RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD KARPOFF

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Susan Sachs: This begins an interview with Edward Karpoff in Rockville, Maryland, on March 10, 2006, by Susan Sachs and …

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: … Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SS: To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Edward Karpoff: I was born in San Francisco, California on February 2, 1918.

SS: I had seen on the pre-interview survey that your parents were born in Russia and Poland. Could you tell me a little about their experience there and when and why they came here?

EK: Well, my father came to evade the Czar's draft in about 1911. He was raised in the Crimea, southern Russia. He had a checkered few years in the United States until he moved to California at the time of the World's Fair there, in 1914. My mother left the part of Russia that has since become Poland, to better herself economically. It was an extremely impoverished area, and one not friendly to Jews. She got to the United States a little bit later than my dad, and she, too, gravitated to California because she wanted to see the World's Fair. They met at the home of a mutual friend, and one thing led to another. My dad finished his apprenticeship as a railway machinist for the Southern Pacific and, when he finished, they married.

SH: Did they travel to the United States alone?

EK: Oh, one came from the Crimea, and the other from what is now Poland, which are thousands of miles apart. They didn't know each other.

SH: No, no, I meant did they come with other family members.

EK: Oh, no. My father came under unusual circumstances. He had a friend who was similarly about to be swept up in the Czarist draft, but the friend didn't have a passport; my father did. So my father went as far as Constantinople, which is now Istanbul, and, in the open mail, he sent his passport back to Morris, who took this passport, which did not contain a photo, and he joined my dad in Constantinople, and they came along to the United States together.

SH: Do you know where they entered the United States?

EK: In New York. My mother, also. My mother had an aunt in New York to whom she went. My father had no one.

SH: How old were they at that point?

EK: My mother must have still been in her teens, and my father in his very early twenties.

SH: Did your father have a trade that he was bringing with him?

EK: No. He was much too young to have acquired a trade. Oh, he had been apprenticed to a photographer, and he understood photography and preparing films very well, but this idea of becoming a railroad machinist was new to him.

SS: Why did they decide to come back to the New Jersey/New York area after California?

EK: Well, the machinist business for the Southern Pacific Railway was fraught with many strikes, and my father recognized that one of them was going to be a long one, so he apprenticed himself to a friend who had a retail fruit and vegetable market, and then he opened one himself. He sold the market to the man who had been his mentor as an apprentice, and my mother had sold our house at the same time. She was the one that always managed the family finances, and the house, and so on. Meanwhile, my father had brought over his brother and the brother's family, and they had lodged in New York, because coming all the way to the West Coast was going to strain my dad's and their finances. He wanted to see his brother, of course. My mother had a sister that was in New York City. My Aunt Mildred, who had come to stay with us from Poland, and my mother and father and I, four of us, came East, when the family got through with the sale of that business and the sale of the house. We landed in New York City, and my mother and father didn't like it. I didn't either, because we were used to a less frantic life in Berkeley, California. I was about seven years old at this time. There was active in New York City, at that time, an outfit called the Jewish Agricultural Society. The Jewish Agricultural Society had as its principal purpose to break the image of the Jew as soley a merchant, and sought to establish Jews, that wanted to, on farms nearby to New York. I said that my father's machinist craft was fraught with strikes. At a previous strike, the family had, for a year, been egg farmers in Petaluma, California. With that background in mind, they went to see the Jewish Agricultural Society, which guided them to a farm in Hunterdon County, near Rosemont, and that's where I grew up, from age about seven until I left to go to college.

SH: Did your father talk about the strike and how they affected him as an immigrant? Did he discuss it?

EK: He was always a very staunch spokesman for labor and when preparation for the war came on, he cut back how much farming he did and commuted, at the age of about sixty, commuted forty miles each way to take employment as a machinist again. He felt that that was opening his second front. He felt very strongly about participation, preparation for war. My dad, the second week he was on the job, sought out the foreman and asked, "What's the Union situation around here, and where do I find the Union Shop Steward?" So that tells you his attitude about that.

SH: So the reason that he went into egg farming was just subsistence until the strike was over?

EK: Well, the family felt that they wanted to be constructively engaged in something and not simply await the end of the strike.

SH: The aunt who came to the West Coast, did she come into the West Coast or …

EK: She entered via Boston, was quarantined because she had some childhood disease, chicken pox or something like that, and then came on herself, still in her teens, to us in California. She

was my mother's sister. Both family members, Mother and Father, were instrumental in bringing their siblings to the US. My mother brought four in her mature years while I was aware, and you might say that her sister, Celia, and sister, Mildred, too, came by her efforts.

SH: What about World War I, did that affect your father?

EK: Well, my father and mother each had left Europe before World War I, but my Aunt Mildred had not, and she was rather stunted in growth on account of the food shortages in World War I.

SH: Did your father talk at all about thinking that he wanted to be involved in World War II?

EK: When Germany started marching, he said, "This is our war and we've got to fight it." That was in '39, and it was apparent before the fall of '39 that war was coming. He'd saved his machinist tools, and he'd go down to the basement and shine them up, and my mother said, "But why are you doing this?" "Because they said over the radio they need machinists." My mother would say, "But they said if you are under forty-five and have these qualifications." He said, "They won't be able to stick with that because they didn't train many apprentices after the year when I trained, or the years when I trained." His education as an apprentice was much like mine as a college student. One day, of course, this radio announcement came, without age limitations, and he noted the phone number and called.

SH: I was just wondering about World War I, did he discuss it?

EK: Well, he had left Europe before World War I.

SH: But when he was in the States, was there a chance that he would be drafted into the armed forces for World War I?

EK: Well, I guess there would have been a chance, but he never seemed to have mentioned that. My uncles were drafted. Probably, he was considered an alien because he had not yet gotten his citizenship papers.

SS: I don't mean to get ahead of myself here, but did your early involvement with the Jewish Agricultural Society, and things like that, did that influence your major in college at all?

EK: Oh, no. It was growing up on the farm, and the teacher of vocational agriculture at the high school I went to, which was in Lambertville, that was the big influence that guided me toward agriculture.

SH: As a young man of seven, you would have gone right into first grade in New Jersey schools.

EK: I'd been in first grade in California, probably about went into the second. In New Jersey, I went to a one-room school, which some people said, "You should have gone into politics with that background." But, literally, the family was very protective of me, and I had no brothers or sisters, and growing up on a farm was an idyllic existence for a kid.

SH: Were there any farms close-by with other children your age?

EK: Well, through the school, of course, there would be between thirty or forty kids, depending on the year in school, and the school served two settled communities and all the farm areas in between. From among them, of course, you had friends.

SH: What were those established communities?

EK: Rosemont and Raven Rock.

SH: What high school did you go to?

EK: Lambertville High School.

SH: As a young man before going into high school, what were your interests? Were you involved in any organizations, or with interests in school or outside of the school?

EK: Well, I was given a bicycle along there somewhere, so my bicycle was a big source of interest. I remember one incident on a Sunday afternoon. I took the back way off the farm, which was a rather remote lane through woods, onto a public road. There was a car stuck in the lane in the woods. The couple had driven off the road to picnic there, and after the picnic, he found that the car wouldn't get out of this mud hole. He said, "Do you have any suggestions?" I was, say, eleven by this time, or twelve maybe, I said, "Let me try it." So, an eleven year old kid, twelve year old kid, I was not yet in high school, got in, rocked the car forward, up the edge of the mud hole, backward up the edge, rocked it back and forth, and pretty soon it came out. This man said, "How do you know that? What skills do you have? Where do you go to school? Where do you live?" He was wondering what kind of superior breed lives around here.

SH: What were your chores on the farm? What were you raising predominantly, what was your cash crop?

EK: Our biggest enterprise was chickens. We had thirty-two hundred laying hens, and keeping the chickens fed and watered involved both my mother and father, and, thirdly, me. My father did all the milking. We had from four to seven cows. The cows were there, because hay was part of the crop rotation on sixty-five tillable acres of a, ninety-two acre farm. Dad did all the milking. I didn't milk at all. I don't recall why not. I knew how to milk. Then in the summer, of course, we made hay, with not much machinery, nothing like what's available now. The rotation was corn, corn, wheat, hay. Somewhere there has got to be oats in there. Oats, corn, corn, wheat, hay, perhaps, something on that order, and Dad would pitch the hay up on the wagon, and I would be on the load to tramp it down, arrive the horses, and so on. Then, as we approached the time when I was getting ready to leave for college, I pitched the hay and my dad would be on the wagon.

SH: How were you able to do such a labor-intensive job without any help, or did you have outside help?

EK: In the summertime, the Jewish Agricultural Society, again, would have a cadre of young men that wanted to get farm experience, so we, typically, would have a student from the beginning of the college vacation on.

SH: Was there any organization of those who had been sent out by this federation? Were there Grange-type meetings for that group?

EK: I don't recall any. There were farm organizations, Grange and Farm Bureau Federations, and so on, but I don't think my family was involved with them. Dad did support the formation of the Hunterdon County Hospital, but that was after I had already left home. Dad was big in the formation of the Flemington Auction Market Association and the association of the Federal Land Bank and the local Farmer's Feed Co-op. I guess that's about the outside life that we led.

SH: What about your mother? Did she have outside interests as well?

EK: Oh, yes. In the wintertime, my mother made arrangements with the principal of the high school that she could take courses, and she did.

SH: Good for her. What did she bring with her backround that impacted your home that you remember?

EK: Well, our house was built before 1802, because the people that now have the farm did a good deal of research into it, and they found that what we thought was the cornerstone of a big house was dated 1802, but they said that was the addition to the house. The smaller part, the original part, was built earlier and they couldn't establish the date.

SH: Mr. Karpoff has brought us a gorgeous picture of the equally gorgeous home that he grew up in.

EK: This is the part that was built in 1802. This is the part that was built earlier at an unknown date.

SH: So the smaller section is the earlier home.

EK: Yes. Well, my mother always said this was a very difficult house in which to keep house, because the walls were stone, about eighteen inches thick, then plastered inside, and no furring or insulation. So to be comfortable, we always kept the pot of hot water on the stove so it vaporized, and humidified the air, but this would promptly condense on the un-insulated outside walls and run down the walls in streams, so you can actually soak it up on a mop, with a mop. So my mother said it was a difficult house to keep in order. But we had a very happy life on the farm because we were near the railroad, which enabled my mother's family to come visit on weekends, and sometimes they drove out as they became increasingly prosperous. We always had Model-T Fords, and we went once to New York City in the Model-T Ford, but it took a long time.

SH: Now where were the families coming from? Were they in New York City, all of them?

EK: Yes.

SH: They had stayed in the city.

EK: Yes.

SH: Did you have cousins that came to visit for extended periods of time?

EK: Yes. One cousin stayed an entire school year, but he missed the city, and then among the family members, that my mother and father brought from Europe, was my Uncle Harold, who was only two or three years older than me, and we grew up together on the farm from the age of probably thirteen on.

SH: Now did he go to Lambertville High School?

EK: No. When he got of high school age, his mother and father had, by then, come to the United States, so he went to live in New York City.

SH: Were you involved as a young man in any community activities, or was your social circle the high school and the farm?

EK: Well, let's see. Students of vocational agriculture at that time had a national organization that was called the Future Farmers of America. We had a real live wire agriculture teacher, and he promoted me, so to speak, as the high school vehicle in the Future Farmers, and I'd get to go to New Brunswick, the State College, from time to time on account of that. That was one high school activity beyond the usual.

SH: Did he also encourage you to go on to school, on to higher education?

EK: Yes. He's the one that was most influential in that.

SH: Had he been a Rutgers alum?

EK: He was a Cornell alum. He was about five foot four inches high and had been a notable basketball player in his undergraduate days, if you can imagine that. Well, let's see. I didn't want to go directly to college when I graduated from high school. I was, well, let's see, 1934 at high school, born in 1918, so I was sixteen years old. I wanted to stay on the farm and work for a year. The family wanted me to go to college, but the Ag instructor who wanted me to go to college, and had tipped off Professor Helyar, who was the Dean of Students in the Ag School. You nod, as if his reputation persists, good! My high school teacher had tipped off Helyar, "there's a kid out here that ought to go to college," and Helyar and his wife came driving out one Sunday, and when he pulled up, Dad said, "Yes?" And he said, "Oh, I'm from the University. I'm told there's a boy here that ought to go to college." "Well, he's out swimming with the rest of the kids right now," said my dad, "but we want him to go to college but he doesn't want to." "Do you have his report card?" says Helyar. Dad said, "Yes, I know where they are," and he

brought them out. Helyar said, "Well, he's had the right courses. He's got good grades. He doesn't have to take any examinations or anything, he can come right to college, if he wants to, and we can give him a small scholarship." So I went to college. And much of my life has been done on the same willy-nilly basis, by the way.

SH: Were there other things that you were interested in high school? Other than your Ag teacher, was there another teacher who stands out?

EK: Well, there were a lot of teachers that I liked. The science teacher, Harley Atwood, was a nice guy. With the prompting of Coan, who's the Ag teacher, I approached Atwood at the middle of freshman year, and said, "You know, says I'd do better to have biology instead of general science, can I go in it?" He said, "Well, I'm going to give the kids a midterm, you take the midterm exam and let's see how you do," and a day or so after, he said, "Yes, you can try my class." The first class of the second semester, I was very embarrassed because he lashed out at these other guys and said, "Look, here's a fellow that hasn't been in any of the classes, and he did better in the exam than half of you did." I took both the general science and biology. There were a lot of teachers that had a much greater interest in me than my kids' teachers had in them, and my kids had not been slouches as students either. As a matter-of-fact, I'll digress with a story about my younger son. He'd had a math teacher that had some sort of complex. He would deliver his lessons from a podium because that compensated for his stature. When Julian showed up in that teacher's advanced placement math course, the teacher invited him out, saying that he really didn't have the stuff for the advanced placement. Well, Julian said he'd like to try it anyhow, and over the teacher's better judgment, Julian stuck with it. A couple of months later, that same teacher had the odious duty of announcing that Julian had gotten 800 in his college entrance exam in math.

SH: Congratulations, Julian!

EK: There's Julian in the picture over there. Well, let's see, so we're gone off to college by Helyar's examination of my report cards.

SH: Where were you housed when you came to Rutgers?

EK: Winants Hall.

SH: Tell us about that. You've been to campus often because of your FAA work at Lambertville. Could you tell us as an incoming freshman what it was like?

EK: Well, I was the baby of the dorm. All the boys were very nice to me, and they'd steer me around, and give me tips on how to act. This was the first time that I'd been away from home on my own, and it worked out very well. As a matter-of-fact, I have a great fondness for Winants Hall, and the times when I've gone back, I've gone into the offices, which covered the same, floor space as my various rooms. Whenever I get back to the campus I've gone to the floors and the locations where my rooms had been and seeing the view again. Lived all four years in Winants, and my last year I was one of two preceptors, Dick McCormick [Professor emeritus Richard P. McCormick] being the other. He had the north end, I had the south, and on the night

that Phi Beta Kappa elections occurred in our senior year, there were seven seniors in Winants Hall, six of whom were elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and a tremendous water fight ensued. A water fight was when the fellows with metal wastebaskets would fill them in the showers and go after each other all over the place. There were stairwells in the north and south wings that permitted you to pour from the fourth floor down to the first. We had a tremendous water fight and then the underclassmen got brooms and mops and swept up afterward, and I thought that was a wonderful show of respect for the seniors.

SS: What language did your parents speak with you at home?

EK: English.

SS: Did they ever speak Russian?

EK: Russian when they didn't want me to understand what was being said. They taught me a little bit of Yiddish, not to read and write, but to speak.

SH: As a young man were you bar mitzvahed?

EK: No. My parents were as near agnostic as you could be, which has been my creed, too.

SS: What was it like in high school and going to college around the Great Depression?

EK: Well, one of the things we'd been taught in vocational agriculture was how to keep farm accounts, so I kept accounts in my four years, and if it all depended on cash, not on scholarships, and so on, I would have spent something like six hundred dollars for the first year I was in college. That rose to about nine hundred by the time I was a senior, but I think that's because my tastes grew, but it was possible then to go to college on very little and, also, to work a substantial part of your expenses.

SH: What was your job? What did you do to compensate?

EK: I worked in the cafeteria, and I worked on the College Farm. Whenever there was a snowstorm, we loved it because we'd go out and shovel snow.

SH: What about NJC?

EK: Well, I had gone on after Rutgers to what was then Connecticut State College for a master's degree, and I was considered socially retarded, and there's a reason for introducing that idea, I was considered socially backward, you might say, socially retarded, and I'd had one date with a girl at NJC. There had been a mixer set up by some temple out on Livingston Avenue for NJC girls and Rutgers boys. A bunch of us from the dorm went, and I walked a girl home, and we'll come back to that later. I went on to what became the University of Connecticut, as I said, and got a master's degree, and there I met Bella. You can't see around the corner, but there are pictures around the corner, and Bella and I married in 1942. We'll go back to that some other

time, too. Although I walked past it [NJC] everyday in my junior and senior years, walked past it, rode past it on the bicycle, I didn't stop.

SH: As a young man did you have a job on the farm that was specifically yours?

EK: On the College Farm? Yes, I kept the turf plots weeded.

SH: Did Professor Helyar keep a close eye on your progress since he had come and recruited you?

EK: More than that. My father used to get the farm equipment parts that he needed in a dealership in New Hope, but when I went to school we changed to the parts outlet in New Brunswick, and, occasionally, he'd stop in wherever I was at class. One time, Helyar was teaching the class, and my father was there, and Helyar was working with some slides and, meanwhile, had the light on, and the kids were making handies on the screen and enjoying it tremendously, no protest from Helyar. After the class, Helyar asked my father what he thought of it. My father thought, "My gosh, this is terribly informal. I had gone to gymnasium in Russia," and he said, "We'd never think of addressing the professor by anything as familiar as Prof or making handies on the screen, or anything like that."

SH: That's a great story. You talked earlier, before we started the interview, about some of your classmates that were involved in the Ag School with you. What are some of your fondest memories at Rutgers and of your classmates? You talked about the water fight that ensued after the Phi Beta Kappa elections.

EK: Yes, there's a lot of water. The Ag engineering department had a bunch of small buildings out on the College Farm where the food technology is now, and I was very fond of the Ag engineering professor. We were out there one time doing something in a laboratory about farm machinery, when a nearby little shed in which they dried soil samples began smoldering. It was a one and a half story shed with gables and window on either end. The firemen came out and put up ladders to those two windows, either side, and then went up the ladder with hoses. The fellow on the north side picked off the fellow on the south side, and the ladder straightened up and he fell. The students had gathered around and they miraculously caught the man. That was a big highlight.

SH: Did you save the building?

EK: No, the building went. In that same Ag engineering class one time, Professor Besley, who later became the Superintendent of Grounds, was called away for some reason. He said, "Well, you fellows are familiarizing yourself with these tractors, keep at it, and just run the tractors and know how to handle them," and he left. I was driving a Caterpillar tractor, and I thought, "Well, let's put up some barriers and see what these will climb over." So we built up planks, about as high as this chair, and ran the Caterpillar tractor over; it'd go up, up, up, like a tank, and then it would weigh itself over. When Besley came back he practically exploded. The agronomy professor was Dr. Sprague, my buddy for four years, was Morris Plevinsky, who became Morris Plelen, and who may still be remembered on the campus, I don't know, because he was an all-

around man. He was varsity quarterback for the football team, worked his way through college, and made Phi Beta Kappa, which, I guess, is pretty much of an all-around man. In class, Sprague asked Plevinsky a question, which had among the correct answers, meadow fescue. Plevinsky said, "So, so-and-so, and meadow fescue. "Very good answer, Mr. Plevinsky, but when you have U-E on the end of a word, you pronounce it as an additional syllable." "Thank you for correcting me, Dr. Sprague, U-E." Plevinsky had a hard time getting good marks from Sprague thereafter.

SH: As a class, did you have to go through initiation as freshman? Did you wear the dink?

EK: Oh, we wore dinks. An upperclassman would sit on the porch of Winants Hall and whistle at freshmen, and when they whistled at freshman, we were supposed to run. There was a song, I don't remember all the words, but the refrain was something about, "I do vow to endow a professorship at Rutgers, where they bowwow, wow," and the scheme here was that when two freshman would pass each other, they would bark. The custom after I had come down to Washington was when a Rutgers student in agricultural economics, (which I did not major in at Rutgers but I was employed in this field down here,) when students in agricultural economics would come down looking for a job, they were told to check in with Karpoff. In the course of that, somebody said, "did I know XYZ?" "Yes, I knew him," I said, "We used to bark at each other." Oh, there were a lot of nice things like that. My undergraduate years were a very happy period. My whole childhood was a very happy period, and because I was quite immature, I think, you might say that my college years were extension of my childhood. I said I was socially retarded. I wasn't emotionally ready for college, but I had a wonderful time.

SH: You must have been matured at some level to become a preceptor, right?

EK: Well, Dean Metzger evidently was impressed by my grades, and I stayed out of trouble.

SH: What's your favorite Metzger story?

EK: Well, let's see. There may still be a song of, "tada-tada-tada-tada-tada-tada," three lines, which all rhyme, and then, the final line is, "on the faculty of Rutgers," and there was a very derogatory, impolite verse about Dean Metzger, but the melody was very good.

SH: We'll have to have you write that down and we'll put it in the file. We just won't put it on the tape.

SS: Had you kept in touch after you graduated at all with McCormick, the other preceptor, or with any of the other people that you went through with?

EK: Well, through alumni affairs, I met Bob Feller, with whom I had not been especially close while an undergraduate, but we got to be great buddies as alumni. Our wives got along well. Repeat the question, get me back on track.

SS: Had you kept in touch after graduation with McCormick?

EK: No, I hadn't.

SH: Did you keep in touch with some of the other people such as your classmates and dorm mates?

EK: Well, before each reunion that I intended to go to, and I didn't go to all of them, I'd write a letter to all the surviving Ag students, for which they could give me addresses, and suggest or urge them to come, and many of them answered and gave me responses, and they'd give them to the class agent, so I kept in touch with a lot of them that way.

SH: Was there an upperclassman in the Ag School that was like a mentor, or big brother to you, because you were so much younger than they?

EK: The man that was the preceptor in Winants when I was a freshman, Harold Sefick was a mentor to me, and as a matter-of-fact, he became a Professor of Wine Making at Clemson College. I was near Clemson one time about five years ago and stopped in to look him up. I spoke only to his son. He had died about six months earlier.

SH: Were there others that you found that you were able to be a mentor to as an upperclassman?

EK: Yes. When I was preceptor, there were a couple of fellows in whom I saw myself, that is young and so on, and I tried to bring them up, and so on. Well, in my work for the Department of Agriculture I became a member of, get this name, OPEDA, Organization for Professional Employees of the Department of Agriculture. Can you imagine a more awkward name? In their newsletter one time, there was a statement that an Ezra Bitcover was retiring after twenty-five, or whatever number of years of work for the department. Well, there can't be many Ezra Bitcover; he was one of the three in whom I'd seen myself, so I sent him a postcard congratulating him on his retirement, and so on, and he replied, and we got to be very friendly. We exchanged visits. One time at a reunion, a bunch of us were looking through Winants Hall, which by then had been remodeled, and a bunch of three fellows gathered around me and said, "You don't remember us." "No." They were freshmen when I was preceptor and they all remembered me very warmly.

SH: How nice.

SS: I saw that you were a Rhodes Scholar.

EK: I was a candidate of the Ag School for Rhodes Scholar, but they recognized that I was sort of childish.

SH: What was your major?

EK: Poultry husbandry.

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

EK: Fred Jeffrey, who later went to teach at the University of Massachusetts, and became dean of one of their agricultural curricula. I went calling on him one time. "Oh, how are you, Eddie? Come on in, let me go get some refreshments. But before I go for the refreshments, let me ask you what you think about this cholesterol scare," which was ruining the egg industry about that time, and I said, "Well, cholesterol is something like snake venom. What's in your blood stream isn't so good, but what's in your stomach won't hurt you." "Fine, fine," he says, "that's the way I feel, and to prove to my neighbors that that's the way I feel, I have an omelet every morning, twelve eggs." Even I, a poultry major, arched my brows, and he replied, "Yes, in my retirement I breed bantams."

SS: Did you have anything else you want to say about the bantam eggs, which I just learned about?

EK: No, no.

SS: I know that we have certain traditions for convocation and graduation. Were there any traditions when you were at Rutgers for convocation and graduation?

EK: There was an unofficial business of getting clay tobacco pipes and congregating about the cannon in front of Queen's Building, and breaking the pipes on the cannon. I think, that was when people knew they were going to graduate.

SH: The last thing you do before you get lined up to walk through Old Queen's to graduate.

EK: And in the middle of the night, the boys used to urinate on the cannon, too, after they had assurance of graduating.

SH: Were you involved at all with the *Targum*, or any of that sort of activity on campus?

EK: Yes. There was an institution called the Ag Field Day about I engaged in some brouhaha, but in my version of it …

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

SS: Side two, tape one.

EK: Well, let's see, brouhaha about Field Day. The Class of 1938 started the student-led Field Day, and I was the drumbeater for that affair. I had gotten something into the *Targum* every week. The *Targum* came out possibly bi-weekly then, but every week I'd get something in there, for about the ten weeks preceding the Field Day, and as a matter-of-fact, in one reunion, I went back and looked it up in the files of the *Targum*. But the administration doesn't like the notion that it started in 1938. They would tie it up with an Adult Field Day that they ran for years and years and years, possibly twenty years, and then discontinued in the early '30s, and would say that ours was hooked onto that, so they now call it their 30th, their 40th, their 50th Field Day.

SH: Were you involved in the planning of Ag Field Day, or did you just write the articles about it for the *Targum*?

EK: Well, there were about half a dozen of us that would meet every week, or more often: "Had you gone to the agronomist? Had you gone to the dairy cow expert? Had you gone to the Pomologist?" What they were going to do by way of it, and I'd get material out of those weekly meetings, and get material from the professors that were arranging the exhibits, and so on, and get a story every week.

SH: Now did that embrace the larger community at Rutgers or the State of New Jersey?

EK: No, it was just activities on the College Farm.

SH: We talked earlier about the Depression. Do you remember any stories of that? I mean being self-sustaining on the farm, perhaps you were impacted only somewhat?

EK: At the height of the Depression I suffered a broken arm from tumbling in high school, and my mother took me to New York City, where my aunt was a nurse, to get more skilled medical attention because the local doctor said he had set the arm as well as he could, and he wasn't sure that I would not suffer some impairment from it, and he knew that my aunt was a nurse and he said to go see what could be done. I'm glad to tell you that the specialist in New York said he saluted that country practitioner because he did a very good job, and he didn't do anything more to it. But while riding in a trolley car, we saw lines of people in front of banks waiting to draw their money out, that was when the banking crisis was acute, and, of course, whenever we'd go to New York City to visit my aunt, and so on, we'd see men selling apples in the streets, and the streets were not busy. There wasn't much traffic, not much pedestrian traffic either. But on the farm, we, I don't recall that we had a hard time particularly. My mother would always send me to the barn to get a pot full of rolled oats for the oatmeal once a week, or so, and we had dried skimmed milk because we were off of fat. There was dried skim milk in poultry rations. We'd take skim milk from the barn, we'd fix our own poultry feeds, and, let's see, what other things? We had big gardens all the time. No, we didn't terribly suffer physically. Financially, I don't know how the folks made out, but physically we got along all right.

SH: You talked about being very aware of the activities that were happening in Europe in the '30s. Was this more something as a Rutgers student that you were aware of, or because of your family background?

EK: After my freshman year, I got the *New York Times* delivered to the door. There was an undergraduate that had the *New York Times* concession, and between the sophomore and junior year, five of us went into the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, to do some mapping. They had sent an opportunity for five boys for summer employment, and they thought that in the assignment of this mapping we would be fully employed for all summer. Well, we finished it in half the summer, and we were offered the opportunity of either discharge, or simply to become one of the boys in the CCC, and I'm glad that all five of us elected to become boys in the CCC. And through that summer, I remember reading about the Spanish Civil War, and, in general, the rebels, as the underdog, would have my sympathies, and I had to read that *New York Times* all

summer to finally figure out that the rebels wore the black hats in that civil war. The rebels were the Francos. Later as an adult, for the Department of Agriculture, I was in Spain one time, and when these tricornered hat-wearing, patent-leather police-types would walk down the sidewalk, if it was two of them they would usually go together when they walked down the sidewalk, Spanish civilians would step off the curb and let them go by. That's how tough it was. Spaniards got us off the subject. But, Dad always got the *New York Times* by mail, and I deplored that there were no funnies there. But after a while, I didn't miss that, and, as a matter-of-fact now I no longer read the funnies.

SH: Your father and mother, were they active in politics at all in Hunterdon County?

EK: No, because both as immigrants and as naturalized citizens they didn't feel at home in politics.

SS: I saw that you had written some articles for the *New York Times* and the *Encyclopedia Americana*. When was it that you did that?

EK: Well, let's see. The job I had through the '50s and the early '60s was the basis for a referral to write the encyclopedia article. That would have been in late '50s probably, and in the *New York Times*, I'd mentioned the Jewish Agricultural Society, the man that became my boss in the Department of Agriculture, later left the Department of Agriculture and became the operating head of the Jewish Agricultural Society. The poultry industry, for which I was the outlook officer and spokesman in the Department of Agriculture, was of interest to him because the Jewish Agricultural Society had financed a lot of poultry farmers in New Jersey, and Ted was having trouble, as head, because they weren't good payback. So he asked me to come and explain the fortunes of the poultry industry to a meeting of his board of directors, one of whom was a member of the Ochs family that runs the *New York Times*, and after I'd given my speech, this man from the Ochs family came up and said, there was one part in my speech talking about the American breakfast and the importance of eggs in it, and, with the declining breakfast, how the fortunes of the egg industry were declining, could I expound on that paragraph and make an article for the *Sunday New York Times Magazine section*? "Of course I could," and I did.

SH: Let's back up then to Rutgers and talk about your senior year, you are a preceptor, how did you then begin to plan for the future?

EK: I didn't plan for the future.

SH: This would be the end of '37, going into '38, what did you …

EK: Oh, about April of '38, or so, the major professor, who had six poultry majors, said, "Each of you fellows schedule a meeting with me, through my secretary, and let's talk about your future plans," and what was interesting him was his majors should not be listed in any directory as "at liberty," they should all be accounted for. "Eddie, what are you going to do?" "Well, get a job Prof." "Oh, that's going to be hard, Eddie, Depression, you're small, you're young, you're a good student, why don't you go on to be a graduate student?" "Okay, Prof." He says, "Go look at the bulletin boards and see what announcements there are, and come back and talk to me

next week." Next week, "Prof, there's an announcement from Connecticut State College, sixty-five dollars a month for half-time, master's in two years." "Good school," he says, "Take it." I said, "But Prof, it's not in poultry husbandry, it's in agricultural economics." "Up-and-coming field, Eddie, take it." So, that's how I became an agricultural economist.

SH: You seemed very flexible.

EK: Well, the course in Connecticut was directed very much toward federal employment in the Department of Agriculture, with two years of preparation, and so on. Well, let's go on to Connecticut now. So again, I was socially retarded, but one of the profs, who was a new prof, would sort of steer me a little bit, and I got along well as a graduate student, formed a lot of nice associations with professors there. They've all passed on, by the way. I've become a very lonely man. I graduated in the early summer of '40. Had a series of temporary jobs, three months here, two months there, one month there, until the spring of '41, when the Lend-Lease program was beginning. The Lend-Lease program began before we were in the war. The Department of Agriculture was shipping a lot of food overseas, principally to England, and I got on, in the poultry division for supplying that material, for which I was very well-prepared because the commodity was well-known to me, and the economics worked out, too, and what I got out of that, was that orthodoxy is not the way to achieve results. I had a boss named Radebaugh who headed the poultry and egg procurement operation for this Lend-Lease, and Radebaugh had under him two sections, one called the research section, which was supposed to tell him from week to week what poultry, egg and poultry markets were going to be like, and the operations section, who would organize the bids to offer eggs to the government. I was in the operations section, with a very able and genial mentor, Gerson Levin, a man from Wisconsin, who had been in the egg trade. We would get these telegraphic offers, which were in accord with specifications that we'd established, and they would offer so many carloads of eggs, at such and such a price, average weight, so many pounds per case, FOB [free on board], XYZ location, and the operations section, of which I was a part, was charged with organizing these so that they were all on a comparable basis, allowing for the differences in freight costs, where they were to be, the point of origin, the differences in value according to the weights that were offered, and so on, and we made an array of most favorable for the government to least favorable. When my boss Radebaugh would have intuitions about what was going to happen and they matched the recommendations of the research division, there was no problem, but when his intuitions were different from the research advice, he'd say, "I got to do my own research." He kept a filled satchel in his desk and told the secretary, "Get me a reservation on the Congressional, both ways." The Congressional was a train that left Washington at three o'clock in the afternoon, and at that time the Department of Agriculture worked until 3:45, so he lost very little time there, and he'd have his supper on the train, and put his bag in a locker in Penn Station, and walk across the street to what was then called the Governor Clinton Hotel and sit at the bar. That bar was the hanging out place for the New York egg trade, and somebody in the egg trade would say, "Radebaugh is in town," the man that runs the biggest egg buying program in the United States, and he'd call up all his buddies, and they'd come and buy Radebaugh drinks and Radebaugh would buy them a round of drinks and chat. After a while, Radebaugh would get around to the question, "What are you guys going to get for eggs next week?" And they didn't mind telling him, because New York City was not where we bought our eggs, we bought them in Iowa, and Minnesota, Wisconsin, but the price in Iowa and Minnesota and Wisconsin would be a nickel

under New York, let's say, and these guys might not have been right in what they were going to charge. That is, their price might not have cleared the market, but that was what was going to be telegraphed to Iowa and Wisconsin, and so on, and would tell what their offers were going to be like. If they said they were going to go up a nickel, Radebaugh would come back on an overnight train and get into the department about 8:15, which was fifteen minutes late, and say, "Take them all," and if they said the price of eggs was going to go down, he'd say, "Just get enough to keep offers coming next week, take the five best carloads and reject the rest." Well, that's not the way that the procurement operations is supposed to work, but Radebaugh saved the Department of Agriculture countless thousands of dollars by his impromptu research, and that's what told me to be on the look out, all the time, for different ways of doing things. Radebaugh would assign me to look up different nuances of procurement and so on, things that involved legalisms. He had an idea one time, "Write it up, Eddie. Take it to the lawyers, Eddie, and see what they say," and I did all that. Then he says, "Now, we got to go to the big boss and explain this." He said, "It's a good idea, but the lawyers said it was illegal," and the big boss got up and pounded the glass top on his desk and says, "Get us a different lawyer." Well, that's the way that things are accomplished and the orthodoxy and the rules have to be followed but you can go beyond them, too, sometimes.

SH: Who would have been the big boss in Lend-Lease?

EK: Ed Gaumnitz was the guy's name. I don't think his name ever broke into the papers but he was the head of procurement in the Department of Agriculture.

SH: Now were you only buying from the Midwest, East Coast, or did you also look at what was going on in California, along the West Coast?

EK: Well, we didn't export any of Lend-Lease stuff from the West Coast…The West Coast, at that time, had higher egg and poultry prices than the East. So we left them alone.

SS: Was the information confidential when you began with Lend-Lease?

EK: No.

SS: It was all public information?

EK: Yes.

SH: What about isolationists? Were you aware, or did you see any demonstrations? Roosevelt was walking that tightrope, so to speak.

EK: He was walking the tightrope. The jokes that circulated kind of revealed some of it. Do the words, "pro-Liberty League," ring a bell with you? They were the pre-war, the early war equivalent of the John Birch Society, and one of the jokes that circulated was pro-Liberty League I guess, but funny, some may have called it, okay. So there was a young man, who was a traveling salesman and who about once a month would like to wind up in Philadelphia for a weekend because his grandmother lived there. She was an ardent Liberty Leaguer and she was

hard-of-hearing. He would take her to church on the Sundays, on the weekends when he was there, and one Sunday, "Who is that man in the pulpit?" "That's the visiting minister, Doctor," for telling the story this is important, "Dr. So and So, whatever, and she says, "New deal?" Doctor Beal, the visiting minister." "New Deal, New Deal?" "No, no, grandma, he's a son of the bishop." "Aren't they all?" she said. So, we knew that there was isolationism.

SH: In 1941, are you just finishing at Connecticut?

EK: As '41 began, I was finished, for six months, at Connecticut and working in temporary jobs that were a month or two months, for the Triple A, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, measuring tobacco fields in Connecticut, for the Connecticut Department of Education, devising a system of state aids for local schools for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, on a credit survey, and so on. I wasn't losing any time. I had this little automobile and threw my suitcase in the backseat, and go to the next job, but no permanence. But then there came a…telegram…with an offer of a job from the Department of Agriculture, and, of course, I took it.

SH: Then you moved to this area.

EK: Yes.

SH: You were married by then?

EK: No.

SH: Can you tell me about where you were and what your memories are of December 7th?

EK: Yes. It was a Sunday, and I had the radio on, and it told terrible things about Pearl Harbor. There lived in the neighborhood another young man who was a part of the poultry procurement operations also, called him up, "Loren, did you hear the news?" "Telling what?" "Let's go down to the Japanese Embassy." We stood on the bluff, on the street across from the Embassy, and looked over the wall surrounding the Embassy and there were Japanese putting papers on an open bonfire.

SH: What did you do?

EK: Just watched. A couple of policemen had come by then and were just walking back and forth.

SH: What was going through your minds, I mean you're both young men, you have just embarked on your careers, what did you think would happen?

EK: Well, the draft was already in effect, and the army standards for vision got to be more and more liberal, at about the same speed that my vision became more and more impaired, so I had always bore the limited duty mark, 1A…There are stories to tell you there, too. Every six months they'd call me up to go get examined again for the draft. We were living in Alexandria, and, from the very first time, you and all the other fellows going for the draft knew the same

thing, that you don't wear your good clothes, don't take a lot of money with you, don't take a good watch, and stuff like that, because when you get on to the examination center, they'll say, "Pick out any hook on the wall, take off all of your clothes and put them there, and take these slippers and put them on, and go from station to station." Well, there was one guy on the bus dressed to the nines, suit and tie. "This is your first time, isn't it?" "No," he says, "I've been here before," but he says, "I don't want to go in the army, I want to argue my way out, and you can make a more convincing argument if you're well-dressed." So, I went through the whole routine following him and noticed that he was standing, in these paper slippers, in front of the captain who was making the judgments pleading his case.

SH: Sans clothes.

EK: Yes.

SH: Did he win?

EK: No.

SH: Being employed by Lend-Lease in the Department of Agriculture, would you not have been exempted anyway?

EK: No. The man that was the big boss with the poultry operations, Radebaugh's boss, had been an artillery captain in World War I. He said, "Eddie, I don't want to lose you, but you know they're completely irrational. They could put you in the field artillery where if you lost your glasses, it would be by a shell that got your head, and you'd be as effective as anybody else." This man Termohler proved to be so nice to me, even after I left his direct employ. There were so many people in the Department of Agriculture that were nice to me. Termohler said, "Eddie, get interested in the World's Poultry Science Association. It will do you some good in your work and you'll learn quite a bit of [other] things." Well, the World's Poultry Science Association has a convention every four years. When I worked in the Department of Agriculture, the first one was in Copenhagen. I was so junior a poultry-type that I wasn't called to that, but after that, Paris, Edinburgh, not chronologically, but Helsinki, Finland; Kiev, Russia; a town in Japan, what was its name, well, Japan anyhow, and so on, great opportunities, Mexico City.

SH: This would be well after the war.

EK: Yes.

SH: You talked about going to watch the Japanese burn papers in their Embassy's backyard, so to speak. Then what did you do following the declaration of war and Roosevelt's speech?

EK: Well, of course, the Department of Agriculture was a-buzz, but we continued exactly the same routines that we had before, shifting from buying shell eggs to buying dried eggs because shipping became scarcer and scarcer.

SH: Who was procuring the eggs for the drying operations?

EK: We, later on we had the driers procured directly and bid on the product, but, originally, we had them custom dried for us.

SH: What were your duties then during the war? Were you still continuing to have to go through this limited service examination every six months?

EK: Yes. Another story from that. There was one situation where you'd come down a long corridor, there would be a right-angle turn, and there you are, plodding along in these paper slippers, and the man sat on a bridge chair, in a diagonal position in the corner of this spot where you made the right turn, same fellow all the time. He started out as a private, no class, after a while he had one stripe, private first class, then corporal, I don't think he got higher than corporal, and since it was the same guy all the time, you sort of get to know him, and what you did at his station was, he said, "Stop, turn around with your back to me, bend over, spread your cheeks, and he'd check for hemorrhoids," and I said, "Gee, I'm glad to see that you're getting better rank," and so on all the time. "Yes," he says, "that part is nice, but the folks at home ask me what I'm doing and I don't dare tell them."

SS: What was your role as an agricultural economist?

EK: During the war, it was organizing these lists of offers of, first eggs, then eggs and processing offers, and, finally, dried eggs, organizing them into a basis where the executives could make a decision about how high to go to fulfill the procurement plan. You see, we had estimates of what the total production of eggs would be in the United States and we knew the seasonality of it, so we knew what seasons of the year were best for buying eggs, without disrupting markets, and so on. But, in the course of all this, there was passed what was called the Stegall Amendment to one of the Department of Agriculture appropriations bills. You're nodding as if you'd heard of the Stegall Amendment. The Stegall Amendment said that if the Secretary of Agriculture ever asked for increased production of any commodity to meet war needs, he would have to support the prices of that at X percent of parity. At first, I think, it was ninety percent of parity and, possibly, after that, a hundred percent. Parity was an abstract concept of what was a "fair" price, much higher than prevailing market prices. Well, the promise of such high prices stimulated agricultural production to beat the band. Egg production increased so much that in 1944, the Secretary of Agriculture took to the radio to urge housewives to "buy an extra dozen, or two, of eggs and tuck them away in the refrigerator," because we were inundated with eggs, and we had to send more for Lend-Lease than they wanted, but we didn't know what else to do with them.

SH: What about supplying the troops?

EK: Now, that was a separate operations run by the Pentagon, but we'd be in telephonic conversation. I once had an officemate, whose first name was Sargent, Sargent Russell, and he was the liaison with the Pentagon, and he'd call up the Pentagon and say, "This is Sargent Russell, is So-and-So there?" "No, he's not but what can I do for you, Sarge?" And he took to introducing himself as S. Russell.

SH: Surely, he would have been at least a major. How did rationing affect either your job, and your wife and you, as someone who lived in a very metropolitan area of Washington?

EK: Poultry and eggs were never rationed, so at work it didn't matter. As a matter-of-fact we were very pleased to be able to say, "Eat all the chicken you want, it's not rationed," and so on. By the way, the form of marketing chickens changed in the course of those years. It used to be what was called New York dressed with the guts and innards in them, and toward the middle '40s, they got to be eviscerated in the poultry plants and the carcass and the organs, the liver, heart, gizzard, there's one other organ. There were four organs that usually were in a paper bag inside the carcass.

SH: They put the neck in.

EK: Okay, that makes four then, but they don't necessarily come from the chicken whose carcass they're in.

SH: Sometimes you'd get two hearts, so as long as there are four things in it.

EK: And I remember in the early days of our marriage I used to tell Bella, "When you buy a chicken, always look at the liver." But now the liver ceased to be with that of its own chicken, so it doesn't matter.

SH: How, being an employee of the government, did rationing affect you?

EK: Well, let's see. Peter was born in '42, and things that were normal baby ration were harder to get. But at a place where I had to transfer busses, from Agriculture to where we lived then, there was a Safeway store and they recognized me as a fairly steady customer and the man used to save bananas for me, for Peter, and baby foods, too. They were very nice. You provoke a lot of very pleasant memories about people being nice to you, and so on.

SH: Did you have any interaction with those who were involved in the War Department, or were GIs assigned to working …

EK: No, I never did have any relations, like my officemate, Sargent Russell, with the military. During the war security was less than it is now, and after my dad died I inherited the family car, and I used to drive the carpool, so I used to have the car at noontime and a bunch of us often used to go to the Pentagon for lunch.

SH: What kind of rationing did you have as a government employee for your car and your gas?

EK: Well, because I had the carpool, I had more generous gasoline rations, and then my Uncle Ruben, who was about five years younger than I am, was stationed at Fort Meade, and whenever he'd get leave, he'd get about four copies of his orders, and he'd stop with us with one copy of the order, and I take that to the rationing board, and that would be good for maybe twenty-five gallons of gasoline, or something. Then next time he got a leave, why, again, and over and over

again, and that plus the allowance for carpool meant that, within reason, it was not a terrible restriction for us. But for people that wanted to drive without limit, why, it sure was a limitation.

SH: Where was your wife's family from?

EK: Well, her mother and father also were in Russia. They came separately, didn't know each other there, met here, and they were about the same age as my mother and father, and he was a house painter.

SH: Were they in Connecticut?

EK: Yes. I met Bella at the University of Connecticut.

SH: What was she studying?

EK: She was studying bacteriology at that time, and ran out of money as a sophomore, and worked as a physician's receptionist, assistant, and so on, in a rural town, and used her bacteriological training. But after we married, she said, "If I go back to college, I don't want to study bacteriology, I want to study art," which she did, got her degree at age thirty-nine from American University, and later taught there, as well as at Montgomery College, and, let's see, that middle picture is hers. That dark charcoal drawing is hers. In one of the bedrooms I'll show you another later.

SH: Nice. For the record, beautiful work.

EK: Washington was a country town when I came here. I stayed with a friend that I'd worked with in New Jersey, who had come down, who had been detailed to New Jersey for the period that he and I worked together, and he was a Minnesota boy with a family, lived near Annandale Virginia, had a little, tiny cottage, on about three quarters of an acre. "Eddie, I want to go back to Minnesota, why don't you buy this house?" "Anyhow, what would I want a house for?" Well three quarters of an acre near Annandale, regardless of house or no house, would have made me a well-to-do man and used to be able to drive into town in my little Ford, find a parking space near the Department of Agriculture. Well, try that now.

SH: During the war, was there a huge burgeoning of activity and security? What were some of the things that you noticed?

EK: There wasn't an awful lot of security, but people came in. Friends of ours would be in the service and their wives would work in Washington, and they'd get leave, and the wife would be living in a dormitory-like arrangement. So we'd say, "Come, share our apartment," and they would for the period of leave.

SH: Were there any Rutgers men involved in this interaction?

EK: No, there weren't.

SS: Were you in the War Food Administration?

EK: Half of the Department of Agriculture became the War Food Administration. Stories. The Secretary of Agriculture was Claude Wickard, the head of the War Food Administration, that changed from time to time. But, anyhow, the liaison between the part of the department that had been called the War Food Administration and the remainder of this department was not so good. The two heads were supposed to have communicated only after a fashion, by the fact that the same reporters would go to both their press conferences, so Wickard would ask, "How's the Director of the War Food Administration doing?" and they'd tell him, and likewise at the other end. One time a reporter said, "Oh, the head of War Food Administration is doing great. He's just published a directory of the WFA so when you have got a problem you know who to take it up with." Claude Wickard is supposed to have said, "Oh, my gosh, he's just dug his own grave. Now the reporters know as much about his organization as he does."

SH: Talk about a review.

SS: How long did the War Food Administration last?

EK: A year or so after the end of the war, because we were still supplying a lot of food to Europe at that time.

SH: Only a year then?

EK: Two years then, because the war ended in '45 and in '47 I was laid off for two-three months, and I toured New England and sought jobs at New England colleges. But by the time I got back, a man in the part of the Department of Agriculture, potential boss, said, "Karpoff, I want to hire you, but I can't do it yet, because I'm going to get told, I've got to hire so many people and I want you to be as a credit for me in that." So I worked for *Look* magazine for about six weeks.

SH: What were your duties with *Look*?

EK: They had planned a big article and wanted me to prepare it. I did, a big article on what US resources had done to keep Europe alive during, and after the war.

SH: Was it just one article?

EK: One shot, yes.

SH: Pretty impressive, *Look* was such an impressive magazine.

EK: *Look* gave me a by-line.

SS: At what point were you in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics?

EK: My reemployment, after those three months, was with the Bureau of Agriculture Economics.

SS: You were an agricultural economic statistician at that point?

EK: Yes. That's an elaborate name in the federal bureaucracy for economist. For two or three years, in the BAE, I did very general statistical research. The cattle cycle was one thing that was my beat, and then the job of poultry outlook officer and economist became vacant, and Jim Cavin moved me into that. That was among the most exciting jobs I had in the department, wonderful exposure, being detailed to other agencies from time to time, so meeting a lot of people, and having great responsibility as the outlook officer for that commodity group, for the Department of Agriculture. It was my job not to be surprised by any developments in the poultry industry, and I wasn't. We'd get calls from a lot of places. It was very good, but the opportunities for pay were better in other jobs, so I moved out of that after about ten years.

SH: I wanted to go back during the war years and ask two questions. One would be about the black market, and if that impacted you? The other question would be of the death of Roosevelt, how did that impact you in the sense that you are in Washington in government? And what did they think of President Truman?

EK: Black market. For my commodities, there was none, because they were generally in surplus. The death of Roosevelt. I remember we all tumbled into the automobile and drove to the Capitol. A cousin of mine was visiting at the time and he came with us. He was staying with us. Crowds of cars drove around the Capitol, incredible congestion, and very somber. There was no horn blowing. That's about all I have really got to say about that. The cortege for Kennedy was more impressive to me, although I think that Roosevelt's death was a more world-shaking event, but at the time my wife…

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

SH: This is side one of tape two of an interview with Mr. Edward Karpoff, on the 10th of March, 2006, in Rockville, Maryland.

SH: Please continue, you were talking about your wife.

EK: Found that art history did not pay as well as being a civil servant. Kennedy's death left a greater impression on me than Roosevelt's, not on account of historical importance but because, I guess, I was more mature, and so on. Her office fronted on the parade route, and we went to her office with the kids and we saw the cortege, the procession. That was very moving.

SH: I'm sure. Were you involved in any of the inaugurations for Roosevelt during the war when he won reelection? How big was the inauguration?

EK: They were very subdued. They were not public spectacles. The inaugural parade is the thing that drew more people than the inaugural ceremony, because the ceremony they'd have to stand around in the weather, and hope that the PA system would reach them, and so on, but for

the parade you could orient yourself along the route, and have a pretty good chance of seeing it, and I remember one of the parades when Peter, the older son, was about seven years old. Other people standing around boosted him into a tree, and he had a good view of the parade, and he would yell down, "Daddy, so-and-so is happening."

SH: How much confidence did you and others in your department have of Truman's ability to lead the country after Roosevelt died?

EK: You know, that wasn't a subject that we discussed very much. Fairly early in his administration, we used the atomic bomb, and there were a lot of discussion, "Was that a good or a bad thing?" and I always felt that it was a good thing, because it probably saved more American lives than it cost Japanese lives. But I agree, there's room for argument on it, certainly, the atomic developments since then have not been good, but Truman was quite resolute in taking care of Europe, after the Russians became difficult to deal with and because that was part of our responsibility. We liked him for that.

SH: What about when Korea breaks out, did your job change at all? Was there any effort put towards that?

EK: Well, by that time I was no longer in the procurement operations. I'm trying to think of where I worked.

SH: This would have been in the 1950s.

EK: Now I have it. 1950s, I was the Poultry Outlook Officer, and I remember writing a memo to my boss saying, you know, "the same facilities are used for drying eggs and drying milk, and if either of them get to be important in this war effort, the first emphasis should be on milk, not eggs, because eggs are so much more expensive in dried form, and have only a few more nutrients than milk has," and that was considered disloyal to the poultry industry, but my boss appreciated it because he was responsible for both.

SS: At what point were you in the Foreign Agricultural Service?

EK: I retired from FAS in '78, so I must have joined them about 1970.

SH: How did your duties change?

EK: Well, from time to time, I had been detailed from the BAE job, which became, through a reorganization, instead of BAE it became some other set of initials which I don't remember. I had frequently been lent to the Foreign Agricultural Service, and at one meeting where I made a presentation of what I developed for them, the head of the Foreign Agricultural Service said that, "You've been doing a lot of work for me, we like it," and I made sure to be the last one out of his office after he said that, and I said, "Yes, responding to your earlier comment, yes, I have been doing quite a lot of work for you. You ought to put me on the payroll." He said, "I will." He said, "It might not be tomorrow, might not be next month, but in a couple of months, I'll get you," and that was it.

SS: I saw that you got to go abroad in the ‘50s and ‘60s through the Department of Agriculture with the American delegation to the World Poultry Congress and to Geneva and Japan. What was your role in those trips?

EK: Well, let’s see, you’ll have to take them one at a time. To the World’s Poultry Congresses, I’d always have a paper which would present a US point of view on some aspects of the poultry industry, whether international trade, or competition, or changing trends abroad, as well as in the US. When the Common Market started in Europe, in the early ‘60s, they started an agricultural protection policy for the original and countries, which had poultry as the very first commodity that they were going to protect that was highly adverse to US interests, because we had been exporting a lot of eggs and poultry to them. So a lot of the trips were to explore parts of it, find chinks in their armor, and so on. Japan was a situation, in, I think, ’72, when there was going to be a short US grain crop, particularly corn, and we exported a lot of corn. The principal objective of an exporter is to establish himself as a reliable supplier so that foreign markets will keep coming back for more, and here we were facing a shortage, and not going to be able to meet all the demands that the foreign customers would have. So the boss divided the globe into about seven or eight portions, and I drew Japan and Taiwan and Korea, and he said, “You guys got parts of the globe, prepare yourselves on their agricultural economies, and our trade with them, and what the prospects are for the short corn crop this year, and you’re going to go out to each of those countries and, with the help of the agricultural attaché there, meet the important people in the grain trade, and explain to them what we’re doing to adjust to this situation. Urge them to make some accommodation, too, because we cannot do anything but disappoint them with respect to their needs.” That was the most important assignment I’ve ever had in the Department of Agriculture.

SH: When you went did you have a delegation that went with you? Did you travel alone?

EK: Alone. There was about a week or ten days of preparation. There are crop reports and forecasts of crops, and surveys, of the intentions of hog farmers and poultry farmers and milk producers, and so on, about how they’re going to handle their herds in the near future, and the indications of breeding of sows to produce the next crop of pork were way down, and carrying them made it very convincing, particularly to the Japanese.

SH: Now you’re doing all of this before computers, electronic information, or data being able to be transported, what would you have to take with you on a trip like this?

EK: A pile of documents that high.

SH: Only eight inches high, really?

EK: Yes.

SH: Oh, my.

EK: And each place I stopped, they asked for the opportunity to take some and duplicate them.

SH: Were you ever subjected to any sort of American rhetoric, or I mean when you talked about how their decision was …

EK: I was in Denmark one time, during the Nixon administration, when there got to be a shortage of soybeans, and we issued a ukase that prohibited the fulfillment of previously made contracts for the export of soybeans. In the morning that that hit the telegraph wires, I had an appointment with a soybean processor in Denmark. He said, "Mr. Karpoff, I'm sorry I can't talk to you, and I got to ask you to leave, because we are so upset at what you did in America that," he didn't mean you in a personal way, "that I refuse to talk to you. Please carry that message back home."

SH: Really?

SS: Did he know that you were from Washington?

EK: Yes.

SH: Were there any times that you were asked questions that were of such a sensitive nature that, you seem so direct, how would you side step something like that?

EK: Well, although I had a high security clearance, I didn't really function with being privy to much classified information, so, I was never embarrassed by that.

SH: Did your wife get to travel with you on these occasions?

EK: Not all of them, but Bella was with me in Iran, for four months, and in Geneva for four months.

SH: So these would be extended times that you would stay there.

EK: Yes.

SH: Oh, I didn't realize that. I thought you were just going a conference type.

EK: Well, most of my trips were short ones, but Geneva, and Iran, and Denmark, were measured in months, rather than weeks.

SH: Now, what were you doing then?

EK: In Denmark, I was writing a recital of how the Danish poultry industry was organized.

SH: And in Iran?

EK: I was the acting agricultural attaché. The attaché is the fellow that seeks to establish the outlook for crops they have that are competitive with the US, and with knowledge of the markets that will continue for the products that we export to them.

SH: Knowing what is happening now in Iran, how do you feel about the situation?

EK: With grave disappointment. The Shah was no democrat, with a big "D," but with a small "d" he was okay. For example, no man that has, as the first point in his fourteen-point policy, "A seat in public school for every child," is a tyrant. And when they established price controls in Iran, he chose only five items, cooking oil, rice, flour, urban bus fares, I don't remember what the fifth one was, and the way he chose and enforced them for import commodities was to take the invoices that covered importation, the statements of the importers of what the prices were, and you can imagine they would not overstate the prices, and that became the basis with markups for different levels of trade to retail. So, the merchant class contributed to his downfall. Also contributing to his downfall was the mullahs because a man that spread education was running contrary to the mullahs' interests and land holders. They had a politically successful land reform, although in terms of economics it was a disaster. And those forces contributed to his overthrow.

SH: Were your children with you?

EK: No, they were grown already.

SH: How early did you go to Japan and how much time did you spend in Japan?

EK: On this business of bracing them for a shortage in corn, I was in Japan for about a week. I've been in Japan one time before and I'm trying to think of why, and the time before was on the way back from Australia. By the way, I came back from Australia with such glowing reports that my wife and I later took a trip there.

SH: That's a good advertisement for Australia then. Had Japan totally recovered from the war when you were there?

EK: There were remnants of MacArthur's influence, which were good by the way. Japan was bustling. They had English signs, as well as Japanese, at the railroad stations for example, and the Japanese were quite open I thought. That would have been about, that's quite a while after the war, that would have been late '50s, but the impressions of Japan was very good.

SH: What are you most proud of in this wonderful career you talked about?

EK: Well, the confidence in my bosses. This man, that became head of the Jewish Agricultural Society, invited me to give the talk to his men after both he and I had retired. The head of the Foreign Agricultural Service asked me to write up one chapter of a book he was doing. The man that was my fourth level boss when I was in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics asked me to write a chapter of his book. The confidence from my bosses was always a nice thing to have.

SS: I have a question about your son and your son's college. I read that one of them graduated around 1968 from college?

EK: That would probably be Julian. Julian is an attorney in private practice, solo private practice, and lives in nearby Arlington. He had signed on as a freshman at Rutgers, but developed an ulcer early in his freshman year and other things there that were just too grueling for him. His Rutgers was not the Rutgers I had gone to. For example, the lines in the cafeteria were so long, one couldn't have an eleven o'clock class, and have lunch, and be at his one o'clock class at all. Bella went up there for a couple of weeks at the time, trying to straighten things out and get different meals for him, and so on, and it didn't work. He came back and he was a broken kid for two, three months, but one day he picked up, went out and got a job, and re that job, he announced one night at supper that he had "worked near Montgomery College today, and at noontime I walked over and signed on for the semester starting in February." By going to summer school at American U, and the Montgomery College thing, he caught up with his class and graduated from Drew University, at the same time that his contemporaries were graduating from Rutgers.

SS: Were there any similarities between your son's experiences prior to the Vietnam War at Rutgers and your experience prior to World War II at Rutgers?

EK: Well, the campus environment, you're talking about Rutgers; the campus environment was not as personal as mine was. They didn't have freshmen who were friendly with the upperclassmen, because the dorm structure changed from when I was there. The freshmen were all together; they didn't enjoy any pleasant company from the upperclassmen, for example.

SH: Were there any comparisons in so far as demonstrations? When you went to school at Rutgers were there not demonstrations for isolationists?

EK: There was a Liberal Club, which I never went to, but I imagine I would now go to it in my present state of political attitudes. I don't remember any contrary clubs. I don't remember anything like the John Birch Society or Liberty League on campus.

SH: Who were some of the speakers that you remember from mandatory chapel?

EK: Well, you know, I remember mandatory chapel but I don't remember any particular speakers. … You had called attention to the Thomas Friedman columns from the *New York Times*. You may have noticed Paul Krugman columns, too; I'm very fond of Krugman. The story there is, tying on to what you'd asked about NJC much earlier, and I'd mentioned I had gone on to Connecticut. In Connecticut I met Bella. She was a sophomore when I was in my second year of graduate work, and that would have been in 1940. We were married in '42, and we had a very happy marriage, fifty-nine years, until she died five years ago.

SH: Beautiful woman for the record. I have seen some of the photographs.

EK: The ones nearest to the bathroom door were of her. After she had died, about six months afterward, I was coming back from a trip that we often made together to an encampment in North

Carolina, and I thought, "This solitary way of living is not good, no one to discuss what one has just seen, as get opposing points of view, things like that. Who would I like to know better among the women I had known? And I went back in my mind to a girl with whom I had a single date at NJC, you'd asked about that. I had met her at a mixer organized by one of the Jewish temples in New Brunswick and walked her home, and, afterward, had a solitary date with her. On the block where I lived, was an alumnae of NJC who had a directory, looked up Belle and the implication was that she was a widow, although it didn't flatly say that. Well, I wrote her a letter asking if she would like to start a correspondence, and she replied promptly, and cordially, and we corresponded for about three months, and then one time I was in northern New Jersey and I went a little bit farther, into Freeport, New York, and had a day's visit with her, and after that, about two or three months later, longer visits with her, and, since then, we've been exchanging visits, perhaps every two months, or so, and it's been a great new mode of life. And the pictures at this end are of Belle.

SH: Did Belle graduate from NJC then?

EK: Yes.

SH: In '41 as well?

EK: In '40. At the time we renewed our acquaintance, she lived in Freeport, New York, and since then, she sold her house and has gone to live in a community much like this one, sponsored by the Suffolk County, New York Jewish Community Center.

SH: What a nice friendship.

EK: Yes.

SH: Delightful. Tell us about your sons. We had talked about Julian and his great recovery, so to speak, from having had a difficult time at Rutgers. He's a lawyer. Where did he go to law school?

EK: University of Pennsylvania. He apprenticed himself upon graduation to a country lawyer in a Pennsylvania county seat, and, I think, he enjoyed that. The social opportunities in the county, in a rural county seat weren't great, so he came back to Washington and apprenticed himself to a fellow who was so abrupt, that when he would answer the phone he would say, "What do you want?" Eventually, he decided he'd rather go out on his own, which he did. He sort of clawed his way up, you might say, starting at a big chain store. First, he got a half-time job, in return for desk space and use of a telephone, that paid him half-time to devote to his own interests, and through that, he developed a practice, and now, with the help of a cell phone, he can be anywhere he wants to and still run a law practice. When the phone rings he answers very soberly, "This is Julian Karpoff," and he could be sitting with his feet on a mahogany desk for all the fellow on the other end knows, and I've been with him, when we've been traveling for example, he conducted business, and his speech when he's talking on the phone, who ever would transcribe would not have to be edited. It would be like a law brief, and, I think, he's a wonderful guy. His older brother also has a law degree, but has never practiced law except on a pro-bono basis to

keep his membership in the Bar up-to-date. He's an economist for the Department of Energy. It was of him that his boss once spoke at the congressional testimony; he said, "I have a staff of seven professionals, all of whom are either PhD economists, or lawyers, and one erudite gentleman who is both."

SH: Nicely put, I think. One thing I'd like to ask is about the family farm that you had in Rosemont, Hunterdon County. You had talked about your father passing away during the war.

EK: In 1944, shortly after the invasion of the continent, is when Dad died. In the family, we say, "Gee, isn't it nice that Dad was aware of the opening of the second front?"

SH: Because you had said that he had gone off to work then as a machinist, knowing there was a shortage of such. Was your mother able to keep the farm together?

EK: No, because she couldn't drive. She went to live in New York City, and there we are.

SH: Did you sell the farm then?

EK: Yes.

SH: Almost as soon as she left?

EK: Yes. The farm, intervened in the story, because when it became clear to Dad that I wasn't going to come back and join him on the farm, they sold this farm, and moved to a smaller retirement farm near Clinton. Oh, and I remember I had wanted to say something about Clinton. It was from that farm that Dad died, and he did not work as a machinist for about six months before his death, because my mother was instrumental in him getting a job as a machinist in the local Buick agency, typical of auto agencies with their repair facilities which became sub-contractors for a lot of machine work during the war, and Mom was very upset about Dad driving forty miles, each way, when he was in his sixties and working twelve hours a day, and so on.

SH: Where had he been working?

EK: In Elizabeth, for, I'll think of the name of the plant pretty soon. Dad worked for Mr. (Hylan?) at the Buick agency, and in that small county seat the resident doctor in the town would come by, every now and then, and stick thermometers in the fellows mouths and give them sample pills and take their blood pressure. When he took Dad's blood pressure, he went to Mr. (Hylan?) and he said, "You know that fellow over there, with high blood pressure, don't put him a position where anybody else's safety, or his own, depends upon him remaining alert, because he could get a stroke at any minute with that kind of blood pressure." So Mr. (Hylan?) said, "Look, there's a cot in my office. I know you like to read your *New York Times* at lunch, you take an extra half hour at lunch and read your *New York Times* while lying on my cot, and never mind these other guys go back to work after a half hour," and Dad had to give up work about six months before he died. Mr. (Hylan?) knew that my Aunt Mildred was a nurse in New York and suggested that Mom take Dad to some specialist that Mildred would select. He'd say, one visit

after another, "I'd like to see another specialist," which was foreign to his nature, and, eventually, they got to one that said, "I know you've been to others and I can imagine the strict rules that they told you to observe. I'd be somewhat more easy-going: try and limit your abrupt exercise, your excitement, don't eat spicy foods, and give up your work and take it easy." My Dad, as they came out, said, "That's the specialist that I was looking for," and my mother said she hesitated every time they would go out for groceries, or whatever, but he never failed while driving.

SH: Your father is such an amazing story. The extended family that you had in New York, do you still keep in contact with them?

EK: Oh, yes. As a matter-of-fact, the branch of the family in New York is mostly Mankoffs, as contrasted to Karpoff, but the Mankoffs and the Karpoffs have always gotten along very well, and there is to be a Mankoff reunion in late April, in Columbia, Maryland, and my cousin, Walter, who is twelve years younger than I am, and when we were growing up we didn't have much in common, but now in mature years, twelve years doesn't matter much, he and I are going together, and I was given the job of writing his biography for the compendium that they're going to put together. He has quite a notable personality.

SH: What is your passion now?

EK: Well, I keep up with the neighbors that I had four miles from here. I keep up with my friends from the gem club. I deplore that here in this retirement community—and I think this is frequent in places like this—it's not like a college dorm where you visit back and forth in the apartments. Now when people come back from supper, you hear the cylinders clicking, in the doorlocks as they go in. People complain about this detail, that detail, and don't do anything about it. So I got myself elected to be secretary of what they call "the resident council," but which I call "the student council," and I try to write the minutes so that each problem that comes up is given to somebody to help resolve, and I specify the name, so that in the next meeting there is somebody to ask, "What's the resolution of this?" That's not a way to make friends around here, but it seems to work to some extent, and the people, that haven't been fingered, seem to like it, and I get a kick out of that. Well, my kids and I try and go off on an excursion every now and then, after the dust had settled when they moved me in. Oh, by coincidence, just about the time I was to move in, I suffered a stroke, which is why you see me walking with a cane and walking unsteadily, otherwise. The kids, and the grandchildren, and their families, were so good. They moved me, cleaned everything out of Bangor Drive, conducted the yard sale for what didn't fit in here, and straightened everything out, even made the beds in here, so when I came from rehab, I could slide into bed. So the boys and their wives, and Belle and I, went to Florida for a long weekend in celebration of that, and having sold the house. You have no idea how well-to-do one can now feel, when having sold the house. I don't know if you have a house that you had lived in long enough to pay off the mortgage.

SH: I haven't sold it but I'm hoping.

EK: Well, prices have risen, probably two hundred thousand dollars since I sold my house, but it made me feel well-to-do. So I financed the trip to Florida for six of us, and my sons and I went

off for a long weekend one time since then, and Julian and I went off to Tim's graduation from law school, and Julian and I are planning to go to Toledo where Tim is a law clerk to a federal judge, before his term expires, and I'm going to go to North Carolina on the same venture that I'd come back from and which I told you about earlier. Belle can't come to North Carolina with me this time, because one of her grandsons is graduating from college on the weekend that's involved there. She had come with me one time before when I still drove to that thing. She enjoyed it very much.

SH: Well, be sure you look us up the next time you're in Rutgers for your reunion.

EK: Well, because it's more difficult for me to get around now, I don't know if I'll go to more reunions. As a matter-of-fact, at our last one, in '03, was that there were so few of us, and, from what you said, there are even fewer of us now, so that we probably wouldn't have a separate blow-out for ourselves, but it might be fun. I had talked to one of the kids into taking me up. … There was a little program at the last one that showed a film of some of the fellows that had spoken, their oral histories.

SS: Could you just tell us a little bit about what you were involved in when you were at Rutgers? It seems like you were involved in a lot of activities, such as cross country, wrestling, debating, the Ag Club, and things like that.

EK: Well, let's see. I'll take them one at a time, then I'll comment.

SS: Cross country.

EK: You had to go out for two sports in your freshman and sophomore years. I went out for cross country, liked it very much, wasn't very good at it, but liked it very much. You'd run, and run, and run. There must be something hereditary about it, because grandson, Tim, who had his junior year abroad at Oxford, got bored at Oxford, so he went out for long distance running, and signed himself up for the London Marathon in the year that he was there. He was the second American to finish that year. He was the 446th, all told.

SS: What college did he go to?

EK: Well, now he's the law clerk. He went to Oxford, and I don't know what college. Oxford is a university, you know. His father visited him there, and Williams, where he was an undergraduate, had twenty-five seats at whatever college it was, and they ran the house for the kids, and Julian says, "They carried America with them." He looked in trash baskets and it was full of pizza boxes.

SS: Wrestling?

EK: That was the next one of the two sports that was compulsory. I was about 120-125 pounds at the time, so there were not many people that I could wrestle with, but I was considered quite wiry, but didn't follow up after the required one or two years, whatever it was.

SH: Did you have to take ROTC? Wasn't it mandatory?

EK: I was a conscientious objector at that time.

SH: Really?

EK: Reflecting attitudes at home, by the way. But I've since changed.

SH: Did people at Rutgers look at you differently?

EK: No, no.

SH: Was there something that you had to do to replace ROTC?

EK: You had to take physical training, which involved these two sports a year. But I did go as far as to buy Army shoes and stuff like that. I had very durable shoes.

SS: Debating?

EK: Reager was the name of the coach of debate, and he had a manner, and encouraged his debaters to have a similarly aggressive manner, which I didn't like, so I only did the required six months, or whatever. His attitude was that how you deliver it matters more than the content of your speech, and I felt the opposite, so I didn't continue.

SS: Winants Club?

EK: That was the residential club. At the time, I was violently anti-fraternity, I'm still anti-fraternity, but not as violently as then.

SS: The Ag Club?

EK: Well, that's self explanatory, yes.

SS: The Scarlet Letter?

EK: I was "the senior's editor," who was responsible for getting all these write ups, and bugging the boys to submit them, and; finally, when you didn't get any more results by bugging, you had to write a few of them yourself.

SH: That reflects then the humor that I see in these write ups, which was good. I like that, usually it's very cut and dry. Susie, do you want to read what it says for the tape under the photograph?

SS: Sure. "If my bike lasts until graduation," and "Have you heard about the man and the barrel?" "Introduced as the lad people have in mind when they say, farm boy makes good.

Pausing only to comb the hay seed from his hair, Ed became preceptor of Winants and a Rutgers candidate for a Rhodes scholarship, and now he seeks even greater worlds to conquer."

SH: Well done.

EK: If I had to revise that, I think I'd make it less competitive, that part about seeking greater worlds to conquer. I don't like the conquer part.

SH: But a senior in college can think like that, right?

SS: The Poultry Judging Team?

EK: All the livestock industries have what they called, "standards of perfection," for the factors that seemed to correlate with productivity, and for poultry, depending on the age of the pullet or the chicken, you want a bright comb, widespread pelvic bones to permit easy egg laying, a bright eye, and things like that, and you won't believe it, but there is competition among colleges, or at least was then, about who can best foretell the productivity of birds, and I was part of the Rutgers team who did that. There were poultry shows in New York at that time, run by the Northeastern Poultry Producers Council, that had such contests, and the Northeastern schools would all send representatives, and they'd vie with each other. At that time, there was also egg laying contests, which later would be changed to mere egg laying tests, because the word "egg laying contest" conjured pictures of fellows coaxing chickens to lay eggs, or something like that.

SS: How did Rutgers do in these competitions?

EK: Frankly, I don't remember.

SS: The last one was Alpha Zeta.

EK: That's the honorary agricultural fraternity, "the Phi Beta Kappa of Ags."

SH: Was there any prejudice against students who were part of the Ag School, as opposed to, I mean, I've interviewed people who were greatly benefited by Helyar's plan to find not only scholarship money for young men but also a place to live, and they would talk about how the …

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

SH: Tape two, side two. Please continue.

EK: Helyar was a humanist, and he was very interested in the welfare of the kids under his wing, and the whole Ag School was under his wing. He did not have favorites. He took care of everybody. He was instrumental in establishing what was called Helyar House, a cooperative living opportunity on the College Farm. The boys cooked and prepared their own meals, helped each other, and most of them had jobs on the college farm, and Helyar was very zealous that jobs that students could fill should be offered to students, and not put up for general bid, and a lot of kids stayed over the summer on account of their jobs at the College Farm.

SH: What about yourself? What did you do between semesters?

EK: Between years really, the first year, freshman to sophomore, I washed dishes in a girls' camp in Spring Valley, New York. That summer, I think, I washed enough crockery to have done my share for the rest of my life.

SH: How did you pick this job?

EK: My Aunt Mildred, who was the nurse in New York, knew the directress of the camp, who said they needed a dishwasher. That was me. That became me. The second vacation period was in the CCC, which we discussed already, and the third was as an agent for the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, a part of what is now Cook College, on a joint venture with the Department of Agriculture to take a sort of census survey of New Jersey farms and their financial accomplishments, if any, during the year, and that went on for the first summer after I graduated, and for the summer of my graduate school as well.

SH: Did you ever find that there was any anti-Semitism?

EK: I didn't suffer any, and some of my classmates who have complained about it, I thought were perhaps inviting problems. I grew up in a situation where I was, for example in high school, the only Jewish kid, but I didn't feel that made me any different, whereas a lot of Jewish kids try to establish differences between themselves and the great mass.

SH: In your publications, of which there are many, are there any that you're most proud of?

EK: Yes. I was interested in stamps, too, at a time before the post office department issued so many, and such big ones, that it became hard to collect them all, and to keep them orderly, and I wrote a couple of stamp articles. One was about a poultry commemorative, and I wrote what I think is the definitive article on it, which was published in one of the stamp journals. I can't remember whether it was *Scott's,* or whatever, and there was a stamp about foreign trade later, which came out while, I think, I was already employed in the Foreign Agricultural Service, and since we were interested in trade, I wrote an article about it, too. So I've got my career encapsulated in two stamp articles.

SH: I think there's a pun involved in that as well. Susie, do you have any other questions? If not, I would like to thank you so much for taking time to talk to us today. Do you have anything that you would like to put on the record?

EK: Well, I just want to tell you how much I enjoyed this, because, as I said, everybody has a little bit of ego and self-centrism, and here I'm the object of attention for a couple of hours. Oh my goodness. I'm about to go to supper.

SH: Okay, well, we will let you go. We'll end this interview. Thank you very much.

SS: Thank you very much.

[TAPE PAUSED]

EK: We became closer to each other as alumni than we had been as undergraduates, and, of course, our wives knew each other, and each of us knew the other's wife, and after Bella died, and I took up with Belle—get that similarity of names? One time, Belle and I went to an opera at New Brunswick, and I said, "Now if you don't mind, I always like to detour and stop in on the Fellers, because Bob and Freda had been so cordial to us," and she said, "Oh, can we do that?" She said, "Freda and I were one year apart in high school together, and we majored in the same major, one year apart, at NJC, and we haven't seen each other since graduation." So they had a very fond reunion.

SH: You had also told me a story about a classmate, Tom Blanchett. Do you want to put that on the record?

EK: I think we did, hadn't we?

SH: I don't think that was on the record. There were two quite humorous stories.

EK: Tom worked for the bank where my parents had their check account, and in the local paper one day it told about how Tom had come back from his field work for the bank and saw that, there in the lobby, was a man with a drawn pistol, looking at a cashier. So Tom just walked up to the man, squeezed his elbows together behind his back, the man dropped the gun, and Tom was on the front page of the *Hunterdon County Democrat*, and my parents sent me a copy of it, and Tom was quite a local hero for sometime after that. The other story about Tom was that I had gone once to a Marine Sunset Parade on the grounds of the Marine Corps Barracks, and was much impressed, and I asked Tom if he'd ever seen it because he had been a Marine in the war. He said, "Yes, three of them." He said, "The first time as an enlisted man, and we practiced for a week." "The second," he said, "I was a lieutenant, and I was in charge of one of the platoons there, and I didn't know what to do, and asked the sergeant in charge, 'what do I do?' The sergeant said, 'well, you're in one of the rear platoons so just watch what the fellow ahead of you does.'" I wish Tom had lived to go to a fourth one. Oh, the third one, he said he was a civilian and he said he cried like a baby while it went on.

SH: Thank you for sharing those. If there are other anecdotes you want to share about your classmates, we would be happy to have you add that to your transcripts.

EK: Not about classmates, but has there ever occurred in the annals the name of Professor Rudolf Kirk, an English professor?

SH: Probably.

EK: One time, about fifteen years I would say, after I graduated, I went to call on him in his office on the campus, "Good morning, Professor Kirk." "Good morning, Mister, Mister, don't prompt me," he says, "I'll get it. Mr. Karpoff." Fifteen years afterward, for a non-major, I thought that was pretty good.

SH: I'm impressed as well. The professor that we work with on this project, Professor John Chambers, has that same sort of memory and connection with the students, and I've always been very impressed with that as well. Thank you, again.

SS: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 6/14/06
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/21/06
Reviewed by Edward Karpoff 8/3/06