RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED V. BRADY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Alfred V. Brady on March 4, 1996 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and Robert Hood. I would like to ask you a number of questions about your father, who seems to have been an intriguing man and an active man, especially politically. He was born in Bayonne. Did he live there his whole life?

Alfred V. Brady: Yeah, actually, I think he was born in Jersey City, and, even then, it was only a half a mile beyond the Bayonne-Jersey City border, but he grew up … and the family built a new house … or a new house … for themselves when he was two or three years old in Bayonne. That house is still there. My mother's brother still lives in it or lived in it, until he died six months ago, and I was born in that house, or at least, yeah, I was born there, because in 1924, you didn't go to the hospital to have children, … Coincidentally, my son was born there, because I lived there for the first year and a half or two years of our marriage, and my son was born, at this point, in 1951. He was born in a hospital, but we lived in that house, and as I say, it is still in the family to some degree.

KP: That is a long run.

AB: Yeah, it is almost a hundred years, my father will be, if he were alive, he would be ninety-eight this summer. My mother is alive and she'll be ninety-seven in May. She is in a nursing home.

KP: That is a ripe old age.

AB: Yeah, she's still physically not in too bad shape, but her head is pretty much … she can't remember a lot of things of the last two or three hours, or two or three months, and, of course, every now and then something will pop into her head from eighty years ago, and seventy years ago, and she'll start talking about it, that is the way it is.

KP: Since we are on the topic of your mother and father, how did your parents meet, do you know?

AB: I really don't know. I know my mother's family lived on The Main Street in Bayonne, Broadway, and there was a string of houses. I think they were four family houses, duplexes with two families on each side of the center hall, and they had a big porch with steps going down to the sidewalk. The kids sat out on the porch a lot of times, and I believe, I seem to remember my mother telling a story of having first seeing my father, because he was walking down the street with several other boys when, I guess, they were either just out of high school or just in college, around eighteen-years-old, and getting introduced to him by one of the boys in the crowd, who knew her and her sister … But … beyond that, I don't know anything at all of their courtship or any of that business. I never really was that interested in it to ask questions and neither one of them had any reason to tell me or volunteering any. Let me make my own mistakes.

KP: Your father was remarkable in that he got to go to college, was he the first?

AB: He was the first one in his family, and the only one in his family. He was the youngest child of eight, and he was the only one that went to college, and he went to a good college, and

he had good grades, and, actually, he got through all kinds of obstacles, including a bout with malaria when he was ... He was an All-State baseball player in high school so he was in pretty good condition, no big monumental athlete, but he was in pretty good shape, but he got malaria when he was … I think it was in 1915, or 1916.

KP: Where did he get it from?

AB: It was not uncommon around coastal New Jersey at that time. Anyway, he recovered from it, but he lost a year out of school because of the time it took him to get over it. He graduated in the Class of 1915 from Bayonne High School, and he didn't go into school until 1917 at Stevens, no, in 1916, I'm sorry, and he lost four months or six months in the military. He never went anyplace. He was in the Army, but they were finishing training and getting ready to go overseas when the Armistice came in 1918.

KP: Your father was drafted into the military, he didn't volunteer?

AB: No, he was in college and had all kinds of reasons to get finished with it.

KP: What did your father ever say about the Army?

AB: He had no particular feeling one way or the other. My father was always pretty well, I guess, judicious is the right word, about experiences like that. He recognizes some of that kind of business is inevitable and necessary in a society that we live in, and it has the same problems that any other organization which gets into dictatorship type of things. You're brought up in a democracy. This one organization you don't get to vote in, [laughter] and so, and that was the way he felt about the Army. He wasn't particularly opposed to military people, and he had a lot of good friends that were his friends from not only from high school and college, but from the military in some degree.

KP: Did he ever join the American Legion?

AB: Sure, it was the kind of thing you would do, what the guys did when they came back, when the American Legion was formed, and they started to push really for membership during the '20s, but he was a member of the American Legion. I was a member of the Sons of the American Legion Bugle and Drum Corps. As a matter-of-fact, we were National Champions in 1937.

KP: So, your father was fairly active.

AB: Yeah, but he never got to be anything significant in the way of an officer.

KP: Would he go to the conventions?

AB: There were two posts in Bayonne. There was the Mackenzie Post and I don't know the other, whether there was any name attached to the other one, it was Post Nineteen. Mackenzie Post was, I think, 165. That's the one I was in, the Bugle and Drum Corp, and the other one

faded out in the Depression. Everybody didn't have the money to pay dues. They merged; the two of them… That was actually pretty much the limit of my experiences of the American Legion, because when I got out of the Army, I certainly wasn't interested in it.

KP: It sounds like your father had quite a struggle in college, being drafted and he had to skip a year because of malaria.

AB: Yeah, he didn't graduate until the Class of 1921, where he should've been in the Class of '19 or '20, but there are a lot of people around even now who take six to get a degree.

KP: Your father was an engineer?

AB: He worked for Esso, same way I did.

KP: He started out with John Devlin Construction. What type of engineering did he do, construction?

AB: That was destruction, that was the major job that company did. He was involved in the demolition of the old, original Madison Square Garden. Of course, taking that apart, and that's what they had to do, they couldn't just blast it down. It required dismantling a lot of structural steel and that sort of thing. He worked on that job for a year or two, I don't really remember the exact… I don't know anything about it on the first hand knowledge, it is only what he told me.

KP: What I felt fascinating was that your father worked for Esso for along period of time, and then he became very active in civic affairs.

AB: Well, he worked for Esso from early 1920s. I don't know which year he actually started working for them, I just don't remember it right now. I may have put something down on that.

KP: You have him listed for engineering from 1926 to 1933. Was he laid off during the Depression in '33?

AB: Yeah, he got laid off in 1933, in the Depression. They had a round of layoffs in their engineering department, and at the time he was laid off, he was working on this project to bring a hydrogenation process that IG Farben had in Germany to the United States to be used in manufacturing hundred octane gasoline, the business of converting the hydrocarbons that are found in refinery gases. They had to run the crude oil through a still and up with some gas off the top, and that has hydrocarbon compounds such as isopropylene, and isobutylene. If you take two isobutylene molecules and put them together, you can make them into one molecule. It becomes octane, or it is actually called di-isobutylene… It is short two hydrogen atoms of being isooctane, so if you get a process to put the hydrogen into it, you can make isooctane, which is what one hundred octane gasoline is. So, anyway, the Germans had this process developed in the late 1920s, and Esso had arranged licenses, permits, and a plant, which is now in Bayway. They had a little pilot plant that they built, and worked on that, and that's the work they were running tests in there and seeing if they could operate it, because it had to operate at 3,000 pounds pressure in order to react. They didn't have the catalytic systems, or they didn't have

them on a plant scale as they do now, and now hydrogenation is relatively simple, but in those days it was brute force and they had to make sure it didn't blow the plant apart, so they were into that kind of thing, and that's what he worked on, and when they laid him off, he had then four kids, the youngest one was two years old, my kid brother, and I was nine, or eight, and I still remember the day he came home. My mother was in tears. It really wasn't that; I never really, just couldn't comprehend the size at that age. But anyway he had been given some sort of lay-off allowance that got us through a few months, and then in 1933, in the summer, he came down here to Rutgers summer school to pick up teaching credits… Then in September that year he started [teaching] he was always sort of involved in politics in the town, but only just as a sort of member of the War Democratic Club, or something like that.

KP: It almost sounds like it was for recreation.

AB: Well, it was social, just a social thing, and that was common, it's still common in cities. It's not like out in the boonies where I live now. People are so apart they have to have some other reason, and it is usually a commercial reason, to get together … Anyway, he had some friends in the city, and on the Board of Education, and among the teaching people in the town, and my aunt was a teacher, his sister was a teacher in the Bayonne system, and, so, anyway, he got his substitute teaching job in September '33, and a year, I guess it was two years [later], he got a full-time tenure job. In 1937, I guess it was, Exxon decided they could take him back, and they invited all their people back, and he had a lot of friends from when he worked there, who were still friends of course, and [who] wanted him to come back there, but he said, "No, I have tenure now, and I got four kids to feed, who knows when they're going to…" In 1937, there was no assurance that we were really out of trouble, because the war hadn't started in Europe yet, and there wasn't anything around that was pushing plants to build stuff and sell stuff quickly. So, his attitude was, and I remember him talking about this, that he was just going to stay with the sure thing, which was teaching, and so he stayed as a teacher… Then he started to get involved in teaching. He was always a pretty popular individual. I had him for a teacher in high school. [As a] matter-of-fact, he was my homeroom teacher my senior year, and that didn't mean anything, and he was my chemistry teacher, too, and I had to know more chemistry than anybody else in the class regardless of anything else, because you're the teacher's son, you're supposed to know all this crap, so it was a lot of fun.

KP: What kind of teacher was he?

AB: He was a good teacher. All the kids really liked him. Not only did the kids like him, the other teachers respected him.

KP: Did the fact that he had actually worked in industry for a number of years help him as a teacher?

AB: Oh, sure. Well, to some degree it, to the extent that you have to learn to work with other people and develop, earn respect not just command it. He did learn that, and I learned it the same way. You learn that when you are put in a situation where you have to work with other people. If that doesn't happen, you start right out in school all the time, because most teachers learn it sooner or later, or they just don't succeed, and then if they don't succeed they become

department chairs, and you can leave that on the tape. Anyhow, he did have that kind of respect from everybody, and he got involved with the Teachers' Association, which was, you know, the NJEA, and he became the president of the Bayonne Teachers' Association in 1945, and, of course, I was out of school by that time, and I was out of here, too. But in 1946, with all the guys that had been a teachers that had gone into the Army, or the Navy, or the service, or somewhere, they came back and there wasn't any place to put them. They were all entitled to jobs, by law, so the town was dragging their feet, Board of Education wise, and the teachers got really indignant about everything, and they pulled the first strike that had ever had happened, teacher's strike, in New Jersey, anyway. I don't remember hearing about one any place else. Primarily because nobody wouldn't make any commitments to this. They wanted a contract and all the other jazz that goes with membership in a union and a powerful enough union to shut the place down. Anyway, he was always remembered in Trenton for that, and that was another story. But he then gets in 1947, or 1948, there was a project to develop a sewer system for Bayonne and Jersey City to eliminate the dumping of raw sewage into Newark Bay and New York Bay. What it consisted of, was running a collector pipe around the perimeter of the town and putting in a treatment plant, and then dumping the treated water into the ... Anyhow, he suspected that there was going to be a lot of fooling around with the contract. It was an outgrowth of the PWA, which was still in affect then, and it was something like a three point five million dollar plant, which, in 1945, '46, was a lot of dough. Maybe now the same thing would cost twenty-five to thirty million, and they … What he did was just keep paying close attention to the design, and then when they bid the job, he got copies of all of the bids that were submitted and started to review them and saw that … an awful amount of materials, and the labor, and everything else that goes in to make the bid, were subjected to the estimates on the part of the engineer as to the quantities, and everything was bid upon at unit price bases. So he realized … he knew then that somebody could play a game, whether they were or not he couldn't be certain. Well, then the bids finally came in. It turned out that two of the contractors, three of the contractors who were involved … were big companies, matter-of-fact, one of them is still building buildings at Rutgers right now. Those companies all got together, and they all submitted … they all took the job as a joint venture, and what happened was that George Brewster, who is not in business anymore, but he was a guy who ran for governor at one time in the 1950s, his firm had submitted the low bid. But when … after they merged, the job wasn't awarded on a low bid basis, because it was awarded to the joint venture, which [was] Brewster's work for some of it, but then in some of these other areas where unit prices were lower, [it was] his bid that made them low. They got thrown out, and then they bid them on the basis of the other bidders, who were also in the mix. There was a guy by the name of LaFera, who I don't think is around anymore, I haven't heard of him, and Terminal Construction, they were the contractors on one of the big buildings, right after I retired, but they are still around. Terminal, LaFera, and Brewster and they were the consortium that built that thing, and he followed that construction very meticulously, in detail, and he was doing all this with one eye, because he had lost one eye in a lab accident when he was in night classes, back in the 1930s… He was looking at all these numbers and the fine print on the dining room table, sheets that wide, and you could see how that in the areas where there was a much greater quantity than the engineer estimated, those were going to the guy with the highest bid at material… They had the choice between steel pipe and concrete pipe for the collector. Well, steel pipe is a lot easier to install, but it requires more welding and that sort of stuff than the concrete pipe… But the steel doesn't need the support that concrete does, because the concrete, in order to keep it straight and level, you really

have to have a solid bed of stone underneath, where the steel will bridge over some of that stuff without any problems. In any case, they used a lot of the steel pipe instead of concrete pipe, but never gave the benefit of the elimination of the support, so anyhow, the net result was that … and he got a lot of publicity for all this out of the Bayonne paper and the Jersey City paper. At that time the *Jersey Journal* and the *Bayonne Times* were separate papers, now they are combined. There was the final analysis, and that sort of got him actively into politics, because he was contending with the people who ran the Bayonne City government, and then to some degree, the state had to get into it, because there was the allegation of fraud and that sort of stuff… Of course, there weren't any elections, in Bayonne there were commission elections, and they were held in the spring, in May, and not in November, and so everybody was a Democrat, I mean, there were Republicans, but they were token Republicans, not taking anything away from the individual. But they always got a good commission ticket out of the five, always had one Republican on it. Hague did that in Jersey City, too, and so it went the other way in Union City, where it was a Republican government and one Democrat, and that was before you had to speak Spanish in Union City. Now it is a different thing, but anyhow since everybody was alike, there might be pretty much three or four tickets in the campaign, and he got involved with some other guys. One guy, who was on the Board of Trustees here for a long time, Al Adler, was a very active in my father's campaign. He ran in 1953 and lost, but in 1954 there was an election, and he got elected as a commissioner. He was on the ticket that got three people in and took control of the commission. Then in 1957 or '58, it was 1957, he got elected again. By this time the guy who had been mayor, Tommy Di Domenico, you may have seen their buses running around the place. They run down the [Garden State] Parkway all the time, down to Atlantic City. His son, I think, runs it now, I'm not sure. But anyway, he was just starting that business then, and he had been the mayor, and then he had his three to five years in, and he had other things that he wanted to do, so my father took over … as mayor. One of the things that he had promised, when he had run for the second time, was that he would work through in changing the form of government to a strong mayor council, so that is what he did get through. He had tried to do that earlier by petition, in the middle '50s, and just got it in on the ballot and could never get it passed, because the guys who were in didn't want it. They got their people to vote against it. But, anyway, he had promised that, so he did it, and then it called for a special election in 1961, and he, of course, was going to run for mayor… Frank Fitzpatrick, who was an old buddy of his, one of his old pals from way back, before I was born, he wanted to run. But my father wanted him to run on his ticket, and he wanted my father to run on his ticket. They both wanted to be mayor, so they ended up going head-to-head, and Fitzpatrick won. It was the usual garbage about fraud, and cheating, and thievery, and everything else, but as somebody who was inside and on the losing side, I have got to admit I couldn't find anything wrong with that election. Fair and square he got beat, and my father said the same thing. Guys like Adler were mad as hell, a lot of things they thought happened I couldn't find any evidence of. In any case, since they were then, and continued to be for the rest of their lives good friends, my father and Fitz, he gave my father a job as the first code enforcement officer in Bayonne, and my father, when he became mayor, and retired from the teaching job, he had twenty-five years in so he quit teaching, and then he ran the code enforcement office, and as a matter-of-fact, I guess, two to three days before he actually died, he was still going to work.

KP: It sounds like your father had a very rich career.

AB: Oh, yeah. One of the major things he did, in the early '60s, was and is still evident in Bayonne, was determine not to tear down a lot of the so-called substandard housing, which really wasn't substandard, it just didn't look really neat. It was all row housing, and so people thought that every house should have a palatial lawn around it, full of trees, and children playing. But that's all right for the landscape magazines, but it's not really the fact of life when all you want is a house to keep the rain off your head. So, anyway, he got Fitz to agree with him, that we were not going to build any of these Curries Woods houses [Curries Woods was an urban renewal project in Jersey City] that were most obvious to Bayonne people, because they were right over the line in Jersey City, and a matter-of-fact if you go off right on the Turnpike extension to the Holland Tunnel as you come off the bridge from Newark Bay, you go past them on the left side, as you're going up towards New York. They're high-rises, they look like a jail, and they are. They didn't really want anything like that in Bayonne, so they struggled like mad to keep … a lot of the people living in Bayonne … there were a lot of these houses were two family houses, maybe four family houses, but one of the families living in the houses usually owned it, and so there was a major incentive for them to maintain it, to take care of it, and to make sure the people around them to take care of it, and it is still that way. It's fifty years later, forty years later, and Bayonne is still a reasonably decent looking town. It has some run-down areas, nothing really consistent, and, anyway, for the lower middle-class people that basically are going to live in an area like that, it looks pretty good, and it works… It functions as a city, so, I think that my pop was right. This is what he thought, and he and I talked about this a lot, about that, because I, at that time got into politics and got elected in Green Brook Township in the '60s and, of course, Green Brook was exactly the opposite end of it: a big empty space with a highway running through it, and how do you develop it? I disagree totally with what's happened with Route 22 running through there. While I was in the government I never let any of that stuff happen, and it was after I got out that we had an administration there that would actively go out and encourage everybody and his brother to go out and build a candy store around that road, and a driveway opening out onto a sixty miles per hour highway, and that's really what you have. It's a dangerous situation. But the worst thing is none of it works very well. The guy that's running the store … can't get any customers to come in unless he is giving something a way.

KP: I know someone who has expressed their feelings about Route 22. He didn't take a job because he would have to drive on Route 22, and I've driven on Route 22 and I will try to avoid it.

AB: When I moved out to Plainfield in 1954 and, for awhile, I took the train in because I was still working here in the Bayonne Refinery for Esso. After a couple of years we started a car pool, and we used to drive in on Route 22, it was a zoo, I mean, the five of us that were in the car pool, each guy took a day in the week, as long as he was working. It was really murderous driving all the time. Out of it all, I think in all of that time, though, over the next, that was 1957-8 till 1964 when I quit, in that stretch, we only had one accident, and that's because a truck, a dump truck, came out of Kenilworth Boulevard, and we tried to avoid him, but we couldn't and got whacked, and bashed up the fender of the guy's car, one of the guy's in the carpool, but nobody got hurt. But it was one of those things that no one got hurt because we were paying some attention and we didn't run right into the back of this damn truck. We had seen so many other accidents, and I was determined that the town would not contribute any more to that, and it didn't for the time I had any control over it… When the riots came to Plainfield I got so

disgusted with public life, generally, because I had been very active in Plainfield in trying to put together a regional planning council, or a regional planning agreement, and it was awful tough sitting on my front steps that Sunday night hearing small arms fire a mile or two away. That was ridiculous, so I got out and I didn't campaign in 1967 when I was up for election again. My name was on the ballot, but I didn't go out and solicit any votes. I only lost by a hundred. I ran as a Democrat, and the town has never re-elected another Democrat in its history.

KP: I imagine doing regional planning must have been very frustrating, giving the certain municipal autonomy.

AB: Oh, sure, that's right. But actually the only mistake we made was a joint mistake on my part and the people in the state government who were involved with regional planning. We tried to make the region too big. We added towns that really didn't have, after I got to know them a little better, they really had no reason to hook up with the Plainfield. Berkeley Heights and New Providence, for example, they're interested in Summit. They weren't interested in Plainfield, and that was one of those things. We couldn't even get them to talk about it very much and since the whole business had been put together and the sample ordinances we had given out to these towns to use as endorsements as the whole proposition included all of these towns because none of these ordinances will become effective until all of the towns have joined, because nobody wanted to get hung up with this thing and not everybody in it. So the only other thing we could do then, when we found out that Berkeley Heights and New Providence weren't interested in it, was to go out and revise the ordinances in all the other towns, and then they were getting so fragile because everybody was starting to worry about them breaking out, and, of course, when the riots started, that finished it.

KP: Why did the riots play such a devastating role?

AB: Because nobody really wanted to be associated with Plainfield, and they still don't. It's just like Newark as far as everybody in the non-black areas are concerned. Nobody talked about Newark, but nobody would go there either, and this Plainfield situation is very similar. You don't hear an awful lot about it, but you know that people are very careful when they go into Plainfield. They don't go in there at night if they can avoid it, and they stay out of the areas where they're liable to get knocked over. It's the same… I would not, in 1945, '46, when I was a kid … I would go into New York City, and I go any place in New York, but I wouldn't go into Harlem and I wouldn't go into the South Bronx, alone, I mean. Now, I would go up in to Harlem, any place with four to five guys, white or black, but you just didn't do that, and there were some areas in Brooklyn you didn't go into. I remember in basic training, the platoon sergeant was a kid from Brooklyn, and he was one of the Amboy Dukes, and I always knew things like that existed, I just had no personal contact with it, you just didn't do that. So, anyway, that's what Plainfield got to be, and that's what killed that whole business. I called a meeting of the organization of the regional planning council, and we just gave back any of the money due to any of the towns that had contributed to the support of it. Well, we needed their money for clerical stuff, postage, any of that sort of stuff, and we dissolved it and that was 1968. I'm trying to remember the guy's name, the regional planning guy in Trenton, Eugene Schneider.

KP: When you come to the transcript, if you remember him, you could always pen him in.

AB: There is a guy still working down there, and I think he is still in the planning department, Michael something, I can't remember exactly.

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KP: There seems to be a story there about the teachers' strike because it was one of the first in New Jersey. Did the teachers win?

AB: Well, yeah, they won to the extent that they got recognition, and they did take care of … they started Bayonne Junior College.

KP: Did that become Jersey City?

AB: Well, this sort of came together in the 1960s, but this is the 1940s still, and Bayonne Junior College went on for ten years, or so, as I remember, maybe even longer than that. My brother went there. I guess it ended up, they all got merged into Jersey City State College. There was one in Jersey City, there was one in Bayonne, and there was one up in North Hudson, and a lot them ended up being merged into Jersey City State, that was late 1960s. As far as my father was concerned that was what they set out to do, was to set out to get recognition, and they had a contract, and they still have it, and, of course, the teachers, NJEA is a fairly potent force in the state.

KP: You mention that he got quite a name in Trenton, it sounds like there was quite a struggle.

AB: Well this came later. This was when he was … it didn't come from the teachers' strike. The teachers' strike … oh, there was a guy, who was the executive secretary for the NJEA back in '60s, and when I was introduced to him here, I guess, I don't remember who introduced me, maybe Mason Gross, somebody in Queens introduced me to this guy, who was the big gun in the teachers' association, and he says, "Al Brady? Are you related to the Al Brady that used to be the mayor of Bayonne?" and I said, "Yeah, he is my father, " and he said, "Well, he was a pretty big man in our organization." I had never really connected much with that teachers' strike, other than that it happened, and he said, "The organization, the New Jersey Education Association, got a big boost in terms of membership and recognition by the fact that this strike," which my father reluctantly led, and he was reluctant ...

KP: Would he have preferred to have negotiated?

AB: Yeah, he didn't want any of this strike business, at all. He thought that teachers should be above that, that they, we were professionals that shouldn't get really involved and go ahead and negotiate and argue. Of course, the guys who had been in the Army, and had gone away in the war and didn't have four kids to feed…

KP: They wanted to strike?

AB: They wanted to strike, but, anyhow, that was the significance of it. But the business of the

things in Trenton happened after I came here to work, and we were in, down at Queens, and it was a day when Governor Hughes was here, and I knew that he had known my father, but I never realized everything had happened. In 1961, when my father was running, and Hughes was trying to get everything together for his first run, one of the things that my father's organization did was, in the primary election that year, was to run a primary candidate in a Democratic primary against Hughes, who was a Jersey City captain, police captain, who had no particular qualifications to become governor or even to be anything more than a police captain. But anyhow, this guy, I really can't remember this cop's name, but this guy ran and he was a candidate rather, and the state Democratic organization and everybody was doing their damndest to get him off the ballot and they couldn't do it, until they agreed not to do some other things that Bayonne didn't want them to do. … Basically these weren't political things, they were purely civic things. Mainly, I think what Bayonne wanted was to get them to change the utility taxation business of giving all the money that they collect from the utility companies, in lieu of taxes, to the municipalities where they have an installation, and so a city like Kearney, with a couple big power plants in it, doesn't pay any municipal tax, or they didn't then, and they still pay very, very little, because they have nothing but big utility plants up there, a Cogeneration plant, and a Public Service generating station. As a matter-of-fact, Kearney has two of them, you have one on either side. I think one of them is called Harrison, but it is actually in Kearney. Anyway, I know that was one of the things they wanted to get out of the state. They never got that one completely, but what they did was to get Public Service to build an installation in Bayonne, and that shut Bayonne up. I wasn't living in Bayonne then, but that was what Hughes, when I met him, he said, "We had a lot of fun with your father in 1961," and I knew what he was talking about, but I just didn't think he would remember.

KP: Your mother worked in a dress factory?

AB: Yeah, she quit after the ninth grade in high school and went to work in a dress factory. That's what she said, this is what she is telling me, but that was back in the beginning of World War I, around 1915, she was fourteen or fifteen years old. She was born in 1899.

KP: Did she go back to work when you were growing up?.

AB: Yeah, well, after my father got laid off, she went to work going out and selling ladies underwear, door to door. Well, it really wasn't door to door, it was word of mouth advertising, but you had to get appointments to visit and fit people, that was the way they operated. She made some money with that. I don't really know, in detail, how much, but she must have made something, because she kept at it for quite a while.

KP: You grew up as a Catholic. How regularly did you and your family attend mass when you were growing up?

AB: Regularly, and then I went through all of the indoctrination, Sunday school, the high school religion on Monday or Tuesday nights, but it was a night school. I went on with that all the way through, but when I got to college, and I started to learn a lot more about other religions and also about history, in general, and I started to have my doubts about religion. In general, it had nothing to do with being Catholic, or a Protestant, or anything else. I can't accept the idea of a

supreme being that resembles any of us. Whatever power there is that controls the universe, is continuing to control it, and I can't do a hell of a lot about it, and so I try to control what goes on in the world, and not just blame it on God. So I don't buy into any religion, but, although I still don't go to church, and I haven't gone to church for a long time, although I was very active in church, again I stayed out. When I came here, it was funny. My freshmen year I didn't want to have to go to chapel, so I told Frazer Metzger, who was the dean, that I couldn't work out a way to schedule going to St. Peter's Church and going to chapel at the same time. He said, "Aren't there any other masses at any other times?" I said, "I have to do other things then." I went through all kinds of contortions. So he finally gave me an excuse and said, "Okay, you don't have to come to chapel." Then I found out you got paid two bucks a Sunday for singing in the chapel choir, and so I got involved in that. It was at that point I had not destroyed my voice yet, which I did do with smoking, but I had a reasonable tenor voice.

KP: So, you ended up becoming a regular at chapel.

AB: I was sitting back there one day, and Metzger turned around to me, and said, "Well, Brady, have you been over to mass yet?" Of course, I wasn't going to church either, so anyhow that is what my attitude towards church was, and I got married in church because my first wife wanted to. We practiced while my son was growing up, and we went regularly to church, and after he was gone, I mean, he was in college, I worked on the building committee for [St. Luke's] … because I was in politics in Green Brook. They wanted to build a new church over there, and to support St. John's in Dunellen, which really couldn't handle the population in Green Brook, and also, of course, the involvement of a lot of apartments along Route 22, in North Plainfield, between West End Avenue and Rock Avenue there were a couple thousand people living there. So, anyway, they wanted to build on some land down along the Green Brook, where what used to be Green Brook High School is now, and it is now, I guess, a middle school. But, anyway, this is flood land, and they wanted to build a church there, and I said, "No, I'm not going to sit still and let you guys build a church there," and then Art Lewis, chair of zoning board, started to beat on me for an answer, and I said, "You don't want to build a church where you are going to have a flood every time you have a big thunderstorm, and where you put a parking lot in and you pave it, and the first spring it all breaks up, and every spring after that you have to go in and you'll have to repave it, because that's what will happen to it, because when the frost comes out of the ground it'll start to heave." So, anyhow, they still didn't want to do it, so I went to my buddies, some of them are good Catholics, chairman of the zoning board, Art Lewis, was a very good friend, although he was Republican all the way. We would run like hell against, not against each other, but we would go and push for other people at elections, but I went to him and said, "Hey, you guys don't really want them to have the hearings for this, because we don't want to put anything as significant as a church or even housing, in this area because of flooding." I said, "We are not going to change the flooding. It has been going on for a million years, and it is not going to stop, so we really shouldn't develop it." So, anyway, he agreed, and nowadays the area, they want to use it as an athletic field for the school. The school is on higher ground. But the church finally got it through it's thick head that they weren't going to get to build in Green Brook, and so they went over to North Plainfield, and put St. Luke's Church where it is now, and I was on the building committee and sat with the pastor, Father Remias, who had been a prison chaplain before he came up there, and those experiences were really tough for him. He had a tough time staying sober.

KP: He was that traumatized?

AB: He really did, and he was really down to earth, a legitimate guy, but it was tough, and, of course at that time I was drinking, but I wasn't drunk much. But we sat in my living room in Green Brook, night after night, lots a time tossing what kind of church we ought to build, and what it ought to look like, and what kind of parish it ought to be, and that sort of thing. I had always been put off by the old, Gothic, long, narrow, dark churches, and where you could sit in the back row, and nobody could see you from anyplace, and you really felt intimidated by the church, and I said, "It shouldn't be like that. You ought to be able to go walk in there and feel like you are really welcomed." Of course, at that time, theater in the round was becoming fairly popular, and I said, "Why shouldn't it be like that? Why shouldn't the parish and the people in the church see what the ceremony is about in detail?" So, anyway, we built the church in a round, I don't know if you ever been in St. Luke's or not.

KP: I have seen churches like that, that became very common.

AB: It did, after that, that's right, during the late 1960s. We built St. Luke's in 1966, I think it was, 1966, '67, matter-of-fact, yeah, because it was the night of the riots in Plainfield. I was driving up Front Street from Dunellen going up to the Italian-American Club in North Plainfield where we were running a bingo to raise money for the construction of the church, and at that time doing … and they still run bingos up there. But that's where I was going when I saw the mess on Plainfield Avenue, where the cop got killed. I couldn't figure out why all the people were standing out on Front Street looking towards the railroad tracks, then I saw the smoke from the burning car and other stuff and the gas station that they had set on fire. Anyway, that was about the limit of my religion business… My son, I taught him what I found out, and I think he agrees with it, or not. But his kids are growing up with some kind of religious experience, but I think they're going to a Lutheran church. Of course, his wife is … she grew up in Wisconsin and came here when her mother moved here … in the Flemington area. She went to school at Hunterdon Central, and then Trenton State. But, anyway, that's about it for religion as far as I'm concerned, and I don't pay any attention to it since. When I got divorced from the first wife and remarried my current wife, we got married here at in the chapel, and it was a religious ceremony. I'm trying to remember, the guy was a chaplain here in 1976. Were you here then?

KP: No, I didn't come here as a graduate student here until 1983.

AB: But this guy got railroaded out of here because he was playing games with one of the female parishioners when we got [laughter] … when Addie and I got married it was 1976, and he was the University Chaplain, and I really can't, I think his first name was Bob something, but I can't remember his last name, a big, reasonably good-looking guy. What can I tell you.

KP: Do you have any Frank Hague stories?

AB: The only thing … the only Hague story I know is, we used to live, my father's house, my sister lives there now, is right next door to the Elks Club in Bayonne. When we were kids, we used to play out in the street there, when we were ten, twelve, fourteen years old, and one night

there was a political dinner of some kind at the Elks Club, and Hague came down to the dinner, and the rumor was all around the street that the big shots were going to show up, the governor, and so we were standing by the doorway when this car pulled up, and several guys got out of the car, and one of them I recognized as Hague, and he came over and started at the doorway, and one of the kids in the gang, who was the pushy kid, he got over there and wanted to shake his hand. He reached out and rubbed his head, and the kid got all excited. He was going around after they went inside, saying it was going to cost you a dime to touch where he touched him and that's what kids thought about him. You didn't know anything about anything at that time, and he was a big guy, and he knew how to handle that certain situation.

KP: It sounds like you enjoyed growing up in Bayonne very much.

AB: Oh, yeah. I had a lot of painful experiences and a lot of good ones. I had a bike stolen, mostly because I was stupid and lent it to a kid for a ride, and what happened to him is he took it home to show off around his house, and one of the thugs around there says, "Get off that bike, get out of here," and that was the end of it. It wasn't a big deal, but it was a painful experience. It taught me a lesson I've never forgotten, anyway, and I had a lot of really great experiences, and the teachers I had in school were … I would say all of them were uniformly all number one, excellent, grade A teachers. But a very substantial majority were good teachers that were really interested in the kids. I always used to wonder, how much of that was because that's the way they were with all the kids, or that's the way they were with me because … they knew my father … But I've seen the same teachers with classes ten, fifteen years later doing the same thing. That is in spite of a lot of the stuff I know went on with the Board of Education type of things, where people got contracts by paying off other people, even some cases where they bought stuff of inferior quality, like for the cafeteria. It was more of a garbage than a cafeteria. It caught fire but still it was that kind of thing that went on, but that didn't… It certainly didn't have any effect on these teachers, and I got a good education out of the Bayonne system and I'm very happy with that.

KP: It sounds like your father wanted you to go to college.

AB: My sister came right after me, in the same school, and went over to Douglass and made Phi Beta Kappa. She is now a distinguished alumna of Douglass.

KP: It sounds like your parents had expectations you would go to college.

AB: Yeah, it was funny. I was thinking about this about a month ago. I never … that summer … well, I actually graduated from high school in January, because at that time you were still doing that in 1941, and 1942, January, was the last class. Anyway, I graduated in January and I couldn't go to college until September, of course, but I never felt personally any expectation from my parents that I had to do something about going to college. I didn't even think about that. It ended up my mother brought me an application and said to fill it out, and then the state scholarship exam, I had to take that. Well, I was used to that kind of stuff, so I went and took the exam, and I didn't have any problem apparently, because right after that I got accepted to that. I guess, it was in the spring, that was April, and in June, I guess it was in July, early July that I noticed I had the state scholarship. Okay, what else do I do? I didn't even think about it that

seriously.

KP: It was really your parents who decided you were going to Rutgers, or at least to get the state scholarship and go to Rutgers?

AB: That was the only option. There wasn't … I would not have gone if I couldn't come here. If I couldn't go for free is what it amounts to. It certainly wasn't for free. I didn't have a place to Live. I never thought about that much, at the time, and I had to be able to eat, and buy books, and that sort of stuff… So, anyway, I never came down here until a week before school started, even to look for a place to live, and then, fortunately, a guy from the Class of '41, whose sister was also a teacher, never one of my teachers, she was a math teacher at Bayonne High. He was a friend of my father. This guy had graduated in 1941, and there was some kind of conversation between his sister and my father about me going to school here and needing a place to live, so I pledged to the Raritan Club, which is Sig Ep now, and I just showed up here, and a matter-of-fact, I commuted the first week, because they weren't organized to the extent as to where I could live. I mean, whether I could actually have a room, and it turned out that I got the last bunk in the house, and that was my extent of my fraternity rush activities.

Robert Hood: So that's how you came about pledging Sig Ep, you just needed a place to live?

AB: That was it. I had as it turned out … there were a couple other guys that went to school, I went to high school with came out, one guy was in Kappa Sig, and another guy was in Lambda Chi. Now I didn't know it particularly until I got here. Anyway, we were saying my mother and father did most of the things for me at that time, and I didn't pay an awful lot of attention to it.

KP: Did you want to be an engineer?

AB: Oh, yeah. Actually, I wasn't certain about it. What I really wanted to be was a meteorologist, and that's the thing I wanted to be, and I'm still interested in that. I still religiously record the temperature every day.

KP: You must love the Weather Channel.

AB: No, the Weather Channel is a pain in the ass. I turn it on everyday just to get the local forecast, and occasionally the stuff they talk about is interesting, but there is so much trash around it. I don't really give a damn about the ski slopes. I didn't care an awful lot then, I mean, I went skiing now and then. Anyhow, I've always been interested in the weather. When I was fourteen, in 1938, Thanksgiving Day, we had Thanksgiving dinner and it started to snow, and I got… There was nothing happening at home. There wasn't any television, and everybody had dinner, and
everybody sort of went their own way, and I said I was going to take a run over to New York, and at that time it cost me a quarter to go to and from New York City, and whatever I wanted to spend in New York. Well, if I can get to West Street and Courtland Street, or Liberty Street that was enough because I could walk a lot of places then. So what I did was I took the train in and the ferryboat, and I got off and walked down to the weather bureau office, which at the time was in the White Hall Building, which is on the top, twenty-ninth floor, of the White Hall Building,

which was facing the old aquarium in Battery Park there. The aquarium is not there now, but Castle Garden and the fort is still there, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel entrance is there. Anyhow, I went up to the weather bureau office, and there was no one in the building. It was Thanksgiving Day, and the security guy let me go up on the elevator. The elevator was one you had to operate. You wouldn't just push a button. You had to...

KP: Pull the gate.

AB: Close the gate and all the other stuff, but, anyway, I got up to the top, and I went down the hall to the weather bureau office, and walked in. There was only one guy there, and I told him what I was interested in, and we started to talk, and, of course, all the time it's snowing, and it's getting worse, and nobody at that time, again, you didn't have the kind of forecasting apparatus you have now, where everybody in the world knows three days ahead of time [that] you're going to have a snowstorm. They're only embarrassed when it doesn't happen. Anyway at that time, here was a whole weekend, and, of course, it wasn't a weekend because you still had to go to work on Friday after Thanksgiving, but everybody was going crazy. His phone was ringing off the hook, and that's all it was was one phone. The old stand-up phone they had a dial on some of them, but a lot of them you had to call up the operator to give them the number. Anyway, the storm was coming up the coast, and he was getting what information he had ... the morning weather maps, again, no facsimile transmissions then. You had to make your own map, and teletype, all kinds of teletype stuff, and they get, anyway … he wanted some help in dealing with the telephone, so I said, "Well, fine, I can answer the phone." He said, "Why don't you do this, I got a storm warning to put out for the marine people," and he says, "what we do is just call people and read them the storm warning over the phone," and that's these various shipping companies, and so I said, "Fine, I'll take care of that," and he gives me this list with twenty to thirty names of United Fruit Company, and Cunard Lines, and United States Lines, all of the shipping companies, "call them up and read it to them and tell them to pass it on to their all of their people," so I did… It was just a storm warning, worded exactly the same way that they are worded now, no big elaborate explanation of why, but just, "beware that there will be heavy snow and winds from the Northeast will increase twenty-five to thirty miles per hour."

KP: This must have been very thrilling for you.

AB: It was the biggest charge. I can still remember picking up that phone and doing it. I'll never forget that. So, anyway, I got to be a big hero around the weather bureau office that day, and I got to meet Dr. Kimble and all the big guns.

KP: Did you ever go back to the weather bureau office?

AB: Sure, I came back. I was there most Sundays, and the guy I met first, and the guy is an alumnus of Rutgers, his name is Jim Osmund, it was, and he came, his family owned a hunk of land in Warren and Hunterdon County. They still do. I still see the name. It is up above Clinton, between Clinton and Washington, anyway, he was Class of '33. I kept going back there, this was '38, '39, '40, and all during that time, a lot of Sundays, and, anyhow, he was there all that time, not always everyday, because the shifts would change. There was one guy, who actually up until about five years ago, I guess, was still working, and they still had the office in

Rockefeller Center. A guy, by the name Abe Zwecker, who, when I was going over there, I was still going over there in … I remember one time going over there in ROTC uniform, because it was after the war had started, and they were still down at Battery Place there, and this guy, Abe Zwecker,was … a meteorology student at NYU, had a job as an observer. That was the right way to do it, he got the job first. That gave him an income, but it wasn't big money, observers got twenty bucks a week I think, which was a reasonable salary at that time for an entry level job in an office. That helped to pay the tuition at NYU, and he was still there, because I remember hearing him on the National Weather Service Broadcast weather radio they … I'm trying to remember, it was 162.275 megahertz on short wave. Anyway, that whole business … Well, I pretty much, after I started actively in school here, full time in 1941, and particularly after Pearl Harbor, then I didn't go down there much any more.

KP: It sounds like if Rutgers had had a meteorology program, you might have taken it.

AB: Oh, yeah. I did actively go out and look for that, and the unfortunate thing was, the only schools that had that kind of thing, and if I had really thought about it in the beginning and worked it out, I just wasn't sophisticated enough to know about this stuff. Harvard had a good meteorology program then, and I would have gone there because I could have competed fairly successful for a scholarship at Harvard, but nobody ever ...

KP: It sounds like you didn't know about it at the time.

AB: That's right, and I had always been a MENSA-type genius in terms of taking certain exams, and I still can do that, but I had 140 IQ in grammar school, and then when I went into the Army, I came out as a GCT [General Classification Test] 143. Anyhow, it was just a matter of taking tests. It didn't panic me, so I never really spent a lot of time agonizing about it, but this whole business with the weather bureau and with the weather has been a part of my life, my whole life, and that stuff … There were meteorology courses available then, because Doc Biel, he was here, and I took his meteorology course and his climatology course, which were the only ones available. The department hadn't started till after the war, and Jim Osmund, of course, the guy went into the service … out of ROTC because he had taken the whole four years, and he got to be, by the end of the war he was a full colonel, and right after the war he was a Brigadier General, and … He made the move from the Army to the Air Force, when the Air Force took it over in 1947, and he became a Brigadier General, and he was in command of all the reserve activities in meteorology in the New York region, and he was over at Kennedy Airport, and that was the last time I talked to him. I went and interviewed for the job Tex Antoine finally had that he got with NBC. I went, it was 1948, I knew I was going to go into the Army, and I went to talk to Jim to find out if there was any kind of hustle I could get into in the Air Force, and it turned out that there wasn't anything that was going to do me any good, but in the course of the conversation, he says, "Did you ever have any acting experience, or anything like that?" I said, "I did some shows when I was in grammar school and a little bit in high school, but no real acting." He says, "Well, have you done public speaking?" I said, "Again, the same way in school." He says, "Why don't you go up to NBC, they're looking for young people who are interested and know something in meteorology. You know enough about it, the only question is whether or not you have any star quality." Of course he didn't say it that way, that's what it amounted to, so I went up and had this interview and audition, and they said, "we'll call you don't

call us."

KP: You never did a mock weather forecast for them on the air?

AB: Well not on the air, but in the studio. I had no style. I just know from guys I had been in school with, who had been active in theatre, and there were a lot of them here then, and there always are, every year at Rutgers I see more and more. It's the same proportion of the student body, but every year there are kids here that really know how to perform, and how to act in public situations, and at that time there were guys that had … Back in 1947, I had gone for summer vacation up to Maine to Bar Harbor, where my sister, my younger sister had … she was working at Bar Harbor Playhouse and the Surry Playhouse, which is just on the mainland, by Bar Harbor, and there were three or four guys who had been with a couple of the women who had became big stars after that. I knew two of them in school, Logan Ramsey, whose wife Anne Ramsey, from *Throw Momma from the Train*, and Logan, I've seen him on television a lot of times, and Felicia Monteleagra ... who was a pretty big deal in television, in *Studio One* and *Playhouse Ninety*, all of those things back in the 1950s, but I did that stuff after this. I went up there then and I only stayed a couple of weeks. I didn't really learn anything. I was a ... they did "The Drunkard," which is a shlocky play, and they needed somebody to play drunk, and that was easy for me to do then, but that was the extent of my experience, and it didn't help no matter how drunk Tex Antoine, and he got pretty drunk. I could never do the imitation of the fellow, so, anyway, that was my experience with real big show business, although I spent twenty-five years in community theaters.

KP: You didn't become a meteorologist.

AB: But, anyway, if it had been available at Rutgers, though, I would have taken meteorology courses, and I might still be here talking to you.

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

RH: Basically, I was wondering about your military experience down at Fort Dix. What was basic training like back in the 1950s?

AB: Well, you just showed up. We got to the post, we got checked in and assigned to a company, mine was Field Artillery Unit. I don't think it exists anymore. I can't remember the number, I use to know it, but I can't remember. Anyway, we got the usual indoctrination from the company commander and the noncoms, and from that point on, from the platoon sergeant, who as far as I was concerned, and from all my experiences since that confirm that, he was the quintessential GI. He came from the hills of Kentucky. He could shoot the eyes out of a sparrow from a hundred yards, and he really was. Hurley Biggs his name was, and he was a very, very good soldier. I saw him and then, and I don't think I ever saw him again after basic training, there was no reason to. I moved away from Dix and he stayed there and I went my way, and he went his, and I don't know how far he went, but I'm sure he was in Korea, because this was before Korea, and a lot of these guys, this was January and when I was in basic it was January, February, and March, and early April in 1949. … The Korean War was 1950, because when we got out, we were released in 1950, and we were originally … supposed to be in for

eighteen months, and then we had a five-and-a-half year obligation, no, four-and-a-half year obligation. It was six years altogether, you had a year-and-a-half active duty, and then you had four-and-a-half years of active reserve, and then your obligation was over. … In any case what they did was let us out after a year, but you still had the six years obligation, so we had five years, and that assigned me to the reserve. As far as basic was concerned, it was first week or so, and it was an eight week proposition.

RH: It is a lot like what it is about today.

AB: It was an eight weeks, but the first three or four days you are just getting outfitted, getting uniforms, getting the rifles, and all other odds and ends together, and, of course, exercise in the morning, and learning a lot about the ins and outs of close order drills, and that sort of crap, and then it was … mostly physical conditioning, because these guys … I was never fat, but most of the people came there like I did. I had an office job. Sure I played baseball, softball, I bowled, I golfed, and all of these sports that may or may not. I played basketball and football, too, but they weren't the kind of conditioning necessarily that you needed for ...

RH: There is nothing like doing a million push-ups.

AB: Well, push-ups, you know, that was punishment, that was always the same way. That's the trouble with exercise, generally, the dopes that teach phys ed in grammar school and high school make it punishment. If they make it punishment that's the way the kid sees it the rest of his life, and that's ridiculous. It ought to be fun, it may be painful a little bit, certainly it's work, but that's not the way, it certainly shouldn't be punishment. But anyway, you did all of this stuff in basic, and you learned the ins and outs of handling the weapons, handling situations, how to protect yourself in terms of combat situations, foxholes, and all of the other stuff that goes with that, and then that just kept on until you got, and you were learning how to function with the other people within the squad. I think that was the major thing that I learned out of it. The guy in the bunk next to me, was a guy by the name of Ettlinger, and he had been an engineer for CBS. This was when they were developing color television, and CBS lost that battle and RCA won it, but this guy … I had just accidentally ran across his name a year ago or so ago, and it was on the occasion when he sold his share of the company, that he owned in L. A., which is a manufacture of the components of the television industry, worth millions and millions of bucks. Here is this guy, I'm still trying to remember his first name, I think it was Adrian, but anyhow Ettlinger was his last name, and he was, you talk about out of shape, he was fat, and he really sweated and killed himself just to do what he had to do.

RH: Did he work harder than the others?

AB: Oh yeah, and by the end of basic, he was in pretty decent shape for the shape he was in. I Mean, he was still always in fear of just collapsing because he just wasn't after twenty years or so. I guess I was about twenty-three, or so, and he was about my age, and we had both been through the same situations. We were both in school when the war was actually on, and had not been drafted for one reason or another. I tried to get in the Navy Air Force during the war, but they wouldn't take me because of my eyes, and then I tried to get in the V-7 program, and they wouldn't take me.

KP: You wanted to serve during the war?

AB: Yeah, I didn't have any problem with it. I went for the draft physical, and the guy said, "You are only qualified for limited service, son, and we have enough limited service guys already." This was 1944, so he said he'd put me in 1-AL, and that's what I was in, until the guy got the message in December 1948, and by that time I had a good job. I was getting ready to get married.

KP: So, that came at a bad time. You would have preferred if they would have called you earlier.

AB: Yeah, anyhow, that's how it was, but basic, I don't know what it is like now, but I think the weaponry is different, that's the major difference.

RH: More or less, the technology has improved. How did you go about getting your commission?

AB: It got shoved down my throat. Actually it wasn't, when I came out of the … when I got out of the active duty I went to, I was assigned to a pool, and I found out, I was working, of course, and I went back to my job with Esso in Bayonne, and I found out that several of my former colleagues who had worked and were working at Bayway are guys, these are guys that had come back out of the war. They had started a reserve unit over there, and so it was just natural for me to go into that unit, but I went in it as a PFC, which is what I came out of the Army, active duty Army, and all at once, I guess, in 1949 or '50, they put through a program that said that anybody that has a degree in a scientific or technical field, if you want your commission, it's available, so I put in an application for that, and I got the commission, because I had an engineering degree.

RH: They based it on your college education.

AB: It was just the availability of a technical degree and then a commitment, but I had the commitment already with the six years of service, so I got to be a lieutenant and then a captain after three or four years, and I stayed a captain for about ten years until that business with Vietnam. I said, "I don't really want to go back and try to teach these guys doctrine, I just don't believe in at all."

KP: When you said you didn't want to teach them the doctrine, were you skeptical about Vietnam?

AB: Oh, sure, I thought that was a totally ridiculous war.

KP: Even back in 1965?

AB: Oh, sure. In 1964 it was pretty obvious you were going there with people [for] what was a civil war, and you didn't know who the hell you were shooting at. They were all civilians as far as Americans were concerned. They may or may not have had uniforms, but how could you

possible win it, and, of course, even if you win it how do you govern? These are all things that are utterly ridiculous, a war of that sort is impossible. Vince Kramer, I don't know if you know him.

KP: We have interviewed him.

AB: Vince and I, I knew Vince from way back, and when he came here about the same time I did, after being sick in the '60s. He came back out of Vietnam. We had immense arguments about this. I said, "How the hell can you expect to win that damn thing, Vince?" I said, "You know you were in the goddamn Marines in China in World War II." I said, "What would happen if we ever went to war in Japan? Do you think we could govern Japan?" He said, "Well, no." I said, "Well, if we won it and had to take the country over, this is the same thing, you got millions of Vietnamese there, Cambodians, and all other China-type people who have a completely different language, a completely different culture, and how would you govern it?"

RH: They have been fighting for their freedom [from colonialism] for the past one hundred years or so.

AB: Yeah, I don't think they have a particular culture of violence anymore than anyone else has. The United States is certainly full of violence the past 150 to 200 years, but I think it's trying to impose a completely different system on a country, you can't do it on a state or city. The people have got to want it, and if they don't want it ...

KP: Since we're jumping around, and we're on Vietnam, I can't resist to ask, because you came here in 1965, and around the same time the history department would gain a lot of notoriety, particularly Genovese.

AB: Oh, sure, I knew that. I agreed with him a hundred percent about the welcoming that week. The language he used, that was inappropriate and that was one of the first things Gross and I had a discussion about, because Mason accepted it and I still think it was undiplomatic. He could have found a smarter way to say, "I can't see anything wrong with what the Vietnamese were doing."

KP: In other words, you thought Genovese was more faulted for the way he said it, rather than the message he was trying to convey?

AB: Oh, sure. I think there are a lot of people like me, who did agree with him, but find it very difficult to really come out and be a cheerleader for Ho Chi Minh, who was just as much a thug as the people he was fighting against.

KP: You were not on the faculty, but you probably had a good sense observing it, even sort of regularly.

AB: Well, yeah, I identified a lot more with the faculty than with the staff, the other nonacademic staff, I started the administrative assembly, too.

KP: How did the faculty break down in terms of the war? I heard there was a division between the humanities and social sciences versus the sciences.

AB: Oh, yeah, the technological people, the engineers, the physicists, the chemists, some of the chemists weren't ... but the engineers were generally sort of accepting what was happening, and were willing to do their all for their country, although that's another thing, I could never see how does this help the United States? It was awful hard to put any good in for the United States out of the damn thing, but the other people and the people in the humanities and the sociologists, psychology not so much, but history and English. The foreign languages, well, it depended, the Germans and Italians … were with the United States position.

KP: They were the Hawks.

AB: Well, yeah, I think so. French, I don't know which existed then, and Spanish, I don't know. I really didn't know enough, but the people in geology and geography, even though they, by association, are not really hard sciences. I don't know anything harder than the rocks in geology, but anyhow the departments weren't that big, they didn't have that many people, but you're right there was that division. Although I, again, I'm not privy to personal, what things that might have happened between individuals, because I just didn't get in that kind of conversation. I'd get hung up with people in the faculty and most of the time I would be talking to the people with administrative jobs, like I said John Salapatas, who at that time was still in history, but he was starting to work in the provost office, and he was trying to get a building on the College Avenue campus or over on Douglass for the liberal arts, which was similar to what was being built for the sciences across the river. I always used to tell him, "good luck, but I don't think much is going to happen, not till you sell a million books," [laughter] but anyway that is the way it works.

KP: What was the relationship between the ASTP and the regular Rutgers students.

AB: I associated with those guys all of the time. I had a couple of good friends among them. I used to umpire their baseball games. You know they had a league, and I used to … well, there was a girl in one of the special programs who I started to date, and went out with pretty seriously for a while in 1943, and she worked for General Motors Eastern Aircraft in Trenton, and they sent a bunch of people up here for technical training, and I guess she was between her sophomore and junior years at University of Tampa and decided that she had to go do something for the war effort. Anyhow, I use to date her, and one of her girlfriends dated one of the guys in the ASTP.

KP: You would go out on double dates?

AB: So we went on double dates. I got along fine with them. There were always smart asses among the kids, among the students, who would taunt these guys because they were dopey enough to be in the Army, and, of course, the guys being taunted were reacting, and, of course, they couldn't react very easily, because they had a sergeant, or a lieutenant who would bust your ass if you opened your mouth. You'd take it and they would go away, but I didn't see an awful lot of that. The *Targum* is like any other newspaper. They print incidents, and the incident

probably happened, but they make no claims that it is an universal kind of thing, or that it is even a high percentage of the time, or anything more than that one incident. An anecdote that describes something accurately, but it hasn't anything to do with the general picture, and a lot of people when they see stuff like that in the paper, and you've got to be careful when you are reading the papers. You are reading what they printed. They, most of the time they don't try to, they don't try to make a conscious effort to say this is the way it is about the whole world, that it is this particular piece of the world this happened and what not … So you should [not] let the newspapers influence you that much, and the *Targum* in particular, because the *Targum* is, like I said, any other newspaper and more so, because most of the people who write for that kind of newspaper are not that sophisticated, no matter how much they try to make themselves [laughter]. They're doing what all twenty-year-olds do.

KP: You've obviously been at Rutgers for a while.

AB: Anybody who has lived around here for seventy years … this part of the world should have come to this point.

KP: I interviewed several people who were here at Rutgers during a good part of the war. Through the whole thing, it was very small in some ways, and Rutgers was a small school before the war, but it was even magnified.

AB: Oh, sure, it was down to 400 or 500 students at one point and 1200 ASTP guys, but yeah, sure, I went around so we could have a baseball team in 1944. I went around and got signatures from … me and four or five other guys got signatures from almost more than half of the student body on a petition to give to George Little, because he wanted to say the hell with it and we weren't going to have a baseball team. Well, we had a baseball team, and we had a coach who was Mike Stang, who was the trainer, but he was also, had been a successful minor league baseball player. We played a lot of games against teams that were good and bad, but it was fun, but that's how small the school was, I mean, we could do that. When we could get a couple hundred signatures and that was half the student body. Now you can get a couple hundred signatures on anything and doesn't mean anything. [laughter]

KP: You mention that Professor Richard Anthony was your favorite professor, what sticks out about him?

AB: Well, he was one of the guys, an economics, an engineering economics prof and he was one of the first guys that made it clear to me the importance of economics in the whole picture of things. All of the things that we talked about in engineering, that made it clear to me how much the field was dominated by economics. That has always been very useful to me. Later on, it made it easier for me working for Esso, working for the university, I was able to use that and make judgments. I wanted to avoid taking an economics course my senior year, because I wanted to get another meteorology course, and he talked me out of that, which he was right, it wouldn't have done me any good, and as it was I came back after I graduated and took it later on ... But that was, he was a good advisor. He was no great shakes as a teacher in terms of prof, I 'd say probably I don't know who was the best teacher that we had. The best teacher I ever had at Rutgers is still teaching, and she is up at Newark, and she's a math prof at that business school. I

got my MBA there.

KP: Is that right?

AB: Yeah, I can't remember her last name now, Rosa. She's an assistant dean or an assistant provost or something like that. Well, that's my Alzheimer's catching up to me [laughter], I just can't remember her last name. I could look in the catalogs and tell you.

KP: I tell my students I have a terrible time with their names, I doubt it's the onset of Alzheimer's, unless I am even earlier.

RH: You were in the National Guard?

AB: I was never in the guard, I was in the reserves.

RH: Your family had a long tradition of military service. Your brother served, you served, I was just wondering if that was the based on your father's influence?

AB: No, well yeah, my father served. My father served, and my brother served, all as draftees. None of us, I think my brother volunteered, but only when it was certain he was going to get drafted. It was in 1949 or '50, I guess it was '50 because he had been working for a year or two after he got out of high school, and had put a year in junior college, and really didn't do well academically, so he quit and went to work for Esso at Bayway, and he was working there for a year or something like that, and then Korea started, and he went into the Navy. He had to volunteer to get into the Navy because the Navy wasn't drafting anybody, but he would have got drafted into the Army.

RH: That was the logical choice, to go.

AB: Anyway, he put two, three years in the Navy and got out, and his Navy experience consisted of running to Havana, Cuba. Castro hadn't happened yet, and running down to Havana … no, running supplies down there on a supply boat, every other weekend they'd come home with a leg of lamb, or a roast of some kind ...

RH: A box of good cigars.

AB: And boxes of good cigars and that sort of stuff.

RH: Did college affect your view upon the Army compared to the average kid coming straight out of high school?

AB: Oh, yeah, having the ROTC experience was very useful in easing the whole basic training Thing. It made it a lot simpler than some of the other guys that were in, and of course at the time I was in it, a lot of the guys were guys who were in my boat, who had for one reason or another had not gone into the Army back … in World War II. So a lot of them were even further removed than not only out of high school four or five years, but what they knew about guns was

to point them a way from you.

KP: Was there any chance you might have been transferred to Korea for military service?

AB: Sure, we were always wondering when we were going to be alerted to get ready to get shipped over there. All that time I was in that pipeline company, and the one that operated out of Bayway, and I always had the idea in the back of my mind that the politics being what they were, Esso was not gonna look kindly upon the military pulling thirty, or forty, or fifty people out of that refinery and sending them to Korea just like that. So I figured for whatever it was worth, the lobbying operation of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey was going to be working on nobody was going to be pulled out of Bayway, and other pipeline companies got pulled out of other places. I know that that happened.

KP: But yours was not one of them?

AB: No, we were alerted once or twice, but that happened later on in the reserves, too, when in 1960 with Castro and Kennedy, we were alerted, too … but nothing ever happened, but during the activities in Korea that went onto 1953, '54, there were several times when there were all kinds of rumors going around. I don't know whether Esso protected us or not.

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

Reviewed by Kathleen Ruck 01/11/02
Reviewed by Jonathan Gurstelle 02/08/02
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/15/02
Reviewed by Alfred Brady 8/02