RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD D. HEFFNER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Professor Richard D. Heffner on January 21, 2010, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth …

Paul Clemens: … Paul Clemens …

SI: … And sitting in is …

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: … Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SI: Okay, Professor Heffner, thank you very much for being here with us. You are actually the first interview of this decade, so thank you for that. [laughter] To begin, can you tell us where and when you were born?

Richard Heffner: August 5, 1925 in New York City, Woman's Hospital. [Editor's Note: Woman's Hospital, founded in 1853 on Madison Avenue, later was located at 110th Street and Amsterdam prior to its merge with St. Luke's Hospital in 1953].

SI: What were your parents' names?

RH: Albert and Cely.

SH: Okay.

SI: Now, beginning with your father, can you tell us a little bit about his background, where he was born, where his family came from?

RH: He was born in Philadelphia. His parents were immigrants from, my grandfather from Germany, my grandmother from Hungary. They moved to New York City, when my father must have been very, very young. My grandfather ran a saloon in New York City, and my father, I'm sure, as his brothers and his sisters [did], and there were many of them, went to public school, and left very early on. My father used to say he left in the fifth grade to carry beer barrels for my grandfather's saloon. So, my father was not an educated person, in the normal sense of the word. He had a wonderful, wonderful sense for numbers, which led him, in later life, to become a bookie, which doesn't mean he made books, he made "book," which meant that he took bets on races. He, in fact, was a telegrapher, initially, and he ended up on the roof of, I think it was, Wanamaker's [department store] when the *Titanic* went down. Sitting next to him was a young man, and they discussed the possibilities of professionalizing their abilities with telegraphy. My father was very impressed with the fact that with the telegraph, he could not only help in what happened to the *Titanic*, but he could also get results of races earlier than others. So, this young man, Al Heffner, went on to become a bookie, and the other young man, [Reserve] Brigadier General [David] Sarnoff [US Army Signal Corps], later on, went on to create RCA and NBC, etcetera. [Editor's Note: RMS *Titanic* sank on April 15, 1912, after hitting an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean; 1,517 out of 2,223 passengers died as a result.]

SI: Wow.

RH: I got the worst of the deal. [laughter] My mother was born in New York, of immigrant parents from Russia, [and] grew up on the Lower East Side. She must have had more of an education, probably went through the tenth or eleventh grade, more than my father. [She] was a housewife. Both came from very poor families, of course, but my father, having learned what you could do with telegraphy, became a very wealthy bookie, and they enjoyed considerable wealth, so my mother was a lady of leisure, until the Great Depression, until, in fact, some years after the Great Depression, because my father's clients were rather wealthy people who would bet 100,000 dollars on a race, and they didn't begin to jump out of the window until the early '30s. [laughter] [Editor's Note: The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic downturn that began in 1929 and lasted through the early 1940s.]

PC: … Literally, 100,000 dollars on a race in the 1920s and '30s?

RH: Yes, yes, yes.

PC: Wow, that's a lot of money. [laughter]

RH: I used to watch my father at night. He would come home, he was a lefty, and I remember his, maybe all left-handed people do that, anybody here left-handed? Well, he used to have a list of numbers, the dollars relating to the bets, and he used to add them up like that [imitating the pose with his left hand], and he was very good at that. He had a great mind for numbers. He was a great poker player and a great bridge player, as a result for his memory and his command of numbers. He lost everything in the early '30s, so I was a child of the depression. Having been brought up by governesses, I was born in '25, we, pretty soon, had nothing in the house to eat, so I knew firsthand what the impact of the depression was. It hit my father very badly. He went broke and didn't come back into his own, until the end of his life, and I was always very grateful that he did come back into his own, not as a very wealthy person, but a comfortable person, and my parents died comfortably.

SI: Before the Great Depression hit them, where had they been living in New York?

RH: We always lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I believe when I was born, my parents lived at 108th Street and Broadway, and I remember that location, because they stayed there a number of years. They moved down to 92nd Street and Broadway. Those were fairly fashionable upper, middle-class Jewish areas, in those days, and they lived well.

PC: You said your mother was from Russia. [I'm] assuming she was Jewish.

RH: Yes, she was born here, but her parents were from [Russia].

PC: Did they speak Yiddish?

RH: My mother did, to a very limited extent. Her parents, I barely remember. I don't remember my grandmother, her mother. I do remember my grandfather, because I remember him as an invalided, old man at Montefiore Home for the Aged, and I'm sure he spoke Yiddish, but I never did, and so, they were able to say, you know, "*Sha, shtil di kinder*." That I understood: "Keep

quiet. The children are there," and then, they'd lapse into some bastard form of Yiddish. Neither parent was very much involved in the language, or in the traditions. I was brought up basically in a tradition-less home. My brother was *bar mitzvahed*. They still had enough dollars then for there to be a *bar mitzvah*, which meant a great party, which took a lot of money. Four years later, my parents didn't want me to be *bar mitzvahed*, because they didn't have the money for it [laughter], and I turned thirteen in the summer of '38. Hitler had made me conscious of the fact that I was a Jew, and I didn't like the idea of not being *bar mitzvahed*. Months later, I would go out to an uncle in Long Island, out in Arverne in the Rockaways, [borough of Queens] and he would take me to his synagogue and his rabbi, who would teach me, and in the middle of the winter, without my parents, because they were disapproving, I was *bar mitzvah*ed, but it was Adolf Hitler who did that to me or for me, or whatever.

SI: Now, part of your childhood was spent in Tucson, Arizona?

RH: In '38, again, no, what am I talking about '38, much earlier. I guess it was when I was eight years old. I had already been identified as having rheumatic fever, and then, when I was eight, I had an episode, which I'm convinced, thinking back, was a function of trauma. My brother had brought home a very, very bad report card. He was the mischievous one in the family, and I remember my mother, who was a very gentle person, nevertheless, spanking my brother with a hairbrush early one morning, when she discovered the report card that should have been shown to her the day before. I was so upset at hearing my brother cry that I went to school that morning and had what others called a heart attack, and I'm sure that it was self-invoked and I was trying to bring attention to myself, and I was feeling miserably about my brother, but that led the specialists of the day to tell my parents that I had rheumatic fever of the heart, that I had to leave New York and be taken to as dry a climate as Tucson is, in Arizona, if I were to live to be sixteen, if they wanted me to be sixteen. [laughter] I remember so well one of the funny, sadder memories of my life was when I was sixteen, on my sixteenth birthday, my mother saying to me, "Thank God, you've made it," and that was the first I heard about my sentence [laughter], and I'm eighty-four going on eighty-five. [laughter] So, the doctors weren't quite right. We stayed in Arizona only two years, because my father was broke. He would come out to visit us on occasions. [Editor's Note: Rheumatic fever is a severe infectious disease, primarily affecting children, that causes fever, inflammation of the joints and, often, permanent damage to the heart.]

SI: So, your father stayed in New York.

RH: He stayed in New York, yes, trying to make a living, not succeeding, because he was dead broke by that time. He lived with his parents and tried to send money to us. Two years into being there, he had run out of money, and my mother could do nothing other than bring us back to New York. So, that was '38, no, '36, excuse me.

SI: Did your mother have to take a job outside of the home?

RH: She certainly did. She and the wife of (Eddie Cole?), who had been my father's partner, there was a place called Volupte that made compacts, women's compacts, and this woman, Mrs. (Cole?), and my mother, who were grand ladies at that time, or up to that time, went out and

peddled these compacts, and my job, and my brother's job, was to deliver them, after the sales had been made. So, this was, you know, really tough.

We moved a number of times. When we came back from Arizona, my mother found a place in Sunnyside, Queens, for us to live, and then, moved back into Manhattan, not to be grander, but because we couldn't pay the rent in Sunnyside. In those days, you could move so easily and you'd get two months, three months, four months "concessions," as they called them, "You take this apartment; you don't have to pay for two months, three months, four months." We moved a series of times, when the rent came due, and we were dispossessed, because we couldn't pay it. [Those were] tough years.

When I came back in '36, when we came back in 1936, I went to what was called a cardiac class, because, it's not a myth, but the question of my bad heart kept coming up, and the cardiac class, though it sounded as though it was for kids with only with bad hearts, was really for any kind of cripple, whether you had asthma and were dying, or cardiac problems, or had had infantile paralysis, because, remember, those were the days when so many [incidences of] polio struck kids. I remember when we were in Arizona, the terror that my mother expressed if we wanted to go to a public pool, and that was true all over the country. I mean, the terror of the summers was always that, "My child might get polio," and I don't think, I don't remember as a kid worrying about that, but that was my parents', certainly my mother's, great worry. I came to know Jonas Salk in later years, and he was a guest on my program *The Open Mind*, and I was a consultant to the Salk Institute [Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California]. I was never able to say to him enough about what he did to change life in America, which was such a terror every summer. [Editor's Note: In 1955, Salk developed a polio vaccine that was integral in eradicating the disease in the United States. Richard Heffner hosted *The Open Mind*, a weekly public affairs television program that airs on public broadcasting stations nationwide. His grandson Alexander Heffner has hosted *The Open Mind* since 2014. Richard Heffner founded the prize-winning show in 1956, when it first broadcast over WRCA (now WNBC) television in New York City. In over fifty years of broadcasts, Heffner hosted hundreds of prominent figures, including Dr. Jonas Salk.]

At any rate, we did come back, [and] my mother did work. My brother finally quit high school before he was able to graduate, for money reasons. They weren't the best reasons. He wanted to take girls out, and my parents couldn't give him money, and so, he quit school and went to work for twelve dollars a week as a messenger in the garment industry in Manhattan. I was the protected one. I mean, I was the younger, sickly one, and I was always very well taken care of. When there was only a half [of] a bottle or a bottle of milk in the refrigerator and nothing else to eat, I was bundled up and sent out to Arverne to my aunt and uncle, who had two bottles of milk in the icebox. So, I led a protected existence; my brother didn't.

SI: How did all the moving around affect your education early on?

RH: Well, what can I say? I became a college professor. [laughter]

SI: Did you have to learn or to teach yourself?

RH: I think, you know, in those days, unlike these days, I think, kids moved. You did move. I think the depression was one of the reasons. I don't think we were exclusively the ones who were dispossessed in those days, and you moved around. I mean, kids were treated [differently then]. I have to laugh at my sons and my grandchildren. I mean, when there is a change of venue, I mean, the horror, "They're going to have to go to another school." My boys went to the same school from kindergarten to the end of their high school experience, both of them, and when they think now of moving their children, or did when their kids were younger, it was with horror. I think people moved; not everybody was dispossessed, but I think there was great mobility, greater mobility then than now, which is strange to say. You would think the opposite would be true. I don't think I was badly affected.

I think the cardiac class was one room in a building on West 50th or 52nd that had been built when Abraham Lincoln was president. Of course, I go back so far that that wasn't so shocking, at the time. [laughter] In one room, the cardiac class, taught by Miss Mae B. a middle initial, (Mackey?), there was 6A, 6B, 7A, 7B, 8A, 8B [six classes] in one room, all of them kids suffering from one thing or the other. Now, that damaged me I'm sure, and when I got to high school, on the basis of preliminary exams, I mean, I was the valedictorian of my class of about seven to ten people [in the cardiac class], I went to DeWitt Clinton High School in New York, even though we lived in Manhattan. It was at the end of the Bronx, but it had an honor's school that was one of the best in the city and I was in the honor's school, but, my first semester in high school, my grade average was sixty-five, and it was barely that, because I hadn't learned what all these others had learned because of the thirty of us in 6A, 6B, 7A, 7B, 8A, 8B, in the same damn room. So, I was affected in certainly not having the same attention that I would've had, and I was affected, too, in later years, when I would come back to visit Miss (Mackey?), and she would say, "So glad to see you, Richard. Do you know about Joseph, Joseph Marcantonio?" "What about Joseph?" "Well, he died." "Oh, what about this one?" "She died." Somehow or other, I don't think I'm kidding myself in, I mean, my supposed physical weakness certainly damaged me in many, many ways. I never was an athlete. I was always restricted in what I could do, I don't think for good reason, but for bad reason, but here I am a person; I can't swim, I don't do this, that or the other thing. I've had a good life, but I think it could have been a hell of a lot happier if I hadn't had that burden of, "Have you heard about Joseph, who died in the past six months?" So, when you ask about the movements of schools, A, I think it was not an unusual thing, maybe not from New York to Arizona, back to New York, to Queens, to Manhattan, etcetera, but much of that.

I came into my own when I got to DeWitt Clinton. [From a] sixty-five, barely sixty-five average, in my first semester, [to] I think it was ninety-nine by my second semester, not year, but semester. I had some perfectly wonderful teachers. I'm trying to think, Miss (Martin?), my English teacher, who took me under her wing. I knew nothing about parsing a sentence. I mean, how could Miss (Mackey?) teach those six grades what they needed to know, each one? I learned quickly, and DeWitt Clinton was a great place for me. I was a good student. I became the leader of Arista, the [National] Honor Society, and I got into Columbia.

Now, that wasn't such a great feat at that time, getting into Columbia, because it was the war; you know, one of the curses and blessings, I guess, to be honest, I have to say blessings, too. I had too many, there were a number of people I knew who had been killed in World War II. I

wasn't; I was 4-F; I guess, the blessing. The curse, I was aware that I was different than others. It was my war; I should have been in it. I wasn't. Anyway, it made getting into Columbia a lot easier. [Editor's Note: In 1940, the US Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act, the nation's first peacetime military conscription. 4-F refers to the Selective Service System classification for draft registrants who are disqualified for service in the armed forces due to medical reasons.] I only applied to Columbia and City College [of New York]. I couldn't think about going anyplace else; my parents couldn't have paid for me anyplace else. I have to laugh when I think of what going to Columbia meant. I had a, though I was later to work and write in Americana, I had a hundred percent on every New York State Regents, except my American History Regent. I didn't identify Herbert Hoover with the phrase, "The Noble Experiment," about Prohibition. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Prohibition refers to the period from 1918 to 1933, often called "The Noble Experiment," in which the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibited the sale, manufacture and transportation of alcohol. The Twenty-first Amendment repealed the prohibition of alcohol in 1933.] I still remember that. I lost my point, but, because of my excellence in taking Regents, and then forgetting everything the day after, [laughter] I got a New York State scholarship for two hundred dollars a semester. The tuition at Columbia was 190 dollars a semester for, I think, you could take up to twenty-one points. If you took more, you had to find another ten dollars. So, I mean, when I think of what my students go through now, and their parents, it's a horror. [Editor's Note: The New York State Education Department administers the Regents examinations to all high school students in the state. The Regents exams serve as standardized, subject-related tests that determine competency and diploma eligibility.]

SI: In a number of the materials that you sent along, you discussed a teacher at DeWitt, named Guernsey.

RH: [Dr.] "Doc" [Irwin] Guernsey.

SI: Yes. Could you tell us a little about him and his impact on your life?

RH: Doc was a great man, a man who had polio, who had developed polio, and like FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt, US president from 1933-1945], he was in braces, and he didn't "speak softly and carry a big stick." He bellowed and carried a great cane. [laughter] When I began to have problems with my balance and had to carry a cane, on the first day in class, I took the cane and banged it on the table here [Rutgers] and said, "Now, that's what Doc Guernsey used to do." Only [there] you'd sit in a class, and the classes were, at DeWitt Clinton, were very crowded. Clinton had been built, it was originally downtown, [in Manhattan] and then it moved uptown to the end of the Bronx in 1929, I believe, and it had been built to carry, to serve 4,000 students. It was huge, but we had 12,000. We had three shifts, and even broken up that way, you had to sit in a small desk chair with someone else, at times. I remember, you know, having hands on the desk, and Doc coming by and banging, you know, an inch away from your fingers. [laughter] His field was American history, small wonder. [laughter]

What I did, and it's funny, John Sexton, the president of NYU, [New York University] is an old friend, and he's been on *The Open Mind* a number of times. By the way, Dick McCormick, [Richard L. McCormick, former Rutgers University President] we're doing a program, we're

taping it early in April, so that we can put it on the air on the Saturday that is Rutgers Day, later in April [on the 24th]. I've done a program with President McCormick before, and it was a good one. He was good; he was very good. I don't think I told the story of meeting him for the first time, when his father [Richard P. McCormick] brought him to the campus, he was three months old, to introduce him to the other people at Bishop House. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Richard P. McCormick (1916-2006) graduated from Rutgers College in 1938 and embarked upon a distinguished career as a history professor at Rutgers, notable author, Rutgers University Historian, and Dean of Rutgers College. His son, Richard L. McCormick (born in 1947), also an historian, served as the President of Rutgers University from 2002 to 2012.]

John Sexton, the last programs we did a few months ago will be on the air shortly, was telling me about Charlie. Charlie was a teacher of his, in Brooklyn, when he was growing up, and he went on and on and on and on and on, and I said, this is off the air, and I said, "John, I know what you're doing. You want to do a program about Charlie. You want to talk about Charlie." I said, "Okay, I'll make a deal with you." I said, "I'm going to talk about Doc Guernsey. You can talk about Charlie," and late in April, we're going to tape the program in which we talk about our mutual heroes. Doc Guernsey was mine. I thought he was one of the great men, personally, in my life. My parents split up, just for a year. It's funny, after all the troubles of poverty, finally, when they were, my father was back on his feet again, they split up. In my senior year at DeWitt Clinton, [which is] at the end of the Bronx, my mother and I had gone to live back out in Arverne, Long Island, in The Rockaways, I would travel from the end of the Bronx, down to Penn Station, and then, back out to Long Island, both ways every day, and Doc was a great support for me in those days, as well as being a great teacher and great inspirer. Doc always had a pipe in his mouth, and in later years, he developed cancer of the jaw, and a big part of his jaw was cut away. I wanted my boys to know Doc, to have met him, and we were afraid that they'd be shocked at seeing him, and I hadn't seen him. This is long after he had retired, and I hadn't seen him in a number of years, and we took them to visit him. They never mentioned his looks, and they were in love with him in three minutes. I mean, it was just wonderful to see. Early in my broadcasting career, [laughter] I have somewhere a review of a program I did called, maybe it was, no, it couldn't have been [*The*] *Open Mind*, it must have been *Man of the Year*, some program, I had Doc on as a guest. Yes, it was *Man of the Year*. [NBC television program]. It was an historical program, and we did it on some major educator of the nineteenth century, and *Variety* reviewed it and said, "Heffner had his old teacher, Irwin S. Guernsey, on the air. We hope he's learned not to have his teachers with him any longer." It wasn't the greatest of programs.

PC: If I could, just one quick question. When you were in a classroom with him in this school that had 12,000 kids in it, how big was the class?

RH: Oh, well, we were, there were about ten of us who were sitting two in a seat, and I guess, so it must have meant fifty.

PC: Fifty.

RH: Yes.

PC: Wow.

RH: So, when you talk about "the good old days." [laughter]

PC: Those were sure not the good old days, no. [laughter]

RH: Right.

PC: Wow, okay.

RH: I was in the, I remember, I always opted for the eight AM session, and we left at noon. It was tough.

SI: Did you have to go to work at all, while you were in high school?

RH: I keep saying to my grandson, at Harvard, who's not working, "Listen, I worked," but I had to admit to him the work I did was tutoring. Sure, I had to [work]. I mean, I wanted to buy books. Every Thursday night down at R.H. Macy's [Rowland Hussey Macy's department store], from five o'clock until they closed at ten, on Thursday nights, there was a sale on Modern Library and Everyman['s] Library books [book series of classical and modern authors], and my house is lined with those books. I wanted to buy them, and, hell, the Modern Library giants, I think, were regularly a dollar-and-a-quarter, and they were, I think, ninety-five cents on sale, and the smaller ones were sixty cents, on sale. So, I earned money, but I never had to go out and work the way my brother did. I mean, I earned good money tutoring, and I feel sometimes like calling Harvard and saying, "Get Alexander Benjamin Heffner on the road to earning a living. Why, he can at least tutor," but it doesn't go that way these days. As a matter-of-fact, he has a quarter-of-a-million-dollar grant from the [John S. and James L.] Knight Foundation [dedicated to promoting excellence in journalism], because he has a website for college and high school news. [I] don't mean to wander that much.

SI: No, no, that is all right. You told a story earlier about your *bar mitzvah* and how it was a reaction against Hitler's enormity. Can you give us a sense of what you knew of the world then, how aware you were of events, if you were in debates with people at the time, your classmates, about what America should do?

RH: Boy, that's a good question, and I really wish I knew the answer, because my sense of it, and it sounds so strange, is that, I was going to say, there were no debates. It was a city, at least, I don't say a nation, I know well enough to know that there was an America First movement. [Editor's Note: The America First Committee refers to the isolationist group that sought to prevent the U.S. from becoming involved in World War II.] I know well enough, as a historian, to know what a battle FDR had to put up with to move us into the war, many people felt lead us into the war, and, many people felt trick us into the war, but I lived in a community in which there really wasn't much debate. I remember one person, an avid reactionary, who would have hated FDR on grounds other than foreign involvement, who was opposed to the war, but otherwise, it was our war. There was no question about that. Now, I, again, it sounds strange for such a momentous thing. On the other hand, as I was saying to somebody recently, my father,

every Sunday, listened to Father Coughlin, Charles Coughlin the priest, and his anti-Semitic, anti-interventionist harangues. So, I was aware of that going on. I was certainly aware of the German-American *Bund*. [Editor's Note: The *Bund* was an American pro-Nazi organization founded in the 1930s.] Again, if you lived in Manhattan, or in New York City, you had to be aware of those things.

Mostly, my awareness was of the depression, because of personal involvement. I remember [riding] the bus, the school bus that used to take me to "Miss (Mackey's?) morgue." [laughter] You'd see men, you'd see the apple sellers, and you were terribly much aware of hunger and homelessness and despair. I had my grandson watching with me, and I had shown it to my class, *My Man Godfrey*, the original one, trying to explain this to my grandson that the beautiful park outside of our beautiful apartment on Riverside Drive was where the "bums" were housed in tents. I don't think, I can't explain ever to my students what it was like. How could they ever know about those things? [Editor's Note: In the 1930s, there was a shantytown along Riverside Drive between the west side of the New York Central freight tracks and the Hudson River, in the area that is now Riverside Park. In 1936, Universal Pictures released the comic film My Man Godfrey, which offers social commentary about class distinctions during the Great Depression era. The movie features scenes of a shantytown built over a dump in New York City.]

But I'm more aware of that, until the war came, and then the war was a much more frightening thing, immediately. Again, I think, because we won, "We did it before, we can do it again," I think there is not enough awareness [of what the Allies overcame in defeating the Axis Powers]. As I remember, the newspaper headlines, in those days, now this is my memory, which is tricky, *The [New York] Times* didn't begin to carry pictures every day, certainly, until recent years; but I remember the pictures on the front page of the giant British battleships going down, too frequently, and then, the sense of the first year of the war, I mean, 1942 was a year in which the thought of losing, the thought of being overrun, was not that strange, and the blackouts, and all of that. So, that it's the war, that part of the war, rather than the debate about intervention, non-intervention, because everybody was an interventionist among your friends, among the people you knew. I don't remember debating the question of aiding the Allies. Even when I got to Columbia in '42, I was the chairman of the, what the hell was the name of the, not Bundles for Britain, but something like that, Aid to the Allies? I remember getting Nicholas Murray Butler, the antique who was still president of Columbia University, to speak at a student bond-raising, war funds-raising. [Editor's Note: From 1941 to 1946, the United States government sold 185.5 billion dollars in debt securities (bonds) through bond drives. One program started by New Yorkers, Bundles for Britain, began in 1939, gathered and donated clothing and other supplies for the British.]

Jacques Barzun was my teacher. Jacques is a hundred now, or he's 101 now and still going, not teaching. *The Times,* [*The*] *New York Times* did a piece on me, when, I think, my program was fifty years old, or maybe it was forty years old, anyway, whatever it was, it mentioned in it, it printed something about Jacques Barzun, the historian, had been my teacher, and it indicated that I despised Jacques Barzun. I don't know that they told the tale of his saying to me, I was seventeen, and one day, he said to me, "Mr. Heffner, can't you do something about that terrible acne." [laughter] I remember, I mean, it's been a number of years since then, and I still, I mean, my heart beats faster when I even think of how I felt when he said that to me. Anyway, I made

some negative comment about Barzun, and I got mail from all over, from academics mostly, saying, "I'm glad somebody took on that son-of-a-bitch finally." [laughter] [Editor's Note: Jacques Barzun, who was born in 1907, received his undergraduate degree and Ph.D. from Columbia University and spent his entire career at Columbia as a cultural historian, professor and administrator.]

I mentioned Nicholas Murray Butler; I had invited, as chairman of the student group, Butler to speak, and I had gone down to my doctor's [office] to get a hay fever shot, and, while there, the nurse came in and said, "Mr. Heffner, there's a telephone call for you," and it was Jacques Barzun, who said, "You may not know it, but you've been summoned for an audience with President Butler, and I need to tell you how you're supposed to comport yourself." He didn't tell me to kiss his ring. [laughter] But, Butler, I don't know if you've ever seen Orson Welles' program about [William Randolph] Hearst, *Citizen Kane* … [1941 film released by RKO Pictures]

SH: Right.

RH: … There is a scene there, in which Hearst is sitting in a great room, behind a great desk, on a great chair, and Butler's office went, it felt like a football field [in] length, and you had to march all the way to him at the end, and he was a dim figure when you began, but as you got closer, you were aware that his desk was mounted, I mean, it was raised, and he was seated, and he was a giant of a man, at the end of it, above you, and I was prepared for it, I guess. Anyway, Butler, I'm really telling you all this to tell you how ancient my education is that Nicholas Murray Butler should still have been president of Columbia University. [laughter] I'm leading you off on to too many things, you forgive me. [Editor's Note: Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia from 1902 to 1945, was an educator, author, political leader, traveler and peace advocate, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 (co-recipient with Jane Addams) for advocating the Kellogg-Briand Pact.]

SI: Go on.

SH: Why did you have to go see the president?

RH: Oh, because he had agreed to appear at the bond rally, and I was going to introduce him, so that he wanted to know who was this undergraduate and he was nice. [laughter] Despite the height, and all of that, he was particularly nice, but Barzun, you know, was going to scare me to death again about not being my poor Jewish self, I guess. Columbia, at that time, was stuck. It got its reputation for being a Jewish undergraduate body at that time, because it was taking in all of the, it had the V-12, the V-8 or V-12, I forget what it was, Navy students [V-12 College Training Program developed to supplement the force of commissioned officers in the US Navy], and then, mostly New York students, because it couldn't, didn't have dorm room because the naval students were occupying the dorms. So, they had to have New Yorkers, and who was getting higher grades, but the Jewish students in the New York high schools. It's been trying ever since, I think, to get rid of its reputation as being [an] almost exclusively Manhattan Jewish school.

SI: When you were looking at colleges, were quotas something that you had to contend with or that you thought about at all?

RH: No, because the major quota was my parents couldn't send me, so I never applied, except to City College and Columbia, and I was accepted at City [College] and was going to go, because I didn't think, you know, my parents could afford [Columbia], even though the state scholarship was there, even though tuition was 190 bucks a semester. A cousin of mine, an older cousin of mine, bless him, said, "You're going to go to Columbia," and he sent me, and he paid for everything. I lived at home, but he paid for my clothes and for the nutrition bar that I used to have for lunch every day, which my sons were brought up to hear about. [laughter] "Now," they'd say, "there goes Pop," you know, then they'd give me the Abraham Lincoln routine about walking ten miles every day to [school]. [laughter]

SH: You were in high school when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

RH: Yes.

SH: What was your reaction? First of all, it was on a Sunday, so you were probably home. What was it like the next day at school?

RH: I was at a Chinese restaurant at 145th Street and Broadway, upstairs, when, who was it, the broadcaster, was it Daly, who got on the air and broadcast the news? I remember hearing it, because they had a loudspeaker, and they had music. Was it then the Sunday, did they have the Philharmonic or the Metropolitan on? It was music that was interrupted by the CBS announcer. [Editor's Note: John Charles Daly was the newscaster who made the announcement about the attack on Pearl Harbor, interrupting the Sunday afternoon broadcast of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra with Arthur Rubenstein playing Brahm's *Second Piano Concerto*.]

The next morning, we had our first air raid drill, going under the seats, and that was scary but mixed with the kids, you know, even though we weren't babies, we were mature high school students, still the laughter, you know, and then, when you had the air raid drills, and I was, as I say, commuting to Long Island, and that was on the ocean, and so, there were real blackouts every night, and I became an air raid warden. There were ships out there. We know that there were ships in the Hudson River, submarines, German submarines, in the Hudson. Scary, but everybody knew this had to be. [Editor's Note: With German submarines positioned in and around New York Harbor targeting American military and merchant ships during World War II, imposed New York City area blackouts prevented the lights of the city from illuminating American vessels, which made them easy targets for U-boats. Air raid wardens patrolled streets during blackouts to ensure that no lights were visible.]

I have to say, scary, particularly when, you know, [President] Lyndon [B.] Johnson [1963-1969], I guess it was April 1st, it must have been April 1, 1968, the day before, he had made a nationwide address withdrawing, saying, "I am not a candidate for, nor will I accept the nomination of my party," a man who had won by the largest majority ever four years before was now being forced out because he believed that McCarthy's, not [Senator Joseph] Joe McCarthy, but [Senator Eugene] Gene McCarthy's victory, and [Senator Robert] Bobby Kennedy's

candidacy, were going rob him of the nomination and he didn't want to be a candidate for the nomination, but to go from having the largest majority ever, to retiring [from] politics. He went up to Chicago the next day, to a meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters, and I know that it was a speech that was written for him by my old boss Frank Stanton, the president of CBS, in which he said, "You people, you're the ones who have done this to me, but I want you to think," you know, we call the Vietnam War the "living room war," because it was there in our living rooms and how were we going to maintain our morale if you saw defeat every night and body bags every night, and he said, "Someday you will have to ask yourselves, 'What would have happened in your war?'" meaning WWII, "'If there had been televisions in our homes and, in those first months and year of the war, we had seen defeat constantly?'" and that, yes, that, not many people remember that. [Editor's Note: When President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke on April 1, 1968 at the forty-sixth annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters, the president said, "You of the broadcast industry have enormous power in your hands. You have the power to clarify and you have the power to confuse. Men in public life cannot remotely rival your opportunity--day after day, night after night, hour after hour, on the hour and the half hour sometimes--you shape the Nation's dialogue."]

SH: That is true.

RH: Many of us were afraid that it wasn't impossible that we could lose that encounter [World War II]. After all, our Navy had been destroyed largely at Pearl Harbor, and so on, so that was, I think, the feeling at the time of Pearl Harbor. Great patriotism, "We're going to fight. This is our war," but [with] a lot of anxiety along with it.

SI: Were there other home front-type activities that you were involved in? You mentioned the bond rallies and being an air raid warden.

RH: No, no, I've never lived happily with the fact that Johnny Leffler, my neighbor in high school, died on D-Day, and I wasn't there, and I, one of my recurring memories, I don't mean I'm haunted by it, but it's a recurring memory, is of being called up by Selective Service and not trying to get out of the heart thing. I mean it was, sometimes the murmurs that I have are heard, and sometimes they're not. I can't get insurance, because they're heard when we go to the insurance office, it's like making a claim on our insurance here at Rutgers. [laughter] That's when it's heard. I always wish, half of me wishes, I had fought hard to somehow or other be in there, you know, drive an ambulance, bullshit like that, but there I was, "What did you do in the war, Daddy?" "I was a 4-F."

SI: Were you ever subject to any prejudice because of being 4-F?

RH: I don't think so. My own. I don't think I've ever, I mean, there've been times when my contemporaries have said to me, "And where were you?" You know, "Where did you fight?" "What front?" I don't think I've ever been subjected to anything they said that would make me feel badly. I've thought to myself, "You SOB, why weren't you doing something?"

PC: They wouldn't have taken you. I was 4-F in the Vietnam War. I tried to get in. I got them doctor's notes. The medical people in the military are pretty cut-and-dry about these things. You wouldn't have gotten in, even if you tried. [laughter]

RH: I know. You can't make me feel better. [laughter]

PC: Once they know you've got something wrong, they're not going to take you. That's a very straightforward thing. I remember being very frustrated. Later in my life, very happy that I hadn't gone to Vietnam, but I did volunteer …

RH: … You see, there's a great difference between Vietnam and the "Good War" [World War II].

PC: When I volunteered, it was still, to me, a good war. I woke up later, but when I was a young, coming-out-of-high-school kid, I thought it was my duty to serve, and I went down and took the test and failed it.

RH: It's funny, my sons, who think of me as a conservative, old fuddy-duddy, although they know what my politics are and they're hardly conservative, they'll never accept when I say to them, and Elaine, my wife, and I had talked at great length about, "What happens if the Vietnam War continues until they're draft-able?" and I say to them, and I mean it, that we would've urged them to go to Canada.

SI: Yes.

RH: They don't believe that, and I find it somewhat hard to believe it myself, but I do, because that was what our conclusion was. With the kids here [at Rutgers], I had a vet here, who must have been shell-shocked, who obviously was a mental case, and I thought to myself, "That's what that goddamned war has done."

SI: Vietnam or Iraq?

RH: Vietnam.

SI: Vietnam, okay.

RH: Yes. Nobody [who] fought in Iraq; they don't get here. We don't have any students, do we?

PC: We have a few.

SI: Yes, they're coming in now.

RH: Oh, now. Yes. No, I meant in the previous years. Is the GI Bill in full effect now?

SI: On August 1, 2009, the Post 9/11 GI Bill went into effect.

RH: Good.

PC: I have a graduate student who's served three tours of duty in Iraq. She's a woman, and she's, right now, she's not in Iraq, though she might go back to Afghanistan, but she's in the graduate program, history graduate program right now, fully paid for.

RH: Well, I, listen, I really withdrew for a while from full-time teaching, until Mason [Gross, Rutgers University President, 1959-1971] got me back here [in 1964]. When the GIs, the kids here under the GI Bill from World War II, began to peter out, it wasn't any fun anymore. I mean, the early years were great. They were challenging; they were wonderful. No bullshit, you know, and they wanted to learn.

PC: Yes.

RH: When they were gone, it weren't any fun anymore.

SH: We need to go back and …

SI: Yes, one of the things I wanted to ask you about is the impact of the veterans in the postwar period, but, going back to your time at Columbia, can you tell us a little about the professors that you had who were an influence on you and how they influenced you?

RH: Yes. There's no question about two in particular. There were a number of very fine teachers. I must say to you, when I went back to teach Contemporary Civilization, three years after I was out, I taught at Berkeley, then I came here for two years, then I went back to Columbia [to] teach CC [Contemporary Civilization], I was horrified. I mean, I had been out four years; I got my Master's and I was teaching in the place of Jacques Barzun, despise him though I did. Lionel Trilling, some of the finest minds ever, and I was a young instructor. I hear from my grandson at Harvard, he only has young people, who someday will be great teachers, but right now are not experienced enough, or don't know enough. Anyway, at Columbia, Charles Frankel in philosophy, who [was an] extraordinary teacher [and] went on to be a very important academic, and then, was murdered; he and his wife were murdered [in 1979] in their home up in Westchester one night by an intruder. [There also was] Ernest Nagel, the great logician and philosopher of science; Harry J. Carman, American historian, who later became the Dean of Columbia College [1943-1950]; [Lawrence] Larry [H.] Chamberlain, political scientist, who became Dean of Columbia College [1950-1958]; and Allan Nevins, of whom I do a good imitation, wonderful scholar [of American history], not trained as a scholar, but as a journalist …

PC: That's why he wrote so well.

RH: Exactly, exactly.

PC: A great stylist in American history. …

RH: I had a student, no, a colleague who on Christmas Day, in those days [the] New York Public Library would stay open all the time, and on Christmas Day, he was down there and he saw Nevins. He said, "Professor Nevins, do you work all the time?" Nevins said to him, "Young man, I was brought up on a farm in Illinois, and everything has been easy after that life, so don't think this is hard work." [laughter] [Other professors included] (Lonnie or Ronnie?) (Kraut?), son-of-a-bitch Henry [Steele] Commager [American historian], terrible human being, but all these men had great things to teach. Lionel Trilling was my Humanities teacher, when I was a freshman, and that was one of the great experiences of all times. These were my teachers, and Columbia was in its belief that leading professors should teach undergraduates. It was wonderful. I was always aware of how much I got from Columbia, but, I told you about my experience with Barzun.

When I was in California, or commuted to California for twenty years [from 1974 to 1994, as chairman of the Classification and Rating Administration of the Motion Pictures Association of America], at the end of that, I was asked if I would be a fellow at the, I cannot think of what the foundation, the media studies center, which is located up at Columbia [Gannett Center for Media Studies, now called Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia], it was underwritten by the foundation. Dammit, I wish I could think of which one it was, anyway, it was up at Columbia, and I thought to myself, "Yes, I'd be pleased to do that and it'd be nice. I'll walk up to Columbia on the days that I go up there." When I got back to the campus, I realized how negative an impact it had had upon me, in terms of Barzun and in terms of feeling uncomfortable there, and I don't understand to this day, maybe when I get a little older, I will have figured it out, I say laughingly. I think the years of poverty had rubbed off in such a way that I felt, even though Columbia was a different place than it had been over the years and probably that it is now, I'd felt somehow or other uneasy, unprepared, even though I was a "big man on the campus" and I was Phi Beta Kappa and I held fellowships. Obviously, it made me feel uncomfortable, because when I went back to the campus and looked forward to, you know, the walking up to the campus and being there, somehow or other, I felt very uneasy there, that it had not been a comfortable place for me. I know that Harvard is not a comfortable place for my grandson, Alexander. I know that [Phillips Academy] Andover, where he went, was a wonderfully comfortable place for him, so it's not just being away, and I wasn't away when I was at Columbia, either when I was a student there or when I would march up there for this year at this foundation. So, it's a puzzle. I don't know how to figure it, because when you asked me about teachers, I think, with a smile on my face and in my heart, I think of these very, very great teachers. But I always said, interestingly enough, maybe I was all wrong, that I had learned more, that the best academic experience had been my high school, and maybe that was because of the contrast with those two years with all the cripples, including me, and learning almost nothing, and then, learning so much in the four years at DeWitt Clinton.

Nevertheless, I have to say to you, in all the years in which I've been a broadcaster, and the many, many times guests will say to me, for the economy of size, I will tape, I used to tape eight shows a day, eight shows in a row, because I'd rent the studio, and before my voice began to give out, I could do that. Now I do four, and so, one guest, I'll do John Sexton, and then, Elie Wiesel will come in, and then someone else, and one guest will hear the other, because they get there earlier, and one will say, "Well, how do you go from this subject to that subject? How do you know these things?" My answer always is, so maybe it's the best answer to your question, "I

went to Columbia College." [laughter] I do feel that CC [Contemporary Civilization] and Humanities and the rigor of the education at Columbia enables me at least to pretend, to myself and, I guess, to my guests, that I'm fairly familiar with many things. I just had breakfast with a student of mine, and [we were] talking about something, and I said, "I know about *The New York Times*," and he was talking about a course he had just taken, one of the intensive courses, the four-week courses. I said, "What did you do?" etcetera, etcetera, and he told me about a book. I said, "Well, that was written by Dan Okrent, who used to be the," what is it, "public editor of *The New York Times*, he was the first of them," and he laughed, how I knew Okrent and how I knew this one and that one. Well, you've been around long enough and you do it, but my answer to the guests themselves is, "Columbia College." So, I guess, I should remember that, and when anybody asks me, if anybody should ask me again, you know, what my response is to my own years at Columbia, [it] has to be a positive one. [laughter] It was a broad, wide education. [Editor's Note: Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, Nobel Laureate, author, activist and professor, appeared on Heffner's *The Open Mind*, and Heffner and Wiesel collaborated on *Conversations with Elie Wiesel*, edited by Thomas J. Vinciguerra (New York: Schocken Books, 2001).]

SI: What made you make the final commitment to becoming an historian, as opposed to going into law?

RH: It's the answer that Bill Clinton gave, "It's the economy." [laughter] [Editor's Note: During the 1992 presidential campaign, Democratic candidate Bill Clinton (US President, 1993-2001) defeated incumbent Republican President George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) by emphasizing the economic recession with the phrase, "It's the economy, stupid."] It's true. I had to work. It's not all; it's partially true. It is two things, one very specific. In my fourth year, I was a pre-law student all through, and in my fourth year when I had to begin to think about applying to law school, I asked myself a question, and I use the same phrase, I asked myself, "What did I care about Mrs. Mufusky's lease?" because I began with, "What is the law?" and what I knew about the law really had to do with commercial, you know, that awful thing having to do with making a living, and what did I care about Mrs. Mufusky's lease? Why did I want to go to court and say, if I had thought, if I had been as aware of the public interest, public service aspect of the law, as my son, who for twenty-five years was an assistant district attorney with [Robert] Bob Morgenthau [Manhattan District Attorney, 1975-2009], and I had thought of that aspect of the law, I would have gone on and gone to law school and then, as Andy did, work in the public sector. But for some reason or other, in those years, one didn't, or at least this one didn't think in those terms, and the more important thing was, I had to make a living. I mean, my parents couldn't support me. It wasn't that I wanted to go out with girls the way my brother did, so he quit high school. I knew, surprisingly enough, that as a teacher, I could earn something. After all, my first job as a teacher I earned 900 dollars a year, as a teaching assistant at [University of California] Berkeley and that wasn't so bad. [laughter] So, in my senior year, having enjoyed my history classes more than anything else and feeling that that was right for me, I did not apply to law school. My teachers were certainly encouraging me to go on in the field of history and the general history of political science, so that when I came here [to Rutgers], I taught history and political science.

PC: When you were at Berkeley, my mother was a student. [It was] right after the war. It would've fit perfectly. My grandfather taught at Berkeley, probably in the history department,

I'm not sure. His name is Gilbert Chinard, and my mother went to school there, when he was teaching either American Studies or history or something like that.

RH: Do, you know, whether she ever studied with Kenneth Stampp [UC Berkeley Professor of History, 1946-1983]?

PC: I have no idea what she did there. All I know is she went there as an undergraduate …

RH: It's a great place.

PC: Oh, yes, she had wonderful stories to tell about …

RH: It's a great place, when you see what's happened now. It's still a great place, but I used to go back there. I used to make certain that I had to go back to Berkeley every year, there was some assignment that I had that took me back there, until the '60s and the riots, and then, the place became so zonked out, kids lying on the street, drugged, always. It became such a distasteful place for me. It had always been wonderfully politically active, and that was great, but when it turned to, when it turned around and it became a drug haven, I just, it was ugly, and it was too bad.

SI: How did the opportunity to go to Berkeley in 1947 come up, and what was that year like?

RH: I stayed for my, I got married, a mistake, we were divorced. I shouldn't say that; our marriage was annulled. In those days, you could, no, you couldn't, unless you knew someone, and our marriage was annulled. There was a girl at Barnard, a history student, Anne de la Vergne, and we both went on to study American history at Columbia with Richard Hofstadter [Columbia University Professor of History, 1946-1970], and our Master's essays you will find both on the public reputation of Theodore Roosevelt. I think I did the early years, and Anne did the later years. Anyway, we were both students of Hofstadter, his first year at Columbia, and I had won a fellowship, a President Adams Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin, which had a terrific American history department, and Dick [Hofstadter] insisted that we not go there, because he had been at the University of Maryland, and Ken Stampp and he were the two stars [there], and Ken had gone to Berkeley and Dick had come to Columbia, and he insisted we go to Berkeley and study with Ken Stampp, and I'm always grateful for that. Ken, who just died [in 2009], was [an] absolutely superb teacher and became a good friend. Anyway, we were informed we both got teaching assistantships [TA] at 900 dollars a year apiece, but when we got there, some nut said, "The rules against nepotism prevent you both from being TAs at the same time … "

PC: Wow.

RH: " … and therefore, one of you is going to have to be a reader," and that's it. We tossed a coin, and in those days, the man would have gone first anyway, forgive me, and I became the TA. Elaine and I have been married sixty years; Anne and I were married two. Anne became a reader. Berkeley was such a sexually-riven place. We used to go to dinner, whether at Ken Stampp's, or at someone else's, and the women would sit on one side of the room, literally. I

mean, there was no question, after dinner the women went here, the men went there, and it was a hateful experience, and Anne insisted that we come back and I, I think I agreed with her, and I applied here [at Rutgers and] got a job. Anne got a job at a publishing company up in Bronxville, New York, met another guy, left me, married him, and they lived happily together. He became a professor of English, and [they] had four daughters. I remember how broken up [I was], because I was here at Rutgers, and Henry Winkler, I don't know …

PC: I knew him. I actually talked to him a couple weeks ago. [Editor's Note: Henry R. Winkler, a notable historian, served as Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Executive Vice President at Rutgers University.]

RH: Good. How's he doing?

PC: He was okay.

RH: He's "long in the tooth" …

PC: Yes, he is.

RH: As I am. Henry really held my hand through the period when Anne had left me, and I was very much broken up. Anyway, I thought my life was at an end. Berkeley was great, in many ways as a teaching experience, and indirectly, it was responsible for my going into broadcasting, because on the way out, Anne and I drove out. In those days, you couldn't get a car. It was right after the war, you couldn't get a car, but an uncle of mine had a friend who was a Nash dealer. He got me a car and he knew that I would buy the car from him and I would sell it when I got to Berkeley for a profit, which paid for the trip across, and, I guess, paid for our first few months of our apartment in Berkeley. Driving across, *Life* Magazine had a big spread, that we picked up on the way, about Earl Warren and his family, and it identified Virginia. [Editor's Note: Earl Warren served as the Governor of California (1943-1953), the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court (1953-1969) and headed the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.] Excuse me, it was John Daly who was the broadcaster at CBS who announced the Pearl Harbor bombing, and I think of that because Virginia later married John Daly [in 1960]. It said, "Virginia Warren, the oldest daughter, was a sophomore at Berkeley," and this was during the summer. She would be a sophomore at Berkeley and I was teaching sophomores, and I thought, said to Anne, "Wouldn't it be interesting if she were in my class?" and of course, she was the first student who I ever called on, to ask whether any president of the United States had ever been impeached, and she said, "No," and I was able to tell her about [President Andrew] Johnson, and so forth, and so, on. [laughter] Anyway, I came to know Virginia and I came to know Earl Warren, and when he became, before he became Chief Justice, he was still governor, when my little book came out. [Editor's Note: President Andrew Johnson (1865-1869), who succeeded Abraham Lincoln after Lincoln's assassination, allegedly violated the controversial Tenure of Office Act. After the House of Representative impeached Johnson in 1868, the Senate narrowly acquitted Johnson so that he was not removed from office. Johnson did not seek reelection in 1868.]

SI: *A Documentary History of the United States*, [1st Edition, New York: New American Library, 1952; 7th Edition, New York: Signet Classic, 2002] an anthology of American historical documents.

RH: Yes. It came out in the fall of '52, and I sent Earl a copy, the first copy that I got, which cost thirty-five cents at the time and was about a third of this size [showing size with his hand]. [laughter] The next time he came to New York, he had already made his deal. He hated [Richard] Nixon. They were rivals as [California] governor and senator, and he came to New York to endorse Nixon [as vice presidential candidate], because he had already been promised the first seat on the Supreme Court; little did [Dwight D.] Eisenhower know that the first seat would be the Chief Justice-ship. He didn't know. [Editor's Note: The animosity between Warren and Nixon, both public figures in California, reportedly began when Warren refused to endorse Nixon's first campaign for Congress in 1946. In 1952, the Republican Party considered Warren, who was very popular in California, as its candidate for the presidential election. Warren withdrew from consideration and supported the nomination of Dwight D. Eisenhower, purportedly in exchange for an appointment to the Supreme Court. In 1953, Eisenhower nominated Warren to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.]

I remember seeing them every time Warren would come to New York. They'd invite me to come over for lunch at the old Pennsylvania Hotel where they would stay, and he said to me, you know, "Thank you for sending me this Democratic Party document," kidding me [about my book]. [laughter] Then, said, you know, essentially, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "I want to go into broadcasting." The book indicated you could teach on a larger scale than the classroom. The book came from my teaching experience at Berkeley, because you'd assign the *Constitution* or the *Declaration of Independence*, and Ken Stampp's [class], for whom I was a TA, there were two thousand students in that class. It was held in Room 2000 of the Life Sciences Building, which we renamed "the livestock building," [laughter] but with two thousand students, do you send [them] to the library to get, you know? So, I thought to myself, "There's got to be a volume," and when I came back to New York, came to Rutgers, I put this together and sold the idea to a publisher. Anyway, I told that to Earl Warren, and he picked up the phone and called a friend of his, and said, "I'm going to write a letter to Edward R. Murrow about this young man and I want you to follow up," and it took a long time.

It took a year-and-a-half, before I, my audience with Murrow was set, and he was the greatest influence on my life in terms of broadcasting, and I met him the morning after the famous [Senator Joseph] McCarthy broadcast. The one that George Clooney just, you know, made into the movie *Good Night, And Good Luck* [Warner Independent Pictures, 2005]. [Editor's Note: Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965) was a legendary American broadcast journalist and pioneer in television news broadcasting. On March 9, 1954, Edward R. Murrow made what is widely considered to be his most famous broadcast on the CBS show *See It Now*. Murrow criticized Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist witch-hunts using the senator's own speeches and assertions. The program showed the power of television broadcasting in swaying public opinion, as it provoked a nationwide backlash against Senator McCarthy. The controversial telecast caused friction between Murrow and CBS.] So, that I owe, owe this and my broadcasting experience to Warren. Some years later, when I was in broadcasting, by that time I was working at CBS, and I remember, every time I'd go to Washington, I'd call and stop off to see him, you

know, make an appointment to say hello, and it was just after the Christmas break, and I went in to see him, and he was angry. Why was he angry? He was angry with me, because I was now in broadcasting, and he had just been home in California, and Mrs. Warren's brother had died. Earl Warren said, and it had been an old joke that had gone around broadcasting for years, but he said his grandson, his grandnephew I guess, had asked, when he heard that his grandfather had died [Mrs. Warren's brother], he said, "Who shot him?" To Earl Warren that was the result of the violence on broadcasting, and I think he had a good idea there, but it was an old joke that the anti-television people used to tell, you know, "Who shot him?" [laughter] He was such a sweet and naïve, innocent person. Anyway, that's how it began in Berkeley. We went out there, we taught; I taught for Ken Stampp, who remained a friend forever.

SI: Can you put into words how studying under these two very influential figures, Hofstadter and Stampp, influence your intellectual development?

RH: Yes, I think, in the first edition of this book [*Democracy in America*, by Alexis de Tocqueville, edited by Richard D. Heffner (New York: New American Library, 1956)], I don't think it is in this [edition], no, I know, I was furious when I found out that somebody had taken it off. There's a new edition coming out this year, I guess, [in July 2010] and Vartan Gregorian [President of Brown University (1989-1997), now president of the Carnegie Corporation (1997-present)] is writing a post-word, but in the first edition in 1952 [1956], there was a blurb from Dick Hofstadter, for which I was always so grateful, and some smartass editor, who probably didn't know who Richard Hofstadter was, at some subsequent reprinting, just took it off of there. It's going back on. You have to remember, these weren't famous historians at the time.

SH: That seems impossible.

RH: I know. It does seem impossible. [laughter] But I disagreed with Dick Hofstadter, and with Ken Stampp, in those days. Ken came around to my point of view; Dick Hofstadter didn't. If you read his *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* [New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948], when he gets to, when he gets close to his own times, he is much less gracious toward and forgiving of FDR, Woodrow Wilson, TR [Theodore Roosevelt]. He's much more generous toward [Thomas] Jefferson and the others before him. When you get closer to the 1940s, when I was studying with him, he's very angry at FDR, as people are today with [President] Barack Obama, because he didn't do what they wanted him to do. He didn't nationalize the banks, FDR. He didn't regulate Wall Street, Obama. I would, you know, argue with Dick, "He never said he would." He was going to drive the money changers from the temple, FDR, and he did, but he didn't socialize the nation. He never said he would. He didn't nationalize the banks; he never said he would, and in those days, Ken Stampp agreed with that, and I was Ken's teaching assistant, and I've loved it so because Ken accepted this. He loved it so. Ken would give a lecture, his very, very left-leaning interpretation, and I would go into my five sections, five hourly sections after that, and say just the opposite. [laughter] You know, say, "He's wrong." [In] the very last lecture of the semester, in those days, the last one was on the New Deal [name given to President Franklin Roosevelt's domestic program that included relief, recover and reform measures], and he hadn't talked about the New Deal at all, but this is the very last day. Ken gets up there, he didn't use a mike, everybody else had to use a mike with 2,000 students, not Ken, who had a wonderfully booming voice, and he spoke about ten minutes, and

then he said, "That's all that needs to be said," shut his notes and left the podium, [laughter] and, you know, giving me the opportunity with the sections that met afterwards, to say, "That man's out of his mind. This is what FDR did," etcetera, etcetera. Both men dismissed FDR, because he didn't do what he could have done, what they wanted him to do. Dick never changed his mind. I later had a run-in with Dick, not a physical one-on-one, but something that disappointed me a great deal, and I think of it a lot, because I respected him so much, and I thought he was the best writer ever, best in all of American history. I don't think there's anyone, a historian [who wrote better]. I don't know if you agree with me on this.

PC: He was a great writer, yes.

RH: At one point, and I don't what year it is, I should've looked at it recently, looked at the date, Samuel Eliot Morison, he and [Henry] Commager had, Morison and Commager [wrote] *The Growth of the American Republic* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1930], which was the text we used in college, and it was widely used. If you ever see a CBS documentary that I show my students every year, the narrator is Bill Cosby, and it's called *Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed*, [made in 1968] and Cosby is depicting the way blacks have been, had been, treated in the media, always, and this, of course, was a long time ago when this documentary was done. He gets to textbooks, he includes them in the media, and he reads from Morison and Commager, their chapter on slavery, the title is, "As for Sambo." What a wonderful introduction to your treatment of Sambo, who was, after all, [an anti-abolitionist caricature of] a slave who was treated well by the master, and this whole myth, I mean, buying the whole pro-slavery myth, and thanks to that documentary, they [Morison and Commager] had to change their text, which is something that bothers me, but I'm so glad it happened to that. Anyway, Morison, on his own, he was the senior historian, did a one-volume history, a massive one, [*The Oxford History*] *of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965)], and Norman Cousins, a name that probably you don't know, but he was the editor of the *Saturday Review* [from 1942 to 1978], now defunct, but a great literary magazine; Norman Cousins asked me to review the new book, and I wrote a scorching, scorching review because, you didn't have to read between the lines, there was still that "As for Sambo" attitude in the book, and Norman liked it and he put it on the front cover and featured it. Norman called me, later in the week it came out, and said to me, "You should know that Dick Hofstadter called me and asked me what right I had to let a man," and you will appreciate this, "who basically abandoned the profession, who is no American historian, no scholar, write that about the grand, old man."

Now, my understanding is that that reflected, toward the end of his life, a conservatism that afflicted, forgive me for using the word, but I mean it, afflicted Dick after the '60s riots. Dick was very much upset, not by the role of the administration so much, but by the role of the students, as I was. I don't disagree with him, but I think it led him to have a more conservative approach to a lot of things, and I think that was, having written this wonderful blurb on my Tocqueville [book] and, that was heartbreaking for me, because I adored Hofstadter. I didn't agree with him. He was a lousy teacher, but he was a great writer, a lousy teacher. [laughter] He didn't want to teach. He was okay in the seminar, when he was with you one-on-one on what you were writing, and he depended upon the Master's essays that Anne and I did for his later writing, quoted it at length, but that was a shocking and disappointing experience. Ken changed, too, but not that way.

I did a program with Ken when I was out in San Francisco once, and I ask him, "Have you changed your mind historically? Have your historical interpretations changed much over the years?" and he said, "Well, something you and I used to talk about a lot, two things. One, a greater respect for Abraham Lincoln, and, two, a greater respect for Franklin Roosevelt," and he had abandoned this earlier interpretation. In fact, funny thing, and I think, forgive me for associating quite so freely, but the first thing I think that I wrote that was ever published was a review in *The Nation* magazine and it was a review of Ken [Stampp]'s book *And the War Came* [*The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950], and Carey McWilliams, who was the editor then of *The Nation*, as Norman Cousins liked what I wrote about the Morison book, he liked what I wrote, or the point of view, which was "war is not necessary," and he put it on the front page [of the April 7, 1951 issue] and he called it, it was a big, big thing, "Are Wars Necessary?" "Is War Necessary?" I guess. ["Why Wars Come"] My wife, we were just married and we lived up [at] 147th Street and Riverside Drive, and there was a subway, at the 145th Street station there was a news kiosk, and my wife went over and bought up all the copies of *The Nation* magazine and she pointed to this cover and she said, "That's my husband." I remember the little guy who ran that place, looked at it and said, "Why Wars Come," that was it, "Why Wars Come," and he said, "Lady, does he really know why wars come?" [laughter] So, Stampp, in his own way, got me started in a number of things, and then, I went on and I wrote a number of book reviews for *The New York Times*, not lately, but in those early years.

SH: How did it come about that you applied for a position at Rutgers?

RH: I think, I'm not sure, there was a tremendous demand for instructors, because there was such a widely expanded student body with the GI Bill, and I believe that there was a man who ran the, there was sort of an extension here, I forget what they call it, University College.

SI: Okay.

RH: Yes, and there was a man here, I believe it was (Cohen?), a very nice …

SI: David Cowen?

RH: No, but don't forget, this is 1940, could it have been, in 1947?

SH: … We can check.

RH: Anyway, John Hicks [UC Berkeley Professor of History, 1942-1972] was the chairman of the department at Berkeley, and I had just done a favor, no, no, it didn't work that way. I ended up doing a favor for Hicks, because Commager was coming out to teach the summer of '48. Hicks, by that time, I had already arranged, I had already signed up for Rutgers, and Hicks said, "Would you do me a favor, please? Henry Steele Commager is a pig, I know that," he said, "but he insists on renting my house this summer, and my wife and I are not going to be here and we have no excuse. Could we say [that] we've rented it to you? It's your last summer and you rent, and we won't charge you, but you rent Commager your apartment, because what do you care

how he destroys it?" Commager didn't come out with his wife. He came out with his son, and they did destroy it. It was a shambles, but my wife then, wife Anne, and I occupied this gorgeous house with his convertible car [Hicks] left for us. He said, "Only one obligation. Our dog has just had pups," and we'd have to look after them, which we did. Anyway, it was John Hicks who (Cohen?) had been in touch with, asking whether there were any likely candidates, and Hicks knew that I wanted [to come back], that Anne and I weren't happy there and that we wanted to come back, and he suggested me. I, in correspondence with him, I was hired. [I] ended up not working for University [College] extension except after hours. I used to teach five days a week here [then Rutgers College] and then three nights a week for the extension, a little more than I do now. [laughter] Anyway, a very nice guy, a very sweet, gentle [man], and he had a tremendous job, because the extension was expanding enormously all over the state. I was teaching for him at Englewood, in Newark, and here [in New Brunswick], three nights a week.

SI: When you were teaching at the extension courses, was it pretty much all veterans, or was it a mixture of adult students?

RH: You know, my impression is that the veterans were here on the campus. The veterans I had were, it's funny, you would think it'd be otherwise as logic to your question, but I don't think of the veterans in the extension. I could be wrong. I could be terribly wrong.

PC: [You came at] the same time that Richard P. McCormick did, because he got here about '47, too.

RH: Yes, he had been here. He had …

PC: It couldn't have been for long …

RH: No …

PC: He came here right after the war.

RH: Right.

PC: Katheryne [Levis McCormick, Richard P. McCormick's wife,] came first, I think. If I remember the story correctly, she came up to teach chemistry over at Douglass or something, but he was here almost immediately thereafter.

RH: Yes, I think a year before, but he was a very popular teacher by that time.

PC: Oh, okay.

RH: The New Jersey history was his, he and Henry Winkler and [Richard] Dick Schlatter. [Editor's Note: Richard Schlatter served as Rutgers Professor of History, Chair of the Rutgers History Department (1955-1960) and Rutgers Provost and Vice President (1962-1971)]. Richard P. McCormick graduated from Rutgers College in 1938. He came as an instructor in 1945. His early works as a political historian focused on New Jersey history and include *Experiment in*

*Independence: New Jersey in the Critical Period, 1781-1789* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1950), *The History of Voting in New Jersey: A Study of the Development of Election Machinery, 1664-1911* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1953), and *Rutgers, A Bicentennial History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1966)].

PC: Yes, Dick would have been here, too.

RH: … Norman, the man who was interested in Japan, Japanese history …

PC: That I don't know. That's not a name I know.

RH: I'm sure I could …

PC: He wouldn't have been here when I got here. I knew Dick Schlatter. I knew [him] very well, actually. I knew Henry Winkler sort of, and of course, I knew Richard P. [McCormick] very well. He was still very much in the history department when I arrived. No, I know there was somebody here who did teach Japanese history, because we hired a person, the year after I came here, to teach Japanese history, but I don't know who it was.

RH: It was the man who set up, I believe in the war and maybe in the six months after, he was involved in administration of our, in the McArthur …

PC: Occupation.

RH: … Yes, then, he was responsible for a lot of the exchanges, because we were pretty big in Japan.

PC: Yes. That's when my father got started. My father taught economics in Japan, after the war.

RH: Really?

PC: Yes, my father made a lot of friends. My father taught business, economics, public utilities administration. He went over to Japan under the auspices of some program out of the University of Maryland to help them set up their public utilities system. I have got to run. I'm sorry. This has been really fun. It's really nice to meet you.

RH: Good to see you.

PC: Yes.

SI: You arrived at Rutgers in 1948. What classes were you teaching at that point?

RH: I think I taught three or four of the basic American history, three or four sections, and one of, I'm pretty sure it was the recent, what I then knew as recent American history. Now, it's very old American history, but I'm pretty sure it was "America in the Twentieth Century," something

like that, because I know it was a group. I didn't teach the world history here. I think I taught only Americana. [Edward] Ed [McNall] Burns was the chairman of the joint department then. He was a great, great man, wonderful man, and he had written the basic textbook that they used here on world civilization [*World Civilizations, From Ancient to Contemporary* by Edward McNall Burns and Philip Lee Ralph (New York: Norton, 1955)]. I think there was some discussion, no, because I went back to Columbia afterwards, where I taught "Contemporary Civilization," so it was all Americana here [at Rutgers].

SH: Were you living near campus?

RH: I never lived in New Jersey. [laughter] [I] only take money from New Jersey, which I'm sure is [common]. [laughter] In later years, Mason Gross was a tremendous help in helping me get past the opposition of Governor [Robert B.] Meyner [Governor of New Jersey, 1954-1962] to the acquisition, by what he described as a bunch of fat cats from New York, of Channel Thirteen [now Channel Thirteen WNET, a non-commercial, flagship station of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)], which was and still is assigned to Newark, New Jersey. Why I mention that, I don't know?

SH: We asked where you were housed.

RH: Oh, right, so I've only commuted to New Jersey, which is too bad. There are so many beautiful spots in New Jersey, where I think I'd like to live, and besides that, I think it'd be much nicer to live on the river and look at Manhattan than look at the factories in New Jersey. [laughter]

SI: When you first came to Rutgers, American history was required, were the classes much larger?

RH: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Where would you usually teach? In what building were the classes held?

RH: My impression is they were always, there must have been a classroom in Bishop [House].

SH: On the first floor?

RH: Yes. I'm sure of it.

SH: Before we started recording you told us your office was on the third floor.

RH: Right, right, and as I think I said, it was the first time that floor, that office had been used, and Ed Burns had a struggle with himself as to whether he was doing violence to the mandate to keep this building pristinely clean, because nobody had dared go in there. I remember being warned, "Don't damage the furniture," and I used to walk around, you know, on tippy-tippy toes. [laughter] It's true, and I remember saying to students, you know, "Watch yourself, watch yourself," when they'd sit down.

SH: This was when they first opened Bishop House to be used for office space?

RH: Well, certainly, when they first opened the third floor, because I don't think it had been opened before then. They just had to find a place to house me.

SH: What was your interaction with the other faculty?

SI: Was there a cultural difference between Berkeley, Columbia and then Rutgers? Was there a different kind of intellectual atmosphere at each?

RH: It's a very interesting question. Well, don't forget, this was the first time I was on equal footing. I mean, I'd been a TA. I'd been a student at Columbia, undergraduate, then graduate student. [At Rutgers,] for the first time, [I was] really teaching. I mean, when I was an undergraduate, I don't know what you'd call it, I was, actually I was paid, I was some kind of, I did something for naval history, because with all [the V-12] naval cadets there, the history department was *succombered* [Old French for "to yield"] into teaching naval history. I'm sure I didn't teach it, it was hard enough to be a reader, a marker, but there was a basic text that was used. So, that my [coming] here, when I came here, I came into my own. It was a wonderful thing for me. I mean, Rutgers was my first real teaching job. I had loved being a TA for Ken Stampp, because he gave me *carte blanche* and let me do what I wanted to do, and respected me as a teacher, and I think that was to a large extent because Hofstadter had sent Anne and me there.

So, Rutgers was very different, and my relationship, I remember, I was an instructor, they were all, the ones I remember, [were] all assistant professors. Ed [Burns], of course, was [a] full professor, but I think they were all assistant professors, you know, one peg up from me. I never felt there were any lines drawn. Everyone was really very nice. I think, in a funny way, the coldest person here was [Richard] Dick [P.] McCormick, but he certainly never made me feel, you know, "You're the low man on the totem pole," and Schlatter and Henry Winkler were always colleagues. It was a difficult period for me, because my marriage was breaking up, but they were all lovely. I was the only one, I believe, who commuted. I can't think of [anyone else who commuted]. They were all sort of new to this world and were living here in the veterans and faculty housing.

It was my first big step, because at Berkeley, I was still a student. I was not only a teaching assistant, but I was doing graduate studies. I intended to continue my graduate studies at Columbia when I came back, and indeed I did, until I ran into historiography and learned how much I despised having to identify where my ideas came from. "Was it [George Macaulay] Trevelyan who wrote this or was it ... ? Or was it So-and-So who had this theory or that theory?" and I found that terribly difficult. I was sort of a, I was a good lecturer and a dynamic teacher, and somehow or other, I couldn't put together where I got what I thought. I mean, I quoted, in the [*A*] *Documentary History* [*of the United States*] I paid my respects to Charles A. Beard [American historian and author], who said that, "All written or spoken, all recorded history is an act of faith." I mean, who knows what happened? You weren't there. You were[n't] there. I wasn't there. When I got back to graduate school at Columbia, while I was teaching here, I

found a sort of rigidity, not among the faculty, but among the requirements, and I never got my doctorate. Am I sad? I suppose, I suppose it'd be nice to be called doctor, legitimately. [laughter] I have, I think, two or three honorary degrees, but I used to be able to say, you know, to my students who would say, "Dr. Heffner, Dr. Heffner," I used to be able to say, " I'm not a doctor. I'm not even a dentist," and that got me into trouble once, big, big, big, big trouble. [laughter]

When I was chairman of the film rating system, there was a movie with Michael Caine and, I think, Angie Dickinson, [in] which he plays the role, he's a psychiatrist [called *Dressed to Kill* (Warner Brothers, 1980)]. My colleagues and I, I remember so well seeing the film and saying, that as we saw it, "We'd have to say 'X,'" and it was for violence. There was a lot of sex in the damn film, but I was, basically, the dirty, old man who tried to move the system away from being quite so concerned about a bare nipple or even [a hint of] one and much more concerned about violence, which I thought American parents [were more concerned about]. We were supposed to reflect parental attitudes, not industry attitudes, because, at that time, that was 1974, and crime was rampant in American streets and I think parents were much more concerned about the threat to the lives of their children posed by violence than by a word, or a nipple. Anyway, this was tough, and we said, "X," and we spoke with the producers, and, not surprisingly, I think the next day, there was a call from *The New York Times*.

A young reporter called me in the morning, which was noon here, and said, "Dr. Heffner, could you tell us why the board gave this film an X?" and I said, "No, I couldn't tell you." I said, "I know, but we don't talk and we haven't given it an X. They have to accept the X, before we say, 'X,' and they haven't accepted it. They're going to do what they want to do first." Or whatever, but he kept saying, he kept pushing me with the reasons, the reasons. "Dr. Heffner, Dr. Heffner," and I said, "I'm not a doctor. I'm not even a dentist, as I tell my students." That went on for a half hour and finally he hung up, and after lunch, I got a call from the editor, the editor of the cultural section, whose name I forget right now, saying, "Now, look. We're your friends," because I would occasionally write for *The Times*, "and you know So-and-So, and you've had some us on your program, Dr. Heffner," blah, blah, blah, and I wouldn't talk. Next day, I think it was the next day, or a couple of days later, a big story appears. "Dr. Heffner, Richard Heffner, will not violate patient-physician confidentiality," and that's why they were trying to get [to me], calling me "Doctor" and "Doctor." Anyway, whatever they did, I was so furious, because I had, I mean, it just was dirty, dirty, dirty [tactics], and I wrote a letter to *The Times*, to the editor, and I said, "As I tell my students, I'm not a doctor. I'm not even a dentist," and I did this in the context of a letter condemning them for jumping the gun, and all of this. I got a letter from the dean, the first associate dean of what was then the NYU School of Dentistry [laughter], and I felt so sorry, because it went to *The New York Times*, and if they had printed it, this man would have been [insulted], obviously, his mother always wanted him to be a doctor and he was only a dentist and what I was doing was rubbing salt into his wounds and I've never publically used that since, because you know you think of this poor man, you know, and I didn't mean it, I meant it as stupid joke, not as an insult. [laughter] Anyway, I didn't get my doctorate.

SH: I believe it was off the tape, but you talked about how exciting it was to teach the returning World War II veterans when you were here at Rutgers. Can you talk a little about that?

RH: Oh, sure. These were inquiring, questioning people. They wanted to learn. I mean, that's the number one and number two and number ten point about them, they wanted to learn. There was never a slacker among them, and if I, it's interesting, I'm a balanced person, I think, intellectually, and they always wanted to push me, wanted a conclusion, out of their, not out of stupidity or failure to realize that there are many sides to every historical issue, but just the eagerness, the dynamism that motivated them. That was fun. It really was. Then, came the Eisenhower years [1953-1961. I look at Eisenhower there [Editor's Note: Referring to photograph of Dwight D. Eisenhower on office wall], and we were getting fat and sassy. We were doing okay as a nation. We didn't want questions, we didn't need answers, and the students were reflecting that. The veterans were gone by that time, and I suppose there are many other factors, but I found it more interesting to teach via the documentary history, or my radio and television work, and it was all beginning as a historian.

SH: Was your radio and television career beginning while you were still at Rutgers?

RH: While I was at Rutgers, no. I went from Rutgers to Columbia to teach CC [Contemporary Civilization], and then, Sarah Lawrence [College], which was still an all-women's school. There was a year vacancy, a professorship, and, "Did I want to teach American history?" There was someone who, Bert Loewenberg, [Sarah Lawrence College Professor of History] was going on a year's sabbatical. "Would I want to come up?" There was a job, and I applied for it. I knew enough about Sarah Lawrence and its orthodox liberalism that I knew that I better find out what's the current what are the orthodox liberals reading? Try to figure out, "What are they reading?" I knew that they were reading, oh, I wish Elaine were here, because she's our family memory, institutional memory. I can see the book now, it had a green cover on it. It was *The Lonely Crowd*, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and after I had read it, I had loaned it to my friend Martin (Levin?), and I called Martin and I said, "Please, return the book. You can get it back again, because I want to reread it tonight," or the next night, because the next day I was going to be interviewed by Harold Taylor [President of Sarah Lawrence College, 1945-1959] and the people at Sarah Lawrence. Sure enough, I mean, right on the nose; it was *The Lonely Crowd* that we talked about, and I was brilliant, because I had gotten it back and reread it, [laughter] and I got the job.

Part of my [reasoning], at that time, leaving full-time teaching was the fact, I should be honest, it was a one-year job, and when Bert returned, there wasn't another position, but I didn't actively look for another one, because that year of teaching at Sarah Lawrence was just a little too much. Those were the days when there was the donning system [advising system] and you were assigned a certain number of dons, and basically what your obligation was, on Monday, to meet with your donnees and have them tell you who they slept with over the weekend, what their sexual experiences were, or were not, over the weekend. I remember thinking, my wife is a psycho-therapist, and I remember thinking that if I were trained the way she was being trained then, there would be some legitimacy to that, but what did I know to do with these, what to do with these gorgeous, young creatures? I remember I had them all over for dinner one night at our home [in Manhattan], and so when I left Sarah Lawrence, I took a bunch of them with me in the car, and as we went through what used to be the toll gates between Westchester and Manhattan, they didn't have the automatic machines, and this toll-taker looked in, and I said, "They're all my students. They're coming to dinner." [laughter] Anyway, I didn't really want to,

I needed to get away from that. Interesting enough, one of my students, and I had my worst and my best students there.

SH: It was such a contrast between teaching veterans at a public university …

RH: Absolutely. I think it was then, and maybe it is now still, the most expensive school. I guess, all the big ones now, the private colleges, are fifty [thousand to] 55,000 [dollars per year for tuition], but then that was 35,000 [dollars], which, after all, that's many, many, many, many years ago. There was a student I remember, Mary Churchill, whose mother was descended from Thomas Jefferson, and we had a field trip to Washington. I remember going to the Jeffersonian Memorial and another one of the students said, "Professor Heffner, look at Mary standing there. Look right above her. Isn't it shocking how much she looks like Jefferson?" and I wanted to say, because she never let the other students know, "Should be, it's her great-great-great-great-grandfather." [laughter] Anyway, her father was chief of surgery at Mass[achusetts] General Hospital, a very famous doctor. Mary went on to become head of the nursing school at Yale and died very, very young, it was tragic, anyway, a lovely, lovely young women. She must have told her parents about this professor and his wife, because she knew Elaine, too, how nice they were, and they said they'd like to take us out to dinner. We arranged for a Saturday night. We met them at Mrs. Churchill's club, I forget the name of it, in New York. In the course of the conversion, Ed Churchill, Dr. [Edward D.] Churchill, said to me the equivalent of, a little bit like Earl Warren's question, he said, "Well, young man," the book had recently come out, the book had come out the fall before, this was in the spring of that same year, academic year, "What are you going to do when you grow up?" and I said, the same thing I said to Earl Warren. I'd been interviewed a couple times on television for the book, and I liked the experience, and I said, "I'd like to teach on [this] with a larger campus," and he said, "Well, why don't you get off your ass and do something about it?" Literally, he said that, this distinguished thoracic surgeon.

The next morning, it just so happened that *The New York Times*, Sunday *Times*, had a big story in its "Arts & Leisure" section about the, I guess it was there, I don't know why it should have been though, about the eighth anniversary of Franklin Roosevelt's death [April 12, 1945] coming up in April [1953], and this must have been in February or March. I said to Elaine, "We've got to do something about this," and I immediately went to every television station in New York and said, "I want to do," you know, I held my book in my hand, and, basically, they said, "What do you know about television?" you know, "Go away." Finally, I got to the radio stations, and they said the same thing, until I got to WMCA, which was basically a talk radio and owned by Nathan Straus [Jr., journalist, author, radio executive], who had been in the sub-cabinet of FDR, had been the federal Housing [Authority] administrator. One of my father's old, hundred-thousand-dollar-a-race, betters [Charles] Charlie [H.] Silver, who was the vice president of the American Woolen Company and who had remained on top financially, and who had been frequently mentioned as a candidate for mayor of New York, I still knew him. [President] Harry Truman [1945-1953] had asked him to become a member of, during the McCarthy years [1947-1957], of the internal subversive control panel of the federal government [Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights]. Charlie Silver, knowing that of all of his acquaintances I was the only intellectual, had called me and said, "Dick, what am I going to do about this?" and I said, "You're going to accept it." He said, "How can I accept? I wouldn't know what to do." I said, "You write the president a letter." He said, "You write it for me," and I wrote it for him. Anyway,

Charlie Silver knew Nathan Straus, the Straus's, because they were all rich people, and I went there, and they said, "That's great. If you do a program, and bring it to us, and we like it, we'll buy it from you." So, Elaine and I rented a tape recorder. In those days, a tape recorder was like that, believe me.

SH: Three feet long.

RH: A Brush [Development Company] tape recorder and we went up to Hyde Park, interviewed a lot of the people who were coming to visit the grave [of President Roosevelt]. Mrs. Roosevelt agreed to see us, and we went to Val-kill, her cottage there, up at Hyde Park. It was a lovely interview. You could hear the fire crackling in the fireplace. You'd hear the chimes of the clock, and she was great. I took her tape down, and the tape of all the other people we had interviewed to WMCA, and spoke with the engineer there, and he was going to edit all that. I was going to go home and write my copy. I wrote it. The next day, [I] came back, he taped me, and then said, "Oh, my God." I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I've never done anything like that in the years I've been in radio." He had taped me; he had used the tape of Mrs. Roosevelt's broadcast and taped me over it, meaning they wiped out. [Editor's Note: Eleanor Roosevelt served as the First Lady (1933-1945) and U.S. delegate to United Nations General Assembly (1946-1952). She was an author and speaker and advocate of civil rights, women's rights and human rights.]

SH: Oh, no.

SI: Wow.

RH: I thought to myself, you know, "It just couldn't be." Elaine and I had tickets that night for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the* [*Forum*, by Stephen Sondheim], no, it wasn't that, it was for Danny Kaye. Danny Kaye was performing at the Palace [Theater], I think, in New York, and it was a performance that I couldn't appreciate because I was so sad. Anyway, Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary, Malvina Thompson, had died in the two days intervening and she [Mrs. Roosevelt] was incommunicado, but, Mrs. Straus called her and said, "Such a nice young man," and Mrs. Roosevelt let me come back to the, she had an apartment in a hotel on 59th, 57th Street, somewhere there, and I went up there and we taped another interview. Instead of hearing the chimes of the clock and the roar of the fireplace, you heard cars going from first into second into third [gear], seventeen stories before, but, she said exactly the same thing; mostly about what a witch her mother-in-law was, but it was fine. We did the program, and they paid me twenty-five dollars, and [they] said, "Would you like to do a weekly, fifteen-minute program on history in the news?" It started in the fall [of 1953], that was in the spring, and they [WMCA] paid me eighteen dollars a week for that [*History in the News*], and I became a broadcaster, and life went on from there.

SH: How did it happen that you came back to Rutgers? What year did that happen?

RH: You really want to know? Do you really want to know? I went on in broadcasting. I went from that weekly radio program, which was a fascinating experience. [I] took an idea for a television--you yell when it's fifteen ...

SH: I know your time is limited.

RH: Well, this one, I'll [shorten]. I had an idea for a television program, and I went and made the rounds again, and when I stopped at WRCA TV, which was the NBC network affiliate, the flagship station, the program manager, Steve Krantz, said to me when I walked in, "We need a program January 7th," it was the beginning of December. "The program starts. You produce it. You're on the air. You get a hundred dollars a week for things, for," what do they call it, under-the-line budget, whatever, "on-the-line budget." They paid me whatever the union minimum was, seventy-five bucks, I don't know. I went on the air with *Man of the Year* and I'd never done anything like that in all my life, and that stayed on a couple of years.

Then, I did other programs, which at another time I can tell you about, but it ended up, so I can answer your question, that I went from NBC, [where I] started [*The*] *Open Mind* there in '56, [to CBS]. Frank Stanton saw me on the air; he was the president of CBS [from 1946 to 1971]. He asked me to come to CBS to head up what it wanted to be its editorial policies [CBS, Inc. Editorial Board] so, I was in the corporation, but he knew that I was a ham and wanted to be on the air and he directed the local station to be sure to find a program for me, which was fine.

Then, going back to my old friend, Edward R. Murrow, [the] McCarthy broadcast [was in] '54, Ed Murrow suffers from that. He was finished then. It didn't really take effect, except during the years that followed they cut him back further and further. By '60, he was really finished as a broadcaster. [Editor's Note: Tensions between CBS and Murrow arose in 1954 surrounding the McCarthy broadcast. In 1958, Edward R. Murrow made a divisive speech to the Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA), in which he described the broadcasting industry as being "fat, comfortable, and complacent" and television as "being used to detract, delude, amuse and insulate us."]

[President John F.] Jack Kennedy is elected in November. He calls Murrow, asked him to come down to Washington to have a cabinet position, to be head of the USIA [United States Information Agency]. Murrow calls me, asked me to go with him as his deputy, which I would have loved to have done. Frank Stanton, with whom Murrow was at great odds, both of them had wanted to be US Senator from New York, calls me and says, "I understand Murrow wants you to go to Washington. Don't go. John [D.] Rockefeller, [III], Amory [Arthur A.] Houghton, [Jr.], and a few other fat cats in New York on the Lincoln Center Board," which was just being constructed, "want a broadcast station as an educational station. New York doesn't have one. Boston does. Chicago does. San Francisco does. New York and LA don't. If you stay, I'll put you on leave. We'll pay your salary, and you birddog the acquisition of a station, and when we get it, you'll run it."

Everything took place over the dead body, almost, of [New Jersey Governor] Robert Meyner, and that's a fascinating story in itself [laughter] and the role that Mason [Gross] played and that [New York Senator Robert] Bob [F.] Wagner [played]. He and Mason had been classmates somewhere, I think in secondary school. Anyway, we get the station; it's a fascinating story. Meyner takes it to the Supreme Court [US Court of Appeals] to get them to take it away from us. Earl Warren tells me later he was so grateful I never got in touch with him to tell him about my involvement, because I knew that it would not be fair. Norman Cousins, who I've already talked

about, is a tennis partner of Bob Meyner. He comes out, plays tennis with Bob Meyner, and makes the arrangement that I will come out the next night. We make a deal and we get the station, and I become general manager of the station, to answer your question. [Editor's Note: Richard Heffner played a major role in establishing Channel Thirteen as New York's first public broadcasting station, in an acquisition fraught with interstate politics, legal issues and controversy. In early 1961, the owner of the New Jersey commercial station Channel Thirteen WNTA put the station up for sale. By June, the New York City-based group, Educational Television for the Metropolitan Area (ETMA), agreed to purchase Channel Thirteen, and the Federal Communication Commission approved the conversion of the station to a non-commercial license. New Jersey Governor Meyner opposed the deal on the basis that as the only VHF channel assigned to New Jersey, Channel Thirteen was crucial for New Jersey programming and advertising. Governor Meyner petitioned the US Court of Appeals, which initially ruled in favor of New Jersey, but later reinstated the FCC order. By December 1961, the ETMA reached a compromise with New Jersey and bought Channel Thirteen. The ETMA became the Educational Broadcasting Corporation and Channel Thirteen WNDT (later renamed Channel Thirteen WNET) broadcast for the first time on September 16, 1962.]

I wasn't a very smart general manager, in the sense that I wanted to run the programs; I really wanted to run the station. I didn't want to put on a tuxedo every night and go out and raise money and I told the board, "Look, we need a president, a president who is a fundraiser who can do these things, whom you'll be proud of, and I'll run the station." So, we look, they look, the trustees look and they get [Laurence] Larry [M.] Gould; they want Larry Gould, who had been the president of Carleton College [from 1945 to 1962]. [He was] an Antarctic explorer who had gone to the Antarctic with Admiral [Commander Richard E.] Byrd, [he was] a great geologist, a wonderful man, and on the board of the Ford Foundation. They ask him to be the president, that would have been great, and Larry says to them, "No. I've done my good deeds. I'm going to go the University of Arizona." He had a home in Tucson. "I'm going to teach one course, and I'm going to retire," and he did.

Well, while they were on the name of Gould, somebody suggested there was a man by the name of Gould, Samuel [B.] Gould, who had been the president of Antioch [College, from 1954 to 1959] and had had big problems with the students and the faculty and had left. [He] had become the chancellor of the University of California at Santa Barbara. Years later, Clark Kerr said, "Dick, if you'd only come to me," he [Clark Kerr] was the president of the university [UCSB], he said to me, "I would have told you enough about this guy, you would never have touched him." Anyway, trustees got in touch with Sam. They invited him to come to New York to talk with them about the presidency of Channel Thirteen. They asked me if I [would pick him up], he only had one evening, he could fly in on the early morning plane, and then, meet with them, and then, he had to take the plane overnight back. They asked me if I'd pick him up at Kennedy. I did, and I briefed him on what it was all about, and when I picked him up after his meeting with them, he said, "They've offered me this job, and I'd like you. You will run the station," and he said, "I like you. You're not like the usual academic, the usual faculty member," and I should've known then. [laughter] I really should have been suspicious enough, if the president didn't like faculty members, then we've got a problem. Anyway, I was too arrogant, too innocent, too young, to put everything together and to figure [it] out. Sam never lived in New York, I've lived here all my life; I'm known, I'm on the air; I have the loyalty of the station; I know the people at

the press; he's going to feel like the fifth wheel, and I've got to make him feel welcome and all that, and I never did think that out. He wanted fancy headquarters, so we got him fancy headquarters, and we still ran this station from over Lindy's [deli and restaurant] on Broadway and 50th Street. [laughter]

Within a few months, the tensions grew between us in such a way that Jack Gould, who was *The New York Times* television critic, when I was fired, wrote that, I was fired on a Thursday, on Friday and Saturday, there were front page stories in *The New York Times*, and in one of them, Jack Gould said, "It is rumored that Mr. Heffner wouldn't give the key to the men's room to Dr. Gould." [laughter] Dr. Gould, who also hadn't ever earned a doctorate, did call himself "Dr. Gould." Anyway, it was dumb of me not to have understood what the human dynamics were, and I think I learned, but, Sam didn't want to be the fifth wheel or the third wheel and he went to the trustees and said, "He goes or I go," and they'll always back up their president rather than their general manager, and I was fired.

The next day, when *The New York Times* carried this big story on the front page, Mason Gross called me and said, "How would you like tenure?" I said, "You're a son-of-a-bitch," and I said, "You know I'm all broken up about this. How could you do this to me?" [Harry D.] Gideonse, the president of Brooklyn [College], called me and said exactly the same thing. Edward R. Murrow called me, and said, "I had designs on your body," and I said, "If you were a good-looking blond that would be fine." He offered me the same job, and I went down the next week to see him. It was clear that the White House was running the agency [USIA] through Bobby Kennedy, and Ed had me have lunch with his two guys he thought he was running, and it became so clear that they were running the agency. They were perfectly willing to have me come down, but I wouldn't go, seeing that, and yet, after lunch, I was flying back to New York, Ed said, "I'm going to a cabinet meeting at the White House. Come with me. The driver will let me off at the White House, and then it will take you to the airport," and on that ride, he said he had never been so happy in all of his life, and it was so close to the end of his life, which he didn't know, because he had a cancer, which had not yet been identified, and I was always so glad that he was happy. He didn't realize they were calling the shots. [Editor's Note: Edward R. Murrow died in 1965 from lung cancer.]

Anyway, [in response to] Mason's call to me, I said, "Give me time. I'll get back to you," and I was broken up. I put my life into that station, got it on the air. It's, I think, my proudest achievement. When I look at it now, I think, "That's great." A few months later, I began to think, "Okay, yes, I'd like to go back, if I can do other things," and I talked with Mason, and he said, his words were, "You can do anything else you want as long as you don't bring disgrace upon the university," and he said, "I know you never want to go to a department meeting." He said, "The historians probably don't want you and you don't want the historians, so I'll make you University Professor and you report to the president and you have your tenure that way." I said, "Yes." Under those conditions, you could teach what you want, when you want, and I'm delighted that I did it, so that's how I came back here [on] July 1, 1964. I'd been fired in April of 1963, and I started here, back here, in '64. I love it when I say to my students in September, first, I say, you know, "I came here first in September 1948," and you can see them looking at their computers and trying to figure out, "What does that mean? How many years? How old is he?" [laughter] That's the answer to your question of how I came back here.

There were other things that were going on that were great. Mason [Gross] kept his word. When the Ford Foundation asked me to run a study on the environmental values and the media [1970-1972], I did. When the Twentieth Century Fund asked me to run a study on money, television and politics [Commission on Campaign Costs in the Electronic Era (1968-1969)], I did. When the movie industry asked me if I would be the chairman of the film rating board [1974-1994], [I did]. By that time, Ed Bloustein was president [Rutgers University, 1971-1989], and he sort of was stricken by the media. He went on the board, a couple of years later, of Columbia Pictures, but he was star-struck. It's been not a bad life.

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Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 3/16/10
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/18/10