RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GENE FRICKS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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BRANCHBURG, NEW JERSEY
JUNE 17, 2020

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins and oral history interview with Gene Fricks, on June 17, 2020. This is Kate Rizzi, and this is our second interview session as a part of the Class of 1970 Oral History Project. Gene, thank you so much for joining me again today.

Gene Fricks: My pleasure again.

KR: We left off yesterday talking about your years at Rutgers. I would like to start today by asking you what you remember about Rutgers traditions.

GF: Well, a number of them, some of them passed down by old grads and people who had actually experienced many of these traditions and which were kind of being abandoned when I was a freshman, but one in particular. I had a colleague, a professional colleague through my work in the 1980s and '90s, Tom Folger, and his father was a Rutgers College graduate, Class of 1924. His father had started at Rutgers College as a fourteen year old. He was a precocious student, and he got in. The comment at the time that I remembered most was, if you're a fifteen-year-old sophomore, sixteen-year-old junior, it's tough to have much social life. He would go across town over to the Douglass Campus, and he was always the wallflower because nobody wanted to pay any attention to him. He later grew up to be a very big guy in Massachusetts in a number of social service organizations. He was state president of this and state chairman of other things.

Anyway, one of the traditions that existed then, and then I was also told about this by a member of the Class of '24 with whom I served on the Rutgers Engineering Society--I was president of the Rutgers Engineering Society in 1977 and he was the secretary--at the end of freshman year, there were a number of tests that the freshman class had to pass in order to become full-fledged members of the college community. One of the things was to shed your dink, a hat that freshmen were required to wear. So, Folger marshals all the members of the class around this pole that was fifteen or twenty feet high. It was a greased pole. The requirement was to climb the pole and take the dink off the top of the pole, and that would then relieve the class of their requirement to wear their dinks. So, he marshals all the freshmen around the pole, and they form a mountain. He climbs the mountain and gets up there and pulls the hat off, and so now they all take off their hats and I don't know what they did, put them in their pockets, threw them [laughter] away or whatever, but they were shed of that.

Well, when we got to Rutgers as freshmen, there was a handbook that we were given, which had some of the traditions enumerated. They also had a copy of the alma mater and some of the other songs that the Glee Club had continued to do. We went to the bookstore and I don't want to say we were arm twisted, we weren't required, but we were encouraged to buy a dink. I think it cost a dollar or something. We put it on our heads, and everybody wore them probably for the first week of our freshman year. Then, they got stuffed in wherever these things get stuffed, and I think I found mine twenty-five years later stuck in the bottom drawer of a desk somewhere. [laughter] It was kind of nostalgic, these kinds of traditions. The others, I don't remember particularly well, but that one has stuck, I guess because I knew Tom Folger and we used to talk about the stories that his father told him. There were lots and lots of stories in this community of only five hundred young men, and it was interesting. So, those were the kinds of traditions.

The tradition that I mentioned to you yesterday about, "Look to the right and look to the left, and at the end of the year, two of you will be gone," I'm not sure that was a good tradition, but apparently, that sort of thing had been around for quite a long time. I was very glad to see that go by the wayside. [laughter] There were a lot of people who became discouraged by that sort of thing, and I think kind of got pushed out a little bit and ended up going to school somewhere else or maybe not at all. That winnowing process, which might've been very Darwinian to somebody's idea, I think had the tendency to eliminate, from the community, folks who really could make contributions and had good contributions to make.

I have a friend right now, Fred Skvara, who was the first Ag School graduate to go to med school. Fred is an internationally known micro pathologist, has become very famous, won numerous, very significant awards for taking photographs of and cataloging pictures of all kinds of disease mechanisms, germs and parasites and whatever. If you're in that particular branch of medicine and you mention Fred's name, everybody immediately lights up and they know who he is. Fred lives in Westfield and he and I are not in the same class, but we did overlap. He was a member of Alpha Chi Rho, Crow, the fraternity down on Union Street that was two houses away from my house, and so we had friendly rivalries there. We would never have thought then that come forty-five years later, fifty years later, we'd still be friends and still have interactions, some of which were Rutgers related and others that were professional. So, it's kind of interesting. That's not a tradition necessarily, but it's certainly a Rutgers friendship. I'm very blessed, I think, to have had the friends that I've had and people that I've stayed close with over the years. Some of them are my classmates and others are just guys that I had met and done something or worked with or whatever.

The most recent executive director of New Jersey Transit, Steve Santoro, is the Class of '75, a civil engineer, and Steve played baseball for Rutgers. I worked as a consultant to him for six years on the River Line light rail project, for which he was, at the time, the project director and then later, when Transit determined to try to dig a tunnel to Manhattan from north of Jersey City, served as one of his cost management consultants. What was interesting, we had six people on that project, five of whom were Class of '74-'75, and actually two of them were in the first class of women enrolled in Rutgers College. So, this made the alumni magazine four or five years ago, and I think people said, "Wow," the fact that here was a woman who, actually, two women, one is still active--she's teaching out at University of Nevada-Las Vegas--I deliberately engineered the opportunity for them to be interviewed and appear in the magazine because I thought that it's tough, I believe, for a woman to survive in the Engineering School. I mean, there are just lots of unspoken traditions and whatever that make it tough. To have someone who's been successful and made their way through this, it becomes kind of a role model and they provide encouragement. Santoro, in my opinion, was one of the best executive directors that New Jersey Transit's had in its thirty years existence. He instilled an enormous amount of discipline, quality of professional activities, and just did a great deal for the taxpayers of New Jersey. His contribution has never been truly appreciated. [Editor's Note: Rutgers College became coed in 1972.]

KR: How much did you follow sports at Rutgers?

GF: We were avid following football. When Dick Lloyd and Jimmy Valvano were playing basketball, you couldn't drag us away from basketball games. [laughter] A little later, after I graduated, we had a couple of other guys who were of similar stature. Rutgers basketball, unfortunately, has not lived up to its past potential, except in the women's basketball department. Vivian just made an enormous contribution to the self-respect of the Rutgers community. [Editor's Note: Jim Valvano (1946-1993) played on the Rutgers men's basketball team from 1964 to 1967. He went on to coach men's college basketball, winning the national championship with NC State in 1983. All-American Robert "Bobby" Lloyd played on the Rutgers basketball team from 1964 to 1967. He then played in the NBA from 1967 to 1969. Lloyd and Valvano led Rutgers to a third-place finish in the 1967 National Invitation Tournament (NIT), losing the Final Four game to Southern Illinois 79-70 on March 16, 1967. Bobby Lloyd's brother Dick Lloyd served as an assistant basketball coach from 1965 to 1971 and head coach from 1971 to 1973, followed by a long career as a radio announcer and in alumni affairs and fundraising at Rutgers. C. Vivian Stringer has been the head coach of the Rutgers Women's Basketball team since 1995. She led the team to two Final Four appearances, in 2000 and 2007.]

Then, when Greg Schiano came in as coach--and, of course, this was long after I graduated--he appeared very early in his tenure at a meeting of the [Rutgers] Alumni Association Board of Directors. Of course, the meeting had fifty of us, and he asked for an expression of support. We made him an honorary member of the alumni association. Now, why that's significant is we've had other football coaches going back, Rockafeller, and some of the others, who were truly icons in their time, and they never did that for them. We had one coach, Frank, who was an alum, was a member of the alumni association by right, so he kind of didn't count. So, we made a big deal that Schiano was now an honorary member, and then of course, what is it, three years later, he decides to leave and go to Tampa for "filthy lucre." They were going to pay him a million dollars or something. "What's this?" after asking for support and all. [Editor's Note: Greg Schiano served as the head coach of the Rutgers Football team from 2001 to 2011. He left Rutgers and coached the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 2012 to 2013. He was rehired by Rutgers in 2020. Harry Rockafeller (1894-1978), RC '16, coached the Rutgers Football team from 1927 to 1930 and again from 1942 to 1945. He then became acting athletic director at Rutgers in 1952 and athletic director in 1956, holding the position until 1961. Frank R. Burns, Jr., RC '49, GSE '64, who led Rutgers to a 27-7 record as a player, coached the Rutgers Football team from 1973 to 1983, compiling a record of 78-43-1 and leading the team to an undefeated season in 1976.]

He [Schiano] had the potential, in that first stint, to have been the next Joe Paterno, in at least the eyes certainly of the Rutgers people and I think for the people in New Jersey. He gave the folks in New Jersey and certainly the Rutgers community a new sense of identification, a new sense of self-respect. It was really an emotional kind of thing to watch and as interested and as involved as we were when we were students, when these kinds of things were happening when we were alums, it just brought back all the great things from the 1960s but then added to it.

In 1969, we beat Princeton in one of, I think, seven games in a hundred years, and it was at that point that Princeton said, "We don't want to play Rutgers anymore because you guys can actually win." But we had an undefeated season. This was just remarkable. It was incredible. Those things were very, very big to Rutgers College, to Rutgers University. [Editor's Note: The first-

ever college football game was played on November 6, 1869 between Rutgers and Princeton. On September 27, 1969, the two teams faced off in the centennial game, and Rutgers won 29-0. Coached by John Bateman, Rutgers football compiled a 6-3 record in 1969, following a record of 8-2 in 1968. In 1961, Rutgers football went undefeated at 9-0, and in 1960, the squad went 8-1. The last football game between Rutgers and Princeton took place in 1980. Overall, Princeton leads in football victories against Rutgers with a total record of 53-17-1. From 1968 to 1980, Rutgers beat Princeton in nine of the games and tied one.]

I'm just hoping that we can somehow recapture some of that. By that time, I was involved in activities with the state Chamber of Commerce and other organizations and had had opportunities to talk to especially the Rutgers people in the state government and in the Assembly and the Senate. It raised the stature of fellow alums in those bodies, but it also raised the stature of the university in the eyes of the public at large. Rutgers, in many ways, became a unifying force between North and South Jersey. Schiano has several times remarked, and once, I remember, in a column in *The New York Times*, that there are very different cultures between North and South Jersey. Actually, Central Jersey has a different culture from the other two, but it's kind of a meld at either end. He said, "You do things differently in South Jersey when you go recruiting for players and students than you do in North Jersey." It's just a different kind of focus and attitude. We, through those years, sort of began to build bridges between the two parts of the state, and I think that was very important. Unfortunately, it didn't last, and I think right now, we're back to as great a divide as I've ever seen in fifty years. That's, unfortunately, one of the things that happens when you kind of lose your way, and, yes, it's kind of where we are.

KR: What was it like for you when you were pledging for the fraternity?

GF: Well, I had been approached by three different houses, and two of my new good friends were also pledging two of those three houses. I pledged Gamma Sigma or Tau Epsilon Phi on my own. I just went over there. I found it very congenial. It was different in terms of acceptance of people. We became, at that time, the only integrated house in the Greek system. I recognize that Paul Robeson was a member of a fraternity, back when he was a student and so forth. But we had every religious creed. We had two guys who were gay but who were accepted. It was a very interesting group of people. The other two fraternities were very much more stereotypical of what you think of at that. I found the Gamma Sigma environment to be very congenial. [Editor's Note: Singer, actor and activist Paul Robeson, RC '19, was not permitted to join a fraternity when he was a student at Rutgers College from 1915 to 1919. The NU Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity made Robeson an honorary member in 1919, while he was serving as an assistant football coach at Lincoln University.]

The guys made a point that Gamma Sigma, in the early 1950s, was the only college fraternity in the country that had been investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee. [laughter] I met one of the fellows who had been a member then and he was on the faculty, I think, at UCLA. He was an economist. I could see why they investigated [laughter], but it was an interesting situation. [Editor's Note: The House Committee on Un-American Activities, known as the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), was a committee of the House of Representatives from 1938 to 1969 that investigated people with alleged ties to Communism or radical, subversive organizations.]

What was kind of interesting, after I had been, I guess, two visits to the house, I kind of waited for a phone call that said I was being invited to pledge, and no phone call ever came. So, Monday came around, and I had to go to school. So, I said, "Well, I guess, they decided they didn't like me." So, I took my disappointment into my briefcase, and off I went to school. I happened to run into one of the members during the course of the day, and he said, "How you doing?" I said, "Okay. Do you mind giving me some insight? I didn't hear from anybody. What did I do wrong? How did I step on my opportunity?" He said, "Oh, you didn't do anything wrong." I said, "Oh, nobody contacted me, so I assumed that was the case." Well, it turned out that they couldn't find my phone number. It was as simple as that. My disappointment, of course, melted away, but it goes to show how those kinds of things had the potential to ruin relationships and so forth. Then, after that, we had pledge projects, some of which were very noble and some of which were very nefarious. Do you want to know about one of the nefarious ones? You're shaking your head. [laughter]

KR: Sure, I would like to hear it.

GF: We had a tradition of having a big Christmas tree at Christmastime, but the Christmas tree had to be purloined. A couple of the guys got in their car to do a road trip in the true tradition of [the movie] *Animal House* and they went to Easton, Pennsylvania up to the Lafayette Campus and cut down a pine tree, a fir tree, that sat out in front of the Lafayette Library. [laughter] This was early on a Sunday morning. It's five o'clock in the morning. We put the tree on top of the car, and we zipped across the bridge back into New Jersey, fully expecting to have somebody in hot pursuit. Nobody did. Nobody had gotten up at that hour, but we were guilty of interstate transportation of a stolen Christmas tree. [laughter] I don't think in later years that was a tradition that they continued. I suppose that they figured it was simpler and safer just to go out and buy a tree and put it up. Well, we did some crazy things and certainly would never have told our folks about these crazy things.

KR: What other memories do you have of your fraternity that you would like to share?

GF: We had a brother who was in engaged to one of the Douglass girls and he was carrying on with another gal on the side. At Christmastime, we had a tradition of "Dirty Claus" coming and giving gifts. His gift was a two-foot diameter ring made out of twisted wire and a tag on it that said, "To whom it may concern." His fiancé kind of figured out what this all meant. He got very exercised over this. The guys basically said, "We don't approve of what you did and this was just our way of registering our disapproval." Were we being naïve? Was it none of our business? I don't know, but most of the guys felt pretty strongly that if you make a commitment, you're expected to live to it. He hadn't. He had transgressed. So, we had a novel, nonviolent way of expressing our disappointment.

There were lots of things that we did. Gamma Sigma lost its national affiliation, Tau Epsilon Phi, after we had graduated because it did something very unusual. It admitted women to the brotherhood. So, we were the only coed fraternity on campus, and I mean, this was scandalous. I don't know why it was so scandalous because the ladies kind of took over the place and gave it a sense of organization. [laughter] It meant the guys had to take a shower at least once a week

and straighten up their rooms and this kind of stuff. There were a few romances that resulted from this. More than a few of the guys and gals ended up in permanent relationships, which was an interesting and nice thing.

I visited every so often, I was on campus for one reason or another. One year, I actually hired, for a summer job, one of the gals who actually lived down here in South River. Her family was from South Jersey, so this made it convenient. I could hire her, and she could live at home with her parents and come to work in Cherry Hill. The relationship offered an opportunity to help somebody, and certainly, most everybody needed some help getting through school, financially and otherwise. I didn't notice very many of the other alums offering that kind of assistance, so I gave her that opportunity.

KR: What are your recollections of events in 1968?

GF: '68 was kind of a blur because I was extraordinarily busy. I was really focused, on a bug-dust level, of my own existence, of what I was doing, trying to get through school and all the other things that were going on. So, in terms of more global, more cosmic kinds of activities, I'm not sure that I was really very cognizant. Now, what were you referring to in particular, what kinds of events?

KR: I was wondering if you remember the assassinations of King and Kennedy. [Editor's Note: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Robert Kennedy was shot on June 5, 1968 at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California, where he was delivering a victory speech after winning the Democratic primary. He died the next day. He was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian who opposed Kennedy due to his support of Israel. Sirhan is currently serving a life sentence.]

GF: Oh, yes.

KR: What do you recall of those events?

GF: Well, I recall the announcement that Dr. King being killed, the consternation that it caused among those of us whom had some sense of identification. It was tremendous sadness. The fraternity house went into mourning, actually decorated the house in black bunting and so forth.

In Bobby Kennedy's case, I don't recall that it made anywhere near the same kind of impression. There were all kinds of stories about who this guy Sirhan Sirhan was and what his motivations were. Having gone through the John Kennedy thing and the Warren Commission report and the rumors that bandied about of Chicago mob involvement going on or maybe [Fidel] Castro had engineered this, we kind of wondered who and where Sirhan had come from. Was he representing a group from the Middle East? But I don't recall that there was the same kind of impact that Dr. King's death had had. [Editor's Note: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas. The assassination was investigated by the Warren Commission, led by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Earl Warren. In 1964, the Warren Commission concluded that Oswald acted alone and that there was no evidence of a larger conspiracy surrounding the assassination of Kennedy.]

KR: What do you recall of the growth of the student protest movement, both nationally and then also locally at Rutgers?

GF: Well, one of my fraternity brothers, two years ahead of me, George Mill, was one of the founders of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] chapter at Rutgers. George, believe it or not, when he graduated, was commissioned in the Army and went off to serve as Army officer. Owen Ullman, who was a fraternity brother also, became a leader of the Revolutionary Youth Movement II. You had a RYM I and RYM II, and they competed against one another for influence, attention and so forth. Owen was pretty active in building things up. He graduated in '69 and got a job with the Associated Press and eventually headed their Washington Bureau. So, they certainly had an effort there.

The guy who was probably most influential was a guy who attended Snyder High School in Jersey City at the same time that I attended Lincoln, and in fact we knew one another from Wednesday nights at the Jewish Y. At the time, in high school, I was never particularly impressed by this fellow. Certainly, he didn't exhibit what I thought were any kind of leadership traits. So, when he finally ends up as the leader of the SDS organization, it was interesting, I mean, about as unlikely a person to be in that position. The movement grew and grew, and they actively proselytized.

We had another group, headed by Lyndon LaRoche, a national leader for, I guess, a right-wing organization and, in fact, became a candidate, a minor candidate, for president against Humphrey and Goldwater. Two of my classmates joined his campaign, one of whom got involved very, very deeply and eventually ended up being indicted and convicted of financial irregularities and such, but this was after we had graduated. He was a very active student activist during this time, and they worked as kind of a counter to that. I'm trying to think, the fellow was [in] a Young Americans for Freedom group. In fact, the YAF at Rutgers was captured by the John Birch Society, which was very active in Metuchen and those areas. [Editor's Note: Young Americans for Freedom is a conservative student organization that was established in 1960 at the Connecticut estate of the wealthy journalist and right-wing commentator William F. Buckley, Jr. In 1964, the group played a role in the Republican presidential nomination of Barry Goldwater over the more moderate Nelson Rockefeller. Goldwater, who served as a U.S. Senator from Arizona from 1953 to 1965 and again from 1969 to 1987, lost in the general election in 1964 to Lyndon B. Johnson. Humphrey served as vice president in the Johnson administration and then lost his bid for the presidency in 1968 to Richard Nixon. The John Birch Society is a conservative advocacy group that was established in 1958.]

I happened to have the misfortune of working one summer with one of those people, and he was as close to an unreconstructed Nazi as anybody I've ever met. I don't remember his name anymore. He's probably not around anyway, but he gave me a gift copy of--what was the book? *Elders of Zion*. Are you familiar with that? At lunchtime, he would query me about, "Have you read chapter so and so?" He apparently had memorized this book. I thought the book was kind of fantastic. When I got to a point, I went to Dr. McCormick and asked him about it. This was a year or two later, and then we sat down. He kind of gave me the background of the book and where it had come from and who was involved and all and said that it was thoroughly

disreputable. Then, when I got to the graduate school in Camden in 2012, the book came up again because there was a course offered in anti-Semitic iconography, and I could now talk very knowledgably, I'm probably the only one in the class who had ever read the book, but had at least a good background to tell why it was important and continuing importance. I recently saw, in a bookstore in Lawnside, New Jersey, a copy of the book on display. I was kind of astounded. I mean, people still pushing this thing? It's been discredited so many times that I found that very unbelievable. [Editor's Note: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a fabricated and widely distributed anti-Semitic text that was first published in Russia in 1903. In a career at Rutgers spanning 1945 to 1982, Richard P. McCormick served as a Professor of History, University Historian and Dean of Rutgers College.]

They [Young Americans for Freedom] very actively opposed the anti-war movement, student protest, which were largely focused on local veterans. They say that all politics is local, and in this particular situation, I think that's very true. If Rutgers people got involved with issues on a more national level, it didn't filter back in day-to-day activities, at least that I experienced.

KR: Gene, to go back, who was the Snyder High School graduate who ended up at Rutgers? What was his name?

GF: His first name was Richard. Let me go over here and pull the yearbook out. [Editor's Note: His name is Richard Najarian, RC '69.]

KR: Oh, that is okay, Gene, you do not have to do that. You will be able to read over your transcripts, and so you could just add his last name at that point. I was just wondering.

GF: Yes, I seem to recall his last name started with an S, but it's not someone that I've thought about in probably the last fifteen or twenty years, so forgive me for not remembering.

KR: Sure. How much was the black student protest movement on your radar?

GF: Well, it was because George Armstrong was a fraternity brother. He caught more flak from fellow black students for having joined a white fraternity. I mean, the guys in the house accepted him completely. He never had anything but great friendship from the other brothers, and the guys in the other houses, with probably the exception of Beta [Theta Pi], accepted him as well. But there was a black fraternity, which continued even after I graduated, for a number of years, and they were very down on George. We didn't have a large number of African American young men as students. I knew, from a numbers standpoint, that that changed once Livingston got up and running, but they weren't Rutgers College. After Susman engineered this division of loyalties, Rutgers College guys became very elitist with respect especially to Livingston. Of course, the Douglass girls had no use for any of us, but that's something that's been around since the nineteen-teens, I think. [Editor's Note: Warren Susman served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1960 to 1985. He died of a heart attack while addressing the national convention of the Organization of American Historians in Minneapolis. In 1968, Susman produced a report entitled The Reconstruction of an American College, which came to be known as the "Susman Report" and called for the rethinking of higher education and a restructuring of the undergraduate degree. In 2007, the undergraduate colleges of Rutgers University--Rutgers

College, Douglass College, University College, Cook College and Livingston College--were merged into the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.]

Yes, I was certainly aware, going all the way back to 1963. Of the relatively few black men who were students, I would have to say that I had friendships with probably an unusually larger number. Bruce Hubbard was Class of '69. Bruce, we hung out together, and he, of course, went on to law school, became a big-time New York lawyer. There were several others like that, a couple of the guys who played football and basketball, and we attend some classes together and hung out in various kinds of activities. When there were Greek activities, typically these guys would show up because they were members of the black fraternity and they were invited and did participate. We, I always thought, were good friends, and I still send Christmas cards and things like that to a couple of them. It would've been worthwhile if some of the unspoken barriers had not existed. It's too bad that we didn't have a better opportunity or maybe better foresight and wisdom to have fostered some of that, but at least on a personal level, I never experienced either hostility from those fellows and I never expressed any to them and the guys at least in my fraternity house certainly didn't either.

KR: One of the aims of the Class of 1970 Oral History Project is to collect memories of the year 1969-1970. We did talk about the spring of 1970 a little bit yesterday, but I'd like to talk more about your last year at Rutgers. Take me through your senior year and what it was like for you.

GF: Well, we started out in September, and one of the things that I had to do was do a senior project for the Mechanical Engineering Department. I had been working on this part way through my junior year. I had two faculty members who were very interested in what I had chosen as a subject and were very supportive. They got me some financial backing. I had to have a piece of apparatus constructed, and I designed it and put it together. Ultimately, during '69-'70, I presented a paper at a national meeting on what I had done. I'll tell you a little bit about the project. I'm not sure you have all that overwhelming of an interest. I was doing thermodynamic research on highspeed flow. There's a phenomenon called shock, where you can propagate a shock, like a sonic boom or whatever, and you go through a significant physical change in the flow of material over a very, very small distance. You basically create a rupture in the mass flow. Ordinarily, the law of the conservation of mass says you can't do that, but under certain, very particular conditions, you can.

I designed and constructed what was called a shock tube, which was essentially a long piece of pipe, where I added a divider at one point and I was able to pressurize one end and vacuum, depressurize, a longer end. Down at the far end, I had a device called a thermistor, which, at that time, was a new technology. I wanted to see if you could read the temperature increase behind a shock front. A shock front would propagate down the tube at supersonic speed and it would hit the end and it would bounce off and it would cause a rise in temperature. That rise, at least theoretically, could be several hundred degrees. We were interested in if the size of the thermistor, the mass and all, was too large to be able to pick up the signal. Well, I got it to work, got the electronics to work, and actually got a signal and bounced several shocks off the thermistor, not enough to calibrate it really well, but enough to prove at least the theory was correct and that the thermistor was small enough to be able to get some useful information.

As it turned out, we made a presentation at a national meeting in Buffalo, New York, and I had gone up to Buffalo. One of the groups that I belonged to was the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the student chapter on campus and, in fact, got to be the vice president. This kind of made bit of a stir because, as it turned out, nobody had actually investigated this particular subject and so I had something actually to offer. Well, the president of the AIAA was Dr. Robert Seamans. A year later, I'm commissioned in the Air Force, and he is the Secretary of the Air Force. So, I owe my assignment to Systems Command to his influence. He actively intervened to see to it that I got assigned to Systems Command. He had been sufficiently impressed with what I had done. [Editor's Note: After earning his B.S. in engineering at Harvard and master's and doctorate at MIT, Robert C. Seamans, Jr. served as a professor at MIT and administrator at NASA, where he oversaw the development of the Apollo program. Seamans served as the Secretary of the Air Force from 1969 to 1973. The Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) was a major command of the Air Force responsible for the research and development of weapons systems from 1951 to 1992.]

I'm really involved with this project, and that occupied a significant amount of my time. At the same time, I had to do a senior project for the History Department. Now, I've got to write a thesis-quality paper for that, and that was requiring a fair amount of research work as well. I was spending lots of lots of late nights in the library. Sometimes, I would go directly from running a string of experiments to the library, so I could spend a couple of hours reading and looking. I wrote my thesis paper on the development of the Roman sewer system. The archaeologists had done work on the subject, but nobody had, at that point, really talked about sewer system development as being a determinate about how cities actually grew and the concern about public health, not that anybody knew where disease came from. It was still the miasmas that came out of the Pontine Marshes involved, as opposed to the germs and bacteria that were flowing around in the gutters. Anyway, Don Weinstein wrote a comment on my paper and he says, "Great idea, lousy execution." [laughter] So, I got a decent grade, and I graduated, which I guess they were just taking pity on me. They all knew what I was doing in terms of two major projects, but those are the kinds of things that I was doing. Then, I had my ROTC involvement. We had three engineering societies in the Engineering Department, in my department, in mechanical, and I was involved in all three of them. It was a busy, busy time. [Editor's Note: The Pontine Marshes refers to the former marshland located south of Rome, Italy.]

KR: I am curious what you remember about the first draft lottery in December of 1969.

GF: I was instructed to go to Princeton, where everyone had to take a test, sort of like an SAT. Then, as a result of the test, we would be assigned to a draft number, a lottery number, and I thought that they were going to do it like they did it in World War II, where they had a big fishbowl and they pulled numbers out. Well, yes, they did that. That gave you your ranking, but you got your numbers based upon how you had done on the test. I thought that this was really kind of stupid because I was already in the Air Force as a cadet but in the Air Force and why are you doing this? But everybody had to do it; it was the rule. So, off we went. I can remember standing in the parking lot outside of the gymnasium at Princeton, and there were, I don't know, a couple of thousand guys kind of just milling around. Then, they had everybody kind of form in groups, Rutgers and Princeton and the various other colleges and universities from New Jersey,

and then we were let into various places in the gymnasium building, handed these multiple-guess answer sheets, and we got the little booklet. It was, as I say, just like the SAT. I did very well. As it turned out, I got a lottery number assigned something like 337, which was almost, I think the best you could do was 360 or something like that. It was almost a non-event. It was an imposition because I had to give up, I think it was a Saturday that we actually took the test, and I had to give up a Saturday. At that point in time, that was a sacrifice. I was not a big fan of the draft lottery. [Editor's Note: The first Vietnam draft lottery took place during the senior year of the Class of 1970. On December 1, 1969, the U.S. Selective Service held the draft lottery, which was broadcast live on television and radio. The lottery selected birthdays to determine the order in which men born between 1944 and 1950 were called to report for induction in 1970 during the Vietnam War. January 16, Gene Frick's date of birth, was drawn at position 121.]

KR: What do you remember about the spring semester of 1970 in terms of your classes and final exams and how the semester ended? What do you remember about that?

GF: The most telling memory was, I had largely stopped going to classes because of involvement with all of the political things that were going on, the anti-ROTC/pro-ROTC. Dr. Skip Fletcher happened to accost me as I was walking through the halls in the Engineering Building, and he said, "Why aren't you coming to class?" He says, "You are going to flunk my course if you don't start coming to class." I explained what I was trying to do, and he said, "I don't care." The thing was I was taking his class pass/fail, so it wasn't like you could get an "A", "B" or "C". It was a case of either you pass or you fail, and he said that he was going to fail me if I didn't show up. So, I had to take time from what I thought were more immediate concerns, in order to attend his classes right up until the end.

In the Engineering School, as I recall, we had to take our finals. Most of the things that I was doing in the School of Arts and Sciences--and, by the way, at that time, it was the School of Arts and Sciences, our Executive Dean, these days, was pleasantly surprised to find there was an antecedent to the Arts and Sciences organization today. I even gave him a xeroxed copy of my diploma to kind of prove the point, so he could show it to other people. It was not a big issue, taking exams was not a big issue for those other classes. Yes, the one, Skip's class in aerodynamics, I remember fairly vividly. I did all right; I mean, I got a decent grade on the final. I certainly didn't have that much time to prepare for it, but I got a decent grade. I got an outstanding grade on my research work. Thermodynamics and heat transfer were probably my greatest love in the field of mechanical engineering, and I was getting straight aces in that. As I said, when I finished up, after having a rotten start as a freshman, I was a dean's list student for the last three semesters, including spring semester 1970. It was very different. If I had just been a liberal arts student, I probably would've gone home and not even stayed on campus because there really wasn't a whole lot to do. I had to stick around for the other stuff.

KR: Do you remember bomb scares in the campus buildings?

GF: Not particularly. There was a bomb threat made when we [ROTC] did our march down College Avenue. The rumor had spread that Rich, whom I mentioned before, and his group [SDS] were going to throw an explosive device into the march, into the parade. As I said, this enlisted a response from campus patrol and a somewhat less obvious response from the State

Police. We were well protected, and those guys never showed up, which made things certainly much more simple. But I don't recall any great incidents of bomb scares. There may have been, but it's not something that I've made a point of remembering.

KR: On May 1, 1970, the National Strike started in response to the United States expanding the war and invading Cambodia, and it also started at Rutgers on May 1st.

GF: Right.

KR: Recreate for me your life in May 1970 and what was going on for you and what was going on with the protests.

GF: Well, it was a very confused time. Of course, I don't remember the precise date when the takeover of Old Queens happened. I think like May 6th or something, if I recall.

KR: Yes, it was May 4th to May 6th.

GF: Okay. Then, there were lots of things going on, a very tumultuous time. I'm trying to keep some semblance of my scholastic life going, and that became very, very difficult to do in a very short amount of time. I was looked to for leadership among the ROTC people, what was the appropriate response to these things. I don't know how well I carried it off, and I'm not sure that I was especially heroic in anything that I advised. But this was all new territory, and you're asking a twenty-one, twenty-two year old to define for several hundred other people and what they ought to do. It was one of my first real episodes of leadership, of being challenged. When the university takeover occurred and then I described for you yesterday the reaction over in Edison among, I don't know whether it was, the American Legion or the VFW or some kind of combination thereof, we went over to try and at least defuse the situation a little bit. We had people who had infiltrated into Old Queens and who occasionally would come out and let us know what was going on. The only thing that really was going on was they'd kind of camped out in the building and kind of trashed it.

One of the reasons why it took an extra year to get our yearbook completed is they took the yearbook files and they trashed those, so much of that had to be recreated. I never could figure out why that particularly bit of derring-do was necessary. You make your political point without coming in and then messing everything else up for everybody else. Of course, there was physical damage to the building and so forth. When that finally was kind of defused and people left the building and all, as kind of a spark point, it kind of died down, and then, of course, when Kent State happened, it came back like a second wave in a tsunami. Of course, everybody became much more involved, much more concerned, at least in my experience, after the Kent State killings occurred. That fueled a lot of the anti-ROTC rhetoric, without discriminating from the fact that the people involved weren't ROTC people. They were National Guard folks, and what was done was a failure of leadership and a failure of discipline. But the pictures were very graphic of the students who had been killed and so forth, and that certainly inflamed opinions. That was, I guess, my first two weeks of May in 1970. [Editor's Note: Following President Richard Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia, a nationwide student strike commenced in the beginning of May 1970. The strike began at Rutgers on Friday, May 1. On

Monday, May 4, two thousand protesters gathered on the Old Queens Campus, and Rutgers President Mason Gross addressed the crowd, calling the protesters his guests. That day, two hundred students occupied the second and third floors of Old Queens, including Gross' office, resulting in a two-day sit-in of Old Queens. On May 4 in Ohio, National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters and bystanders at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine. In solidarity with the National Strike, the Rutgers College faculty voted on Tuesday, May 5 to make classes and final exams optional and instituted pass/fail grades for the spring semester 1970. The faculty also voted to eliminate ROTC on campus the next year, though that was later reversed by the Board of Governors. On May 5, massive demonstrations continued at Rutgers, and protests and counter-protests continued for several weeks at Rutgers and on campuses across the nation. On May 14 and 15, 1970, students at Jackson State College protesting against racial harassment were fired upon by state and city police, resulting in two deaths and a dozen injuries. (From Paul Clemens' *Rutgers Since 1945*; Kent State University Libraries, Campus Strike Papers: New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1970)]

KR: The ROTC march that you described to me, was that going on while the Old Queens takeover was happening?

GF: I don't clearly remember just what the sequence was. It was the same general timeframe. I would like to say yes, it was, but the two events really weren't connected. We were demonstrating support for ROTC. They were demonstrating for a different issue, and the two events, in many regards, weren't connected. So, I can't answer at this distance just what the scheduling or the juxtaposition might have been.

KR: The veterans' organization over in Edison that you had interaction with, how involved were you, as a leader in Air Force ROTC, with this veterans' organization?

GF: Until that point, none at all. We knew that they existed. There were lots of the groups with their chapters and posts and so forth in the greater New Brunswick-Middlesex County area, and we were sort of aware that they existed. We didn't have any contact, any involvement with them.

KR: How was it that you and the Army ROTC leader ended up at their meeting in Edison? How did that communication happen?

GF: Someone had mentioned, and I don't remember now who it was, someone had mentioned that this group was having a meeting and they were very torqued up over the takeover. We thought that maybe since no one else seemed to be interested that we would go over and at least survey the situation and see what was going on. When we got there, I guess we concluded that this had the potential to really boil over into something very serious and very violent. So, we made, as I told you, the effort to try and defuse this, and, I guess, the fact that nothing ever happened, everybody kind of drifted away, was a good thing and that we were successful. For that, I am eternally grateful. [laughter]

KR: You mentioned being thrust into a position of leadership during this really turbulent time. How did you feel when graduation was coming? What was the atmosphere?

GF: Well, graduation, in many regards, was an anti-climax. We had graduation. We had a speaker. About half the class, half the people in the stadium got up and turned their backs on the speaker. It was a symbolic act of disrespect, which, I think, after they had done it and everybody sat back down, whatever impact it had kind of dissipated. The speaker continued with his speech, and I'm not even sure if it made *The Home News* in its next day coverage of the activities.

Of much more importance to me was, on graduation day earlier, like at noontime, I was commissioned in the Air Force, and that was done at the Barn and was a significant event in my life. Going to graduation was much more important to my folks and my grandparents probably than it was to me. There were a lot of fellows in the Engineering School who didn't even bother to attend. We had, instead of having five or six hundred graduates there from all the different departments, we had a considerably diminished number because a lot of guys had gone home and basically said, "Mail my diploma to me." More of the liberal arts-focused people showed up for graduation. There were lots of social events going on and that sort of thing. Then, after we graduated, we got our diplomas, everybody got in the cars and either went down to the shore or went home or wherever they were. Let's see, I think it was June 3rd is when that occurred, if I remember the date correctly, and a day or two later, you'd never know that any of us had been there.

KR: Who was the graduation speaker?

GF: I don't remember. That didn't make that big of an impact. He was some national figure. I'm sure you may have it in some archives some place. [Editor's Note: This likely refers to William T. Cahill, the Governor of New Jersey, who received an honorary degree at commencement on June 3, 1970.]

KR: It is. It is in University Archives, which I cannot get into right now. The people that I have interviewed so far in your class describe the graduates standing up, turning their backs on the speaker, but nobody can remember who the speaker was.

GF: Well, the problem with graduation speeches is most of them don't mean anything, and they're supposed to, I guess, be motivators or point you to the future. I'm reminded of a story that appeared in Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*, and he talked about before one particular battle that he rode up and down the line of the legion on his white horse. He told off-color stories to the troops. They were all very enthusiastic about this sort of thing and the fact that the general and the imperator was doing this kind of thing, but no one else ever remarked about what he had told, what he ever said. So, it made everybody funny and maybe felt relaxed, but it didn't have any earth-shaking, cosmic implications. My impression is that most of the speakers at Rutgers commencements that I have ever experienced had similar impact. Students were much more interested in getting it over with and getting on with the party than they ever were with being inspired or motivated or whatever. I've often thought that maybe we do away with the whole tradition of having commencement speakers. That's a tradition that, I guess, I don't have a whole lot of regard for.

KR: What was your commissioning like?

GF: It was a very formal happening. We were all in the Barn seated. You may remember how the main part of the Barn that they had concert seating essentially. There were three sides around a platform. Dr. Bill Bauer, from the Ceramic Engineering Department, was our commissioning officer. Dr. Bauer was a major general in the Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and so he performed the commissioning ceremony. You raise your right hand, you take the oath of office, and he basically waves his invisible magic wand and you're now a second lieutenant. [Editor's Note: The College Avenue Gym was nicknamed the Barn. William H. Bauer (1920-2015), RC '42, GSNB '47, '50, taught ceramics at Rutgers from 1947 to 1993. He served in the Army Air Corps in the Pacific during World War II and subsequently in the Air Force Reserve until retiring in 1978 as a major general.]

Then, the Army, we had, I think it was, Fritz Strosser, who performed the Army ceremony. Strosser was Class of '56. He was a four-star general. He was commander of U.S. forces in NATO but had remained a reasonably active Rutgers alum through all of those years. So, the Army guys got commissioned, and I think that was the extent of it. Yes, it was a ceremony that probably lasted maybe an hour, maybe not quite.

Then, there's a tradition in the services that the first enlisted man who salutes you outside the building, you're supposed to give a silver dollar. Of course, the enlisted fellows who were part of your ROTC detachment made sure that they were camped out right at the door, so that they could give the first salute and they could get the loot. We didn't have any silver dollars, but they would get a dollar a piece. Between these four guys, they probably accumulated about five hundred dollars. Then, I'm walking down the street, going back to my car in the parking lot behind the Barn, and there was another enlisted man who was not part of the ROTC detachment. I'm not sure just why he was there, and he snapped me a salute. I said, "Well, I've already been caught by those guys over there," which disappointed him. I said, "Anyway, thanks for the recognition," and I gave him a dollar. [laughter] So, he was happy. I don't know that anybody else did it like that. That was it. We went back and took off the uniform and, if I recall correctly, put on the cap and gown and went over to the stadium and found our assigned seats, our assigned sections, and plopped ourselves down. It was a pleasant day, a pleasant afternoon, with bright sunshine. It was a pleasant ending to a long, five-year quest.

KR: Who from your family came to your commissioning and graduation?

GF: My mother, my stepfather, my younger brother Terry, my father's mother, my grandmother, and she brought her sister from Memphis, and then my mother's parents showed up. Those are the ones that I recall. I don't think there was anybody else. I had several neighbors of my folks [who came]. The next-door neighbor in Old Bridge was--then it was called Madison Township--an Old Bridge Township councilman who eventually ended up as mayor, he and his wife came.

On the other side of their house was obviously another family, and the grandfather of that family, I remember his name, Peter Tchuk, T-C-H-U-K, he was a Russian immigrant, had been a tugboat captain in New York Harbor. He had lived in Russia in czarist times as a youngster, had gotten out of Russia after the First World War, at the time of the revolution, and had lived in the United States since then. He introduced me to the Russian Orthodox Church, and, actually, I went to

services with him a couple of times because I found it fascinating. Of course, there was the Byzantine connection with all of that, and I learned that the services were three to four hours long, that you stood for most of them. They were done in Russian, which meant that I had no idea what was going on, but it was just sort of interesting, stimulating to kind of look around and see people's reactions or whatever. From an understanding standpoint, it was a whole new dimension of looking at people and considering what people did and believed in and how they expressed those beliefs. Of course, the church was incredibly decorated, the icons, the amount of gold paint, gilt. It was just incredible. The people who were members of this congregation had donated a very, very large amount of resources to making their church something very special. That is to say, Peter came [to my graduation]. He wanted to be there. He considered himself this sort of a mentor, and I thought of him in some of the same kinds of ways, an interesting character.

KR: The people that you were in Air Force ROTC with and then folks you knew in Army ROTC, how much did you stay in touch after graduation and commissioning?

GF: Well, I was the class correspondent for the Class of '70 for the Rutgers Alumni Magazine. I held that position, I think it was thirty years. So, it was my responsibility to keep track of anybody who wanted to be kept track of. There were actually seven of us in the Air Force who, I guess, did it for the long haul. Joe Butchko retired as a brigadier general in the Strategic Air Command. Let' see, we had one of our fellows contract some kind of strange disease while he was in an overseas assignment and died. One of our guys ended up as a commander--he had been a fighter pilot--he ended up as commander of the 5th Fighter Wing Maintenance Squadron. Donnie Green retired as a colonel. He was the meteorologist for the moonshots out of Kennedy Space Center. He was the guy who gave the go/no go signal for the Apollo missions, a very, very important guy, a very important meteorologist. Let's see, who else can I remember? Bill Budenhagan retired and went to work for Eastern Airlines. There were probably a couple of others. I'd have to go back and review some of the columns. I actually saved all of those columns and digitized them and gave them to the Rutgers Archives just so that there would be a record somewhere of what some of us had done.

As far as the Army guys, to answer that part of the question, John Dressel graduated with me. He was also a five-year guy. He was best man at our wedding. Johnny retired as a vice president of the Gillette Company up in Boston and now lives in South Carolina. He married his girlfriend while we were in school. He married her in our fifth year. Unfortunately, she passed a number of years later from leukemia, a very sad event, totally unexpected.

Let's see, who else? Tom Burke ended up as a vice president of Westinghouse. Jack Connelly got off into Exxon and ended up as senior operations manager for some of their facilities. He actually had one stint here in South Jersey. What was his name? Richard Merz ended up as dean of engineering at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. Let's see, there was John Futyey, who ended up as a New Jersey Superior Court judge.

The one that is most interesting is Mike Freeman, who was my Army ROTC counterpart. Of course, Mike has been very much in the news in the last three weeks because he is the district attorney in Minneapolis and is responsible for the George Floyd case. I suspect that after this

stint is finished with--and I know that Mike will finish it because he's that kind of guy--but I suspect that after it's all finished, he's going to hang up the spikes and say, "Enough is enough." He's been the district attorney there probably for forty-five years and has had a great record and is generally pretty well respected. I sometimes wonder if he had been in charge of the police department as well as being district attorney that a lot of this would have never have happened. [Editor's Note: This refers to the arrest and death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 at the hands of Minneapolis police officers. Michael O. Freeman, RC '70, is a Minnesota politician and attorney. He served in the Minnesota Senate from 1983 to 1991. He was elected County Attorney of Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis, and held the position from 1991 to 1999. In 2006, he was elected again as Hennepin County Attorney. In this position, he is prosecuting former police officer, Derek Chauvin, who is responsible for killing George Floyd.]

KR: Gene, do you know anyone in your class or anyone ahead of you or behind you that ended up serving in Vietnam?

GF: Yes, there were a number of guys ahead of me. The war was winding down in '70-'71. We had largely pulled most of our forces out; Vietnamization was what it was. They had the Paris Peace Accords that basically said that the Americans will make a graceful exit and then it's up to the South Vietnamese to determine their own destiny. Of course, the guys in the north agreed with that, fully expecting that in 1974 that they would roll across the border, which they did and then basically captured the south. [Editor's Note: After the Paris Peace Accords between the United States and North Vietnam in 1973, American forces withdrew from South Vietnam. In 1975, North Vietnamese forces invaded South Vietnam. North Vietnamese forces took over Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, on April 30, 1975.]

Of the guys who were ahead of me, there were a number [who served in Vietnam]. Jack Jacobs was Class of '66. He won the Medal of Honor in '68 I think it was and actually had the presentation of the medal at Rutgers, which was kind of a big deal. I think it was somebody like the Secretary of the Army actually came to campus to make the presentation. I do not recall anyone who was a casualty from our groups. I won't say that there weren't any, but I don't have any recollection. A lot of our guys served but didn't serve in Southeast Asia. [Editor's Note: The oral history of Jack H. Jacobs, RC '66, is archived on the website of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

The one fellow that I described for you yesterday, who played cards through his examination week, enlisted in the Air Force and ended up in Florida as a radar operator and actually intercepted a MiG coming in from Cuba, where the pilot was defecting. He had to raise the alarm and then guide this guy in, so that he could land at Miami International Airport. [laughter] This must have caused a lot of interesting reactions. You've got Eastern Airlines and United Airlines, American Airlines, oh, here comes a Cuban fighter jet that plops itself down. But we had guys serving in Germany and all kinds of different places, so it certainly was not exclusively Southeast Asia. [Editor's Note: A MiG is a fighter jet produced by the Russian Aircraft Corporation, MiG. In 1991 and 1993, Cuban Air Force pilots flying MiG fighters defected to the United States.]

I think one of the determinant things is, at least for the Army guys, it was only through your commitment of service, and it didn't have a really great opportunity if you were only going to serve two years and take a Reserve assignment or resign your commission or whatever, you didn't really have a lot of opportunity to go to Southeast Asia. I mean, most of us had officer advance courses. We had courses, or school, in whatever branch we were assigned. I had an engineering officer program, and then the Army guys had something very similar. That occupied three months, the first three months of your initial assignment, and then whatever else you ended up doing. If you hadn't indicated that you expected to continue, the Army didn't invest a whole lot in your time. They were already talking about downsizing the force because of what was going on overseas, and so there just weren't a lot of opportunities. You really had to work hard if you wanted to go to Southeast Asia. You had to make application and you had to make the best of yourself in order to be picked up for that, and usually you had to commit for an additional couple years.

On the Air Force side, we all had four-year commitments. So, the opportunity was certainly there, but for most of us, it was also going to schools and becoming much more technologically proficient in the various things that we had to do. I had an assignment, right after the assignment at Edwards, to the Ordnance Research Laboratory in State College, Pennsylvania, which happened to be right on the Penn State campus. So, I ended up in graduate school, while I'm busy working. That was kind of neat. What was particularly interesting is the Ordnance Research Laboratory was a Navy installation and I'm an Air Force guy. So, this was before the idea of having joint assignments got to be the flavor of the month. Guys who had joint assignments, at some point, usually had the opportunity for more advancement. Everybody who aspired to be a general officer had to have had at least one joint assignment on their record. Here I was, a first lieutenant, and I had a joint assignment. [laughter] It was kind of interesting.

A story that goes with this that is not related necessarily to Rutgers, but one of the things that the lab was responsible for was overseeing the development of the propulsor unit for the Mark 48 torpedo. If you ever saw the movie *Red October*, you may remember that the Russian submarine launched a Russian version of the Mark 48 at the *Red October* and at the American submarine. We knew that ours worked better, but theirs worked pretty good too, as it turns out. [Editor's Note: *The Hunt for Red October* is a 1990 film based on Tom Clancy's 1984 novel of the same name.]

So, the project's not going very well. One afternoon, this Navy admiral shows up, more gold braid than I think I've ever seen, and he was not a big dude, like five-foot-six and kind of wiry and wizened-looking and all. Everybody in the building was shaking like leaves, including the captain in charge, and I said, "Who's the guy that's causing that?" "Admiral Rickover." I said, "Wait a minute, he's naval reactors, he doesn't have anything to do with weapons." "Those weapons are going in his submarines." He walked down office to office, and there was blood running on the floor of every office. He got to mine, all the way at the end of the corridor, it said, "Lieutenant, USAF." I guess he figured, "This guy doesn't belong to me." [laughter] So, he just walked right by. He went down, and the chief, the chief petty officer, who was assigned there, fixed him a cup of coffee and he sat with the chief and had a very pleasant conversation. One thing about Rickover that impressed me tremendously was that he had a real feeling for the enlisted force. If you were an officer, you were expected to live to very high standards and very

high performance. If you were an enlisted guy, you were the salt of the earth. It was an interesting exercise. [Editor's Note: Admiral Hyman G. Rickover served as an officer in the Navy for sixty-three years, from 1918, when he attended the Naval Academy, until he was forced to retire in 1982. He oversaw the Navy's development of nuclear-powered submarines and went on to develop civilian uses of nuclear power.]

Years and years later, I worked for a guy, in fact, he's still a very close friend, who had been one of Rickover's principal deputies, and I could see the old man in [him]. The fellow's name is Ed. He lives in Voorhees, New Jersey, but I could see how working for the old man for sixteen years had shaped him. The very same kinds of things, very uncompromising, he had very strict ideas of what constituted excellence, what constituted quality. It was just an amazing kind of thing, amazing how somebody can rub off other people's characteristics. Obviously, most of the guys who worked for Rickover idolized him and thought he was the greatest thing since butterflies. The guys who didn't like him, didn't like him. It was interesting, to say the least.

KR: Before we get into your career, and I do want to delve into your career, I just have a few more questions about your Rutgers years.

GF: Okay.

KR: You spoke yesterday about your internship with the alumni office.

GF: Right.

KR: How did you get that?

GF: Well, it partly came about as a result of my ROTC involvement, and, as I recall, Vinny [Kramer] asked if I could use as a job, a part-time job, not making a whole lot of money, obviously, but, at that point, anything was a contribution. In fact, I had a job working one night a week in a trucking freight terminal in Somerville, and I had to join the Teamsters union. I was making, for one night's work, I made 125 bucks, which was good money, which was an indication of how well the regular Teamsters made out. Then, I did that for more than a year, and that occupied Sunday night into Monday morning, which made it tough my last year because I had a class in linear analysis at five o'clock on Monday afternoon. By that time, I could just about keep my eyes open. I'm sure I fell asleep more than a few times in class. [laughter] Yes, I got off the path here, sorry. [Editor's Note: Vincent Kramer, RC '41, served as an officer in the Marine Corps during World War II and continued his military career after the war. After his retirement in 1964, he became executive secretary and director of the Rutgers Alumni Association until 1987. His oral history is available on the Rutgers Oral History Archives website.]

Well, Vinny basically approached me. He was doing it more, I think, out of a sense of trying to help somebody out than anything else. So, there I was. I did just menial kinds of stuff, like made xerox copies and took phone messages every once in a while. When he wanted a cup of coffee, I would go out and get the coffee, you know, typical kinds of stuff that you'd expect out of an office assistant I guess.

KR: I am curious, where were the offices located?

GF: Well, he started, he had an office in Old Queens, on, I think, the third floor. When they started doing renovations, they moved the office down on College Avenue opposite the Alexander Library, and they were located there for more than a couple years. Then, he retired, I guess, in 1987, when I was already on the board of the alumni association. I had been on board of the alumni association for a number of years. They moved--right in that area, there were several buildings that belonged to the university--they would take him from one place and move to another, but it was all within two minutes walking distance, so there were no massive moves anywhere.

KR: What other anecdotes do you have to share from your time working at the alumni office?

GF: Other than the episode that related to you earlier that was probably the most significant, the rest were just trivial kinds of things. There really weren't any anecdotes that stuck in my mind. It was very kind of trivial. It was not a lot of times; I wasn't working twenty hours a week or anything like that. I would basically come in either at lunchtime or in the afternoon and spend an hour or three doing whatever office tasks that Vinny didn't feel like doing himself and he'd pass on to me. Maybe he did that so that I'd have something to do and feel like that I had actually accomplished something.

KR: How was Rutgers different in 1970 from how it was in 1965?

GF: Well, certainly, the level of activism. In '65, Rutgers was very much a conformist kind of institution. There was still a lot of holdover from the earlier '60s, maybe even from the '50s. Some of that was generational, related to the faculty, I think, and some of it was generational related to the administration. There was a lot more acceptance of authority or a lack of questioning of authority. We talked about the gray flannel suit, and it was still very much in evidence. You could see that just in student dress. It was not at all atypical for, in 1965, people wore ties and jackets and so forth. By, 1970 we were into tie-dyed and rags and things like that. Certainly, The Beatles had started the hairdos and things like that and we had guys who aped those particular looks and styles and all, but they were, I think, more of a minority. By 1970, the guy with the short haircut was the guy that stood out because he was obvious, and everybody else kind of looked like they needed to go to a hair salon and have the curlers put in.

There's a story about that. One of my fraternity brothers had a band, and he would play at the house on party nights and he would then hire himself out as well to some of the other houses on campus and do other things like that. He was also in Air Force ROTC, which meant there were certain grooming standards. He actually bought a wig, so that he could wear the wig while he was doing the band thing. [laughter] He was trying to sort of look like Ringo Starr. He played drums. But in order to kind of bridge this, he went to the point of buying himself [laughter] a Beatles-type wig that he put on and it had a curled fringe around the edge. He got a lot of ribbing over the wig. [Editor's Note: Ringo Starr was the drummer for The Beatles.]

KR: After your commissioning, after graduation, what came next for you?

GF: Well, as I said, I had an assignment initially to Systems Command, which didn't last at all long because the Air Force decided to get out of the Titan IIIC missile business. Then, I was offered this great opportunity. The colonel walked over and put his arm around my shoulder, told me all about civil engineering, and how this move was good for my career and all this kind of stuff. So, that's what I did and then I had the opportunity to go in this research lab and go to Penn State. I did my master's there. Then, I had other kinds of assignments to do. Let's see, I'm trying to recall, they wanted me to go to Northwestern to take a program, a certification in nuclear engineering, which I did.

Then, [I had] another base-level assignment. Then, they came and said, "We want you to go to the Wharton School and do the executive management program," and I did that, which basically was an MBA program but it was finance-oriented and so forth. Then, I was an operations officer at a squadron, which meant that I operated all the dump trucks and much of the folks who actually did whatever had to be done.

I had an assignment during Ronald Reagan's administration. The United States and Russia signed a treaty to destroy chemical weapons inventories. There were two kinds of chemical weapons. One was the so-called unitary weapon, which everything was packed into the end of one rocket. Then, the binary ones actually had two pieces and they had to kind of crash together in order to make them operative. The kinds of stuff that were in the military munitions were a number of very powerful nerve agents, GB [Sarin], VX, GS and so forth. [Editor's Note: In 1986, President Ronald Reagan made an agreement with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to remove American chemical weapons from West Germany. The weapons were transferred to Johnson Atoll in the Pacific to be destroyed at the Chemical Agent Disposal System there.]

We did a survey of the United States inventory and we had about six thousand tons of this stuff spread in various places around the world. Then, we talked to our Russian counterparts and discovered that they had sixty thousand tons of this stuff. They had enough stuff tucked away in places on the other side of the Ural Mountains to have wiped out the entire population of Asia. Getting rid of this stuff from the environment, for the biosphere, turned into a really good idea.

There were three different technical approaches that were approved, and I became a consultant to the United States Chemical Weapons Destruction Agency, which was part of the Department of the Army. It was run by the Army. They all looked at me like, "You're an Air Force guy. What do you know about this business?" They were all chemical warfare guys, so it was, "What do you guys know about this?" Well, they said, "This is to do." This was my second joint assignment. So, I figured I was really doing great. It ended up, we built an incinerator complex on Johnson Island out in the middle of the South Pacific, a thousand miles from anywhere. The whole idea was you took the munitions, most of which were inside artillery shells, and you would put them in this incinerator and you would burn them. Then, the thing that was important was that the contents of the shell would degenerate into effectively harmless byproducts, and you'd fish out the shell when it was all finished and you could send it off to be recycled into some other kind of a metal or whatever.

We had a Korean War-period submarine there at the island. If there was ever a problem, we were instructed to run down and jump in the submarine and close the hatch until whatever might have happened had blown away. We never had any problems. We never had any accidents. We learned an awful lot about this. I learned, for example, that all of this stuff was really nothing more than what you got out of a can of Raid, only it's enormously diluted. This stuff is bad on insects, just as it is on people. Most all of it are neurotoxins, but, anyway, we got through that.

The Russians came back at one point and said that they didn't know how to do the destruction. They didn't know how to do the destruction process. "You've got to help us," they said. So, we did in some way and provided some technical advice and whatever. It was interesting times dealing with those guys. This was, of course, by the time we got around to doing it, it was after the Soviet Union had folded, and you had Gorbachev as the president of Russia and a new period of *perestroika* and friendship and whatever. [Editor's Note: Mikhail Gorbachev served as the General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991 and as head of state from 1988 to 1991. His policies of "perestroika" (restructuring) and "glasnost" (openness) sought reform but ultimately failed, as the U.S.S.R. dissolved in 1991 and Boris Yeltsin became the president until 1999.]

The most interesting part of all of this, that I found fascinating is, for the first time, Americans had access to most of the Soviet archives, and so you could go back, and particularly for the Comintern and these kinds of things, you could actually learn from their perspective what had transpired in the '30s and the '40s. [Editor's Note: The Communist International (Comintern) was an organization headquartered in the Soviet Union with the goal of spreading communism. It was in operation from 1919 to 1943, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took over the Comintern's records. In 1991, the Comintern archives were opened to the public at the Russian State Archives for Social and Political History in Moscow. Recent international efforts of the International Committee for the Computerization of the Comintern have focused on making the records more accessible through digitization and translation.]

One of the things that we learned was that Mr. McCarthy was not so far wrong when he got up and talked about all the folks who were members of the party. A number of people, prominent people, in America were on the Soviet payroll. I mean, do you remember reading about--what was her name?--Dorothy Post? I think she was a columnist for, I think it was the *New York Herald*. Her famous quote was, "Girls with glasses never get passes." Maybe you don't, but, anyway, yes, she was in the pay of the Comintern for twenty-five years. [Editor's Note: In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy's claims that Communists had infiltrated the State Department sparked a Red Scare throughout American society.]

Ernest Hemingway had been in the pay of Soviet intelligence almost from the end of World War I right through until he committed suicide in Cuba, what was it, 1960. There were just a bunch of other people. What was the fellow in the State Department who was prosecuted for perjury? Oh, gee, I don't remember that name. Well, it turns out that he really wasn't the spy. The guy who took off after him was Richard Nixon, when he was a Congressman. The real spy was his wife and he took the fall for this and went to prison to spare her that kind of thing. You've got all this stuff laid out in the archives there. For someone with historical interest and bent, it was fascinating, and of course, there were lots of people that I had become acquainted with who were

making the trip to Moscow to see what was in there, that they could use for their particular next paper or project. It was fascinating, really fascinating, those kinds of things. [Editor's Note: Ernest Hemingway committed suicide at his home in Ketchum, Idaho in 1961. John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr and Alexander Vassiliev's *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* reveals that Hemingway was on the KGB's list of its agents in America in the early 1940s. The book is based on research undertaken by the former KGB officer Vassiliev, when he was given access to Stalin-era intelligence archives in Moscow. Mr. Fricks is referring to Alger Hiss. In 1948, professed ex-Communist and spy Whittaker Chambers testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), identifying a number of alleged Communists from the 1930s, including Alger Hiss. Hiss had served in the Roosevelt Administration and the State Department before becoming head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Richard Nixon, then a first-term Congressman and a member of HUAC, headed the investigation of Chambers and Hiss to determine who was lying. Chambers said that Hiss turned over secret government documents to the Soviets in the late 1930s, thus committing espionage, and offered as evidence microfilmed documents located at Chambers' Maryland farm and hidden in a pumpkin, dubbed the "Pumpkin Papers." Although the statute of limitations had expired for charges of espionage, Hiss was tried twice on counts of perjury and convicted in 1950. Priscilla Hiss, who was implicated in the alleged spying, testified in both trials, maintaining her husband's innocence. Alger Hiss served three years of a five-year sentence. Although Hiss spent the duration of his life asserting his innocence, the question of Hiss's involvement in espionage remains highly debated and controversial.]

I got off into a lot of the environmental-related stuff because that had become a big issue. We did a project at Incirlik Airbase in Turkey, which had an installation of what was called intermediate-range ballistic missiles, that there was a need to retract, from Turkey, a bunch of electrical equipment, which was contaminated with PCBs [polychlorinated biphenyls]. We, in fact, did the extraction, had plane loads of equipment being brought back to the United States. One of the young engineers in our group came up with a way to neutralize PCBs at one-fiftieth of the cost that we had been spending for remediation in all the other places that had this kind of contamination. It was a major breakthrough in the remediation world. At that point, PCBs kind of slipped from being the number one remediation target on the hit parade to something that was a lot less urgent because now we know how to do it. That was important. So, there were a lot of worthwhile things that came out of some of these activities.

I retired in '93 after the Gulf War, Desert Storm. I had a number of assignments, one for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, having to do with possible relocation of air bases to the area that was outside the range of the scud missiles that Saddam Hussein had. I actually went to the location being considered, one of the most desolate, hot places I have ever been. Fortunately, the reason for potentially leaving never materialized. We found where most of the weapons had been buried and destroyed them.

I was given a special assignment to the U.S. port mortuary, the military mortuary at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, as a support person for a brigadier general, Air Force, who ran this place. It was interesting because I had known him in our previous lives, so it was kind of an old home kind of thing. It was just pure dumb luck that I ended up working for him. [Editor's Note:

The Charles C. Carson Center for Mortuary Affairs is located at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware and is the primary mortuary center for the military.]

The most interesting thing that happened--we were very fortunate that we had relatively few casualties to deal with, and I was mostly in the business of keeping the air conditioning systems working and the decontamination systems and so on. We wanted to make sure you controlled disease and that kind of thing. Early one morning, when I'm in the control center for the mortuary, the door opens. It's kind of dark, and I'm all by myself. This was not an area where just anybody could walk in. Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, he had gotten in his helicopter and had flown over from Pentagon, because the mortuary had been in the news the day or two before. There had been a disturbance or two. Actually, the press caused the disturbance and interfered with a number of families who were retrieving their family members. So, he came over. I gave him a tour of the place, and we had coffee together and whatever. I said, "You know, I'm supposed to call the wing commander and let him know you're here." He said, "You can do that after I leave." [laughter] After he left, I picked up the phone, called the wing commander, woke him up at home, and I said, "You're not going to believe who I've just had as a guest here for the last hour." "Why didn't you call me?" "Well, because he told me not to." It was interesting, a great guy. Powell was totally impressive, in my opinion. When he decided that he was not going to run for president, I thought that that was a real loss for the nation. He would've been something really special. [Editor's Note: Colin Powell is a retired Army general who served as the National Security Advisor from 1987 to 1989, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989 to 1993, and Secretary of State from 2001 to 2005.]

Then, as I say, after all that, I retired and went off into the consulting business and was doing large number of worldwide projects. The last thing that I did, I was senior vice president for a consulting outfit in Manhattan. I worked with Steve Santoro, whom I mentioned earlier, the executive director of New Jersey Transit and some of his people, working with Amtrak, and doing some of their projects and so forth.

Then, I retired. I guess it was about 2014. I had started a graduate program in Camden in 2012, got through it in good order, honors graduate, had a 4.0 grade point average, which anybody in 1965 would never have predicted. I did my master's work, if you will, on the 1915 New Jersey referendum to give women the right to vote, and I'm still continuing the work.

A little background here. It had been proposed that several items to be enacted into the state constitution. One was statewide Prohibition, the other was to give women the right to vote, and the third thing was to amend the way that the state constitution could be amended and make it more liberal. It was a very exciting campaign. Most of the political establishment in New Jersey were opposed to giving women the right to vote, the big political leaders, such as Frank Hague in Jersey City, with his famous comment, "Why would women want to be in politics? It's a dirty business." The German community controlled political life in Newark, and they were very definitely opposed to Prohibition because the brewing business was a major part of the economy. Atlantic City, I don't know if you've seen *Boardwalk Empire* on HBO, which is obviously a dramatization of Enoch Johnson's time, but at root, and if you read Judge Johnson's book of the same title, that is pretty authentic. He didn't do the melodramatic things that you do for television. Enoch Johnson opposed giving women the right to vote. The only place that the

proposition was successful was in Camden. [Editor's Note: Nelson Johnson, a lawyer, former judge and author, wrote the 2002 book *Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times, and Corruption of Atlantic City*, which later became an HBO series. A central figure in *Boardwalk Empire* is Enoch Johnson, who was the sheriff and treasurer of Atlantic County and political boss of Atlantic City. He ran bootlegging, gambling, and prostitution operations, until he was convicted of tax evasion in 1941.]

It had to do, I think, [with] some of the leadership. David Baird was the Republican Camden County leader--and I think I may have mentioned this to you before--his grandson, Tom Baird was someone that I've known for a number of years. I had asked Tom if I could read or look at his grandfather's papers to use as reference material for what I was doing, and he said, "No," that he was thinking about doing something himself and so he wouldn't give me the opportunity. He's never done anything. I think it's unfortunate because apparently, from comments that I've read elsewhere, Mr. Baird got a lot of pressure from Mrs. Baird to at least be neutral in the subject if not supportive.

A big area, geographically, in Camden County of support, the very important leadership, was Haddonfield. The support or non-support kind of broke down along religious lines. The Methodists and the Catholics were very opposed to suffrage, Catholics because the church had issued an official encyclical opposed to the idea of suffrage. I'm not sure why the Methodists were opposed, but they were. The Baptists and the Presbyterians and the Quakers were very much in favor.

So, the pictures of stories that I've seen, they actually had marches in Camden, in Haddonfield and some of the other places--and this is not something that was at all typical for South Jersey--they had sound trucks that went about the street with these huge, it looked like an old-fashioned hearing horn, but they were broadcasting, "Get out to vote, women," and so forth. It was not a huge group of people who were supporters, but one of the supporters was Henry Moore, who was the president of the American Tobacco Company, who lived in Haddonfield. His wife was one of the real leaders of the movement. Her cousin was the woman who founded the Women's Christian Temperance Union, so she was pushing Prohibition. We had Alice Paul from Moorestown, who had been camped out in Washington, D.C. since 1913, since Wilson had been elected president, and was pushing on the national level for acceptance of the idea. But what was the nucleus was probably about two hundred people. There's an organization in Philadelphia, the American Anti-Suffrage Association, and it was mostly women's membership, and it had about five thousand members. In the newspapers of the time, you had the volleying back and forth across the river of the two organizations, a fascinating way to explore it.

You get down to, it was October 15th, I think it was, 1915, the referendum is held. Wilson comes up from Washington to go to Princeton, so he can cast his ballot. As I say, it failed everywhere in New Jersey except in Camden, and that was really remarkable. The guy who ran for the Assembly, the State Assembly, from Camden, campaigned on anti-Prohibition, pro-gambling and pro-prostitution platform, make prostitution legal, make gambling legal, and let's not have this. The breakdown politically, the Republicans had the largest vote, and, apparently, it depended on where you were, as to how they voted. The Socialists had the second largest vote, and Democrats had a third and a distant third. In South Jersey, the Democratic Party did

not play much of a role until the 1930s, and the Socialists were the Debs version, Eugene Debs, and they kind of faded out through the '30s. The Democrats kind of absorbed much of their platform and built their powerbase from that standpoint.

We come to 1918. Wilson had tried twice to get the Senate to consider a suffrage amendment of the United States Constitution, and in both cases, his Democrat allies from the Deep South scotched the idea. In the 1916 Congress, Democrats controlled the House, had a substantial minority in the Senate. Then, when country entered World War I, there was lots of dislocation. In the spring of 1918, the Germans launched their all-out offensive. It was going to win the war. Kaiser Wilhelm promised the women of Germany: support us for this and he would see to it that German women were given the vote. Apparently, it really motivated things, but the offensive failed, and the German Army retreated back to their lines to lick their wounds.

Well, then, in October of 1918, the Allies launched their great Meuse-Argonne Offensive with the United States suffering enormous casualties, and three weeks later, November 8, 1918 were the congressional midterm elections. The Democratic Party was destroyed. The Republicans got a clear majority, a two-thirds, veto-proof majority in the Senate and, except in the Deep South, lost enormously in the House.

Wilson gets himself involved in the Versailles Treaty, and it's left to Henry Cabot Lodge, the elder, to propose the Prohibition amendment, the Eighteenth, and the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the vote. It was due to Cabot Lodge that that was enacted, and women are given the vote. In 1920, of course, Harding ran for president, very photogenic. That's one of the things that all the commentators of the time remarked upon. [Editor's Note: Henry Cabot Lodge served in the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts from 1893 to 1924. He headed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1919 to 1924, as well as being the Senate Majority Leader from 1918 to 1924. In the presidential election of 1920, Republican Senator Warren G. Harding defeated Ohio Governor James M. Cox. On June 4, 1919, the Senate passed the Nineteenth Amendment, which went into effect in 1920 after being ratified by the necessary three-fourths of the states.]

Well, then, you know Harding was in the Teapot Dome [Scandal] and all the other kinds of things that happened later. One of the things and it's a current issue that came out of this, and it came from the society women of New York and you can find documented correspondence, they said they would not support the amendment that Cabot Lodge had proposed unless something was done about immigration. They wanted immigration to be significantly revamped to cut off immigration from Eastern Europe and Southern Europe. So, to get the necessary support for the amendment, for both amendments, the Congress proposed basically the immigration quota system that we have today. It's just amazing how those kinds of things go. [Editor's Note: The Teapot Dome Scandal involved bribery among members of Warren G. Harding's administration. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Law of 1924 both sharply curtailed immigration by instituting nation of origin-based quotas.]

One of the other things that I learned, one of the major causes for the failure of the Versailles Treaty with the U.S. Congress, Japan proposed Article 6 of the treaty, which outlawed racism, and the Congress, especially California and the Deep South, just rose up in insurrection. [Editor's Note: At the Paris Peace Conference, Japan proposed an racial equality clause that was

excluded from the Treaty of Versailles.] The reason that Wilson went to the West Coast on his barnstorming tour was an effort to try and undermine two senators from California. It was said that this treaty would be accepted over their dead bodies. Of course, it also cost Wilson his life. He had this massive stroke on the way back. In fact, the guy who led the assault against the treaty in California was the state attorney general, who was a young guy. He was in his twenties, late twenties when he was elected, Earl Warren. It was an amazing thing. Of course, Warren was governor of California in 1941, when the Japanese relocation effort happened, and one would have never expected Warren, when he became Chief Justice [of the Supreme Court], to have undertaken the kinds of things that he had done. That was a complete reversal of expectation. [Editor's Note: During Wilson's speaking tour to convince the American public to accept the Treaty of Versailles and join the League of Nations, the intense travel schedule caused the president to collapse from exhaustion. He returned to Washington and then suffered a debilitating stroke on October 2, 1919, leaving him incapacitated for the rest of his presidency. Senators Hiram Johnson from California and William Borah of Idaho were among the Senators who opposed the Treaty of Versailles, which the Senate rejected on November 19, 1919, the first peace treaty ever voted down by the Senate. Earl Warren was a deputy district attorney of Alameda County in the early 1920s. He served as the Attorney General of California from 1939 to 1943, during which time he oversaw the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and Governor of California from 1943 to 1953. He then served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1953 to 1969.]

Out of this graduate paper that I had done, I got an enormous introduction into that part of American history, twentieth century American history, that nobody had ever exposed me to. I actually got to see a video of the movie *Birth of a Nation*, that Wilson, of course, got to see in a private showing at the White House. I have, on my bookshelf here, both of D.W. Griffith's books, *Birth of a Nation* and *Fall of a Nation*--the second book, I don't think ever got as much attention as the first did--violently racist, and the movie is a pretty fair representation of what the book was like. [Editor's Note: D.W. Griffith directed *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which was based on the 1905 novel and play *The Clansman*, written by Thomas Dixon, Jr. *The Fall of a Nation*, the sequel, was directed by Dixon in 1916.]

When I got finished with that in 2014, I thought that I had made a little bit of a contribution. Then, the *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* wanted to publish what I had written, and the chancellor in Camden was overwhelmed, somebody from the graduate program was getting printed in a refereed journal. I was really very proud about that. I kind of stood up for Camden.

So, anyway, I continued consulting. I've continued in the business about Camden. One of the projects that I undertook was to analyze--a bit of background, in the 1960s, there was a fellow who published a paper about what happened in North Jersey, particularly in Hudson County, during the 1915 effort. He had analyses of religious breakdowns of the people involved, political affiliations, economic status and whatever. So, I set out to discover if there was anything that I could say about the people in Camden, Camden County, that was comparable, just to get a sense of who these people were that were pushing these issues. Where I lived in Jersey City in high school, the back of our apartment house backed up to the state headquarters of the New Jersey Women's Club. So, I went to them as a resource. First of all, did they have any records related

to this paper that was done? Actually, they didn't, and we never did find much background that this fellow used. I'm not sure if it was kept, or if it was, where it was. So, I started out searching. One of the fellows that I had met here in South Jersey was a fellow by the name of Potter, and his older sister had been the president of the Camden Equal Rights organization. I think his first name was Steve, Steven Potter. He was much older than I was. He had been a columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and for newspapers in Camden County. So, I got my first real sense of who the people were at ground zero of this whole thing.

Then, I began to do the ancestry search in an effort to find out things about these people and then discovered what churches they belonged to and what businesses they were involved with, what their economic status was and that sort of thing. I continued that and now have a database of 43,000 names, where I have recast the 1920 Census for Camden County. Instead of having the men as head of household all on the left-hand side and that's the indexing, I have all the women on the left-hand side, and all the women in Camden, whether they're five years old or sixty-five years old, but in an effort to identify the same kinds of things, if I can. Camden, at this time, had a population of 142,000 people. It's about twice the size of the city today. So, this has been a real effort, a real situation, but I'm getting there. Maybe before I'm finished, we'll have a document that people can go back and actually do some research with and dig stuff out. So, sorry to bend your ear. That's, I guess, to be expected.

KR: Thank you for sharing. That is really interesting. Gene, I want to go back and ask you something. You talked about the archives in Russia. Did you actually get to go to Moscow and go through the archives?

GF: No, but several colleagues, good friends did. When Chernobyl happened, I was asked to go to Ukraine, and the fellow that I mentioned earlier that I ended up working for, Ed, was one of the people sent by the United States government. His job was administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, and he operated at an assistant secretary-level within the Department of Energy. I was asked to go along, and we were prepared to do that. Then, the Russians told us that we would not be allowed to get into any proximity of where the accident had happened. There was no point in being there, you know, live in some rather primitive hotels out in the woods in Ukraine and all. Our group, it consisted of about four eminent American engineers who just went back to the United States. So, no, but we had a number of good friends who actually did have a very great opportunity to go through the archives, come back with satchels and satchels of photocopies of things from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, even into the '50s, showing just how bad Josef Stalin really was. [Editor's Note: The worst nuclear accident in history occurred on April 26, 1986 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant near Pripyat, Ukraine.]

KR: You have talked about this a little bit as we have gone through, but what has your involvement been in alumni affairs at Rutgers?

GF: Oh, let's see, I have been a member of the board of the Rutgers Alumni Association since 1976-'77. I served as the treasurer for the alumni association for a couple years. I was the alumni representative to the Faculty Senate for five years. I was the treasurer of the Rutgers Alumni Federation for a term. They wanted me to run for president of the federation. I really had my heart set on being president of the RAA, and other things got in the way, assignments

and being posted to places that weren't close to New Jersey. That didn't work out. So, I have been a member, in some fashion, for all that time.

I chaired, at one time or another, most all of the committees of the RAA. I'm currently the co-chair of the By-laws Committee. I, at one point, chaired the Budget and Finance Committee, Long Range Planning, Membership Affairs, Grants and Gifts. We've got, I think, about fifteen or eighteen committees. I was responsible for Homecoming for two years, Alumni reunion day, back when it was held in May with the big parade up College Avenue and assembled everybody down at Old Queens and all that sort of business.

I mentioned to you that I was a class correspondent for a while. I was alumni class president for ten years, two five-year terms, and I decided to share it with other people. [laughter] So, the guy who's currently the president, Charlie [Carroll], you probably have met or will meet. Actually, he's close enough that he could almost come to the office and do this kind of thing with you. Maybe you'll have that opportunity if things become less restricted. Yes, a lot of us have been very involved, very committed. Yes, it's been a great thing.

KR: What have your experiences been like over the past couple of months, as New Jersey has been sheltering in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

GF: Well, we've kept pretty much close to home. We go out to go to the grocery store, go to the drugstore, that kind of thing. I've had two medical procedures since March. One was Friday of last week, I had surgery. I am the treasurer, corporate treasurer, for an organization in Collingswood here. This morning, I went in to pay some bills and get payroll checks, as I mentioned, I think, distributed and so forth and beat feet back quickly, so I could be with you. Yes, that's the kind of thing, there's nothing particularly spectacular but just holding on.

Our reunion was cancelled. Alumni Affairs keeps saying, "Well, maybe we'll have something in the fall." Peter March, the Executive Dean of Arts and Sciences, who I'm sure you know, attended our Zoom RAA board meeting, annual meeting actually, several weeks ago. From his comments, I suspect that there will not be any public activities related to the university until probably the end of the year, which says that we will not have a reunion. We'll be the first class in two hundred years--well, not two hundred years--but since the 1860s that hasn't. I guess that's a distinction, maybe not a good one. In fifty years, we can come back and redo this [laughter], and remember about the reunion that never was.

Yes, it's been kind of a quiet time. It would be nice if we had been able to do these things. We raised a fair amount of money. We hit our goal, our fundraising goal, paid for this program and some other gifts that we've given to the university. We're proud of that and indebted to a minority of members of the class. There's still a lot of members of the class who hold bad memories and hold grudges going back fifty years. A fair number of my engineering classmates were among them. I think that if you were to do some kind of a percentage breakdown, I doubt that twenty-five percent of the 1970 engineering graduates had particularly pleasant memories of their last year, their last months. When I've spoken to some of them and written them letters and so forth, I've gotten everything from a polite, "Gee, no, I can't do that," down to, "Hell no" and hang up on me.

KR: Gene, the ones who say, "Hell no," what does that grudge stem from?

GF: Well, one fellow, who I'm still a little bit close with, he says, "It's not the same place that I went to school. It's a very different place. I disagree with many of the policies and things that the university has done, and so I have no interest in supporting it." Then, they'll bring up 1970 as a burr that has stuck under the saddle blanket. 1970 continues to carry a little bit of negative weight with some of the folks. I expected, for example, Tom Burke, who I told you earlier was a vice president of Westinghouse, to have been a decent supporter, and Tom would barely speak to me when I brought the subject up and had absolutely no intention of participating or contributing. I felt badly about that because it's not about this big, faceless edifice called the university; it's about us, the shared experiences and the memories and whatever, and he didn't quite see it that way. I really wouldn't have expected many of those people to have participated, even if we had been able to pull off something, social distancing or not, and it was just not something that was going to happen.

KR: On that note, what does Rutgers mean to you?

GF: Well, I'm still proud of being a Rutgers graduate. The enthusiasm, I think, has probably dimmed a lot over time. I happen to agree with the fellow who says it's not the place I went to school. It's clearly not. I think, in some regards, New Brunswick has become a very alien kind of place. I guess the fact that we don't live in Central Jersey and don't really see very much, other than through mail and whatever, contributes to that somehow. The university is absolutely terrible when it comes to polishing its own image. The business of sending out daily emails and whatever--and I know that's hard to do and it's an effort to dig out the information so you can present this kind of thing--but the university is its own worst enemy when it comes to these kinds of things. Then, when you have the chancellor, who gets up at a meeting, I guess it was last fall, and says, "The purpose of alumni is to give money," boy, I'll tell you, that stuck in a lot of people's craw. The fact that he's not a Rutgers man didn't make it any better. I'm here, I'm still giving, I'm still doing. Sometimes I wonder why, but I'm here.

KR: That was the former chancellor?

GF: Yes, I guess so.

KR: Okay, yes.

GF: What was his name?

KR: Well, the current chancellor is Chris Molloy and he is ... [Editor's Note: Christopher Molloy, Phar '77, GSNB '87, has served as the Chancellor of Rutgers-New Brunswick since 2019. Debasish Dutta was his predecessor, from 2017 to 2018.]

GF: No, it's Molloy.

KR: Yes, he's a Rutgers alumnus.

GF: Is he?

KR: Dutta was the former chancellor.

GF: No, this was Molloy who made the comment.

KR: Oh, he is an alum.

GF: Okay, well, you would never know it. Maybe he needs to come out and actually interact with some of the alums to reacquaint himself with his roots.

KR: One thing we have not really talked about is your family. We did talk about your wife and how you met your wife. Would you like to share anything about your family?

GF: Well, I've got two daughters. One works for the Wal-Mart Corporation, and the other is a dental hygienist, a Thomas Jefferson University of Pennsylvania graduate. There's an interesting story about that. She had gone to Camden County College, got herself an associate's degree, and then went to Gloucester County College and got another associate's degree. She came to me and said that she wanted to go to school to become a helicopter pilot. I said, "Uh, that's a pretty big nut, and I'm not sure that's a good idea. Why don't you go work a year or two and then maybe you can afford to do that on your own?" She had been a good student but nothing spectacular. So, she does that, and she became a supervisor with UPS. UPS has a very large complex in Lawnside, New Jersey. One night, while she's working, a package breaks open in the terminal, and a human head rolls across the floor.

So, anyway, she had been interested because of a girlfriend of hers in the dental hygiene program at Jefferson, so she had made application. This was right after this head episode. They contacted her and they said, "Can you come in for an interview?" "Oh, okay." It was maybe the third, maybe fourth week in August, and the next semester is going to start right after Labor Day. She comes home, and she says, "I'm accepted." Wow, I mean, I went through months and months of acceptance, but, "I'm accepted." [laughter] Then, I got a call from the university, my first check is due next week, twenty-six thousand dollars, please. Then, I realized [Thomas Jefferson University] is not Rutgers, at least when it comes to cost. [laughter] I quickly did some things with my IRA and paid the bill. She went through and she graduated with a 3.94 grade point average and was mightily disappointed that she didn't get 3.95 and has been successfully employed in dental practice now for a goodly number of years.

I have a grandson who is a graduate of King's [College] now university in Wilkes-Barre. He's a social worker. He played football up there. If you cross him, he will pick you up with both hands and hold you over his head, and he did that. He had a summer job at the amphitheater in Camden down on the waterfront, and there was a situation where a young fellow was abusing young women. He said the only thing to do was to pick this bird up and hold him over his head and carry him out of the amphitheater and deposit him with the local police. [laughter] He's a case manager with something called the Family Guidance organization, which is part of Virtua hospital system. He's responsible for forty-six kids, mostly teenagers, who like to hurt

themselves, cutting, burning, whatever, and he's actually formed some real bonds and ties with some of the kids, many of whom had been deserted by their families. I mean, you would cry to read some of the stories that these kids have been subjected to, the abuse. It's just really remarkable. So, he tries to keep them from hurting themselves or hurting each other and getting them to stay on a reasonably even, stabilized kind of thing, so they can get some kind of an education, some kind of preparation, because under the state system, when these kids reach eighteen, nineteen years old, they're out of the system, cast out of the system. Unless there's some kind of a program that they've been pointed into, they're just basically left on the curbside. A lot of these kids are not ready for open society with all of this, and many of them still have most of the emotional issues that they had, that got them to where they were.

I have another grandson, who was attending Rowan University and wanted to be a psychologist. He's stopped going to school for, I guess, the semester, taken a job at a Starbucks and a job with a stable tending horses, which is one of his big things in life. I guess, his thinking is he will make enough money to go back to school. I think also he was beginning to suffer a little bit from being over-drafted emotionally. Let's see, my oldest granddaughter is an assistant manager of a pizza shop. Then, the second granddaughter, she was at Camden County College until she had a run-in with algebra, and she has taken this past semester off. I'm not sure she would've missed anything. She works in a laundromat down on the Glassboro campus. So, anyway, everybody has a very diversified kind of activity. You try and get the kids to want to continue their education, and there's just lots and lots of things that can get in the way and make that difficult. So, there it is.

KR: At this point, is there anything you would like to add that we skipped over?

GF: No, I don't think so, but I think if I do come up with something, I can always add it to the script, and hopefully after I read the script, we can make it a little more organized. [laughter]

KR: Well, I will conclude this interview, and then, Gene, I will stop the recorder and you and I can just talk off the record.

GF: Okay.

KR: Thank you so much for doing these two oral history interviews. It's been absolutely fascinating.

GF: Well, I'm glad it was worthwhile.

KR: Okay, I'm going to stop the recording.

----------END OF TRANSCRIPT----------

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 9/1/2020
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 9/15/2020
Reviewed by Gene Fricks 10/14/2020
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 10/26/2020