RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEON A. CARPENTER, III

FOR THE

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SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Leon A. Carpenter, III, also known as Tom Carpenter, on April 1, 2009, with Shaun Illingworth in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Mr. Carpenter, thank you very much for coming in today.

Leon A. Carpenter, III: I'm delighted to be here, Shaun.

SI: Great. I think you are actually the first member of the Class of 1957 that we have interviewed.

LC: Oh, really? That's surprising.

SI: I am not a hundred percent sure.

LC: Okay.

SI: That might come back to bite me, but the first one I know of.

LC: I know Sandra's been after me for a couple of years. [laughter]

SI: Yes, we have. To begin, can you tell me when and where you were born?

LC: I was born December the 11th, 1935, in Somerville.

SI: Your father, obviously, was also Leon Carpenter.

LC: Yes, he was junior.

SI: What was your mother's name?

LC: Sarah.

SI: Can you tell me a bit about your father's family background, where the family came from?

LC: He grew up in Clinton. That's where my grandfather lived, owned a newspaper up there. So, he grew up in Clinton, went to Rutgers University, worked for the *Daily Home News*, later became Sunday editor of the *Home News*. So, he's been local most of his life, really.

SI: What was the name of the newspaper that your grandfather owned?

LC: He owned the *Clinton Democrat* and he worked in Flemington on the *Hunterdon County Republican*. So, I guess he was an independent. [laughter] I don't know.

SI: Do you know anything about the family history before that, such as if there was any immigration history on his side?

LC: Yes. My daughter has been working very diligently on our genealogy for a number of years. Our family originated in England. My great, great--how ever many great, great-uncles--was Mayor of London back in the 1200s. That's as far back as the history goes.

SI: That is pretty far back.

LC: Yes. Then, I think, relatives came over some time in the 1500s. I had a grandfather--great, great, great-grandfather, rather--who owned the *Rochester Times*, up in Rochester, New York, and then, the family slowly migrated down to New Jersey. Quite a number on my mother's side lived in New Jersey. Some of the branches on my grandmother's side lived in and around Philadelphia. A branch of the Carpenter Family settled in the area that is now Providence, Rhode Island, and became members of the plantation owners in Rhode Island.

SI: It is interesting that there was a long tradition of newspaper journalism and publishing.

LC: Yes, there is.

SI: Your father graduated in the Class of 1935, I believe.

LC: Right.

SI: Did he ever tell you anything about why he chose Rutgers or what his days here were like?

LC: Probably mostly because of its proximity. I mean, he lived in Clinton. It was during the [Great] Depression. He could commute back and forth, if he had to, although he lived here. He was a Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity brother, but he said times were tough when he was here, because of the Depression. In fact, he told me that he used to have to drive down, and then, drain all the gas out of the car when he got here. Otherwise, people would siphon it dry on him. That's how much you had to watch it. The car was parked right outside the fraternity, so [that] he could keep an eye on it all the time, but, yes, it wasn't an easy time back then.

SI: Did he ever tell you any other stories about how he made it through the Depression or its impact on your family?

LC: No, but I think that it made him very aware of a good working environment. I know, after he graduated college in journalism, his first assignment was--oh, the kidnapper, whose name I can't think of.

SI: Hauptmann, Bruno Hauptmann? [Editor's Note: The trial of Bruno Hauptmann, accused (and subsequently found guilty) of kidnapping and murdering famed aviator Charles A. Lindbergh's son, took place amid unprecedented media coverage and public interest at the Hunterdon County Courthouse in Flemington, New Jersey, in January and February of 1935.]

LC: Yes, in Flemington. He was covering the trial for the *Home News* at the time. Then, he got hired by the *Home News* after that, and he always had a very strong work ethic. He'd drive a bus,

sometimes, also, to make ends meet. Never went in the service--fortunately, he was too old to make the service, World War II.

SI: Do you know if he had written for newspapers before he came to Rutgers?

LC: I know he worked with my grandfather in the newspaper. In fact, he told me that he could read linotype [a machine used in printing] backwards before he ever learned to read front-wards. So, he used to set the linotype when he was five, six years old. He ran the linotype machine for my grandfather's newspaper in Clinton.

SI: Was it a small newspaper?

LC: Yes. It was a weekly newspaper, so, very small, and, back then, New Jersey, Hunterdon County, wasn't very big. [laughter] So, it was just a small newspaper.

SI: What about your mother's family history?

LC: My mother grew up in High Bridge, [New Jersey]. Her maiden name was Apgar. Originally, up to about two years ago, supposedly, all the Apgars came over from Germany in, I don't remember what year it was, 1600 something, and all originated from Jonathan Apgar, I believe. Since then, they've found that there's a second Apgar. My daughter's also done all the genealogy on her side of the family, too. So, they originated [in Germany], then, moved into this area. If you go up to North Jersey, you'll find there's a hundred thousand Apgars up there, all of German heritage.

SI: Do you know how your parents met?

LC: My father took my mother to a high school dance, no, college dance, I think, is how they met. She was a year behind him in high school. She went to High Bridge, he went to Clinton, but they're only, like, five miles apart.

SI: You listed several jobs for your mother. Were those from when she was young, before she married your father, or were they later on, more in your lifetime?

LC: They were in my lifetime, yes. She brought us up and did not work. Most of the work that she did, jobs probably that I listed there, were after my father died. She worked for various bowling alleys. My mother was a very avid bowler and a very good bowler.

SI: It is interesting that your father covered the Lindbergh baby kidnapping trial as his first job out of college. Did he tell you any stories about that experience?

LC: No, other than--no, he really didn't. He really didn't relate much about that, other than it was very interesting sitting there in the trial and taking notes. I don't think it was until much later in life [that] I really knew that that was his first job, but, no, never delved into it.

SI: In his long career at the *Home News*, did he have a typical type of story or beat that he covered?

LC: Well, he was a reporter for [the] Metuchen area for quite a while, and then, he became city editor, and then, he became Sunday editor [of the] *Home News*. So, [as] city editor, you're covering everything and compiling stuff, really, and editing--the same with the Sunday editor.

SI: Do you know if he maintained a relationship with his professors at Rutgers, such as Ken Jennings?

LC: Ken Jennings taught my father journalism and he and his wife and my parents were very good friends. She worked for the *Home News* as well and I got to know Petey Jennings and his wife, Elise, who's Ken Jennings' son, and he's very active at Rutgers now.

SI: I know he maintained very close ties with a lot of former students and was able to enrich the journalism curriculum at Rutgers because he knew so many people in the field.

LC: Yes. Well, he [his father] did have a good relationship with Rutgers, especially when he became city editor and was covering this area, really, but he knew a lot of people here.

SI: Your earliest memories are of growing up in Metuchen.

LC: Yes. We originally started out in Clinton, and then, moved to Metuchen when I was, I don't know, three or four. So, I don't have any memories of Clinton prior to that, but, when I got older, I used to spend my summers there and up in High Bridge. But, yes, most of my memories are of Metuchen.

SI: What was your neighborhood in Metuchen like?

LC: I would say it was probably a very blue-collar type of neighborhood. It was not an upscale neighborhood by any means. Metuchen was a very nice, little town, though. The wealthier people lived on the other side of town, [laughter] but it was small. I mean, you knew everybody in Metuchen.

SI: Did most of your friends' parents work in local factories? Is that what you meant by blue-collar?

LC: Yes. One of the friends' [fathers] was a lawyer, another one owned a car dealership in Metuchen, where my father used to work occasionally, another one owned a bus company just outside of Metuchen, another one was a mailman. So, they had businesses in and around Metuchen, most of them.

SI: Were your parents involved in the community much? Did they get involved in clubs?

LC: They were very active in the bowling community and that's where a lot of their friends came from, but they were not active in politics, no.

SI: What about the church?

LC: The church, somewhat, but not much. They were members of the Presbyterian Church, but not really active in it.

SI: Pearl Harbor was attacked when you were about six.

LC: Six, seven, yes, just going on my seventh birthday, because I can remember thinking that I wasn't going to get any birthday presents. [laughter]

SI: What do you remember about that day? How did you hear the news and how did you feel about it?

LC: I've thought of that and I can't remember. I can only remember that one selfish thought, that, "Oh, Pearl Harbor's been attacked. Now, I won't get any birthday or Christmas presents," but I guess I was really too young to comprehend its full impact at that point.

SI: Could you see the war impacting your life, such as when rationing came in to effect?

LC: Rationing was a big item, yes. I can remember, my father had a special gas ration [card] because he was a reporter, and so, he had to drive a lot. He was able to purchase gas, which a lot of people couldn't. I can remember having to get the ration coupons to go to the store for my mother and it was a difficult time at that point. Some of his friends were called up and went into the service, so, that was tough, too. He got called to go in and I don't remember when this was. I think it was about '43 or '44. The morning that he was supposed to leave, they called him and told him they had just changed the age limit and he was too old. So, he never went in.

SI: Did he have any feelings about that? Did he want to go in the service?

LC: No, he did not want to go into the service. [laughter] I can remember that, because he was stunned when he got the telephone call in the morning and he just sort of [stood there]. Then, he was very happy.

SI: Do you know if many of the stories he was working on in that time period were related to the war?

LC: I would have to think so, but I don't really know, but I would think that they would have to be war related. At that time, Camp Kilmer was over here in Highland Park. I'm sure that that occupied a lot of the stories that they had, too, but that was before I read the newspaper.

SI: You mentioned that you remember rationing. Do you remember it being a hardship? Do you remember different strategies that your family would use to kind of stretch things out in that period?

LC: No. The only thing I can remember is, I almost got killed by my mother once because I was at my friend's house and I was supposed to go to the store for her and I forgot the ration booklet. So, we took my friend's mother's booklet and she was not a happy camper about that incident, [laughter] but, yes, it proved hardships. I mean, there were only certain things you could buy and just so much of it. So, [it] made life difficult.

SI: As a kid, do you remember doing scrap drives and that sort of thing?

LC: I can remember the scrap drives. I remember, I probably worked on them with the church, but that's about all I remember. I don't remember anything specific of that era, that period.

SI: Growing up, before you were a teenager, what would you do for fun? What occupied most of your time, besides school?

LC: We used to play ball a lot. It's not like today, where kids won't play sports unless you have an organized sport. We always got together, a group of us kids, and we'd play football or basketball or baseball out in the street.

SI: Most of the friends that you made, would you say they were first-generation Americans? Had their families been here for a long time?

LC: Most, their families had been around for a long time and most of them lived within two or three blocks of where I lived. They were very close, so that I could walk. Of course, nobody worried about you walking back then, but they were local.

SI: Was that area of Metuchen densely populated or was it more rural?

LC: We lived right on the outskirts of Metuchen and lots were seventy-five-by-a-hundred. So, dense, no, but it was all single-family and they were all homes on similar-sized lots.

SI: Were there any kind of organized activities, like the Boy Scouts or church youth groups?

LC: There was Boy Scouts and I was a Boy Scout for a while. The Y [YMCA] had organized activities and I belonged to the Y and would go to the Y a lot. Those were the only ones. Every now and then, the church would run something, but not too much.

SI: Which school did you go to first?

LC: Initially, I went to Edgar School in Metuchen and, from there, I went to Metuchen High School.

SI: What do you remember about the Edgar School and your education there?

LC: I was just a kid going to school. That's all. [laughter]

SI: What were your favorite subjects?

LC: Math and science. I was not a writer and that's probably why I never went into journalism. I had a friend of mine who was also good in math and we used to get finished way before the rest of the class. Either he or I would get thrown out of class almost every day, because we'd be sitting there talking while all the rest of the class was trying to finish their work. So, the principal and I got to know each other pretty well. [laughter]

SI: Do you remember anything about the end of World War II, V-E Day or V-J Day, if there were any kind of celebrations?

LC: I can just remember some of the pictures, the picture of the guy in the Navy kissing the woman in New York ["V-J Day in Times Square" by Alfred Eisenstaedt]. That's very vivid in my memory and I don't know why.

SI: Do you remember seeing it in the newspaper?

LC: Yes, it was in the paper. There was no television back then, but I can just remember the pictures and the celebrations that went on. A lot of celebrating went on for both of those, especially V-E Day, more than V-J Day.

SI: Really?

LC: Yes, I don't know why. I guess most of the people in the area were probably in the Army in Europe.

SI: Did you know many people in the service?

LC: No, I didn't, a few of my father's friends, but not too many. Most of them were about his age and were just too old to get drafted.

SI: Do you remember any kind of Civil Defense activity at that time? Did they have blackouts?

LC: They had blackouts. I vaguely remember them at home. My wife's mother was a warden, though, and she told me stories of her mother pulling down the shades and going out at night with just a flashlight, making sure that people had their shades down and the lights off, but, yes, there were. I can remember doing that, that there were tests that you had to go through and have a dark house, or at least seemingly dark house.

SI: Do you remember following the war on the radio or in the papers?

LC: I can remember following it more in the movies. We used to go to the movies. I was very small when I was young and my sister and I would go to the movies. I would sneak in for under six when I was ten or eleven and we'd use the quarter to buy popcorn, but I can remember following it in the movies, very, very interested in the newsreels that they had.

SI: It must be difficult for a child to comprehend something like a war, but do you remember being scared or thinking that the United States could ever be directly involved in the war?

LC: I didn't think the United States would ever get involved in it. I can remember, though, not being scared, but intimidated, by the death and destruction that went on. I mean, you would see some of the films where the Allied bombers had bombed cities in Germany and France and it was just mindboggling.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Let me turn this back on.

LC: Okay.

SI: You remembered that you had an uncle in the Army.

LC: Right, and, well, actually, I had two, as my aunt's, my mother's sister, husband was killed in '42, I think, and then, she remarried. The man she married also went in the Army, was a glider pilot trainer, used to train guys how to fly gliders. That was probably the one person I got more war stories from than anybody. [Of] course, he used to embellish on them, you know what I mean?

SI: Was he your uncle at the time?

LC: Yes.

SI: Did you spend a lot of time with either side of the family in Hunterdon County?

LC: Yes. We used to go up there all the time. In fact, we used to go up probably twice a month. We used to go up to both my grandparents. My mother's father had died when I was five or six, but we used to get together with her family, who was up there quite often as well.

SI: Both sides of your family had been in this country for a long time, but do you remember anything traditional being kept up in your family, any holiday celebrations or foods?

LC: Oh, yes. Thanksgiving was always a major holiday then. We always went to my grandmother's for Thanksgiving and, when I got older, probably by the time I was twelve, my father and my grandfather and I would always go out hunting Thanksgiving morning. That became a tradition. We'd go out rabbit and pheasant hunting. On Christmas, we used to get together mainly at our house. Relatives would come down and that was [because] I think we used to originally go to my grandparents', and then, it got to the point that neither my sister or I wanted to leave home because of all of the gifts and everything. So, then, the family used to come down to our house in Metuchen, celebrate Christmas and Easter, but we did get together an awful lot.

SI: Would you do a lot of outdoors activity like that, hunting and camping?

LC: I'd go hunting and fishing a lot. In fact, my grandmother lived on what is now called--the gorge, Ken Lockwood Gorge--up in High Bridge. I used to go fishing up there with a friend of mine that I knew up there, and we did a lot of fishing. Then, I used to fish a lot around New Jersey with my father, who was an avid bass fisherman. My father and my uncle, who was in the service, the three of us would go fishing a lot.

SI: How involved were you in the Boy Scouts?

LC: Not very involved, because I think it was, like, six months after I was in, I rolled a ball across the floor when I wasn't supposed to and got booted out. [laughter] So, that was the end of the Boy Scouts for me. I probably could've rejoined it again, but I wasn't that interested in that--so, very limited experience in the Boy Scouts.

SI: After World War II ended, many veterans returned. Do you remember them changing the community at all, that many people bought houses in the area or that the population really started to grow?

LC: Well, the population did start to grow at that point, but I don't remember how much of it was attributable to GIs returning or not. Most of the ones that I knew that returned were already married and living there, but it was just a general population boom, which started in the late '40s.

SI: You went to Metuchen High School.

LC: Right.

SI: What do you remember about that school?

LC: I played sports all the time, all three sports, basketball, football and baseball. So, most of my life was around sports. It took up most of the year. I remember many of the teachers. We had a very good relationship with several of our teachers. In fact, a couple of them still come back for our high school reunions. It was enjoyable, I enjoyed high school very much.

SI: Did you continue your interest in math and science?

LC: Yes, I did, and that's [why] when I applied to Rutgers, I applied for engineering, because of the math and science, but, after one year here, I decided I didn't want to be an engineer. [laughter] So, I switched to business, or arts and science.

SI: Did you ever have any contact with the University before you came here as a student? Did your father take you here or did you go to any games?

LC: [With] my father, I saw my first Rutgers football game in 1942, and then, after my father became city editor, he used to get us tickets all the time. We would come quite often. I knew Ken Jennings, who was still a professor here, I knew Karl Metzger, who was Secretary of the University. His son, Fritz, and I were best friends in high school. Fritz and I used to hitchhike

over to the Rutgers Golf Course all the time while we were in high school and play golf. You wouldn't hitchhike any more than the man in the moon now, [laughter] but we didn't have any other transportation. So, we used to hitchhike over to Rutgers to play golf, but those were the only people that I really remember in the University at the time.

SI: When you were playing sports in high school, what positions did you play?

LC: I played end on the football team, I played a guard on the basketball team and I was shortstop on the baseball team. So, football was the better of the three sports.

SI: Did Metuchen have a rival at that time?

LC: Highland Park, very much so.

SI: Do any of those games stand out in your memory?

LC: We lost most of them, [laughter] so, no, they don't stand out. I think we won, out of the four years, three years--of course, you could only play high school football for three years at the time--think we won one out of three, but the others, I think, we lost badly, but it was a big rivalry. Then, we used to play teams like South River. I can remember lining up against--I was a whopping 145 pounds and lining up across from two guys that must've gone 230 each. I mean, I took a pounding that day, believe me, [laughter] but I enjoyed playing the sports.

SI: You were in high school in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

LC: Right.

SI: It was a time, when we look back, that was heavily influenced by the Cold War and the Communist threat. Do you remember that at all in your own life?

LC: Yes. It didn't have any real impact at that point, but, yes, I remember the Cold War and [Soviet Premier Nikita] Khrushchev and Cuba, and, of course, that was a little later. That was with Kennedy. [Editor's Note: In October 1962, the United States demanded that the Soviet Union remove its nuclear missiles from Cuba. The United States placed a naval blockade around the island nation, creating a tense standoff between the superpowers that many feared would lead to nuclear war. The crisis was averted when the Soviet Union agreed to remove their nuclear missiles from Cuba in exchange for the United States removing its nuclear missiles from Turkey.]

SI: Do you remember the Korean War having any impact on you?

LC: Well, yes, it did impact me. That's one of the reasons why, when I was at Rutgers, I went into Advanced ROTC, because they were still drafting for the Korean War. There was no way in the world I wanted to get drafted for the Korean War, but that had made an impression on me. I mean, I can still see the pictures of those guys in the wintertime, up in Inchon and around there. I mean, it was a terrible place to be.

SI: Do you remember thinking of the Soviet Union as a threat?

LC: Oh, yes, oh, yes, and, I mean, they were a threat. In fact, I can remember, even after I went in the service, that there was a sign that we used to have in the SAC [Strategic Air Command] base that said something to the effect that, "We will destroy you," signed, "Khrushchev." Yes, they were a threat and nobody took them lightly.

SI: Do you remember having drills in school, in high school or maybe even earlier?

LC: I don't remember that we ever had that. I don't think that came about until later, where they had the drills where kids went under their desks and whatnot. I don't ever remember anything like that.

SI: What about the Red Scare? Do you remember having any thoughts about, "Who was a Communist? Who was not a Communist?" Did that filter down to the level of the average person?

LC: No, it really didn't. I mean, there was a lot of talk about it, but we ourselves didn't talk about it that much. I can remember [the] McCarthy trial and all of those things that went on, but it didn't filter down that much. [Editor's Note: The Army-McCarthy Hearings, which ran from March to June of 1954, were televised nationally. The witch-hunt tactics Senator Joseph McCarthy displayed in pursuing alleged Communists in the US Army led to the demise of his political career.]

SI: With your father being in the newspaper business, were politics and world events talked about in your home?

LC: Yes, not a lot, but they were talked about. We were free to ask him questions and he'd give us his best answers that he could, but, yes, we did talk about it. Maybe that's why it never really had a great impression on me, because it was a very relaxed conversation.

SI: Was it always expected that you would go to college?

LC: No. As a matter of fact, they weren't sure that I was going to go to college. Parents weren't really that rich and my sister wanted to go to college, and then, I wanted to go to college. It ended up that I went and she couldn't go, but I sort of expected all along that I would go to college. In fact, I had applied to here and Rensselaer [Polytechnic Institute] and, I forget, Lehigh, I guess it was. I ended up here at Rutgers, primarily because of the scholarship that I got and it was a lot cheaper--and I'm happy I did. I enjoyed Rutgers.

SI: You applied for a State Scholarship.

LC: Yes.

SI: What was the process like at the time that you went for it?

LC: I don't remember. I could just remember filling out forms and that was about it, and then, they granted me the State Scholarship. I think tuition, at that time, was 350 dollars or four hundred dollars at the absolute most and my State Scholarship covered two-thirds or three-quarters of it. So, that's how I could afford to come, and then, I worked, had an agreement with my father. After my freshman year, I told him--I commuted my freshman year and I decided I couldn't handle that. That was just too difficult. So, then, my father paid for half of my stay at the fraternity and I paid for the other half. So, like I said, then, I stayed on campus.

SI: Before you came to Rutgers, had you had any part-time or summer jobs?

LC: Yes. I worked in a nursery, starting, I think, in my sophomore year in high school and I'd work there summers. Also, I'd go in and sell Christmas trees over Christmas. I worked for the post office a couple of times during the winter break, but I always had a job. In fact, the nursery I worked for, I worked all year long. When I was in college, I'd work weekends with them.

SI: Which nursery was it?

LC: Bruno's Nursery in Metuchen. Hank was a graduate of Rutgers as well.

SI: Was his last name Bruno?

LC: Yes, his last name was Bruno.

SI: I have interviewed a few people who graduated from the College of Agriculture and many of them went into the nurseries around New Brunswick. I think a few of them went to Bruno's. What do you remember about your first few days and weeks at Rutgers, what that was like? You were a commuter student.

LC: Yes, I found it difficult, because you really didn't know anybody. You didn't get to know anybody in the first couple of weeks, and because I was playing football--although I couldn't play on the team, I was practicing with the football team--it would be every day after classes. Taking an engineering course, back then, it was six hours a day or better, five days a week. So, between that and football, I got to know very, very few people in my freshman year.

SI: Were you practicing with the 150-pounders?

LC: Yes, but you couldn't play in your freshman year. So, I just went out to try to see if I could secure myself a position in my sophomore year.

SI: I have heard that the 150-pound team was extremely popular.

LC: Yes, it was, yes. We had a good turnout and a lot of good guys.

SI: Who was the coach then?

LC: Al Sidar, the wrestling coach. I know he's since died, and Dick Voliva, they're both wrestling coaches, and then, in my senior year, Harry J. Rockafeller coached. [Editor's Note: Harry J. "Rocky" Rockafeller, Jr. (1894-1978) served as head football coach for Rutgers from 1927 to 1930 and again from 1942 to 1945. He served as the Athletic Director until 1961.]

SI: You stayed with the 150-pound team for the whole four years.

LC: Yes, yes.

SI: Did you also play as an end there?

LC: [Yes]. I had a chance at either playing quarterback or end, but I'd hurt my shoulder, and so, throwing the long passes was not my forte anymore. [laughter] So, I played end.

SI: Do any of your games from your time at Rutgers stand out in your memory?

LC: One of them stands out particularly. We were playing Princeton and we were behind by five points or six points, I don't remember which, and I caught a pass and went for a touchdown and the other end was offside. We lost the game. That stands out in my mind, [laughter] because, of course, even back then, Princeton was a big rivalry. We played mostly against Ivy League schools and Army and Navy, that was the conference, but Princeton was the big rivalry back then. It was very enjoyable playing and you didn't have the pressure that you had on a regular football team. It was really just playing football. So, it was very enjoyable.

SI: Was the time commitment the same? How much time would you have to put into the 150-pound team?

LC: Oh, the same. We practiced every day from, I don't know what time, two o'clock, three o'clock until dark and, sometimes, even thereafter. I mean, you'd had to run laps in the dark. So, yes, it was very time-consuming. I'd played freshman baseball and that was the end of that. I wasn't a good enough shortstop, [laughter] but I enjoyed football very much.

SI: You went right into the College of Engineering.

LC: Yes.

SI: Was there any particular kind of engineering that you were interested in?

LC: I was looking for electrical engineering. I thought that's what I wanted to get into and the courses that I was looking forward to, I just couldn't see it. I just said, "I'm not really interested in doing that." Later, my roommate, at the fraternity, was an electrical engineer and I'm sort of glad I didn't. I'd help him with his homework and I didn't have the slightest idea what he was talking about, [laughter] but, no, that wasn't for me.

SI: When you first came to Rutgers, was there an initiation for freshmen?

LC: You had to wear your dink. Other than that, I don't remember much. I think you had to say, "Yes, sir," and, "No, sir," to any upperclassmen, but I just don't remember. After I joined the fraternity, of course, there was a big initiation in the fraternity, but, other than that, I don't remember. It wasn't a real heavy initiation for freshmen.

SI: Was there any initiation or hazing on the sports teams?

LC: No, none.

SI: Was your fraternity the same as your father's?

LC: Yes.

SI: That was how you got involved with them.

LC: That's how I got involved with them, yes.

SI: Did you pledge them in your freshman year, and then, move into the house in your sophomore year, or did you pledge in your sophomore year?

LC: I pledged in my spring semester of my freshman year, and then, moved in the house in my sophomore year. Now, I think, they pledge sophomore year. I don't think they pledge freshman year at all.

SI: They do not?

LC: I don't know. I know things have changed. So, since Lambda Chi's no longer on the campus, I'm not that involved with them anymore.

SI: Did they have the house that is now Chabad?

LC: Yes.

SI: They had that when you were here.

LC: Yes. There were two houses there, actually. There was the fraternity house and, next to it, I don't remember what his name was now, but he was the district attorney, I think, for New Brunswick. My father used to tell me that--during Prohibition, of course, was when he was here--the New Brunswick Police would raid places, and then, the guy next-door would bring the booze over to the fraternity. So, that's how they got their liquor supply. [laughter]

SI: What was life in the fraternity house like in the mid-1950s?

LC: In fact, we were just talking about it at lunch today--they couldn't believe that I said, "We wore shirts and ties to dinner, every night, six nights a week." Sunday night was the only night that we had a buffet and we didn't have to wear a shirt and tie. We had a housemother. It wasn't

as wild as it was after the housemothers left. I think when the housemothers left, that became the downfall of fraternities. I think the other problem that they had was, back when I was here, probably, the fraternities comprised maybe thirty percent of the housing for Rutgers students, and then, they started building the dorms down along the river and whatnot. Then, the University started to look askance at fraternities, because they wanted the kids to occupy the dorms. So, fraternities lost a lot of University support at that point. Fraternity life was great. I mean, it was a very [good] camaraderie. A lot of us still see each other all the time, I mean, especially my class--I see some from other classes--but especially in my class, very close to a couple of, again, the fraternity members.

SI: Was your house known for being a sports house or something else?

LC: No, it wasn't. We weren't the DU [Delta Upsilon] or any of those. No, we weren't. In fact, there were some people on sports teams, but not that many. I think the only thing that they were really known for was Hobo Hop, which was a big weekend that they used to run and people from all over would come to that. They were very infamous, or famous, I don't know which, for that, [laughter] but it wasn't a big drinking house, either. Yes, they had parties--I mean, all the fraternities had parties--but it wasn't a big party house, either. So, it was a good environment.

SI: Was the Hobo Hop the one where you had to dress up like a hobo?

LC: Yes, and they had cardboard boxes up and down the steps and you had to crawl around and a lot of decorating went into Hobo Hop.

SI: Were there any other things that you experienced at Rutgers then that they do not have now? Did you have to go to mandatory chapel in that period?

LC: No. You had mandatory ROTC for two years, which you don't have now. You had physical ed. I don't think the physical ed is a prerequisite anymore, either.

SI: No.

LC: So, you had to go to, unless you played sports, you had to go to physical ed., and ROTC was every Tuesday, but, other than that, probably much like it is now, except that, back then, everything was--I won't say everything--almost everything, except engineering classes, were here on this campus. Most of the engineering classes were across the river at what is now Busch.

SI: When you first joined ROTC, did you go immediately into the Air Force ROTC or was it kind of a generic course for the first two years?

LC: No, you joined either the Army or Air Force ROTC. You had your choice of which one you wanted to join. So, why I went into the Air Force ROTC, I have no idea, but that's where I ended up.

SI: What do you remember about your training in ROTC?

LC: Well, mine was a little different, because, as I say, I joined the drill team my freshman year. So, that started right after the first or second week of ROTC, and then, I spent all four years with the drill team. I was commander of the drill team my senior year. So, the training was probably different. I mean, yes, we marched, but we drilled. We didn't march *per se*. So, it was a lot different. I ran my own ship, so, it was a lot of fun.

SI: That must have been very time-consuming, with football and the ROTC.

LC: Oh, yes, especially in the spring, we would drill two mornings a week from seven to eight o'clock in the morning, to get ready for [competitions]. In fact, I was just talking to Colonel [Kenneth] Patterson today and the drill team, Queens Guard, just got back from Cherry Blossom Festival. They did all right, but they didn't do very well down there. So, I'm still not active with the drill team, but I stay abreast of what's going on with the drill team, with the Queens Guard.

SI: Had they merged at that point or were they still separate?

LC: No, they were separate at that point. In fact, when I joined, it was the Air Force Scarlet Rifles and the Army Scarlet Rifles. In my senior year, when I took over, the lieutenant that ran it, Maynard, Maynard Dow, and I decided to change the uniform and change the name. So, that was the birth of the Queens Guard. Now, the Queens Guard is really an Army ROTC [organization], because there is no Air Force ROTC [drill team]. So, it's really Army ROTC, but I followed them all through their trips to Europe, where they did extremely well.

[Editor's Note: From 1957 to 1992, The Queens Guard dominated intercollegiate competition and performed at international exhibition venues throughout the U.K., Europe, Canada and Australia/New Zealand as goodwill ambassadors on behalf of the U.S. and Rutgers. Founded in 2005 as a special interest group of the Rutgers Alumni Association, The Queens Guard Alumni Association of Rutgers University ("QGAA") represents alumni of The Queens Guard and Scarlet Rifles, each rival rifle drill teams competing cross-campus on behalf of the Air Force and Army ROTC, respectively, until their merger in 1971. Dr. Dow served as a captain with the U.S. Air Force ROTC Faculty at Rutgers in the late 1950s and, subsequently, graduated from the Master of Arts Program in Geography at the University's Graduate School of New Brunswick in 1960.]

SI: Was it the same style of competition when you were here at Rutgers?

LC: Pretty much so, no bayonets, but, other than that, it was pretty much the same thing. It was just a drill competition. It hasn't changed that much, other than some of the movements have changed, but a lot of it is similar.

SI: What would you do in preparing for a drill?

LC: Well, we'd come up with all the various moves that we wanted to make, have the guys make, and then, it was a matter of just practicing them and staying on them. I mean, we had some guys I didn't think could count and some guys who had two left feet, but, other than that, it was just repetitive practice, over and over again.

SI: Did you do any of the aerial moves with the rifles?

LC: Oh, yes, yes, and we'd toss them around, throw them up and back and forth to each other, and I'd walk through the spinning of the rifles, but we didn't have bayonets at that point. That wasn't until later that they got the bayonets.

SI: How far afield would you go to compete with the drill team? Where would you compete?

LC: We only had two. Cherry Blossom was the biggest one, in Washington, DC, because that was national at that time. There must've been, back then, I would say, sixty, seventy, eighty different schools [that] would compete in that drill competition. Now, I think they're down to forty schools and probably half a dozen of those, or maybe even a dozen of those, are from military schools. Each school would send one drill team, usually, or two in the case, like Rutgers, with the Air Force and the Army [ROTC] drill teams. Then, there was another one that we used to compete in, a very small one, and I don't remember much about that. Then, of course, we always competed against the Army Scarlet Rifles in May on Military Field Day.

SI: Do you remember also going to put on exhibitions and the places where you would do that?

LC: Only once. It wasn't like after the Queens Guard became very famous. Then, they would go and they performed for the Queen [of the United Kingdom] and they went here and there--that was entirely different. I guess, back in my time, there was too much remembrance of the war, probably the Korean War, or even a little later than that, [the] Vietnam War. So, we marched in a couple of parades, locally, but that was about it.

SI: Why do you think that limited interest, that it was so close to the wars?

LC: I think it limited people wanting to organize the competitions, more than anything. I don't think that the drill teams would've thought twice about competing, but the interest wasn't there to get it organized and parade a bunch of young men around. It just wasn't there.

SI: People were tired of military issues.

LC: Yes, right.

SI: During your time at Rutgers, I know many Hungarian refugees came into New Brunswick. Do you remember that at all?

LC: No, I don't, no. I know they were here. In fact, even before Rutgers, there were some here, because a friend of mine, who went to Rutgers with me, [his] parents were part of that. They lived in New Brunswick, then, later, moved to Metuchen, and that's where I met him, in Metuchen, but I don't remember the people *per se*. I don't think I ever ran into any. If I did, I didn't know it.

SI: This is obviously a big Hungarian area.

LC: Definitely.

SI: However, in 1956, after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, many more came to Camp Kilmer, specifically, but were housed at Rutgers for a little while. I was wondering if you knew about that. [Editor's Note: Hungarian freedom fighters revolted against Communist rule in Hungary in 1956. The Soviets crushed the revolution and Hungary remained part of the Eastern Bloc of Communist countries under Soviet domination until 1989.]

LC: I knew about it, but had no contact with them.

SI: Who was your favorite professor? Do any of your professors stand out in your memory?

LC: Sidney Simon.

SI: What did he teach?

LC: He taught business law and also accounting. He and I used to argue all the time. He was a retired captain in the Navy and we would argue about the supremacy of the seas or the supremacy of the skies and which was going to win. [laughter] I used to see him at football games for years after that, so, I got to know him fairly well.

SI: Does any of his teaching style stand out in your memory?

LC: He was a great teacher, yes, a great teacher. I mean, I learned as much in business law as some lawyers know in business law, I think.

SI: Do any other professors stand out?

LC: No. There was another professor I had for statistics, but I don't remember his name, that I liked very much.

SI: Did you get to know any members of the administration, any of the deans?

LC: I got to know, more afterwards than beforehand, Dean [Cornelius] Boocock, and I can't think of his name, another dean. [Editor's Note: Cornelius B. Boocock served as Dean of Men/Director of Student Life at Rutgers from 1949 to 1963.]

SI: [Howard] Crosby?

LC: Crosby, yes, Crosby, I knew. Now, I know several of the deans--not on a real personal basis, but enough to talk to them--but that's [due to] my association more with the Rutgers Alumni Association than anything.

SI: When you were a student, you did not have any run-ins with the deans or need to see the dean, anything like that.

LC: I think I did have to see the Dean once, [laughter] used to see Crosby every now and then when I was a senior and an officer in the fraternity. He was in charge of fraternities and we used to have a run-in, every now and then, and get called down to see Crosby.

SI: You mentioned that the University was a bit more supportive of fraternities then because of the housing issue, but was the relationship cool or contentious?

LC: I think that Rutgers tried to keep the fraternities a little under control, that was their main objective. It wasn't like later, when the fraternities just went wild and there was no way to keep them under control. You were suppressing individual rights at that time, but they just tried to control it and keep things calm.

SI: Do you remember men coming back on the GI Bill, Korean War veterans, probably?

LC: Two, that's all I remember, a good friend of mine, Vince Maggio, who's since died, and another guy, Joseph MacMichael, who I talked to recently and said that he would be willing to interview with you. He speaks all over South Jersey on the Korean War, I think.

SI: That is good. We have a particular program--you probably met them at today's scholarship luncheon--the Crandon Clark Scholars, to interview Rutgers alumni who served in the Korean War.

LC: Right.

SI: In general, veterans were not really a major presence on the campus.

LC: In my class, as I say, I remember those two and there was another tall guy that I remember, but I can't remember his name now, but, other than that, there were very few GIs.

SI: Do you remember your days at Rutgers as being a period of growth?

LC: Oh, yes, I think that [we] probably all went through that, but, yes. I mean, for most people and for me, it would give you [the] first opportunity to be independent. I still had ties [to home], because I used to ask my father to pick up my laundry, every now and then, and take it home with him, because he worked here in New Brunswick. [laughter] I'd go home, but not a lot. I think a lot of the guys went home a lot more than I did. I'd just stay on campus and probably because I knew I could go home any time I wanted, even overnight. I'd call up my father and have him pick me up and go home and come back the next day, but I enjoyed staying on campus. I enjoyed [it] and I did grow. You learned how to manage yourself and manage your life and I think that was an important thing to do before you got out into the business world.

SI: What about the school itself and the student population? Were they just cramming people in here? Was there a lot of building while you were here?

LC: No, there was some building. As I say, the dorms were being built along Albany Street. The library [the Archibald S. Alexander Library] was being built. I don't think that they had started building out at Busch [Campus]. At that time, there was the Microbiology Building. So, there wasn't a real lot of building going on. Yes, the classes got a little bigger, but not that much bigger. We had started with 430, 440 people, and graduated with 285, or something like that.

SI: What percentage of men went on to Advanced ROTC, as you had, out of the initial pool?

LC: I would say maybe twenty-five percent. As I say, I did it because I didn't want to get drafted. Plus, I looked at it and said, "Well, at least when I get out, I'll have a job." I could go into service for a couple of years. [laughter]

SI: Did they have any flight training while you were at Rutgers?

LC: No. They had a summer camp program you had to go to between your junior and senior year, where you got to go up in a jet, but, other than that, there was no training.

SI: Where was the summer camp?

LC: Midland, Texas, Webb Air Force Base. It was there, when I was taking the physical there, I found out that I had a problem with depth perception. So, they told me I couldn't go into flight training. I almost quit the ROTC at that point.

SI: Why did you stay in?

LC: Primarily because I knew I was going to be commander of the drill team.

SI: Does anything else stand out about your training, anything that they taught you or any class that was of interest?

LC: Well, I became a navigator and they taught quite a bit about celestial navigation. So, I enjoyed that end of it. In fact, I was probably a "4.0" in ROTC, that it was my best course, [laughter] but it was not that exciting--no hands-on, no flight training, nothing like that.

SI: Is there anything I am missing that you think was essential to your Rutgers experience?

LC: No, I don't think so. As I say, I was just an average student.

SI: After you left the College of Engineering and went into the business course, did you develop any kind of specialty within your business studies?

LC: No. Part of the problem there was, I was so far behind, by spending a year in engineering, I had to use a lot of my classes, like chemistry and physics and a lot of those, for my electives. Otherwise, [for] my program, I was still taking eighteen to twenty-one credits a semester and I would've had to take more if I wanted to choose my own electives. So, I really didn't get into a lot of different areas, other than the fact that I took all the accounting courses and the business

law courses that I could, because I thought I wanted to go into accounting at that point. Rutgers did not offer a degree in accounting, nor did they offer a degree in business, which they do now. They just started a degree in business this year, I think.

SI: You were commissioned after you graduated.

LC: Right.

SI: Did you go on active duty right away?

LC: No. In fact, I went on active duty [in] 1958, so that would be fifty-one years ago, today, April Fool's Day--good time to go on active duty. [laughter]

SI: What did you do between graduation and active duty?

LC: I worked for IBM. I started working for IBM when I graduated college, and then, after the service, I came back to IBM.

SI: What were you doing in that initial period?

LC: Mostly going to school, learning the nuts-and-bolts of it. It wasn't even computers at that point. It wasn't computers until I came back out of the service. So, it was old EAM [electrical accounting machines] equipment.

SI: Punch cards?

LC: Punch cards, yes. It was all punch-card business going at that point and technical schools and sales schools that occupied most of the time.

SI: Was it difficult to get a job coming out of college in 1957?

LC: I didn't think it was that difficult, no. I mean, I had several job offers and I was no "4.0" student. So, it wasn't that difficult at that point, not like it's going to be this year.

SI: IBM is interesting because it was the model for the 1950s corporate culture.

LC: Right.

SI: Do you remember running into that?

LC: Oh, yes. I took the interview with IBM primarily because of that. I said, "Here's a great company, I think, to work for." So, when they gave me an offer, I took it. I could've made more if I'd gone to a Wall Street brokerage firm, but I didn't [laughter] and I'm probably just as well off.

SI: Do you remember IBM as being more of a paternalistic company, or any examples of that?

LC: No, I thought it was going to be that. I mean, they tried to be a very paternalistic company, but, then, I ended up in sales and that was just as cutthroat as any sales organization was. So, it wasn't that paternalistic at that point. It was a cutthroat sales organization. They wanted the business and you had to go out and sell it.

SI: On April 1st, where did you report to first?

LC: San Antonio. I went through four weeks of boot camp, which was next to nothing. It wasn't like [US Marine Corps boot camp at] Parris Island, that's for sure. Then, I went down to Harlingen [Air Force Base], for navigation training, for seven months. I graduated just before Christmas of '58. Then, I went back to San Antonio for advanced navigation training in an air refueling tanker. Then, I spent the next two years as a navigator on an air refueling tanker.

SI: You had been to Texas before, when you were at Rutgers, but, in that period, in the late 1950s, what was it like, being from New Jersey, to go down South? Does anything stand out in your memory?

LC: Yes, it was a little different. By and large, I found the Texans very, very friendly people. While I was down in Harlingen, I got to know several cotton farmers down there and used to go out to their homes for dinner and discuss the state of migrant workers, or "wetbacks," as they were known at that time. So, it was interesting, and they were very friendly people.

SI: When you were in navigation training, which aircraft did you train on?

LC: I don't even remember what aircraft was in Harlingen. It was a special trainer that they made just for navigation training and I don't remember what it was called.

SI: Was it all-around training or were they training you to mostly utilize electronic measures?

LC: No, it was mostly just navigation. You went up and maybe there were six, eight of us at a time that flew. They graded you on how well you did in your navigation area. Then, when you weren't flying, you were in class.

SI: Was it more focused on the traditional navigation methods, like shooting the stars?

LC: It was mostly celestial, yes, mostly. The radar that they had at that point was terrible. I can remember, once, even after I got out, we used to have to make radar landings. Man, we were lucky to find the airport, let alone the runway. [laughter] The radar just was terrible, but they were convinced that the Russians were going to attack us at night, so that most of it was concentrated on celestial navigation. Plus, if we ever went up over the North Pole, that's all we'd have.

SI: When you were assigned to the 305th Air Refueling Wing, did you join a crew?

LC: Yes, I spent, I think, maybe a month, a month-and-a-half, not on a specific crew, and then, I got assigned a crew. I spent the rest of the time I was in the service with that crew. Occasionally, I would substitute for somebody. We would spend alert duties up in Newfoundland for ten days, probably every three weeks. I would occasionally have to switch off to another crew, which was [difficult]. When my children were being born, my wife insisted I be home for the birth. So, I would, very often, have to switch off and go up with some other crew, so [that] I could be home for the birth of a child, but, other than that, it was one crew I flew with all the time.

SI: In that first month-and-a-half, you were just being put on whoever

LC: Right, whoever needed a navigator, yes, and, plus, I had to get checked out, too. So, they made you fly with an established crew while one of the senior navigators checked you out, before they would assign you to a crew.

SI: What do you remember about your first few missions? Does anything stand out about those?

LC: I can remember the first mission that I flew was on my way to Newfoundland. We'd fly up over the Atlantic, all the way up. Of course, the planes didn't climb very high in those days. I mean, twenty thousand feet was pretty much max. We flew in and out of thunderstorms all the way up and we had to find an island where we had to make an ADIZ [air defense identification zone] penetration back into Newfoundland--and that was scary. I wasn't sure I was going to find that island and the next point was Iceland, [laughter] but I'll never forget that first flight. That was [a rarity]. By and large, it went pretty well. We had a couple of instances, which, now that I think about it, back about it, I'm glad I wasn't as scared then as I was now about it, [laughter] but that was the way it went back then.

SI: What comes to mind about those incidents?

LC: We had a fire onboard at one time and we were carrying, I don't know, eighty, a hundred thousand pounds of jet fuel at the time. My job was to go down with the boom operator, in-between the tanks, and try to determine where the fire was. There was so much smoke, the only way I could keep up with him was [to] keep my hand on his shoulder. I was on the radio and he was supposed to put out the fire. Man, was I scared. [laughter]

SI: That must be the worst thing you could think of.

LC: Yes, yes. We had another incident where some B-52 took our boom and condensed it down from a forty-foot boom to about an eight-foot boom, which means that he was right up under our tail. That could've been disastrous. So, those were the two main incidences that I can remember.

SI: This is part of SAC [Strategic Air Command].

LC: Yes, I was with SAC.

SI: From what I have heard from other SAC veterans, they maintained pretty strict discipline in how you conducted yourself and how you trained for your operations.

LC: Oh, yes.

SI: What do you remember about that in your own experience?

LC: Well, you had to run proficiency tests all the time. If you were falling behind, then, they made you come in and take courses or do something to try to pull you back up again. I didn't have that problem, but the only other thing was that you weren't allowed more than fifty miles from the base. You had to be in contact with the base all the time. Except for vacations, that was it. When we got transferred up to McGuire [Air Force Base in Central New Jersey], I could come up and see my family and my wife's family, because I was close enough. I could get back in an hour, but they were very strict on that.

SI: How often would you have to go up?

LC: Two or three nights a week, plus the ten days of alert duty, and that's [demanding]. When I got out, they offered either getting out immediately or signing up for five years. I was due to get out in April and I think this was either January or February of the same year. My wife said, "No, you're not signing up for five years." She said, "You're never home. When you're home, it's during the day and you're sleeping." [laughter] Almost all of our flights were at night, which made it tough, because I was gone from four or five o'clock in the afternoon to five, six o'clock in the morning. So, it was a little tougher on her. She didn't enjoy it. I loved to fly. I thought it was great.

SI: Where would you go? Would you just patrol an area until somebody needed fuel? How did it work?

LC: No. You would be working with a bomber squadron somewhere and you would have a rendezvous point. When we were in Florida, it could've been out over the ocean or it could be in the Gulf of Mexico. Most of it was one or the other. [When] we were at McGuire, most of the refueling was done down over the Appalachians. There was an area that we used to refuel in most of the time, and it was always pre-arranged. You were due at such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time and you'd refuel. Sometimes, most of the time, you refueled first, and then, I flew a navigation mission of five or six hours after that.

SI: What do you mean--to train yourself?

LC: Yes, yes. You were allowed to decide where you wanted to go on your own. I mean, we'd go up with a two, three, four, five-ship formation all the time, refuel, usually as a formation. Then, after that, you were allowed to fly pretty much where you wanted to and file your own flight plan and do your own navigation. You had to do celestial navigation, radar navigation and Loran navigation. Those were the three main types. So, you had to schedule those because you had to do so many every quarter. Once we broke apart as a formation, you were on your own.

SI: I wondered if you were doing the same thing over and over again, if you fell into a routine.

LC: Not really, because, every time you went out, it was [that] you might be going to the same refueling area, but you were flying, usually, different places after that, depending upon the type of mission you had to fly very often. Most of the time, it was you'd break off, and then, fly down to, I don't know, South Carolina or somewhere. You had to figure out beforehand a flight plan that was going to take you four or five hours, to get your requirements in. So, sometimes, you'd fly out West, sometimes, fly along the East. We used to fly out [over] the ocean a lot.

SI: Would you land at these places?

LC: No, no. We always returned to McGuire or to--I was at MacDill [Air Force Base] in Tampa. Occasionally, you would have a [situation] where they would call an alert. When my telephone rang at four o'clock in the morning, I knew what it was. It was the AC [aircraft commander] calling me to tell me he's going to pick me up in five minutes. So, you always had a bag packed, and then, you would fly. Usually, you would fly to some other airbase and stay there for two or three days, on alert duty. That's what it was in Newfoundland, too. We didn't do any flying. We flew in, we were just on alert duty. We'd just sit there and wait until the Russians decided they wanted to attack.

SI: From interviewing some B-52 crew members, I know that they had this mentality that, every time they went out, it was like a combat mission. Was it the same with your unit?

LC: Yes, except that you knew when you went out, [if] you're flying refueling over the Appalachians or over the Gulf of Mexico, that it wasn't a combat mission, because we knew that if the B-52s or the B-47s were ever going out, they were going out over the North Pole. So, the only time you really ran into that type of a situation was when you had one of these alerts and had to refuel somewhere up over [the] Northern United States or out over the Atlantic. We never went into Canada, that I can remember, but that was the only time that you didn't know, at that point, what it was. You didn't find out until you got back as to what you were flying, but, then, it was a real mission, but the B-52 guys would never know, because they were up for ten, twelve hours at a time.

SI: Did that increase your stress level, when you would go on these alerts?

LC: Oh, I'm sure it did, yes, because I can remember that the one thing that they used to tell us was that if the commander of the B-52 wanted all the fuel, you gave it to him. You kept just enough fuel to get the hell out of his way, and then, you were on your own. We sort of had a pact that, when we had to go on those, I would figure out how far it was for landfall and the engineer would decide how much fuel we needed, because you wouldn't survive in the North Atlantic in the wintertime. I mean, you just couldn't survive. So, we used to plan to keep enough fuel onboard to at least landfall somewhere.

SI: How many men served on the plane?

LC: Five. There was a pilot, a copilot, an engineer, myself and a boom operator.

SI: Once you were on a permanent crew, how did everybody get along?

LC: Good, good. The engineer was an NCO and the boom operator was an enlisted man--he wasn't up to an NCO yet--but the pilot and the copilot and I were officers. So, we used to get along well. In fact, the NCO used to take us to the NCO clubs, sometimes, when we'd have to land at other bases, because they were a lot better than the officers' clubs were.

SI: There was not a strict line between enlisted man and officer.

LC: No. Everybody had a job to do and that was it. The line did not exist, really. I mean, yes, the AC had authority to do what he wanted us to do, but everybody had their job to do and that's how the crew really functioned.

SI: You were married at this time. When did you meet your wife?

LC: We met before I went in the service.

SI: While you were at Rutgers or earlier?

LC: I met her while I was at Rutgers, actually. She worked with my sister down in the telephone company in New Brunswick and I met her at a Bell Telephone Christmas party. Then, I saw her after that, and then, after college, I started dating her. Then, we got married after I got out of navigation school and before I went back into the 305th.

SI: Did she stay in New Jersey or did she follow you around?

LC: She stayed in New Jersey until we got married, but, then, she went with me back down to Texas, and then, over to Florida. So, she left home at that point. In fact, the assignment that I really wanted was either in Japan or England. You chose your assignment out of navigation school based upon your class ranking and whether you were career or non-career. Career officers got the first choice and there were two career officers. One assignment was Japan and one England and they took them and I was next in line. So, I didn't get either one of those. So, I ended up with SAC in Tampa, thinking Tampa'd be a great location. My wife and I determined that we would never retire to Florida. [laughter] It was terrible.

SI: Were the conditions on the base bad?

LC: Oh, the bugs, the heat. I mean, it was back before air conditioning and it was just too hot.

SI: Did you live on the base or off the base?

LC: No, we lived on the base.

SI: You mentioned that the schedule you had to keep was difficult on your family. Were the living conditions difficult for starting a family?

LC: No, we had a nice apartment. We had a two-bedroom apartment. It was well-kept. I mean, the Air Force kept it up, so, you got all of that for free. So, there was no complaint there, but it was just that the weather conditions in Florida. We used to joke that the temperature and the humidity would race to a hundred. At one o'clock, they would tie and it would rain. I didn't enjoy Florida.

SI: Going back to these alerts, would they be precipitated by any event, like, if something happened in the world?

LC: No, they'd call them randomly.

SI: Do you remember any incidents that affected your service time? I do not know if you missed the Berlin Crisis. [Editor's Note: In June 1961, at the Vienna Summit with President John F. Kennedy, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev demanded that the Western powers pull their forces out of West Berlin by the end of 1961, leading to months of increased tensions. That July, Kennedy asked Congress for billions in new military spending and an expansion of the active military. On August 13, 1961, East Germany sealed the border with West Berlin and began erecting the Berlin Wall. On August 30th, President Kennedy ordered 148,000 National Guard and Reserve members to active duty in response.]

LC: No, as a matter of fact, I almost got called back in, because, before I left the service, before I left McGuire, I talked to the commander of the Air Reserves that was there and told him I wanted to join. They flew back and forth to England, flew MATS [Military Air Transport Service] back and forth to England. I said, "I wanted to join, but I want six months off first, because I want to get my family established, I've got to get a house, I've got to get started at work." It wasn't four months later, the Berlin Crisis came up and I would've been back in again. So, that would've affected my service, [laughter] but, other than that, not while I was in.

SI: The Kennedy/Nixon election was going on while you were in the service. I know servicemen are generally apolitical, but was that discussed at all?

LC: Oh, yes. I wouldn't say servicemen were apolitical. They were either Democrats or Republicans, even in the service. Yes, we used to argue about that. I don't remember--I know I voted for Kennedy. So, I guess, back then, I was a Democrat. [laughter]

SI: Nobody expressed a strong opinion, like, "This is going to be good for the Air Force, bad for the Air Force."

LC: No. I think that we were fairly well convinced that both men were going to treat the Armed Services correctly and I think they did, really. In fact, Kennedy was probably stronger than Nixon. I don't think that anybody had any adverse feeling toward the service, either President.

SI: Does anything else stand out about your time in the service?

LC: No, it was more routine than anything. I mean, you were flying so much, you didn't have much time to do anything else. I mean, when you weren't flying, maybe you went in and graded other people's navigation runs, which we used to have to do, but that was about it. Most of the time seemed to be consumed flying.

SI: When you came back out, did you go right back to work at IBM?

LC: Yes. I went right back in to IBM.

SI: In the same program or is that when you made the switch to sales?

LC: No, in the same program. I was actually in a sales program when I started, but it wasn't specified *per se*. When I came out, that's when I went into the real sales program and went up to Endicott, [New York], for school, for six weeks or something like that, and then, I went out. In fact, I wasn't even scheduled for Endicott until the Berlin Crisis came up. Then, two of the salesmen in the office got recalled into the service, because they were in the Reserves. So, then, they quick sent me to Endicott, so [that] I could take over one of the sales territories.

SI: What were you selling at that time?

LC: Punch-cards equipment, anything, but that's all there was at that time.

SI: Mostly to businesses?

LC: Yes, mostly to businesses. I was selling in Newark primarily, terrible territory.

SI: Newark was your territory.

LC: Yes, Newark was my territory. It was not a nice place to have to go into all the time, but that's the way it was.

SI: How long did you stay in sales in IBM?

LC: Until '64. I left in '64. I went into consulting work for myself for about four, five, six months, maybe, and then, I took a job with Hess in Perth Amboy. I stayed with them for thirty-two years after that.

SI: In sales again?

LC: No, I was in IT. The consulting work I did was primarily IT-oriented.

SI: Was that based on your training in IBM?

LC: Yes, that's what got me involved in it. I probably would've gone back into IBM if they would've put me into the support group rather than the sales group, but I just didn't enjoy the

sales and I didn't enjoy working in Newark and they weren't about to make a change. So, we parted ways.

SI: What stands out about your career at Hess? IT, obviously, has been a field of tremendous change and expansion over the last thirty years.

LC: Oh, yes.

SI: What was it like at the beginning, when you first joined them in the mid-1960s?

LC: I joined as a supervisor of programming and they were programming computer systems at that time, which they had just sort of [started]. So, it was a learning curve for everybody. Then, they merged with a company called Amerada [in 1971] and that's when it became Amerada Hess. I spent probably four or five years working with various divisions of Hess, trying to get all of their systems compatible, all of their computer systems for accounting and whatever compatible, so [that] it was more uniform in reporting. Then, I took over and worked in automation systems for our terminals and refineries for probably fifteen years after that. That was probably the most interesting aspect of the job, because you were working with, I was working with, engineers at that time. I was the only one that had any IT experience, and working with engineers and setting up computer systems for automation of our refineries and of our storage facilities. So, [I] got to do a lot of traveling, but that was probably more interesting and more challenging than anything I'd been in before.

SI: You traveled, but were you always centered in Perth Amboy?

LC: Until they moved to Woodbridge. I forget when they did that. They built the building on Route 9 in Woodbridge and that's where I worked out of until I retired, but I traveled all over the East Coast. Between Texas and New Jersey, we had storage facilities, and then, I did a lot of work for our refinery down in St. Croix. So, I used to travel down there a lot.

SI: What were the biggest challenges in working on getting the automation up to snuff?

LC: There were several challenges. One was trying to understand the business and equate it to what the engineers were trying to automate and, also, make sure that it provided the information that our accountants and other people needed. I was sort of the go-between for IT for that. I had my own little group that did all the programming work on the computers that we used and I had enough engineering experience or knowledge that I could relate to the engineers, also. That made it very interesting. I really enjoyed that aspect of my job.

SI: You were like a clutch between all these different groups.

LC: Yes, because I was the only one that had the experience, really, in all three areas, that I could come up with systems that would work for us. Then, we went around and installed systems and upgraded systems all over the East Coast.

SI: When you would do these jobs outside of New Jersey, how long would you be on those sites?

LC: We'd do a hardware installation, where we'd go down with the engineers, spend maybe three or four days with them, and then, we would maybe have another week off, depending upon the schedule. Then, we would go down and actually turn the system on and get everybody trained, and that was another week. So, it was about maybe two weeks at each site and we had, I don't know, thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six sites to do. So, it took several years for us to get through it. Then, after we started, we changed computer systems in the middle, because we didn't like what we had. It wasn't working and the engineers wanted to use something else. Then, we changed computer systems again, and so, it kept us busy just keeping things up-to-date.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to say about your career at Hess?

LC: No, other than the fact that I found it very interesting and challenging working with the company and it was a good company, very paternalistic. Leon thought he was "the benevolent dictator." He was very fair, I felt. I knew him, and most of the executives that I knew were very fair, also. Hess was a very job-oriented environment. I mean, you had a job to do and, if it took seven days to do it, it took seven days to do it. Leon worked six or seven days a week, so, there was no reason you shouldn't--but you were rewarded for it. It was a lot of self-satisfaction, but you were given a lot of responsibility and that was the good part of it.

SI: Was the business affected by things like the OPEC [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries] Crisis in 1973 or did that not really affect Hess?

LC: Oh, yes. There were a lot of things that affected the business. A lot of the work that we did was driven by government demands, I mean, government control. The OPEC Crisis was one. I forget what it was called now--there was another program where they thought the oil companies were making too much money and the government was taxing the surplus that the oil companies were making. We used to have a lot of government intervention in the business that we had to address and that was always a crisis, because you know the government. If they wanted something to go into effect the 1st of April, you were lucky to get the regs [regulations] the 31st of March. So, that was always a crisis.

SI: That would affect your job.

LC: Very often. Back then--that was probably before I started with the automation side of it--yes, it would affect my job, when I was in charge of programmers. Then, it was trying to marshal the troops and get the job done as soon as we could. Then, there were a lot of other things that went on. At one point, Hess had a humongous truck fleet and it got too expensive to run efficiently. So, we got rid of the truck fleet, and then, had to figure out how to hire companies to do all the hauling for us, and how much to pay. I spent about a year-and-a-half just working on that end of it, but it was a lot of fun. I kept getting these different assignments that made the job not mundane by any means.

SI: Would you like to say anything about your family? How many children do you have?

LC: I have four children, three girls and a boy, had a daughter and a son, and then, two other daughters. My oldest daughter, Mary, went to Rutgers and graduated here, and took a job as a CPA--which company, I can't remember now. My son is up in Connecticut and he works for Hartford Insurance. My third daughter is a teacher down in Charlotte, North Carolina. My fourth daughter went to Seton Hall Law School and became a lawyer, for probably, I would have to say, ten years, maybe. She worked in Jersey City for a while, and then, she got a job as a public defender in Monmouth County, which is where she ended up working her last four or five years. Then, she got married and decided to become a housewife. They're all doing very well. We get along well. I see them all the time--the one in North Carolina, not often enough, [laughter] but that's the way it goes. We have nine grandchildren. One's in college in Bucknell, one's in college in Rowan, one's in Middlesex County College, one's going to college next year in Connecticut--he hasn't decided where he's going--and another grandson has been accepted to Rutgers and is coming here next year.

SI: Have you ever tried to influence your children or grandchildren to come here?

LC: Oh, yes, oh, yes. [laughter] In fact, the one that went to Bucknell wanted to get into engineering. I happened to be in an RAA [Rutgers Alumni Association] meeting one night and Dean [Michael] Klein [of the Rutgers School of Engineering] was our speaker. So, after he gave his speech, I asked him, I said, "My grandson is coming next week to talk to Lehigh," and I forget where else he was going to go see, I said, "but he's got a day free on Monday. Could I schedule an interview with you? Would you interview my grandson?" So, he did and he got accepted. Dean Klein told my grandson that he would get an out-of-state scholarship based upon his grades. Then, the Admissions Office didn't offer it to him and I was irate. Oh, was I irate, but I found out at that point that being an alumnus does nothing for you, which is too bad, really. I think that it should have some merit to it. I attended the scholarship luncheon today. We, the class, has a scholarship that we give out every year--one of the stipulations in the scholarship is that preference is given to children who are descendants of members of the Class of 1957. So, my grandson who's coming is going to apply for the scholarship. We'll see what happens.

SI: How long have you been actively involved with the University as an alumnus?

LC: I really got actively involved after I retired in '95, but I had been somewhat involved probably for two or three years prior to that. Then, when I retired, I got much more active with the RAA. I've been one of the reunion co-chairs for Rutgers for probably eight or nine years, but I've been working with the University for probably a good fifteen years.

SI: Does anything stand out about that period?

LC: No, other than the fact that being reunion chairman took a lot of time. The RAA, Rutgers Alumni Association, is one of the organizations under the Rutgers University Alumni Association, because, much like Rutgers did, where it's now the College of Arts and Sciences, they have done the same thing with all the alumni organizations and put them as separate groups under the Rutgers University Alumni Association. So, I'm not nearly as active this year. The only thing I'm really doing is running the golf tournament, but, other than that, I'm not as active.

In fact, next year, I'm going to join the Board of the RAA, because reunion no longer requires that much time. It's just I need something that has a little more challenge to it.

SI: How do you feel, as an alumnus, about all of the changes you have seen in the last ten to fifteen years?

LC: Well, I think they're good and I think they need to be a lot more. In fact, I was talking to [Rutgers University Foundation President] Carol Herring today and I told her that one of the things that Rutgers doesn't do, which aggravated me to no end was, setting up communication to find out who was responsible for giving out our class scholarship. It took me, probably, two weeks and fifteen phone calls. Now, I'm president of my class--that information should have been available to me pretty easily, because other people also asked me "Who do I talk to?" I think that that's one of the failings that Rutgers has. I think they've gotten so big and so--I don't want to say disorganized--but organized in such a way that I don't think it's as efficient as it should be. I think that's going to happen. I think you're going to see a lot more of that, but the [Rutgers] Foundation has just gotten so many people in it and it has so many different organizations that it's tough to even find out who to talk to.

SI: Have you become involved in your community or any other activities since you retired?

LC: No. After I retired and my mother died, we moved down to Holmdel, which is where I now live. My wife told me, at that point, that if I ever went into politics again, she was going to shoot me. So, I haven't gotten into politics in Holmdel. [laughter] I've kept out of it.

SI: However, you were involved in Edison.

LC: I was a member of the Housing Authority for twenty-five years and Chairman for probably fifteen--and that got to be very political. I just don't care for politics that much. I think there's too many people out there that have no idea what they're doing, will say anything to get elected, and I'm not that type. So, I'm just staying out of politics. I'm doing some work with the church, but that's about it.

SI: What were the major issues that you faced when you were on the Housing Authority in Edison?

LC: Well, I became a member of the Housing Authority because the mayor asked me to join the Housing Authority. We had the oldest urban renewal project in the nation and he charged me with trying to get it completed. That was a ten-year job, and I didn't realize it, but it was at least ten years before we got it done, and that took an awful, awful lot of time. It was probably, I don't know, a hundred million dollars. So, it was a major project. A lot of people were against it, but it was either "do it or lose it." That's what we got down to. If we didn't get it done, [the] Federal Government was going to take it away from us. I think that a lot of people are misinformed about low-cost housing or subsidized housing or whatever you want to call it. My two kids, my oldest daughter and my son, both lived in the housing that we built after they got out of college. I think, today, that there's a crying need for housing for that type of an individual. I mean, a lot of communities, Holmdel being one of them, loses a lot of their kids because they can't afford to

live there and I think that that's where low-cost housing should gear itself to, but [that is] not happening yet.

SI: In your position, what would you be doing to try and move that project along? Would you be working with contractors? What would you do?

LC: Initially, it was [dealing with] the Federal Government, and then, the lawyers, trying to get all the property, that we didn't own have condemned. That took us, probably, three to four years just to condemn property and take it over, then, to pick out a major contractor to supervise the whole thing, to manage it and build the whole project, and then, supervising the job itself. Even working with the town, who initially was against it to a certain aspect, we wanted to build the housing first and they wanted the shopping center first. I could not convince the mayor and the council, for a long time, that you can't build a shopping center where you don't have the homes around it to support it, won't work. So, we finally convinced them that that's the way we had it built. We had to build the homes first and set up the need for the shopping center, so that when we got it done, there were enough people around to support it. That urban renewal project opened up the development in North Edison. It took off like crazy up in North Edison after that. So, we were the catalyst for building umpteen thousand homes up there.

SI: Was there anything that finally convinced them that your position was correct?

LC: The original plan that we had submitted was what we wanted to do and the town would've had to go [to the Federal Government to get it changed]. They could've fired me, but they finally convinced them that that's the best way for it to be. It was time-consuming, working with a lot of the organizations, especially NAACP, which opposed it to a degree because we didn't hire a black developer. They would sue us. I [was] one of the few people that had pickets walk up and down my front lawn--not too many people have had that experience. [laughter]

SI: This probably took longer than we originally agreed.

LC: Yes, I just want to get out of here [soon]. New Brunswick is tough to get out of after four o'clock.

SI: Yes. Is there anything you want to add?

LC: No, I don't think so, Shaun. I think that we've covered most of it, unless you want to ask more. That's fine, too.

SI: I will probably have more questions after I review the transcript, but, for now, thank you very much for your time. I am really glad you came in.

LC: Okay, well, thank you. I'm glad we finally got it done. Sandra's only been after me for three years, I think. [laughter]

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 12/5/2017
Reviewed by Leon A. Carpenter, III 3/21/2018