passed all the verbal and everything else until they took the eye exam and they wouldn't even give me limited service. So then I went military and I had a draft number because everybody had a draft number and I passed. ... They gave me limited service, admitted me because they were desperate for human beings then. And I went in on limited service and that's how I got ... into the army.

KP: Before getting to the army, there's a lot more questions I would like to ask about Rutgers. I guess to back track a little, one standard question I always ask of 1942 class members, particularly in the beginning of my interview, are stories of Vinny Utz because I quickly learned, I don't know if it was from Ralph Schmidt at one of the first interviews, but very quickly I could almost piece a whole history of Vinny Utz and Rutgers from all of the stories. And there have been many. So, I guess, what are some of the more memorable stories you have of Vinny?

LA: Of Vinny?

KP: Yeah.

LA: I bet I've got one you haven't heard. You may have heard this, though. Have you ever heard of the organization called the Golden Dagger?

KP: I don't think so.

LA: To the hilt?

KP: No.

LA: Well, you know, there [are] secret organizations in every university. ... They talk about fraternities having secret rituals and so forth, but this one at Rutgers was unique. ... To this day, if you ask me, "How did you get into this group?" I haven't the slightest idea. I haven't the slightest idea. But this group at the time ... I went in with Vinny Utz, Otto Hill, Stuey Hurlbert, Frank Patton, ... who the heck was the other one? I forget, it's not material. It was a drinking society. That's all it was. The initiation was to see how many glasses of beer you could chug-a-lug and you did it until you got sick, until everything came back up. And we used to say, "To the hilt, to the hilt." Well, you weren't initiated until you were a junior and I didn't realize it until I got into it that the organization had been going for some ten [years] or I don't know how long. ... There were a total of twenty- was it twenty? ... 24, I guess there had been. Double dozen, I think that's what it was. 24 members. ... There were a ... wide variety [of members], I mean, there ... [was] Frank Kilcheski was in it and he was what you call and off-campus person, he lived off-campus. And most of us were fraternity people. And there weren't many regular meetings that I can remember. [laughter]

But some how or other we would get together. And we went, Vinny Utz and myself, Stew and Haber and I don't know what ... the place is probably gone now, but it was some ... roadhouse out on the turnpike, some turnpike. ... And I don't know how we got there because none of us had a car, but some how we must have borrowed, Stew must have borrowed or stole one, I don't know. But anyway, ... we were out there having a great time drinking beer and raising a lot of noise and racket and suddenly Stew said to me, ... "Where the hell is Utz?" And I looked around, I said, "Utz, where'd you go?" No answer. He's just disappeared. And we realized, this was around one or two o'clock in the morning that the four of us were controlling what was going on in there because there wasn't anybody else there, but the four of us. But now there's only three of us. What happened to Vinny? And suddenly I was conscience of the fact that it was very quiet and there'd been a jukebox really booming out all night. ... I looked over, Vinny Utz is down behind the jukebox pulling the wires out of it, disconnecting everything. ... I went over and I said, ... "There he is." I went over to him and I said, "What the hell are you doing under here." He said, "The God damned thing won't play the records I want it to play. And so I'm gonna fix it." He fixed it all right. We got reported to Dean Metzger, who at that time was the Dean of Students.

KP: You have actually anticipated one of my questions. So Dean Metzger was not happy with this program?

LA: He wasn't very happy at all. But I'll say one thing for the kind old gentleman. He could really throw in the book at us. He made us pay for. Well, we chipped in. He made Vinny pay, but we chipped in to help him pay for it. ... But ... that's part of the Vinny legend that you don't know anything about.

KP: No, I've never heard ...

LA: And the only one who could tell you would be Haber or Lyman or Stew because we were the three that were with him. But it was fun, it was part of an offshoot ... of the Dagger, of the Golden Dagger meeting and I guess we decided we were gonna close the place up. Lyman is here and Stew Hurlbert is lost someplace, we don't know where the hell he is. I think he's in

Florida, but no one can locate him. We haven't located him. He's a lost member of the class. But that's the story about Vinny Utz that you ...

KP: No, I never heard that story.

LA: You've never heard that.

KP: But I've heard the Golden Dagger before. But I'll have to ask more people.

LA: Let's see, who could you ask?

KP: Were there other secret societies besides the Golden Dagger?

LA: That's the only one I know of.

KP: Yeah.

LA: Yeah, well they talk about, ... not the Crown and Skull, the Cap and Skull, which is the senior honor society, which does not exist anymore. ... That was strictly an honorary type thing where you met for that one picture in the yearbook and that was the end of it. How I ever got to be president I haven't the slightest idea, but the more [I] talked to Ralph at the last reunion, I said, ... "How naive was I, Ralph? And you're pulling all the politics around here, you and Jarvis." ... You've interviewed Russ Janoff too, haven't you?

KP: Yes.

LA: Well, Janoff, Schmidt and Jarvis rigged the student council election in my senior year. And I said, "How the hell, ... how come I didn't know about it? And how did I get elected treasurer?" "Oh, we," he said, "we planned all that." That's how they got the support of the fraternities and the non-[fraternities]. They did it all. It was all politics, rotten politics. I said, "You're a great group, you are." ... So, I bet you Ralph or Russ never said anything about that either.

KP: Well, actually.

LA: Ron might have.

KP: Ron had talked about it, he sort of alluded to it. I did not follow up, but he sort of alluded to that. He said how he and Ralph were political rivals, but they cut a deal.

LA: That's exactly what they did.

KP: They did, yeah.

LA: They knew that, actually, Ralph said it, Ronnie didn't. Ralph said, ... "You know we cut the deal." Ronnie told you we cut the deal. ... He said, "Do you know why we cut the deal?" ... I said, "I know, you wanted to get elected." He said, "Yeah, because if we hadn't cut the deal you

would have got elected to the council, but you would have been elected president." And he said, ... "We wouldn't have had any power at all." I said, "Oh, thanks a lot, you guys." "Well, we gave you the treasurer, didn't we?" They talk about big politics. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned Dean Metzger, who apparently handled this incident with Utz very nicely, but I would be curious for any other Dean Metzger stories you had.

LA: Yeah, I['ve] got another one. Poor Dean will roll over in his grave if he hears me telling this story. In ... [my] senior year here at Rutgers, they suspended Hell Week. Did anyone talk to you about Hell Week? It may be still going on.

KP: A few people have talked about it. By standards of today it was a pretty rough week.

LA: Oh, it was, it was. No question about it. Anyone tells you that it wasn't is dumb.

KP: No, people sometimes really talked at length about initiations.

LA: Well, anyway, they suspended it ... from the fall of '41 to the spring of '42. No more hell week. ... We were all notified and I was president of the house and they called in the inner-fraternity council. We discussed it and [said,] "Okay, we'll abide by it, if that's what they want to do." And that was a lot of tongue and cheek because damn few did. But anyway, I don't know what leaked out, but I got a call, I was working up at the gym as intramural manager. I get a call from Dean Metzger's office. His secretary said, "The Dean would like to see you Lyman, as soon as possible." They didn't call you Mr. Avery, it was first name if you got to be known well. So, I said, "What's up?" She said, "I don't know. He just wants to see you." And I knew that if the Dean wanted to see you it wasn't because he wanted to pat you on the back and say it was a nice day and where were you going tomorrow. So I went down and he called me and he said, "Lyman, ... I know you won't lie to me." He said, "Are the DKE's having hell week?" I said, "No sir. What gave you that idea?" He said, "You're not lying to me?" "No sir." That was the end of that interview. And I know the hell week is raising hell in my dorm and my fraternity at that particular moment. And I said, "Oh God, if he ever finds out." ... Well, I went back to the fraternity. I called a meeting and I said, "Look, he's wise to the fact we're having hell week, so everything is kept inside. Nothing is allowed to be outside. And make sure that these pledges are conducted to their classes like their supposed to and get there. Because that was what the real problem was. You were so exhausted by the hell week, you couldn't, you weren't going to class. Well, I've come to, lets see, I went to the 50th reunion and this one and the only other reunion was the fifth, I think. And Dean Metzger was still here then. ... I don't know how we met, I guess it was-- but anyway, beside the point we were talking about, he asked me how I was doing and I told him I was in education. He said, "Wonderful." ... And he said, "By the way, ... you lied to me, didn't you?" [laughter] I said, "Me, lie to you?" He said, "You can't lie, Lyman." He said, "I could tell it every time I looked at you." He said, "I knew exactly you were lying to me, you were having hell week." I said, "Well," I said, "It was pretty hard not to because ... if I admitted we were, the house would go on suspension and ... [these] crucial days of whether they were gonna graduate." ... I said, "They might have all just dropped out of school and gone someplace else." He said, "Yeah, that's right." He said, "That's why I didn't really push it because ... if I'd pushed it, ... we would have lost a lot of students." Because they would have

said, “Well, they've been pickuane around here. Let's go in the service." ... Everybody was talking about going in the service anyway.

KP: Yeah.

LA: ... You know, you hear people say, “What were you doing on December the 7th, 1941?” You ever heard that question asked?

KP: It is one of my standard questions.

LA: Well, I'll answer it for you, before you ask it. ... I was serving table, Sunday in the Deek fraternity. And I was ... head waiter at that point. ... When you were head waiter, you stayed in the dinning room and made sure that the food was being served and so forth. ... Right in the middle of the meal, we heard this terrible crash and we knew, I knew, that somebody had dropped a tray of dishes out in the kitchen. So I immediately left my place and ran up in the kitchen. I said, “What, who the hell dropped the tray?” And Wess Graf was the one that dropped it. ... He said, “Did you hear? Did you hear?” I said, “Hear what?” He said, “The Japs just bombed Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt's been on the radio." They had a radio going in the kitchen. So I came back out and announced what had been said. What a change. It was like somebody had drawn a pall over the whole thing. People got up, didn't finish their dinner. People called the house. Everybody was talking at the next meal about when they were going into the service. And everybody's getting all ready to go. Of course, that calmed down a bit, but at that particular time that was really a traumatic feeling on the part of I guess, everybody there. ... I wonder if the same thing happened today, if our society would react that way.

KP: Would we want another surprise attack like that ...

LA: No, but if it happened, and it could. What would be the reaction of the United States?

KP: You were a history-political science major. I was wondering how much discussion before Pearl Harbor did you have of world events.

LA: Little or none. What did Ronnie say?

KP: If I remember correctly, pretty much the same. A lot of people have said they didn't even read the newspaper daily when they were here.

LA: No, we didn't. ... If we read the newspaper we read the particular section that we were interested in, whether it was sports, if it were dramatics, if it was music. But, ... I can remember the New York Times being dropped ... in the Deek living room every day and very few people doing anything other than the crossword puzzle. I don't know, we weren't, ... we were too, I guess, insular and concerned with our own lives at the University. ... I think, also, whether strangely or otherwise, that this was our life and ... I had few boundaries outside of Rutgers University for four years. I mean, I went home two of the summers, but the other summers I stayed here and worked. ... And I think that was true of a lot of us, that we lived in a little cocoon until that happened.

KP: It is interesting you should say that. My students for the past few years have had to take a semester's worth of Targums from the 1930s and 1940s and try to reconstruct history from those Targums. I've coined it, but they've basically concluded that there were the three 'F's at Rutgers: It was football, fraternity and fun. Not that academics wasn't there and not that there weren't guest speakers, but that seemed to be a real dominant theme that ran through the Targums. And they're somewhat envious of the social life and at the ...

LA: That's true.

KP: ... Fraternity life. I mean, there is a lot they really respect. I mean, not that they want to recreate all of it.

LA: But the interesting thing out of all that [is] look at what they turned out. I mean, there were a lot of terrific students that came out of this university at that particular period of time.

KP: Oh, yeah.

LA: [There were a lot of] people who have done tremendous things in public life and in politics and in government that came out of Rutgers during that period of time. But it is true, ... I don't know about the football part of it. Athletics, social life, ... you know, that's true. ... The courses were, I guess it's a hell of a thing to say, were almost incidental.

KP: The Targum today, while it focuses a lot obviously on the campus, it does have national, international news. And a lot of the student columnists write about national events and state events, even international events. Whereas, we have read the Targum often, I think of Joseph Ryan from the class of 1941, writing about how upset he is that students are not staying at the end of the football games and ...

LA: Yeah.

KP: ... the singing the alma mater, which ...

LA: Well ...

KP: ... now would just ...

LA: I came up here, ... what was it, ... two years ago to see the West Virginia football game and it poured, poured rain. But, ... I sat through that whole game and ... I was amazed that the students who just got up and walked out in the first quarter and left. Rutgers wasn't loosing that badly, but they just didn't seem to have any interest. They left. And I said, “Wouldn't happen in my day.” Because we'd stay. And I stayed the other day. But, it was different.

KP: One of the things that struck me also about Rutgers students, that compared to the rest of American society, was they were fairly conservative. Alf Landon won the 1936 straw poll.

Wendell Willkie had quite a visit here on campus and won the majority of the straw poll. What was your stance on political events?

LA: Conservative. I think, well, conservative because I was a conservative, but I think conservative on a whole. They didn't take stands. I mean, ... you didn't see some of the student rebellion, or not rebellion, but student riots or student protest about some policy of the University such as you have nowadays. ... I think we would have thought of it abhorrent ... to really act that way towards the administration. Even when they called off ... hell week for the fraternities. That was enough for the [students], because the fraternities in those days were really strong. I mean, you had a strong background of really affluent fraternity people who would have really [been angry], but they didn't. It wasn't, it wasn't worth it, I guess. Or they didn't seem to think that it was worth it. And when of course, when the war was declared it just took everybody, I think, by surprise, as you say. And then, from then on, it was, "Let's go someplace else." ... Somebody told me that they came up here in 1943. They walked the campus and it was like it was a dead place, no life at all. Very few students, ... because there weren't. I guess Rutgers, I don't know about the history, but you probably know more about this than I do. Rutgers at that time was in financial, real financial trouble. They almost thought they might have to close up.

KP: Well, until ASTP came, in fact, they were in real trouble.

LA: Yeah, yeah.

KP: And it was a real roller coaster in World War II because the ASTP once again, student enrollment is flushed with the civilian phase and, then when ASTP leaves then there's another dip. Then the GI Bills come and ...

LA: That helped it out.

KP: That ...

LA: What's holding it up now? You've got tremendous enrollment now.

KP: Yes. It is the State University.

LA: Is it the State University?

KP: Yes.

LA: And, of the proportion, I mean, state residents who are in the University? Is it ...

KP: I am not sure of the percentage. You know, that's a good question. I think there are 40,000 students on the New Brunswick campus and I do not know the percentage. New Jersey still is a net exporter of students to other states, but it's a higher percentage than it had been in earlier years. Both on this campus and the other two, Newark and Camden, which were not part of

Rutgers in the early 1940s. You mentioned that you worked in the fraternity house for meals, did you work anywhere else?

LA: I worked in ... Neilson, what used to be the library, the Neilson library. I worked in there for all four years under the ...

KP: NYA.

LA: NYA, for ten dollars a month. I got so that I knew the stacks up and down and in and out. [I] used to hide down there to study. Beautiful place to study. You want quiet, that's the place to go. But I worked there for all four years. Somehow or other, politically, I gained the assistant intramural manager and then I became the senior intramural [manager], which is a paid job. ... I also had the laundry concession for all the fraternities. I was broke. ... I had just about enough to survive the first semester and eat and [when] I left Rutgers, ... the last part of my senior year, I had money in my pocket. I had made money at Rutgers. And then, as I was telling Russ Janoff at the 50th reunion, ... I said, “I have a lot of pleasant memories about Rutgers and some unpleasant." ... But, one of the most unpleasant is the day I picked up the Targum and in that section in our senior year, in the last part of our senior year, which was devoted to those who are most likely to succeed, those who had done the most for Rutgers, those with the most athletic and so forth, and reading beside the name of Lyman Avery, “The man who did Rutgers the most.” I said, “Was that yours? Did you think of that one?” “No. But why did it bother you?” I said, “How would you have thought if somebody said that Russ Janoff was the one who did Rutgers the most?” I said, “That hurt.” ... He said, “Lyman,” he said, “it was perfectly, it was easy to see how you got it because,” ... he said, “you had your finger into everything that was ..." I said, “No, I didn't, I had nothing to do with the Targum." But, he said, “You had your finger into everything else.” He said, “Anytime you were looking for something, if it was laundry or intramural supply, the intramural schedules, permission to get into the library after hours.” He said, “Who'd you go see? Go see Lyman Avery, ... inter-fraternity council.” He said, “You were the power behind that one.” I said, “No, I wasn't.” He said, “Oh yes, you were.” But anyway, that's what I got, ... I was not the one most likely to succeed, but the one who did Rutgers the most. What a thing to get. But fortunately, that wasn't made a part of the yearbook. So, it didn't go down in posterity. Only those people who dig up back Targums like you.

KP: The Targums ...

LA: If they find it.

KP: One of the slogans that students have found in the Targum is, "You were part of the 42tude." Your life changed, even for your class, even though life would change even more for the other classes after you, for 1943 and 1944. But your spring semester really had a different feeling.

LA: Oh yes. Well, actually, it started, because December the 7th. ... Well we all knew prior to December 7th that something was going to happen. We didn't know where, but we knew that we were gonna be involved in some sort of a war, that we couldn't stay out of it forever. ... That Roosevelt that was up there, he was going [to] get us into it. He and Churchill would get us in.

Hey, we were right. But, so that from December the 7th on until, and we got into the spring semester. I think it was unreal, I don't remember that much about [it]. Other than that constitutional law class that I'm talking about, I don't think I could tell you the subjects I took my senior year, or anything that really happened of great importance. We didn't, the hilt was fine and the Golden Dagger and some of the other things, the social life theories that you're talking about. This is off the record ...

[Stop in recording]

KP: Did you date much at the Coop?

LA: Yeah I dated, ... much. Now, what do you mean? By going every other night or something like that?

KP: Well, I guess, there has been quite a relationship between NJC and Rutgers. A lot of people have talked about that and I am curious about your fraternity and your fraternity parties.

LA: I guess, I didn't. I had, ... if I needed, ... if it was a ball or something or a fraternity party, a dance, whatever it might be, I got a date over there, but it was usually one or two of the same girls. ... I was too busy.

KP: You were very busy.

LA: I was.

KP Just look through your activities.

LA: I was too busy. ... I'm not bragging. I was just too busy to get involved in that kind of stuff, plus the fact, I didn't have the money. It costs money to take a girl out. I didn't have it. But, the interesting part of that, that you mentioned the Coop, I mentioned Bill Frost as being one of the Upson scholars who had to leave in our freshman year because his dad died. When that happened he had previously asked Zoe Thiffault, a girl over at the Coop to go to the ball with him and now he was going to go to California so he asked me if I would take her because she was without a date now. So, I didn't even know Zoe, but I said, I would. So, I went with Zoe and I don't know who else I was with, but somebody who had a car, anyway because I couldn't drive. And I had never smoked and had never touched a drop of liquor at that point in my freshman year. I've seen Zoe many times since then. I've said, “You were the one that led me down the road of ruin.” But that, I dated her maybe four or five times and the other girl a little, ... from ... Paulsboro. Is there a Paulsboro?

KP: Yes.

LA: Yeah. Well, that's where she was from. Betty Turner. But other than that, no, ... not that actively. The interesting thing about Zoe, the girl I was talking about, ... I told you, I think, I moved down from Osterville, Cape Cod down to Chesapeake, but ... a couple of years before I moved the phone rang one night and this woman's voice said, “Lyman?” I said, “Yes.” She

said, “This is Zoe.” I said, “Zoe, who?” She said, “How many Zoe's do you know? We're not very common, you know?” I said, “Now, don't tell me it's Zoe Thiffault?” And she said, “No, it's not Zoe Thiffault, it's Zoe McCarthy.” But, ... she said, “I used to be Zoe Thiffault.” Well, she now was living two street away from me in Osterville, had come up, retired with her husband, who was a big Back Bay lawyer in Boston. And, so, we, she and my wife and her husband, we played bridge several times before we left Cape Cod. I don't know if she's still up there or not. But I asked her, “You ever hear from Bill Frost again?” And she said, “Yeah.” She said, “Not often.” She said, “I heard from him two years after we graduated and he called to find out if I enjoyed my date to the military ball.” [laughter] I said, “Come on, you're kidding me.” She said, “No, that's ... how he started the conversation out.” No, to come back to the original question, no, I wasn't too active over at the Coop. Too far to walk.

KP: Other people have said that same thing. People who commuted to Rutgers and went to the Ag school have commented on the walk to the Ag school, which is also where the Coop is.

LA: Yeah, yeah. It is a long haul.

KP: Being very active, being very much a big man on campus, it was interesting you mentioned the divisions even within the fraternities between those that really had money and those, like yourself, who really were the, I wouldn't say the service people, but you in a sense earned your way through the fraternity. What other divisions did you see on campus? Obviously the fraternity, non-fraternity.

LA: I'll give you a good one. Maybe this has been mentioned to you before. I'm going to ask you the question and see if you can give me an answer. Between 1938 and 1942, when the class of 1942 was here at Rutgers, how many blacks do you think were on the campus?

KP: There were very few. There was Simeon Moss from the class of 1940, whom I interviewed and there was someone else, who I think has since passed away. I can't remember ...

LA: Baxter. Ernie Baxter.

KP: Yes.

LA: Simeon and I played 150 pound football together. I'm surprised, I didn't know he was still alive.

KP: He's still alive. In fact, he was just in. He came down for an interview, I can even give you the exact date. He was here on Friday, May 2 for an interview.

LA: I'll be darned. What's ...

KP: He's living still, he lives in South Orange. He's doing well and ...

LA: I'll be darned.

KP: And in good health, and he seems in good health.

LA: You got his address?

KP: I've got his address and I'm sure ...

LA: Would you do, don't bother now, but would you do me a favor and send it to me?

KP: I'd be happy to.

LA: Because I'd like to get in touch with him. Simeon and I played football together and had one very interesting experience that ...

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

KP: This continues an interview with Lyman Avery on May 17, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler. You were just telling a story regarding Simeon Moss.

LA: Oh, yeah, yeah. ... I think ... a sign of those times and a change in the times that we live in now. Simeon and I played 150 pound football together. We traveled from here up to Cornell to play at, what's the name of the stadium up there, I forgot now. But they also had a hotel management program at Cornell and the visiting team stays at that hotel that's part of the training process for those who were taking, the major in hotel management. I don't know what happened, but Simeon had no one rooming with him. He was rooming alone. And, ... no one said a word and I don't know, ... how or why I happened to ... ask him, I guess. I said, “Whose rooming with you, Simeon?” He said, “No one.” I said, “Oh.” I said, “No one's rooming with me, so lets room together.” So we did. He didn't get the after effects, but I did. I took a lot of abuse from people for that ...

KP: From fellow teammates?

LA: Yeah. They felt it was something I shouldn't have done. But, also, on that particular trip brings me to another story that maybe, ... you can edit this one out or not, whatever you want. We played Cornell on a Friday afternoon and we stayed over Friday night to get the bus back on Saturday. So, Friday we all went to downtown Ithaca. Simeon was a senior then and I was a sophomore - it was my first year. ... And I don't know who got the damn thing started, but they were under construction and if you know, have you ever been to Cornell?

KP: No, unfortunately.

LA: It's on a ...

KP: I've heard it's on a big ...

LA: Oh, hill. You climb forever.

KP: Yes.

LA: And it's all right going down, but coming back its unbelievable. Somewhere on the side of the road on that particular hill was a construction site and there's a big Catapillar machine on the side of the road. Don Shallcross, who's long dead, I didn't know he died a year ago, got the thing started and we got it rolling down the hill. We went rolling into the center of Ithaca and the cops stopped us. We got a few words of caution and were told to get the hell back to Cornell's campus. So, "We aren't Cornell students." "We don't care whether you are or not, you get back to where you belong." Okay, but that's the story of Simeon and the fact that I felt sorry for him and I felt sorry for myself afterwards because they thought it was, something I shouldn't have done.

KP: Which in some ways was very innocent. I mean, you just ...

LA: Yeah, yeah. He was rooming alone and I was rooming alone and I said, "Hey, ... I'll room with you." He said, "Okay." Simeon also is the only man that I know or only boy that I know in my lifetime whoever put on his football shoes first and then put his pants on. You can imagine pulling football pants on while you got the shoes on. But, that was the superstition with him. He always put his shoes on first. If he's sitting there with his jockstrap and next thing you know his socks are on and now his shoes are on. And then he pulls on his pants. [laughter]

KP: How do you think Simeon was treated by the student body? What do you think students ...

LA: I think they ignored him. I think he was, you know, he was there. No one thought anything, as far as I know. Of course, that was maybe because I didn't have the biases that some people had, I don't know why.

KP: Because I asked him. I asked him directly. And he really seams, he really did not feel anyone really hated him and wanted him out of here. In fact he ...

LA: I don't think so. I think everybody loved Simeon.

KP: Yeah.

LA: Ernie was a little different. Ernie was a little more aloof or, I don't know whether it was aloofness or whether he was shy or whatever it might be. Simeon was just a lot of fun. I mean, he no matter where you were, Simeon had somebody laughing. So, I think that he was accepted very well.

KP: He is still active with his class. In fact, I talked to the class of 1941. I met him ...

LA: Yeah, I thought it was '41.

KP: Well, yeah. I was giving a talk before them about the project and he came up afterwards and introduced himself and I said, "I would really like interview you." So that is how we met him ...

LA: Yeah, he was a great kid. I liked Simeon. ... And ... that's just an incidental thing that I just thought about him. To show you the difference between what's going on campuses now between blacks and whites and, I don't know how bad it is here at Rutgers, but based upon what I read in the papers about your president, the blacks ...

KP: I would be curious, Paul Robeson was ...

LA: Before my time.

KP: Well, he did come to campus a number of times.

LA: Yeah.

KP: Do you remember any of his concerts?

LA: I attended one concert and all it was, was a concert.

KP: Yes.

LA: And it was well received, ... you know. He was a great artist. We went to hear him and ... that was it. I can't tell you anything on toward about any of his concerts.

KP: But he seems to have been very popular among students. When he did come on campus, it seems like everyone did attend.

LA: Yeah, which sort of contradicts some of the things that have been written about him since, that he was not so popular. And the reality, as far as I know, he was [popular]. He was extremely popular.

KP: Because I was surprised. I mean, some people have really talked about Paul Robeson who were fairly conservative. I mean to this day they are conservative and I have sometimes been surprised because they speak glowingly of Paul Robeson when I even mention his name or bring the question up. Robeson became a very controversial figure.

LA: But see, the hard thing, I think for people your age and nowadays, growing up in today's world is to realize that we didn't have any animus towards blacks. They were there and for, particularly for those of us who lived in the North, there were few blacks in our neighborhood. In fact, where I grew up, there were no blacks. But the blacks that we saw, we were friendly with and we thought, I never thought that I would grow up to see the day when I'd be walking down the street and if a black was coming up the street towards me that I might cross and go over because I was afraid that something might happen. Or that ... I just got the feeling that he's different, because we didn't in those days. We just took them for what they were. And Ernie

Baxter and ... what's his name, they were part of us. They were part of the society and we accepted them as what they were. I liked both of them very much. I hoped they liked me. I liked them.

KP: No, I am sure Simeon would enjoy hearing from you. He really ...

LA: I want to, I do. I've been wondering what happened to Simeon because I said, “There were only two blacks in the whole four years that I was at Rutgers and one was Simeon Moss and the other was Ernie Baxter. And ... Ernie played the 150 pound ball, but he also was a boxer. I don't know what Simeon did besides play 150 pound ball.

KP: He was fairly busy, he worked as well going through college and he ...

LA: I think they both did.

KP: Yes.

LA: One of them, ... Ernie was, I think, was [in a] fraternity. But Simeon wasn't.

KP: Yes. Simeon wasn't. But was Baxter in a regular fraternity?

LA: You can't pin me down on it, I just think he was a fraternity man. Now why, I don't know. I've looked in the inter-fraternity council, because he, Ernie, was very popular, too, see, if he was an officer in the inter-fraternity council, there's no picture of him. In fact, I can't find a picture of either he or Simeon in the yearbooks I have. And that's what I want to ask Simeon. I'll say, ... "How come your picture's not in the yearbook?” He'll probably give me some facetious argument.

KP: You mentioned earlier that because of your eyesight that you could not even get into basic ROTC, which was, almost ...

LA: Pretty basic.

KP: I mean it must have really, because it was almost a universal rite, except for people, I think, was it Russ Janoff who played in the band? Someone told me they played in the band and that was one of the few other ways ...

LA: ... you got another one.

KP: ... to be exempted from ROTC.

LA: No, there were a lot of us. There were, now, I would not say a lot, but, in the class of '42, who took basic phys. ed. in place of ROTC.

KP: Really? How many were you?

LA: I don't want to be quoted because I'm not sure, but ... there aren't any of the people that I eventually associated with as far as friendship was concerned that were in that group, but I'd say there were probably ten or fifteen that were in that program. They ran it just for those of us who they felt were not qualified. You had a choice, by the way. You could either take basic ROTC or take this two years of basic physical education. But I'm not sure of the number that were in there. Mine was no choice, really. I couldn't get in the ROTC if I wanted to.

KP: I normally do not ask people about President Clothier because he was such a distant figure.

LA: He was.

KP: But since you were so active in the student government and the student life about campus, did you have any contacts with President Clothier?

LA: Twice. Once was a tea over at his place for student leaders and the other time was he invited the ... class officer[s] and the student council, and I was a senior, to a dinner at his house for, I'm not sure, but I'm going say it, I think it was ... Yehudi Menuhin, the violinist I'm not pronouncing it right, who was here for a performance. ... How do you pronounce his name?

KP: Yehudi ...

LA: Yehudi Menuhin, he was a great violinist, but I'm not sure of the name. ... But those are the only two times. And then those two times it was, you know, I was sort of, well, it wasn't sort of, it was a formal function. We as student leaders or what, I think we were probably awed by the fact that we were in his presence and with other guests and so forth that, you know, it wasn't real close contact. I certainly think he would be quite different from the gentleman that I've heard today and last night, Lawrence. Although, Bill Bauer said that Lawrence, when he first came here, was very distant and hard to get to know. ... But to me the two times I've heard him, I would think that, he either, somebody's told him to change his ways or he seems to be a very personable guy. Maybe I read him wrong.

KP: I guess, before leaving Rutgers and talking about the military, is there any other good or bad memories you have of Rutgers? You really had some great stories. I will forever remember the Golden Dagger and ...

LA: I'm glad I gave you something.

KP: Well, you have given me a lot, but that is something, because it is not written down, you cannot ...

LA: No, no. ... And you're not going to find it anyplace.

KP: Yeah, it hasn't left a paper trail to find.

LA: No, and you can't. The problem is I don't know the year, after I left. In fact, I know it did, it disbanded in '42. Because there was nobody to be a part of it, because the people who might

have been involved then had gone into the service. Juniors as well as seniors, because a lot of juniors went in at the same time. So, the sophomore and freshmen were left without anyone to initiate them. So, I know that's when it died. And I'm not, I wish, well, if I could get a hold of (Stewart?), he's the only one I can get to back up my story because the rest of them are gone. It's too bad. But that's, as God is my judge, that's the truth. Now, what else did I ... I think I've covered ...

KP: You've covered a lot but ...

LA: I think, I've covered everything.

KP: I guess the one thing you didn't tell us on the record is your great fall you had.

LA: Oh that's right, I forgot about that.

KP: You had quite a fall.

LA: I may as well tell you about that fall and repeat it all over again what I've told you. But anyway, when I was a freshman at Rutgers, the later part of my freshman year, I joined the DKE fraternity. And, anyone who is familiar with the DKE house knows it's a three story structure which has a gutter that runs around the entire house underneath the window sill on the third floor, which if you were to jump off of that, it's a drop of about 27 feet. If you did you would find that you were either headed for a flagstone patio of some forty by twenty foot depth and width or you'd fall down a stairway that led to the chapter-room underneath, which is another thirteen feet. So, if ... you covered that whole distance you'd really have a nice fall. Well, anyway, we used to have a practice in that fraternity, particularly in the spring-time when a young man's fancy turns to all sorts of things, and in this case it turns to water fights. You'd be sitting at your room window and at your desk and all of the sudden you're drowned with a bucket full of water and you'd look up and you can't see who did it, but you could guess. So, it happened to me on a particularly balmy April night and I preceded to get out of my room, go to the shower, fill up a waste-paper basket with water and go down to the room of the guy that I thought did it, down at the end of the corridor. He's got his door shut so I can't get in. So, I realized in order to put water in his room I'd better do the same thing he did to me, so I went back to my room, climbed out on my window, got in the gutter, and walked down to his room. Lo and behold, he's got his window locked and he's standing inside laughing at me. So I said, “Well I'm defeated.” I may as well turn and I go back and I got back, just about to get to my room, and the room next to me, the boy, ... Don Waterman had a radio hooked up and his aerial was hanging out over the gutter. He secured it somehow and I took a step ... in the dark, this is at one o'clock in the morning, somewhere between one and two, and my foot, and by the way we were studying very hard that night. My foot stuck underneath that wire and I came off the roof and I fell the full distance in the dark and I went all the way to the bottom of the stairwell, knocked the breath out of me and the only thing I can remember is I looked up, and if you look up from a place that is darker than the area above and you look at the sky you can see reflections and I could see the legs of this Wes Graf standing there saying, “He's down here!” Because, they couldn't find me, they didn't know where I went. I wasn't on the flagstone patio. ”Where'd he go?”

They took me to the hospital and I got in the hospital and, I guess I passed out because I don't remember going to the hospital. I woke in St. Elizabeth's, or whatever the hospital was, and Dr. Copleman, who I guess now has passed away, was former athletic doctor for the University, standing beside the bed with two nurses and they're looking me over. One of the nurses looked at me, she said, "What happened?" I said, "I fell off the roof." And the two of them went into hysterics, and I said to myself, "Well, what the hell do they think's so funny?" Here I am lying on my back and ... he's stitching up the cuts underneath my arm and ... they're in hysterics, because of what I just said. Well, for those of you who live in New Jersey and for those of you who live in Massachusetts, where I came from, if you fell off the roof, it means two different things. In Massachusetts, it means you fell off the roof. In New Jersey it means a girl has her ... has her period, ... but her period. And that's what the girls were referring to, and from that point on, until I graduated from Rutgers, I was known as the only man who could "fall-off-the-roof." That's the story. But Copleman's dead, he can't tell you.

KP: That's interesting. I recently heard from his widow.

LA: Oh, did you?

KP: Dr. ...

LA: Copleman.

KP: Copleman's widow. She had seen the article on the oral history project so the name sounded very familiar.

LA: Yes, ... he was a great guy, but then he stitched me up and ... I became infected and I had about six weeks of septic cleaning the infections. I had some scars on my back.

KP: But, otherwise, you could've ...

LA: I should've been dead.

KP: You could've broken your neck ...

LA: Copleman told me, he said, "Lyman, ... if anyone else fell where you fell," because he didn't believe it, he had to come over and see where there was still some scrapings of blood on this wall. He said, "If anyone fell the way you did they would've been dead." He said, "You've got two things going for you: one is the Lord, who decided he wanted to keep you for something, and the other thing is that you're an athlete." He said, "An athlete and a drunk would've survived." He said, "Were you drinking that night?" And I said, "No I wasn't." I really wasn't. But, he said, "It was your athletic ability." He said, "Because as soon as you went out in to space, you automatically from your athletic ability, from playing football, you're whole body went limp. So ... when you went down there, ... you sort of bounced." He said, "You weren't rigid or anything, so nothing broke." And he said, "A drunk can do the same thing." [laughter] I

never ... forgot that, but it must have, it was either the Lord or the fact that I was an athlete, because I wasn't drunk that night. Some other nights I might be.

KP: You were on the home-front for awhile working as an assistant personnel manager. How did the war affect the company you were working for, particularly personnel matters?

LA: In the first place, Armstrong Cork at that time, in that particular plant in Millville, was a glass manufacturing plant. And they used to ... Most of the business was the manufacture of liquor bottles, either clear or brown, amber, whatever they might be. When the war came along, they, like everybody else, converted to other things. I don't know if you can guess what they converted to, but it was a very simple thing and they made millions and millions of them. Glass insulators for the signal corps, to run wires on them. We made them by the millions. I used to watch them come off the conveyor line, and the workers that we got at that time weren't paying too much attention and we had piles of broken glass where they just kept on coming. They wouldn't pack 'em, they'd just let the stuff come. ... Some ... how they converted and we had a tremendously tough problem with personnel. We couldn't get any men to do the work and we had to get pretty strong women. ... because once you've filled a carton, it was pretty heavy to move around. I've forgotten what the weight was and there was constant absenteeism. I spent most of my time chasing workers who hadn't reported for work, either by calling them by phone, going to the house or room or wherever they lived to see if, roust them out, see if we could get 'em into work. So yes, Armstrong Cork, for the eight months I was with them, I don't know what happened after that, had a tough time with the personnel trying to hold them. In fact, ... I said to Bill Mall, who was my supervisor, sometime after, “You only hired me to chase these women off the streets and get 'em in here.” And he said, “Pretty close.”

KP: What about rationing? Did rationing affect you at all?

LA: Not then. Not at that time. That was, see, ... that was the spring. I went to work for them in June of '42 and left in February of '43, and the rationing came in January, and, no, it didn't affect me, I can't [say]. It affected my mother, but not I. Why didn't it affect me? Because I ate out all the time. You know, I was living by myself in a room and any meals I ate I ate out and it didn't bother me. I didn't notice rationing. I knew you were going to ask that question, and I was trying to figure out how did it affect me.

KP: Because there are some people that for various reasons it just didn't ...

LA: It didn't affect me. It affected my mother and she complained about not being able to get silk stockings and not enough butter, ... but they didn't have dough. Oh, you want talk about rationing wait till you get to my military experiences.

KP: Well, yeah, especially having a war bride. No, you really had rationing in England.

LA: I'll tell you about rationing. That's why I laugh at somebody, and I, you know, people tell me, “Oh, it was terrible during the war years. Oh! The rationing.” And I said, “Come on, you didn't even know what it was like.” And they didn't. They didn't.

KP: You applied for this limited service. I mean, you wanted to serve. You mentioned walking through the train. Did anyone, such as a soldier ever say to you, “Why aren't you in uniform?”

LA: No.

KP: You never had that kind of experience?

LA: I had the looks, but no one ever said anything. They'd look at me. They looked at you and ... you knew that the wheels were going around and say why ...

KP: Yes. No one ever said something to you?

LA: No.

KP: You enlisted on March, 23, 1943.

LA: Hey, pretty good, aren't you?

KP: Well, it's also on your survey, so I can't claim credit for knowledge that you provided. [laughter]

LA: I didn't know. Yes, I enlisted or, ... how do I say? I enlisted or I urged my draft board to draft me and they did.

KP: And where did you report? Because you were based in South Jersey.

LA: I reported to Dedham, Massachusetts.

KP: Oh, okay. So that's where you ...

LA: I went in from Dedham, Massachusetts.

KP: Not from New Jersey?

LA: Not from New Jersey because ... when I registered, I registered in the summer and I was at home at that time. Well, you had to, wherever your domicile home residence [was], and at that time I hadn't graduated from Rutgers.

KP: So, that ...

LA: So, Dedham was were it was. That's where I had my first physical examination. That's where they made me, at that time 4-F because they wouldn't accept my vision. But, then the standards lessened and lessened and lessened and you could take all sorts of bad apples if you work hard enough at it.

KP: And where did you report for your initial induction?

LA: Boston.

KP: Yes?

LA: Boston.

KP: Boston.

LA: Boston. And from there I went immediately on a train to Fort Devens, Massachusetts. I ... went through the classification section and the interesting thing about it, a week later, after cleaning the walls and so forth, the dishes of the barracks, I was notified I was being assigned to the classification section. I was to be a classification specialist, I knew anything about the army's classification or not, it didn't make any difference, that's what I was gonna be. ... And now that ... I look back on some of the things that we did, it wasn't a bad classification. They took my civilian experience, which was personnel, and I was a college student, I should have some brains and should be able to interview somebody and draw out of them their work experience and then classify them as to a skill that the army can use. Phew! You'd be amazed at some of the things that we did.

KP: So you did that initially?

LA: I did that for, let's see from April 1, I guess it was, or April, somewhere, first week in April until ... August. Wait a minute, I'm loosing track. April until the following March. Yeah, the following March, yeah. I did that ... army classification specialist. I interviewed I think, if I remember correctly, something like, ... We used to pride ourselves on how many we could do in a day. Imagine one day I interviewed and classified 62 recruits, and you've probably never seen what they call a AGF-20 form. It's a general personnel classification, but it's two sided, you have to do the work experience, you have to do the educational experience, hobbies and all the other jazz that goes with it and then try and find the real skill that he may have, because you would be amazed. ... At one point, I found out how to diagnose a schizophrenic. One of the unique methods is to find out how many different jobs he's had in a period of time, how often he changes jobs. Not true and tried I suppose, but the doctors told us. I remember doing ... one kid and he had sixteen jobs in a period of two years. I said, “There's something funny about this kid.” I said, “I don't think he should ... be in the service. There's something wrong.” I went through his jacket and inside the jacket was his physical exam, which is supposed to be there and I read the physical exam. He had been rejected by the medical corps, as being a schizophrenic, not fitted for service, but somehow or other it had gotten by and here I spent all that time working on him. So he didn't get into the service. But that's what I did ... for the Fort Devens Service Center for all that time and then I was assigned to the 184th General Hospital.

KP: Before getting to the hospital ...

LA: Okay.

KP: I can't resist asking. People have described being classified.

LA: Oh yeah.

KP: Particularly people on the GI Bill and sometimes it made perfect sense to them. It was very logical. And then, of course, there was the need for infantry, so then they just put people in infantry. But even before it became a crucial need for infantry sometimes people wondered how classification was done and I'm sure you could elaborate on it, having been on the other side, I would be curious.

LA: ... I tell you something. ... I'll never forget. But some of these people that came in, you know, we had lawyers and scientists, a lot of real top-flight people and people that were highly skilled in, ... well, machinists and mechanics and so-forth. Some of the people who came to us had all sorts of strings they wanted pulled to get their [way], to be assigned to such and such, and "Oh, we don't to go anyplace other than Fort Devens or we want to go to Camp Edwards ... on the Cape." ... And, "Oh yeah, I'd be good for that," and so forth. "Don't you think that would work out?" [laughter] ... And ... some of the cases you'd smile to yourself and say, "Well, I know so-and-so, I know Mayor Curley's brother-in-law who lives over so-forth, they'll be in touch with you." I said, "Okay. Fine." We used to get, now this is the truth, we used to get [orders] and we'd see them come in. We'd get orders, ... you filled orders for infantry if you decided you wanted to purchase ten dozen of these. We'd get orders to fill an infantry division at Fort Biloxi, Mississippi, and they wanted machinists, they wanted infantrymen, they wanted riflemen or whatever they might be. So one day, ... let's say I have 150 papers to work on, but I can only do 40 of them, and of those 40, 25 of them are lawyers. I've got to classify them. Where do I ... send them? What's the army classification, riflemen 070, because I know I'm filling a request that's coming from Fort Biloxi. And those poor lawyers, regardless of the fact that they were well-suited for the judge advocate section or the attorney general, became infantrymen.

KP: So some of it is being at the right place at the right time?

LA: Or the wrong place.

KP: Or the wrong place, but if you report to induction center that has a draw for this specialty, whatever that specialty may be, and there's so many people there, you will get funneled in because people have talked about, you know the truck driver who ends up being the cook and the cook who ends up being, you know, the truck driver.

LA: Yeah. ... You couldn't fit their skill with what the need was and because, at that particular time, particularly in '43 and '44, the need was so great. We were losing so many people and we were having to replace them and they were running them through basic training, which was, at one time, three solid months on they were running them through in six weeks and eight week shots just to put, to be honest, just to put bodies in the line. So, the poor guy who came in as a chemist and found out he was carrying a rifle said, "How the hell did that happen to me?" But, ... if he survived being an infantryman for say a year and a half and came back for R and R and some place they needed a chemist, down at Oak Ridge or wherever it might be, "whoops," that's

where he went. And they used to blame the poor classification specialists for [it], and I know. [laughter]

KP: I wanted to get a classification specialist perspective on this because people have commented on this at length.

LA: Well, you got it, ... that's exactly how it works. It was a case of the law of supply and demand.

KP: In fact, Robert Strauss has really told me a great story of how he was at Fort Dix and they needed a unit right away to go up to Canada to work on this base, so he was thrown into this unit that was sent up to Canada without even basic training to do construction.

LA: Yep, ... that's the way it went. And ... as I said, I interviewed thousands of people in that short period of time and I think I, I know, I did an honest job. The classification that I put on, the job description properly classified the person for his skill, but the military skill that I had to fit them into was not what he was fitted to do. The same thing could have happened to me. I could have gone in ... on an induction in which they were looking for limited service infantrymen to be cooks. I could have ended up being a cook. Thank God, I didn't. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that people always talk about, “I know so-and-so's, I know the governors.”

LA: Not always, but quite often.

KP: Quite often, yes, but enough so it's memorable.

LA: Yeah.

KP: Did anyone really have connections? Did you ever hear back, I mean, did someone's pull reach you?

LA: Nobody ever reached me.

KP: No, you never heard ...

LA: It was a long chain to reach us.

KP: Yes, I know.

LA: Because, remember now, ... I'm a buckass private. I mean, I've got good skills, which would qualify as an officer, but I couldn't because of the limited service classification I had. I was a plain old Ernie, buck private. Nothing else. No rank whatsoever. The only thing I could do was to do that and play softball for the Fort Devens team. I couldn't see very well to play. No, no one ever got to me.

KP: Yes. At a certain point, you just ignored this.

LA: Yeah, I'd just say, “Well, fine, if they can.” Because I knew they'd never get to me. They might get to my commanding officer, who would readily take care of them, because he wouldn't have, never. He might have told somebody, it was easy enough, because I'll tell you that later on in my military career in which I did it. But it was easy. It could have been done by him.

KP: You had not had any basic training in doing this job.

LA: No. I went right from induction into that. Then before going to the 184th General Hospital, I went through eight weeks of basic training, learning how to fire a rifle and learning how to scramble under wires and so forth. But the reason for that, ... I didn't know, and neither did the rest of us who were were in it, ... [was] that it had been determined that the need for us was overseas. They ... did not want anyone to go overseas without having the ability to fire a rifle and to be able to survive some combat. So, if things hadn't turned out the way they did, I probably would have gone as an infantryman, even with the fact I couldn't see. Or couldn't see very well.

KP: What was basic training like for you?

LA: I hear people, maybe it's, ... if you've asked the same question of Ralph and some of the others, they didn't have it. ... Did Ralph go in?

KP: Ralph never served in the military.

LA: He didn't serve at all?

KP: He initially had an exemption because of his work on DDT.

LA: Yeah.

KP: And that ...

LA: I didn't think he did.

KP: He tried to enlist to go to the chemical branch, but they would only send him to infantry.

LA: ... How many have you interviewed who have graduated from Rutgers who went in as enlisted men?

KP: Oh, quite a few because of the GI Bill. So, I have interviewed quite a few.

LA: How about the class of 1942?

KP: Very few from 1942. Most went in as officers.

LA: Most went in as officers. Because, ... I almost am embarrassed when ... you asked what the ... I said, “What the hell?” I said, “Everybody in my class was an officer.”

KP: Well, you and Sid Goff should have a long talk. You should really go up to Sid because Sid has wondered about the same thing, too. And there's quite a story in his case, which is on the record now.

LA: I don't know if Sid ended up as an officer. I did.

KP: No, he did not. He has not been pleased with the army for that. Actually, the army air force. He has good reasons for not being pleased.

LA: Yeah, I'm sure. ...

KP: You were saying that basic was not too onerous.

LA: No. I don't want to make it [seem] as if they didn't really train us because they did. But, ... I guess what I'm trying to say is that because of my ... athletic ability, the fact that I'd been an athlete and I still was of sorts, that it was challenging. I loved it. I really loved basic training. They could run my ass ragged and I was fine because I never allowed anyone to lick me ... in a race if I possibly could. And most cases, ... because of my body and native skill, I was successful. So, ... I loved to have them call out, at reveille early in the morning, and go all day long and be so exhausted when I got in the barracks that all I wanted to do was fall asleep. That was great for me. The others would bitch and moan and complain. Some of them washed out and some of them couldn't handle it. But for me it was [great], and when ... I finally graduated that day, I said, “Hmm, can of nothing.” I enjoyed it and I did. But it really wasn't the thirteen weeks of basic training that you would've had if you'd gone for a little more training. And I'm sure, if ... I'd gone in the marines, I would have still liked it because that's the nature of the beast, I guess, in me. So, it wasn't nothing. Wasn't much at all, it wasn't. No landmark in my career, that's for sure.

KP: And then you were sent to the medical hospital.

LA: ... I went to the hospital because of that classification. ... They were getting set to go overseas and the army, I guess, decided that they were not going to send any specialized unit overseas unless they had a classification specialist within the unit, because they were finding out that in these longer stays overseas that some of these units were not upgrading and ranking and so forth according to the specialist they had in their unit. So I was assigned to the 184th as their personnel classification specialist. That's how I got into that. And two weeks after I was assigned to it we went overseas.

KP: And you went overseas to England?

LA: Yes.

KP: When did you leave for England? What month and year?

LA: We left in March, the following March.

KP: March of '44.

LA: Yeah, March of '44. We went out of Boston, too, which was surprising because ... typical of the army, they do everything to try and convince the troops that the troops won't know where they're going. So they issued us all winter gear, parkas, woolen stuffs, and everything else and we said, "Hey, where the hell are we going? Going to someplace that's cold anyway." So that looked like we were going to Europe and a week later they took it all back and gave us all sun-tan shorts and, you know, hot-weather gear. That really threw us. We figured now, we're going to North Africa. Nobody ever thought of the Pacific Theater, for some reason, because here we are stationed in the Northeast. Well anyway, two days before we're to ship through Camp Myles Standish via Boston or Boston via Camp Myles Standish we were reissued with all the winter equipment and we ... headed out of Boston and we joined one of the largest convoys, at least that's what we were told, going out of the Eastern coast. We had picked up units from Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk, and there were 132 ships in the convoy. We had, well, I can't tell you that right now. ... The ship that we got on was the S.S. Alexander, which was a ship that was impounded by the United States. It was a German liner and it was in dock when we declared war on Germany, and we impounded it and they converted it to a troop ship. We had 14,000 troops on-board that ship. ... How many numbers do you have to go down to get to F deck, but F deck was the bottom deck and that's where I was, along with most of the 184th. And we hit a Northeast storm off the coast. Evidently, ... we didn't know, but it must've been off the coast of Labrador because, after we got to England, they traced where we had gone and we went up the New England coast, off Newfoundland, northern route, then down to the Azores and came back up again to England. That's how they were trying to dodge everything. But we ran into this storm and it stormed, and it ... I wasn't sick, but almost everybody on that [ship], not everybody, but a lot of people were just deathly sick. They couldn't even [get] out of their bunk, they were so ill. We used to hang the helmet liner on the side of the bunk, that's what you used and they wouldn't allow us on the deck because the weather was so bad. Finally, when the weather cleared up, they allowed us to go outside.

But before that, ... we were all asleep one night and then all of a sudden there's this big explosion and this kid, no kid, he was older than I was, he was 36 years old, (Eddie? Rosenberg?) from Hackensack, he was sleeping underneath me, or trying to sleep underneath me. He jumped out of his bunk and he said, "Christ, we've been bombed!" And he took off. Now he's on F deck. He got to the upper deck, when ... some of the marines that were handling the upper part of it stopped him and said, "Where the hell are you going soldier?" [laughter] He said, "We're bombed! I'm getting out of here!" They said, "No, you're not. That's nothing, go on back down." What had happened was that the bulkhead had blown loose in the storm and it had just made such a noise that it woke everybody up, but ... Rosie ... was never able to forget that time. [laughter] He even lied. Somebody said, ... "You didn't take your helmet gear with you either, did you?" But ...

KP: Well, your story illustrates the fear of death. I mean, the fear of sinking in a submarine.

LA: Oh.

KP: If it was a submarine, your chances of making it out ...

LA: We'd never have gotten out of there. He wouldn't have either. [laughter] ... We finally were allowed to get up on deck and we found it was a beautiful sunshiny day and that the few that got up ahead of us were lying up on the deck, resting in the sun. I said, “Where in the hell are we now?” And we were off the Azores. We didn't know it, but that's where we were. And we ... finally landed in Liverpool, England. We went from Liverpool to Wales. That's on the lower part of the Irish Sea, Wales, beautiful spot. ... We were billeted there for six weeks and then we left for Mansfield, England where we set up, took over for the 30th General Hospital. We were the 184th. ... This was a different kind of a unit. I don't know whether somebody devised this or what. [They] must have. There was the 184th General and the 684th Labor Complement. They did the laundry, they did the baking, the cooking, whatever it might be, and a lot of the clerical work.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

KP: Were most of your medical personnel from New England?

LA: All ... our skilled professional personnel were from New England. ... All the medical people were out of Mass. General, Tufts Medical School, Harvard Medical School. They were the top surgeons ... in the Boston area. So, we had a good complement and the nurses were all from New England hospitals, ... Massachusetts and Connecticut. ... But the 684th, that was the labor [complement]. ... Where did they come from? They came from the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee. And do you think people weren't ostracized in the army or the navy? Well, they were in 184th General Hospital. These guys were put in billets by themselves. They had a different NCO. They had a different commanding officer. They reported to different people. They did not play on the unit softball team. They weren't allowed to take part in the band and the orchestra that we got together, and as somebody said, “Well, Christ, they don't wear shoes.” That's how bad it was.

KP: It sounds like they were really treated as second class ...

LA: Oh!

KP: ... service people. I mean ...

LA: And one of them was the best man at my wedding.

KP: Where did you get married?

LA: I was married in Mansfield, England. Bill Frew, ... he was a clerical worker with the 684th General Hospital, came from Ohio. He had worked for a newspaper in Lisbon. I can't remember the name of the newspaper. ... Bill was a great guy. I don't know how we got so friendly, but when ... Edith and I were going to get married, ... I said, “Bill, would you be my ... best man?”

He said, “Oh, yeah, I'd be glad to.” He said, “I can't think of anybody that you should marry other than Edith.” And I said, “Thank you.” That was nice. But my company commander didn't think that. ... That's a story by itself.

KP: Well, since I think you're the first person I've interviewed that married a war bride, I guess I can't resist. I was going to ask you for more about the unit.

LA: What do you want to know? How I met her?

KP: Well, I guess first how you met her because I've heard [about] a lot of meetings. People have talked, actually fairly honestly, about having affairs with people, but you are the first to have a marriage. ...

LA: I had a ...

KP: There were a lot of war marriages, but there just hasn't been from the group I've interviewed.

LA: Yeah. ... Well, I had an affair and a marriage, if you're following me.

KP: Yes.

LA: I mean, that does happen. And particularly it would happen in wartime. I met Edith one night when I went to the Sir John Cockle. The Sir John ... Cockle was a very -- do you know anything about pubs in England?

KP: Not a lot. I just know ...

LA: Well, let me just ... say this one thing. Pubs in England are institutions. And they are a way of life. And they're not bars. You don't think ...

KP: Yeah. I've been to a pub or two. No, I know that ...

LA: You don't consider them as bars. You go to a pub in England after work or after supper to sit down and have a couple of bitters or milds, whatever they might be, or maybe it's a gin and tonic or whatever and talk with your neighbors, play dominoes or checkers or chess. And the wives will be in the other room and they chat and you chat with your friends and then you go home at ten o'clock because the man calls time and you go home at ten and that's it. There's no drinking when you get home. You go home and you have a cup of tea and a biscuit and go to bed. [laughter] Not quite sure whether the United States ...

KP: No, no.

LA: Well anyway, I walked into Sir John Cockle one night ... because somebody had told us, Tom Donahue from Pennsylvania and myself -- Tom was a T-4 sergeant -- that the Sir John Cockle always put up a bottle of scotch at six o'clock when they opened. And we didn't know

any other pub in the vicinity of the 184th General who put, I'm beginning to sound like an alcoholic, I'm really not, put up a bottle of scotch at six o'clock. And if we got there early we'd be able to get a few drinks out of it. So we had become quite a thing. If Tom was free and I was free, we'd trot, and it was an easy walk, it was only about a mile and a half down the road. So we'd trot down to the Sir John and sit there and wait till they put the bottle up and we'd have our couple of drinks and come ten o'clock time, we'd go home. Go back to barracks. And I don't ever remember getting drunk there. They were real gentlemen and so were the people who owned it. There was a husband, wife and daughter who ran this place. One night when we came in I looked behind the bar and there's a, ... there's a door in back of the bar that leads to their living quarters and ... there's this new girl. "Where'd she come from?" [She is a] real attractive woman. I wish I'd brought Edie's picture. A real attractive woman. I said, "Whoo." So one thing led to another and evidently the bartender said to her that there was an American soldier sitting out at the bar and he looked lonely. "Why don't you go out and talk to him?" Well, Edie is so shy she wouldn't talk to her mother, I think, unless she got an invitation. So she just stood there in the door and the bartender came over to me and he said, "Have you met Edith?" And I said, "No." And so to make a long story short, that's how we met. I took her to the movies about a week later and from then on ...

KP: Then you started dating. It sounds like you had a very ...

LA: We had a very prosaic, just a perfect type of an introduction for marriage, I guess. We dated and talked and I found that she liked what I stood for ... and I liked what she stood for and she ... had come from Sheffield where she'd lost both her mother and father in the Blitz of Sheffield.

KP: How old was she when you met her?

LA: How old was she? She was 21.

KP: But she lost both parents?

LA: Lost both parents two years before that. And she was working on her own. She had been going to school and she had to leave and go to work. She was living in a boarding home ... just down the street from Sir John Cockle.

KP: So she had seen a lot of sadness in her lifetime.

LA: Oh!

KP: Very quick, I mean that's ...

LA: That's quick, I mean you lose your mother and father. ... And ... she said, "I can remember." ... Some nights ... she does wake up screaming because she ... still ... remembers walking into Sheffield and bodies lying in the street from the bombing the night before. They hadn't been able to clean everything up. So ... she had a tough time and she was lonely. And as she said, many times since then, "If I hadn't been so lonely and desolate, we'd never been

married." [laughter] And I said, "Well, if I hadn't been lonely and [had] nothing to do, we never would've been married." But we were. We were married in a church, but ... I've got to tell you this because this will be an interesting story, nobody can tell you a story like this. You're gonna probably think I've stayed awake trying to think up these stories for you, but this also is true. When you got married in the military, it wasn't like getting married anyplace else. The military has a lot of protocol, a lot of administrative regulations you've got to go through. Well, if you were overseas it made it even worse. Would you believe that I have ten copies of our marriage certificate? We have got original passports, original certificates from the Church of England, I've forgotten what else. I've got a special order signed by General Eisenhower, the ... Commanding General of the European Theater, giving me permission to marry because it's gone through all the channels. My company commander, he was the first I had to go see. The company commander forwarded it to the colonel of our detachment. The colonel forwarded it to the commanding general of England's theater. From the commanding general of England's theater over to SHAEF, which was Eisenhower's command force in Europe. And finally, after six weeks, I got permission. But before I go through all of that, ... the first step is you have to go see your company commander. My company commander was a 22 year old from Long Island who is a captain because he had gone in early and they had moved him right on up. And ... he was a pretty smart kid, but in some ways. And ...

KP: But in other ways he wasn't.

LA: Yeah. Right.

KP: But I mean, he's also 22 and ...

LA: He's 22. ... I'm almost 26. I've got four years of college education. He has just come out of high school and gone through special training to get his captaincy. And I'm not degrading what he did.

KP: Yeah.

LA: I think, you'll understand what I'm getting at. But anyway, I have to go before the company commander. Well, before you go through the company commander, you have to go to your first sergeant and you ask the first sergeant for permission to see the company commander. And the first sergeant said, "For what?" And that's usually the way he says it, "For What?" I said, "I want to seek permission to get married." And he said, "You're out of your fucking mind!" I said, "That's not for your to say, Sergeant!" And he got up out of the seat, went to the company commander's door, opened up the door and went in and shut the door behind him. So, I don't know what the hell's going on. So, anyway, the door opens up and he comes out and he says, ... "Captain Heally will see you." And I said, "Okay." So I walked in, saluted like I was supposed to, and the captain said, "What can I do for you?" He knows well right what he can do for me. I said, "I'd like permission to marry Edith Henry, a spinster." Because that's what you have to say. He looked at me, he said, "Avery, ... do you know your own mind?" I said, "Sorry?" He said, "Do you know your own mind?" He said, "Here you are a military man, college education. You want to marry some slut." I said, "Sir, she's no slut. That's the woman I want to be my wife." And he said, "I want you to take some time to think this over." And I said, "I've thought it over."

He said, “Take some more time.” I said, “I'll be in tomorrow morning.” I was. I came in the next morning. So he finally realized that [I was serious]. But what was really bugging me, here's this 22 year old kid asking me, my age and my experience and my education, if I knew my own mind.

KP: Yes.

LA: Well, he finally gave permission and we got married.

KP: So it sounds once he gave permission, it was just the paperwork.

LA: It was just the paperwork going on through. It took six weeks for all that to clear. We finally got it cleared and married in June of that year.

KP: So you ...

LA: I went with her for a little over a year before ...

KP: That's a fairly long courtship.

LA: Oh, yeah. It was ... a year and one day from the year we met. So I wasn't ...

KP: Yeah, it wasn't like a six week ...

LA: We had a lot of them in my unit, you know, ... and the poor girls. Well, it's their own fault. Marriages failed and they went back to England.

KP: So you did know war bride marriages that did not work?

LA: Oh, yeah. Lots of them. Lots of them. And there are some that did work and worked well. And the upshot of this Captain Heally story is, and how strange fate is, later on I get shifted out of 184th General Hospital and I'm assigned to the UK Medical Center in London, Grosvenor Square. And my responsibility was to work with a lieutenant and clear out all the medical troops in England. This is ... '45. To clear out all the medical troops in England, either to the European theater or to the Pacific theater, because the Japanese war had not ended at that point. And that's what I was working on. Well, one day I was sitting in the office. I've now, by the way, ... I've moved up in rank. I'm now a master sergeant. And my buck sergeant said, “Sergeant, there's a captain out here to see you.” And I said, “About what?” And he said, ... “He's got his orders for re-deployment.” And I said, “Okay, send him in.” Who comes in? Captain Heally. My captain. And he looked at me and he says, “Sergeant Avery?” I said, “Yes, Captain. How are you?” He said, “I'm fine. How are you?” He said, “Are you involved in this?” I said, “Yes, I am.” I said, “In fact, I am the guy, because the lieutenant had been shipped to France and I'm doing it all.” “Oh, I'm so glad.” And I said, “What can I do for you?” “Well, ... I've got my orders here. ... You see, I've been ... assigned to San Diego and I gather from there I'm going to the Pacific theater.” I said, “That sounds like it might be true.” [laughter] And he said, I wasn't quite as facetious as I am now, but he said, “Sergeant, is there anything you could do?” And I said,

“What do you mean anything I could do?” “Well,” he said, “I'd just as soon either stay here or go to France.” “Well,” I said, “you can't stay here, because we're clearing all the ... American medical troops out of here. But ... you're not gonna gain anything by going to France, but if you want maybe I can do it.” “Well,” he said, “I've become very friendly with a young lady in the south of England.” And I said, “You son of a ... ” [mumbling] And I said, “Okay, Captain, I'll see what I can do.” You know what I did? He went to San Diego. So I got back at him. He went to San Diego. And about five years later I heard, I didn't know this for sure, that he had been killed in an automobile accident on the Westside Highway in New York City. This guy was married by the way. I forgot to tell you that. He was married and he was ...

KP: Oh, he was married when he said he had this woman on the ...

LA: ... Yeah, yeah. At that time, he's married and has got two kids in the states. You do get a lot of interesting stories. ...

KP: Oh, yes. Well, and also the stories that do not have a paper trail. This is one of the stories.

LA: No.

KP: And people do not want to put this on paper.

LA: No. ... [laughter] You'd have trouble finding this paper trail.

KP: Yes. So you were in England for a long time, your unit.

LA: Sure. I was in England. Well, the unit wasn't there for so long.

KP: But ...

LA: The unit left. The 184th was reassigned from England to France and ... when I asked to be transferred to another unit in England our commanding colonel, Colonel (Berry?), said he would be glad to do that, but he said all the medical troops were being cleared out. But he said, “Maybe you could be assigned to London in ... that process.” So that's how I got assigned.

KP: To the ...

LA: I was assigned then to the adjutant general. And ...

KP: And when did you go to London? Do you remember what month? Was it in '45?

LA: Oh, was it '45? Yeah, because, let's see now. It was before the Japanese surrendered ... late May or early June.

KP: That you were reassigned to the adjutant ...

LA: General. That's when I was involved with clearing medical troops out. And, in the meantime, I had arranged with ... with London to have, oh, I got beside the point. Edith in the meantime had our ... oldest daughter and then she said, "You can take us out of here."

KP: Had your wife shipped back?

LA: Yeah.

KP: You wanted her shipped back the same time you were being rotated.

LA: After I had gone back. After. To be shipped back not before I'd gone back to the States because there was only my mother left there for her to go to. Well, I was rotated out in May, '46 ... I left England April, the ... 29th, I guess, and got to the States ... and came through Camp Kilmer and that's where I was discharged from, Camp Kilmer.

KP: You must have found it somewhat ironic to be back in New Brunswick?

LA: I did. I did.

KP: I've often though of that when people have told me ...

LA: I didn't stay very long.

KP: Yes, but still.

LA: ... And I said, "My God, here I am. I've run the whole circle." As soon as I got here, I called my mother because I had told Edith to keep in contact by letter and so forth and so I called my mother and I said, "Have you heard from Edith?" I'd been in the process of twelve days of coming back and so I didn't know where she was. And ... she said, "Yeah, she's on her way." I said, "What?" She said, "She's due in New York on, according to her, she's due in New York on the 20th of May." I said, "I'll just about beat her home." I was discharged on the 11th and went home to Massachusetts, turned around and came back and took her off the boat in New York City and ... that was it. I came out of the service on May 11th, 1946.

KP: You ...

LA: Uneventful.

KP: Well, you had more things happen to you than you think. I mean historians really ...

LA: But there not like Charles Getty ...

KP: No, no.

LA: And the MacDougalls and ... Tom Kindre.

KP: No, but for some of my interns, such as Melanie Cooper, they like this project not for the war stories, but for the stories about marriages ...

LA: Humanity.

KP: And societies and families.

LA: Yeah.

KP: You got to know English society better than a lot of people do.

LA: ... Edith, my wife, has cancer and up until she became seriously ill with cancer and vertigo -- She's had two major diseases -- we used to go back to England. We went back every two years. I love the country, I confess. And all the times that we have been back and the places I've been, I still think there's so much that I still want to see, but ... Edith can't travel and I won't leave her alone. I called this morning and she's having a fit now. "When are you coming home? When are you coming home?" I said, "I'll be home late Sunday." Yeah, ... it's a great country. ... They have their faults and so do we. ... If the economy hadn't gone soft in England, I think I might have retired there, I liked it so much. And evidently the people like me, and [when] I came back to the States, I had an English accent. I'd been over there for awhile, three-and-a-half years practically.

KP: And by dating and marrying an English woman you really got to know the people.

LA: Yeah. I've never really had, ... after my introduction down here at Rutgers, I have never, no one has ever been able to pin down where I come from. That my dialect doesn't ...

KP: Yes, it is not a Massachusetts dialect.

LA: It's not Massachusetts, it's not Virginia and it's not New Jersey. It's somewhere in between with all the others. ... I think England had a lot to do with it. I think because I'd stayed there for so long.

KP: You mentioned it earlier when we were talking about rationing in the United States, you got a sense of how bad things were with the English. I mean it was very real.

LA: Can you imagine? Well, I don't know -- are you a meat eater or are you a vegetarian?

KP: I eat meat, yes.

LA: How would you like to exist on two ounces of meat a week? Two ounces a week. One egg a week. No butter, just lard. Sugar practically non-existent. Tea, their most vital product in England, was rationed and they could do pretty well with that. ... [laughter] The only thing that was really not rationed was beer. There was plenty of beer. They never ever seemed to lose track of that. But everything else was oh so tight. And the experience of driving around or riding around England, they would put these, maybe you've seen them in the movies, they would

put these masks on the [headlights] ... and all you saw was a pin hole of light coming through. I don't see very well. I stepped off the curb in Mansfield one night coming out of a movie and if he hadn't stopped, I'd have been dead. I didn't see the car coming. The car didn't see me, and I stepped right in to it. He stopped just in time. But the rationing, ... oh it was just [terrible], and families that had, you know, three and four children. But the interesting thing is ... they were the healthiest looking people during the war. ... Where did you see obesity? Not in England. Because they couldn't have the food.

KP: Yes.

LA: They ate plenty of potatoes, plenty of vegetables, because that wasn't rationed. There was plenty of that because a lot of them grew most of what they had. And their diet was such that ... they just were really healthy people. ... Heart disease was down, everything was down during the war.

KP: No. In fact, you were discouraged from eating high fat foods like meat.

LA: Yeah, yeah. [It] wasn't there. ...

KP: And butter and milk is restricted.

LA: Yeah. [You] couldn't have it. I was talking to Bob Olson about that. He said, "Yeah, it's too bad we don't have it here."

KP: You mentioned your wife had experienced the Blitz. Had you ever experienced any bombing or any rocket attacks?

LA: Yeah, that's one of the funniest [thing], who was ... I talking to last night about that? They asked me if I saw any, what kind of conflict or war did I see, because we were talking about ... the archives program. And I said, ... "Literally, I suppose I had a fun time. I met my wife, we had a daughter and I came through pretty well." I said, ... "Yeah," I said, "My experiences, yeah, ... I've one real close miss." I was walking on High Street near Marble Arch. I can't remember the day and it was just before noon. I guess I must have been coming from lunch or something like that. I started to step down off the curb and I remember taking the step. The next thing I know I'm lying flat on my back about twenty feet back off the sidewalk against a wall. Oh ... the back of my neck hurt and I said, "What in the ... " I couldn't, didn't realize what had happened. One of those, what did they call V-1 Buzz Bombs had landed just on the other side of Marble Arch and that explosion had blown me back off the street onto the walk. That's my experience ...

KP: That's pretty close.

LA: Oh, it was close!

KP: Did you ...

LA: And I've been in the underground when they were bombing London, but not up on the streets. I, fortunately enough, I got into the underground because ... we got so much warning. I mean, when you think of what ... those people went through in World War II and how much we complained over here.

KP: It sounds like you have a lot of admiration for the British. You really thought that they ...

LA: Yeah. Not because I've got Scottish and English relatives.

KP: No, no. But I think because you ...

LA: I admire them. I just, I've often said many, many times to people here, I don't know, we might have existed. In fact, I said, "Maybe it would've been a good thing if we had some bombs dropped over here so they'd realize what the hell it means." All that, you see it in the movies, but that's nothing. I walked into St. Paul's Cathedral shortly after they had dropped the bomb through the nave or whatever you call that upper part. And all around it, St. Paul's is devastated and here's this cathedral, with the exception of the damage to the dome, that's all that was touched. Now why? But everything else is flattened. People dead, oh. No, it's a wonder. It's like me, still alive. No, I admire them. ... At least, I admire the people that went through that. I don't know exactly what is going on there now, particularly with their new government.

They'd be different. ... We talked ... election night. I was talking to London because Edith's niece and her husband, we're all very good friends and they've visited us here in the states, and ... it was a quarter after seven when they called us and that's a quarter after twelve, London [time]. And I said, "Margaret," I said, "I know what you're doing." She said, "What are we doing?" I said, "You're watching the results of the election." And she said, "Yep. And we've all voted." And I said, "I bet I know how you all voted. You all voted for the Labor Party." She said, "And I'll bet you're all wrong." I said, "Who'd you vote for?" She said, ... "You'd never believe it." But, they have ... a girl Claire, there's Margaret, the mother, and Chris, the son, and the husband, Lawrence, who is ... an investment banker with City Corp in London. He's well up there. He's a vice-president. ... All four of them voted separately at different times during the day and that night they compared how they voted. They said, "How'd you vote?" Well when Margaret ... was asked, she said, "That's my own business. I'm not gonna' tell you." And Claire, the girl, said, "Ah, come on, you've got to tell us." So, finally they all exchanged who they voted for and all four of them voted independent in what they call the local elections because they have independent voter on the local. And all four of them voted for the Liberal candidate.

KP: Oh, yes. The Liberals did very well.

LA: Yeah. And I said, "Well, you know," I said, "you've been trying to elect the Liberals now ever since you two were married and you haven't done it yet." Lawrence said, "No, and, ... I don't think we're going to." He said, "At least we got nineteen percent. That's a hell of a lot more than we had before."

KP: No, that's the most seats they've had since ...

LA: Yeah.

KP: I forget the decade, but I watched the election coverage on C-Span.

LA: It's long before the war.

KP: Yeah.

LA: World War II.

KP: Yes.

LA: Way back. Yeah, ... we're still very, very close. Edith has two brothers over there and both with Alzheimer's. One is institutionalized and the other one should be, but his wife won't let him go, but she's going to have to. And she has some nieces over [there]. Yeah, I'd love to go back and ... visit, but it's not going to happen.

KP: You mentioned earlier, and I just wanted to make sure we got to your marriage and your experiences with English society, but you mentioned the segregation between the hillbillies and really one of the elites of New England society, Massachusetts General Hospital.

LA: Yeah it was. Yeah, Irish Mafia too, by the way.

KP: Oh, okay. So it was both the WASPs, I get the impression, you know, Massachusetts General ...

LA: I'll bet of that 184th General Hospital, where all the cadre and so forth that came from the hospitals around that area, I'll bet that there weren't, Protestant services, I'll bet there weren't more that ten of us. That the rest were all Catholic
[laughter]

KP: Were all Catholic?

LA: Catholic chaplains.

KP: The hillbillies. People have described the experience of having "hillbillies". In fact, many of them did not know how to read. Did you find that in your unit?

LA: Yeah. These are whites, too.

KP: Yeah. I know.

LA: These are not blacks.

KP: Tom Kindre talks about this. Having this unit full of Kentuckians and Tennesseans and that experience. Did you have any sort of training programs to teach them how to read and write?

LA: All they had to do was, “Sammy, do you want to do all the pressing and ironing today? You're gonna cut the hair and your gonna sweep up the trash and you're gonna do the cooking. Just learn how to fry eggs,” or whatever it might be. But, no.

KP: No. You didn't set up any special program?

LA: No way. They came in, went through their basic training and came into our unit and they worked. They were laborers, period. No way. Think you've gone long enough?

KP: Hmm?

LA: ... Oh, you haven't gotten to the end of this, have you?

KP: Oh, no. Well, let me, the dinner actually starts soon and I should ask a few more questions.

LA: Holy smokes.

KP: Yes.

LA: Well, we can finish this tomorrow if you ...

KP: Well, I have to interview Tom Adams tomorrow at nine. But let me just ask if I could a few more questions and I'll eventually get the chance to see if I could ask a few questions of your wife about her story on English society. But I guess, you came back to the states with an English bride, but how did your wife adjust to American society?

LA: ... She had a pretty tough time. First of all, ... she was a shy retiring English person. And she didn't know any of the ways of the American life. I had tried to tell her before we came back. I said, “This is not going to be easy for you. You're going to have a very difficult time. My mother is not going to be easy to get along with and we're going to have to live with her for a while. Because I was unmemployed ... could have gone back to Armstrong Cork, but I didn't want to. I didn't know what I wanted to do at that time. Hell of a job. Come out married and [with] a child and not knowing where your going to live and not knowing what kind of a job, but that's the way it was. So, Edith had a very, very difficult time. ... Oh, I bet it probably took her pretty close to twenty years before she could say -- I'll say one thing though, she was a citizen two years after she came here.

KP: Oh, she did ...

LA: And she has never missed voting in an election. Whether it be local, state or national. And she just loves American politics.

KP: Really? Interesting.

LA: Loves it. I mean, ... and also, she's a Kennedy-phile, which doesn't go too well. We don't talk about that.

KP: Interesting.

LA: Yeah. But ... she is very interested in politics, loves it, but she is very quiet and removed from society. She is perfectly happy to bring up her two children, to stay in her own home. She won't join a group. She will not join the, well, she joined the PTA and after the girls were through, she got out of that. But she doesn't, she will not socialize. We used to play bridge quite a bit, but when my eyes went bad I had to give it up, so she gave it up. But she's perfectly content to stay right in that house and she's so handicapped now, with the vertigo, she can't get around without using a walker and she's embarrassed by using it so she won't go out unless I can brow beat her to go. She'll go to the doctor, but she won't go anyplace else. ... I wouldn't say that she's had an easy life, but she's done such a great job with her two daughters that she's got a great big sense of pride. And that's what holds it together.

KP: Did you think of using the GI Bill?

LA: I used it.

KP: Oh, you did use it for ...

LA: I have two graduate degrees.

KP: Oh, you did?

LA: I've got a master's degree from Boston University and I've got what they call a CAGS, which is a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study or, in other words, the guy who wouldn't do the thesis.

KP: Yes.

LA: Or in my case, didn't want to do it because I had just washed out. I was doing all of this. I was teaching, coaching, trying to bring up a family and I just got to the end of four years of this part-time and I said, "Dean, I can't do it, I can't hack it." So, I got the certificate and said, "That's fine." And I suppose, except for the fact that they don't call me doctor, ... it didn't hurt my career any.

KP : And you went into teaching. How calculated was that?

LA: Why, that was real calculating. I was standing on the street corner and the guy across the street looked over at me and he said, "Hey, Lyman, when did you get back?" I said, "Two months ago." He said, "What are you doing?" And I said, ... "Come across." So he came across and we talked and he happened to be the assistant football coach, at Dedham High School. And to make a long story short he said, "Hey, a job just opened up." I said, "I can't teach. I was a history-political science major." He said, "Well, you can teach that can't you?" And I said,

“Yeah I can teach it, but I can't follow these foolish certificate requirements that you people have like educational psych and educational philosophy.” I'd looked into this. And he said, “They're no damn good anyway, come on in.” [laughter] So, two days later I was called for an interview by the principal, the one I've talked about, the one I told you was a great man and he hired me as a teacher. I said, "Ralph," I said, “Mr. Eaton," at that time, I said, "Mr. Eaton you know,” I said, “I'm not fully certified.” And he said, ... “You stay with us for three years, ... I'll get you certified.”

KP: He obviously did get you ...

LA: He did get me certified and from then on I continued. I loved the classroom. I loved the classroom more than I did the administration. I got out of administration because I just couldn't hack it any longer. I got tired of, particularly as a superintendent, you're no longer really involved. It's like Lawrence only he may be more, but you're not involved in education. All you're doing is managing a multi-million dollar business. You're far better off hiring an MBA, who really knows how to handle that stuff, than worrying about the teachers union, worrying about how you're gonna balance your budget, worrying about a school committee that's going to cut your head off if you turn sideways. And I just became disenchanted and after five years of that, of superintendency, I said, “That's enough.” And I got out.

KP: Being a superintendent is not ...

LA: It's not a cup of tea.

KP: Because your not like a principal where you have the satisfaction of really working with teachers and students.

LA: No, you're not.

KP: As a superintendent you hardly ever see a student.

LA: If somebody said to me, “What's the biggest mistake you made in your life?” I'd say it was when I got out of the classroom because when I was in the classroom, I taught. And kids learned. And I've got kids now who come back, who write, remember me at Christmas and so forth. A Mr. Chips type of thing. I don't have any teachers tell me that as a superintendent.

KP: Yeah. Actually, I think Simeon Moss would enjoy hearing from you because he also went into administration.

LA: Oh, was he?

KP: Education, he was a superintendent for Essex County.

LA: Oh!

KP: And he's had doubts about what he's accomplished over his career.

LA: Hey, we'll have a good ....

KP: No, I think he will really enjoy hearing from you because he's expressed those doubts.

LA: Are you going to the dinner?

KP: I'm going to the dinner and I have to stop at the Seward Punch Bowl Reunion.

LA: I've got to go to the hotel and change clothes.

KP: Well, then let me ask you one very quick question. Have you ever been to any reunions of your hospital unit?

LA: Yeah, one.

KP: When was that? Was it recently?

LA: No, no. ... It was when I was in Brookline, teaching in Brookline in high school. So that's got to be sometime between 1954 and 1962. I can't remember the exact year. But we did have a reunion and it was a lot of fun. Interestingly enough, none of the 684th came. That's the labor battalion. None of them came. Not surprising.

KP: What about your best man? How long did you stay in touch with him after the war?

LA: Until he died.

KP: Really?

LA: Yeah. And we visited him in ... Lisbon, Ohio and he came out and visited us twice. He and his wife were divorced. We met his second wife and shortly after that he developed cancer and died. That was about fifteen years ago, something like that.

KP: So, in many ways he stayed a good friend.

LA: Oh, yeah, yeah. ... We were good friends. But even he did not come to the reunion. ... I tried to talk him into it. He said, “No way. No way!” He said, “I don't want anything to do with that group."

KP: Very interesting. Well, thank you very much. I wish we had more time.

LA: That's long enough. ...

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

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