

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROGER H. KIRSCHEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Roger H. Kirschen on June 16, 2005, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Sue Yousif: ... Sue Yousif ...

Peter Asch: ... Peter Asch.

SI: Mr. Kirschen, thank you very much for coming in today.

Roger H. Kirschen: Oh, it's a pleasure, look forward to it.

SY: Could we begin with when and where you were born?

RK: Surely, born August 23, 1942, in Trenton, New Jersey, because, at the time, in Flemington, there was no hospital, [laughter] so, a true small town, rural, small town.

PA: That meant you grew up in Flemington.

RK: Right, exactly.

SI: Could you tell us a little bit about your father and where he was from?

RK: I'll be very happy to. My dad, actually, was born in 1909 in Newark, New Jersey, of immigrant parents who came from Romania, and he was a wonderful man in many, many ways, very intelligent. He graduated from high school ... at the age of sixteen and went straight to Newark School of Law, which, of course, is Rutgers Law School now. So, at the age of nineteen, he was a full-fledged lawyer. ... Actually, [he] got a job out in Flemington--that's why we were there--and he joined the law firm of Judge [George Knowles] Large, who was the most famous lawyer in the area and kind of a real gentry kind of a guy. ... My father ended up specializing in corporate law, because, back then, [in] New Jersey, the tax laws were written in such a way that a lot of corporations incorporated there, [to] get the tax break, and they had to have their annual meetings in Flemington. So, my dad was the one who handled quite a few large accounts. ...

SI: Such as Standard Oil?

RK: Exactly, and that was one of their many clients, exactly, and he also practiced before the Supreme Court, too. So, he was quite a man. He also was very civic-minded, of his generation. He was involved with all kinds of civic groups and charities and Boy Scouts, the whole bit. ... Once again, he was a good role model to have as a father.

SI: Did he ever talk about his days at the Newark Law School?

RK: I probably was too young, really, to take much in at that time, other than, obviously, it prepared him well for his career that he pursued and ended up in. [laughter] I know that his parents actually owned a delicatessen in Newark, in the Weequahic [Section]. He went to

Weequahic High School and that's, you know, in terms of that. His parents died fairly young, because I never knew them, other than [that] they were gentle folk. David and Rose were their names and I was actually named after ... his mother. That's why I have an "R" [name]. [laughter] He also was a young Republican. Well, Hunterdon County, it's "dyed in the wool" Republican and, being in a law firm with a corporation [cliente], that was a natural affiliation, but, also, secretly, he voted for FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]. [laughter]

SI: You did not know your grandparents, but did you know any of their relatives that came over from Romania?

RK: Well, I knew my mother's grandparents much better. I can go into their background very briefly, too, if you'd like, because it's interesting.

SI: Please, tell us about your mother's family.

RK: Okay, I'm very happy to; interesting background, because they came from, then called Byelorussia, [known as] Belarus today. ... My great, great-grandmother, my grandfather's mother, was quite a character. Apparently, she ran some illicit businesses on the side and had to do some bribing. I think she had some kind of an inn or something. [In] any case, he himself became a social revolutionary and he was arrested, put in prison, with two of his other friends, and they were apparently in cells, one floor above, one below. They kind of communicated that way. ... His two friends, one was called Boris, the other one was called Ellis, and that's how my brother got his name. They put those two names together when he was born. He's five years older than I am and his name is Borell, which nobody else has that name, as far as I know. [laughter] Anyway, they came over. My grandfather came over, [his] name was Joseph Berkowitz, I believe it was, like, around 1903, and my grandmother came over, like, a year later, and they were in New York City at first, which was typical. My grandmother said they came through Castle Garden, not through Ellis Island, which is interesting, too. [Editor's Note: Castle Garden, located at the tip of Manhattan, served as America's first immigration center, processing over eight million immigrants from 1855 to 1890.] ... Eventually, it was the movement ... back then to be agrarian, so, they ended up getting a farm, out in Sand Brook, New Jersey. It does exist, as small as it is. Eventually, they had to get a farm out in Rosemont and I remember my mother talking about what it was like on the farm. It was horse-drawn equipment. She had a pet horse that she used to ride and they had a pet cow--the usual bit of a true rural background. To make ends meet, my grandmother always took in boarders during the summertime and worked very hard. She also worked out in the field, too, and it was a hard go. ... My mother talked about the fact that the very first farm experience they had, when they moved out to the farm the first time, I guess was in Sand Brook, typical, they arrived in, like, around November. There's no crop there and they literally survived thanks to a neighbor, who gave them potatoes to eat that winter, and my mother, talk about tough stock, she was the second of five children. She's the only girl and she was born on June 23, 1907, weighed all of three-and-a-half pounds. She was not premature--it's just that ... my grandmother was undernourished and that's the size she was. Fortunately, there's a heat wave, and so, she survived because it was so hot out, and they put her in a shoebox in a drawer of a chest and that's how she survived. So, it was tough stock. ... Anyway, they eventually moved out to the Flemington area and that's basically how they eventually met, back in the ... 1930s.

SI: Did you ever hear any stories about why either side of the family immigrated to the United States?

RK: Yes, I did, because my grandmother would tell me stories of what it was like. Actually, my grandfather and grandmother, in Russia, grew up in Vitebsk, Chagall's city. [Editor's Note: Vitebsk, or Vitsyebsk in Belarusian, is located in modern-day Belarus. Artist Marc Chagall was born there in 1887.] ... She told stories about *pogroms*, [violent, anti-Semitic riots], and one story is really kind of horrifying. She remembers, talking about it, looking out the window, because she actually was, I guess, from a middle-class background, but, of course, back then, if you're Jewish, you didn't go to public school. ... You weren't allowed to. So, she went to the library, self-taught and self-read. ... Anyway, she said, "I remember looking out the window one time and the *pogrom* was going on somewhere out in the streets," and, literally, she saw this old man with a white beard and, literally, they ripped the beard off him, as part of the *pogrom*. So, that combination of fear and being arrested, chased by Cossacks, the whole bit, that's why they left [Russia].

PA: Did your parents tell you how they met?

RK: Oh, yes. That's also an interesting story, too. Actually, my brother, I think, has a better idea of how they met. It turns out that my mother went to what's now called the College of New Jersey, Trenton State--back then, it was Trenton Normal School--[for] two years. ... Of course, back then, if you were a woman, you could have ... a limited career, either you taught or you're a secretary being pretty much what it was, or you became a nurse, I guess. So, that's the reason why she went into teaching and the four brothers, basically, were very protective of her. So, when my father came into town, they were going to go on their first date, the brothers accompanied my father and my mother on their first date. [laughter] So, that's basically how they met. It's a very small Jewish community back then, out in Flemington, and everybody knew everybody, apparently, and, once again, they were married, let's see, in 1935. My brother was born [in] 1937.

SI: This may be a longshot, but, since your father was in the legal profession in Flemington, did he ever talk about the Lindbergh kidnapping trial? [Editor's Note: The trial of Bruno Hauptmann, accused (and subsequently found guilty) of kidnapping and murdering famed aviator Charles A. Lindbergh's son, took place amid unprecedented media coverage and public interest at the Hunterdon County Courthouse in Flemington, New Jersey, in January and February of 1935.]

RK: Yes. ... Well, he knew the lawyers who were involved in it. [C.] Lloyd Fisher was one of them who was involved in it, on the defense side, and so, my dad did talk about it. It was, obviously, as everybody knows, ... a real spectacle. It was a big media event, it was the "trial of the century," and it was kind of almost like a circus most of the time. I know my father talked about the fact that the trial attorney, ... [Edward J.] Reilly was his name, I think he was actually head of the team for [Bruno] Hauptmann's defense, and, basically, everybody knew that he was pretty much a heavy drinker, to say the least, and it was not the best defense. Those are the things he mentioned, talking about it. The other thing he did talk about, ... actually, through my

grandfather, also, there actually was a Ku Klux Klan parade, in the 1920s, on Main Street. I remember that my grandfather recognized someone in the crowd ... who had the Ku Klux Klan attire on and called out his name, said, "What are you doing here? What's the problem?" and basically called his bluff. That was the temper of the times, I guess you would say. Obviously, back then, you also had exclusions for anybody who was Jewish. The "country club," quote-unquote, had no Jews in it. In fact, they invited my father to join them--I think it was, like, around 1950, give or take--and he turned them down, because he didn't want to be a "token Jew" in the country club. So, he said, "I'm sorry. Unless you accept everybody, I don't want to be a member of your club." So, his Boy Scout upbringing came through. [laughter]

SI: Did they ever tell you any stories about the Great Depression and how it affected them?

RK: Oh, surely, surely. Once again, my mother, who lived the longest, obviously, I have the most stories about, had a true Depression mentality. Once again, back then, I guess it was a good salary, but ... I think it was twenty-five dollars a week, something like that, my father earned back then, which was good money back then, during the Depression, but, still, she talked about the fact that they would never spend on themselves. They always would scrimp and save. Things were always worn until they fell apart from use, [laughter] that kind of a thing, no extravagance whatsoever. ... My mother also talked about the fact, in terms of World War II, of course, everybody had to have the ration cards and, once again, she talked about the tough times then, the fact that they actually had blackout drills. ... As I mentioned there, my father was a Civil Defense warden, who, at night, was supposed to patrol, make sure everybody has their shades drawn, no lights are showing. Unfortunately, he forgot to draw down the shades of his own house, so, he was reported by a different warden. [laughter] So, that was basically his job. He wanted to enlist, but the judge wanted to keep him in the office. ... Back then, he could arrange, I guess, to not go into the draft. So, that's what happened with him--he was protected.

SI: Is there any history of involvement in the Zionist Movement in your family? The story about your grandfather made me think of it.

RK: Right. ... Once again, they were involved in, actually, the founding of what's now called the Flemington Jewish Community Center, back in 1948, and, as a social revolutionary, he was not religious whatsoever. [Editor's Note: According to the Flemington Jewish Community Center website, the congregation was founded in the early 1900s and incorporated in 1924.] ... He looked upon it as being for a social gathering. That's why it's called "community center," rather than "synagogue," I guess. In terms of support of Israel, my mother was the one who really got involved in that very heavily. I know she was involved in charities and in bonds for Israel, and then, of course, trees for Israel, too. So, she was the one that actually was most involved with that. My grandfather died back in 1948, so, he wasn't really involved in it at all. My grandmother, it's interesting, in spite of all the *pogroms* and all, she still had a very, very warm spot for the country Russia--not the Soviet Union, but the country Russia. I have an interesting story to tell about my grandfather, Joseph Berkowitz. He, as a social revolutionary, went to see exactly what was going on in Russia. So, he went over there in around 1933, I believe, to see exactly how things were working out, and, to him, it was a real eye-opener, because, as a social revolutionary, he believed in the fact that socialism was wonderful and it's going to solve all your problems. Well, he was horrified at what he saw when he went there, in

terms of the fear amongst people, the fact [that] people would not talk openly, because of the spying. ... He also was horrified at the lack of workmanship, with the kind of buildings that were put up by the Communist regimes at the time. So, he came back not so much a social revolutionary at that point, much happier to be in America. [laughter]

SI: Do you know if he ever had any problems as a result of that?

RK: Not that I know of. He was a businessman. ... After he gave up on the farm, he actually had a hardware store right in Flemington, right at the corner, by the old courthouse. ... As a matter-of-fact, my parents lived in an apartment above the hardware store, which it's still there today. So, no, he was a businessman, as far as I know, typical, would be forthright and honest, and he also was outspoken. He liked to know exactly what things were. Then, eventually, he and my grandmother actually divorced, ... even though they're buried together, which was kind of typical at that time. [laughter] You can divorce, but you should be with your original spouse. He never remarried. ... So, that's basically it.

SI: You mentioned that your grandmother had a warm spot for Russia.

RK: Right. Once again, she ... spoke the Russian language, then, Yiddish, as well as, of course, English. I have another story to tell about that, in terms of my grandparents. Literally, my mother and her brothers taught them how to speak English, but they went to a one-room schoolhouse, in Rosemont, and they had to walk to it from the farm. It was, like, about a mile walk, give or take, and that's typical, I think, of a lot of immigrant groups, that the children learn the English first, and then, the parents learn as a result.

SI: That is mostly what we hear.

RK: Right.

SI: We have already touched upon rationing during World War II, but what else did your parents tell you about World War II, as you were just a baby then?

RK: Right, yes. [laughter] Okay, interesting story, ... talking about my two uncles who were involved in the war directly, one uncle, Uncle Lee, really interesting guy, he's a very handsome guy, a true flyer. He actually ended up flying cargo from India, over the Himalayas, to Western China, where Chiang Kai-shek's forces, the [Chinese] Nationalist forces, were. ... Obviously, quite a few planes were lost on the way, because of the weather and altitude, but he also did training of new pilots that came in to the area, because he was a super flyer. I remember, one time, he had to train a British pilot and the British pilot froze at the controls, went into a nose dive. ... Once again, my uncle, with his natural talent, was able to pull the plane out, you know, at the last minute, from crashing. ... His stories were basically about the arrogance of the British flyers, because most were upper-class. This is the way Britain still was back in the 1930s and '40s. ... He was a typical American, in that he did not like that. ... He actually ended up down South, also, so, he had no great love for pretense and class. ... Once again, his stories, [laughter] ... some stories I won't repeat, but he was married six times, "officially," and there were others, too, [laughter] because some of his female friends would end up at my mother's doorstep. He'd

kind of abandon [them] there at my mother's house and she'd have to go ahead and give them some money and send them back home. [laughter] So, he was a character. My other uncle, Uncle Gene, was the youngest of all of them. He basically was an afterthought child, the last one, and he actually was drafted into the Army. He had gone to acting school in New York City. ... He has a wonderful, deep voice, perfect stage presence, kind of a handsome guy in his own way, and he was in the same class as Angela Lansbury. They were classmates, and, obviously, the war changed his career completely and he ended up training over in Hawaii. He was part of the force that basically patrolled, make sure there's no invasion of Hawaii, but, also, they trained for about a year, I guess ... a year or more, to be the diversionary force for the invasion of Japan. ... They were told ahead of time that, you know, "You're going to be the diversionary force. You should expect at least eighty percent casualties." So, that's basically what he had faced, but, of course, it never happened, because of the atomic bomb. So, instead, he became [part of] the occupying force over in Japan for a couple of years. So, he came back after that. When he came back, it's a funny story to tell, because I'd always heard, as a little kid, all the time, "We never get any letters from Uncle Gene. He never seems to write." So, the first words I said to my uncle, as he came home, I said, "Uncle Gene, why you no write?" [laughter] I'm sure he loved me for that, but, actually, in terms of growing up, I knew him very, very well, because he lived downstairs with my grandmother. We were upstairs, over on 51 Broad Street in Flemington. So, his stories were basically about the training, about the fact that you didn't get the greatest healthcare when you're in the Army. He ended up with rotten teeth as a result. ... Just the same, his acting career was over, as a result, and he went into TV broadcasting, out in Omaha, Nebraska, at first, and, after that, ... it was a sad story. He never really achieved what he could have achieved. ... In terms of the war itself, I remember, they talked about the gas rationing, ... [what an insufficient] amount of gas you'd have. In terms of tires, you kept whatever tires you had on. You couldn't replace them, because rubber was scarce. So, you never traveled very far at all, and the same thing with ration cards. That's all you could use, in terms of the food gathering.

SI: I have read that it was difficult to raise a child, particularly an infant, during the war, because you had to wait in line for so many things, such as baby formula.

RK: Right, exactly, but here I am, so, I guess tough stock, you survive no matter what you had as a baby. [laughter]

SI: What can you tell us about your earliest memories and what you remember about growing up in Flemington?

RK: Okay, all fond memories. Once again, growing up in a small town, you knew everybody. Back then, Flemington was about four thousand people and everything else's just farms. So, it was a very protected existence. No one ever locked their doors. It's true, typical, you know, the American dream kind of a thing that you always see on TV in the 1950s--back in the 1940s, that's what it was like. You'd have neighborhood [activities], a couple picnics every summer. Everybody'd bring their best food they can make and you'd join together and have a picnic. Across the street, the (Danleys?), ... they actually raised chickens. So, you'd get your eggs from them. Every Friday, a truck, ice truck, would come, with fresh fish from the shore, so [that] you can get your fish on Friday. Now, there was one grocery store, the old A&P, right on Main Street. ... Once again, "farmers' night" was Friday night. Farmers would come in to shop. That

was the one night that the stores were open late, on Friday, and it was typical, with one, long Main Street, and all the stores there were basically it. ... Once again, there were a fair amount of businessmen, who my father, obviously, knew, because he transacted a lot of legal things for them, too. ... There was one clothing store. The [owner's] name is Ben Karrow, ... who was a tailor from New York and came out and established it, and it was the one clothing store that people would go to, to get "good clothes," quote-unquote. It turns out that my wife's grandfather, [his] name was Henry Kolchin, also had a clothing store, but his was the "low end," [laughter] and they also included washrags and socks and things like that. So, he had a store a couple of doors down from the fancy store. There were two five-and-dimes, [five-and-ten-cent stores that typically sold household goods, toys, candy, etc.], and, of course, that was our favorite place to go as kids, because you can always look and touch and, occasionally, you could buy some things, too. We always had, and still do have, parades, very patriotic, especially after World War II. A lot of veterans always marched in parades and they'd have the old equipment, too. In fact, up until the ... late 1950s, they also would use the old Sherman tanks, the National Guard would have them, until, one day, in one of our Memorial Day parades, they rounded the corner at the post office and crushed two parked cars. That's the last time they had Sherman tanks in the parade. [laughter] The one who led the parade, his name was Colonel Foran, was [from] one of the well-established families. The Foran Foundry was the old iron foundry in Flemington, which existed up until around [the] 1960s or so, and he always led the parade on his horse. So, he was sort of like the symbol, ... I guess you would say, of status in the town. [Editor's Note: Republican Arthur F. Foran (1882-1961) worked for Foran Foundry and Manufacturing Company, his family's business, before entering politics. An aide to New Jersey Governor Walter Evans Edge, Foran left politics briefly to serve in the US Army in World War I, achieving the rank of colonel. He later held several elected and appointed political offices, including President of the New Jersey Senate.]

SI: Previously, you mentioned your parents had lived in a predominantly Jewish area, when they were young, in Flemington.

RK: ... It really wasn't a Jewish area, because there was really only a handful of Jews scattered all over the town. [laughter] So, there was no "ghetto," anything like that. [Out of a] four-thousand-[resident] population, ... there were a couple of Jewish people on Broad Street, along with lots of Protestants and Catholics, too. So, it was a complete mix. The one thing that the town lacked, of course, was a true minority, quota of minorities. There was one African-American family, the Reisners, and they lived over on ... Broad Street, a little farther on down Broad Street from where we were. Once again, you know, obviously, there may have been prejudice, but I myself ... never experienced it directly. My friend, who grew up in outside of Ringoes, did experience it. His classmates were very bigoted against him, because he was the only Jew at this school. So, you know, it varied. Obviously, there was prejudice, but, by the 1950s, things had begun to change in that regard, too. The country club I'd talked about before opened itself up to anybody who wanted to apply after that. My father still refused to join them, though, because of the way they were before. [laughter] In terms of a childhood, it was great. Everybody had a bike ... [and] you'd be gone for the day. You know, you would go to each other's friend's house, you'd have lunch at someone's house one day, someone else's house the next day, just completely open and free, and it was fun. We used to walk to school. The old school was built in the 1870s. ... They used to call it "the Queen," because it sat majestically on



top of the hill in town. It was typical of schools built in the 1870s. ... All of the desks were bolted to the floor, like, about twelve-foot ceilings, these huge, oversized windows, all wooden floors. You had a cloakroom in back and ... it was typical of what schools were built back then. They still had boys' entrance/girls' entrance, though, of course, had it all changed by the time we went to school. ... I remember, this is a funny story to tell, the school itself--not so funny in this regard--it burned to the ground. There was a huge fire. My mom would not let us go to see the fire. All we could do was look on our back porch at these flames up on the hill from the school that burned. Everybody knew about it, of course. It was a big event at the time and, the next day, one kid walked to school, not having realized that it'd burned to the ground. He's another friend of mine, name's Harvey Kahn, which is a funny story to tell, because, you know, small town, everybody sees these things. He didn't, for some reason, arrived with his book bag amongst the ashes. [laughter] In terms of what we did, they had a tennis club, on a clay court, and we used to all [play, for] a nominal fee, because the men wanted to have this continue on, the next generation learn how to play tennis. So, we'd play tennis a lot. Once again, Boy Scout encampments, too, the whole bit--typical of the American dream of what it's like to be a kid in the 1950s, '40s and '50s. In terms of the high school, that's also relative to, you know, what's going on. I still call it, it was "innocent times," ... probably the best of America, when all's said and done. People still cared about each other, when all is said and done. The high school itself was large for the time, but, to us, now, it's very small. Our class, we graduated 186 students. The high school, now, has over five hundred students in each class. So, obviously, it's changed. [When] I arrived, I was always very small, not that I got that big to begin with, but I was really small then. So, our freshman year, I'm sure ... I felt intimidated and insecure, being about the smallest one there, but I had a book bag I carried with me. [laughter] ... I was real bookish back then and, in terms of memories, what actually, I think, is the fondest memory is that a lot of us in our class, we're not the greatest athletes, but a lot of us actually joined the band. ... Back then, the bandleader, whose name was John Krauss--another interesting story, we used to call him "Johann Sebastian Krauss," because he had a mustache and he had a German temperament in that regard, had to be done exactly, properly, [in a] military way, because, actually, ... this is interesting, he also was, of course, in World War II. He was the director of the band that played on the Battleship *Missouri* at the surrender of the Japanese. [Editor's Note: Japan formally surrendered on September 2, 1945, in a ceremony held onboard the USS *Missouri* (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay.] So, that's our connection to that. Anyway, he built up the whole music program in the whole county, when all's said and done. He used to have a countywide band and music was very, very important back then, in the high school, surpassed the sports prowess, [laughter] other than wrestling. We were good in wrestling back then, but that was about it. So, my freshman year, before school began, he always had his band camp, so that, [in] the middle of August, for two weeks, you would practice, because you had to be spit-and-polished, marched like militaries march, and our uniforms were military-inspired, with little things, epaulets, on the side and the military hat, the whole bit. It's typical, you know, what he wanted it [to be]. ... It was fun, because some of the people who were seniors in the band knew my brother, because he graduated from Flemington High School back in 1955. That was the last year Flemington High School existed as a high school, because they built this new complex, [which] became Hunterdon Central [Regional High School]. So, I knew seniors that way, thanks to him, and we actually bonded, ... [partly out of] intimidation by John Krauss. [laughter] ... You'd shape up very quickly, because you had to. Otherwise, ... his mustache would quiver and he'd start yelling at you, and what he would always do [was], after you had been [at] band camp for two weeks, we

then had the honor of [performing at] the Flemington Fair. Well, back then, it was an agricultural fair still. It had a midway, but agriculture was still the most important part of the fair. So, they always had the big agricultural day, in which we would participate, with all the animals that are at the fair entered. Unfortunately, we always marched behind the animals, so, our black shoes became brown by the time we finished marching around the whole oval. [laughter] Back then, it was a dirt track, and they used to have sulky races, too. [Editor's Note: A sulky race is one in which a two-wheeled cart, known as a "sulky," manned by a rider, is pulled by a horse in a contest of speed, typically around a track.] ... It was a throwback to the way things were, almost, like, the turn of the century. Things hadn't changed in terms of the fair back then. So, anyway, being in the band, I think, probably, ... socially, was a great thing, because you really made friends. ... Obviously, we had long hours after school, because, back then, unlike today, during football season, each game, you put on a different show. So, wherefore, you had to prepare the show and we always had band time during school hours and, also, you had to do it after school hours especially, always, we were there very late on Friday, because all the games were Saturday morning games. So, we had a lot of experiences in which we were there ... until the sun set, parading, until things were done. [laughter] I remember that on our band, our class, [the] freshman class and the sophomore class, [were] probably the best musicians the school had for quite a while. ... As a result of that, I think it was probably my junior year, we were good enough to go to the Cherry Blossom Festival [in Washington, DC], which was a competition, a concert band competition and marching band competition. ... We actually won the concert band competition. We came in first there. In the marching competition, where we played music, I think we came in second. So, we considered ourselves to be, like, number one, because we did better than all the other bands did at the time. ... I remember, when we came home, we were met by an escort of the police and sirens and everything else and we came into town and there was a big, ... it wasn't really a parade, but the whole town was gathered there to honor us, because it was a typical small town.

PA: Yes, cool.

RK: It was cool. Interesting time, too, when we were down there, is that I remember--I was talking to someone else, too, in one of our reunions--that what happened is that when a class would go there, they used to have [the] senior class would go down to Washington, DC, for, you know, about a week. ... I remember talking about it, that the Reisner Family, when they went down, they had to stay in a different hotel, because it was segregated in Washington, DC, back in the early '50s. So, that's, you know, a direct impact now. Everybody felt very embarrassed about the whole thing, that that's the way things were done. So, that's probably our first real inkling about the need for Civil Rights. Now, in terms of high school, I had some wonderful teachers. We also had a shell-shocked chemistry teacher, who was still suffering from World War II. ... There's a lot of stories to tell about that--I won't tell them right now, other than he was made fun of mercilessly by some classmates. At one point, one classmate, who came from New York City, so, typical New York City, you know, city slicker kind of a guy, so, he would do these kind of things. We never would do them, but he did them. He hooked up wires in such a way that he attached it to the guy's belt and [he] didn't realize it. So, eventually, he walked around and got entangled and couldn't move. [laughter] Another time, he deliberately set off an experiment that was not done underneath the hood, so, the whole place filled with smoke, had to evacuate out of there, too. ... The guy, the shell-shocked guy, it was kind of sick, he had the,

what's it called? the electric spark generator. ... It's the Van-something, [a Van de Graaff generator], remember those things?

SI: The bubble? [Editor's Note: The interviewer was thinking of a plasma globe.]

RK: It's a bubble and electronically [charged], exactly. Well, he went and ... would go ahead and shock girls as they would leave the thing. The guy was really sick, anyway, but, then, he's the bad one. A lot of teachers were very, very good. I had a wonderful biology teacher, probably helped when I eventually went into science, excellent math teacher and terrific history teachers. That's why I was so into history, too.

SI: Could you share some of your teachers' names?

RK: ... Okay, Ron Tolley was one teacher who I really loved and [taught] all history classes. [The] other one's name was A. George Gazonas, was the second one, too, were our two main history teachers. His first name was actually Aristotle George Gazonas. [laughter] They were just wonderful teachers, because they loved what they were doing. They made it exciting, made it fun. They were our favorite classes.

SI: Were other teachers World War II veterans, if you had to guess?

RK: Yes. Of course, they seemed old to us; everything's relative. In the eyes of a teenager, everybody who's more than twenty-five looks old, I guess. [laughter] I'm sure there were other veterans here, but, personally, ... never told us the war stories at all. ... My favorite teacher of all, however, was Claude Schmidt. Now, Claude Schmidt taught, I guess we'd call it literature, and he was just the finest teacher of all. He just made you want to write and think, and he had these wonderful, almost like a seminar, discussions in his classes. He was way ahead of his time. Eventually, [he] did become principal at the high school for a while, too. I think, probably, he had the greatest impression on all of us, just because he was such a talented man, intelligent man, and brought out the best of us.

SI: What was the student-teacher involvement like with your other teachers?

RK: Oh, there's an interaction, a lot of interaction going on. It wasn't just lecturing, exactly, [that] kind of a thing, which is, you know, what you want, makes you think, makes you think on your feet and reason and challenge. So, it's some good preparation for Rutgers College.

SI: Since you were the first class to graduate as Hunterdon Central High School, were there any signs of the transition in your four years there?

RK: Okay, all right. ... Remember, we graduated in 1960, so, it still is what I'd call "innocent America." It was before the Vietnam War and the drug culture and the Civil Rights [Movement] really getting to a full extent. There were virtually no fights. There was a dress code--you couldn't wear dungarees, you couldn't wear sneakers. We had our sneakers, of course, for gym. The only problems you had were, there were the smokers and there were guys who wore black jackets and they would, obviously, illegally, get some beer, and that was it. That was the so-

called scandals at the high school. ... There were a couple of tragedies, all related to death by auto. We lost a classmate in junior year. Her boyfriend and she crashed and died. So, in terms of the school itself, it was a safe place. ... My gym teachers, I enjoyed them a lot. Stan Dresnick was one and another one named, ... I forget his first name now, his last name was Holcomb, and we just enjoyed gym class, too. However, back then, [we would] divide up into teams. The losing teams, in some of the events, would get paddled by the winning team. [laughter] Corporal punishment, I guess, was still in vogue back then, of sorts.

SI: You could not do that now.

RK: No, no, but, once again, as I said before, I was kind of a bookish and "goody-goody" kind of a guy. So, I didn't get in trouble until my senior year, when I ... finally wised up and realized that I had a sense of humor, I could do some things. I remember, a friend, Frankie Knoll, and I were joking at an assembly program and we ... had to go serve detention, because we were being too loud. So, that was our one bad thing we ever did. [laughter] ... As I said before, it was an innocent time.

SI: Were there fraternities in the high school at all?

RK: No, no.

SI: I visited the high school a couple of months ago. It is a huge facility now. What was it like physically then?

RK: Once again, okay, ... exactly, it's too large, actually, when all's said and done. I think, you know, Schoff was superintendent of schools and his idea was that big is good. ... In some regards, it is, because you can have more programs, more opportunities to bring [in], well, later, of course, technology. It's one of the "blue star" [Blue Ribbon] schools because of technology. In terms of us, it seemed big, but, actually, it wasn't. So, there weren't problems, but they had problems that developed, and, once again, I know this for a fact, that is that, for a while, they had denial on the drug problems, but it's still there, and, unfortunately, I guess, always will be. My personal feelings, once again, is that we were there at the right time. ... Everything was kind of (modern?) in terms of problems that you experienced, and [I] came away with a pretty good education.

SI: You were in school during an intense period of the Cold War. What was your experience like in that regard?

RK: Oh, yes. ... After our old school burned, we went into what was called the Flemington Raritan School, because Flemington High School still existed, and the Flemington Raritan School eventually became Hunterdon Central. ... Temporarily, it was used as an elementary school, as well as the churches were used for some of the lower grades, because there was no school until they were able to add on to it. We would have air raid drills. We had to either go under your desk and go in a crouched position or go out into the halls in the same kind of position. So, that we did have. My good friend, Steve Case, lived two doors down from us, and some other friends and my brother decided to become volunteers for the Civil Defense, air

spotting. So, over near a field, in back of the American Legion, there's a [building] ... a little larger than a shack, that, literally, you had telephone wires there and you were the spotters for any kind of planes that flew over, and you had to call in what you spotted and what it was and what direction it was flying. ... Once again, that was part of ... our defense against being bombed by the Soviet Union. So, we did that, not because we're so patriotic, but because it was fun to go out, like, get the two to four o'clock in the morning slot of time. It was a lot of fun when you're that age, kind of thing. So, we did it for about a year or so. That was our involvement with protecting America from invasion. [laughter]

SI: Was the nuclear threat on your mind as a young child and a teenager?

RK: Oh, yes, there always was a fear. I remember, I guess it was back in the late--was it late '50s? I'm not sure what it was, the movie that was made about the atomic blast and this American submarine that survives.

SI: *On the Beach*? [Editor's Note: The novel *On the Beach* was published in 1957. The first film version was released in 1959.]

RK: *On the Beach*, exactly, and that obviously brought fear back to our minds, but I think, when all's said and done, you knew it was there, but it didn't affect your life. [You] still went on with life, assumed that was never going to happen, because we had the power to retaliate, so [that] they couldn't possibly do it to us. That's kind of the feeling, I think, deep down, you know, the idea that it's a deterrent, [so], people are afraid to use it as a result.

PA: You had mentioned that your father was involved in Scouting.

RK: Oh, very heavily, yes.

PA: Did you stay in through high school and was he your leader?

RK: I didn't stay in through high school. No, I only went up to First Class Scout, as far as I got. My brother went up to Life Scout. My dad was involved very heavily, especially with my brother, ..., but he had health problems, because, in 1954, he had a heart attack, his first heart attack. So, he had to scale back after that, because he went out to California with my brother for the Jamboree, out in the Irvine Ranch. Then, he came back, and then, he had a heart attack after that. So, at that point, he scaled back on Boy Scout involvement, though he still, you know, obviously, supported it. As I said before, he died in 1959, so, he died a young man. ... He was only forty-nine when he died. ... Once again, the idea of importance of country and patriotism was all instilled in us because of Boy Scouts, and because of him, but, also, at the same time, the idea that you don't accept, you question--also is part of being a lawyer, I think. [laughter] ... I think that's probably why [I] ended up the way I did in terms of the 1960s. In terms of the 1960s, I'll talk about Rutgers College, if I could, briefly, unless there's something else you want to talk about now. ...

SI: We plan to move on to that later, but, first, was politics discussed in your family at all?

RK: Oh, heavily, heavily. In other words, this was a tradition on--once again, as I said before, my mother's side of the family is the one who I knew best, because the uncles were almost all in New Jersey. My dad's brothers, a lot of them died young. It was just a genetic thing. Wonderful political discussions, because we always had a tradition of all the brothers and my mother getting together for Thanksgiving, and, also, during the Christmas holiday season, too, they always would get together for that, too, and politics was always discussed very heavily. ... My dad would always take the Republican side, even though he was, like, as I say, ... I guess you'd call him a "liberal Republican," quote-unquote. They don't exist today, but, back then, they still were around, and my other uncles were pretty much dyed-in-the-wool Democrats. So, it's fun discussions going on and my mother, also, was very heavily involved in politics, up to ... almost the very, very end, until she died, ... very heavy reader of the *New York Times* and, you know, *Newsweek Magazine* kind of a thing, too. So, politics was discussed very heavily throughout our family get-togethers, and even in my own house, with my mom and dad, too. In fact, that's probably why ... I went into political science, was one of my majors at Rutgers.

SI: What kind of role did your religion play in your life growing up?

RK: Okay, interesting, because, as I said before, my grandparents were non-religious, completely. My dad actually came from a religious family and he was fairly religious himself. He would go to services at least once a month. My mom was non-religious, because of [her] background, too. So, in terms of ... the role it played, I went to Hebrew school for one year. I didn't like it. My best friend also went, and he, once again, [had] ... a very religious background, and he said he still remembers my being there, that I was the only one in the class [who] had a watch. I was looking at my watch all the time. [laughter] So, once again, religion didn't really play an important part until later on. I'd say, probably, when I came to Rutgers, that's when it started to become somewhat important, and I can talk about it in more detail, if you want me to. So, once again, in terms of religious importance, ... Jewish identity was important, the idea of the existence of Israel, the fact of the Holocaust, all these things were instilled in us, but, in terms of being observant, that wasn't part of it, in terms of my childhood.

SI: Were you exposed to any Holocaust education programs as a child?

RK: All I really was exposed to as a child was some of the Holocaust survivors that came out to the area, and, once again, they would have their tattoos on them, the numbers tattooed on them, and they ... did not want to talk too much about it, because it's such a horrifying existence. We knew about it just from relatives that were lost or other people who had lost relatives. So, in that particular regard, that's how we got our experience. In terms of Holocaust education in the high school, there was none, no.

PA: Research shows that the Jewish community made a decision to not discuss the Holocaust and concern itself more with building Israel and building up the Jewish image as not victims, but warriors. Did you see that?

RK: Well, I guess, subliminally, that was the case, because, as I said before, Mother did give quite a bit to the State of Israel and its existence, and, in fact, I would go to Sunday school and that was always a very important part, about Israel itself and, you know, how progressive it was,

compared to everything else in the area, and the fact that it was the size of New Jersey made more of an impact on us, that it was that small.

SI: Did you have a *tzedakah* box, a charity box, in your home?

RK: No, I think she just gave directly, on the different kind of appeals and all, and buying bonds and that kind of thing. ... She also was involved in ORT, O-R-T.

SI: What is that?

RK: Okay, that's the occupational rehabilitation in Israel, and she was ...

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

SI: This is side two of tape one. Please, continue; you were talking about your mother's involvement with ORT [a global Jewish assistance organization].

RK: Okay. ... My mother was involved, once again, with ORT, very heavily, over here in America, did all kinds of social events and fundraisers. Once again, the idea was that this organization would help train people to be useful members of economic society in Israel, who may have been handicapped [in] one way or another. ... She also would, once again, send money to them, as well as go to all different kinds of fundraising events that they held in America. So, that was her direct involvement with Israel; that would be the closest. Also, she was involved with the foundation at Brandeis [University], the idea that this is a "Jewish university," quote-unquote. Even though it's non-denominational, it had a Jewish creation. ... She did contribute quite heavily to that, in the early years especially. ... Once again, in terms ... of how things work out, my daughter went to Brandeis. So, full cycle, [my mother] helped create it, and then, ... my daughter went there and enjoyed it. [Editor's Note: Brandeis University was established in 1948.]

SI: Moving on to Rutgers.

RK: Right.

SI: Can you tell us about your decision to come to Rutgers, why you chose Rutgers?

RK: Okay. Basically, the decision was kind of made for me, because I had graduated second in my class and I figured that, "Hey, ... I may as well go to a small, prestigious school." So, I applied to Wesleyan University, as well as to Williams College, and I forget, I think I applied only to about three or four schools, and I was waitlisted at Williams and, also, at Wesleyan. ... My adviser at the time said, "Oh, you're going to get into Wesleyan. You have nothing to worry about." Well, time went by and that wasn't the case. So, he said, "Oh, well, why don't you go ahead and apply to Rutgers?" So, I did and was accepted. In fact, there was an over amount of students accepted that went here and one of the first people I met--because we were housed over in Corwin, which was oh so nice, right next to the German House. [laughter] We were Corwin A and they were AA, was the German House. I remember, a couple of people in my class [were in]

the same situation as I. One had ... wanted to go to Colgate and was waitlisted and never got into Colgate. So, he came to Rutgers, too. ... My roommate, a wonderful, wonderful guy--unfortunately, he died at a very young age, I'll talk about him briefly--his name was Vic Mangese and he was from Newark, obviously Italian. ... The connection with him is that his uncle and my uncle were both on the police force in Newark. So, that was how that tied in. [In] any case, he was the first of his family to go to college. So, in that particular regard, he was a great roommate to have, and he'd never been out of Newark. So, he came out to my house a few times, because we were really very good friends, and I remember, we'd go out at night and he'd look up at the stars, say, "I can see all these stars. I can't see them in Newark, didn't even realize they existed." So, literally, he was "star struck" by being out there. [laughter] It was a great experience being there, because, as I said before, being in a small house like that, it was almost like a fraternity, except that, you know, you're from South Jersey, North Jersey, Central Jersey, all different backgrounds. ... We just bonded as a result, because you'd have to take the bus across to get over to all your classes. ... You had your, I guess--what were they called then?--like a proctor or whoever takes care of ...

PA: Preceptor?

RK: Preceptor, that's what he was, exactly, a pretty low-key guy. So, once again, we didn't cause any problems, except that, in the springtime, in springtime, you go crazy, right. It's typical. See, that doesn't change. So, we decided, "Well, let's liven things up." So, we made a bonfire in the middle of the tennis courts at Corwin, because it's like a loop and the tennis courts [are] in the center. So, that got us in trouble. We also had some--typical, back then--when you came to campus, you were given free things, including shaving cream and stuff like that, by Gillette and all. So, of course, you'd end up with shaving cream fights and those kinds of things, too. Deodorant, the spray deodorant, you could light a match and get like a flamethrower going for you. [laughter] So, those were the kind of things you did as a freshman. It's typical, because you're independent for the first time, really and truly, in your life, and, as a group of guys, you do some crazy things, which we did. Drinking was also illegal, but we did it. That hasn't changed, I'm sure, even though it's frowned upon. [laughter] Our favorite places, you know, outside of town, ... quite often, we'd go to the Spinning Wheel Diner and Moscow's, which doesn't exist anymore, I don't believe. It was a wonderful, wonderful pizza place/bar, about four blocks heading back toward New Brunswick from where we were. We made the radio station news, because, ... back then, you had very long semesters and it was horrible, the worst of all worlds. You would begin in September, you'd go up until about the middle of December, then, you'd have a break of about two weeks. Then, you come back in January for two more weeks of classes, followed by exams. So, any kind of papers would come the same time you had to study for exams. So, it was a horrible situation. Anyway, we had English composition, which, of course, everybody had to take and you had to pass. I'll tell stories about that, too, and then, we had to take an English composition exam and it was right about the time of Kennedy's inauguration. Remember, it was a big blizzard and no busses were running and we had an exam to go to. So, we started off. We left Corwin in the middle of the blizzard and walked right through town, and I remember, the WCTC, the radio station, saying that, "Four students from Corwin have left for exams. They've not been spotted. [laughter] We hope they make it," and we did arrive and took our English comp exams. ... Of course, back then, exams were given in the old Rutgers Gym, probably still are, I don't know, yes, but, back then, that was the big place



to be. So, that was one of our stories. I remember, freshman year, in terms of professors, my favorite professor, I just loved him, because he's so old fashioned, was Dr. Mull. I don't know if you've heard of him or not. Okay, Dr. Mull was the head of the Biology Department and he taught general biology to all freshmen who took biology as their science and it was in Voorhees Lecture Hall, back then. Now, it's the Art Museum, of course. ... He was dead serious, typical professor, demanded a lot of you, wonderful teacher. I mean, he really could explain things well, but he expected his students to have studied, to have read and to be listening to what he had to say, because his lectures were important. Well, he also had an uncanny knack that if anybody came in late, he would embarrass him and make them leave. He said, "Either you come here because you want to learn or you don't get here on time--get out of here." ... Anybody who'd fall asleep in his lectures, he had uncanny aim, he'd take his eraser, because, back then, all they had is chalk, ... didn't have any technology, he could throw that eraser right across the hall and hit someone right in the forehead to wake him up, startle them, and then, embarrass him, get them out of the lecture hall and say, "Next time you come here, make sure you're awake." [laughter] ... So, once again, he was good, very good. Back then, we had tennis courts ... where the Education Building is, down there. There was no Scott Hall. There were greenhouses and gardens and things. Once again, it was a small college. Our class, our total class, was, when we came, I think it was, like, about fourteen hundred and we did have our orientation in the old power building, where the old generator was, I guess, furnace, and it was a big dirt floor in there. They had all the freshmen arrive there and I guess the dean of the college came in and he said, "Look to your left, look to your right--in four years, one of you won't be here." Of the three, one-third were not going to make it. [laughter] Well, we graduated 760-some, so, he was pretty close to the mark. Back then, it was wonderful. ... Your freshman, the first two weeks, you had a dink to wear, you had a tie to wear and you had to learn all the Rutgers songs, and any upperclassman could stop you to make sure you did. ... Also, back then, at the end of two weeks, you had a field day in back of the old Rutgers Gym. Back then, it was just a big dirt field ... [where] we had our gym classes and they had, like, a field day in which the freshmen versed the sophomores. So, it was a different time, really was. ... It probably was a carryover from the GIs from World War II, kind of things they would do. So, we knew the songs and we went to the football games. Once again, it was the best Rutgers football back then, because it was low-key and they won. [laughter] We'd walk to the games. ... The stadium was always filled, always filled, because you played Ivies and you played Lehigh and Lafayette. ... Everybody would go to the game. You all would wear a sports coat and tie. So, it was just a different time, it really was, and the band was very low-key also. They had their red jackets and straw hats and their white bucks, and they weren't the greatest, but they were fun to watch. ... Everybody would go to the games--it was that simple.

SI: Why did you choose not to pursue the band, or any of the other music programs?

RK: I guess because I wanted to do well academically. I always thought--wrongly, I thought--that you couldn't go ahead and do other things, too--my loss, when all is said and done, because I loved music all of my life, still do.

SI: What did you play in the band?

RK: I was French horn. Well, to go back to our high school and John Krauss, we had regional band and All-State Band back then and you'd have to audition and it was always held in the early winter. ... Somehow or other, we always sight read back in our band room, usually, what we later got to sight read for regional band. [laughter] So, we always had an inordinate number of Hunterdon Central musicians in the Central Region Band. ... I also got into All-State Band each year, too, for four years. So, I played pretty well, but I know that my downfall came when I had to do a concert, my senior year, with the Hunterdon Symphony, Hunterdon County Symphony, and I was going to do a Mozart second horn concerto, which I had played before and knew well, but I got very nervous in front of the crowd. ... Even though I got through it all right, I kind of gurgled part of the time I was there, too. ... I remember my friend, Arthur Wetstein, ... had brought out the stand and the chair for me to sit in when I played, because I didn't stand. I sat and played it. ... As soon as I was done, and I got up, of course, to acknowledge the applause--of course, people were very kind back then--and he took the stand and chair and he went off stage and saved me from having to do an encore, which I never would have been able to do. So, I had to thank him for that, too. ... In terms of going off to Rutgers College, I guess I felt that I still ... didn't have the confidence I should have. Even though I had grown, I still hadn't grown in terms of ... feeling good about myself in that regard. Freshman year, once again, changed me, brought out the good sense of humor within me, and I contribute that, once again, to the group of people I was with and the fact that I really enjoyed going to college here. That's what we were, just nothing but fond memories. Once again, I remember, in terms of our first year of history, ... basically, the first year was a world history kind of a thing. It was interesting, "How are you going to have world history in year one?" but we did anyway, and the nice thing about Rutgers College back then is that your professors were the ones who lectured to you. So, you got the best of the professors at [the] Rutgers History Department who would lecture to you on their expertise. ... Sophomore year, [I] went with, once again, American history, and that's when I first got with Susman, Warren A. Susman, just a wonderful, warm man, who loved what he did, because he was enthusiastic about everything he did. [Editor's Note: Dr. Warren I. Susman, a cultural historian, taught at Rutgers from 1960 until his death in 1985. He served as chair of the Rutgers College History Department from 1973 to 1979.] Probably, the one thing I'll always remember is his lecture on Jonathan Edwards. When he lectured about Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan times, he became Jonathan Edwards, [(1703-1758), Puritan preacher, theologian and missionary]. He would thunder and everything else like that. ... That's the kind of professor you'd want to have, once again, who just made it fun--at the same time, challenged you to really do your best. That's the way he was. Once again, always easy access to students--you could always see him whenever you wanted to discuss papers you were doing or ask a follow-up question after a lecture kind of a thing, just making himself available. The other one I loved, once again, was Eugene [J.] Meehan, and I had political science [with him] freshman year, introductory political science, and what I loved about him is that he loved destroying sacred cows. ... Of course, having come up through high school, you'd never really been challenged before about your beliefs, in terms of what's happening. You're kind of straight-laced and patriotic, the whole bit, and he was a real eye-opener, in terms of making you start rethinking about some things that you just assumed. ... I mean, often, he'd take outlandish views, just to get your reaction from you, just to shock you and have you react and say things to him, and give-and-take was his way of making you think. This was wonderful, like Aristotle all over again. So, as I said before, I just loved him. He's a great sense of humor besides and we were sorry to see him go, because, our senior year, he went, I think, to American University, but, until then, he

was my favorite professor in political science. The other one I really loved, who's still here, is Gerald Pomper. He came in when I was, I think, [in] my sophomore year, sophomore, junior year. ... He was a wonderful professor, too, in terms of American politics and all, ... and elections. [Editor's Note: Dr. Pomper has since retired as a Board of Governors Professor *Emeritus* of Political Science at the Eagleton Institute of Politics of Rutgers University.] ... It was a great, great time. We were here for Kennedy's assassination, of course. [Editor's Note: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on Friday, November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas.]

SI: What do you remember about that?

RK: Okay, what I remember about that is, I had a late morning class and, at that point, I lived with a group of students--we had, like, a rooming house for college students--over on Handy Street. I wouldn't go there now, but, back then, we did. ... I remember, I walked in and there were about six people just glued around the TV when I walked in. They said, "The President's been shot," and we just sat there the whole time, watching it. I mean, I still can remember when I first walked in and what it felt like. In terms of follow-ups to it, I had a wonderful course in music history with Professor Sherman, in the old brick building on College Avenue that you come to before you get over into the Bishop House area, too. It's right at the corner. I don't know what it is now. I forget. It's like an old, kind of a brick Tudor kind of looking kind of a place.

SI: It is an office now, though I forget the name of the building.

RK: Okay, anyway, I remember, ... after the assassination, that next week, he said, "Well, I think all of us need to do something just to get through this period of time." He said, "I'm just going to play some music for you I think is appropriate," and that's just what he did. He played Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto*, which is still my favorite, and, of course, he played, I think, Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*, the slow movement, which is like the funeral movement kind of thing, and it did help get us through it. ... Then, a week after that, as part of the series, back then, as students, we could go to concerts from different kind of world-class orchestras. The Philadelphia Orchestra used to come here all the time. ... Once again, the only place you could do it is over in the old Rutgers Gym. ... My horn teacher was the second chair, French horn, in the Philadelphia Orchestra, and, I remember, they did put the concert on. Quite a few times, they'd do a concert with the Rutgers Chorus, and they did the *German Requiem* [by Johannes Brahms] and that was done in silence, without applauding at the end. So, that kind of brought back memories of the assassination, too.

SI: How did you feel in general about the Kennedy Administration? Today, we always see the "Camelot" image.

RK: Exactly, that was the image you had. No one knew about his health problems or his sex life back then, even though there were hints of it, of course--Marilyn Monroe singing to him on his birthday, a little obvious. [laughter] ... Basically, it was the fact that this was a new generation taking over. It was a young generation, young people all around him, top-most thinkers, a lot from [the] Harvard area, whatever, [Arthur M.] Schlesinger, [Jr.], and others. ... There was lots of hope that, "Hey, this is a person who can make a difference, in terms of the world and, also, in

terms of things here at home," because you had your [movement for] Civil Rights really going gangbusters at that point. I should mention, briefly, about that, in terms of Civil Rights, I think, left an impression on me, too, is, I joined a fraternity, once again, in your second semester of your freshman year, back then. ... I joined the fraternity Phi Sigma Kappa. Well, you know, things might not be so good now, but, back then, it was the foremost fraternity in terms of being different from all the others. It truly was a melting pot of all races and creeds. They were the first fraternity that had no hazing whatsoever and, basically, ... they got involved also in Civil Rights, because we had, for back then--Rutgers had a small amount of African-American students--but there were about ... four or five in our fraternity, at the time. So, this was, I think, probably one of the greatest things that ever happened [to me], was joining that fraternity, ... during that period of time. My roommate was Don Harris, an African-American guy who got involved in Civil Rights and actually got arrested once, too, down South, and he was in jail. I remember that we got a notice out and we passed it out to all the people who came to the Princeton-Rutgers game. ... I guess it was '61, and, basically, making people aware of what had happened and that he should be supported and to do anything you could to make sure that he got out of jail. So, that was our involvement in Civil Rights, in that particular regard. [Editor's Note: In August 1963, Donald S. Harris, Rutgers College Class of 1963, was arrested in Americus, Georgia, while trying to register African-American voters. Working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Harris and two others were charged with insurrection, a capital offense in Georgia. The case stirred support on the Rutgers campus and across New Jersey in the Fall of 1963. Harris was released in November after a federal court declared the law under which he was charged to be unconstitutional.]

SI: Was that when he went down to protest the ...

RK: "Freedom Rides." [Editor's Note: Beginning in May 1961, African-American and white "freedom riders" began testing the desegregation of interstate bus travel made legal in the 1960 Supreme Court decisions *Boynton v. Virginia* and *Morgan v. Virginia*. They faced violence, arrests and imprisonment when hostile Southern mobs and local law enforcement refused to honor the ruling. Harris, however, was arrested regarding voter registration.]

SI: I read about that in Professor Richard P. McCormick's book on the black student movement at Rutgers. [Editor's Note: The interviewer is referring to Richard P. McCormick's *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers* (1990).]

RK: Okay, right, right.

SI: Is that what attracted you to the fraternity originally, the social activism aspect?

RK: ... Once again, as I found out, the idea [that] it was different from all the other fraternities, because I'd gone to another one and was thinking of possibly joining it, and then, I realized that the hazing was still a big part. ... I thought, "What's the point of hazing? It's ridiculous." ... So, I found this fraternity instead.

SI: Let us pause for a moment.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RK: But, by the way--we're talking about the football and Rutgers-Princeton tradition--my uncle, my oldest uncle, ... my mother's oldest brother, [his] name was Simpson Berkowitz, was a star lineman back in the 1920s, when, what's his name? [future band leader and TV star] Ozzie Nelson was the quarterback. Of course, it's single-wing back then and, of course, back then, you played both ways, and he was big. He was a tackle, offense and defense. I remember my mother talking about the fact that--of course, back then, football was very different--after every single game, he's black and blue all over his body. ... He was one of the stars of the team. I remember, he tackled Frankie; no, I take it back. I think he picked up a fumble against Fordham and he ran it back almost all the way, except he was tackled on about the five-yard line by [future Major League Baseball Hall of Famer] Frankie Frisch--never did score a touchdown as a tackle. [laughter] So, Rutgers, you know, once again, has been part of my family life, too, in that regard.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit more about what happened with your roommate, Harris? You got to the point where you handed out the bills at the Princeton-Rutgers game.

RK: Right.

SI: What happened after that? Were you involved any further?

RK: Well, basically, in terms of discussions of what was going on and what was faced and, really, the fact that these are, you know, exceptionally brave people, to venture down South, knowing what was going to face them, could be anything from death to terrible beatings.

PA: Did you feel that the University administration supported Rutgers students getting involved with the Civil Rights Movement?

RK: Some, and some would be oblivious to it, I think. Once again, there was like an awakening up for all of America, thinking that, you know, things were fine in the North and the problem's down South. Well, that's not the case, obviously.

SI: That is why I wanted to find that book, by Richard P. McCormick, *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. He really points to the Harris case as the eye-opener for people at Rutgers, what made them realize that there was a problem.

RK: Right.

SI: I also wanted to ask you about the early Vietnam period, most famously, the Eugene Genovese incident, which was about 1963, I believe, or 1964. [Editor's Note: On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Rutgers University's Scott Hall, Professor of History Eugene D. Genovese declared, "...I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." A firestorm of controversy ensued and became a focal point in the 1965 New Jersey gubernatorial race, but Rutgers University President Mason W. Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted public pressure to dismiss Genovese, on the principle of academic freedom.]

RK: Right, exactly, right, right.

SI: Do you know anything about that?

RK: Other than what I really read in the papers, I was not involved in it directly, in terms of being involved in any kind of lecturing, anything else like that.

SI: Were there sit-ins or teach-ins at that point?

RK: There were. ... Susman led a teach-in, I remember, yes.

SI: Did you attend those?

RK: I attended his, yes, just because he's Warren Susman, one of my heroes, yes. [laughter]

SI: What was the sentiment on campus at the time?

RK: Well, once again, I also had fraternity brothers who were ROTC, who went over there. One of my best friends in the fraternity, his name [was] Darryl Cathers, became a second lieutenant, went to Vietnam. I never heard from him after that. I don't know whether he was killed or not, ... lost contact with him completely. [Editor's Note: Darryl Cathers, RC '64, survived the Vietnam War.] So, you had mixed feelings, because you had friends who were in there, fighting the war, that, basically, Kennedy had begun, when all is said and done, sending [military] advisors there. So, you know, once again, you would hope for the best, but you had trepidation, because you remembered also what Eisenhower had said, "Never get involved in a land war in Southeast Asia." [laughter] ... As the war progressed, and as you got to realize that you're, basically--it seemed like--being told lies, that it became very hard to support and, basically, questioned it, as to why we were sending so many troops there, when ... it seemed like something you couldn't win at the time, even though others still have these [views], revisionist history, that if we had stayed, we would have won, but I find that hard to believe; yes?

SY: Did you find that people on campus, even if they did not support the war, supported the troops? You said you had mixed feelings.

RK: You do have mixed feelings. You wanted them to do well there. At the same time, you had trepidation about, you know, their being there, as [to] what's their long-range purpose of their being there, when all is said and done. It's hard to understand what they called the "Domino Theory," of how, if Vietnam goes, all of Southeast Asia's going to go. It just didn't make sense to me, having studied political science, that it seemed to me it was more of an indigenous, nationalist movement, rather than a Communist movement, in North Vietnam, going back to during World War II, and then, the French after that. ... Once again, people had legitimate reasons for wanting to fight against the French, and then, fighting the fight against us. ... Once again, you're torn both ways, because, I mean, there are Americans there, dying, and you don't want them to die for what seemed like a cause that's going to be a lost cause. So, yes, we had mixed feelings, obviously. You're torn.

SI: While you were an undergraduate, did you participate in other Civil Rights-related activities?

RK: Well, okay, once again, what happened is that, actually, I went out to California, [in the] Fall of 1962. ... I thought I was going to go out to college out there, because my brother went out there ... for his job, and I thought, "Hey, I bet California'll be fun, get all the sun," and I really didn't like it there. California was not my bag. So, actually, I lost a year, and I came back here in, once again, Fall of '63, to resume. No, I didn't get involved in Civil Rights, in that regard, no.

SI: In general, was it a difficult transition from high school to college, academically? Was it challenging?

RK: It was challenging, it was challenging. Once again, I found that English composition-- [laughter] I thought I was great back when I had it in high school--turned out not to be as good as I thought it would be. ... What I didn't like about English comp is that you had TAs [teaching assistants] doing your papers, grading your papers, and whatever. So, that was probably the least favorite of all the things I took, for that reason. ... In terms of studying and being able to organize a paper and get ... your thoughts down on paper, it's something you could handle, but, once again, I think, back then, grades were not inflated. You had to really earn your grades. Lots of students ended up flunking out, a lot of students end up with "Cs" and "Ds." Once again, I had "Cs" thrown in with my "As" and "Bs." So, I think, in a way, it was more of a challenge. It was a fairer evaluation of [us than], perhaps, the way things have happened. I know, back in the '80s and '90s, you had an inflation of grades. Everybody was getting, you know, averages that are higher than what you're supposed to be even [able] to earn. So, in that regard, it was challenging, yes. As I said before, ... I think what I enjoyed most of all is that, with a few exceptions, every course you took was with a regular professor, not TAs. That was the difference. It was a quality education, for sure.

SI: You talked about Professor Mull, but do any of the other courses that you took outside of your major stand out?

RK: Yes. I had a professor, Dr. [Melvin G.] Marcus, who was also in science, came from Colorado, and he just made things alive and explained things ... [in a] very understandable [way]. Actually, he taught what was called physical geography. It was actually half geology and half meteorology, and it was a fun course. We went on field trips and that made it even more fun, too. So, he was a terrific one. Another professor I had--I forgot his name now, but he's one of the best professors I ever had--was in major British writers and you were challenged to the utmost for that one. I remember putting my heart and soul into everything I did and I always end up with, like, an "A-minus" average going into the final exam, always ended up with a "B-plus" for the course. I always got a "B-plus" on the exam, ended [up] with a "B-plus" for the course, but I can honestly say that anybody who went into that class loved it. Challenged as much as we were, writing as much as we had to write, it was just one of those courses where you just had to think and analyze. ... A true test of that was when we did the blue books, the exams. We were there, I think the exams were, what, three hours? I forget what it was, three hours, four hours? I forget what it was.

PA: They are three hours now.

RK: Three hours now, but I remember, ... he would extend it. So, you could actually be there four hours, if you wanted to, and almost everybody was there the full four hours, writing. [laughter] So, that was another course I just loved, too. Like I said before, I forget his name. I just don't know, I forgot it, but he was a great teacher, also. I also had a horrible teacher in political science, international relations. His name was Dr. Brooks. He was here for only about two years, if that, and we all detested him with a passion. ... He said, "My name is Dr. Brooks, like babbling brook." Well, that was a Freudian slip by him, because he could not explain anything worthwhile in his boring class. It was one of the worst classes I ever had. [laughter] In fact, we would have spotters, because it was over--I think it was in Murray Hall--where he would lecture. ... He always would tend to come late and we always had a lookout out there, looking out the window, and, sure enough, they had that ten-minute rule and he would arrive about five minutes late and we would all vacate out one door as he came in the other door, out the front, so [that] nobody would be there. [laughter] That's how much we hated him. Another professor, I don't know if he was actually a professor, I had French, my freshman year, with a Belgian, actually, who taught the French class, and he was so much fun. He was great. We just loved French, being there with him. He wore glasses. He drove an old Citroen, which you could hear a mile away, like a box on wheels, and we just loved his class. He made it fun. ... You know, we enjoyed it. Our sophomore year, we had a neurotic French teacher. [laughter] I'm not sure where he was from, but he kind of looked like Vladimir Putin, and very neurotic and a heavy chain smoker, and we hated him. So, you know, personality is very important, in terms of teaching. I've taught for thirty-three years, so, I know that. You want to make things fun and exciting for the students, and so, that was another class that I forgot. [laughter] Let's see, I also took Russian, because I thought I was going to go into, get into, the "Diplomatic Corps," quote-unquote, somehow or other. ... My Russian, both years, I enjoyed it a lot, and I had a chance to use a little bit of Russian when I went over on an exchange program in 1992. So, that was kind of good, too.

PA: Did you have any background in Russian from your grandparents?

RK: Other than interest in the country and having read books, ... history books, about Russia, and Stalin and Lenin, everything else like that. That's probably why I wanted to take some Russian, too, probably deep down, because my grandmother could still read Russian, and write and speak it, of course.

SI: Can you tell us a little more about your fraternity? You mentioned it was very socially conscious, but did they have a house? Did they have parties?

RK: Of course, it was a fraternity. [laughter] Beer and parties, that's part of it, right. Of course we did. It was like other fraternities in that regard, too, sure. It was just [that] the camaraderie is just extra special, because, I know, I go to the reunions with my Class of '65, because I missed that one year, and my fraternity brothers, who actually were the class that initiated in, that was my sophomore year they were initiated in, as freshmen, ... they're the ones that I still am close to and there are four of us that always kind of get together at our reunions, which is fun.



SI: Was there any sort of initiation process?

RK: ... Well, the initiation process is, of course, done at night, kind of a thing, but, other than the Phi Sigma Kappa, some of the secret kind of passwords and things like that, ... there was no hazing at all, whatsoever. It was a "solemn ceremony," quote-unquote, because you'd become a member of the fraternity and all. ... I remember, after [we were] initiated, what we did, we all drove down to Cape May to see the sunrise, the whole fraternity. [laughter] So, it was kind of fun. It was, as I said before, just a good group of people who were concerned about academics, but, also, we liked sports, too. As a matter-of-fact, we got to the championship in softball. We lost, but we got to the championship in softball for fraternities, which was pretty good for our fraternity, because [we had] never done too well before that. ... I also remember playing ... football. I was a defensive back, I remember that. I remember completely being fooled and a pass going over my head as the guy goes for a touchdown. [laughter] So, yes, ... it was well rounded, because you had people of so many different kinds of backgrounds. You had great discussions at night, too, about what's going on in the world. Study discussions--you had the same kind of classes with each other, too. Yes, they also had a file cabinet with old tests to look at--all those good things were there. [laughter] It was fun and, once again, the food was good. An African-American woman was our cook. ... Other than the place was always running down, falling down--and still is, apparently--it was a fun place to be.

SI: Did they still have housemothers then?

RK: Oh, for the fraternity? I think we did. Yes, we did. We did have a housemother. In terms of, like, supervising parties, kind of a thing? Yes, we did. [laughter]

SI: What was the social environment like on campus? If you did not belong to a fraternity, were you outside of the social circle?

RK: Absolutely, absolutely, unless you were [in a] religious affiliation, with some group like that. Another example, even though there was Hillel, [a community center/group for Jewish students] and I had friends who were in Hillel, I was kind of not really tied to it, because, as I say, my background was, like, non-religious, basically, but, later on, [I] did get tied into it, when my wife, who went to Douglass, [laughter] I married her when she ... had finished her sophomore year at Douglass. ... I'd started teaching at that point and she had gone to Hillel her freshman and sophomore years. So, I went with her, and that's how I got kind of reattached to my religion. It turns out that--what's his name now? ... He always was the leader of Hillel, for just a long, long time. Oh, I forget his name. Anyway, he actually married us. ...

SI: Was he the founding rabbi?

RK: I think he was.

SI: Yesterday, we interviewed someone who helped found Hillel in the 1940s. He mentioned the rabbi, but I forget his name, [Rabbi Julius Funk].

RK: All right.

PA: Were there Zionist organizations around at that point or had they kind of wrapped up?

RK: They'd probably wrapped up, as far as I know. ... It was purely just meant for the social [aspect] and religion. That was it, not so much the Zionist movement in Israel.

SI: Was ROTC still mandatory for any amount of time?

RK: No. When I came here, in 1960, it was just pure voluntary. If you wanted to, you could; you didn't have to.

SI: Were you required to do any kind of thesis work as an undergraduate?

RK: No, I didn't. What we did have was a humanities exam, which you ...

SI: Do not have.

RK: Don't have [at Rutgers presently], but, then, back then, you did. It was supposed to be, if you'd gone to liberal arts college, you should be able to write and analyze anything you're given. ... I remember, one of the things was [that] you had to analyze art of Stonehenge. It was a photograph of Stonehenge, and then, there was a romantic painting of it and you had to go, basically, compare and contrast the two. That's one of the things you had to do. I remember that, yes. I passed the humanities exam. It was fun. I thought it ... kind of served a good purpose. I mean, you should be pretty articulate and literate enough to be able to do that. What I do remember is that you had to pass English composition before you graduated and we had a couple of fraternity brothers who were sanitary engineers. What's a sanitary engineer?

PA: Garbage.

RK: Garbage, right, waste disposal, what it is. [laughter] Anyway, I remember, senior year, two of them were sweating. They finally passed the English comp course, so [that] they could graduate, [laughter] but, no, I didn't have a thesis to write. I wasn't a Henry Rutgers Scholar or anything like that. [Editor's Note: From 1951 to 2008, Rutgers College undergraduates could write a thesis in their senior year through the Henry Rutgers Scholars Program.]

SI: What led you to pursue a master's in history?

RK: Essentially, as I said before, because I just enjoyed history and I thought maybe I'd go on to, eventually, go on to a doctorate kind of a thing, too, and teach at the college level. That's always the ideal, because, you know, I had some great models at Rutgers College, some people I admired. ... Basically, what I did is, ... actually, I had two things--I went out to Indiana one year, to go into political science, and I didn't really enjoy it. So, I switched over to history, then, went back and went over to Temple in American history and got my master's there, but the idea is, I was going to then go on to get a doctorate, but, ... between my wife, getting married and graduating and everything else like that, I ended up going into public school instead, over in East

Brunswick. So, '67 to '69, I taught over at what's called Smith School back then [part of Churchill Junior High School since 1986]. It was an elementary school--no longer an elementary school--and taught fifth grade. ... [When you] teach fifth grade, you would teach, like, about three or four subjects, kind of a thing. So, I had to teach science, as well as math and some reading, whatever. ... Eventually, when I came back, they eventually went into more of a departmental kind of a thing. ... I ended up, when they changed over [the] organization, I always had taught math and science and history, in the sixth grade, and then, they reorganized into a middle school kind of a situation instead--it was sixth [and] seventh. At that point, you could specialize, and I decided to go into environmental science, because I always loved the outdoors, always enjoyed science as an undergraduate at Rutgers, and it became a natural thing, because it's something I just enjoyed doing and that became my main teaching [focus] after that.

SI: Do you still teach?

RK: I retired two years ago. So, I taught in East Brunswick for thirty-three years, yes.

SI: How did the school change?

RK: [laughter] It changed immensely, because it went from a small school district to a very large school district. There once were, maybe, about four elementary schools, and, now, they're, like, eight or nine, I think. There's a middle school, there's a junior high school and there's a bigger high school, too. So, it's quite huge. In fact, ... from having taught back in elementary, where you teach, like, thirty kids [in] most subjects, when we went to a more middle school approach, you're teaching, like, 120 or more students each year, too, as a result. So, that changed. Our middle school itself is huge. ... They're going to build an entirely new one, [from] what's now there. Sixth grade and seventh grade alone were fifteen hundred students. So, it's larger than my high school ever was, these two grades. So, it's changed a lot. In terms of students, it's changed a lot. In terms of the whole philosophy of education, it's changed a lot. Back in the late '60s, you were in control. You had the respect. Basically, [if] a kid does something wrong, the parents would back you, not the kid. [laughter] They had to go ahead and do a certain amount of work or they would not pass, kind of a thing, too. So, it was more of a true evaluation. As you got into the '80s, self-esteem started to become more important than academics. What the kid thinks about themselves is more important than what they're actually [doing], in terms of performance. So, you had to go ahead and phrase things in nice ways, make the parents feel good about it, and it became sort of like a con game, that the kid could still have problems, but you're not supposed to really bring them out the way you're supposed to. Then, we went into a "back to basics" period. I mean, I've seen it all fluctuate from all kinds of approaches in education and, when all is said and done, in terms of teaching, you teach what's effective, what works with kids. So, you take a little bit from here and there, combine them together to teach. There's no one answer, there's no magic bullet for how you're going to teach kids. In terms of the kind of kids you get, from total respect, it's gotten to the point now where a teacher is always on the defensive. It depends, of course, on what kind of principal you have. Some principals are good and some won't back their teachers. They take the parents' side right away, ... leave you out there to swing in the air on a limb. The kids themselves, we've seen them going downhill in terms of their skills. They're very needy in terms of emotional problems, psychological problems. A lot of kids just don't read. You know, it's the kind of thing you hear a lot about.

They always talk about our emulating the idea of what they did in Europe or over in Japan. Well, all they did in Europe and Japan, a lot of it was done [by] pure rote and lots of testing along the way. ... You know, that's something that, basically, concerns me. ... I go to my teacher reunions--retirement dinners, I should say--all the time, and they say that, you know, the trend has continued going down like this, that the kind of kids you have are very, very needy. A lot of parents are enabling for them to be failures as a result. ... It's scary. Obviously, it's like the old pendulum--it has to swing back the other way, too, to make, ... literally, the kids have to earn their grades the right way. So, we'll see what happens. I was fortunate, in that, when I retired, my last year, I had one of the best bunch of kids I ever taught. ... We just bonded right off the bat and just a wonderful bunch, lively, great senses of humor, but, also, they studied and worked. I mean, it was just the best of all worlds, just the best way to go out, with a class like that. ... In terms of teaching, probably the brightest class I ever had was a class I taught back in 1975-76. They were an extraordinary group of kids, and what we demanded of those kids was unbelievable. We had them writing papers that were almost like college-level kind of papers. It was just unreal. They were just a sophisticated bunch and I did some amazing things with them. That probably was the most challenging year, in coming up with ideas to keep them interested, but, also, was the most gratifying year for that reason, too, because they just soaked it up and loved it. So, no, I had some great kids in the '70s. '80s and '90s, you see it starting to go downhill, and, apparently, as I said before, it's gotten worse. So, I'm concerned. You know, somebody should wake up and say, "The emperor doesn't have any clothing--time to go back to let the kids learn how to read and write again."

SI: Were you involved in any other activities, such as clubs or sports?

RK: Okay, what I did, once again, ... as I said before, ... [with] the kids there back in the '70s, I actually ran a basketball league for the "guys," quote-unquote, back then, and just did it on my own. There was no pay involved. We also ... went on outdoor education kind of things. We'd go up to Stokes State Forest for a week, and we'd do that with no pay, just to get them up there, the idea that, you know, science is a lot more meaningful when you're out there, seeing it really true, up close, [rather] than see it in the classroom or see pictures of it or watch it on a video. So, [in] those particular regards, yes, we put our bodies where our minds were. In fact, in terms of the environmental science, we created the whole program, ... for sixth grade, out there, because we had a wonderful science coordinator who said, "Let's get together, teach what you want to teach and the way you want to teach it." So, all kind of field trips were included. In fact, at one point--this man is Bob Bonja--he also was an adjunct professor at Rutgers, over at Cook College for a while, too. It's just a wonderful experience, because what he would do is that, instead of having a final exam, we'd have the sixth grade kids have to come up with their own teaching plan and go over to a local park, where they had been back in the fall and we had taught them about various kinds of things that were there, different kind of concepts and all. They'd come up with their own lesson plans, and then, teach first graders, and then, we'd evaluate them on how well they taught and what their plans were, and then, said, "Hey, if you've gone from being taught to becoming a teacher, then, you certainly deserve to move on." So, that was the philosophy we had back in the late '70s and '80s, and that was fun.

SI: You mentioned that the caliber of students has gone down, but what about the quality of the teachers coming out of college now, about the philosophies that are being taught?

RK: Okay. I'd say, well, once again, being honest, teaching is an art. It's something that either you have to kind of have the temperament for and personality for or you don't. No matter what kind of course you've taken or methods you were given, you have to get across to kids and connect with them, and they have to also, in return, realize that you're there for a reason, that you're trying to bring out the best in them. ... To me, that's something that, it doesn't matter what kind of methods course you had or, when you're a teacher, if you have that as your philosophy, you're going to be successful, and that's basically how I've always taught that way. ... When you have college graduates come back to talk about that you had an effect on their life, that's why they went into science, it means a lot to you. That's why you taught all those years, and astrophysicists and things like that, it's pretty amazing.

SI: Have you kept up your interest in history or were you focused mostly on the sciences?

RK: Oh, no, I've always enjoyed history. You know, once again, I also liked political science, ... read lots of books, once again. One book I'm reading about, just a pure entertainment book, is one that a British author wrote about Clinton. [laughter] ... It's everything you knew and would want to know, may not want to know, about him, but it's written very lightly, and so, it's a fun read. At the same time, it reveals a lot about his personality; interesting that his wife is probably going to be running for President, given all that's she's been through. [laughter] ...

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

SI: This continues an interview with Roger H. Kirschen on June 16, 2005, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

PA: ... Peter Asch ...

SA: ... Sue Yousif.

SI: I wanted to ask you about your time in California. Which area in California did you go to?

RK: Okay, I was in the Los Angeles area. I actually went to Occidental College. That's where I transferred there, for just only a couple of months, and then, I said, "This is not for me." I think I probably felt insecure out there, kind of felt out of place. California is a very relaxed atmosphere [laughter] and, I don't know, I just felt like I was probably out of place. I realized, at that point, that I am probably more at home back here in the Northeast and go back to Rutgers. So, basically, [I] just did lots of reading, did some things with friends and we came back, took in lots of theater and museums, kind of just found myself again, what it was. ... When I came back here, in the Fall of '63, I was ready to go whole hog back at Rutgers. I basically improved my average a lot, as a result of my last two years, moved up. So, I think I graduated number sixty-seven, I think, in my class, so, average did go up quite a bit from my freshman and sophomore years.

SI: You told us before the interview started about protesting Nixon at Indiana University. Can you elaborate?

RK: Okay, I was at Indiana University and, once again, I was in political science, but our dormitory was just graduate students of all different kinds. ... I had a couple of students, one of whom was linguistics, one of whom was in music, played the cello--they're from New York City. ... We'd have our discussions about what's going on there and we were kind of concerned about the way things were going and we said, "Hey, Nixon's coming. Let's go join the protest about the war, ... the fact that we think that it's going in the wrong direction and ... you're losing lives and, in the end, you're going to have to get out anyway." That's kind of what we thought at that point. So, I said, "Okay, let's go to the protest." We had signs about, you know, "Why are we there? How can you support a war that American soldiers are losing their lives [in] and could be for no purpose whatsoever?" ... I know that, as we were parading around, all pictures were being taken, was the FBI, probably taking pictures of us, because, remember, Johnson was paranoid about the protestors being anti-American, the whole bit. ... So, then, we went in, listened to Nixon, and basically disagreed with what he had to say, because, back then, he was portraying the fact that we're there for democracy and that we're there to save the rest of the world and that, by making a stand there, it's going to make things safe in the rest of Asia as a result. ... Other than, as I said before, lots of discussions and all that, that was really the extent of our protests, that one "demonstration," quote-unquote.

SI: As a teacher in the late 1960s and early 1970s, did you discuss it in your classroom?

RK: Once again, they're young and, once again, what you can do is, you take the neutral approach, saying that, "You know, there are pros and cons from both sides as to what's going on." You just present the fact that some people think this, some people think that, "But, you're the ones who'll make up your minds later on, when you're a little bit older."

PA: Did they ask a lot of questions?

RK: Not overly, no, I think. You know, at that age, it's something that's not too important to them, unless there's a relative directly there that would concern them.

SI: Did you ever have to deal with that, a student losing a relative?

RK: Yes, yes, we had that, basically afterward, once we'd gotten out. Then, you had some students who, you know, had lost relatives back in the late '70s, would talk about it more then. Once again, you know, what can you say? I mean, it's a war that, you know, tore the country apart, literally. It's a war that helped bring the drug culture in, full-fledged. You know, basically, I think probably the lowest point was probably in 1968, when you had all the assassinations, combined with the Tet Offensive, combined with the burning cities and everything else. It was probably the lowest point of our country's history, as far as we were concerned. We were there and you're wondering, "What's going on? What's going to happen next?" [Editor's Note: The Tet Offensive, a series of offensives conducted from January 30, 1968, to September 30, 1968, by the Viet Cong against every major city in South Vietnam, is seen as the point when American public opinion began turning against the war. In April and May 1968, race riots erupted in 125 US cities, sparked by the assassination of Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. On June 5, 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy,

campaigning for the Democratic nomination for President and having just won the California primary, was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan in a hotel kitchen in Los Angeles, California.]

SI: Did they have any kind of problems in East Brunswick? I have talked to several relatives who were in high school during that period and it seems like every high school had some sort of riot. I know you were dealing with young kids.

RK: Right. We never experienced that, once again, at the elementary level or ...

SI: Any kind of turmoil?

RK: I don't think so, no, not that I can remember.

SI: What about in town?

RK: No, not really, nor out in Flemington, where I lived at that point. [laughter]

SY: You were a teacher in 1976. Did you do anything special for the Bicentennial?

RK: Yes, yes, we did, absolutely. What we did, actually, [during the] Fall of '75, and then, '76, of course, we had the Bicentennial, is that each class was given a different colony, that became a different state, of course, as a result. ... You had to come up with some kind of theme about your colony/state, and then, we had, like, a parade, outdoors, kind of a thing. I remember that my teacher friend, who taught language arts, Rosemary Monteverdi, had Rhode Island. ... She happened to have red hair, so, we used to call them "the Rhode Island Reds." [laughter] Let's see, what state did I have? I'm trying to think what state I was supposed to do. I think it may have been Delaware, I'm not sure. In any case, yes, we did have a big celebration all year long on that, because, back then, fifth grade and sixth grade in East Brunswick was American, US history. ... It still should be that way, as a history major and as someone concerned about the fact that ... a lot of people in today's generation out there have no sense of history or of our country's institutions. Yet, I remember teaching, very heavily back then, about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and the fact that all the kids knew these things when they were at a young age, when they should know them. We would also role play, have the kids role play, during this period, as US Congress, in terms of a committee, and then, bringing a bill to the floor and the whole bit, too, and the fact that it had to pass both houses, and then, up to the President, the whole bit. So, they actually did, you know, role playing, as the best way of learning, and we did that. Bicentennial was very important to us, yes, exactly--from the patriotism, from World War II, I think, was part of that, too, that, you know, pride the country's gone this far from where we began. I think, probably in terms of, as I said, with the kids we had back then, they were exceptional. ... I wouldn't be surprised if some of those kids are right up there. I'm trying to think what the other thing was I was going to mention here now about it. Oh, yes, ... in terms of following history and all, the one who I love is David McCullough and his books. ... I always loved Harry Truman, one of, probably, the last honest politicians we had in our country, who told things the way they were. Of course, I think Hubert Humphrey also was that way, in that regard, too. It's kind of a tragedy in his regard. ... Yes, I think that if books are written that well, it may hopefully bring history back to a younger generation again. His book on John Adams, I loved. I

always liked John Adams, even though he's always had these criticisms by Ben Franklin. I've also read books on Ben Franklin, too. Yes, I do, I love history. It's still very important to me. I probably over-instilled history in my daughter. [laughter] We went off on a grand tour of New England, visiting all the historic sites and all. I love architecture, too, so, that's part, tied into it. I have a little granddaughter now, who I have her involved in science already and she loves the outdoors, and, eventually, get her into history, too, I'm sure. [laughter]

SI: You have only one daughter.

RK: Just the one daughter, right, and I have two grandchildren, a little guy was born three months ago.

SI: Congratulations.

RK: Yes, thank you.

SI: You mentioned that your wife went to Douglass. Is there a story behind how you met?

RK: Yes. It doesn't deal with Douglass at all. It goes back to the fact that her grandmother lived at the end of the block on Broad Street. ... Actually, she lived there. Her parents and she lived on one side of the house, like a duplex, and her grandparents lived on the other side of the house, but there's a five-year difference between myself and my wife. She lived there from the age of one to about the age of ten. So, I never really knew her anyway. I was playing Little League baseball and she's on the tricycle, whatever. So, actually, ... it turns out, in terms of my Jewish background thing here, we were invited to a Passover *Seder* at her grandmother's house, Jeannette Kolchin's house, because she and my mother had a bridge group, a Jewish bridge group, "the Broad Street Group," I guess you'd call it, because it was the Postmans and Kolchins and my mother, and then, some others from other parts of town. ... I saw her there for the first time and, of course, who knows the age difference, whatever, at that point? Trying to think when it was, I guess I was--1965, I guess it was--so, here, I'd just graduated from Rutgers and she is still in high school kind of a thing. So, you know, what are you going to do? [I] went out to Indiana and sent her a letter and we corresponded, the old-fashioned kind of thing--correspondence, written letters, the whole bit--and she won my heart, I remember, when she sent me home baked chocolate chip cookies. "The way to a man's heart is through their stomach," exactly, it's true. [laughter] That actually is how it began and it continued when I came back and, ... as I said before, I went down to Temple, got my master's in one year there, had the big exam at the end of that summer and passed it and got my master's and went off to teach in East Brunswick. ... I can remember that, I think it was when I came back from Indiana, I think that's what it was, I think it was like in January and I decided, "You know, let's go into New York City," because we both loved the city back then, still do. ... I said, "Let's go to the Cloisters [Museum], always wanted to go there." So, we went to the Cloisters. I remember, it was very romantic. There's snow on the ground and all. Remember, we were walking down these long set of steps that are up there and, literally, there are thousands of pigeons. As we're walking, they're flying away from us, like right out of a Hollywood kind of a thing, you know. So, that's basically when we won each other's hearts, I think was then, and were married on July 9, 1967.



SI: That was a nice story.

RK: Yes. Well, it'll be thirty-eight years this July.

PA: Did your wife have her own career or did she stay at home?

RK: Okay, interesting, too. ... [At] Douglass, history is her major, and her favorite professor was William Gillette--I don't know, is he still there or not? I'm not sure.

SI: Yes, he is still there.

RK: Wonderful professor, also, in many, many ways and very challenging--you know, you have to work for your grade with him. I remember, she did one [paper] on the [1872] election when [President Ulysses S.] Grant won against [Horace] Greeley and she analyzed the *Jersey City Journal*, is it? I think it was back then, their editorials and all, as to, you know, what politics was like back then and what role papers played in political elections back then. So, it was a good paper and, after that, she student taught in East Brunswick over at the junior high school, because she was in secondary history at Churchill [Junior High School], and, back then, they had what's called the mod system, modular system, which was the worst thing ever invented for [scheduling classes]. [laughter]

PA: Is that the open classrooms?

RK: It's basically an open classroom and your schedule changes each day and you can make your own study periods, whatever. ... I mean, unless you have discipline, it just fell apart completely. So, it was a complete disaster. Anyway, she had to student teach there and, having student taught there in this mod system, she said she's never going to teach again in her life. [laughter] That was the end of her teaching career. She eventually became a court reporter and she's going to retire July 1st of this year. She is a court reporter in Somerville and Flemington, primarily Flemington the last ten years. ... So, yes, she had her own career. She'll, well, actually, retire after twenty-six years as a court reporter in the State of New Jersey. So, she's seen quite a few cases, including Jayson Williams' case. [Editor's Note: On February 14, 2002, retired NBA New Jersey Nets player Jayson Williams shot a limousine driver at his estate in Alexandria Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, for which he pled guilty to aggravated assault in 2010 after a series of trials and appeals.] ... Also, her favorite case that she ever did was [the case involving] organized crime in the garbage collection and she just loved it. The one guy who testified about it was right out of Damon Runyon, a character. He looked like a Damon Runyon character and he sounded like one, too, you know, boasting about things and all. ... He was probably one of the funniest witnesses she ever had and, at the same time, a very effective witness, because, obviously, these guys were convicted of, once again, bribes and things like that. So, yes, she had a career all this time. The difference between myself and she is that I went out last year on a high and she basically is burned out at this point and can't wait to retire. [laughter] ... No, most of the time, she had wonderful judges she worked for. The first judge she worked for, was in Hunterdon County, had known my dad, because he was a lawyer, too, before he became a judge, Judge Herrigal. ... In fact, he's the one who told her about the job, said, "Hey, come apply for this job. You can become my court reporter." So, she did, and the rest has

been history. As I said before, one of the judges she worked for was actually a neighbor of ours, but he was older. ... My brother's five years older than I am and I think ... he's eight years older than I am, Judge Bernard, terrific, terrific lawyer and a wonderful judge. She worked for him and, also, Judge Roger Mahon, another terrific judge she worked for, also, originally was a prosecutor for the county. So, she's had great judges. So, that's what kept her going, because they were just so good and they're fun to be around, too. A lot of times, ... after court's done, she'd go back to the judge's chambers and they would just kind of discuss what went on and all. So, it was fun. That was the big plus side to her career. She loved that. The downside, as a court reporter, you had to produce transcripts and, to produce transcripts, that's night time. So, you talk about teachers having long hours, she had even longer hours, especially if somebody has ordered a daily copy. You're up until, like, midnight or so getting your daily copy. Now, she was on the cutting edge of "technology," quote-unquote, because she was the first court reporter in the vicinage, which is Warren, Somerset and Hunterdon Counties, to go on computer for transcripts. Of course, now, everything's done by computer and they have the real time. You know, you ever see the things on the news, twenty-four-hour news on TV, with captions down below? A court reporter is doing that. So, yes, we're going to be enjoying retired life, with the grandchildren especially, may very well end up, probably, moving up to Connecticut, probably within about two years, just to be near them. ... [Also, we have] lots of traveling to do, because I love to travel and want to catch up on going to places I haven't been to. Part of my interest, even as a little kid, I used to love ancient civilizations. I still remember, that was one of the tragedies when that elementary school burned to the ground--my beautiful book that I put together on ancient Greece burned up in that fire. [laughter] I used to be a great artist, used to do a lot of drawing by hand as part of my book, as well as all the writings. So, I do want to get to Greece and Italy and southern Spain and *chateaux* country in France. ... I have all kinds of trips planned here. I mean, it's going to make you envious, but I'm definitely going to do them. I definitely want to go down, from Amsterdam, riverboat, down to Budapest, want to get to Prague and Krakow, if I can. We're going up to Scandinavia this fall, on a cruise with three other couples on the Baltic. ...

SI: That is pretty busy.

RK: It's busy, but, yes, exactly, I have great plans, but, you know, it's what dreams are all about and that's what pensions and Social Security are all about, too. [laughter] Hopefully, we'll still have a pension, even though it has been under funded.

SI: You mentioned how the teachers here helped guide you through the period after JFK's assassination. After 9/11 [the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon], on that day and afterwards, how did you help the students?

RK: Okay, that was really tough, because I was over, of course, in Hammariskjold Middle School and the first time I realized it, I went into the faculty room, because I had a break after teaching first period, I had a break, and I walk into the faculty room and there's this thing on TV. ... There's one of the Towers burning on the TV and they're talking about this plane flew into it--they're not sure exactly what happened kind of a thing. ... Then, of course, when the second one hits, you knew right away that it was all deliberate and devious. We did not tell the kids a thing that day. That was deliberately done by East Brunswick. The superintendent then said,

basically, "Let them get home to their family and let them go ahead and deal with it first, and then, we'll take care of it from there, the next day." ... Basically, it was handled in as low key a manner as possible.

PA: Was there an effort to make sure that people's parents ...

RK: Well, once again, those who had lost relatives or parents, yes, there was ... counseling available to them, exactly, sure. In fact, in East Brunswick, it was pretty heavy hit, because a few commuted and worked in the World Trade Center. I know that I didn't have it, but I think one of my other--we have, in Hammarskjold, it's called houses. So, there were, like, five houses, so, each house had, like, about 125 or so kids in it and, in one of the other houses, I think there were two of the kids had lost parents. So, yes, it was pretty direct. People were just devastated by it all. I mean, you know, what can words do to explain it to a kid, as to what's going on? So, it was a tough time. It was a tough year, as a result. It was always in the back of your mind, "What's going to happen next?" Again, like I said, in '68 was a low year for me, this was probably the next lowest one, but I think that's normal. I think everybody was affected that way.

SI: Did they keep the kids in school?

RK: Oh, yes, kids were kept in school. Some parents did come by to pick them up in the afternoon. They were allowed to do that if they wanted to, but most kids stayed and went home by bus.

SI: Was it difficult?

RK: Difficult as a teacher, to try to put on your face, exactly, like nothing had happened. Yes, that's very difficult. I mean, definitely, I know, once school was out, a lot of teachers just gathered around and just had to talk about it, to get it off their chests and get their emotions out, sure.

SI: There was a conscious decision to keep the events from the kids, but, in today's world, with all this technology, were they able to find out?

RK: Okay. Well, cell phones, at that point, were not in the schools. They weren't allowed. Secondly, the TVs were basically all shut down. So, they couldn't get any way they could, other than the faculty room itself had the TV on, that was it. ... The doors were blocked off, so [that] the kids couldn't look in, that kind of a thing, too. So, it was surreal. I mean, you had to pretend that it never had happened, go through with an ordinary day of teaching. So, that's something else, I mean, when all is said and done, being a teacher is also being an actor--be able to, you know, keep emotions in, if you have to, or express them, if you have to. So, that time, you had to keep them in.

SI: Was there anything else before that where there was a unified response like this, any national or local disaster, like the *Challenger* explosion, where you had to make the decision whether to bring it up in class or not? [Editor's Note: On January 28, 1986, the NASA Space Shuttle *Challenger* broke apart shortly after launch, killing all seven crew members.]

RK: It would be something that the kids could raise on their own if they wanted to. Once again, some would and you would have a discussion, in as calm a manner as you could, try to explain, once again, give them some kind of security, the fact that, you know, the whole government's mobilized and things are going to be safe and it shouldn't happen again, kind of a thing. You tried to reassure them, which is another role you have as a teacher. You're like their protector when they're there, so, assume that role. We also had gotten, after that, we went into lockdown-drills, which I think all places have now. It's all mandatory, and we'd have lockdown-drills at least two or three times a year and it'd be a simulation and you'd have to either be over in one corner of the classroom, so [that] you're out of view and out of sight and the blinds are all drawn, your door's locked kind of a thing, and you wait for any kind of announcement [that] may come. You'd evacuate out certain entrances kind of a thing. So, yes, we did that. So, the kids were aware and I'm sure it's still going on. So, yes, some kids you'd have to really sit on--they'd think it was, like, a joke--let them know that, "Actually, it's your own life, the reason why we're doing it, trying to keep you protected and safe," but most kids were good about it. Of course, everything's done in silence. So, it's something that they're obviously growing up with, like we grew up with the atomic bomb, but you still go on with life and it doesn't really affect you deep down. You get through it, like anything else. I think, human nature, you're resilient. You have to be. ...

SY: Do you remember when we went to the Moon? [Editor's Note: On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first man to step onto the Moon's surface.]

RK: Oh, do I ever, yes, black-and-white TV with Walter Cronkite announcing. Yes, I remember, Laurel and I actually woke up early, put the TV on, to get the man on the Moon actually stepping down on the Moon itself. It was like science fiction. You couldn't believe it was happening, yet, there it was, in front of your eyes, happening. ... It was just a wonderful moment, because, going back to when I was a kid, remember Flash Gordon, used to be a serial on TV? We grew up with that. Then, here it is, [the] reality of someone actually stepping on the Moon from a spaceship. That really, really hit home, absolutely. That's something that it was tremendous pride for the country, because it still was the Cold War and big competition between us and the Soviet Union back then, and then, "Hey, we finally won." I mean, again, I remember as a kid with *Vanguard*, remember *Vanguard*? That was our first rocket for the space program--blew up off the pad twice. [laughter] So, we came a long way in a short time. Yes, I remember the whole idea, in '58, we're shocked by *Sputnik*--'57, '58, I forget which it was.

SI: 1959?

SY: I thought it was 1957. [Editor's Note: The world's first artificial satellite, *Sputnik I*, was launched by the Soviet Union on October 4, 1957. In response, the Naval Research Laboratory's *Vanguard* satellite program, established as part of America's involvement in the International Geophysical Year (July 1957 to December 1958), was fast-tracked. *Vanguard TV3* blew up on launch on December 6, 1957, an event broadcast on television. Another unsuccessful *Vanguard* launch followed on February 5, 1958. On March 17, 1958, *Vanguard I*, the first solar-powered satellite, was successfully launched.]

RK: ... I think it's '57, yes. That was really shocking, because, you know, here, we're the number one country in the world, our great technology, and they get the first satellite up in orbit, yes. So, everybody bought into what Kennedy had to say about it, you know, "We can always get the first man on the Moon." It basically said, "We're, technologically, number one in the world again." That was it and I guess what kind of alarms me is that there's so many problems out there that we could be solving in the same kind of a way. I mean, think about the atomic bomb project, the Manhattan Project, back in World War II--did it because you had to, man on the Moon, did it because, at the time, you thought you had to, and, you know, in terms of what can be done in terms of stem cell research, it could be done, if you put the money into it and research. You can make tremendous breakthroughs. I mean, you think about it, everything that's happened medically in the last thirty years, unbelievable, but ... imagine how it could have happened even sooner if you had more money put into it, instead of other kind of things that are rather wasteful for the government to be getting into. So, yes, I'd like to see us do more things like that. It's a matter of priorities. You know, I'll be honest about it, I'm not very happy with our present President [George W. Bush], because I believe in science, not religious dogmatism, and, also, that this multicultural society should take advantage of the fact that we have such a diverse group of people here, not try to turn everybody into one belief. So, I have lots of concerns about that. I'm not a great admirer of Christie Todd Whitman, but I do admire what she's trying to do, bringing her party more into the mainstream again. [Editor's Note: Christine "Christie" Todd Whitman (born in 1946), a Republican, served as Governor of New Jersey from 1994 to 2001. She resigned from office to become Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency from 2001 to 2003 under President George W. Bush.] I always felt that whether it's extreme left, extreme right, this country is a very conservative, moderate country--it's either somewhere to the left or to the right of center, usually. That's where it should be. It's always been our history. So, that's my political science spiel [laughter] and, also, I believe, once again, having studied our government and its institutions, how it's supposed to work, it's supposed to be based on compromise, not all or nothing.

PA: Have you ever been involved in local politics with your interests?

RK: Other than with some Congressmen, that's about it. ... Back when, a few years ago, Rush Holt was our Congressman, I love him. [Editor's Note: Democrat Rush D. Holt, Jr., has represented New Jersey's Twelfth Congressional District since 1999.] He's a scientist, bright and what I call a true left of center moderate who's a realist. That's the kind of person, you know, I would admire. I can see him going for higher office, being honest. I think that if he did, I would certainly volunteer time for him; another one who I believe and admire, too--once again, as I said before, Democrat, Republican, doesn't matter, it's, you know, basically what you do, where you put your actions along with your words--Senator Lance, minority leader in the [State] Senate in New Jersey, once again, another terrific person, who'll let you know exactly where he stands, very good on the environment and education. [Editor's Note: Republican Leonard Lance served in the New Jersey Senate from 2002 to 2009 and in the New Jersey General Assembly from 1991 to 2002. He has represented New Jersey's Seventh Congressional District since 2009.] So, once again, you know, those are the kind of people that I admire. I don't agree with everything he says, but I do like [Arizona US Senator] John McCain. Once again, women should have the right to do whatever they want in that regard, extreme on the abortion thing, but, on other things, he's outspoken and tells it the way it is. That's the kind of politician you need, people with some

guts and courage--[Delaware US Senator] Joe Biden, another one I like, too. So, those are the kind of politicians I like to see. In other words, the idea that this compromise that was made a few weeks ago, with, basically, the moderates at the center of both parties coming together and saying, "Let's let the Senate work the way it's supposed to work," hopefully, we get more of that, get a reaction to what's been going on, because, when all is said and done, [President William] Clinton blew it, so-to-speak, with his trying to ram things through Congress. [Editor's Note: Mr. Kirschen is referring to the compromise made by a bi-partisan group of Senators in May 2005, which prevented a filibuster from blocking the judicial appointments of President George W. Bush.] As a result, they were knocked out of office. ... It's gotten to the point now where I think people finally realize that they were told some lies by Bush about Iraq and all, a pretense that I always had doubts about that to begin with, given the history of the Middle East and Iraq, and it's going to catch up with him, too. I mean, it did-in Johnson, it did-in Nixon, it'll eventually do-in Bush. So, that's basically my philosophy now, having lived history and seeing, unfortunately, lies that are uttered by the government, whether it's Democrat or Republican. You want the truth--tell it like it is, that's all you want--and then, try to come up with programs that are going to deal with the reality. So, that's pretty much what I learned in political science at Rutgers. As I said before, the one who probably had the greatest impact on me, when all is said and done, probably was Eugene Meehan, because he really made you think and really challenged [you]. ... I remember, his readings were great, because his readings were up on the left and to the right and in-between and you think whatever you want and you could analyze and see both good and bad in everything you read. That's what it should be about, be critical.

SI: Have you made a conscious effort to bring the teaching styles of Susman and Meehan into your classes?

RK: Absolutely, yes. I like to act up in front, too, once in a while. [laughter] Enthusiasm, that's always very important, loving what you do, loving what you teach. That's something that the kids always said, that, "We always can tell, you just love what you do, you love what you teach." ... Every day, there's something new that you bring into the classroom to keep it alive and that's what it's all about, too. When you see the lights go off in their eyes, you know you're doing something right. So, yes, I used a lot of their techniques in that regard, the questioning technique, be able to see things from different perspectives, not just one view, the idea that absolutely right or absolutely wrong usually is not the case. So, that's it. [laughter]

SI: Is there anything we skipped?

RK: I think we pretty much covered it. I'm trying to think if there's anything else you wanted to know; well, thank you.

SI: Thank you very much.

RK: I enjoyed it.

SI: It has been very interesting to hear your experiences and views. This concludes our interview with Roger H. Kirschen on June 16, 2005, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Thank you very much.

RK: Okay, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Melissa Falk 2/14/06

Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Guarneri 11/19/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/12/13

Reviewed by Roger H. Kirschen 4/5/14