RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDGAR J. FELDMAN

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Edgar J. Feldman on April 22, 1997, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and …

Jill Casey: … Jill Casey.

KP: I would like to begin by talking about your parents. Your father, you said before we started the interview, was, you think, born either in Newark or New York City. He was a newsboy at one point.

Edgar Feldman: Yes, I have a picture of him as a newsboy at City Hall, carrying newspapers and I know he made his--his parents were immigrants, didn't have much in the way of education. I think my grandfather was an old rip. He looked like the Prince of Wales and I think he carried on that way, from old pictures. My father, in later years, had told me that he had been much inspired by some of his teachers in the New York City school system--one particular Irish teacher of his, whose name he said--but he thought he had influenced him enough to go on and become a success in the world and instilled in him a love of learning and to become part of the American dream, but my father did very, very well. He wanted to be an attorney, but they couldn't afford it, because of poverty. He eventually wound up in the insurance business and he headed a wonderful, wonderful company. It was enough to send three sons to college. The only reprehensible one was, my youngest brother went to Yale. My older brother was [Rutgers] Class of 1939; I'm '43, of course. So, we had a very comfortable existence. These were Depression days and I was a pretty badly spoiled kid, I'm afraid. I'd gone to a prep school and got ruined there. I never knew what a Depression was and I'll tell you, as long as this is a World War II thing, one of the best things that ever happened to me was going into the Navy, because I spent close to three years there and I got things straight. I got my head straight, if you want to put it that way, and I've had a certain amount of modesty in my life ever since, emanating from that experience.

KP: If I had interviewed you when you were in prep school or in the early years of college, you would have had a very different attitude towards life.

EF: Oh, I was a snotty kid. [laughter] I was turned down at Princeton, and then, I guess that's the second great thing that happened in my life, that I was turned down at Princeton. It was not a salubrious atmosphere for anything, as I recall, but it was the thing to do, coming out of a private school. You had to go to Yale, Harvard or Princeton and I'd wanted to go to Princeton. Of course, my brother and my cousin, who had been a great football star, were working on me to come to Rutgers and I think that, too--I talk about the Navy, but I loved Rutgers. As you get older, in retrospect, the harsher things soften. We all know that. Well, you're young--you young people will come to see this--one tends to remember the happy and good things. Rutgers was a wonderful experience for me and, intellectually, it was a wonderful experience. There were two professors there at whose feet I worshipped. One of them, William Hayes Fogg Lamont, English professor, became friendly with my father, as a matter-of-fact. My father used to take him to Brooklyn Dodgers football games, and the other was John George, [who] was in political science. They were outstanding. I can't even diminish any of the other teachers or professors we had, but they were outstanding and it was a marvelous experience. Also, coming into the Rutgers environment, after a prep school environment, I started to meet some real people.

KP: It sounds like you really did not know very much about the Depression, at least on a very personal level.

EF: No. The one or two episodes, I did not know the Depression. I knew there was a Depression, but it had no meaning.

KP: You knew of it, but it was very distant.

EF: No. The maid came and we went to camps, as a little boy, and the laundress came. My mother shopped on Fifth Avenue. There was no particular change.

KP: No family members who were down on their luck?

EF: No, no, there wasn't. Well, there were always poor relations, because my father, he was not what one would call a millionaire in those days, but he was affluent. If there were any poor relations, uncles or aunts, perhaps one or two of them I may think of now, he helped out, but others did in the family as well.

KP: There was no poor relation that had just lost their house or was living in bad conditions.

EF: That, I don't even recall reading about. I had an uncle who was a yachtsman. My mother had a brother who graduated from Yale--from Yale, I beg your pardon, I can't get that dirty word out of my mouth [laughter]--graduated from Cornell as an engineer, I think in 1906. My grandfather on that side, whom I never knew, died when he was about thirty-five or forty, but nobody ever wanted for anything. I know my mother had a fine upbringing and comfortable, and aunts and uncles. I had an uncle who helped kill Enrico Caruso as one of his physicians. So, the families were pretty well-ensconced in, not the upper levels of society, but …

KP: Sounds like just a step below the top.

EF: Just under, and, of course, being Jewish was another thing. That was not an easy thing. I'll tell you, and I don't mind putting this on the record, I was at prep school and I learned to cope, but the prep school I went to, I think there were only two or three Jewish kids. My mother insisted that I have a prep school education. Academically, it was superior, but that's quite another story. I've kind of left the faith. I don't follow anything in particular. As I say, my daughter was married at Kirkpatrick and I have very reverent thoughts about that, [laughter] but this was the '30s and it was a very anti-Semitic time. I'd had a difficult time, but, as I say, I learned to cope. I learned to drink on the sly. Then, later, kids did drugs; well, we did liquor and I did liquor with …

KP: At the prep school.

EF: With some of my so-called oppressors, I used [the term]. It was not that bad, but the fact of the matter is, and I've said this many times to friends, when I got to Rutgers, I said, "Where the

hell have all the fucking anti-Semites gone to?" take that word out, [laughter] because it was a different atmosphere.

KP: You felt there was much more anti-Semitism at your prep school.

EF: Oh, good Lord, and, if it existed at Rutgers, I just wasn't aware of it. I just wasn't. Well, I knew there was segregation of fraternities. I joined a Jewish fraternity because my brother had.

KP: Sammy [Sigma Alpha Mu].

EF: And the big football player had been there, but I think I lived in the fraternity house for about fifteen minutes--actually, a couple of weeks or what-have-you. I was happiest at the dorm, at Hegeman in the freshman year. I moved out of the fraternity house very quickly and moved over to Ford. Now, Ford Hall, in those days, the old-timers will tell you, this was almost "white-shoe living," because there were two men in a three-room apartment and there was a cleaning woman who used to come and dust up. I forgot if she made beds or not, but I know she was there. She was an old English charlady type, but Ford Hall was almost Princeton-ish, I suppose.

KP: Then, it was still a relatively new dorm. It had been built, I think, in 1912. [Editor's Note: Ford Hall was built in 1915.]

EF: Comparatively speaking, yes.

KP: Yes, it was comparatively new. I got the impression that Winants was a bit old.

EF: Winants was old. Well, you know this better than I, that that was originally a dormitory, I think, a hundred, three hundred years ago, or whenever it was. [Editor's Note: Winants Hall was built in 1890.]

KP: Yes. It looks spiffy now, but I got the impression that it did not look as good when you were a student.

EF: Yes. Well, it comforts me to see it on the outside, but, going on the inside, it's like having walked from my old world into a new world. I remember, the bookstore was there and you had your letterboxes there and I wondered if I was going to find a letter from my girlfriend in my box there, or that particular girlfriend, not that I was that much of a socialite. [laughter] What else can I add about that?

KP: I want back up. How observant was your family? Did you belong to a synagogue?

EF: Yes, yes, and I don't know if this has very much to do with what we're talking about, because my parents were religious--let me explain this--and this is what drove me away from the faith of my father, so-to-speak. My wife has been suffering with cancer now. We've been battling this for close to two years and she had her fourth cancer surgery about six weeks ago. There was a delightful, little Filipino nurse and she said something which it just brought up the entire philosophy I have having to do with religion. She said, "The religious use God. The

godly are used by God," and my parents fell into that first category. They were very bigoted. It works both ways, very often, you say, and we had religion really jammed down our throats.

KP: Did you keep a kosher household?

EF: No, God, no, oh, Christ, no.

KP: You were more of a Reform family.

EF: Well, as a matter-of-fact, to digress, my grandfather was dying of leukemia. They called it--oh, I can't think of the word--and they started to push bacon into his [diet], because they said, the doctor said, there's something in ham and that sort of thing that was very nutritious, in those days. One thing about the Jewish religion, which I respect intellectually, is that they said, "One lives." The toast is, "To Life," and that you do anything or you break any rule so long as it helps to support a life. An episode in the Navy that I had, and I tell you, it was an object lesson, I remember, I was just out of boot camp and there were two young sailors sitting on the ground and there was an officer standing over them. I noticed that it was a Jewish chaplain. The chaplain was chewing their asses out--my language gets a little bit pungent after a while, but I know, these days, anything goes--and what they were trying to do, these two little bastards, was to claim that they couldn't stay in the Navy because the food was not kosher; think about that a little while. Well, the Rabbinical Council [of America] would've said, "When the war is [on] and you're fighting for your country, everything is [permissible]," but they're trying to get away with this and this, too, was another thing. I would've already been turned off by my so-called religion at that point.

KP: This chaplain was really letting them have it.

EF: Oh, he let them have it, but there were some beautiful things, too. I remember, when I was in boot camp, it was a beastly hot summer, Tidewater Virginia, and it was brutal, but you were allowed to go to services. The Jewish area, the Jewish boys could get it and march a mile or two away. All of a sudden, I found my religion again, because I could get out of boot camp for an hour or two. [laughter] Well, this is a very beautiful story and I think it ought to be written. I suppose there must have been, I don't know, fifteen, eighteen, twenty Jewish "boots," sailors, all suffering, with no hair on our heads, because it'd been clipped out. A chaplain came in with crosses on his lapels and he explained, he announced himself, he said that he was sorry, he said, "But, we do not have a Jewish chaplain in this area. So, with your permission, I will conduct services and I will try to conduct them in the spirit of your religion," and he did. That was certainly a lovely, lovely, lovely thing.

KP: He did the Hebrew service.

EF: Not really. There was a sailor who had some and he said something, but he [the chaplain] did the Old Testament readings and what-have-you and the old blessing, which is actually the old blessing, made with the *tefillin*. That's generic to most all faiths now. So, now, I'm rambling--I think I ought to try to come back to some of your questions.

KP: Your parents, even though religion was unimportant, were in the Reform tradition.

EF: Well, they used it, they used it. They were so-called Conservative Jews. They were not Orthodox, where they separated the …

KP: Milk from meat.

EF: Well, no, they didn't keep a kosher home, either, although my grandparents did. My grandmother seemed to have lived the religion a little better than my parents did. She was extremely reverent. The word of God was always on her lips. She'd come over as a fourteen or fifteen-year-old girl, I don't know exactly [from] where, but the name was--she never spoke English very well--"God bless, America," and, "God Bless the President." Oh, "God bless, America," that's all you seemed to hear from her. She must have had a bad time.

KP: Where did your grandparents come from?

EF: I know my grandmother used the term--I never knew about my grandfather, because I never had much contact with him. I never saw my grandfather smile. I don't remember him. He was always very aloof and off alone somewhere. My grandmother mentioned the City of Konigsberg, which was Prussia, which was not Prussia, dependent upon, as we know, who over-swept that area, but she had a *shtetl* mentality. You know what that is? That's the Jewish village, *Fiddler on the Roof* kind of crap, but she was a very good person and very kindly and very reverent, without necessarily being religious.

KP: Yes.

EF: She became ill at one point and the doctors confined her to home and, all of a sudden, she disappeared. She sneaked out the back door to go to her synagogue, but that was really Central European. Was I taught this way? There was more family and I lost track of that family, because I did have--part of my family was in the Middle West, in Illinois, and I don't remember them--but it turned out, World War I, I had a distant cousin or an uncle, I don't know who he was, but he was a soldier in World War I, had been gassed. He spent most of his life in a military hospital, but they used to let him loose to come visit us. He used to come and stay with us one week every year. I'm scared today--his eyes were popping out of his head and he couldn't keep his hands straight. So, I do have family out there and, as a matter-of-fact, I ran into one of them who had been an Army officer and had just gotten out in the Washington, DC, area. The war was over and I was stationed there. I met him and we spent about three months together. [If] it had been four months, I would have died, because it was carrying on, drinking, boozing, twenty-four hours a day. [laughter] It was a wild, wild time--and it wasn't my nature, wasn't my nature, but I got caught up. I fell in with evil companions. [laughter] I say that about my entire life--any sins I've committed was the fault of the evil companions I fell in with. [laughter]

KP: Your mother was a full-time housewife. Did she join any volunteer organizations?

EF: I don't remember, I don't think so. As you ask these questions, they come back and how manners have changed--think how Rutgers has changed. I remember, either the first or second

year at prep school--now, this should have been, I think, 1935--and she's [his mother] introduced to our headmaster and she curtseyed to the headmaster, a curtsy. Now, that's within my lifetime. It's like going from the oxcart to the jet plane. So, again, this is one digression after another.

KP: You started out in public school.

EF: Yes.

KP: In PS 161.

EF: 161, yes.

KP: Were the students there from a more diverse background?

EF: No, they were, they were. They were diverse. As a matter-of-fact, there were a couple of black kids in that class and that was another thing that embittered me, because I think I graduated in 1935 and the school then was Boys High School in Brooklyn. This is interesting, because Boys High School, it has been said, in 1915, the graduates had the equivalency of a Harvard degree today and I think I can believe it. Of course, they deteriorated, but the New York City schools and colleges were just superior. I wanted to go on to the Boys High School; my brother had been there.

KP: The brother who had gone to …

EF: My older brother, Arthur.

KP: The brother who had gone to Yale.

EF: No, no, the younger brother, he's the disreputable one.

KP: Younger brother.

EF: The older brother was Rutgers Class of '39. Where was I again?

KP: You wanted to go to Boys.

EF: I wanted to go to Boys High School with my friends and I remember my mother stepping in, "I beg your pardon. No, you are not going to that school," and I never forgave her for it. I remember, after about three or four weeks there, I came back and I complained bitterly and I broke down. My mother said to me, "Well, if you're that unhappy, we'll change. We'll get you out of there," and she lied to me. A couple days later--is this a psychiatric session or is this a historical session?--and my father, I'd been at prep school four-and-a-half years, because it was mid-'30s, he never once asked me, "Hey, how you getting on?" never asked once. He was wrapped up in his career, but, then, again, that's what people did in those days.

KP: Why do you think your mother was so determined to send you to prep school? It sounds like your father acquiesced to it.

EF: My mother was a bloody snob.

KP: This was really a sign of status.

EF: That's right.

KP: Your father was a very distant figure.

EF: Very distant, very distant, except he ran things as a Prussian military barracks. He was a tough, mean man, as far as the discipline went, but, on the other hand, he gave--under the law, he was one of the most charitable, most giving men. He couldn't give of himself, but he gave of things. When he died, he had a book of charities, there was a box, and there was Catholic Charities. He would go to all the--I remember, he had letters from Cardinal [Francis] Spellman and what-have-you, thanking him, anyone who came to him …

KP: He was very …

EF: Very eleemosynary type; couldn't give of himself, but he could give of things.

KP: How did your family feel about Zionism?

EF: Mildly, mildly about it.

KP: Mildly, but not enthusiastic.

EF: Not at all. I became a Zionist fanatic after the war. As a matter-of-fact, I worked in this country with one of the--supporting one of the terrorist groups there. I remember being in one area trying to buy trench knives for the--what was then not the Israeli Army. [Editor's Note: Great Britain controlled Palestine as a League of Nations mandate from 1920 to 1948. Jewish leaders established the paramilitary organization *Haganah* in 1920 to defend Jewish settlements from Palestinian claims over the land. The more militant *Irgun* split from *Haganah* in 1931. In 1948, Jewish leaders declared the independence of the State of Israel and these factions formed the core of the Israeli Defense Forces.] Another thing, I don't know if I hadn't made the biggest mistake of my life, but I had been *bar mitzvah*-ed. You know what that is? My teacher had served in the [Zion] Mule Corps in the British Army in the First World War, and then, in their British unit [the Jewish Legion]. He knew things military and, as a matter-of-fact, my instruction suffered because he'd start teach me the Hebraic, whatever it was, the grammar and what-have-you, and I'd say, "Mr. (Kogan?), tell me about the Mule Corps again," and he'd put his book down and start. Well, many years later, I was at a Zionist meeting and he came over to me and I said, "My God." He said, "This is good. If we can get someone like you in here," he said, "there's a lot of hope for us." Then, several months after that, don't you know, I got a call--the state had not come into being--and I was asked, "How would you like to think about going to Israel and coming into one of the diplomatic corps and get into that level?" "Oh, God," I said,

"that was so absurd--I'm an American." "Well, you can have dual citizenship, but we'd like to have you." I don't know if this is a compliment or not, I haven't made it up. There was a rabbi I got friendly with at that time. This was the first beginning of the Ecumenical Movement and I was at a small meeting of his, because I liked him. I didn't like the faith, I'd left it, but he was a very dynamic man, cultured, well-read and dynamic. We were in a small meeting and they were supposed to send two or three people over to one of the Protestant churches. It was, as a matter-of-fact, Church of England, the high church in Brooklyn, and the Rabbi said, "I'm going to take Buddy with me," and one of the men said, "Hey, he's kind of young, isn't he?" and he said, "Nah-uh," he said, "Buddy knows how to speak to the Gentiles." [laughter] Now, I don't know whether that was a compliment or the worst insult I've had in my life. Strike that, that's humor or it's gallows humor; so much for that particular era.

KP: You alluded to a misspent social life at the prep school. Now, it looks very innocent, where you did not do drugs, but you did the very illicit activities of the day.

EF: Yes, you had to do liquor. Again, there was that nasty sort of feeling. Even the headmaster said--I remember him sitting back--"Well, where are you going to college? Well, obviously, if your name were Wordsworth, you could go here, sir, couldn't you, sir?" This is the sort of thing you heard. Oh, well, I don't know about that--it was a bad time. They were playing indoor soccer once and I got a soccer ball under my chin and it knocked me cold, actually knocked me cold. This helped me, it helped me an awful lot, because, then, the other kids came around. Oh, I'm not painting such a dark picture--these were the times--because there were a lot of wonderful kids there. One of them went on to Rutgers here. By God, if you could get somebody to tell you about the history, not John Forbes, his name was Forbes, Bill Forbes, F-O-R-B-E-S, get someone talking about him. Some of our other people in my class knew Bill Forbes well. You [could] write a book on him.

KP: Was he Class of 1943?

EF: Bill Forbes was--I'm not here to talk about Bill Forbes, or can I?

KP: Please do.

EF: Yes. Bill Forbes was one of the nicest kids at Poly. There was none of this damned anti-Semitism from him, as many other kids. I shouldn't say this …

KP: There was a group that was very anti-Semitic, but there was another group that was not.

EF: There was an atmosphere. There were always a couple of pricks there. [laughter] It happens.

KP: Yes.

EF: Bill Forbes was an athlete. He came from a banking family, could have bought the school, went on to one of the--forget the name of the school, it was one of the colleges of--Wesleyan, I think, or one of the sister colleges. He played football against Army and there was one particular

game where Wesleyan was supposed to have lost eighty-seven to nothing and Bill Forbes scored three touchdowns against them. He's a scholar-athlete, not a scholar, a good student, what-have-you. He drank, whored around, smoked and they finally threw him out. He came to Rutgers and he was supposed to--I think Harvey Harman was our coach at the time and he wanted him on the football team. He said, "But, Bill, you've got to stop smoking," and he wouldn't stop smoking, he wouldn't stop drinking and they wouldn't let him on the football team. He went on, after the war, he stayed in the Army. He drank himself to death by the time he was in his mid-thirties. It was a suicide. There's a poem about--I forget who it is, who wrote the poem, someone--"And he put a bullet in his head," is the last line of the [poem], one of the English poets. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feldman is referring to American poet Edwin Arlington Robinson's 1897 poem "Richard Cory."] In a way, he put a bullet in his head, because he was endowed by God, he was touched by the finger of God, as far as talent is concerned. He was just fine at Rutgers and it's funny, he turned up here and, also, Freddy (Flynn?), I think he died, turned up at Rutgers. I knew him from Poly Prep. I think he was a philosophy major. If he wasn't a priest, he should have been a priest, because he was a scholastic, so-to-speak. So, there was some enjoyment. Oh, my brother became the first--younger brother, the Yale [grad], disreputable--he became the first Jewish master at Poly Prep in 150 years, at our prep school. I used to have lunch with him frequently. These are the kind of kids there--there were a lot of kids in the Diplomatic [Corps], the sons of the Diplomatic Corps, and there was a kid who was very liked, name was (Wonderlet?), and he was a little blonde kid. I think he was born in this country, I'm not sure, and very quiet and decent, what-have-you. I had lunch with my brother, many years after, and we're talking about old things at Poly Prep. "Oh," I said, "who was killed in the war?" He said, "Oh, (Wonderlet?) was killed in the war." I said, "Oh, my God, that's terrible, what a nice kid he was, what a decent kid." "Yes," he said, "he died for the *Fuhrer*." I said, "Gil, come on, don't say that." He said he did, he died for the *Fuhrer*. He said, "When war broke out, his father was in the Diplomatic Service, he was a consul here, German. He was taken back, put in the Army, went to Russia and lost his life."

KP: You went to school with him.

EF: Yes.

KP: You had no …

EF: No idea.

KP: No idea that he was basically a …

EF: They didn't know. No, he was no Nazi.

KP: No.

EF: As a matter-of-fact, the German Diplomatic Corps tended to be very anti-Nazi, what little [resistance there was], that was one of the core. They despised the *Fuhrer*. There was one young man there who you couldn't get away without knowing; the name was (Herringdean?). He was from the Netherlands, a boy from the Netherlands, but you knew he was Dutch, because

he couldn't (have fire?). He was older and he couldn't hide his accent. That was Poly Prep. Academically, it was superior. I was not a good student and, I tell you, I just have an average intelligence. I learned my limitations many years ago, but you had such a grounding in education there. In our New York City Regents Examination, I came out with something like a ninety-eight percent average. I was able to speak French. There were only five kids in our French class and our French class was Monsieur, the French master was (Jonsuior Desmai?) and we spoke French. Of course, I've lost most all of it now.

KP: While you would prefer to go to Boys High School, you did still get a good education.

EF: Oh, yes, it was superior. I have to give them that.

KP: They were not looking to turn out "gentlemen's Cs" in that sense.

EF: No, they weren't, because they maintained--and I could never comprehend that snobbery. I'm something of an Anglophile myself, culturally speaking, and the old saying, "The world has never had sweeter masters," but why they had to parrot the English system--we weren't in grades, we were in forms, third form, fourth form, this headmaster, "Good morning, Headmaster," principal. For God's sake, why this?

KP: What about sports? Did you play rugby?

EF: No, no, I didn't, but I …

KP: Did they have rugby as part of the program?

EF: No, no, but they had every conceivable sport that the public schools did not have.

KP: To be different.

EF: Yes, that's right. You had fencing and you had shooting, rifle.

KP: You had soccer, which was very rare.

EF: They had soccer, but, again, football was the big sport there.

KP: What about uniforms?

EF: No, this was non-uniform. The parochial, you're thinking of the parochial schools; no, at that level, no one had uniforms.

KP: You did not have a set tie and jacket.

EF: No, no, it was not the top school, maybe--it was not Exeter or Andover--but it was a distinguished, old school.

KP: Did you have chapel services?

EF: Yes, yes. As a matter-of-fact, at Rutgers, we had compulsory chapel. It was a wonderful experience. This I learned from my brother, because, when I came to Rutgers in 1939, they had compulsory chapel, unless you were Catholic. Then, you were automatically excused. If you were non-Catholic, if you got a letter, they excused you, but my brother Arthur, and this is in the annuls of the college, my brother Arthur said to me, "Bud, don't get any excuse." He didn't get an excuse, because my father would not give him an excuse. He said, "This is going to be a good example for you. You'll learn something from it," and I had that first year and they had the most wonderful preaching--preachin', you might say. The services were lovely and who preached? Reinhold Niebler came down every year, Norman Thomas, who had been an ordained Presbyterian minister. There were wonderful, wonderful services and I found them very, very edifying. As a matter-of-fact, when I was a sophomore and no longer it was compulsory, I …

KP: You continued to go.

EF: … Went voluntarily; so much so that, as I say, my kids, my son-in-law and my daughter, were married here in Kirkpatrick, because they had met here. I did not bring up our children with any religious feeling at all. My wife and I agree on that, largely because of my rebellion. I have two daughters and, as a matter-of-fact, when they were adult, I said, "Did I deprive you of anything?" "Oh, Daddy, you didn't, you didn't, it was fine," and my son-in-law is a good Irishman. He's a Colligan and he came up Catholic, but, then, he converted to--oh, I forget, one of the Protestant denominations. So, they were married here and, you see, to me, this whole concept, religious concept, it's all an eclectic matter with me. At Poly Prep, they did have compulsory chapel, but, again, that was not a bad experience. First of all, I got hooked on the old Protestant hymns--maybe that's one of the things that drove me out of the flock [laughter]--but they also had little intermissions. I remember Hampton College, that's a black college, used to send their quartet up. There's always something going on, always something stimulating there. The Headmaster was an ass and a lot of the masters were pretty bad, but, on a whole, they were a pretty good bunch. It was just the time. I remember, I had a Latin master. I took four years of Latin and the last two years, last, well, up until Virgil, Hiram Austin Tuttle, I think he was Tufts Class of 1884, with the high, stiff collar and, by God, you learned your Latin or you really could have had a mistake and not made it to the john. That was tough. It was hard, but it was good, tough learning.

KP: Let me give Jill a chance to ask some questions.

EF: I want to say one more thing.

JC: Sure.

EF: ROTC, it was a precursor of what was to come, because in freshman ROTC, I think they handed out uniforms at the gym. They had an Army sergeant there and he was saying, "Here's your uniform. You'll get the real ones in a year or two. [laughter] You'll get the real ones in a year or two," and he was right, of course; yes, excuse me.

JC: What was the interaction like between the men at Rutgers College and the women of NJC?

EF: Purely social. At NJC, you have to remember the times, each house at NJC had a chaperone and they closed the doors, I think, at twelve o'clock on Saturday. I won't say it was puritanical, but there was a clear separation of the sexes. A lot of the boys used to go down to the whorehouses in Pennsylvania. I never did. I sinned a lot, but I had my standards.

KP: That was …

EF: There was a separation there, and there was very little hanky-panky. I don't think there was--if there was a case of a pregnancy with a NJC student, I never heard of it, or we never heard of it. It was dating.

KP: In other words, the NJC women were good girls. If you had to go for sex …

EF: Yes.

KP: You went to Pennsylvania.

EF: They did that. Well, I didn't do much dating there myself. I just never really met anyone I felt very happy with. That happens, but it's just fortuitous, because I just happened to know some other young ladies elsewhere. Again, they called it the Coop--you understand that. You remember that. They called it the Coop, "We're going over to the Coop tonight." They'd go, but it was very, very innocent.

[TAPE PAUSED]

EF: Of course, today, I've given up on America. [laughter] So, I mean, I'm doing my duty here and I'll do my duty to my family and Rutgers as long as I live, but you get in a traffic accident and, God, you see a young woman with the middle finger up. I am not ever going to get used to that. I'm a sexist, so, obviously, you can reach that conclusion. [laughter]

JC: I understand.

EF: But, I have two daughters whom I adore, always have, the best things that ever happened, one of the great things that happened to me. When they say something, an off-color word, I don't like to hear it.

JC: What was it like being in a fraternity? How important was it to you or to the other men?

EF: It was important to most of the men, except they had a non-fraternity organization, which I never joined. They called them the Scarlet Barbs, but, in my time, they called them the Scarlet Barbarians. Now, I think someone may have mentioned that. They used the term Scarlet Barb, but it was Barbarian. In other words, if you were not in a fraternity, you were a barbarian. I was in a fraternity, but I was happy out of it, as I told you. I almost brought some pictures with me. I had a terrible, terrible type of experience. There were five men who I was most friendly with at

the dorm. I shouldn't say that--there were some others, too, but the people you saw almost every day--and, one day, we were out romping, and, of course, everyone was well-dressed. You wore a sweater, but you didn't necessarily have to have a tie. My best friend was Johnny Groves there, and then, there were four, Earl Thompson and whatnot. Anyway, there were …

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

KP: Al Strickland's Tavern.

EF: Al Strickland's Tavern afterwards, and we'd have hard-boiled eggs and hamburgers or beer and what-have-you and we took pictures that day, Joe Karaszewski and Johnny and I and what-have-you, of the five romping around in those days. I have pictures--as a matter-of-fact, I sent them out to Peter Crane, who's another--and four of them were killed. This has embittered me, when I look back.

KP: All of your closest friends from college.

EF: In a way. Well, I had a roommate, Jack Van Kirk. He came through, but I would say over fifty percent, let me put it this way, were killed. One of them was very, very talented, Johnny Groves, and I reverence his memory. In those days, the Communists used to say that we would never bomb the Ploesti oil fields, because the capitalists wanted to save the oil fields. I got Christmas cards from Johnny and we corresponded, even this thing, and wouldn't you know, he was shot down over the Ploesti oil fields on a bomb raid and that's where he lost his life. [Editor's Note: Groves served as a tail gunner in the 727th Bomb Squadron, 451st Bomb Group, 15th Air Force and did serve on missions to bomb the Ploesti oil fields. However, his B-24 blew up over its target near Vienna, Austria, on October 13, 1944, after a direct hit from a flak barrage.] The Communists were telling me, at the time, and telling everyone at the time, "Oh, Ploesti, they'll never touch the oil, because of the capitalists." Oh, this was bad.

KP: This would be a good time, if you could, to talk about the classmates you lost in the war.

EF: Yes, yes.

KP: That is one thing we would like a record of.

EF: I thought that that would be the contribution I would be making, what little contribution it was, because I never felt we would be going into the past quite so much. When they're young, as the poets say, you never see them as ever being old. On our fiftieth reunion, I was on our reunion committee and Peter Crane, who knew the four--as a matter-of-fact, he roomed with three of them, there were four of them in one room--he wrote to me and he said he wasn't coming back to Rutgers, he said, because he couldn't stand it. I wrote him a couple of letters and, don't you know, he showed up, but all I have are memories. I mean, I remember, for example, Earl Thompson was a psych major. We talked, we went to classes together. Here's another story that isn't quite so nice. There's a fellow, and it's funny, I can't think of his name, I think I'm blocking it, but he was ROTC and he went on to ROTC and his name is on our plaque. You know our memorial plaque?

KP: Yes.

EF: Yes, and they said, "He'll never make it through the war," someone said, because he was a bastard and, what the hell, we weren't a military--we were supposedly a military, ROTC. He was an ROTC officer. No, actually, it didn't happen to me, because I quit after two years, but he went on there, and then, he had this bad reputation. He's really very rough and they said, "He'll never make it through the war," and then, the talk, the joke, was, "When the war breaks out, if the enemy doesn't get him, someone else will." He was--I'll tell you [what] his name was, except you'd better take it out of the tape.

[TAPE PAUSED]

EF: But, I kept up some relationships with some of the people. I really don't know what to add to that. There are other memories that come through. There was a kid I was not friendly with at all, but he was a very sweet, roly-poly kid, and he was a member of the Jewish fraternity, Morty somebody or other. I met him in front of Ford Hall, "Hello, Mort, how are you?" He said, "I'm packed," and I said, "Oh, really, where are you going?" He said, "I'm going in tomorrow, in the service." I said, "What are you doing to celebrate?" He said, "I'm not doing anything. You want to go out?" We went out. There was a kind of whiskey in those days, Three Feathers Whiskey. You pour that on your desk and it would eat the wood away, and we were drinking Three Feathers Whiskey and what-have-you and got high as a kite. I remember, I came back and Jack Van Kirk was my roommate at Ford and I could not negotiate those steps. As drunk as I was, I remember screaming, "You fucking bastard, Van Kirk, get up," and he came down and he threw me over his shoulder and carried me upstairs and put me in the shower. Morty So-and-So was killed in the war. Jack Van Kirk, he's a classmate I see at reunions and the last time I saw him, he had shriveled up. He was a 220-pound, huge Dutchman. He played soccer. I don't think he played--he didn't play football--and I was built like an ant and tall and skinny, what-have-you. Jack is, today, all bent over, can hardly move. I hope he comes down and you talk to him. He's a fine guy, but he said, "I think you'd have to carry me over your shoulder now." [laughter] That's a poignant memory, fifty years later or more. Others, I've kept in touch with, but not those who had been in the service with me and there were a couple from other classes.

KP: You alluded to the fact that you were well-off when you got to prep school. A number of people I have interviewed were very envious, for example, of fraternity people, because they were perceived to have a lot of money.

EF: I'm sure there were; there were some affluent houses.

KP: You were in the group that was well-off coming to college. How did you see the world, although you were not happy in the fraternity as such?

EF: I needed a lot of maturing in those days and, to a certain extent, I knew--now, they may tell you about this, but the greasy spoons used to have meal tickets. They sold a meal ticket for five dollars and those five dollars, those tickets, were good for twenty-one meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner. It was horrible, this sort of thing, and, somehow, they made it. I don't know,

because breakfast was fifteen cents and lunch was twenty-five cents. Somehow, they scrimped through. A lot of the boys were here through the National Youth Administration, from Washington. A lot of them were helped that way. I remember, I'd come home and I'd go to the Broadway Restaurant and, on Sunday nights, if I were home on leave or liberty, during that time, yes, sure, I'd have a cocktail and a steak and a glass of beer and desert and leave ninety-five cents there, or a dollar with the tip. I saw this other thing around me, but I never said to myself, I didn't flay myself, I didn't say, "Well, that's just their tough luck." I mean, I was not without feelings about it, but there was nothing I could really do about it and I didn't see any sense [in] scourging myself, so-to-speak, in retrospect. It just happened. God knows there was a kid in the [class], God, he was funny. He was dressed immaculately, Johnny (Grogan?). He never graduated. He went into the war and was killed--there's another thing about Rutgers that perplexed me, that they never followed up on some of the men who were here, but did not graduate. One of my friends as a freshman was Jimmy Scull, S-C-U-L-L. We were quite friendly and he dropped out and no one ever knew what happened to him, but we had dropouts who were killed. There doesn't seem to be much follow-up there, except I don't know how you'd go about it without bringing in the FBI.

KP: Did you ever have a car when you were at Rutgers?

EF: No, I did not, because that was rare and, while my father was very indulgent, he was also a very hard man and he was a disciplinarian. I always described growing up as being grown up in a Prussian military barracks, but he did not believe in this thing--he didn't believe in spoiling the kid any more than he already was spoiled. No, he turned that thing down.

KP: You would have liked to have had a car.

EF: Well, anyone would have, but it's funny, I didn't thirst for it, because you could walk anyplace. I mean, the football field was five minutes; there was really no necessity for a car. So, I never felt the loss of it. Yes, if I were going home for a weekend or on a holiday, I suppose so, or, if I happened to have had a date, I think it would've been nice, but, if I went home and I had a date, my father gave me his Cadillac. So, I never felt that need.

KP: Politically, how did your parents feel about Roosevelt and the New Deal?

EF: They were passionately in favor. My father was a great supporter of Al Smith. As a little boy, I think I had a dozen Al Smith buttons on my hat and what-have-you. I was a dedicated liberal, not to get into any politics, but I think it was George Bernard Shaw who said, "If you're not a liberal when you're young, you have no heart and, if you're not a conservative [when] you're older, you have no head." [laughter] So, I was very, very liberal, but that was the atmosphere, too. There were only a handful of Republicans here and some of them, I'll tell you, I remember Dave Hendrian. He was a brilliant man. He'd had some sort of a chronic infection. I don't think he lived very long, but he used to take me to discussion groups and he was poor as a church mouse, but he was a conservative to his fingertips. It wasn't--it's the old story, we weren't "limousine liberals," but the level had nothing to do with the economic status at the time. Johnny George was a Southerner and a liberal and there's no liberal like a Southern liberal. As a matter-of-fact, he ran for Congress after the war and I supported him there. I remember some of the

boys, he made no bones about his liberalism and a lot of the boys would fire back and those boys who were on the food stamps at the time would fire back and challenge him.

KP: I heard he loved to just get things going. He wanted a reaction.

EF: Oh, my God, he's looking down from heaven and blessing you for you knowing anything about him.

KP: He has been mentioned a lot.

EF: Oh, that's wonderful.

KP: He was apparently a very dynamic professor.

EF: Dynamic, oh, I can see him now, I can hear him now, with his cracker way of speaking. He was certainly one of the most colorful on the faculty. William Hayes Lamont was equally so. He was a complete sexist. There's a young girl--he had a fine reputation. The *Reader's Digest* used to publish Willie Lamont's twenty-five most famous American novels. He was very cruel once. I felt so badly. A young girl came over and she walked into the class and sat down. He said, "Young lady, what are you doing here?" and she said, "Well, Professor, I wanted to take your course," and I remember him saying, "Do you think you're going to be happy here?" He said, "I don't think you're going to be happy here," only because she was a girl, a female. She got a little teary and she got up and she left. He paid no attention to that whatsoever. He just went on with his lecture, but, again, when he lectured and he spoke about things, you sat on the edge of your chair. The University treated him very shabbily. In those days, they treated all faculty very shabbily. Today, the faculty, in my mind, of course, they've come to accept it, but they live like the sun kings. I don't know what the pension system is at Rutgers. I'm sure it's not what it is at other places, but I think he went out with a pension, like, eleven hundred dollars, and then, he had to go down to work someplace else.

KP: The pension system is much better.

EF: Oh, I would think so.

KP: Nationally, they are just better than they used to be. Your younger brother went to Yale and your older brother went to Rutgers. You very desperately wanted to go to Princeton at one point. How much do you think the Jewish quotas hindered you from getting into Princeton?

EF: Oh, I think that's one of the reasons I didn't get in.

KP: It sounds like you went to the right prep school.

EF: Because, academically, my grades were just fine. Again, it was fortuitous. I mean, life is full of luck. My older brother, Arthur, he couldn't quite make it in the Coast Guard as an officer and he went in the Army. He washed out. I lost track of it, I think he had five wives. He's a security guard in Las Vegas now. He just harum-scarum and went to pieces, down through the

years, and he's just a shadow, absolutely destroyed a capable mind. The best thing that ever happened to me was having met my wife. This, too, was--I don't think these things are ordained in heaven, but you meet people and things happen to you and they're completely beyond one's control and they turn out for the best or the worst. This is not a philosophy course--you'd call that a "crap shoot course."

KP: You said you look back now and are glad that you did not go to Princeton. Why?

EF: Because I knew what Princeton was and I knew the Princeton type and they were the preppy type. My experience at Rutgers was so enriching, I could never have had such an experience there. I say to you, dry-eyed, I love Rutgers and always have. It's sentimental--my daughter went here, my son-in-law went here. I've got three little Irishmen, grandsons--if they don't kill each other, we think they're going to go to Rutgers--but that came later. My daughter having come here, and, again, it's apropos of nothing, my daughter was at the University of North Carolina. She was mugged and almost killed and there was a trial and they saw the thing through, but she was afraid. She was fearful of any retaliation. "I'd like to go to Rutgers, Daddy." I mean, my heart …

KP: You were delighted.

EF: Sure, sure, [laughter] because my experience had been so lovely. So, she came here, but I always recognized the friends. I don't think I have three friends left from the old days, because some of them have died, but, in my experience, before my kids went here, I mean, I still felt the same way. There've been a lot of changes I have not cottoned to, but you hear a lot of the old grads will say that. Oh, I'll tell you, it has to do with the quota system again, they must have told you about Paul Robeson.

KP: Yes. [Editor's Note: Paul Robeson (1898-1976) was an African-American singer, actor and Civil Rights activist. He was valedictorian of his class at Rutgers University in 1919. Due to his support for Stalin, the USSR and the Communist Party during the McCarthy era, Robeson was blacklisted and had his passport revoked from 1950 to 1958, which prevented him from traveling to perform during those years.]

EF: Paul Robeson, while he hated America, he loved Rutgers. When he gave a concert, he would give the concert, and then, he'd sit on the proscenium with his legs dangling down. First of all, if he did twelve numbers, he did twelve encores, and then, he would sit and I remember coming up to him, with a whole group of people. He'd just, as you young people say, rap--you still say rap?--and he would rap with the student body.

KP: He was really loved by the Rutgers student body.

EF: He was, he was, even in the bad, old days.

KP: I am struck that even people who are conservative really gush about Paul Robeson.

EF: I'll tell you, today, I'm a Goldwater Republican, but I, again, have that great memory. I say I think the college went overboard, but I'm not politicizing. We're talking about World War II, I know. We had, I think, four black kids in my entire class. One of them was Harry Hazelwood. He'll never come down and talk to you. The poor man is--he became a judge. Boy, if you could get in touch with him and get him out of himself, but he has a lot of ailments. I remember, at a couple of meetings, I got in touch with him, I said, "Harry, I'll come to Newark and pick you up and put you in my car and you come on down, because everyone misses you." There was no racism. I kid you not. I think this came a lot later and I think a lot of this racism is the fault of the University, and even though we all felt that integration was a happy thing, but this is not in our province, is it? I think there were three or four kids in our class who were black, or the ones that I knew. Now, there may have been others off campus. Have you been in touch with Johnny Rimo?

KP: No.

EF: Get a hold of him, get a hold of him. Johnny was--and there was another fellow, he's now living in France, Jerry Levin--Johnny Rimo was the fastest human being that God created since Jesse Owens or what-have-you. He was a poor boy. He commuted to campus. He was born for the Olympics. Of course, the war ended that. They tried to get him on the football team and he said, "I can't, because, if I go to practice, I can't get home. The buses stop running," and the coach called him a coward. He'll tell you this. Jerry Levin, he was an Olympic swimmer. There was a lot of my class that had beautiful lives laid out in front of them and the war ended all that. I didn't deserve to graduate. I took a course in Psychology, Griffith Williams. I drank my way through that last year and I started to bone up for the final exam. I think I'd gone to class five times. It was the war. I blame it on the war--actually, it was my lack of character that led to this. I know I flunked that final exam. He called me in and chewed me out something fierce and I said, "Can I do a remake or something of that sort?" and, oh, did he lay it into me. He said, "You have not been in class," he said, "you have not studied and you are asking for this sort of thing?" Well, I left and I said, "My father will kill me. My father will absolutely kill me, because, now, I'm not going to graduate," because I was going into the service, I think, fifteen minutes later, and don't you know that good, old bastard gave me a "C-" or something. I guess he knew I was going into the service and that was his …

KP: Under normal circumstances, you would have failed.

EF: And the University acted *in loco parentis*, too, when you talk about what went on at the dorms and what-have-you. Oh, my brother ran up a bill of close to two thousand dollars at (Doc Roby's?) Pharmacy. How could a college boy run up--that's like a fourteen-thousand-dollar bill today.

KP: How did he do it?

EF: All his cigarettes, everything, he charged everything, had his meals there. This was over two or three years. Dean Fraser Metzger--he should've been thrown the hell out of school--*in loco parentis*, the Dean telephoned my father, telephoned him. He said, "I'm not going to let your son graduate. Are you aware of that?" My father was completely unaware of it, but the

University, again--I'm overusing the term--that's the way they acted. Of course, my father came running down, beat the hell out of my brother, paid the bill, my brother got his diploma. He bought cameras, he bought anything that was there.

KP: Your older brother was pretty spoiled, too.

EF: Much differently, because my saving grace was that I was introspective. I always knew what I was doing to myself--he never knew what he was doing to himself--and this is why it all went downhill after, down through the years.

KP: One of the people in your prep school was a German diplomat's son. At Rutgers, we have read in the *Targum*, for example, that President Clothier gave a long address about the war, saying that America should stay out, in September of 1939.

EF: I don't remember that.

KP: What were the sentiments of your classmates about the war, before Pearl Harbor?

EF: I don't have much recollection about that. It would come up in bull sessions, about what was going on, but people lived within themselves. They had to get an education. Oh, another thing, when my brother--I know we're going back, but you said I could go back to 1914--when the Class of 1939 graduated, it was the *New Brunswick Home News* in those days, was the newspaper, they said, "What did they think they'd be earning in two or three years?" The class answered, they said they'd be earning five thousand dollars in two or three years. They had an editorial on the arrogance of these young people, who felt that they could earn that much money that quickly. So, that, too, was part of the time. I don't think I answered your question.

KP: That is okay. After Pearl Harbor, did you think of going into the service right away?

EF: I know I got caught up in it, because I was home when I heard of Pearl Harbor. I was visiting my old grandmother and I walked out of her building and I'd heard about Pearl Harbor. I got back to college that night and it was lunacy. There was a Japanese student, Tommy (Yuki Hashizuma?)--Rutgers always had some sort of affinity, a connection, with Japan--and they had to bring him his meals. There was one football player, I forget his name, red-headed kid. He wanted to kill this poor student. He's blaming him for Pearl Harbor. A whole gang of them went down to enlist the next day. I did not go, because I knew that there was no sense--they weren't going to take them. Of course, they sent them all back and they said, "We'll let you know," at the [station]. There was a recruiting station, I don't know where it was, I don't remember where it was, but they said, "We'll let you know. Just go home. Don't bother us," but I remember, in [regard to] Pearl Harbor, right off Old Queens, there's a railroad bridge and I remember a soldier patrolling that with a fixed bayonet, walking back and forth there. There was an enormous amount of tremendous excitement, because everything changed immediately. Everything had changed immediately in the country. There was that America First movement, which you know of, and there's a great deal of isolationism, but, when Pearl Harbor happened, when that occurred, I remember going down--there was a drug store, one of the chain drug stores, at the railroad station--I remember everyone going down there the next day, it was the Monday or Tuesday,

standing on the stairs. They had a loudspeaker, listening to Roosevelt declare war, asking for a declaration of war. So, there was an immediate change. I would say, from my recollection or evaluation, it was day turned into night.

KP: We also read in the *Targum* that there were a lot of blackouts on campus and an air raid post set up. Do you remember that?

EF: I have no memory of that at all. There may have been an air raid post set up, but I have no memory. You have to understand that I'm going back fifty years.

KP: We fully understand.

EF: As a matter-of-fact, a lot of what you hear, I'm sure, has never happened [laughter] and that's something you're going to have to cull out. I find myself, from time to time, thinking that this happened. I say, "No, no, come on." I find that it never really did happen or the dates are wrong.

KP: When you get the transcript back, you can correct any mistakes.

JC: To jump back to your younger brother who attended Yale …

EF: Yes.

JC: Did you feel there was a strain between the family or did you see differences in his personality? Did that affect him at all?

EF: No, he had had what they called encephalitis lethargic as a child. So, he was immediately 4-F and he was handicapped to a certain extent in his writing and his speech. He was a scholar and, in time, he turned out to be something of a distinguished scholar, a classical scholar. He went to Yale and went to Yale Graduate School. Between Poly, the prep school, Yale and Yale Grad School, he was able to speak Latin. At one particular point, he went to Fordham, where there were two elderly priests there and they held a conversation in Latin, which was difficult, because he knew the classical Latin and the priest used the ecclesiastical Latin, but, somehow, they worked it out. When he retired from prep school, they gave him a testimonial dinner at the Yale Club in New York and there were 240 people there and the chairmen of the board of most of the banks in New York City were there, because theirs sons had gone to Poly Prep. So, no, no, he'd had this, they called it then sleeping sickness, at that time, so, he was slow in his reactions. So, he went to Yale, he didn't really count, because he couldn't play games when we were a kid anyway, and he was awkward, and so on. One of the big thrills when I was a teenager was to come to a football game and to see my cousin smash into that line. So, I always had an orientation toward Rutgers.

KP: You had been to Rutgers quite a bit growing up.

EF: Yes, yes, because when my brother was here, and he came in 1935, I'd come down and visit. We'd come down to football game and functions and things of that sort. So, that worked out for the best.

JC: When you were drafted, did you feel it was an honor or an obligation?

EF: I felt a strong sense of duty and, as a matter-of-fact, I went the other way, because my younger brother was automatically 4-F. My older brother came within ten minutes of becoming a Coast Guard officer. Then, he went into the Army and he got into some sort of difficulties there and I think they were emotional and he was Section--they called it a Section 8--which was an emotional [based discharge]. So, there were three boys and it became my duty to represent the family. I was in a Navy hospital for possibly two months and, when I went to the [officer], after that was all over, I think I weighed 118 pounds--I looked like a Dachau type. There was a marvelous Navy captain, he was the head of the whole base, Captain (McNamara?). Oh, he was a wonderful man and he went in and he said, "Son, I'm going to send you home." I said "What?" [laughter] I pleaded with him. I said, "Captain (McNamara?), please give me a thirty-day leave. Let me go home. I'm coming back, you give me a physical exam." This was literally so; I was terrified …

KP: That you would not serve.

EF: That I would not serve. I was terrified of serving, I was terrified of the gunfire, if it came to that, but I knew I would do what I had to do. He said, in a benign way, "Thirty days, come on back here." He was a Southerner, a Marylander, of the aristocracy--again, I can see him now, what a fine man he was. I came back. I went home and I told my father about this thing and I told him--one of the few times I could ever get along with my father, when I was in the Navy or when I was at Rutgers. Other than that, it was warfare continuous. It was like the "Three-Hundred Years War." I told him about that and he said, "What do you want to do?" Then, I started ingesting bacon and eggs and drinking heavy cream and going out and he took me out. We'd go to the steakhouses in New York and what-have-you and I think it took me about a week or ten days to get some weight back. I finished out the thirty days, went back and saw Captain (McNamara?) and said, finally, "I'm going to send you back to duty." "Thank you, Captain," and there it was, but it became so important. When you saw something like Vietnam, there was no way of relating the atmosphere of World War II to Vietnam, or World War I, for that matter, because, I mean, I'd heard stories of something else again, about World War I. If it hadn't been for connections--my mother had a corrupt cousin who was a Superior Court judge in New York and got my father off, because my father had children, but they didn't care about those things.

KP: Your father was supposed to have served.

EF: My father was supposed to have served.

KP: Strings were pulled.

EF: Well, strings were pulled and I'm glad that they were pulled, in a way, because my mother'd already had her baby. That child was conceived before war broke out, but there was a tough

draft board, but my mother knew Uncle Otto. Uncle Otto was one of those old Tammany types who became a judge. That was his payoff in those days. I mean, the idea, to play around with the Selective Service System, but Uncle Otto did, my father didn't serve, but this, again, is a bad digression. I warned you. You get garrulous at a certain age, but I was garrulous to start with. [laughter]

KP: Why the Navy? You had been in the ROTC.

EF: No, no; yes, I went in there and I was drafted.

KP: You were drafted.

EF: I was drafted and they drafted me into the Navy. When they said, "You're in the Navy," in those days, they put you in Marines, Navy, Army, I knew enough about ROTC where when they said, "You're going Navy," I breathed a sigh of relief, because, in the Navy, they moved you as an individual, by name. In the Army, they moved you by unit. I remember, several times, I had special orders with my name on it, from the BUPERS, the Bureau of Personnel. As the war went on, they moved me further and further inland. Because I had ROTC, I became a drill instructor in the Navy. So, there, that was the only thing I related to my ROTC. I spent exactly three days with the Marines. They were a bunch of sadists in those days--I don't know what they are today--and that was to flesh out my own training. Then, I worked with two platoons at a time as a drillmaster or a drill pusher or boot pusher, as they used to say. Then, when that ended, I moved further inland. War went on, they sent me further and further inland. I wound up in Charleston, West Virginia, came back to Washington, but I never really served my country. I really feel that. I did--have you read anything by Ed Oleskie?

KP: No.

EF: God, I was kind of hoping, because he had cancer.

KP: No, you are the first person to mention his name.

EF: He's a professor at Rutgers. I'm surprised, because he's one of your prime candidates. I wish you'd call him. I've been afraid to call him, because he, Ed, amazing thing, he was an aggie at Rutgers. He became a Marine officer, fought through the war. Then, he became the head of, the ramrod of, a huge Texas ranch. He did a marvelous job with cattle and they brought him back here as a professor and he's since retired. My wife had been through cancer and he was suffering from cancer of whatever it was. We're talking together and I wanted--but you can't call people up and say, "Are you still living?" but I'm leading to something, because I had a lovely talk with him. I said, "Ed, I always felt badly that I hadn't been in action." I had this cousin who'd been in action in World War I. He said, "Why do you feel that?" He said, "There's nothing--it's a terrible thing." He said, "You went where they sent you, didn't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Then, what are you talking about?" Well, he'd been through the whole thing and I felt that I should have gone through something a little bit more than [I did], because I wound up partying. After the war, they sent me to the National Bureau of Standards in

Washington. I wasn't even in the barracks. Washington was so congested in those days, they gave me a living allowance, then, "Go out and find yourself a room somewhere."

KP: What did you do at the National Bureau of Standards?

EF: I had worked on the first guided missile program. The war was then over. So, when I went to West Virginia, I went in a draft and I knew something was up, because we went on a draft and there were about sixty men--every one of us were college graduates. Anyway, we went there, turned out to be the first guided missile program and it laid a huge egg, because we had a glider while the Germans were destroying London. We were still playing around with gliders. So, when the war was over, they had to take all this materiel and do something with it. So, I did something with the materiel. I don't know what I did, but I shipped it someplace. I shipped it back to the manufacturer. I was supposed to take a Japanese course. I was supposed to go to the University of Colorado, learn Japanese, and then, go to Japan in intelligence, because, at that particular time, it was 1944, they thought the war's going to go on for five or six years--atomic bomb fell and that was the end of my having to go to Colorado. [Editor's Note: Hiroshima was the target of the first atomic raid on August 6, 1945. Nagasaki was attacked on August 9, 1945. V-J Day was declared on August 14, 1945, in the United States and August 15, 1945, in the Pacific.]

KP: Just to put this in some order, you were drafted in June 1943.

EF: They let me finish, they let me finish. I had a very benevolent draft board and I had a late number. The late number came up, I think, early in that winter, February or March. The draft board said, "You mean you're going to graduate in three months, two-and-a-half months? Oh, you finish it." Of course, I graduated and I put my diploma down and got on a train. [laughter]

KP: You went to Virginia for boot camp.

EF: Camp Peary, Virginia, a hell, by the way, but a lot of men had this happen, had the same [experience], because there, in the Summer of 1943, that's Tidewater Virginia.

KP: Very hot and humid, I would imagine.

EF: Let me say, we'd go out there on Sunday parade and I was as skinny as a rail in those days and tall and skinny. I was able to tolerate it, but I'd stand out there and you could see a parade on Sunday afternoon, out of the corner of your eye, you'd see this one drop and that one drop. Then, we'd have marches in full gear and who fell down but the big farm boys, two hundred-pounders, falling down. They had a weapons carrier that used to pick up the bodies as you took a march. I never fell, I never fell. I didn't thrive, I detested it. It's the story of what the service is like. When we got there, about four o'clock in the morning, after this smelly train and the heat, they marched us to a barracks to be fed and came in there and I said something to myself, "Now, I know I am going to die, certainly, because no one can eat this swill." Then, I think we're coming out of boot camp, we're able to move around a little bit and you're talking about chow hall. I was with some other Navy people and they said, "I know a great chow hall up there." It was the same place. All of a sudden, the food became marvelous. Another thing I think they will tell you, any

serviceman will, you make friends very, very quickly in the service, very quickly. I have some nice memories of that, too.

KP: Before going to boot camp, you had led what you described as a charmed life. Money was never really a worry. You went to a nice college. If you needed a nice meal, that was no problem. You could live where you wanted--you did not like the fraternity scene, so, you lived in a nice dorm, Ford Hall. Boot camp is very different from all that.

EF: Yes, indeed.

KP: It sounds like …

EF: As I said, the earliest, when we first started your interview with me, I said this was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Rutgers was marvelous.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Edgar J. Feldman on April 22, 1997, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and …

JC: … Jill Casey.

KP: We were cut off. The Navy really matured you, you mentioned.

EF: Yes, well, what I said, it was half a joke, I said it was *Captains Courageous*, just like that snotty kid who gets knocked off the boat and is rescued by a different environment. Going from the type of life I'd led into boot camp and under those awful circumstances, the summer and the heat in Tidewater Virginia, it was a quick read or a quick learn, as they say, but I got on. I did well. It's a digression, but the greatest compliment I think I've ever had in my life came after the war. The war was over and I was getting ready to get separated and a chief gunner's mate from the Navy, whom I knew and worked under, came up to me. He had forty-five hash marks--I think he must have served in the Battle of Lake Erie. Let me tell you, in the Navy, a chief boatswain's mate or a chief gunner's mate had more prestige than an admiral. He said to me, he wanted to speak with me, "What did you want, Chief?" He said, "I think you ought to stay." He said, "The Navy is going to want people like you." I said "Gee, that's fine, but I wasn't cut out for it," and I demurred, and then, he said, "It's all right," he said, "I understand, you'll make out," meaning, in the future, my life was going to be okay. That was, let me tell you, that was really something to hear, and then, here it is, fifty, sixty years later, I …

KP: You still remember.

EF: I remember that. Oh, with a compliment like that, one doesn't readily forget. Had he said something else, I might have blocked it from my memory. [laughter] It was a fun thing. So, obviously, I had done pretty well. I had adapted. Oh, I made a ton of friends in the Navy. Some of them I stayed with and met with after the war, most of them have dropped away now, but I really made some very good friends in the Navy. I had really some great experiences.

KP: What was the hardest thing to adapt to initially? Was it the food, the very structured life?

EF: It was a feeling that I was going from a fairly comfortable life into what was a nightmare, the fatigue on that troop train, getting stripped naked, a strip search, in a manner, so-to-speak, the indignity, having one's hair cut off, a bunch of brutal Marines as your drillmasters, and then, later, I became a drillmaster. It was an environmental thing. The food was horrible. You had to shave in a split second, shape up, start calisthenics five-thirty in the morning, six o'clock in the morning, in the bloody heat. I remember, there was a man who had been a truck driver in New Jersey. I had a lower bunk, he had an upper bunk in boot camp. This man was as hard as nails and he used to cry himself to sleep every night, for the first couple of weeks, and the homesickness and the moaning and the groaning--somehow, I didn't feel that. I hated it and I detested it and I think I was rooting for the Japanese after a couple of weeks of that, [laughter] but, again, it's the old idea, it's the old military idea, that you start by breaking people down, and then, you build them up. It's a morale sort of thing and I think there's a lot of truth to it. Maybe it's hard--it worked on me. For me, it worked, going from wanting to die to being a little bit proud, "Well, I went through this thing and I made it," and it colored my feeling. I think that, I said I was so pessimistic about the country and not having a draft and a professional army, professional services, is something that I decry today, because I think a country ought to have a citizen army, citizen armed services, and we were a citizen army.

KP: You think a draft is not a bad idea, to make people serve.

EF: I don't think it's a bad idea. It's all a bad idea--any kind of thinking of any kind of bloodshed, warfare, is all a bad idea--but, of the two choices, to have a professional corps--now, I think I'm speaking from history--as compared to a citizens' military corps, if you must have it, it's better to have a citizens' one. I tell you, my whole feeling is--I'm old and bigoted--you take an eighteen-old-kid, that kid is a menace to himself and society. You put him in the service for two years, I think he shapes up a lot better, because he stayed there, or she shapes up a lot better, too, but that's quite another thing.

KP: How long were you in boot camp and when did you get your first assignment?

EF: I think about six weeks. Boot camp ran about six weeks, and then, they gave you a few days' leave and, again, I don't recall whether it was a week or seventy-two hours. I went home, and then, when I came back, they told me that I was tapped to be a drill instructor. That was an ego trip, because, here I was, a third class--I think by that time, I might have been a first class seaman, I'm not sure--but I was given two platoons to train, mostly close-order drill, some classroom work and a lot of marching. The whole idea was to try to form a unit. That was the purpose for all of this close-order drill, which they did in the Civil War and going back to Julius Caesar's time. There was an officer--there were officers in charge of each platoon--but, when the platoons were released to me for training, the officers were not permitted to say anything. If I said to some little stinky ensign, "You go back and get me some coffee," [laughter]--of course, that's an exaggeration--they almost had to do that, because you were boss, you were a god. Again, I played some awful tricks on them. We were talking earlier--and this is, I don't know if you want to, apropos of nothing, but I think you might find this interesting--I said I grew up, I

am Jewish. You can't deny your being Jewish any more than one can deny that they're black--this is regardless of what one's theological training may be. I was running some platoons through on this particular day and some boot came up to me and he whispered to me, "Are you a landsman?" I say I think landsman is German or Yiddish, that they said, "Are you Jewish?" That's what he was asking. I said, "Well, why do you ask?" He said, "Well," he said, "I am." He said, "You're going to be a pretty good guy, aren't you?" I remember saying to him, "If you ever go to hell, you're going to understand what it was, because, for the rest of your boot training here, I am going to make life a pure hell for you." [laughter] I wasn't bothered--he turned nineteen different colors. I rode his ass and, I tell you, I don't think he ever asked for preferential treatment after that. [laughter] That's one of the pleasant or funny stories of my distinguished military [service].

KP: He figured, "I found a compatriot who is Jewish and he will be a little easier on me."

EF: That's what it was. I think he had the wrong guy. [laughter]

KP: How long did you stay as a drill instructor in Virginia, roughly?

EF: It's hard to remember. It could have been three months, it could have been six months.

KP: You got very sick. When did that occur?

EF: Yes, that was at the end of the training. This is when they had put together--I think they were getting ready to close that base. I don't know what they had, I'm not sure, in mind. That winter, I got pneumonia.

KP: You had been training people for a while.

EF: From three to six months, I would say.

KP: Then, you got very sick.

EF: I became very, very ill and wound up in the base hospital and spent most of the winter there. I didn't know if they had antibiotics at that time, I don't remember. I don't remember how I was treated, but I remember being almost in constant, constant fever and lost a great deal of weight, became very, very weak. That leads to that story of the episode with Captain (McNamara?).

KP: You were determined to serve. You were determined to remain.

EF: Yes, I could not--I felt, first of all, I was very patriotic, and I am to this day, but, within the context of having two brothers who had not served and there were three sons in that family, I think to what lengths I would have gone to stay. I think I'd have tried to bribe the Captain if it came to that.

KP: Many Americans had the perception that Jews did not serve. There was a rumor that Jews always got exempted and pulled strings.

EF: Yes.

KP: Was that also in the back of your mind?

EF: That may have been part of it, but, again, I represented that for just pure, nasty, anti-Semitism, although, to a certain amount, there is a grain of truth in it. I had a cousin, by the way, who [was] a few years older than I who was a captain in the Tank Corps. He was on D-Day and he had half his face blown away. That was his contribution. He had a daughter. She was three years old before he saw her again. He was in a tank and he'd just turned his head away to give a command and a German shell came right through the slit of the tank, killed everybody in the tank, blew--had he not moved his head away to give an order, his head would have been blown off, but only his eye was blown out and his cheek and part of his head. He had forty-five operations after that. It's an amazing thing, this is--I haven't really come to grips with this, because what was said, to a certain extent, was true, and true to this day, but it depended upon the geographic area of the country. I have a feeling that it was true a lot among a lot of Eastern and New York Jews, because I heard too many talking about wanting good service or getting good service, but, of course, this was true, could have been true, with non-Jews as well. I do know that that's a canard when it came to those Jewish families that lived in the South, the Midwest, New England, for the most part, and the far West. Of course, that goes back. I think when West Point was founded, I think they graduated twelve people and two of them were Jews and they fought like hell in the Confederacy. You see that most of the military people who are Jewish do come from areas other than the Greater New York area. So, there may have been some truth to that. I've always tried to be a realist. Part of it was anti-Semitic, but part of it may have been true. It may have been true. I just do not know, but it did not influence me, not one bit, because I knew I was Jewish in the sense that the world says you're Jewish. They now found out, in Nazi Germany, that, like, ninety generals and colonels had Jewish backgrounds. I think, if everybody goes back, they may find something there, but I somehow didn't feel--that did not motivate me, did not motivate me. It was, I'll even tell you, it sounds like what we used to call corny, but it was love of country and my father did instill a sense of duty.

KP: He had a lot of civic consciousness himself.

EF: He had an enormous amount of it. I tell you, I'm a little bit of hidebound. I said my brother had five divorces. I read about divorces at fifty percent and I make sardonic jokes about it; I'm not even sure I believe in divorce. I think if you make a vow, if you--my wife is undergoing cancer treatment and, of course, we still joke and what-have-you. Some very dear friends, one of their daughters is getting a divorce, after four children, and I said the old joke, I said, "Well, they have to change the wedding service, 'Do you forsake all others and swear to it,' say, 'I just might do that.'" I said, "Instead of saying, 'I do,' you might say, 'Well, possibly,'" and I think that's another thing that's destructive of the country and this is not apropos of what we're talking about, but I'm pretty hidebound. I did have that sense of duty, and the curious thing, my son-in-law, who was Rutgers Class of 1983, they all graduated forty years after me, with my daughter, they went a courtin' for many years. He came from a divorced family and they went together for so long and I was starting to get a little bit angry about this thing--my daughter giving up the best years of her life and all that crap. I learned later that he had said to her, "Nina, I want to be as

sure as we can," he said, "I don't believe in divorce," having come from a divorced family, and it's all part of the picture of how sacred is one's word. I'm pretty hidebound when it comes to that. So, in a way, I'm as hidebound then as I was now. When the war came, I had to serve. The fact that they let me graduate, fine, I was happy. I felt a little queasy about that, but it was only three months, and so, I took it, but I do believe a vow is a vow, and so, that colors it. In that sense, I haven't changed.

KP: After you were given a clean bill of health, where did you go?

EF: Then, they sent me to do some other distinguished service--they sent me to what they called the motor pool and I became a truck driver. I'm a courier of sorts, delivering mail and messages to different sections of camp. That was a very unhappy time in service, because I was really surrounded with a pretty bad element--not a bad element, I don't mean that in a snobby sense--but these were a lot of ignorant, blue-collar, redneck types. I did that, I think, for just two or three weeks, but, then, the Lord had something in mind for me. One of my friends came up, he said, "They're looking for you at headquarters." I said, "Oh, I'm in trouble again," and I ran to the headquarters company and I said, "What is it?" He said, "Get your things together--you're moving out." Well, fine, I got my sea bag and went down there. "Well, where are you going?" That's where I found myself on the train moving west and we started to talk and chat and found out that we were all college graduates. So, we figured it was something good happening to us and we went out to Charleston, West Virginia, and took to the Marine barracks there and took that over and went to work on this guided missile system.

KP: This was in 1945.

EF: My sense of timing is so bad.

KP: It was before the war ended.

EF: Oh, yes, it was certainly before the war ended. I think I was there and I remember the war had ended in Germany.

KP: However, not in …

EF: It had not ended in Japan.

KP: You did not really have a science background.

EF: No, I was liberal arts. As a matter-of-fact, I was a journalism major at Rutgers. I had hoped to be a writer. Then, of course, I learned very soon, very, very quickly, that I didn't have the talent for that.

KP: Why do you think you were put into this unit of college graduates?

EF: I think they were looking for college graduates, I think anyone, no, because we did not, I did not, do scientific work when I got there. It was still a military base in that sense, because we did

our guard duty and we did eight hours on and twelve hours off. We did strike duty. There was a strike there and we were supposed to threaten strikers with shooting them if they walked, if they came past a certain area, but it was a matter of assembly. The officers were engineers and some of them were just fine. I made a very dear friend of one of the officers there. I saw him after the war, too, Joe B. (Jenkins?). He was a Southerner, but there were a lot of rednecks in that particular unit, but the rednecks didn't do the work that we were doing. It's largely assembly of different components. It was a type of an assembly line that we worked on and I was supposed to watch, do inventory and things of that sort, and say, "You're running short of gyrocompasses," and get something over to General Electric, or whatever it was, to get these other parts. We thought it was really an extraordinary thing we were working on, but we were fifteen years behind the Germans.

KP: We did not know it at the time.

EF: We did not know it at the time. We thought we were really, really on top and it was a top secret, because I was investigated by Naval Intelligence. I got messages, later on, that they had been all over my school and friends and neighborhood, to make sure I was not a member of the Communist Party, and so on. There was one man who took a photograph and sent it home and Naval Intelligence got on top of him. I think they sent him to the Aleutians, if they didn't put him in prison.

KP: That must have been quite a warning to you and the other people at the base.

EF: Well, you have to have enough common sense to--but it was interesting, because we all have interests. Some of these small, interesting things happen. I had the watch one night and a dear friend of mine took a jeep and he piled it into a snow bank. This man became an Episcopal priest after the war was over. He did, Bob (Holland?). I saw him after the war. He called and there I was, I had the watch, and he was piled up. I said, "Oh, my God." "I can't get out of here." Well, I left my post and I took a weapons carrier and a winch and pulled him out and got back and I never got court-martialed. There was also some--a little racial, there was one racial story there. I never, all these years, I haven't known what to make of it. I had the watch one night and there was a fight went on in the barracks. There was a big bear of a man, I think he had hair on his soles of his feet, (Kanagey?). I remember, there was someone else and I went over there and I said, "What the hell is going on here, (Kanagey?)?" He said, "He called my wife a nigger," and he said, the other one, this was a redneck section, he said, "Well, she is." He said, "She is, but you can't call her that," turned out that his wife was black. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine such an episode happening today? "He called my wife a nigger. Well, she is a nigger, but he can't call her that." Odd story, isn't it?

KP: Had you ever been to the South before World War II, before you entered the service?

EF: Not really. No, yes, I've been to the South, sure, the Deep South--Miami, on a vacation, in an exclusive hotel. [laughter]

KP: You really had not met many Southerners.

EF: No; yes, but this fellow, (Kanagey?), was from Pennsylvania. He was not a Southerner, but, oh, I saw some nasty things. I was in a car. This was when I was still in Virginia, when I was still a drill instructor, and we had our whites on. There were five of us in a car and to drive the car--there was an old black lady, grand-mommy type and he swerved the car over as if he was going to kill her. What was the remark? I mean, I just froze in the back--he said, "We almost got that old nigger, didn't you?" He said, "Well, let me go around." He says, "Maybe I'll back up and try it again." This I had never heard, but I pretty much kept my mouth shut. You had to--you're a damn Yankee. There were still a couple of them around. Some of them were so dirty. When I was in boot camp, they took--no, this was not a Southerner, this was someone from Appalachia. He would not take a bath and the shore patrol, the Navy police, they had to strip him down, like what's the name, the play, the musical play? *My Fair Lady*, what they did to her. [laughter]

KP: Yes, basically have him washed.

EF: Yes, that, they used to call it a "GI bath" or a "Navy bath," because they used to use hard bristle brushes on them. So, it was certainly a mixed bag. It was a mixed bag.

KP: How surprised were you by the atomic bomb? It sounds like you expected to be doing this project for a while.

EF: Yes, yes, but you see, then, I was going to be an officer, because I was going to learn a language.

KP: When did you get your orders?

EF: I hadn't gotten orders. This was scuttlebutt.

KP: The rumor mill.

EF: No, the rumor was--but there were actual drafts, because we had heard about that and there were language camps at Colorado--someone said to me, "You're on the next one," or something like that. I knew that that's where we were going. What was your question?

KP: Yes, the atomic bomb, how much of shock it was.

EF: Oh, I'll tell you, we were so thrilled with that. I remember being so thrilled with that. I thought to myself--you see, while the Navy was a good experience, I didn't want to stay there. There were times I got very depressed, because I, as many people did, felt that that war's going to last for ten years. Here they were, you were reading about the casualties and the warfare and this would go on. Of course, I didn't realize that we were subject to the same propaganda that others were. It just seemed as if that thing was going to go on forever, and then, we heard about this thing and I remember having a sense of elation when I learned of its impact. That was my reaction to that and you can put me under that particular column.

KP: It sounds like the atomic bomb derailed your going to language school.

EF: Well, oh, yes, that was the end of that. Yes, I didn't even think about language school after that. I don't think it crossed my mind.

KP: You were just waiting to get out.

EF: Yes, because the war with Germany was over and I knew that that would finish the Japanese, because we never really knew--Winston Churchill said, "When war breaks out, truth is the first casualty." I don't think we knew too much. Oh, we got some glowing reports and everything, but things went on and on and on, and then, you just figured--I was a little bit embittered, too, because I was getting on for twenty-five. I would say, "Come on, I'll give my country two or three years, two, three, four years, but …

KP: You would not be discharged until June of 1946.

EF: That's right, because I didn't have enough points. That's when I went to Washington and I met this disreputable cousin of mine from the Midwest. Oh, there were some wild stories there. I met a man who was, he was supposed to be--he was because he told me he was--he was an Army colonel, Air Force colonel, and his name was (Frue?). I don't know whether it was his first name or (Frue Henry?) or (Henry Frue?). I just don't remember, but I had a 1931 Model-A Ford and he had a 1933, some rattled-down car. I never saw this man when he was sober and I remember going out and we'd drag race. The fact that we weren't both killed--he was a very democratic man. He was the operations officer of the delivery of the atomic bomb, or so they said. I never called him colonel, he never said, "Call me colonel," but that was part of this wild scene.

KP: I think a lot of people we interview really do not want to talk about some of the wild scenes. They exclude that and future generations often get a much sanitized version of what happened.

EF: Yes.

KP: It sounds like this was not that uncommon, that there were a number of men, in a sense, drinking a lot, carousing a lot.

EF: Oh, they did that; anyone who is dissembling, who did not describe that, because even when they were in barracks, they were looking for it, to get whiskey in there, if they could. There may have been a number of sober-side types that you're interviewing, but, then, you've got to factor in a lot of lies, too.

KP: I would not say they are necessarily lies, but they often do not …

EF: You don't--it's selective memory, selective memory, yes.

KP: Selective, but I got the sense that there was more going on than people have said.

EF: No, and I'm writing a memoir at home and I started with old photographs. I work on it for a week and I drop it for a month, but, in that memoir, I'm putting this down, whatever my memory is, as scrupulously as I can recall. One of my daughters read it and I said, "Should I destroy it?" "Daddy, you've got to continue with it. It's marvelous," but I've always been truth obsessed and, even today, I tend to look on the more dolorous side of things and say, "There's no sense. Why not be forthcoming? If this happened, fess up to it," but, again, that's my generation. It's not--this is the way, more or less, you were. Today, I think it's less, isn't it? "Do your own thing," I don't know.

KP: You mentioned that you became quite an active Zionist after the war.

EF: Yes.

KP: What led you to be so interested in Zionism?

EF: Well, there had been the Holocaust, for one, and, two, there'd been this Mr. (Kogan?), who had taught me Hebrew and who had started in the Mule Corps in the British Army and I think he was with [British General Edmund] Allenby as a soldier, when he went into Jerusalem. I believe he had an enormous impact on me. I don't know of too many people who were, but, then, of course, I heard that, oh, a friend of mine from college, a naval officer, Rutgers, Class of 1944 or '45, I believe, now deceased, [was] one of the youngest ship commanders in naval history, not a destroyer, but a destroyer escort, commanded it. He's twenty-four years old, commander, gets off the naval operating base in San Francisco. They tap him on the shoulder, "You are Captain?" because you were "Captain" even if you were only a lieutenant. "Yes." "We want to talk to you." "Where are you from?" "We want to talk to you," turned out that they were operators from what they called the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which is now their Secret Service. "We want you to take a ship over to;" they sent him to Scandinavia. From there, he went down to--so, he was a Zionist. There'd been the Holocaust, so, he was ready to go and he was very pro-Zionist. Sure enough, he goes to Italy, they give him a tramp steamer and he runs the British blockade. He gets two miles off the coast of then Palestine, now Israel, and a little boat comes up and the pilot takes over. In fact, they didn't even say thank you, took him off the boat, came back to America.

KP: Do you remember his name?

EF: Al Meltzer, Albert Meltzer. He played football--no, no, he was ASTP, played football for Colgate. He didn't play for Rutgers. Again, he was too poor, but there were those and, of course, we were corresponding all the time. When he was in the Navy as a captain, I used to draw cartoons of him, really, and I put him in very provocative situations, but one particular showing him as an admiral with a broomstick up his ass, sort of cartoons that I'd send. So, there were others as well and I had a lot of respect for the military, because they saved everyone's asses, when you look back, and they say they taught it at West Point. They called it "the class that the stars fell on," the Eisenhowers, the Bradleys and what-have-you, even that popinjay MacArthur. There was a lot of them that I respect and, of course, then, they started to form Jewish military units and I said, "Oh, boy, I wonder what Adolf thinks of this." I was very proud

that, now, the Jews were soldiers, as they were in the Old Testament, and they're tough soldiers today. So, that was all part of the whole thing. If there hadn't been--Adolf Hitler created Israel.

KP: You do not think you would have been a Zionist, or as active as you were.

EF: No, no, not at all, not at all, because it had no meaning for me. It's the event of history that started me thinking this way, and then, there were these other influences.

KP: Yes. Have you been to Israel?

EF: No.

KP: You have never been to Israel.

EF: No, no, I've never been abroad. My wife is a daughter of--she has an interesting thing. My wife's brother was a speechwriter in the Eisenhower Administration. She came from a very distinguished family, in the sense that her grandfather was in the Diplomatic Service. So, she traveled all over the world and, somehow, I found a reason not to. Her first language was German, although she was born in this country. So, she had been to Europe twenty-three or twenty-five times. I was working very hard in those days, too, because, when I first went to work, in those days, you worked six days a week. You quit at one o'clock on Saturdays. That was a normal working day.

KP: You went into insurance.

EF: I did, and thereby hangs a tale, because it was my father's doing. I got out of the--I was an English major at Rutgers. I remember, I walked around with a copy of *The Book of English Verse, Oxford Verse*, [*The Oxford Book of English Verse*] in my pocket and I gave it away to a pretty, pretty little Polish girl I was sweet on. [laughter] I knew how to shoot a gun and I knew *The Book of English Verse*. I was twenty-five years old. Now, that was a disgrace, in my time, not having an occupation. My father said, "Oh, Bud, come on into the business." My father was an insurance broker, but he struggled, because he only had accounts like Martinson Coffee, like Tourneau Watches. I mean, this is small accounts, a few department stores throughout the country. Anyway, he just struggled with these tiny, little clients of his. So, it seemed to be, like, the path of least resistance. You just walked into the family company with a salary, and so, I learned the insurance business. I didn't thrive at it particularly, largely because of that damn streak of honesty, which was imbued in me somewhere, somehow, because, if you're honest, you cannot really do very well in most fields of endeavor these days. On that sardonic note, am I running over time?

KP: No. One question, and it might be a minor point, but, for years, I heard that the insurance brokers, if they were honest, would tell you to buy term life insurance, because it is in your financial best interest, but, for their best interest …

EF: Yes.

KP: Whole life is, for insurance agents.

EF: Well, it was false in those days.

KP: Yes.

EF: Today, there are elements of truth to it, although everything is term (and truth?) today.

KP: Yes.

EF: In those days, yes. It was [that] all insurance brokers said, "Buy ordinary life insurance," but our first manuals didn't have term insurance in there.

KP: Yes, I am just paraphrasing.

EF: Nobody bought it, but, later on, now, they have universal life or a combination of the two.

KP: Yes, now.

EF: It's all different now, but the insurance agents do not have a very good reputation and they've earned every bit of it. [laughter] So, I never made an awful amount of money, but we were very much middle-class and we've kept our head up.

KP: You said one of the luckiest things was meeting your wife. How did you meet your wife?

EF: On a blind date. I was thirty, thirty-one years old and the dating scene was arid, really, in those days. I think about the good, old days and I think about the bad, old days today. Things are too loose today and they were too strict at home. It's the best thing that ever happened to me, really, because she's just a wonderful, wonderful human being. Now, I don't say that as her husband, because there are so many people who act the same way, and my mother-in-law, remember the mother-in-law jokes? My mother-in-law was a gentlewoman and a delight, but they were European. Well, they were American--they were European in their outlook--and there was none of the pretentiousness of the time. So, you didn't have to go to a cocktail party, goddamn it. I didn't like cocktail parties. I like to drink, but I like to do it sitting down. It was what the Germans call a (Gemütlichkeit?) type of environment. Our daughters are the same way.

KP: It sounds like your wife came from a German Jewish background.

EF: Yes, yes. My late father-in-law would've made a superior Nazi. He lost a bet. They said it was five thousand dollars, in 1936--I don't believe it was that, I think it was five hundred dollars, which was like five thousand [today]. He came from Germany and he said the Germans were the greatest people in the world and he said he'd made a bet with a friend that Adolf Hitler could not last three months. He admitted it, he even told me the story, he said, "I know the German people and they will not put up with it for more than three months." Well, he was wrong, but they were very, very pro-German. In World War I--well, he was an American citizen at this time, he kept his mouth shut--he was pro-German.

KP: Given his being Jewish, but proud of the German heritage, how shocked was he, your father-in-law, by the Holocaust?

EF: Well, he went--he had a lot of integrity. He had a pinch of anti-Semitism in him. Have you ever heard of the expression, "the anti-Semitic Jew?" He felt that Jews are called to a higher standard. I feel that to a certain extent, too, and, if I hear of a Jewish stockbroker, of course, I want to kill the son of a bitch. He had that element, too, but he had a lot of integrity, because he went bond for about forty or fifty German Jews and he could have been wiped out if those bonds had gone south. Of course, in those days, you had to guarantee that you would not become a public charge.

KP: He sponsored …

EF: He sponsored forty to fifty of them.

KP: After the war?

EF: No, during the '30s.

KP: During the 1930s, refugees.

EF: That's right, yes, and he was never hurt. I don't think he ever got a thank you letter, but the German Jews were more German than the Germans, as they said.

KP: I have been struck by that.

EF: But, culturally, oh, another story, my Gwen, when she first heard a Puccini opera, she didn't realize that it was an opera, because all she knew was Wagner. Here she was, five, six, seven years old and going to Wagnerian operas and loving them. Of course, she went on to Juilliard later on, too, so, she is musical, but it was a very heavy Germanic--and, of course, there was a lot intermarriage there, too, in her side of the family. Some in the Diplomatic Corps, some of them were Jewish and denied it, and she had an uncle who knew [Konrad] Adenauer, and so on, but there wasn't an ounce of pretense with any of these people. So, I said, and my wife is my witness--she's going through cancer now and I get a little teary, I have to warn you, about one story. When she had her second surgery, she opened her eyes, she said, "How is Buddy?"

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

JC: What was the confidence level in what you were doing and/or in the country during your service?

EF: In the nation or in the service?

JC: Either one.

EF: Everyone, I think, was convinced we were going to win the war. It was just a matter of time. Of course, that's the American spirit. Within my [circle], the people I served with, there was a lot of grumbling, because service people grumble, but people did their jobs.

JC: It was positive.

EF: It was positive in that sense, the sense that, "Oh, I've got to go do it, dammit." There was a lot of ignorance, too. It depends upon who you were with. If you were with the college men, yes, you discussed the war and, "What did Churchill mean by this?" and so on. Also, when I was in West Virginia, we took over the Marine barracks there. There's one episode where we had to make room for a platoon of Army military police. What were they doing there? They had to go out into the hills and get the deserters. The reports were, there were ten thousand deserters in those West Virginia hills. I don't know how significant this is, but they were there, they existed, but, at the same time, General Lee used to shoot his deserters, too, but, yet, the Confederate Army fought as no army ever fought in history. The Union Army, God knows they had their deserters. I think my great grandfather was. [laughter]

KP: You joined the American Legion at one point.

EF: I did, yes.

KP: Was it right after the war?

EF: Right after the war, yes.

KP: How long did you last in the Legion?

EF: About fifteen minutes, because I realized--well, I shouldn't say that, because they were an educational organization then and I did believe that there was a lot of Communism within the country. I had a cousin who graduated from Barnard and was the youngest Ph.D. who had ever graduated from [Barnard]. I heard her say, at the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, someone said, and I was there, they said, "How can this be?" She said, "We haven't been told yet," believe me. [Editor's Note: In the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, also known as the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, of August 1939, the Nazi and Soviet governments agreed to invade and divide Poland.] I knew Communists and I knew that it was a movement. I knew more about it--people tend to shut their eyes. The atrocities, Stalin killed more people--Hitler would have tried to compete with Stalin--but he murdered people by the million. I knew that and the American Legion was an anti-Communist unit at that time and I guess I was a little bit of a McCarthy-ite.

KP: Were there any active Communists at Rutgers?

EF: Yes, yes.

KP: You do not have to name names, but how many were there?

EF: I don't know, I don't know, but it actually stuck in my gut, because I only knew of two of them that I think of. One of them actually was on the *Targum* and he was a card-carrying Communist and the son of a bitch was Jewish. That is something you don't do, because, for Jews, of course, even then, this has been the most hospitable country on the face of the Earth for Jews. When I hear of a Jew running America down, I get very, very upset. So, I've had cousins who were two of them and they were intellectuals and they were Communists and they were well-educated and they were brilliant. I have a way of saying that, "Sometimes, the IQ gets so high that the brains implode," and the brains imploded with these people. They won't even face the fact--Lillian Hellman remained a Communist, a Stalinist, for the rest of her life. So, I joined the American Legion because that was one of the groups that were anti-Communist.

KP: It sounds like you were anti-Communist through the 1930s.

EF: Yes.

KP: There was some question. Communism now, in retrospect, does not seem that appealing, but, in the 1930s, you could see why, in fact, it would be appealing.

EF: Yes. I handled that by becoming an extreme liberal, the fact that Franklin Roosevelt was my God. I couldn't think of the Republicans being other than evil. That's part of youth, too, all black and white. So, in a way, that was my type of Communism and, of course, there were a lot of things you had to be aware of. Labor was terribly exploited. It was. Franklin Roosevelt had done [well by labor]--to this day, I acknowledge it. Yes, I'm a Republican, but I think I'm fair-minded enough to say Franklin Roosevelt did some marvelous things and a lot of the wrongs were redressed. Sometimes, they went the other way and they've gone the other way, too, as I can see, but, in those days, yes, I was a Legionnaire. I was sorry because I couldn't join the VFW; so much for that.

KP: You termed yourself a Goldwater Republican. When did you start moving, because you were pretty liberal?

EF: Yes, yes.

KP: When did you notice this drift, that you were increasingly more conservative?

EF: When I started to see that the economics were defective. I worked in a Democratic Club after the war. My first vote was for Adlai Stevenson in the first …

KP: 1952.

EF: Yes. Then, I voted for Eisenhower next time around. I met some people, very liberal people, and I was running with them, and then, I started asking questions. The New York City budget ran a billion dollars, one billion; then, it became two billion. I said, "Well, how can this be?" and then, some of the excesses of, I won't call it welfare, but to the extent that people were being seduced. I think our black illegitimacy problem today, the roots of it was then, was there, when I saw some of the welfare things. I said, "But, gee, Grandpa made it and Vinny's grandpa

made it and his father made it," and this is why we can't afford this. It started with economics and, of course, it snowballed and there's no reversing any of that now.

KP: Did you vote for Goldwater in 1964?

EF: Yes.

KP: You are a true believer.

EF: Well, you know what they say …

KP: "In your heart, you know he's right," [Goldwater's campaign slogan].

EF: Professor, that was not Goldwater, was it? no, but what they said, if I voted for Goldwater, there would be a terrible war, and I did and there was. [laughter] Remember that, at the time?

KP: I should say Goldwater has really gotten some favorable press from historians.

EF: Well, again, the old story of the decent man and "the white man who do not talk with forked tongues." He'd go down to Florida and he'd lay it into the elderly there. "Your Social Security is," but what he predicted came to be. Social Security is out of control today. That's another guilt trip I take all the time, every time I get one of those Social Security checks.

JC: I think he answered all of my questions.

KP: Okay. You talked about your daughter, who is a Rutgers graduate. It sounds like you are immensely proud she went to your *alma mater*.

EF: I was very happy, I was very happy. Originally, it was an economic thing, because she'd been mugged and, of course, I was worried about her. As a matter-of-fact, I hired an attorney who had been a prosecutor to dog the prosecution. We were going to go down there, Gwen and I, and I suppose he said, "It's not necessary to come down here," used that expression, he said, "While your daughter's here, I will act *in loco parentis*, sir." He had been a prosecutor down South there and he handled this case very well, but, then, she was nervous, because this [the defendant] was a bad, black dude, twenty-four years old with thirty-one arrests. As a matter-of-fact, he said, this Southern gentleman, the attorney, he said to me, "It's just as bad here as it is up there." He said, "We have a real crime problem." So, we were afraid of retaliation and she wanted to come up. "Well, where do you want to go?" "Daddy, I want to go to Rutgers." Well, of course, then, I felt--of course, if she had wanted to go to another college, that would have been all right, but, then, she went to Rutgers. Then, of course, very soon after, she met Mr. Colligan and they lived happily ever after.

KP: In fact, her birthday is tomorrow.

EF: Yes, yes, we're going over there.

KP: You have been very proud of your Rutgers heritage, both the fact that you are not the first in your family to come to Rutgers …

EF: Yes.

KP: And you were not the last.

EF: Well, I'll tell you, when Rooster Colligan was three years old, he's now five-and-a-half, and I give him no peace, but he gives me no peace, his mother dressed him up in the whole Rutgers thing. Well, irrationally, I glowed, and the little one, little Will, who's Buddy Colligan, and, now, Casey, the one who's only about two months old, they've got a little Rutgers cap on him, but they are fanatically Rutgers. Yes, it's been very enriching. My son-in-law, it's interesting, he doesn't have much of a feeling for Rutgers, but he likes the Rutgers athletics and, if Rutgers loses a football game, which happens not infrequently, [laughter] he actually goes into a depression. [Editor's Note: Edgar Feldman's son-in-law was born at a hospital on the Rutgers campus and both his parents attended Rutgers.] So, I support the Scarlet R and we go, our family, to the football games. I've been supporting them and suffering them for twelve, fifteen years now.

KP: Since your daughter went to Rutgers, did you see any continuity between your daughter's experience and yours? Obviously, things changed.

EF: No, no, I see no continuity whatsoever.

KP: Really?

EF: And it's all superficial. I don't know about the level of education at Rutgers today. I know, in the sciences, they are superior. I don't know whether or not there's been a general decline in the level of academics, I judge not, but I don't think she had anything near like an intellectual experience or the stimulation that I had. Maybe she wasn't interested, but I noticed that in my son-in-law, too. He's a college graduate, he's an attorney and you expect that they know a little bit more about the world and the world's history. "Oh, Daddy, all you're interested in is history," or my son-in-law, "Bud, you like history, don't you?" Yes, I like a little bit about it, but, again, I don't know if I would stop and speak to five or six students here if I might not have the same reaction, that they might say, "Yes. What do you know about the Battle of Yorktown?" Do you follow me? They may be on a level that I don't give them credit for.

KP: You went to a very small Rutgers and your daughter went to a very large Rutgers.

EF: That's too *la différence*. It's hard--I don't mean it that way--it's hard for someone coming in and, saving your grace, it was an all-male school. Now, when it went coed, it changed. I have a way of talking, because I speak to some of the young women and it's a delight--you're a pure delight to speak with and that sort of thing--but it's different.

KP: What did make it different, to have an all-male school?

EF: Oh, camaraderie, I guess. That's a bad word, because I don't have the precise *mot juste*, as they say. It's just different. We've seen this everywhere, that I don't know quite how to put it, because I don't want to demean coed education, but, historically, when Cornell, for example, was coed, or the women's colleges, Smith, Wellesley, what-have-you, they were superior. While there was the separation, they seemed to do better.

KP: It sounds like you appreciated the fact that Rutgers was all-male for you.

EF: Yes, but we have the [alumni] meetings and the men bring their wives along and it's good to have them there. All I can say is, I'm repeating myself, Professor, it was different, of course because of the size--not so much as much as the non-coed thing as the fact that it was smaller. As I said, I didn't feel the need for a car because you could walk from one end of the campus to the other and you could meet the same people. Today, we have our Big East football teams. You were in class with our football players. There was no differentiation. Lenny Hansen, you know Lenny Hansen? He is one of the superior people of our class.

KP: I have not interviewed him yet, but I have heard the name.

EF: Yes. He's going through an awful thing. His wife is dying, she's literally dying. He was an outstanding classmate of mine, but he's going downhill--get a hold of him fast, if you're going to--but he became an expert in medieval books and literature. As a matter-of-fact, he created, at the library now …

KP: Yes.

EF: And I supported him, "Lenny, I will get you money," not an awful lot, but what I could for the library, because of Lenny. I see him every once in a while, because he lives in Englewood.

KP: Yes, I have interviewed him.

EF: Yes, he's a fascinating man. He started out as a born-again Christian, his parents, and he grew up in a very strict environment. When he came to Rutgers, he was a wild man. He came right out of Borneo, and then, he started to get things [settled], but we sang at the--I have no voice--but at some of these little functions we've gone to. He starts to sing and I jump right alongside him.

KP: You mentioned there was one Japanese student who happened to be here at Rutgers during Pearl Harbor.

EF: Yes.

KP: Do you know what happened to him?

EF: No, no way. I know because, again, there was an exchange. He was here under some sort of auspices and they had to be governmental, because Rutgers, you know better than I, has had, Rutgers, Japan, what-have-you, and I presume that he went back to Japan.

KP: You do not know exactly what happened.

EF: No, I have no idea and, again, the times were so hectic, you didn't function. You said, "Oh, that son of a bitch." It was a red-headed kid, he was a football player, but I didn't do it, because others were doing it--they were bringing him his meals. He was being threatened.

KP: Yes.

EF: That being the case, we're closing, at the end?

KP: Yes, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/5/2014
Reviewed by Nena Feldman Colligan 11/25/2014
Reviewed by Molly Graham 1/24/2015