RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

# AN INTERVIEW WITH BARRY KRAMER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on February 15, 2010 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Barry Kramer and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you so much for taking time out of this busy day to speak with us. To begin, for the record, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Barry Kramer: I was born in Newark, New Jersey on June 2, 1940, just as German troops were entering Paris at the start of World War II.

SH: Could you tell me a little bit about your father and mother, starting with your father, his name and background?

BK: My father's name was Sam Kramer. He was the son of immigrants from Poland, or Austro-Hungary, actually. The borders of those countries moved around. He was born in 1912 and died nineteen years ago, and for most of his life worked for the US Post Office in Newark. He ended his career with the post office as superintendent of the Roseville Station in Newark.

SH: That is amazing. When did he immigrate to the United States?

BK: … My grandfather?

SH: Your grandparents, yes.

BK: Around 1910. …

SH: Okay.

BK: … Almost immediately [they] settled in New Jersey.

SH: Did they come in through New York?

BK: They came in through Ellis Island, on both sides of my family. … Then settled, my mother and father's family were neighbors, which is how they, my parents, met.

SH: That is a nice story. What was your mother's name?

BK: My mother's name … was Sara. She was born in 1913. …

SH: Was she born in Newark as well?

BK: In Newark. I'm sorry, my father was actually born in New York City. …

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: … [He] moved to Newark with his family, as a baby. … My mother's family, my grandfather on my mother's side came from Romania and was a trained leather worker, so he got work immediately, and Newark was the place where the leather industry in this country was

focused. So, he got very good jobs immediately, right off the boat, and worked until he was eighty-four. …

SH: Wow.

BK: … [He] quit only because the company in Newark was about to fire a younger man with family, staff layoffs, as the industry faded, so my grandfather said, "No, don't fire him. I'm ready to retire." … He lived another ten years, working the whole time, never was ill. …

SH: Amazing.

BK: We really don't know what he died of, but he was healthy right up until the end.

SH: Your mother and father, obviously, as you say, met because they were next-door neighbors.

BK: Right.

SH: Did they marry young?

BK: They married in their early twenties.

SH: Had your mother gone to college?

BK: No, neither of my parents went to college. My older sister was the first one in our family to go to college, and then I went, of course, and my younger sister also went to college.

SH: There are the three children.

BK: [I have] two sisters.

SH: Were you and your sisters encouraged to go to college?

BK: Oh, absolutely.

SH: It was expected.

BK: It was just expected that we would go. I think, at that time, my father was less eager to send the girls to college, but that was a standard cultural problem, in those days. I say problem; it was a problem for my sisters.

SH: [laughter] Right. How much older is your older sister than you?

BK: About four-and-a-half years older.

SH: Did your mother work outside of the home?

BK: She did.

SH: What did she do?

BK: Only after, when my older sister approached college age, she started working and worked for the post office.

SH: Oh, really.

BK: … [She worked] as a clerk and then was later a personal secretary for the postmaster in Newark, and later in life worked in California for the Veterans Administration [now known as US Department of Veterans Affairs].

SH: Did she really?

BK: Yes, well, they, my parents retired to California, and my father was working in California, after retiring from the post office, but had the first of about five minor heart attacks. …

SH: Why did they choose California?

BK: We had relatives there and the winters were less harsh than in New Jersey.

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: My mother's sister and her family had lived there since the '40s.

SH: Had there been a large extended family? I meant to ask that earlier.

BK: In New Jersey, yes, very large, so, I have lots of cousins, and the aunts and uncles are mostly gone, but the cousins are all there with their families, except some of those have now moved further afield as well.

SH: Were there any sorts of family gatherings where they brought everyone together?

BK: Absolutely.

SH: Did the gatherings keep the traditions of the old country alive?

BK: We had a family picnic every July that met in Iselin, New Jersey at a park, though I don't recall anything European at these typically American picnics. Although it wasn't always a park … and that went [on for] fifty years, until my aunt, who organized it, passed away, and that was the end of the family gathering. Plus, everyone had scattered by then, so the cousins are in New Mexico and South Carolina [laughter] and other places, even Costa Rica.

SH: They moved to places where it is warm and sunny.

BK: Yes, well, you wouldn't know it by this past weekend, but, yes. [laughter]

SH: This is true, this is true. As you said, going to college was something that was expected. What are some of your earliest memories of growing up? Did you grow up in Newark?

BK: I grew up in Newark. We moved to Irvington, when I was in high school. I went to high school in Irvington, but that was part of the whole exodus, the white exodus out of Newark, which is sad, but it's a fact of life. Many of my relatives eventually ended up in the suburbs of Newark, depending on their income levels. Yes, I grew up in the Weequahic Section of Newark. As a kid, [I] used to play in Weequahic Park, where Philip Roth [author] hung out. So, I have read all of his books, because they mostly take place in the neighborhood where I grew up.

SH: Right.

BK: I went to Weequahic High School for only the freshman year, but then we moved to Irvington, so I transferred to Irvington, graduated from Irvington.

SH: How tough was that, making that transition?

BK: It was very tough, because Irvington operated on, or Weequahic, one of them operated on a half-year semester schedule, so I was a half semester off, and I had to go to summer school to skip a half grade. So, it made me younger than most in … Irvington High School. So, I was always friendly with classes other than my own, or friendlier. … Actually, we moved back to … Newark, at one point, but … my life was … at Irvington High School, so I actually went to work as a checker in a supermarket to pay the thirty dollars a month tuition fee to continue at Irvington. Can you imagine paying thirty dollars a month … to go to any school today? [laughter]

SH: No. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

BK: … In grade school, I was a member of the Newark Junior Museum, which meant I had to take a bus from Peshine Avenue School, on Peshine Avenue in Newark, which is still there, take a bus downtown once a week, I think on Thursdays, and they had a regular round of, I wouldn't call them classes, but we were introduced to things like geology, nature, snakes and frogs, and bees, and at one point, I was even on, they did a television show on what later became WNET, the PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] station in Newark. I forget what it was, what the call letters were back then [WATV]. It was just Channel Thirteen. It was a commercial station. … I did a program or two with Mrs. Turnbull, who was a member of the Newark Museum staff, and I remember one show we did on bullfrogs, and she coached me before the program and said, "Now, you notice that the tadpoles for the bullfrogs are big," and they are. They're about the size of an orange, almost, and she said, "I'm going to ask you why they're so big." They're bigger than the other tadpoles, and she says, "The reason is because, unlike the other frogs, they take two years to develop into a frog." So, the program starts, and I'm nervous. I'm on television, and I couldn't remember, so I said, "I guess they just have big babies." [laughter] … I wasn't invited back to the program.

SH: [laughter] But it is a fact you shall never forget.

BK: I will never forget that.

SH: You continued at the Newark Junior Museum after that.

BK: Oh, yes, absolutely. … That was the basis for a lifelong interest in science. I originally started at college in a science degree, and even in my career as a journalist; when I joined *The Wall Street Journal*, in later years, I wrote about science and medicine for almost six years, before going overseas for the paper.

SH: Okay, to back up then, before we …

BK: Jump ahead, right.

SH: Before we jump ahead, when I asked you about your earliest memories of growing up, you talked about Weequahic Park. Were there organized sports for young men?

BK: There was nothing organized at Weequahic Park. It was strictly [that] kids would tromp down there for sledding in the winter, or picking up horse chestnuts off the ground and carving a hole in them, so you could wear them as a ring [laughter] around your finger. Horse chestnuts are not edible, but they're very pretty. … I remember the lake, and I remember seeing, at one point, a giant catfish that somehow had gotten out of the water and was sort of panting its last [breath] on the shore, and it was huge. It was about the size, the length of this table, which is about four-and-a-half feet.

SH: Unbelievable.

BK: A big, white catfish in Weequahic Park Lake [laughter], which is pretty darned shallow.

SH: [laughter] I was just going to ask, a white catfish?

BK: It was white, almost albino in color. I don't know if that was natural, or if it was albino, but I was nine, ten years old at the time. …

SH: Were you involved in any sort of athletics or church activities?

BK: No church and no Jewish temple activities. My family was pretty sectarian.

SH: Were they?

BK: Or is that non-sectarian? [laughter] We were not religious. I was *bar mitzvahed* but I learned my recitation phonetically, so I never really knew what the words meant.

SH: Was it important that you be *bar mitzvahed*?

BK: Yes, yes. All of my cousins were *bar mitzvahed* or *bat mitzvahed*.

SH: Were there any family members who were more religious or kept a kosher home?

BK: There were, but I wouldn't call them really religious. Yes, some did keep kosher. We did not. There were a lot of things we just didn't eat, but it was a matter of tradition, like we would never put butter on a meat sandwich, just because we didn't like the taste, but that is an element of kosher law.

SH: Is that anything that you have explored as you have grown older?

BK: No, no. I have never found a need … for religion.

SH: Okay. Let us talk a little bit more about Irvington High School and the fact that you were willing to go to work to remain in that high school. What was it about the school that was so attractive to you?

BK: Just the friends.

SH: The friends.

BK: As I look back at Irvington, at the high school, I have to admit that it was not a very demanding high school, and most of the people that I knew who went on to college didn't do well. I don't think I, personally, developed good study habits there, and not a lot was demanded of me. I breezed through the courses, as I recall, without really having to do much work, and as a result, my study habits were pretty atrocious.

SH: Were there other subject areas that you were interested in, besides the sciences?

BK: I did a lot of extracurricular, but they mostly tended to be things like the Dramatics Club and stuff like that, nothing athletic. I was a very un-athletic kid [laughter] and didn't really become coordinated until years later, when I was in the Army.

SH: Did you participate in the theater as an actor?

BK: Well, there was a club, and we would put on plays and readings and things like that, and I was in some high school theatrical performances, one based on the Judge Hardy [popular movies]. [laughter] Actually, that goes back to grade school. I was in a couple of plays in grade school as well.

SH: Was this something that your sisters had been involved in as well?

BK: No, my sisters are more into art. My older sister was also very athletic. She later went, her college degree was in physical education.

SH: Where did she go to school?

BK: Panzer [College of Physical Education and Hygiene], which is now part of Montclair State [University], if it's still called Montclair State. I'm not sure.

SH: Yes, it is. [laughter]

BK: Nothing stays the same.

SH: That is true.

BK: … My younger sister went to Ryder [University] in Trenton and later became an artist in California and New Mexico.

SH: How much younger was your younger sister?

BK: Four years.

SH: When you were in high school, or even in grade school, did your family do any traveling?

BK: Yes, we used to take car trips. We went to … Monticello and Mount Vernon, went to Washington DC, went to Niagara Falls, which, I remember, the children in the family were disappointed in Niagara Falls. I don't know why, but apparently we had seen it in the movies, or something like that, and weren't impressed. [laughter] … My father loved to drive, and we used to take car trips. Even on hot days, in those days you didn't have air-conditioning, and it got pretty stifling in Newark, so we used to all just get in the car and go drive up into the South Mountain Reservation area, Summit, and places like that, where it was a little bit cooler.

SH: Did you ever attempt anything like camping or canoeing?

BK: Only with the Cub Scouts.

SH: Oh, so you did get involved with the Cub Scouts.

BK: I was in the Cub Scouts for a couple of years but didn't go on to the Boy Scouts. That just was not, tying knots was not my thing. … I mean, I was always interested in the trees and the botany and the biology and zoology of nature but not in … starting a fire by rubbing two sticks together. …

SH: Was the job as a checker at the grocery store your first job?

BK: No. I worked as a file clerk for an insurance company in downtown Newark, insurance broker, so it wasn't one of the big [insurance companies], and that was just [a short time]. The office staff would pull out files, insurance contracts from the files, all day to work on them and then leave them in a big stack, and I would come in after school and have to file them back into the proper places in the file. That was the most boring job [laughter] you could imagine.

SH: I can imagine.

BK: So, I don't remember doing that more than five or six months.

SH: What about during the summers? What kept you busy?

BK: I don't think I ever did anything gainful. Once I started working, I did that, like in the … supermarket, and I started that as soon as I turned the proper age. I don't remember what the age was, sixteen …

SH: The earliest would have been fifteen.

BK: Then it was fifteen. It was the earliest, and I had to get parental permission and go to some office in, this was, by then, at the Good Deal Supermarket on Stuyvesant Avenue in Irvington, which is not there any longer.

SH: How far was your commute, once your family moved back to Newark?

BK: We moved to Leo Place, which was off Clinton Place in Newark, so it was just a single ride, about a fifteen-minute ride, on the Clinton Avenue bus, going up Clinton Avenue in Newark to Irvington center and then a short walk to the high school.

SH: Where was the grocery store in relation to your home or school?

BK: The grocery store was … also in Irvington, and it was the other way, down Stuyvesant Avenue, and that was actually a longer trip than going to the high school.

SH: When did you work at the grocery store? Was it on weekends or after school?

BK: No, it was after school, as well, and weekends, just a few hours each day. … As I said, high school was not very demanding, so I, frankly, seldom had to do homework.

SH: That is amazing.

BK: It is amazing and sort of sad, because I think that affected me later on.

SH: Were the "blue laws" [laws regulating commercial business on Sundays] in effect at that time? Was the store closed on Sundays?

BK: It was closed on Sundays, although that may have changed while I was still working there, because I can remember doing work on Sunday, … stocking and things like that, when the store was closed.

SH: As a ten-year-old, were you aware of the Korean Conflict?

BK: Oh, sure. I used to follow it on television. … When John Cameron Swayze [television news commentator and television personality] would get on the … air for the, I guess, the six o'clock broadcast, or some time around there, evening broadcast, which was only fifteen minutes in those days, and the graphics would be a cardboard chart standing on an easel behind him, and he would get up with a pointer, and the camera would shift over, and he says, "There's the line, … the American troops are along this line defending it against invading Chinese troops," and there were arrows on the chart … [Editor's Note: From 1950 to 1953, the Korean War involved South Korean, American and United Nations military forces fighting against the North Korean military, who were backed by Soviet weaponry and Chinese military forces, for control of the Korean Peninsula, which is still divided at the 38th Parallel.]

SH: Really?

BK: … [The chart] showing the Chinese troops coming down from the north, very crude.

SH: Did everyone have a television at this point, or was this something that was pretty unique?

BK: I wouldn't say it was unique. It wasn't universal, like it became shortly after, but I think around 1950, most people had somehow, if they had a radio, then they had a TV, at that point. … I can remember neighbors in the, right after World War II, having a TV, and that was unique. That was something. You had to, you really looked forward to … the neighbor letting you … come over and watch a program, which were nothing I really remember. …

SH: But you remember it as a real treat. [laughter] With there being a four-and-a-half year age difference between you and your sisters, how involved were you with their friends?

BK: Well, I met their friends, but I was never really [involved]. There was enough of a difference where, no, I mean, my older sister's friends probably considered me a pesky, little kid, and my older sister would have to "watch" me, as they used to say, so they probably resented that. … I was actually closer with my younger sister, through the years.

SH: You acted as the big brother.

BK: Yes, well, we had, we were more attuned to each other.

SH: What about the movies? How did that play into your life? We talked about television.

BK: Well, the Park Theatre on Bergen Street was within walking distance, and we could go on a Saturday morning, I'm thinking I'm seven, eight, nine years old, and for a quarter, see a hundred cartoons, many of which, looking back, were really just film strips that had been rescued from the floor of some [laughter] cinema, just little snippets of cartoons. Some of them [were] silent cartoons; some of them [were] totally politically incorrect, in terms of today's [standards]. I remember one particular one that could not be shown today, called *Mamma's Little Children Have Shortbread, Shortbread*, and it was a caricature of southern blacks singing about "Mammy's" shortbread, very racist and demeaning, but it was just a cartoon that nobody thought twice about then.

SH: Was your neighborhood mixed ethnically?

BK: There was a black section a few blocks away, but it was … not mixed. There were no mixed neighborhoods that I knew of in Newark, and I have memories, in high school at least, well, even in grade school, of discrimination. I remember at Peshine, for example, there were some black children who were from that area, a couple blocks away from where we lived, lower down the hill. I remember the vice principal at Peshine, whose name I won't mention. I actually remember the name, because of this incident. A black kid in my class, who I knew, was called into the office for something, and the vice principal started talking to him, in a very loud voice, telling that he had body odor. "Don't you have a bath tub at home?" and he was totally embarrassed, and [the vice principal said], "You should use it," and she was talking in a loud voice to embarrass this child. By the time I was in high school, I realized that New Jersey had a law that every student had to stay in school until sixteen, but it seemed to me that a lot of black kids were, as soon as they turned sixteen, [for] any minor infraction, they were pushed out, and I think that continued through my high school years. It was not a good situation, and I've always said that that's the reason that black parents, in later years, were so incensed by any move to discipline their children or expel them, etc., because of that memory.

SH: In some of the theater clubs that you were involved in at Irvington, were there any minority students?

BK: … There were Asians. There were almost no black students at Irvington High School, and, now Irvington … is predominantly African American. … Plus, there were no blacks living in Irvington. … I was not in the housing market, in those years, [but] from what I recall, people did not sell to a … black family in Irvington.

SH: I think that is right. I was going to ask whether that was the reason your mother and father moved back to Newark. What was the reason for the move?

BK: No, the reason was that the [landlord], we lived in a very nice apartment in a three-story house. It was the nicest place we ever lived in, … that I lived in as a child, and the owner decided that he wanted. The apartment back for his children, his grown children, so we had to look for a new place, and we found a very nice apartment back in Newark, so we moved back.

SH: So you were renting. …

BK: Always. My father and mother were children of the [Great] Depression, and they never borrowed money, and a mortgage was just, they could afford it, and they would've done very well later in life had they bought, but [they] never would owe anyone else any money, because they saw what happened to their parents and others in the Depression. [Editor's Note: The Great Depression (1929-1940s) severely impacted homeowners. In 1932, 250,000 families lost their homes. In the first six months of 1933, over one thousand homes were being foreclosed every day.]

SH: Did they talk about that at all? …

BK: Absolutely.

SH: … And pass that on to you?

BK: Absolutely. That was very clear.

SH: Were you close to your grandparents?

BK: No. All that was left, at that time, were the two grandparents, the two grandfathers, excuse me. I wouldn't say we were close. I mean, we saw them. …

SH: They didn't live in your home. …

BK: As a matter-of-fact, my grandfather on my father's side lived with us for few years. …

SH: Did he?

BK: … I shared my bedroom with my grandfather. He was pretty old, by that time. He had atherosclerosis, or "hardening of the arteries" [as] they called it back then. Now, totally treatable, but [he] lived until he was seventy-eight, which was a good span in those years.

SH: That was.

BK: … As I said, my mother's father lived until the age of ninety-four and was not, he was active, shopping every day, until the day he died, the day before he died.

SH: Especially considering the industry that he was involved in, I think that is pretty amazing.

BK: Yes, plus, tramping up and down two flights of stairs. He was very healthy.

SH: That is great. What are some of the things that you remember really changing from the time that you were in grade school until the time when you came to college? This was not long after World War II; things were booming.

BK: Almost all of my memories are really … after the war.

SH: Okay.

BK: I was too young to remember the war. I remember marching around the block with pot lids, using them as cymbals, when the war ended.

SH: Do you really?

BK: I didn't exactly know what had happened, but I knew World War II was over. I don't know whether it was the German war or the Japanese war [laughter], but the kids all got out [there]

with pots and pans and marched around. We didn't go around the block, we weren't old enough to do that, but we [went] up and down one side of the block. … I remember, around that time, seeing a postcard from my uncle, who was an airman during World War II, and there was a picture of a plane on it, so that … impressed me. [Editor's Note: America's involvement in World War II began after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941 and ended with German surrender on May 8, 1945 and Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945.]

SH: … Were there other family members involved in World War II?

BK: Yes. My father was not, because he was married with children and worked for the government. My uncles, my Uncle Hy, my mother's brother, and another brother, their youngest brother was also in the military. He ran away from home at the age of fourteen and joined up. [He] joined the Merchant Marines, went through whatever basic training they had, and was getting ready to ship out, when they found out that he was only fourteen. [laughter] …

SH: Oh, dear.

BK: So they threw him out. My father and my grandfather drove down to pick him up, and he … told them, he said, "Look, if you take me back [home], I'm just going to run away and join again. I'll join another service, the Army, or something." So, they actually signed [for him]. …

SH: They allowed them to do that? …

BK: They allowed them to sign, at that time. He may have been fifteen, by that time, and he went into the Army Air Corps, and became a pilot.

SH: Really?

BK: [He] was actually in a plane crash right after the war, a single-engine plane, and now lives in Arizona, in Scottsdale. He had a very adventuresome life.

SH: It sounds like it. [laughter]

BK: My Uncle Mickey.

SH: Was this your …

BK: And five wives along the way. [laughter]

BK: My father had one brother and two sisters, which is another interesting part. I don't know whether it goes in this interview, but my father's older sister, she was quite a bit older than he was, was divorced, and when my mother's father, … my grandmother, his wife, died of tuberculosis in the middle '30s, that … could be a fatal illness in those days. She was also a Romanian immigrant originally. She died in the mid-1930s, so he was a relatively young man. Some of his [children], my mother's brothers and sisters, hadn't even left the house when she died. He remarried, this is my mother's father, remarried my father's older sister. [laughter] So,

my father's sister was both my aunt and my step-grandmother. They had a child, a son, who was about two years younger than I was, maybe one year, and he is my uncle and my cousin, at the same time. [laughter]

SH: There have been songs written about this. [laughter]

BK: Yes, but I'm not my own grandpa. [laughter]

SH: That is a great story.

BK: It's a constant family tale that nobody quite understands, except me and few others.

SH: When you have that age difference, I think that makes a difference. …

BK: Yes.

SH: … Did these uncles talk about their service?

BK: Never, never. I would see pictures, occasionally, or references to it, but none of them ever talked about it. My Uncle Hy served in the South Pacific, I think, with the Army Air Corps, and, as I mentioned, the other uncle also served in the Air Corps, but he was based mostly in the Aleutians, some of which had fallen to the Japanese, a few of the islands. Of course, they [the Japanese] couldn't supply them and were kicked off eventually, well before the war ended. I don't think any of the other uncles served. [Editor's Note: In June 1942, Japanese forces occupied Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands, the archipelago southwest of Alaska. In May 1943, American forces retook Attu in a bloody battle. When 34,000 American and Canadian troops invaded Kiska in August 1943, they found that the island was unoccupied, as the Japanese had evacuated secretly months earlier.]

SH: When the war ended, after you had the victory parade, did you begin to see veterans returning home?

BK: I would … have been too young. … In June of '45, I would have been five years old.

SH: … In 1946 and 1947, especially if they had injuries, I was wondering if you had seen any of the returning veterans.

BK: … I remember my youngest uncle coming [home], but it was just coming home. I didn't link that with the end of the war. I should've, but I didn't , mainly because he came home with a cage full of about 150 canaries. He was going into business selling canaries, breeding and selling canaries, which he … promptly lost interest in, leaving my mother with the cage full of canaries.

SH: Really?

BK: Yes, and she was not happy about that.

SH: Did they survive?

BK: They did not. Some of them got parceled out to other relatives, and they survived. I don't [recall], I wasn't clued in on what actually happened. [laughter]

SH: You did not have a family cat.

BK: We had no pets in those years, and, as a matter-of-fact, once, me and my older sister found a kitten and brought it home. So, my mother was not happy about that, and she took my younger sister shopping, in the stroller, went to the market, and came back with the sad news that the kitten had run away. So, we were very sad. [laughter] Then, about thirty-five, forty years later, we were talking about it. My mother quite calmly said, "Oh, yes, I shooed that cat away," [laughter] and we were horrified, and she didn't realize that she had been caught in a lie forty years earlier.

SH: The stray cat had strayed.

BK: Well, she was concerned about diseases and fleas and things, etc. Later, both my sisters had pet dogs. I stuck with frogs and garter snakes.

SH: I am sure. What was the family reading?

BK: The *Newark Evening News* was a staple in the house. That's where I first remember wanting to read, because my mother would read it every afternoon when it came out; it was delivered to the house. … I remember her reading it, page by page, and I would ask her to tell me, "What is that story about? What is that word?" I didn't even know the alphabet, at that time, and she would say, "Well, you have to know the alphabet, before you can read." So, I actually started asking my older sister what different letters were and how to write them, so I knew how. I had … rudimentary reading and writing skills before kindergarten, and that's where my journalism career must have started. … I even remember asking my mother how to do a crossword puzzle, and she said, "Well, now, you really have to know your letters to do that." [laughter] I still can't do crossword puzzles.

SH: I was just going to ask if you can do them now. … [laughter]

BK: I think the clues are totally unfair. [laughter]

SH: When you were a senior in high school, did you have any guidance on where to go to college? How did you come to Rutgers?

BK: I don't have a clear memory of that. I did not apply anywhere else. I knew that Rutgers was the state college and that it was, for in-state students, was the cheapest, and we really did not have a lot of money. We had no money. I think Rutgers was the only [option]. … I have never done a lot of intense planning for my life. I know a lot of people do, so I'm never disappointed if something doesn't [work]. … The same thing with graduate school after Rutgers, I applied, and

if I made it, fine, and if I didn't, fine, [laughter] and somehow, I always make it. I mean, I became more focused later on in life, but at that point, I was pretty easy-going. As I said, I had no study habits, no good study habits.

SH: Did you come to campus before you applied?

BK: I did not. I did not. It was a total new experience. I had no idea what to expect. I mean, I got the literature that [was] mailed out from the college. … I took my SATs, but I only sent them to Rutgers.

SH: What year did you graduate from Irvington?

BK: '57.

SH: Had your family been politically active at all?

BK: My family was politically active for one main reason. My aunt, one of my aunts was very politically active in the local Democratic machine in Newark. For years, [she] was a worker for various Democratic politicians, not a volunteer, not a staff member. So, she knew a lot of, she got various other family members in public housing and things like that. … My father, as a[n] … employee of the post office, federal employee, was not allowed to campaign for politicians, but political pull was really required to get promoted to a lot of these [positions], like the postal superintendent job, which he later got. It helped to have political pull. So, the family, the kids and my mother, would stuff envelopes during … congressional political campaigns. We would do things like stuff letters. It was all mail, in those days, not Internet, and that's what we would do around election time, several nights.

SH: So, as a young person, you were exposed to the political machinery.

BK: But not to politics. More or less, the lesser mechanics of it. …

SH: Okay, the mechanics of it.

BK: … Certainly, [I] was exposed to the fact that deals were made, and political pull was a component.

SH: Did your family ever discuss the different presidential elections?

BK: We were all Roosevelt Democrats, liberal, so I think that was always a given. I didn't have to be indoctrinated; I agreed. I still do. … Although I worked for *The Wall Street Journal* for thirty-one years, and I'm still working for them, and it's considered a conservative paper, which on the news side it's really not. It is conservative editorially, it absolutely is, but on the news side, we make great effort to be as objective as [possible]. There's an incredible amount of effort to be fair and objective, because that's what credibility is based on, but we can get to that later.

SH: [laughter] Of course.

BK: … We were lower-middle class, Jewish Democrats; that was a given.

SH: What about the McCarthy hearings and President Eisenhower?

BK: Well, I also had relatives who were card-carrying Communists. My mother and father were aghast at that, and our relations with them were limited, because they were always afraid that as federal employees, they would be tainted by that. … My uncle, my younger uncle, the one who ran away to join the military, actually came up against that in getting a security clearance, at one point, and got it, but there was a question, because my aunt and uncle were serious members of the [Communist] Party in Los Angeles and were until late in life. [Editor's Note: During the Red Scare of the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy led government-sponsored witch-hunts and held congressional hearings to uncover alleged Communists in American politics, academia, unions, military, Hollywood and society in general.]

SH: Did they talk about being Communists? What were they doing in California? What were their occupations?

BK: My uncle in California was a very successful food broker, which means he was the middle man between the packers, canners, frozen food-makers, and the wholesalers. There's another layer; it wasn't just wholesalers and then retail. There was a food broker who sold car-load size lots of food, and [he] was very successful at that. … My aunt in California did various things in (life?). She worked; she had her own travel agency and things like that. They were very capitalist in their occupations, and I love them. I was very close to them, later in life, but early in life, we were, my parents sort of kept at a distance. … When my grandfather lived with us, he used to subscribe to *The Forward*-- it was called *The Forward* then, but in Yidish-- a Yiddish paper known for its socialist leanings, and my father used to have arguments with him about not letting that paper in the house. … I remember in high school, or maybe I was slightly younger, it might have been eighth grade, I wanted to subscribe to the; … the Russians and the Americans reached a deal, where the Russians were allowed to publish a magazine in the United States, a *Look* magazine type, color magazine, and the Americans got to publish a magazine in Russia, which, I'm sure, they [the Russian government] managed to completely keep out of the hands of any Russians. [laughter] … I wanted to subscribe. It was free. It was just pictures about Russia, and all the great things that socialism claims to accomplish, and my mother would not allow it. It was not allowed.

SH: How did you become aware of this magazine?

BK: It was written up in the newspapers.

SH: Was there a "Weekly Reader" in school …

BK: In school, absolutely.

SH: … to keep you up on current events?

BK: Yes. We all read that. That's the first newspaper that I read regularly, although the *Newark News*, I read the *Newark News* from a very early age. *The Star-Ledger*, I considered at that time, was a more lowbrow newspaper. It even looked cheesy. It's improved quite a bit over the years. [laughter] … The *Newark News*, in my mind, was the more serious newspaper in Newark. Its problems were that it was a PM paper, an afternoon paper, and they all disappeared. When television came in, and the *Newark News*, I think, died in the '70s. … [Editor's Note: The *Newark News* was a widely-respected New Jersey newspaper that existed from 1873 to 1972.]

SH: I think so.

BK: … When I entered journalism, I'm getting ahead of this, that was my aim; when I was at Rutgers studying journalism that would've been my ideal job, being a reporter for the *Newark News*, and it wasn't until graduate school that my horizons lifted, and I'm glad they did, because the newspaper failed within ten years.

SH: [laughter] Did you know what you wanted to major in when you came to Rutgers?

BK: No, I did not.

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: I did not. As I mentioned, [I had] this interest in science.

SH: Yes.

BK: In high school, I had an English teacher who used to compliment me on my writing ability. I was a poor speller, but I could write coherent sentences. I didn't write like I talked. I actually, maybe from reading newspapers, I knew what a composed sentence [was]. I never studied it, but I just knew what sounded right and what didn't sound right, which is the best way to learn a language anyway. … His compliments, I think, made me realize that I could write, and a lot of my ability to breeze through courses without really studying was my ability, even with limited knowledge, to shoot back … during a test, but I could say it coherently, and that must have aided me in getting through these courses.

SH: Did this same teacher advise you?

BK: … Science was really my prime interest, at that point, in high school, and that's what I started Rutgers as, as a biological sciences major, which is pre-med. I don't know … if I really thought seriously about being a doctor but certainly a biologist or … I mean, obviously, it was a pre-med course.

SH: Were you at Rutgers College?

BK: I was at Rutgers College, what's now the [Rutgers School of] Arts and Sciences, I guess. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1766 as Queen's College and renamed in honor of Colonel Henry Rutgers in 1825, Rutgers College existed as one of Rutgers University's liberal arts schools, until

the merger of the university's federated institutions in 2006 into the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences.] My biology classes were at New Jersey Hall. Chem[istry] laboratories up in the [University] Heights, in the Quonset huts that they set up after the war. [Editor's Note: In the post-war years, the University Heights campus provided Rutgers-New Brunswick with extra dormitory space and became the science campus. In 1971, New Jersey resident and wealthy investor Charles L. Busch donated ten million dollars to Rutgers for biological research. The following year, University Heights was renamed Busch Campus in his honor.] Even the Commons, the old Commons, which is now the computer lab [in Records Hall], was a, you must have heard this from others, was a prefab factory that was headed for Russia at the end of the war, because Russia was getting Lend-Lease from us, because they were an ally against the Germans, and at the end of the war, it was sitting on a dock waiting to be shipped, and the government said, "Well, that's the end of Lend-Lease," and they gave it away to public institutions like Rutgers, and we got that, this huge, in effect, it's a huge Quonset hut … with steel girders, and that became the Commons, and the power plant that's next to it. [Editor's Note: Lend-Lease refers to the program by which the United States provided aid to the Allies during World War II.]

SH: I have seen that, right.

BK: That was probably just either a second factory or part of that original factory. I actually worked in the Commons as well. …

SH: Did you?

BK: … As a cashier, checking out the meals, and it was amazing, because it was the same cash register that I worked on, the same brand, the same model, that I used at Good Deal Supermarket in Irvington, so I was built for that job. [laughter]

SH: You were a shoo-in for the job.

BK: … Science was, I was interested in it. …

SH: Was this a work-study type of job?

BK: At Rutgers?

SH: Yes.

BK: You mean at the Commons?

SH: Yes.

BK: No, it was just a job.

SH: Okay.

BK: For spending money.

SH: Were you on any type of scholarship?

BK: No scholarship. My grades were not good enough for a scholarship. No, but tuition was 250 dollars a semester, as I recall.

SH: Our students are just amazed at that.

BK: Yes, I mean, that's like I used to buy a house for a nickel type thing. [laughter] … Room and board … was like 300 dollars.

SH: In the fall of 1957, where were you housed when you came to Rutgers?

BK: Leupp, Leupp Hall, on the second floor right over the entrance to the dorm, and the Quad was entirely covered by ivy. Every wall in that Quad, in the Leupp Quad, had dense stands of … ivy, not English ivy, some other kind of [ivy], grape ivy or something, with thick stems. They'd been there … probably since the '20s, when Leupp Hall was built. … In the summertime, well, maybe in the winter too, thousands, literally, thousands of starlings would settle in this ivy for the evening, making a racket you would not believe. [laughter] It was like the subway system in New York, just "ya-la-la-la-la," [imitating sound of constant noise], which was also not … [conducive] for studying, and of course, they would do it again in the morning, early in the morning, when they took off to find food.

SH: When you came to Rutgers in'57, was there any type of hazing for freshman?

BK: There was. It wasn't serious hazing, but you had to learn certain things, like *On the Banks* [*of the Old Raritan*, the *alma mater* of Rutgers University] and other various things and memorizing. Of course, you could be stopped by an upper classman and asked to sing, and you had to wear the red beanie.

SH: Did you?

BK: I don't remember it being at all oppressive or scary.

SH: Was ROTC still mandatory?

BK: ROTC was absolutely mandatory for two years, as was chapel once a week, in Kirkpatrick Chapel, which I found, I was not totally politically aware, … socio-politically aware, but I found that a little offensive. …

SH: Did you?

BK: … That it was mandatory. There was nothing religious about it, but the fact was it was in a … chapel, and the talk was given by the chaplain.

SH: Was it?

BK: Yes. It was a moral lesson… I have no recollection of the substance of any of the talks.

SH: Really.

BK: … They were strictly not religious, but still, I found that questionable.

SH: Were there guest speakers?

BK: I don't have a fond memory of it, because we had to go. It was at lunch time, which meant you usually missed lunch on that day. … We also had mandatory parades, military parades and classes, with ROTC. I was in Air Force ROTC.

SH: Were you?

BK: Yes, we had to march behind the gym, which used to be an open field. It's now completely built up. They also used to have a competition between the freshmen and the sophomores with a ball, a rubber ball the size of, what I remember, was the size of this room almost, that they used to have to push across a goal line. [laughter] A lot of fun.

SH: Were there mixers with the New Jersey College for Women?

BK: At Douglass, yes.

SH: Was it called Douglass when you came?

BK: It was Douglass. Mabel [Smith Douglass] had died … several years before that. There's an interesting story with Mabel as well. [Editor's Note: In 1918, Mabel Smith Douglass (1874-1933) became the founding dean of the New Jersey College for Women (NJC), the coordinate women's college associated with Rutgers College. Douglass remained at the post until 1932. In 1955, NJC was renamed Douglass College.]

SH: Please.

BK: It comes much later.

SH: Okay.

BK: So don't let me forget. When we talk about Henry Rutgers this afternoon, remind me to tell you about Mabel Douglass. [Editor's Note: Colonel Henry Rutgers (1745-1830) was a Revolutionary War veteran, New York legislator, wealthy landowner, philanthropist, Dutch Reformed Church elder, and trustee of Queen's College. After donating money to the financially-beleaguered institution, Queen's College was renamed Rutgers College in 1825 in honor of Henry Rutgers.]

SH: Okay.

BK: … They're buried in Brooklyn within walking distance of each other.

SH: Are they really?

BK: That's the end of the story. I'll tell you the beginning later.

SH: [laughter] Well, this will keep anyone listening to this interview tuned in.

BK: … They're both buried in Brooklyn.

SH: I did remember hearing that was where Henry Rutgers' final resting place was.

BK: Yes, she's right around the corner from Henry.

SH: Amazing. Were there any kinds of civil defense drills or anything like that here at the college?

BK: No. There were in grade school and … in high school. … Duck and cover was big in grade school. I do remember seeing air raid shelter signs on some buildings at Rutgers, though.

SH: Was there a sense of fear or was that just a fun thing?

BK: No, no, no. I don't remember any drills during college … where people had to stop driving or go indoors. We may have had it. I just don't [remember]. I mean, how would you do it? … There's no loud speaker system. There's no … I mean, we had WRSU, which I worked for as my main activity. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1948 as WRSU-AM, the non-commercial, non-profit, student-run WRSU-FM radio station broadcasts alternative sounds, news programs, specialty programs and Rutgers sports.]

SH: Really?

BK: Yes, I was news director.

SH: All right. Going back to your freshman year, coming to Rutgers, what was your first impression of Rutgers?

BK: Oh, I was impressed.

SH: Were you the only one from your group of friends that was coming to Rutgers?

BK: There was another guy from my high school, a football player, who flunked out at the end of his freshman year.

SH: Did you have roommates at Leupp that first year?

BK: Sure. Robert Bosch, I think it's B-O-S-C-H, who later became, I believe, a stockbroker, but we were just roommates, not … friends. … I remember people from freshman year, [but] I don't remember many names. …

SH: Do you remember any specific incidences or fun things that you did that were new and exciting for a kid coming from Irvington/Newark?

BK: Well, I remember a year before I got there, they were building those three high-rise dorms along the [Raritan] River. What is that, George Street?

SH: Yes. We call them the River Dorms.

BK: Frelinghuysen …

SH: Campbell …

BK: I don't think it was called Campbell, at that time.

SH: Oh, really?

BK: That may have been renamed. I seem to recall … all three had Dutch names. I could be wrong.

SH: All right. We will check that out. [Editor's Note: In 1956, Rutgers College completed the construction of the River Dorms, which, from east to west, are called Frelinghuysen Hall, Hardenbergh Hall and Campbell Hall, originally known as Livingston Hall.]

BK: I was told that, while they were building one of them, I think the one furthest up the street [Campbell Hall], they had the steel structure up, and it tilted. The foundation gave way, and it tilted very noticeably toward the [Raritan] river. …

SH: Oh, my.

BK: … They had to come in and pump concrete into that. There was then the canal there. There was the bank of the canal, and the canal was one of my favorite places, because it was wild. So, I used to go collecting plants and specimens. … Anyway, they attached cables to the steel girders and pulled it back up straight. [laughter]

SH: No kidding.

BK: So I was always sort of wary of going into those dorms, any of them. I don't know how I knew about it, because it happened before I got here, but I think those dorms had just opened when I got here. … I was in Leupp, not in those, across the road.

SH: What was the social life like here on campus?

BK: There were dances, and I was not … actually, not a lot into that. I was a very shy kid. There were lots of social activities. The Ledge was a prime place. I don't even know if it's called the Ledge anymore. It's now the convenience shop. …

SH: The students call it the SAC, the Student Activities Center.

BK: Right. That was called the Ledge then, because, literally, [it] is a ledge over the canal. That was the only venue; there was no student center like there is now on College Avenue. WRSU was in a dinky, little, wooden building across from Winants Hall.

SH: Was it really?

BK: On lower College Avenue, just north of the Preparatory School which is now Alexander [Johnston] Hall. It was in the attic, and you had to literally bend over in order to work there. … [Editor's Note: Before moving its studios to the Rutgers Student Center to 126 College Avenue in 1971, WRSU was located at 12 College Avenue.]

SH: Did you get involved in that your freshman year?

BK: I think so. It was early.

SH: How did you get interested in or recruited for that?

BK: I don't remember. They had, all the activities had recruiting that was done. I don't know whether I took that path or somebody said, "Let's go look at WRSU," but I took to it right away.

SH: What about *The Daily Targum*?

BK: No, I never considered [it]. This is before, this is while I was still a science major, biological sciences.

SH: What was your first show with WRSU?

BK: I had a regular daily DJ [disk jockey] show with a woman from Douglass. Robin Platt was her name, very, nice, young lady, and we used to play records and tell jokes. I hesitate to call it funny, I'm so glad there are no recordings still around.

SH: That you know of. [laughter]

BK: The first show, before that, was actually just a DJ show, playing music, and there was no rock-and-roll allowed, at that time. …

SH: Allowed?

BK: Not when I first joined. Later on, we finally pressured them to allow.

SH: In the late 1950s, you were not allowed to play any kind of rock-and-roll?

BK: No, no. The Brothers Four and things like that these sorts of folk singers, well, this is before folk song, but the early groups, and even some classical music. I used to play the Rutgers Choir with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra directed by Eugene Ormandy, 1960, Columbia Records that had a record out of *Carmina Burana*, which I loved, so I used to play selections from that. [Editor's Note: Collection of medieval poems of which twenty-four were set to music by composer Carl Orff, 1935/36] It was pretty staid stuff.

SH: Okay.

BK: … WRSU, at that those times, was an AM station, with about two-and-a-half watts of power. It was supposed to be a wired radio station, with little transmitters in the main dorms. It really didn't go beyond the campus grounds.

SH: So it was for the Rutgers community.

BK: Only Rutgers community; it was not licensed for any wider transmission. They, the engineers, at the [station], students, used to juice it up occasionally. [laughter] I remember one fellow named Bob Tarring, who went on to become a professional radio announcer, had a wonderful voice, as deep as they get, nice sense of humor. He was one of the main engineers and once took one of the transmitors and hot-wired it to the main electric supply for the campus [laughter] and was using an insulated screwdriver, this was live, and he was attaching the wire, and the screwdriver exploded in his hands. It had that yellow plastic [handle]. … It just melted. He wasn't hurt, but he could have been killed. …

SH: That is right, yes.

BK: He could have been killed, but then WRSU could be heard all the way up in Parsippany. [laughter] I don't know how long that lasted, because the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] did have monitors going around, looking for stray signals.

SH: Were you aware of the FCC coming to campus?

BK: No, no. I wasn't aware of them shutting us down or warning us or anything like that.

SH: [laughter] That is a great story. What were some of the news items that you reported? Did you also report the news?

BK: We reported news, but it was, what is probably still called rip-and-read. We had a UPI [United Press International] radio wire, which we probably got for free, because we were a college, and they, it was a teletype that sat in a little closet with sound-proofing around it, asbestos shingles, which, thinking back on, is not good. The whole place was sound-proofed with asbestos ceiling tiles. [Editor's Note: Mr. Kramer coughs.] This is not that, [referring to the

health effects of exposure to asbestos]. [laughter] … This teletype machine would be spitting out half-hour newscasts. It was a complete newscast.

SH: Oh, really?

BK: … You would sit there and you knew you had [a] certain amount of minutes, so you'd cross out certain items … and then you would take it into the studio and read it, and that was it. That was news. There was no attempt made to do campus news, just because we didn't have the staff or facilities. … [Editor's Note: Rip-and-read, or "rip 'n' read," refers to the practice of radio anchors ripping off the paper discharged by the teletype machine that contained the wire service news stories and reading the stories verbatim on the air.]

SH: Were there paid advertisements?

BK: There were ads, yes, usually local, or we ran a lot of things like the Red Cross and other, not so much charities but public appeals. We used to get these big phonograph records of, sort of like a huge floppy disk, and there were ads on it, maybe about ten tracks of ads. …

SH: Really?

BK: … You would have to place the needle on it very carefully and spin it along. We had a big reel-to-reel tape recorder, a Teac, which was also portable, which we used to record music programs and dances. I used to do a lot of remotes.

SH: Really, they had that capability.

BK: So we would go to the main dances, and there would be acts performing. I think The Brothers Four came once, and we would broadcast this. We would set up microphones and record it and broadcast it. I'm sure today that would be totally forbidden by the artist. … Johnny Mathis came once. We had him on. We had some of the big orchestras, in those days. They had faded from the World War II days, but they were still around. … We also did quiz shows and charity events at the Ledge.

SH: Did you really?

BK: … I did some of those. Yes, there's pictures of me in one of the yearbooks doing that.

SH: Was this something in which the students generated the programming?

BK: Yes.

SH: Was there faculty oversight?

BK: There was faculty oversight but not in the day-to-day operations. It was, more or less, to see that we were financially secure and things like that, but there was never, … well, that's where

the rock-and-roll thing must have come in, but I wasn't privy to that. I know that just at some point during my college days they relented, and we were allowed to [play rock-and-roll]. …

SH: Who decided who was an announcer? …

BK: Usually, you volunteer and if you … do well … and there's no one else to do it [it is yours]. …

SH: Was there a board like you would have on a newspaper?

BK: No, no. There was just, this guy was the news director, that guy was the programming director, another guy …

SH: How did you get that title then?

BK: I don't recall. [laughter] I don't recall. You were just appointed to it. Did we have elections or anything like that? I don't think so. It just happened.

SH: You had said there was a young woman from Douglass who was with you. Was that common to have someone from Douglass and someone from Rutgers College co-announcing?

BK: No. There were several Douglass women who were involved in the station. Yes, it was probably more common than a lot of things. … It broadcast at Douglass, too. It was all done by phone lines. There was a line at Douglass, so you could hear it there.

SH: How much time per week would you have on the air?

BK: A lot. Too much. I obviously had time on my hands from, again, from not studying.

SH: The pre-med courses. … [laughter]

BK: … By that time, I was also involved in the fraternity.

SH: Okay. I was going to ask you about the fraternity. During your freshman year, had you already started at WRSU?

BK: I think so.

SH: Did you pledge in your freshman year?

BK: Sophomore year.

SH: Sophomore year.

BK: I got to know several members of the fraternity, Delta Upsilon, which is now no longer on campus. They were thrown off, many years later. [Since this interview, DU has been re-

established at Rutgers.] I got to know certain [fraternity members], because I took summer courses after freshman year, because I had not done well [laughter] during the year, and I got to meet several of them, and by the next year I was pledged, the next fall.

SH: Where was the Delta Upsilon fraternity house?

BK: At 66 College Avenue. The building is still there. It's now a sorority, whose name I don't know. It has three Greek letters out front [laughter], and has a terrace out front. It's Italian architecture; there's a name to it, Italianate, red brick and concrete. [It was] built in the '20s. It's a nice building.

SH: When you went into the fraternity, how many men were assigned to a room?

BK: We had two-man study rooms where we had desks, but we all slept in a common, open dormitory on the third floor, and there were two sleeping rooms with maybe a total of fifty people in the house, so about twenty-five beds in each section, and the windows were deliberately left wide open in the winter. [laughter] Chalk it up to youth. So, everyone huddled under several blankets and toughed it out. [laughter]

SH: Did you have a job within the fraternity?

BK: I was steward, responsible for supervising the kitchen and the cook and the buying of food and collecting of payment, but that got me free food.

SH: Did you have a house mother?

BK: We had a house mother.

SH: Did you have a cook as well?

BK: We had a cook, full-time cook.

SH: Did the cook live …

BK: In New Brunswick.

SH: Okay. Not in …

BK: Not in the house. The house mother lived in the house. She had an apartment, also up on the third floor, and [she was] a very nice lady. I don't remember her name. [She was] from Georgia, wonderful southern accent, and was completely oblivious to what was going on in the house. [laughter]

SH: Was she?

BK: Not that anything really terrible went on, but she … would make her appearance at dinnertime … except when there was hazing going on, and then she would stay in her apartment. She knew better. [laughter] Although Delta Upsilon … was one of the few fraternities, if not the only one, that had no secret rituals, that prided itself on that, and hazing was rather mild. It really wasn't hazing. There was no paddling … except later, maybe fifteen years after I'd graduated, or twenty years, they started branding pledges with hot irons, which is what got them thrown off campus.

SH: When you were involved in the fraternity for those three years, was dinner formal?

BK: Formal in what sense? That you had to wear a …

SH: Tie and jacket.

BK: … Jacket and tie. I believe it was.

SH: I guess formal would have been a tuxedo.

BK: You didn't have to shave, and a lot of kids didn't shave, in those days. [laughter] Maybe they still don't. [laughter] I mean, no one wore beards, but there was often two days growth of beard. Beards were tough, in those days, and they didn't have these advanced razors, like you have today.

SH: Did men wear the VanDyke [mustache and goatee] or the mustache?

BK: No, no. Beards and mustaches were not common. That didn't start until a couple of years after I'd graduated. There were almost no student protests when I was at Rutgers. The only one I remember was a "Hands-Off Cuba Protest" during, this was during the [President John F.] Kennedy Administration [1961-1963]. The Bay of Pigs had not happened, but there was obviously friction between Castro's Cuba and the United States.

SH: After Batista.

BK: So, there were some hands-off Cuba demonstrations at the Ledge, but they were considered far-out lefties and they were in a small minority, and most students either didn't pay attention or were against them, [thought] they were unpatriotic. I don't remember having strong feelings one way or the other. [Editor's Note: American intervention in Cuba dates back to the Spanish-American War of 1898, after which Cuba became a US protectorate until 1934. The US supported Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, whose economic policies benefitted American businesses but whose repressive regime incurred the wrath of the Cuban people. The 26th of July Movement, led by Communist revolutionary Fidel Castro, overthrew Batista in 1959, marking Castro's ascension to power in Cuba. Castro's advocacy for the poor and landless won him the sympathy of many Americans. The US ceased diplomatic and commercial relations with Communist Cuba, which became a Soviet ally during the Cold War. The Kennedy Administration undertook a variety of operations to depose Castro, including the Bay of Pigs invasion. In April 1961, CIA-trained Cuban exiles invaded Cuba, hoping to spark a popular

uprising against Castro. The operation failed miserably and proved to be a major embarrassment for the Kennedy Administration.]

SH: Because ROTC was mandatory for the first two years, did you ever consider going to advanced ROTC?

BK: Never, never.

SH: When did you decide not to be a science major or pre-med?

BK: When I realized that I wasn't going to graduate. …

SH: You stuck it out until that point.

BK: I stuck it out until early in my junior year. My problem, without good study habits, I could do well in the descriptive courses, biology, zoology, I even took a course in limnology. If you want to know what that is, I'll tell you.

SH: Please.

BK: I did pretty [well]. Limnology is the study of lakes and ponds, freshwater lakes and ponds. …

SH: Right.

BK: … Which, unbeknownst to most people, are fascinating habitats in layers, different animals, different plants, different, all kinds of different things, fascinating science. … When it came to physics and chemistry and calculus, I was a dud, because I didn't have study habits. Having worked at *The Wall Street Journal* all those years, I'm now a pretty good mathematician.

SH: Interesting.

BK: In those years, I had no interest in the mechanical sciences … that required you to actually memorize formulas and things like that. So, it was obvious I was not going to … make it, and the dean, at one point, actually called me in and said, "It's about time you looked at something else." So, I did, and since I was already involved in news at [W]RSU, and I liked to write, and by that time, I was also, I had inherited a job as a stringer for the *Herald Tribune* in New York, big, important paper, at that time. …

SH: How did you inherit the job?

BK: I'm leaving out a whole string.

SH: Please, we can come back to that.

BK: While I was at WRSU, I had friend named Bill Liss, William Liss, L-I-S-S, who was the news director before me at WRSU, and he had inherited the job as stringer for the *Herald Tribune*, campus correspondent, they called it. … What you did was you sent items in from the campus to the newspaper, and when he was getting ready to graduate, he passed that job onto me, because I was news director at WRSU.

SH: This was as a junior.

BK: About that, about that. So, I actually made money from that. They paid like a dollar an inch or something like that. … That also got me into trouble here. This is a good story. I forget what we were talking about in general, but let me tell you this story. I wrote a story for the *Herald Tribune*. The Ford Foundation had funded an experimental dormitory for freshman. …

SH: Was it here on this campus?

BK: Up on the Heights. …

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: … Near the stadium. … It was a purpose-built building that the Ford Foundation funded, and it was a very efficient use of space. The students' rooms, there were two-man rooms, and they were on, they slept on bunk beds over a desk-study area. It was like a cubby hole, like … a kid would have in his bedroom with a bunk bed above a desk and a lamp. … That was going to be the model for the future, because it was easy to build, easy to maintain, very efficient. Well, at the end of the year, the dropout rate was substantially, frighteningly higher than normal, and it was already pretty high, because Rutgers had to take almost anybody who graduated from … a New Jersey high school. So, it was a failure. So, I wrote a story for the *Herald Tribune*, and they loved it. They ran a whole column inside the newspaper and paid me sixteen dollars. …

SH: Oh, that is a lot of inches.

BK: It's the most I ever made for writing anything, up to that point. Well, the next day, the dean called me into the office and just chewed me out. …

SH: Who was the dean? Do you remember?

BK: Boocock.

SH: Oh, Boocock.

BK: Cornelius Boocock, a name you could not forget. [laughter] … There was an assistant dean, whose name was Howard Crosby, who was a much nicer guy, who was related to Henry Rutgers, by the way. [Editor's Note: Cornelius B. Boocock served as Dean of Men/Director of Student Life at Rutgers from 1949 to 1963. Howard J. Crosby, RC '41, functioned as Associate Dean of Men from 1951 to 1965.]

SH: Really?

BK: Crosby was Henry Rutgers' adopted great nephew, who inherited all of Henry Rutgers' property and became one of the wealthiest men in New York.

SH: Really?

BK: Yes. That's part of the exhibit that's opening tonight. [Editor's Note: Mr. Kramer is referring to the opening of the Special Collections and University Archives 2010 spring exhibit "Benevolent Patriot: The Life and Times of Henry Rutgers" at Alexander Library.]

SH: Oh, cool.

BK: … That's another story. So, where was I?

SH: You were talking about being …

BK: So, he chewed me out. He said, "We have a lot of Republican donors who read," [donors] to the college, "who read the *Herald Tribune*." So I just sat there and nodded, because what was I supposed to say, "Did you want me to censor the story?" which is, in effect, what he was saying. Of course, the cat was already out of the bag. … This was before the days when, colleges could really censor all journalism on the campus, [and] it took another ten years of protests … at Berkeley and other places before that became less dominant.

SH: Did he ask or strongly suggest that? …

BK: Well, he was angry. He was angry.

SH: Was he?

BK: Yes.

SH: Did you write anything to counter what you had said?

BK: No, no.

SH: You were not asked to do that, were you?

BK: No. …

SH: Was it, more or less, do not do that again?

BK: That was the implication, yes. … He didn't … threaten me with expulsion or anything like that, nothing of the sort.

SH: Why did they think the dropout rate rose? Was it because of the location across the river?

BK: That may have been. I don't know the details. I don't think they knew, at that point. All they knew was that the dropout rate was scary.

SH: How did that information become known to you?

BK: It was known. … Nobody had put it together in a story. I don't know how I found out. There may have been a story in the *Targum* that I did some extra research on. There may have been a story in the *Targum* just saying that the experiment was ended, without really saying [why]. … I don't know. I don't remember specifically.

SH: I asked you about the oversight for WRSU. Did Dean Boocock oversee WRSU?

BK: No. It was a panel. … There was a Rutgers, there was a group at Rutgers who did broadcasting of some sort, either Rutgers football games, … Rutgers Radio Council, something, and there were a couple of men with broadcasting experience who did either PR [public relations] work for Rutgers … in broadcasting or had some connection to broadcasting, professional … [Editor's Note: Currently, the WRSU Radio Council, comprised of station members, professors, alumni and broadcasting professionals, oversees the student-managed WRSU-FM.]

SH: What about oversight over the fraternities?

BK: That was the dean, absolutely.

SH: Did the dean come often to visit?

BK: Oh, they used to, yes.

SH: Did they?

BK: It was also part of our Hell Week, the dean.

SH: Really?

BK: It was incorporated into the theater of Hell Week. I don't think we called it Hell Week, Greek Week. … We're also getting aside, but I better tell you before I forget. [laughter] … At the end of Greek Week, the pledges were told, after we'd been hazed, it was mild hazing but it was [hazing], were told that to end Greek Week, "We're going to have to follow tradition," this was in the middle of the winter, "and go swimming in the canal," and they were going to bring axes along to chop through the ice [laughter], so we could jump in the canal. So, we're … in very little clothes, at that time, and I think we were covered with Karo syrup and feathers, [laughter] at that point, nothing painful … just embarrassing, and we were marched out onto the driveway on College Avenue … to go on this ice-dip, and someone shouts, "The dean is coming," and we all run back into the house. … There, they have ice cream and cakes set up.

"It's the end of Greek Week." … The dean virtually played a, in virtual reality, played a … part in that theater, that annual theater. [laughter]

SH: No one really had to go swimming in the Raritan Canal.

BK: No, no, no, no. … We never indulged in things like making pledges eat raw liver. … One of them choked to death at one the houses on upper College Avenue. …

SH: Really?

BK: … Died while I was at school. I think it was a fraternity where the Chabad House is now. …

SH: Oh, really?

BK: … Died from choking down liver, raw liver.

SH: What about attending football games?

BK: That was a ritual.

SH: Was it?

BK: Everyone did and everyone took part in the floats, [in] making floats by [hand], made from chicken wire with Kleenex stuffed in the holes of the chicken wire, and, of course, if it rained even the slightest, the thing was ruined. [laughter] I would love to see pictures of what they actually looked like. They must have been pretty sad affairs. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever help with the decorating?

BK: Oh, yes. We all had to, but there were brothers who specialized in that.

SH: Were there active alumni brothers?

BK: There were. There were, absolutely, not only for keeping up the moral fiber of the place but donating money and overseeing finances and things like that.

SH: Did they come to have dinner?

BK: There were regular meetings a couple times a year.

SH: Who was the president of the college, when you were here?

BK: Mason Gross took over while I was here. I believe … the fellow when I came was Clothier. [Editor's Note: From 1932 to 1951, Robert C. Clothier served as the president of

Rutgers University, followed by Lewis Webster Jones until 1958. Mason W. Gross became president of Rutgers University in 1959 and filled the post until he retired in 1971.]

SH: Was he still here?

BK: No. When I graduated … Gross was still there. I think Clothier may have died. I don't [remember]. I remember doing a documentary at WRSU, which [was] about Mason Gross becoming the [president]. …

SH: Mason Gross had been the provost from 1949 to 1959.

BK: Yes, and a philosophy professor, nice guy.

SH: Had you seen his television shows?

BK: I had not. I had not. I've seen videos of them subsequently.

SH: I wondered how the students felt about having a president who had also been involved in television.

BK: I think he was so high above students that nobody had thoughts about that. [Editor's Note: In addition to functioning as Rutgers University professor and provost during the 1950s, Mason Gross gained national notoriety as a television personality on *Think Fast* and *Two for the Money*.]

SH: Really?

BK: Because it was imposed on [us]. We didn't vote.

SH: That is true. [laughter]

BK: … He certainly sounded like a very accomplished [academic], and he was [a] very accomplished fellow, plus the speaking voice he had … inspired confidence.

SH: That is what I have heard.

BK: … Anyway, that documentary [inauguration of Mason W. Gross] was played on WOR [radio].

SH: Was it really?

BK: It was a half-hour documentary that we, me and three or four other people at WRSU, put together.

SH: Was Mason Gross someone that the students saw often on campus?

BK: Absolutely, yes. He was very involved, and I'm trying to think when the first time I met him, but he would have students over at the president's house, also up in the Heights somewhere. I don't know if it's still there.

SH: I think it is.

BK: He was quite available.

SH: Was he?

BK: Yes. I don't think you could go see him, but he was at lots of events.

SH: What about the professors? How approachable were they?

BK: It varied by professor.

SH: During the time you were here, as you said before, President John F. Kennedy was elected. …

BK: Well, was he?

SH: Kennedy was elected in 1960.

BK: Was it '60? Yes, he was, yes. I was definitely pro-Kennedy.

SH: Was that something that was discussed on campus, or did the election just take place "out there" and you guys were here?

BK: Speaking from my perspective, yes, it was just out there. We saw it on the news. I don't recall people reading a lot of newspapers on campus.

SH: Okay.

BK: … That could have been just my circle of friends.

SH: You talked about the demonstration about staying out of Cuba.

BK: Yes, that was a minor …

SH: Was that the only demonstration you experienced?

BK: It's the only one I remember. The only other student activism that I recall was, I believe, in my sophomore year, when the state legislature was considering a sixty-million-dollar bond issue to build facilities here at the Rutgers College campus and perhaps at other campuses, but most of it was destined for here, and the legislature was debating it. There was a lot of opposition to it. Sixty million dollars was a large obligation, in those days. Now, it's pocket change. [laughter]

So, several hundred students took a petition drive and a march on Trenton; lots of buses, organized, and we all went down and marched peacefully around the state capitol, and some of us were invited in to meet legislators, I guess, the ones who favored the bond issue. [laughter] … The bond issue was approved to be put up to the voters, and the voters approved it; also different times, a different era, let's put it that way, that voters would approve of a bond issue. So, a lot, quite a few of the buildings that now exist are because of that bond issue. … That was my personal first experience with advocacy. … [Editor's Note: In 1959, New Jersey citizens passed the first of three bond issues (also in 1964 and 1968) that enabled Rutgers to begin building programs at the various campuses to accommodate growing student enrollment.]

SH: So you went to Trenton. …

BK: Well, a lot of students did.

SH: Did you speak to any legislators?

BK: No, I was not one of the ones invited in. I was too young. I was not one of the organizers, let's put it that way.

SH: How often did you go home?

BK: I stayed on campus a lot. I liked staying on campus, and I was living in the fraternity, so it was not a problem.

SH: What about laundry facilities?

BK: Well, in your freshman year, they would collect your sheets and towels once a week. You had to carry them down in a bundle to a big collection point outside your dormitory, and they would give you fresh ones and then wash the dirty ones. Now, in, when I was in the fraternity, what did I do for laundry? I don't remember. I had to wash my clothes, but I don't remember.

SH: We hear of some students who sent their laundry home.

BK: Some students did, and there were some in my fraternity who would mail them home, often a couple of states away, to their mother, and a week later, they would get a package in return. They would be these fake leather suitcases with a leather strap that you wrap them up in and … take them to the post office and then off they would go. I found that, I was not comfortable with that. [laughter] My mother would have done it, but I couldn't … bear the thought. We must have used, I don't recall washing machines being in the fraternity house. Isn't that funny? I don't remember.

SH: Okay. Fair enough. You were involved with WRSU and you talked about recording the dances. …

BK: And broadcasting.

SH: Broadcasting also. Do you remember some of the convocations that were held on campus, or do you remember other events that you covered as a student radio announcer?

BK: Well, the football games and certain other sports as well, but I was not involved in that, because, as I mentioned, I am not a big sports fan, so I really don't know a lot about sports. …

SH: You are not a fan either.

BK: I'm not a fan, to this day.

SH: You talked about being here on campus between your freshman and sophomore years. Were you housed at Leupp?

BK: No. That summer, that particular summer, I was housed at the graduate students' dorm, which, I think, today is called Ford [Hall]. I don't think it was called Ford then. …

SH: Oh, really?

BK: … Although that sounds like an old name, doesn't it?

SH: Ford Hall.

BK: We just knew it as the graduate [students' dorm], and that was right across the street from Delta Upsilon, which is probably how I met the guys who eventually got me into the house.

SH: Did you work that summer at all?

BK: No. I don't think the Commons was open, so that job would not have been available. I don't recall working then, that summer, in a remunerative job.

SH: Between your sophomore and junior years, do you remember what you did?

BK: I do not. At that point, I was getting into WCTC, downtown, where I had a paid [job]. It may have been a little later, but I had a job, again, writing and reading news at WCTC.

SH: WCTC was a …

BK: The commercial station.

SH: A commercial station, okay.

BK: AM and FM.

SH: I did not know what the word was.

BK: In New Brunswick.

SH: What were you doing? What was your job?

BK: I was writing; also, that included rip-and-read, but it also included local [news] and reporting. …

SH: Oh, really?

BK: … News, local news.

SH: Did you have press credentials that let you attend events?

BK: I did. I did, although most of it was done by phone.

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: I covered a major fire for them once at some big roadside inn, famous inn, somewhere about twenty miles away from New Brunswick, and the place just burned to a cinder. It was a spectacular fire, but I remember driving out there, or being driven out there actually, and reporting by phone about this spectacular fire. … Most of it was written in the newsroom or gotten from the newswires.

SH: Where was the station located?

BK: Right downtown, second floor of a … commercial building, a wooden building, not a steel structure.

SH: Was downtown amenable to college students?

BK: No, no. It was a scary area.

SH: Was it?

BK: If you asked me to pinpoint exactly where it was today, I couldn't do it, but I think it was on the … no, I have no idea.

SH: Was there any competition or friction between, there is an expression, town and gown?

BK: Town was a rough place, and I don't recall frequent visits. There were no restaurants to speak of. There were no restaurants, period. There were one or two right off the campus, but there was a movie theater. I think there still is, the State [Theatre]. There were no good hotels. It was a rough place … I knew few students who made it a practice to go there. Usually, on the weekends, you hung out at Douglass.

SH: Really?

BK: A lot of guys did.

SH: First, I want to finish about WCTC and being downtown. Was WCTC made up primarily of Rutgers students?

BK: No, no, no. It was not. It was mostly professional broadcasters, people with deep, mellow voices. I don't know how I fit in, but I was cheap. There were one or two Rutgers people, students.

SH: I wondered if WCTC went to WRSU looking for people to work there.

BK: No, no.

SH: You applied for this job.

BK: I think that job, again, was handed down to me by William Liss. Give him credit. He had that job.

SH: How often would you go to WCTC?

BK: At times, daily.

SH: Really?

BK: Yes. I don't know how I fit all this in. …

SH: [laughter] You must have been a better student than you thought you were.

BK: … That was one of the summers I stayed here, when I started work for them, so it was daily there, since I didn't have [W]RSU and I didn't have the fraternity.

SH: You talked about spending weekends at Douglass. Did they still have the curfews?

BK: They sure did.

SH: [laughter] What was the attraction to Douglass? Was there a student union or a particular girl?

BK: You mean why they imposed that?

SH: Why did you find yourself at Douglass?

BK: That's all there was. [laughter] If you wanted a date, that was … where you went.

SH: When you were hanging out at Douglass, were you hanging out at the student union?

BK: Student union, or there were certain times you could go into the lower floors of certain dormitories. I don't have a lot of strong memories about it. I just … know that it was there.

SH: [laughter] If WCTC was between your sophomore and junior year, what did you do between your junior and senior year. …

BK: You're asking me to be more specific than I probably could be. …

SH: I wondered if you remembered where you spent the summer.

BK: I was actually at, because of the poor grades, early on, I was actually here for five years.

SH: Okay.

BK: So, I started in '57 … with the Class of '61, but ended up, because I had transferred to journalism and had to make up courses that I had missed as a science major, that I graduated with the Class of '62.

SH: Okay. All right.

BK: So, it was actually five years.

SH: I did not realized that.

BK: No, I hadn't said it. [laughter] I was trying to avoid it.

SH: Oh, I am sorry. We started talking before about you changing your major. You talked about going in and having the dean tell you that maybe you should look for a different major.

BK: … He was right.

SH: [laughter] When he proposed this, was it just a natural move to journalism, because you were involved with WRSU?

BK: That's right. It made the most sense, since I already knew some of the basic precepts, although I later … realized that broadcasting and print journalism are quite different, quite different.

SH: We can talk about that later. When you made the move to the journalism classes, did you enjoy school more?

BK: I did. It turned out I was very interested in journalism, which my extracurricular activities had already shown. So, yes, I ate up the journalism courses. I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the professors.

SH: Did you have a favorite professor? …

BK: Ken …

SH: … In the sciences?

BK: No, but I did in journalism.

SH: I was going to say Ken Jennings.

BK: [Kenneth] "Ken" [Q.] Jennings, [RC '25] absolutely, a crusty, real journalist, well, not crusty, but …

SH: He was working full-time, was he not, when he was teaching here?

BK: At *The Home News*, absolutely. So was his wife, [Viola W. Jennings]. I just met his son for the first time. Peter? David?

SH: It is Dr. [Paul] "Pete" [B.] Jennings, [RC '45].

BK: Pete, and his wife, so, we talked about his father for a period of time.

SH: [laughter] We talked about women being involved in the programs at WRSU.

BK: There were women in my classes.

SH: Were there women from Douglass?

BK: Yes.

SH: You had said there were also women in …

BK: Well, I'm trying to think clearly now. I believe there were some, in classes that were not given at Douglass. …

SH: That is what I understand was the trade-off.

BK: … [These were courses] that … the women were allowed to [take]. I don't know why they segregated it that much, even in those days.

SH: Did men take courses at Douglass?

BK: I believe so, where the courses were not available on the Rutgers campus.

SH: That had already started then.

BK: I'm fuzzy on that.

SH: Okay.

BK: I can't imagine that they didn't. I mean, that would have been like a second-class education for both, when there were courses available. …

SH: What were some of the things that you remember about your journalism classes? Were there different assignments or things that really stick out in your mind?

BK: The one thing I remember is that Ken Jennings, I actually didn't think this was too good [of] an idea, one of the … regular assignments was to collect stories about town meetings, local town events, about meeting of the city water planning commission, and we were supposed to clip those out, because the way things worked in journalism, that's how you started in your first jobs. You were writing obituaries and attending … a meeting of the "Citizens Against Dirty Streets" and things like that. So, you had to know who, what, when, why, and where, regarding things like that, local coverage, which nobody does anymore. … I was already above all that. That's beneath me, so I didn't appreciate that very much, but I could see the … usefulness of it.

SH: Did you take a photographer with you when you were reporting?

BK: No, not for broadcasting.

SH: Okay.

BK: There was no TV.

SH: No, I meant [laughter] …

BK: I mean, there was TV, but not in what I …

SH: I mean, when you were working for *The Home News* with Dr. Jennings.

BK: I wasn't. You mean, the *Herald Tribune*.

SH: I should have said the *Herald Tribune*.

BK: I, occasionally, would take a camera. I don't recall ever having a picture-taking possibility though. … It wasn't a daily job. It was whenever news came along, I would phone them and say, "I've got a story on such-and-such. Do you want to take it?" and I would dictate the story.

SH: Did you ever work for *The Home News*?

BK: No, never. I read it and thought it was a good paper. It was called *The New Brunswick Home News* then [now *Home News Tribune*].

SH: Really?

BK: Now, it's a wider audience. …

SH: Before we took our pause, we were talking about Douglass and why that was a good place to hang out on weekends.

BK: I should add that at the fraternity, most of our social functions were at the fraternity.

SH: Were they?

BK: So, yes, we used to have parties pretty regularly, especially on football weekends, and, of course, the big dance events, we always had separate parties.

SH: Where would you go to be housed, because I heard that men would leave their dorms?

BK: Well, in the dorms, you just moved into another dorm, and they would set aside your dorm for women guests who were visiting for the weekend. Of course, their boyfriends were not allowed in that building either. So, I would have to, as a freshman, I would have to just move into Demarest Hall or something like that. … The same with the fraternity, the men moved out for at least one night, and their dates moved in.

SH: When you were on campus, did you have a car?

BK: No, no one had. …

SH: Really?

BK: Cars were very limited.

SH: Were they?

BK: Restrictions were pretty heavy, but I didn't have a license, at that point, either.

SH: Were there any veterans here on the GI Bill from Korea?

BK: Yes. There was a guy on student council, who was here on the GI Bill, but … I don't know if it was Korea. That would have been … well, he was slightly ahead of me. Steve Beal [was] his name … and he was definitely, he was in his thirties, so he was definitely a veteran, and a very popular guy, very active, but I don't know if he was, I couldn't swear that he was here on the GI Bill. We were pretty much past that. They had all come and gone.

SH: … The Korean War ended in 1953, so I wondered if there were any …

BK: It's possible. It's possible.

SH: … veterans at Rutgers when you were there.

BK: It's possible.

SH: With the Air Force ROTC that you were involved with, how extensive was that training?

BK: There were classes on subjects so minor that I don't even remember what they were. [laughter] … Frankly, they were mostly recruiting efforts, to tell you what a good life it is in the military and [that] they needed college graduates. I mean, that's why they did it, why the military did it. I found them interesting, but not memorable.

SH: Why did you choose the Air Force ROTC, as opposed to the Army?

BK: It's a good choice. It's all I can [say], I don't know.

SH: All right. …

BK: … We got to go on air trips … to bases. I went to Shaw Air Force Base on a [Fairchild C-119] Flying Boxcar with the rest of my ROTC class.

SH: Did you really?

BK: Yeah. In a Flying Boxcar, which is, literally, what it was. It was one of those planes with two tails and a big cabin in the middle, and that's about all there was, and the wings.

SH: Did you depart from McGuire Air Force Base or Fort Dix or Newark Airport?

BK: I don't know. I don't remember. … Probably McGuire, because I don't think you could fly a Flying Boxcar out of LaGuardia [Airport] or …

SH: Newark.

BK: Newark.

SH: Was there something romantic about Air Force ROTC?

BK: Probably. Well, as I mentioned, my … two uncles had been in the Air Corps … during the war, but I don't think that played a part. It may have been "eeny-meeny-miny-moe," but it was more glamorous.

SH: What was talk about the space program?

BK: None. There was no, not even an inkling of a space program. … Well, there was no Sputnik.

SH: Not yet?

BK: Not yet. Maybe that was that year, my freshman year. I remember no talk about a space program.

SH: Okay.

BK: The only talk that came out of Sputnik was we had to increase and improve the teaching of science … in schools. … [Editor's Note: In 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first Sputnik satellite, which orbited the earth. In addition to initiating the space age, the event signified the Soviets as world leaders in space technology and led to increasing competition between the US and Soviet Union in developing the technology necessary to achieve space exploration.]

SH: Kennedy was the president who pushed the space program.

BK: That would be '59, during the election, and then he carried forward after he was elected. When I was in school, I don't recall [any discussion].

SH: [laughter] Okay. Fair enough. You made that decision to go into journalism, and you said how you had to pick up the extra credits for journalism. Were you thinking that you could combine the careers of journalism and science, because you said before that you ended up writing about science? Was that something that you started to try to do right away?

BK: Well, … I went to [Columbia] after Rutgers. I went to Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, and one of the reasons, my grades were not that great, so one of the reasons they chose me for the class was … my extracurricular activities, working in the various things that we've discussed. … The other reason was that I got a recommendation from one of the faculty advisors … for WRSU, who had been there while I was the news editor, *etcetera*, and, well, that's it.

SH: Did Dr. Jennings commend you to Columbia? Did he recommend that you go on to graduate school?

BK: No, no. It was just my own [decision]. I don't think he got involved.

SH: I wondered why Columbia. …

BK: I got very good grades in journalism, so I think Columbia was more concerned and did question me about my earlier grades.

SH: Why did you pick Columbia?

BK: Oh, it's the best journalism school … around. … Again, as I said before, I'm not a big planner, so it wasn't the end of the world. I figured it wouldn't hurt to try, so, even though the tuition there was 750 dollars a semester. …

SH: [laughter] Still.

BK: No, still, now it's …

SH: Well, no, I meant that the tuition was still so low compared to now.

BK: Yes. Well, the universities were not research universities. They were learning centers and things, professors got nothing in pay, so they provided a good deal.

SH: What did your parents think of your decision to go to graduate school?

BK: Oh, they backed me all the way.

SH: Did you live at home and commute into New York?

BK: No, no. I never did that. I actually lived in Manhattan and had a [room]. …

SH: Was there graduate student housing there?

BK: There was. It was a SRO [single room occupancy] hotel … that the university had just bought, and what an SRO hotel is, is for homeless people and things like that. In this case, there were still a bunch of prostitutes who had lived in this SRO hotel, and the university had not quite cleared them out before they started letting students in. So, I got to stay in a dormitory that had some other occupants.

SH: [laughter] That must have been interesting, given that you came from Rutgers College where the women only came in after you were gone in 1972.

BK: That's right. That's right. It was a whole different thing.

SH: Were there classmates, friends or fraternity brothers that you let know about your move to Columbia. … [laughter]

BK: No, no, no.

SH: … Going to Columbia, how different was that? Was it what you expected?

BK: It was very much like I expected. What I didn't expect was … how enthusiastic I would be, because unlike undergraduate, in graduate school you all know that that's what you want to do, and that's all you talk about. We, twenty-four-seven, we didn't use that phrase, but … that's what we talked about. [When] I was there, some of my classmates were working at *The New York Times*, during the Cuban Missile Crisis in '63, and so they would come back at night and they would talk about this, all these hush-hush meetings, because the government, the Kennedy Administration, was trying to keep it secret, and *The Times* knew that … something was going on serious in Cuba, that we had spy flights going over, and … *The Times* had an inkling of it, so there was a lot of very hush-hush going on. Later, I actually got a job at *The New York Times* as a copy boy … [Editor's Note: In October of 1962, American reconnaissance flights revealed the construction of Soviet missile installations in Cuba, which sparked the thirteen-day Cuban

Missile Crisis. President John F. Kennedy organized an "Executive Committee" of the National Security Council to deal with the crisis that brought the Soviet Union and United States to the brink of war. In the end, the Soviets removed their missiles from Cuba, in exchange for the US removing missile installations in Turkey.]

SH: Did you?

BK: … I started work, this was during school, at eight o'clock at night, and at midnight, when my shift ended, my first night on the job, I had to walk out past picket lines at the beginning of a strike, a newspaper strike in New York that affected all newspapers, that lasted for like the next fifteen months, so I never went back to *The New York Times*. They called me and asked me to come in, and I said, "No, I can't cross the picket lines." I was still pretty ethical about that. I probably wouldn't do it today either.

SH: [laughter] Was this something that was discussed in journalism school?

BK: The strike?

SH: Yes.

BK: Oh, yes. Sure. … That strike was the death knell for like half a dozen newspapers in New York. New York used to have like a dozen newspapers … and in the years that followed that strike, they just one by one [collapsed].

SH: Was this in 1963?

BK: '63 through '64. I don't know exactly how long it lasted, but it was a long time.

SH: There was still a draft going on.

BK: Oh, yes.

SH: Was this something that you were concerned about?

BK: Absolutely, and it's why I joined the Army Reserves, to avoid the draft, to pick.

SH: When did you do that?

BK: This was after graduate school. I got a job with the AP [The Associated Press] in Newark. … I had three job offers, *The Providence Journal*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and AP, and the two newspapers were offering like eighty-five dollars a week, before taxes [laughter] and social security. … While I was at Rutgers, I had been a stringer for the AP from WCTC. In other words, we would get a story and I would phone it into the AP, which is how the AP operates, its members phone in breaking stories. That's still the way they work, although AP has a lot more reporters who do first-rate reporting themselves today. So, the AP offered me 119 dollars a week, which was almost thirty-five dollars more a week, which was a consideration, so I took the

job with AP in the Newark Bureau. [Editor's Note: The Associated Press is a not-for-profit, cooperative global news agency that gathers and distributes news stories to member and subscriber media outlets.]

SH: Did you continue to live in New York?

BK: No. At that point, I got an apartment in Newark, near the office. It was downtown, right near Military Park and right near the new Rutgers campus. After about year at the AP, I knew that my draft number was coming, and a friend of mine from Columbia Journalism School had faced that same decision, and so he joined the Army, or may have actually been drafted and then saw that he could go to language school, if he signed up for six years, which is what happened. They sent him to Russian language school at Monterey [Army Language School], so he was a Russian linguist and in top secret work for the Army, which he still doesn't talk about. [laughter] So, when my turn came, I went to a[n] Army Reserve unit at Fort Monmouth, a friend had told me about it, where they specialized in teletype, operating teletype machines, which was the way you messaged by wire in those days. That was the email of the day, and everybody, including the newspapers and the wire services, used teletype machines. So, the recruiting sergeant gives me the talk about, "You'll go in for six months and you'll be trained as a teletype repair man." So, at that point, I'd been with the AP and I figured, "Well, it wouldn't hurt to learn how to operate a telex machine." [It would] always come in handy, how to read the tape, the punch tape, that these things made, and I'm leaving the office and he says, this is after he knew I had a graduate degree, … he said, "You wouldn't be interested in going to language school, would you?" So, immediately I signed up for that, and they sent me for an Army language aptitude test at Fort [Jay], the Army fort that was on … the island [Governors Island] in New York Harbor, where the big fort is, right next to the Staten Island Ferry. After I took the language aptitude test, they offered me the choice of Chinese or Russian, and I would only have to serve on active duty for fourteen months. I think, two months in basic training and then a year in language school and then I'd be out. All I'd have to do afterward is attend Reserve meetings. So, I ended up at Monterey with my friend, who had signed up in the Army for for six years, learning Russian. I was learning Chinese

SH: I was going to ask which language.

BK: So, I spent a year immersed in Chinese, which has come in handy over the years, and that later led to my assignments in Asia for the AP and for *The Wall Street Journal*, so I've served … [a] total [of] about ten years in Asia.

SH: Was this around 1966 that you enlisted?

BK: I was in language school in '64 and '65, so it was earlier. So, after graduate school, I graduated in '63, spent about a year at the AP, and then during '64, went into the Reserves and finished language school in '65, in late '65, and I'm leaving stuff out, but my mind is slipping, after the garlic at lunch.

SH: [laughter] When you went down to Fort Monmouth and signed up for the Reserves, did they call you up right away?

BK: I think it went pretty quick. They have what they call, classes enter, so I got put on a schedule right away.

SH: Did you fly out to Monterey, or did you take a train?

BK: No, we, they flew us. They get cheap tickets on things like Allegheny Airlines, which doesn't exist anymore, so you land about eighteen times, but I think the trip to Monterey was on United, but I think … even that stopped several times.

SH: Did you connect with your friend who was studying Russian?

BK: I did, yes. I'm still very friendly with him. He lives in Boston now.

SH: Were you an officer?

BK: No, no. I was an enlisted man.

SH: I wondered with your degrees if you were an officer.

BK: No, he, my friend was. When he signed up for the six years, they made him a lieutenant.

SH: You were interested in that shorter period of time.

BK: I didn't want to spend a long time in there, and they were going to teach me a language. …

SH: Where did you go for basic training?

BK: Fort Dix.

SH: Was it regular basic training?

BK: Yes. That was one of the main basic training centers, tens of thousands of people going through basic training then.

SH: Was it tough to have to do something like that, after having been in college?

BK: No, no. … After being non-athletic, no, but I did get called things by the other kids, "Pops," because I was twenty, what was I? twenty-four, twenty-five. …

SH: I was wondering how old you were, because you were young getting out of high school.

BK: Well, it came back to haunt me, because after I got out of language school, I went back to AP, and they sent me to … work on the general desk in New York as a[n] editor. … The general desk is the desk that handles the main newswires of the AP, at that time. At that time, it was all teletype machines. There were no computers, so I would have to decide which stories were

going out, and edit them with paper and pencil before they went out; make sure that they went out on the right wires, etc., etc. These were stories coming in from bureaus of the AP around the world, and the foreign desk would send over a bulletin and I'd have to jam that onto the wire. [laughter] Nowadays, they just code the stories on the computer, which routes them to customers all over the [globe] … and you don't have to ration the copy like we did when they used slow-moving, clacking teletype machines, because today's computers move copy almost instantaneously and the capacity is nearly unlimited.

SH: So you did not learn how to use the telex in the Army.

BK: No. … I did, but at AP, just because I wanted to know. We weren't allowed to touch the teletypes for work, because of the unions. I was not in the union, whose members "punched" the stories on the teletype machines.

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: … That type of thing followed me through my career. The unions really made it tough. At *The Wall Street Journal*, I was once at the printing plant helping to lay out a special section, and I needed to Xerox something. I was not allowed to. The union boss came over and said, "Let me do that," and he Xeroxed it. … It's a lot of feather-bedding, a lot of make-work. … Anyway, coming back to the language school, I went back to the AP, and they sent me to Vietnam. I was in Vietnam for two years, with AP, covering the war. … [Editor's Note: In 1954, Vietnamese forces defeated French military forces at Dien Bien Phu, signifying the end of French colonial rule of Indochina. The Geneva Accords sought a temporary partition of Vietnam along the 17th Parallel and elections to unify the country under a single government, but the post-colonial era witnessed two nations forming, Communist North Vietnam and anti-communist, US-backed South Vietnam. As the Cold War policy of containment compelled the US to oppose Communist aggression in Asia, the US started sending military advisors and financial assistance to South Vietnam in the 1950s and early 1960s. After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, the US steadily escalated its military involvement in aiding South Vietnam against the North Vietnamese and Communist South Vietnamese insurgents, the National Liberation Front or Viet Cong (VC). In 1973, the United States withdrew its military forces, having failed to solve the internal divisions in Vietnam. By 1975, South Vietnamese forces collapsed, and Vietnam reunited as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam under the Communist North Vietnamese regime.]

SH: What years were you there?

BK: '67 and '68, during the Tet Offensive. Unfortunately, at Tet I was out of the country on R&R [rest and rehabilitation]. I was in Hong Kong, when the Tet Offensive hit, and had to sneak back into Vietnam through Thailand, because all the airports were closed, and, literally, [I] had to come into Vietnam illegally, but that's a whole other story … We're not going to make it through the two hours, if I start telling stories. Later, the Vietnamese tried to throw me out, because I had come in illegally, but there were no customs or anybody at the airport to check you in, to stamp your passport. [Editor's Note: In January 1968, the North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong launched surprise attacks on over one hundred cities and towns in South Vietnam, violating the Tet [Lunar New Year] holiday cease-fire. Although US and South Vietnamese

forces repelled the attacks and incurred heavy casualties upon the enemy, the Tet Offensive was a major turning point in the Vietnam War. The US military suffered heavy criticism for failing to foresee the Tet Offensive, which was well planned, coordinated and executed. [Though the offensive was a military failure for the Communists, it added to growing antiwar feeling in the US and helped lead to the American pullout in 1973.]

SH: Its borders were all fairly porous at that time.

BK: For the Viet Cong it was, and the North Vietnamese, but not for journalists.

SH: Really?

BK: Well, the attitudes were already changing toward journalists. Journalists were seen as unfriendly, although it didn't reach the levels that it did after Tet, when the US government and the press were just at war with each other, and elements of that have continued to this day, although most of the soldiers are younger and don't really have a memory, a group memory, of that, so relations are a little better now. … I don't think the press really turned against the war until after Tet when … the country turned against the Vietnam War.

SH: Going over to Vietnam in '67, as you did, and being involved in the newspaper industry, and having been in the military, how were you hearing about the war? In '64 and '65, America was really just beginning to hear about the war, and you were in the military then.

BK: Yes.

SH: What were you hearing in the military, as opposed to what everyone else was hearing? Was it different?

BK: There wasn't a lot of anti-war feeling, in those years. I can remember having a long, more of an argument than a discussion, with my leftist relatives from California about the war, and I staunchly defended the right for us to protect South Vietnam from being taken over by the Communist North, and of course, they argued. I still, to this day, believe we should have helped defend South Vietnam, but it's not as clear-cut as that. We have to reach a point where, is it worth 58,000 lives, our lives, and millions of their lives to pretend to protect the world against the falling dominoes, and since we lost that war, the dominos have not fallen? [Editor's Note: In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower likened the spread of communism in Asia to falling dominos.] If anything, most of the Communist states today have turned into capitalist bastions, who threaten us more as capitalists than they ever did as Communists, economically. So, I think it was we didn't know anything about Vietnam. That was another problem. … It's also where I learned that governments lie. Governments lie routinely, and the whole press learned that, at that point. The Pentagon Papers came out, and you learned that our … involvement was a lot more problematic than the press and the public had been led to believe. The light at the end of the tunnel didn't exist. The pacification of the coun[try], two weeks before Tet, they came out with charts and graphs and numbers, showing that 89.62 percent of the country had been pacified, and they had this down to the village level, with little flags, and two weeks later, the whole thing falls apart. So, they were not only lying, but they were fooling themselves. This was not worth the

fight, but that lesson has been lost. We got into Iraq, I'm not saying it's wrong or right, but there was very little opposition to it in Congress, in the press, until later, until it didn't go well. [Editor's Note: The Pentagon Papers refers to the top-secret study commissioned by the US Department of Defense, to evaluate US involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967. A Defense Department analyst leaked details of the study to *The New York Times*, which began publishing stories about the Pentagon Papers in 1971. After a battle between the government and press over First Amendment rights versus national security, publications regarding the Pentagon Papers revealed that military operations in Vietnam were carried out on a much more extensive scale than the government had divulged to the public. The US government lost credibility, and public sentiment reflected the widespread belief that the government perpetrated many lies regarding the Vietnam War. Pacification refers to the US security and counterinsurgency measures in South Vietnam.]

SH: Right.

BK: So, those lessons have not been maintained, to be more skeptical of what governments say, to look beyond the, you can only call it propaganda. … Before I leave that story …

SH: Please.

BK: … I wrote some stories at AP, which … Washington was not happy about. I covered mostly politics and economics in Vietnam for the AP, and I wrote some stories involving the diversion of US aid supplies and military supplies onto the black market, just being stolen, and I also wrote about drug trafficking within the South Vietnamese government, like things we see today in Afghanistan. … [Editor's Note: Drug trafficking in Southeast Asia and South Asia surged following the Vietnam War. While US and NATO forces have waged war against terrorist forces and their Taliban allies in Afghanistan since 2003, Afghanistan has surpassed Myanmar as the world's leading producer of opium.]

SH: This is in '67? …

BK: In 1968. Although not on that level, not at the level of Afghanistan, this was just officials in the government loading suitcases with heroin and taking them on foreign trips or whatever. … Within two weeks of that story, *The New York Times* picked up one of those stories and ran it on the front page with a byline, an AP byline, with my name, and that is unusual. The AP was ecstatic; that never happened. … Within two weeks of that, because I was still a Reservist, and I was on inactive Reserve, because there were no Reserve meetings in Vietnam, I got called up punitively, supposedly for not attending Reserve meetings … as I was obligated to do. … Before I left to … work in Vietnam, I had been put in a standby Reserve unit, because I was going to be out of the country, so it was all done above board. … I was called up, and no amount of appeals would change their minds, so I volunteered to serve, I had to serve the remainder of a two-year term, a draft enlistment, so that means I had to serve nine more months. So, I said, "Well, let me serve in Vietnam with the Army, be happy to do it. I have skills you can use. I even speak Chinese. I can work in the Chinese listening post in Da Nang," [the] China listening post. "No, sorry, can't do it. We don't have your MOS here," military occupational specialty, which was Chinese translator/interpreter.

SH: So this was in 1968.

BK: This is the end of '68, around October. … So, then I got in touch with the commander of US forces in Taiwan. We still had military in Taiwan. Recognizing China instead of Taiwan was ten years off, at that point. So, he requested me for his PR department … [Editor's Note: Until the US recognized the Communist People's Republic of China in 1979, the US recognized the non-Communist Republic of China in Taiwan as being the official government of China.]

SH: How did you get in touch with the commander?

BK: You just call someone who knows somebody who knows someone.

SH: Okay. [laughter]

BK: … So, he requested me, and the Pentagon turned him down. So, it was obviously not only do they want me out of Vietnam, they wanted me out of the theater completely, so I spent the next nine months as a specialist fifth class, but only after I earned it, because when you're called up punitively, they bust you down to private, not PFC [private first class], but private. …

SH: Really?

BK: … Which is what you are when you go into basic training.

SH: So it actually says on your record that it was a punitive call-up?

BK: Oh, yes, … for not attending Reserve meetings. … At that point, AP did not want to fight it, because they didn't relish getting into a battle with the government over little old me. So, I served nine months at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, working for a special forces unit in charge of a group that wrote psychological profiles of various foreign leaders and governments and countries that could be used by a psychological operations unit [psyops] at Fort Bragg to write and produce propaganda leaflets, in case we went to war with the country I was working on, or my group was working on, Iran, France, I mean, they had contingencies for everything. You never know. So, which prime minister liked to sleep with little girls, all this semi-secret, gossipy stuff, from which propaganda leaflets could be written. My group didn't write the leaflets, but they wrote the studies from which this information was drawn, and it was all from CIA documents and newspaper clips, and marked, "Top Secret," the *LA Times*, "Top Secret." [laughter] … That's how I spent nine months, but I got an Army commendation medal. They raised, in one fell swoop, they raised me to a spec five, which is four … steps … above private and then I got out and went back to AP briefly to work on the, something called the world desk, which provided news to foreign newspapers.

SH: Was this in New York?

BK: In New York … right next to the general desk, where I had worked before. … While I was in Vietnam for AP, I had become good friends with Peter Kann, who was a journalist then, a

young journalist, for *The Wall Street Journal*. Eventually, he won a Pulitzer Prize, but not for Vietnam, for Pakistan and Bangladesh, years later, great writer. … I was writing letters to him and telling him how unhappy I was at AP, after getting out of the military, so he, unbeknownst to me, recommended me to *The Journal*, and that's how I was hired at *The Journal*. [Editor's note: Peter Kann received the Pultizer Prize in 1972 for international reporting of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. He later became chairman of Dow Jones and Company, publishers of The Wall Street Journal.]

SH: Why were you unhappy at AP?

BK: Well, first of all, when I left graduate school, when I left Columbia, I was told, "AP's a great place to get started, to learn the ropes," really learn them, where you could write a story off the top of your head, just … looking at your notes; get on the phone, "Got a new lead," and you'd just read it off, which I did very well, after a couple of years. I was a total of five years at the AP. So, *The Journal* hired me, and I, for six years, I was a science writer-- science and medicine-- at *The Journal*, bringing back my old interest with my new job and had a lot of fun doing that … but kept asking, "Can I go to Asia?" for *The Journal*. … When Peter Kann, who had won the Pulitzer by then was appointed editor-in-chief of the new Asian *Wall Street Journal*, which was started up in early '76, I was named to replace him as Asia Correspondent for the *US Journal*, with my home base in Hong Kong.

SH: Really.

BK: It's still there, still publishes, and there's another one in Europe. It's *The Wall Street Journal Asia* and *The Wall Street Journal Europe*.

SH: Okay.

BK: … They still publish, even though the paper is now owned by Rupert Murdoch and News Corp [News Corporation], and I still work for them, the Asian *Journal*, by computer. I edit a weekly column for them and … do … other work. So, I was sent out to Asia, based in Hong Kong, covering about thirty-two countries, not every day obviously, but mostly feature-writing. There wasn't a lot of spot news. There was no business news out of Asia, in those days. There was no business, not like the economies you see today in Singapore and South Korea and elsewhere …

SH: You did not see …

BK: These were very Third World countries then, all of them.

SH: You did not see any development percolating.

BK: There was none. … There was nothing percolating.

SH: Okay.

BK: If it wasn't, if the countries weren't Communist, they were very autocratic. Singapore was like a friendly dictatorship. Everything was state planning. India was impossible. Businessmen couldn't even increase production without government approval. If he is selling more, he wasn't allowed, the government would not allow him, because it would upset the whole raw-material system.

SH: Were you physically going to these countries?

BK: Yes. … I was traveling more than half the year, which is not as wonderful as it sounds, but that's what I did, and mostly writing features, the occasional spot news stories, like when China and Vietnam had a border war, after the Vietnam War, so I covered that on a daily basis from Hong Kong. You couldn't get any [closer]. You couldn't get close. … The occasional business story, but nothing really heavy, like it is today. [Editor's Note: In February 1979, the People's Republic of China launched a twenty-nine day invasion of the Sino-Vietnamese border region of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Vietnam's incursion into Cambodia in 1978, Vietnamese cooperation with the Soviet Union, and other geopolitical issues prompted the Chinese invasion, which ended in withdrawal and led to tense relations and continuing border conflict between the two nations over the next decade.]

SH: Did you maintain your fluency in Chinese?

BK: I wouldn't call it fluency, by that point. It came in useful, let's put it that way. I could read signs … up to a certain extent. I could order in restaurants, but I could not conduct a political interview or even an economic interview. I would need a translator, but it helps to know some of what's being said, to double check and see if the translation is way off base. …

SH: Would that be something that you could do, to hire and fire a translator?

BK: Oh, yes. We all had the ability to. … You had to. You had to have translators. In my coverage area, I was dealing with dozens of different languages, even within a single country.

SH: Would you know if that translator was good?

BK: Well, I never had one that I found was misleading me. … I've heard of it happening, but … these were not those kind of situations. I think some of them were surprised at the depth of the questioning that I was asking, because I was no longer a wire service reporter. I was a feature-writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, which specialized in these very in-depth … long-form features that started on page one and then jumped inside, sometimes for a whole page inside, and they take a long time to do. They had the rules, like every sentence has to have a new fact in it, supposedly, but the writing had to be clear, focused. We had what was called, in those days, an anecdotal lead, which a lot of stories had. They've gotten away from that, because it became sort of a cliché, and the rest of the press adopted it, where you start with the microcosm as an example of the macro-story that you're then going to tell them, but you have to tell them what the macro-story is pretty high up. You can't lead them on for half a column of type. Otherwise, the reader loses interest, but that's the, it's *The Journal* that originated that style, and now you see it in every paper in the country.

SH: What were some of the stories that you remember from that time?

BK: Oh, yes, so many. … I wrote one of the first stories on how the corruption system worked in the [Ferdinand] Marcos government in the Philippines, which was one of the countries I covered. Everybody knew that … Marcos was corrupt; to the extent of billions of dollars taken out of the economy and probably secreted away in Swiss bank accounts, and even skyscrapers in New York were bought and sold by the Marcos family, and, of course, Imelda [Marcos, wife of Ferdinand Marcos] had her 3,000 pairs of designer shoes. [laughter] I did something I would have done as a reporter covering pharmaceutical companies in New York, which is what I did on the science beat. [I] covered a lot of companies in this area, like Merck, but that was part of the science beat at *The Journal*, which is a business publication. Where was I?

SH: You were saying …

BK: … So, I went to the Securities and Exchange Commission in Manila, actually … not in Manila, in the actual federal capitol Makati City, which part of Metro Manila, it's where all the banks are, and Marcos had gotten in the habit of issuing decrees, mostly economic decrees. He was a dictator.

SH: Right.

BK: There was a legislature, but he just wrote decrees. So, I got the files with all these, almost 2,000 decrees he had issued, and started looking closely at them, and what he was doing was putting the companies of his cronies at an advantage over companies owned by people who weren't part of his circle. He was literally putting those other companies out of business with these decrees. For example, one Philippine company made cigarette filters, or they supplied filters to Philippine-made cigarette companies, and to do this, they had to import this filter material from Switzerland or somewhere, so Marcos issues a decree … raising the duty on these filters 2,000 percent, putting them out of business, and his crony's company then could import it, I never found a decree but, probably duty-free. He did a lot of that. So, I just got a couple dozen examples and wrote a story. This is how cronyism, corrupt cronyism, [worked]. His overthrow didn't happen for several years more, but that was the start of it, I think, and I've always taken credit for that, [laughter] because people finally … didn't have to just gossip. They had some facts to go on. [Editor's Note: Ferdinand Marcos was the president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986; during which time the Philippines suffered from rampant government corruption. Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, embezzled billions in public funds and funneled the money into the United States and Switzerland. It is estimated that the Marcoses stole between five and ten billion dollars. In 1986, allegations of corruption and assassination, widespread opposition, and a popular uprising caused Marcos to flee to Hawaii, where he was exiled until his death.]

SH: You provided the evidence.

BK: … *The New York Times* followed up on that article, actually stole part of it. …

SH: Really?

BK: Just included, yes, it's called plagiarism. …

SH: [laughter] I was going to say, there is a word for that.

BK: Because to match it, they would have had to spend three, four weeks in the SEC files, like I did, and at *The Journal* you're allowed to do that, without filing every day or even every week, if you want.

SH: You talked about the pharmaceutical industry. Was that at all a part of your role as a journalist in Asia?

BK: No. I did do some medical stories in Asia. I did one on the cholera research laboratory in Bangladesh, where I'm interviewing the docs; these were all American doctors who ran this research facility. Cholera is not a dangerous disease, easily treated. … You don't need antibiotics, all you need is this fluid they give babies with diarrhea, pediatric [Pedialyte]. It's got electrolytes in it, salt, potassium, manganese, whatever, regular table salt. [Editor's Note: The bacterium *Vibrio cholerae* causes infection of the intestines, which, in severe cases, may lead to watery diarrhea, vomiting and life-threatening dehydration. In developing nations with poor water and sanitation systems, cholera outbreaks usually result from contaminated water and subsequently spread through the feces of infected individuals.]

SH: Pedialyte, I think it is called.

BK: You give that to someone with cholera, and the body takes care of the cholera and you're well. You're up and walking in a couple of days. People die because they get so dehydrated with diarrhea that their system shuts down. So, that was the treatment, and the problem for the research lab was how to get this solution available around Bangladesh, where cholera was a major cause of death. So, we're sitting in the cafeteria, during part of the interview, and I'm interviewing these guys, several doctors, and they're talking about how the disease is quite easily treated, and he says, "By the way, you see all these servers here and the cooks. They're all cholera patients." [laughter] … Then he said, "And there's a vaccine, but we don't think it works very well, so none of us get it," because they know they could treat themselves by drinking the adult equivalent of Pedialyte. [laughter] So, that was [a story.]

SH: Did you take a supply with you when you left the lab? [laughter]

BK: No, you could get it. You could get it. … The other problem was: what do you mix it with in Bangladesh? If the water's dirty, you're just going to re-infect [yourself], so that was a problem. So, they had to teach people to boil the water, before they mix up the solution, and not to put too much in it, because that could be bad, too. … Most people were illiterate, so they had to do it all with diagrams. So, that was a story.

SH: How did the conditions in the countries that you went to affect you and your work?

BK: I used to get sick every time I went to India, and it made it difficult to go to India a lot. Once, I was in the … it's the Taj … Hotel in Bombay, the one that was attacked … by the terrorists last year. … [Editor's Note: On November 28, 2008, Pakistani-trained terrorists attacked the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower in Mumbai, killing more than 167 people, injuring 293, and incurring major damage to the hotel. The assault was a part of a series of coordinated terrorist attacks in India perpetrated by Pakistani militants.]

SH: Oh, okay, it was the Taj.

BK: The Taj Mahal Hotel, big, fancy hotel on the waterfront in Bombay, or Mumbai, as they say now, and I got these severe abdominal pains and they kept getting worse and worse and worse. So, the house doctor was called and said, "You have classic kidney stones, because it travels from the front of your abdomen to your back, back toward the kidneys, so something's caught in the tube that carries urine to your bladder, or in the kidney itself." So, he gives me a shot of morphine, waits five minutes, nothing happens. So, he gives me a second shot, nothing happened. We got up to five shots and nothing was working, and so he called an ambulance. They were going [to the hospital]. He said, "I'm going to have to do exploratory surgery, because it may not be what we think it is." So, these two litter bearers arrive at my hotel room and they see me. I used to weigh more. I used to weigh 230 pounds, and I thought they were going to drop dead right there, but I was in so much pain that I wasn't thinking straight. … He said, "Let me give you one more shot," and maybe it was psychological, but the pain just vanished. The next day, I had to go for an X-ray, where they attach this soccer ball-like thing, strap it around your … abdomen, pull it real tight, and then give you a shot in the arm with a radio-opaque dye that lights up under X-ray, and then they start taking a series of X-ray pictures of your abdomen, around your kidneys, and they release the ball, so the dye shows where the blockage is as it descends from the kidneys to the bladder. Well, the doctor at the clinic, where they're taking these X-rays, pulls out this old, brass needle, hypodermic syringe, from the days the British Raj, the kind that jiggle when you shake them [laughter], sitting in a basin of antiseptic, and he brings the needle over to inject the dye, and I can see the hole in the tip of the needle. It is that big, and [he] starts jabbing into my vein and he can't get it into the vein, because at that point, I must have been totally dehydrated. … [He] keeps jabbing, jabbed about twelve times before he got it in, and then you [have] got this thing squeezed on your abdomen the whole time, so that's very uncomfortable. Then he takes, he brings out this old X-ray machine, from the days of Madame Curie [referring to Nobel Prize-winning physicist Marie Curie (1867-1934)], and starts taking pictures from behind a wall, to protect himself. [laughter] So then, I had to go back to Hong Kong. I figured, "I better get out." …

SH: Did he finally get it injected?

BK: Oh, yes. Yes, he took the pictures and gave me the pictures. Since the pain was gone, it was no urgent [medical issue]. So, I went back to Hong Kong, and the kidney specialist there looks at the pictures and he says, "These are useless. I can't see anything." It was a 1928 X-ray machine. So, I had to have a whole new series of pictures, but this [time] they used the modern hypodermic needle, it took zipity-split, and they got crystal clear pictures, and there was nothing there, nothing anybody could see, a little inflammation, that's it, and I never had a repeat, and that was 1979 or '80. … I seemed to get sick every time I went to India.

SH: It did not sound like a place to get sick.

BK: Well, no, they … have hospitals. Now, they have world-class hospitals. Then, they just had hospitals. You could get treated, and this doctor, who treated me in the hotel, was trained at Mount Sinai [Medical Center in New York].

SH: Oh, okay.

BK: In the kidney department, [laughter] which was good. …

SH: It was his specialty.

BK: Which was good.

SH: I am sure that there was just adventure after adventure, like that. …

BK: If I could remember them, yes.

SH: … When you were living in Hong Kong, were you living in a community of ex-patriots or other journalists?

BK: Not necessarily living with them, although there were several in the area. Socializing, yes. You were sort of cut out, unless you spoke Cantonese. You pretty much socialized with other journalists or members of [staff]. … By that time that I was there, I was reporting for the US paper, but the whole Asian *Wall Street Journal* had been set up, so they had about fifty people, many local Hong Kong Chinese also, so I had a wider … social circle than many American reporters there.

SH: Is that where *The Wall Street Journal Asia* … has its headquarters?

BK: For the Asian *Journal*, the Asian *Wall Street Journal*. It's still the headquarters today, but they now have printing plants in about eight cities around Asia, Tokyo and Bangkok and Manila. … A lot of censorship in those years. Papers would just be, pages would be ripped out, or blacked out, or the paper, the whole paper, stopped at the airport. They had to be …

SH: By the Chinese?

BK: By different governments. Singapore was especially bad, very autocratic in those years under Lee Kuan Yew [Prime Minister of Singapore, 1959-1990], who has since retired.

SH: Did you interview people in those kinds of positions?

BK: Oh, yes, yes. I'll get back to one of the interviews that involves Rutgers.

SH: Okay, sure.

BK: I covered Afghanistan, mostly before the Russian invasion [in December 1979].

SH: Really?

BK: … Two of the people I interviewed were the president [Nur Mohammad Taraki] and the prime minister [Hafizullah Amin] of Afghanistan in Kabul.

SH: So you were in Kabul.

BK: That would have been probably early '79. Oh, yes, I went into Kabul many times.

SH: Okay.

BK: It was a beautiful country back then.

SH: Was it?

BK: [Afghanistan was] very Islamic, very strict. Women were covered. If a woman appeared uncovered, like a journalist friend of mine did, she risked getting stoned. People threw stones at her, because she was wearing half sleeves, and she's also a blond. [laughter] So they threw stones, they literally threw stones at her, outside the hotel. … Anyway, so, I interviewed the president [Nur Mohammad Taraki] and the prime minister [Hafizullah Amin], who were both Communists, both probably put there by the Soviet Union, who maneuvered them into control. One of them that I interviewed, [Hafizullah Amin] we're talking; … after the interview, he got casual and he said, "You know, I went to college in the United States," and I said, "Oh, where?" and he said, "I went to Rutgers," and I said, "When were you at Rutgers?" and it turned out he was here when I was here.

SH: You are kidding.

BK: … During the conversation, I said, "Where did you live at Rutgers?" and he said, "In the graduate students' dorm on College Avenue, Ford Hall," right across the street from my fraternity house, so we were neighbors. So, anyway, a couple of months later, this guy, who, I think, was prime minister [Hafizullah Amin] kills the president [Nur Mohammad Taraki], assassinates him, trying to take over.

SH: Right. I remember that.

BK: The Russians considered the guy he killed [Nur Mohammad Taraki] more their guy than him [Hafizullah Amin], so they invaded, killed him, sent in an assassination squad, rubbed him out. So, we lost another Rutgers alumnus. … This guy also went to Columbia after Rutgers, as I did.

SH: Was he here as a graduate student?

BK: I think he was [a] graduate [student] at Columbia.

SH: So, he was an undergraduate here.

BK: He was a foreign student. He was a teacher in Afghanistan, at that point, so he was probably taking some kind of educational courses … probably paid for by the State Department. [Editor's Note: Hafizullah Amin graduated from Kabul University and studied at Columbia University. Amin headed the Kabul Teacher's College. Nur Mohammad Taraki earned a Master's degree at Columbia and a PhD at Harvard.]

SH: Did that connection make for more interviews?

BK: No, because the Russians invaded pretty soon after that [in December 1979] …

SH: Shortly after that …

BK: … Both of them are now gone. I don't know if I ever wrote that story. I don't think I had a place to put it. The Rutgers connection, it was interesting to me and it's interesting to Rutgers … [Editor's Note: Nur Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin were members of the Afghan Communist party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which formed in Afghanistan in 1965. In April 1978, a coup carried out by the PDPA overthrew the president of Afghanistan, installing Taraki as president. The Soviet Union played no direct role in the coup but supported the Afghan Communist regime with organizational assistance and military aid. In March 1979, Amin became prime minister and then overthrew and killed Taraki in September 1979. Amin was killed during the Soviet invasion. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 to support the unstable Communist government in Afghanistan and withdrew in 1989, defeated by the internationally-supported mujahideen.]

SH: Of course.

BK: … But not to *Wall Street Journal* readers.

SH: [laughter] You will have write about that. …

BK: I may have put in a line, saying, "who … received part of his education in the United States." I don't recall specifically, but you leave out a lot more from stories than you ever put in.

SH: Oh, I am sure. What kind of censorship …

BK: In Vietnam?

SH: Yes.

BK: It wasn't censorship, except that you could not report troop movements. … So, if an attack was imminent, and you knew about it, you could not report it. You wouldn't go to jail, but you'd lose your press credentials.

SH: Were you based in Saigon?

BK: I was based in [Saigon] for the AP in 1967 and 1968. I lived in Saigon for two years, an apartment on Rue Pasteur, about four blocks from the office, and got rocketed there. They fired these six-foot long rockets into Saigon, and they're flying right over my apartment house on the way to the National Assembly building, where they exploded and killed several people on the street, but it's like sitting at the end of an airport runway with a jet going over. … It was like five in the morning, and I was lying in bed and I heard these things start to come in. … I'm lying in bed and I'm thinking, "There's nothing I can do. If one of those comes through the roof, hiding under the bed is not going [help]." … So, as soon as they eased, I ran to the office to help cover the story.

SH: When your stories were submitted to …

BK: … There were big holes in the ground along the street, and there was one, Vietnam used to have little food stalls, right on the street. They had a little charcoal brazier and little stools about six inches high, and you sat and you had your *pho*, your noodle soup, in the morning, and it was delicious. It was really good. … I did see one of these women decapitated from these rockets. I covered another terrorist explosion at the police headquarters, actually at a coffee bar across the street where the bomb had been left at the food counter, underneath the stools, and when I got there, all you could see was the shoes of all the people who had been sitting there. Everything else was gone, except these charred shoes, lined up in a row. I think they were all police people in uniform, because the shoes looked like military boots. … I didn't cover a lot of actual … battles in Vietnam. As I said, I covered mostly politics and economics, so wherever Nguyen Van Thieu [President of South Vietnam, 1967-1975] or Nguyen Cao Ky [Prime Minister of South Vietnam, 1965-1967; Vice President of South Vietnam, 1967-1971] went, I would go along.

SH: How were you treated?

BK: Very well. Ky once gave me a private flight back to Saigon, from wherever we were, so I got to interview him. He was very publicity-conscious, very dashing man, and his wife was a former beauty queen.

SH: I remember seeing those stories.

BK: Thieu was much more reserved.

SH: Did you become jaded soon, later, never?

BK: No, you become very jaded, when you see that there is no light at the end of the tunnel, especially after Tet. I was still pretty much a supporter of the war. I saw things were going wrong, but I didn't see the basic problem, but after Tet, you started reading what everybody's writing, and it's clear that we had all been misled, and the country saw that, too, and that started the major disaffection with the war.

SH: Did you have access to the US commanders?

BK: Oh, absolutely, but it was all very formal and staged. You had what was called the "Four o'clock Follies," I think it was later the "Five o'clock Follies," [laughter] which was all these military briefers; you had the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, and JUSPAO, which was the Joint US Public Affairs Office, the flacks, and they would all get up, "Today Navy bombers attacked four weapons installations south of Hanoi," and did this and did that, or, "Today the Ninth Cavalry Division wiped out fourteen Vietcong infiltrators with no loss on our side," which was probably true, although we often suspected, and could never prove, that the US sort of rationed the figures on … our side, so you wouldn't have huge casualties on one day, because that would be the headline, but who could prove that? ["Flack" is a disparaging name used by journalists to describe public-relations people.]

SH: Right.

BK: … It probably never will be proved, if it was true.

SH: So reporters were not embedded with different units.

BK: No. There was no [embedding]. The practice of embedding came out of that system in Vietnam where the reporters had wide access. We all had military equivalent ranks. The higher up you were in the news business, if you were a bureau chief, you were a colonel, the equivalent of a colonel. I think I was a major, the equivalent of a major. So, that gave you transportation privileges. You could go out to the Tan Son Nhut Airport and get on a military flight to anywhere you wanted to go. If you wanted to go to Da Nang or Nha Trang or out in the, some military base, if they had room, they would take you, and they almost always had room. I mean, there were so many helicopters, or [go] on a plane. You could just get on a C-130 or other military aircraft. There were thousands of them. It also got you PX [post exchange] privileges. So, it was a PR [public relations] thing, but obviously, they decided later that was too much access, so they came out, for the first Iraq war [1990-1991], they came out with this embedded thing. It could be worse. It could be a lot worse. They seem to be getting stories out nowadays.

SH: Did you have photographers who traveled with you, or did you do your own photography?

BK: Both. The AP had a huge staff. *The Wall Street Journal*, of course, didn't run photographs in my day.

SH: Right.

BK: It runs drawings, so that was never a problem with *The Journal*. At the AP, they had scads of photographers, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographers, really great guys. Photographers are the gutsiest military reporters by far. A reporter, if he misses some action, can be filled in, by the military, by interviewing the military, by other reporters, who are happy to share what they saw. If a photographer misses the action, he's out of luck.

SH: That is true.

BK: He doesn't have anything to earn his salary with, and darn it, they were always there and they took a lot of risks doing that. Horst Faas, the Pultizer Prize-winning, twice Pulitzer Prize-winning, photographer for the … AP once was crouched, and they used to carry these cameras, maybe five, six of them, strapped around their neck at various lengths, so they didn't interfere, and then if you wanted a long range, a long-range camera, you just pull that one out, you knew where they all were. So, he's, they're under a Vietcong mortar attack, and there's mortar or rocket shells landing all over, so he crouches next to a tree, squats next to a tree, with his cameras hanging between his legs, and a mortar round goes off, and every one of those cameras is torn to shreds, and he is injured, he was in the hospital for weeks after that, but if the cameras had not been there, he'd be dead. [Editor's Note: In 1965, Horst Faas won the Pulitzer Prize in Photography for his combat photography in South Vietnam. In 1972, Horst Faas, along with Michael Laurent, won the Pulitzer Prize in Spot News Photography for their picture series, "Death in Dacca," which recorded genocide of Bengalis during Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan in 1971.]

SH: Unbelievable.

BK: He would be dead.

SH: It is too close for comfort.

BK: Yes, but these guys were there. It's not an untold story, because it's been told, and the photographs, Horst Faas has come out with collections of photos from the war. He's got one book that's a classic. It's photographs by cameramen on both sides of the war, from the North Vietnamese side and South Vietnamese side, Americans, Europeans, Russians, Cubans, Vietnamese; the one distinction is that they're all, they were all killed in the war, and those photos are just incredible. I think the book is called *Requiem* [*Requiem: By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina*, edited by Horst Faas and Tim Page], and I highly recommend it. … So, I lost several friends, photographers.

SH: I was just going to ask how many were killed. …

BK: Oh, I don't know the number … but, me, personally, maybe half a dozen. All told, there were quite a lot more, but I was only there two years.

SH: Was that a standard tour for a press person?

BK: No, a lot of them stayed longer.

SH: Did they really?

BK: A lot of them stayed longer, but I was called up, in the military. …

SH: Did you get an opportunity to interview anyone from the North Vietnamese side?

BK: Only once. In 1973, I went back briefly for *The Wall Street Journal*, because the reporter's wife, who was covering Vietnam for *The Journal*, this is when I was a science writer at *The Journal*, the reporter's wife was very pregnant, so they had to fly back to the States before the airlines would stop allowing her to fly. So, I was sent out to Vietnam for three months, during the cease-fire in '73, right before US troops left. [Editor's Note: In January 1973, the United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Agreement, which called for a cease-fire and the withdrawal of all American military forces from Vietnam. The war did not end until 1975, when North Vietnamese forces took control of Saigon and South Vietnam collapsed.]

SH: Really? How was that to go back?

BK: Oh, it was fun. It was fun, but there was no fighting, because there was a cease-fire, so I got to ride all over the country, places I had never been able to go. There were Vietcong roadblocks, but there was little fighting. So, if there was a roadblock, you just lifted the tree branch and drove through, if you had the guts, which is what we did. [laughter] I went with one other reporter, from *The Baltimore Sun*, and we drove all over and I got some good stories out of that.

SH: Were you shocked at what you saw, after having been there earlier in the war?

BK: No, things, actually things were, this was … I mean, the war didn't end for another two years. …

SH: Right.

BK: … So with the cease-fire, you could see what Vietnam would look like without war. It's a beautiful country, and the scars of war cover over very, very quickly. You really don't see …

SH: Even with the napalm and all of that destruction?

BK: Yes, you don't see that. Napalm doesn't leave anything.

SH: Did not napalm just obliterate everything?

BK: Napalm is just burning gasoline, jellied gasoline. It's just a big fireball. It doesn't blow a crater. It's the B-52 bombs that leave a twenty-foot crater, I mean, twenty-foot deep … [Editor's Note: Napalm, a mixture of gasoline and thickening agents, is used as a liquid incendiary in bombs.]

SH: Between that and Agent Orange that defoliated everything …

BK: Yes. I currently have chronic lymphocytic leukemia, which is, I've had it for twelve years, which is on the Pentagon's list of compensatable illnesses because of Agent Orange. You know, there's a list of Agent Orange … so, if you're a veteran, you get compensated. You get disability, because you were in Vietnam and you have leukemia or lymphoma. What I have is closer to lymphoma. Of course, I'm not an Army veteran from Vietnam, so, I was there as a civilian, so I

don't get [compensation], but, plus, I'm covered by more ways than one. [Editor's Note: Agent Orange was one of the herbicides used by the United States as a defoliant to clear jungle cover during the Vietnam War. Agent Orange contains 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzodioxin (TCDD), a dioxin classified as a carcinogen. The US Department of Veterans Affairs pays disability compensation to Vietnam veterans suffering from diseases caused by exposure to Agent Orange, including acute and sub-acute peripheral neuropathy, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, B cell leukemia, type 2 diabetes, Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and multiple myeloma.]

SH: I am glad you are covered, but I am sorry that you have that.

BK: Well, I've had it for twelve years.

SH: Do you think it is from that exposure? …

BK: Well, it's why I'm coughing. I'm prone to every cold, every sinusitis, all kinds of stuff, because your immune system is depressed. … No, I get treated. I've been treated twelve, twelve treatment regimens so far. They usually last about six months, each one. Not terrible. Could be a lot worse. My hair never fell out, except naturally.

SH: [laughter] Do you think the lymphoma is from the Agent Orange?

BK: … Nobody knows. Nobody knows. There's a very high level of lymphomas in Southeast Asia. That's all they know.

SH: Going back to the trip when you went during the cease-fire, what were some of the stories that you reported?

BK: That's where I got to talk to a North Vietnamese for the first time. Previously, people had only seen glimpses of them, I never did, glimpses of them on the battlefield, usually scurrying between a tree or something, … North Vietnamese soldiers or Viet Cong, but during the cease-fire, there was an exchange of prisoners between the South Vietnamese and the North Vietnamese at the northern border, Quang Tri. … That was a day we spent, we drove up from Saigon through Da Nang and Hue, all the way to Quang Tri, which had [been flattened]. Quang Tri had been flattened by bombing during the last North Vietnamese incursion across the border. That had been repulsed but at the cost of, there wasn't a stone left standing in Quang Tri, which is a major city, just rubble as far as the eye could see, and we actually, me and this woman I talked about before from the AP, Edie [Edith] Lederer, she's now the UN [United Nations] correspondent for the AP, witnessed one of these prisoner exchanges across the river. The South Vietnamese would put their Communist captives in boats and paddle them across, and as they're paddling across, they're all throwing away the clothes that had been given to them by the South Vietnamese, because these are the, whatever they called the South Vietnamese, and these are the "running-dog puppets of the American imperialists", and then the South Vietnamese prisoners would come across in boats the other way. So, we actually [saw this], and I have some pictures of me and Edie Lederer interviewing North Vietnamese officers in their pith helmets and green uniforms. They didn't say very much, but it's the first time I had ever stood next to a North Vietnamese, until I got to visit North Vietnam several years … later, ten years later.

SH: What was that like?

BK: Well, as I said, Vietnam is a beautiful country, and the food is great. … I'll tell you a secret, they love us in North Vietnam, even though we bombed the bejesus out of them, but most people weren't even born, in North Vietnam, during the war. The majority of the population is now post-war, so they really like us. [laughter] … They're very friendly, is what I'm trying to say.

SH: Right. Do you think that is true in South Vietnam as well?

BK: Oh, absolutely. In the south, they didn't fair too well at the very beginning of the Communist takeover, but they've since, that's where the economy is, in the south.

SH: Is it really?

BK: Oh, yes. It's a booming economy. It's a great rice-growing area. The north is less successful. The north has been, has delayed giving up as much of the Communist system as China has, for example, because they fought so hard to maintain it. China's war was decades earlier, the revolution [Chinese Civil War, 1927-1949], and they're doing quite well with capitalism [laughter], better than anyone anticipated.

SH: [laughter] Yes.

BK: They, … the North Vietnamese even tried to communize these very lucrative farms in the south, which turned out three rice crops every year, and that failed utterly. The rice crop just dried up, so they had to revert to the old system.

SH: When you were in Hong Kong, you traveled all over that part of …

BK: All over …

SH: Southeast Asia.

BK: Well, we had … after 1978, we had a correspondent in China, *The Journal*, after preliminary relations were restored between the United States and Beijing with that, after that first Nixon-Kissinger trip. They did let a small number of US reporters into Beijing, and *The Journal* was one of them. [Editor's Note: National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger made secret visits to Peking (Beijing), China in 1971. In February 1972, President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger traveled to the People's Republic of China, seeking to establish US-Chinese relations on the first US presidential visit since mainland China became Communist in 1949.]

SH: Did you go?

BK: I did not go, because we had a reporter who was Chinese, American-Chinese, and spoke fluent Mandarin, Shanghainese and Cantonese. [laughter] He's a terrific guy, Frank Ching. So

he went, and I would fill in for him on his vacations or if he was traveling; they would allow another reporter to go in, which I did and enjoyed that immensely. … Basically, I covered from Afghanistan on the west through Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives. I even wrote stories on the Maldives.

SH: Really?

BK: Through the Philippines, Thailand, not Malaysia. Malaysia and Singapore and Australia [and] New Zealand were covered by another reporter out of Singapore, and Tokyo also had reporters. Now, each of those places has five or six. China must have ten *Wall Street Journal* … and Dow Jones [reporters]. …

SH: Because of the economy, right?

BK: Yes, right, absolutely, and the Chinese know that as well. I don't think they like the notion of having reporters, but they know that *The Journal* at least is covering mostly business, although the reporters don't stick to that. When a jab is needed, they jab. A lot was written about the suppression, not by me, suppression of Falun Gong, the nutty religious sect. It is nutty. These people think they can levitate, are convinced they can levitate. So, they've covered a lot of things, the executions of political dissidents and things like that. We don't shy away from that. [Editor's Note: In 1999, the Chinese government began a campaign to suppress the practice of the spiritual movement Falun Gong.]

SH: Is China made up of many different tribes like you find in …

BK: … The Communists did one thing … they unified the country, even the language. It's taken them a long time, but now almost everybody, except if you're really way out in nowhere, everybody speaks Mandarin, the national language. That's what it's called in Mandarin, *Guoyu*, or the national language. Actually, they don't call it *Guoyu*, they call it common speech, *Putonghua*. Taiwan calls it *Guoyu*. It's the same language [laughter], but they agree not to agree.

SH: You were going to tell a story about the Maldives.

BK: I was, if I could remember one. The Maldives, I don't have an interesting story. The Maldives is hundreds, if not thousands, of small atolls in the middle of the Indian Ocean, a plane flight west of Sri Lanka, like an hour's flight, and the hotel is on one island, the airport is on another island, the downtown is on a third island, and then there's islands with other hotels. All around there's just these little spits of sand, coconut palms and ants, and that's all that's there. … This is one of the nations now, I didn't know it then, that's in danger of disappearing with global warming as sea levels rise … but the bluest water you've ever seen. Snorkeling must be incredible. I didn't do it, there were tourists from Europe doing it, a little too remote for my taste. … That's also a dictatorship. [Editor's Note: On average, the Maldives are less than five feet above sea level, making it the lowest country on earth. If sea levels continue to rise at current levels, the 300,000 inhabitants of the Maldives may become among the world's first

environmental refugees. The Maldives government has undertaken efforts to purchase land in South Asia to relocate the population.]

SH: Yes.

BK: An Islamic dictatorship.

SH: How was the CIA involved in any of the stories you were covering?

BK: In Vietnam?

SH: Wherever, in Afghanistan or …

BK: Well, they were involved, but we were not privy to how they were involved. They were involved in the assassination program, in the Phoenix Program. … I'll tell you a CIA story. I interviewed Robert Komer, who was the Johnson Administration official who headed up CORDS. CORDS was, as opposed to the military side of the American effort in Vietnam, was the civilian operations resettlement and development [program]… [Editor's Note: Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) was an inter-agency pacification program headed by National Security Council member Robert W. Komer during President Lyndon B. Johnson's Administration. CORDS sought to provide security, destroy support for the Communist insurgency, and gain loyalty of the population in South Vietnam. The Central Intelligence Agency undertook the Phoenix Program, a part of CORDS, to undermine the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam through arrests and assassinations.]

SH: Okay.

BK: … Some kind of acronym, and they were supposedly there, and were there, handing out, you know, rebuilding schools and all kinds of good things, but they were also in charge of the pacification program. It was Komer that announced, a few weeks before Tet, that 86.72 percent of the country had been pacified, and he had the maps and big areas of blue, cleared of VC, and we all knew that was not true, but these were official statistics, and of course, Tet put a lie to that. The reason they were pacified was because the VC and the North Vietnamese were preparing; [they] were lying low and preparing for, probably the previous year, for this major, nationwide attack in the cities, in every city. So, I had an interview with him. I think this was before Tet, and actually this was while I was doing those articles, one of which appeared in *The New York Times*. … It was common knowledge that the CIA ran CORDS. They funded it, they ran it, their operatives were out in the field, and word was starting to come out about … the Phoenix Program; when they would send in special operations troops, Vietnamese and American, to assassinate supposed Viet Cong officials in the villages and out in the countryside. Often what happened, sometimes what happened, was that some South Vietnamese official had a grudge against someone else, so he would just say he's a, "VC, VC," so they would go in and assassinate him. There was very little check and balance to that program. So, during this interview, when I was questioning him about diversion of military and aid supplies, I asked him. … I was getting all these reports about theft and diversion and black marketeering, and he kept saying, "Oh, it's not much. It's not much." … I said, "Well, you certainly must have a figure?

How much do you think?" and he hemmed and hawed and says, "No more than ten percent." … So, after the interview, I got back to the office and I looked up what the total package was, military and civilian, it was ten billion dollars a year; so a billion dollars worth. A billion dollars in those days, you're talking big money …

SH: I was just going to say …

BK: That's like a trillion is today. So, that's the story I wrote. … Also, during that interview, I had pressed him about where the funding came from … [for] CORDS and all those programs, and he said, "It's State Department and normal government funds," and I kept saying, "Uh huh, uh huh," so he must have suspected that I knew something. I didn't; I couldn't prove it. I mean, everybody said it was CIA, I couldn't prove it. When I got back to the office, he called me and he said, "I was a little off base. Yes, it's all CIA money." [laughter] So, I included that in the story, and that's the story, I think, that got me called up [to report for active duty in the Army].

SH: Really?

BK: Yes. That's the part of the story I had forgotten before; … I ran into him once, when I was reporting in China. There was a Pentagon delegation at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, and Robert Komer was a member of the Pentagon delegation, so we're in the Great Hall of the People, these cavernous banquet rooms, for cocktails or something before dinner, with the secretary of defense and other US and Chinese officials, Chinese generals. Robert Komer comes walking up to me with his wife, and he introduces me to his wife and he says, "Dear, this is Barry Kramer. He worked for the AP in Vietnam and now he's with *The Wall Street Journal*, and he was one of the enemy." … I looked at him, because, as you know, at that point I still supported the war, [laughter] and I said, smiling, I said, "Is that what you thought?" … He looked at me, as if he was remembering something, and turned on his heels and walked away, leaving me with his stunned wife. So, we made some small talk, and then we both wandered off. … That led me to believe that, it was like he had remembered something; that I had been called up because of that story that he gave me, so he must have gotten into trouble, too.

SH: Hence the term the enemy. [laughter]

BK: Hence the term the enemy, yes.

SH: Amazing.

BK: … I can't prove any of this. I tried a Freedom of Information request for all files relating to me, but I only sent it to the Army, and I got every bit of my military records, every physical exam, every new pair of glasses that I was prescribed, [laughter] you name it, how I did in basic training, but nothing about being punitively called back into the Army from Vietnam.

SH: Really?

BK: Yes, nothing.

SH: I wonder why.

BK: Except the official orders, but no communications dealing with how those originated, which I think could very well have been President Johnson … getting up in the morning, opening up, well, he didn't have to open up *The Times*, it was right there on the front page, and saying, calling up the generals in Vietnam and screaming at them, … which he was want to do, "Get that fellow out of there." [laughter] He would've used harsher words …

SH: Yes.

BK: … As he was one to do, but I can't prove any of it.

SH: Did you ever run into people like Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara?

BK: Oh, sure, sure. My first reporting experience in Vietnam was with McNamara. I had just arrived, the day before, in Vietnam for the AP … [Editor's Note: Robert S. McNamara served as secretary of defense from 1961 to 1968, during the presidential administrations of John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Lyndon B. Johnson.]

SH: Really?

BK: … So, George MacArthur, who was a veteran Vietnam correspondent for them and must have stayed there a total of fifteen years or more with the AP but is now retired, is told to, by the bureau chief, to take me out to the VIP lounge to learn the ropes. McNamara was arriving, and whenever officials like McNamara arrived, they would set up a news conference in the VIP lounge at the airport, at Tan Son Nhut, in the civilian side. So, he was told to take me out and show me how to find the phones, because you'd have to phone in a bulletin right away no matter what he said, and how to hide the phone from the UPI. You had to put it under the sofa cushion that you were sitting on, so you could grab the phone right away, [laughter] and actually, you had a line already called up to the AP office, where the rewrite man would be ready to take your dictation. [laughter] So, we're sitting there, and I'm sort of taking notes, and McNamara is talking about why he's there, etc. So, the press conference ends, and George picks up the phone, and he says, "Ed," Ed was the rewrite guy, Ed White, and he says, "Ed, I've got a bulletin on McNamara," and he hands me the phone. [laughter] So, I hemmed and hawed and then got out the bulletin. I don't remember what it was. I was so surprised, but that's what AP taught you, to think on your feet, and that came in handy when I got to *The Journal*. Because at *The Journal*, *Wall Street Journal* reporters, when they covered a spot news story, had to phone in a bulletin or a headline to the Dow Jones News Service. It was operated by the same company, a wire service, but all business news, and we were required before we wrote the story for the paper, and preferably at the scene, we had to race Reuters and other business news agencies to the phone, to phone in a headline, because people were sitting in front of their Dow Jones Newswire machine ready to hit the buy or the sell button, based on these headlines that come through. …

SH: Oh, wow.

BK: They still do it. To this day, that's how a lot of this works. So, being ahead of another service is essential. So, when I was hired, there were several other guys hired, I say guys because women were rare, there were women but pretty rare, I was the only one of the new batch who could do that because of the AP training. So, I'm eternally grateful. I could still do it, even though there's little call for it these days.

SH: The communication has …

BK: … These other guys could not do it; they could not send a story off the top of their heads. If there was a press release, then they'd just read off the press release, but if somebody said something at an annual meeting or a stockholder's meeting, the same thing. They could not run to the phone and dictate. They could go back to the office and mull it over and write three drafts and put in a decent job, but they couldn't dictate off the top of their heads, which any AP or wire service reporter can do, literally, at the drop of a hat.

SH: What a skill to have.

BK: … There's a story that one of *The Journal* reporters used to tell. He was a science reporter, one of the best that ever existed, and he was my boss when I was science writer. … They would go to these scientific seminars, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association; they'd bring in science reporters from all over the country, big newspapers, *The Times*, *The Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, UPI, AP, and they would all cover it, and they'd have these scientists talk about the latest discoveries in their field, and then they would either write a feature story or phone in an urgent story, especially the wire service guys. So, the science writers, without the presence of the UPI guy, get … one of the scientists to agree to give a total gobbledy-gook presentation that made no sense whatsoever, with scientific double-speak. …

SH: Right.

BK: … The UPI guy is there for this, and the guy [scientist] gives his presentation, five, ten minutes, and they all, to a man, run for the phone. So, the reflex reaction of the UPI guy was to run to the phone. They had lots of phones in that instance, and they all sit there and listen, as he gets on the phone with the UPI desk in New York and he says, "I've got a bulletin," and he didn't know what the, he couldn't know what the story was [laughter], and then they all broke out laughing. … It's the journalist's nightmare, of being in that situation, when you've got a breaking, important story and you don't know what it is, but it's a very funny story at the same time.

SH: [laughter] On your feet training. How did technology change for you over the years?

BK: Oh, immensely, immensely. In Vietnam, for example, we could be out of touch with the rest of the world for days. {With] the telex lines, atmospherics would blot out the telex transmissions, which were all by shortwave in those days. There was no cable between Vietnam and Hong Kong, say, to get it out to the rest of the world, undersea cable, or if there was, the military had taken it over for their use and [it] couldn't be used by journalists. … So, you could be out for days. You'd have to, literally, type your stories, have someone who was going to the

airport to fly to Hong Kong, hand-carry the story and deliver it to the AP office in Hong Kong to be transmitted to the rest of the world. If it was really urgent, if there was something major happening, you could get clandestine access to military phone lines by impersonating an officer [laughter] and the AP, and I'm sure the others too, had people who specialized in that. There was one guy at AP, George Esper. We all knew that President [Lyndon B.] Johnson was visiting Asia in December 1967. He was going to a summit meeting somewhere in the Philippines or … a meeting with Marcos in the Philippines or something, and we all had his schedule, and the Press Corps from Washington was traveling with him. … George Esper noticed that there was a two-hour blank in the president's schedule and said, "I'll bet he's making a surprise visit to Vietnam," but we had no idea where. We knew approximately when. So, George gets on these military phone lines, impersonating [a] colonel, Colonel Esper, and in those days, well, always, you didn't just call a base; you had to go through several different switchboards with different code names, and you had to know all those code names, "tango two" whatever, and he did, he called every single air base in Vietnam, in South Vietnam, and got a lot of, "No, nothing's happening here." He calls Da Nang. … You just don't call the base, you had to call each flight line, so he gets one flight line, and he says, "Is the President there?" … The guy, the sergeant or whatever it was, says, "No, he's not here, but he just gave a speech to the troops out on the flight line, and I recorded it." … You're under a blackout. You're not allowed, the Press Corps that was with him … wasn't allowed to broadcast until the President was back in Manila or wherever, because it's security. So, the guy plays the tape on the phone for George. George files one bulletin after another, "President Johnson urged troops to keep up the," whatever. … Whatever he said, but it was world breaking news, and we had it for like eight hours, alone. … That's George Esper. … There's a lot more to reporting than just writing down what somebody says; getting it and then getting it out are the most important parts.

SH: Has there been a book written or a movie made that really depicts what you went through and saw when you were in Vietnam?

BK: Yes. Again, I should repeat, I don't want to make myself sound too brave, I didn't cover a lot of military. Peripherally, I covered military, but I was, I never covered a battle … so to speak. I covered aftermaths of battles, things like that.

SH: The experience …

BK: The films, I have a favorite film that I hate and a favorite film that makes me shiver when I see it, to this day, at how accurate it is. I'll tell you the accurate one first, and that's *The Killing Fields*. I used to cover Cambodia, too; the film made me feel like I was back in Cambodia for that, and they nailed it.

SH: Really?

BK: They nailed it. I saw those skulls later. I saw the "killing fields," and I knew the Cambodian [Dith Pran] who was the subject of this film, who's real. He now works for *The New York Times*. I didn't know [Sydney] Schanberg, the reporter. He came after me. [Editor's Note: Roland Joffe's 1984 film *The Killing Fields* relates the stories of *The New York Times* journalist Sydney Schanberg and Cambodian Dith Pran, who reported on events and atrocities during

Cambodia's civil war and America's bombing and incursion in the 1970s. The "killing fields" refers to the skeletal remains of Cambodians massacred by the Khmer Rouge regime in various locations around Cambodia.] … The movie I hate is [Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 film] *Apocalypse Now*, which has no connection to Vietnam or the war. It's just a nightmare film. It's a great nightmare film, but it has nothing to do with [Vietnam]. I mean, the trimmings are there, but that's not the reason we lost in Vietnam, because some commander was playing Beethoven, or whatever he was playing [Richard Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries"] from his helicopter loudspeakers. … The other one I hate is, what's the one where, now I'm forgetting, where they play Russian roulette, the American prisoners of the Vietnamese, [*The*] *Deer Hunter*.

SH: *The Deer Hunter*.

BK: That had no connection to reality, I mean, first, there weren't that many prisoners of the North Vietnamese, and they didn't play Russian roulette. [Editor's Note: In 1978, Universal Pictures released the film *The Deer Hunter*, which depicts the experiences of American soldiers in the Vietnam War and illustrates how the war impacted them.] … Another film I liked is [Stanley Kubrick's 1987 film] *Full Metal Jacket*, but the whole, the first half of that has really nothing, little to do with Vietnam.

SH: That is true.

BK: It's just about basic training and the Marines. I don't know how true that is. I have feeling it's sort of true. … The Vietnam part was good.

SH: What did you think of *The Fog of War*?

BK: I didn't see that.

SH: That is the one in which they interview McNamara. [Editor's Note: The Academy Award-winning documentary *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, directed by Errol Morris, explores the lessons learned by Robert S. McNamara when he was secretary of defense before and during the Vietnam War.]

BK: Oh, I haven't seen that. I did read McNamara's book [*In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995)]. It's sad. It's sad, especially since he claims early doubts, but … he would've been considered a traitor if he turned around then.

SH: When did you retire?

BK: '81, not '81, 2001. [laughter] It feels like '81. [laughter] Two months before 9/11, and I was working in Hong Kong for the Asian *Journal*, helping them put out the paper for about a year and a half after I retired. On 9/11 we had the TV on, and … it's about nine o'clock at night in Hong Kong, and the bureau chief of *The Journal* in Tokyo calls and says, "Turn on CNBC. Somebody flew a plane into the World Trade Center." So, we turned it on and there it was, and then when the buildings collapsed less than a hour later, *The Wall Street Journal* building was right across the street, and I thought everyone in our home office was dead, and I started sobbing.

I was sitting on the news desk at the *Asian Journal*, helping lay out and plan the next day's paper, there were other people there, too, and I started sobbing, and then I said, [laughter] --it sounds sort of fishy-- to myself, "We've got a paper to put out," and set off. We did. We had to, we were getting no copy from the States, the New York office had evacuated.

SH: Of course, yes.

BK: … Everyone did escape without injury, almost everybody. There were some injuries. The New York headquarters building was a wreck and wasn't usable for another year. They had to completely gut our floors and rebuild everything, and throw out everything that was contaminated in the office. … In Asia, we had no copy, so we had to write. … Reporters started rushing back in, other editors, and we put out a full newspaper, using wire photos of the planes hitting the [World Trade Center], very rare for *The Journal* to print photos, but we didn't … have a lot of copy [laughter], and someone rounded up the wire stories. … We had to throw out everything that had already been put into print, start from scratch.

SH: I asked you before how the technology had changed and you discussed being out of touch …

BK: Being out of touch. It's totally different now. You can take a satellite phone, even satellite TV, anywhere in the world, anywhere, and have a high definition TV signal set up in minutes. In the sixties and seventies when we were out of touch with the telephone, and the telephones often didn't work, you were cut off completely. Of course, in those days, it was often a saving grace that you were out of touch. Nobody could bother you. Nobody could tell you to leave the country saying, "It's too dangerous." You could send a message back saying, "Message un-received. Poor transmission." Which somebody [Peter Kann] actually did. I didn't. … He didn't leave. This is the guy who won the Pulitzer in Bangladesh, during the Bangladesh war of independence from Pakistan, and he stayed and actually did send that message, "Your message telling me to leave, un-received." [laughter] It's famous at *The Journal*, and [he] won the Pulitzer for staying and doing great stories.

SH: Any of these countries that you were in definitely would have been difficult to …

BK: Well, there was censorship in some of them but only for stories that appeared locally, not for reports being sent abroad, like mine. Other countries, you couldn't phone. It was almost impossible to phone long distance. Even in Hong Kong, if you wanted to make a long distance phone call, you had to book a couple of days in advance. …

SH: Really?

BK: … Then it cost like fifty dollars a minute, fifty US [dollars] a minute. So, it's totally different now. You can phone anywhere in the world, because they all have cell phones and satellites now. … We relied on telexes, but you didn't have your own personal telex. You had to go to the PTT, post telegraph and telephone, I think that's the French initials, or the telex office in almost [any city], India and Pakistan had that, and you had to bribe the telex operator to put your copy on the top of the pile. …

SH: Really?

BK: Otherwise, it would go on this pile and get out four or five hours later.

SH: [laughter] Really?

BK: … They did that. I'm not even sure all that copy was real. They did that to get your thirty rupees or whatever, which was no great cost, and I would just put it on the expense account, but you had to bribe the telex operators or bring them a bottle of whiskey or something and then hope that they didn't drink the whiskey before they sent your copy. [laughter] In India, I could file my copy to the *Journal* through the AP office in New Dehli, which had a quarter-speed teletype; communications were so bad. With London, communications were bad and this is a former British colony. …

SH: Right.

BK: … Still a member of the commonwealth, I believe. They had a quarter-speed telex, which means the telex moved, "Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick," and then would pause, because it had to make sure that the signal for each letter had gotten to London and then bounced back, so nothing was missed. It was checking itself. So, it was really slow. You'd leave some copy there at eight at night, and it was still ticking out when you got back to check at nine in the morning. I don't know how they existed with that. [laughter] … Now, everybody gets on email, zip, you're in New York before you know it, so it changes things quite a bit, and if … your computer goes on the blink, you'd go to the Internet café or the coffee shop. … [Editor's Note: In 1947, India became independent from British rule, and in 1950, India formed the democratic Republic of India. India is still a part of the British Commonwealth of Nations.]

SH: Wi-Fi.

BK: It's really unfair to all of us who worked … back in the days of spotty communications, but that was a major effort of reporters in those days, not only getting the story, but just as difficult was getting the story out. You were lucky if everyone else was in the same position. If you were somehow in that position alone, you were … screwed, to put it bluntly.

SH: Did you take copious notes?

BK: I think at the beginning, you take more notes than you could ever use and then find out that it's overkill, so you start editing while you're taking notes. You don't write down [everything]. At the beginning, I think I wrote down everything that everybody said. [As] you get more experienced … your mind says, "That's important. Write that. … People who take stenographic notes sometimes over-quote people. It's a lot better, it makes the story more understandable, if you paraphrase more. You [have] got to be careful to get it right and not twist what somebody says, but you learn. I think I used to envy the people who could take it in, what's that …

SH: Shorthand.

BK: Shorthand, but I think that's a hindrance. That's a hinderance because you have to transcribe. … Some people record them and transcribe the entire word-for-word interview. I think that's a waste of time.

SH: Did you ever use a recording device?

BK: I did at the beginning. I used to use it a lot.

SH: Did you find that you got to the point where you did not have to take notes at all?

BK: No, no. You have to take notes.

SH: Okay.

BK: … You cannot rely on your memory, no matter how good you are.

SH: How do you verify sources, when you are writing stories like that?

BK: By asking other sources. You do it as much [as possible]. …

SH: With technology now, do you go on the Internet? …

BK: Well, there's more than that question involved; there's the question of, if a person agrees to be quoted by name, that's less of a problem than if a person gives you quotes and refuses to be attributed. That's dangerous. I would not trust that, as far as I could throw it. You just try to confirm or add it to what you already know … and you had to be careful, the way you write it, to hedge it.

SH: Sometimes you read "unnamed source."

BK: At *The Journal*, unnamed sources were used minimally, only when there was no other option, and it had to be clearly stated what side the source was on. We were forbidden to use negative quotes from unnamed sources.

SH: Really?

BK: If you had an unnamed source, you had to give some indication of where they were coming from, Army source, Pentagon source, company source. We don't use the word source, "a person with knowledge of the situation." …

SH: Okay. There is another way of saying it.

BK: … If it's an unattributed, negative quote, we were forbidden to use it all. You could go do other reporting to try to verify it, but you cannot print in *The Wall Street Journal* and probably

not *The New York Times* and other major papers, a negative, unattributed quote; like saying, "That guy's a crook," says someone who used to work with him," no.

SH: There are issues of liability.

BK: Because when you come down to it, there's a question of fairness and objectivity. It's the type of thing you see on the Internet all the time, especially with people with an agenda, negative, unattributed quotes, and they say the most outrageous things, and the proof, more than ever, that we need to be careful about, that and readers don't recognize the difference. That's even more frightening. You read newspapers closely, the good newspapers, you'll see they do gymnastics to be … fair and get comment from the other party.

SH: Because now so many of the newspapers are read online, and as you say, there is so much other information out there. …

BK: I'm not sure how well they're read online either.

SH: What?

BK: I'm not convinced they're well read online either.

SH: Well read or …

BK: Widely read. I don't think people are reading period. I don't know what they're doing online.

SH: Okay.

BK: They're Twittering [social network and blogging service] in incomprehensible jargon. … Obviously, some people are reading, but I think it's the same people who read newspapers. I don't see young people sitting down and going through blogs carefully, because I read the … responses at the bottom of blogs, and they're gibberish. These people don't understand what the blog was about. They're criticizing another comment, rather than talking about the article. They have read the story, or they say they've read the story and obviously didn't understand the thrust of it. They get it completely backwards. It's frightening to read those comments. They have running battles, the commentators, of inane comments about each other. They must do this all the time. They have little debating clubs of nonsense. It's scary.

SH: I think so.

BK: I'm sure newspapers used to get letters like that, but they would winnow them out and put in the cogent ones. … Have you ever seen a correction on a blog? Occasionally. You open *The New York Times,* and there's twelve of them. They care about being accurate.

SH: How many newspapers do you get a day?

BK: Just two, *The Times* and *The Journal*. [laughter] Occasionally, I'll pick up another.

SH: Are there stories that you are still after?

BK: I still love reading science stories. I read the science stories in both papers, Science and Medicine in both papers online, the night before. I love that stuff. … I send some to my doctor, if they're cogent. [laughter]

SH: You told me to remind you about the Mabel Douglass and Henry Rutgers story.

BK: We went to the unveiling [of the plaque], the Rutgers Club of New York was there and John Pearson [of the Rutgers University Foundation] was there for the unveiling, of the Henry Rutgers entombment. They have a whole group of Revolutionary War soldiers, and he's one of them, in this big Dutch Reformed Church crypt. They found his bones. That's part of the exhibit tonight, on how they found Henry Rutgers and reinterred them there. So, we, the group of us, after this little ceremony, were given a tour of the cemetery by one of the historians at Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery. It's a beautiful cemetery in Brooklyn, and this must have been by prearrangement; he showed us several graves of really interesting people who died one hundred, 150 years ago, some of them. … Then, he brings us to the grave of Mabel Douglass. … Did you know this story? She disappeared. She was at her summer cabin or her parents' summer cabin and just disappeared [in 1933], and twenty, thirty years later [in 1963], skin divers in that summer cabin lake [Lake Placid], found her skeleton tied up with rocks, weighted down with rocks, in a way that they determined she had committed suicide, by throwing herself off the boat, so that, she couldn't save herself. How they determined that, I don't know, but that was an official determination. [It] could show up on one of these unsolved cold cases [on television], and she's buried in the family crypt at Green-Wood Cemetery about a five-minute walk away from where Henry Rutgers is. The bones are buried, let's put it that way. I just found that an amazing coincidence. …

SH: It is.

BK: … Because nobody knew twenty years ago that Henry was going to be buried there twenty years ago. [Editor's Note: In 1999, revelations regarding Henry Rutgers' possible burial at a Dutch Reformed Church in Belleville, New Jersey, sparked a renewed interest in the Rutgers community about the lifetime of Henry Rutgers. Research undertaken by various members of Rutgers University has culminated in the Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives exhibit "Benevolent Patriot: The Life and Times of Henry Rutgers" in Alexander Library. The spring 2010 exhibit displayed illustrations and documents that highlight the history of Henry Rutgers and America during the Revolutionary and Early National periods. There exists some mystery regarding the original burial site of Henry Rutgers, as his remains were reinterred several times and his final resting place was unknown for years. Civil War researchers discovered that his body was buried in a crypt in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. In June 2008, the Green-Wood Historic Fund and members of the Rutgers community honored Henry Rutgers' gravesite with a bronze marker.]

SH: That is amazing, considering how the university and their stories evolved.

BK: … It was just a mystery, [how] she disappeared. …

SH: I thank you so much for coming and talking with me today.

BK: I had a great time.

SH: I hope that you think of other stories and that we will have a chance to do this again.

BK: I would hope so.

SH: Thank you.

BK: I'm willing.

[After he returned in 1981 from Asia, where he had served as an Asia correspondent of *The Wall Street Journal* for six years, Mr. Kramer worked as a senior editor on the Foreign Desk at the Journal's New York headquarters. During that time he also did several short-term stints in Asia and Europe for the *Journal*, and retired in 2001 as deputy foreign editor. After retirement, between 2001 and 2010, he performed editing tasks for *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, both in Hong Kong and New York.

Between 2000 and the present, Mr. Kramer has participated as a patient in ten different clinical drug trials at Weill Cornell Medical Center/New York-Presbyterian Hospital that tested treatments for chronic lymphocytic leukemia, with which he was diagnosed in 1998. As of this writing (July 2011) he has been in remission for more than two years.]

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

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 5/11/10
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/9/11
Reviewed by Barry Kramer 7/19/11