RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT F. OCHS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Robert F. Ochs on November 24th, 1997 with Kurt Piehler at Wilmington, North Carolina. And I guess I'd like to begin by asking you about your parents, but also growing up. Because, in many ways, not only did you spend a lot of time in your career at Rutgers, and in the New Brunswick area, but you are … a native of the New Brunswick/Highland Park/Milltown area. And maybe we should start off with a little bit about your father, because he was born in Milltown. How did your family come to the Milltown/New Brunswick area?

Robert Ochs: Well, both of my grandparents came from Germany. My mother's family was named Ziegert and they settled in South River, New Jersey and my dad's family, of course, was Ochs, and they actually lived in New Brunswick first. My grandfather Ochs was a shoemaker in New Brunswick, and my father's brother started a dairy farm in Milltown, and that's how the Milltown connection came into effect. And my mom and dad got married, and I was born in New Brunswick. In fact, on George Street, up around Remson Avenue. At about the age of six months moved to Highland Park, so that was my home ... all my life, until I came down to North Carolina. Because I was born and raised in Highland Park and most of the … youngsters I went to school with, their dads were profs over at Rutgers. So to go across the river and walk on the College Avenue campus, which was then Rutgers, was not unique. In fact, I even went in the library as a youngster. But the main thing is, I started to follow the Rutgers ... athletic teams back in the mid-thirties. So when people talk about old-time Rutgers athletes, I almost feel I know them because I remember sitting in Neilson Field, which is the site of the University Commons now, and at the end zone there they had a free section for kids. We used to line up about 11:00 o'clock in the morning, and they let us in to sit in the end zone. Rutgers would send a cheerleader over there. We could cheer them on. I can almost say they were the most loyal fans Rutgers ever had. We had maybe a thousand kids stacked in those stands, and they might have had about eight thousand people seated at the game ... at Nelson Field. So anyway, my association with Rutgers really came about then, and continued.

KP: You mentioned knowing a lot of profs and prof's sons ... . Do you remember any in particular that you grew up with, sons and the professors?

RO: Oh, yes. My age is gonna' show. I have to stop and think about this, but an ag/economics prof, his son was one of my best friends in high school. I went to school with a girl named Betty Thomas. Her grandfather had once been President at Rutgers. Dr. Clothier was a president. His son, Bob, used to hang out with us over in Highland Park. To be honest, Kurt, if I took the time out and looked up a few names, I could give them to you, but offhand ...

KP: What about Carl Woodward's?

RO: Oh, ... well, Carl's just a little bit older than I am, but he's a Highland Parkite. We were thicker than thieves over there in Highland Park. People accused us of having a clique, which we didn't. But in those days it was a unique community and you just got to know each other. But, yes, Carl Woodward's dad, of course.

KP: Your father served in World War I ...

RO: Yes, he did. He was a ... sergeant in World War I, in the Army. In fact, his job, as I understand from reading clippings of his career in the military, ... he was a motorcycle dispatcher in France during World War I.

KP: Did he enlist or was he drafted?

RO: He enlisted. I'm not so sure when the draft came into effect in World War I, but I know he enlisted. He spent, I think, typical World War I veterans, about, either twenty-three or twenty-five months was about the time he was in the military in those days.

KP: Did he ever tell you much about what he did or about the war?

RO: No, he did not. Maybe for the same reason that I have three boys and we've never really discussed, [Laughs] excuse me, what I consider the nitty-gritty of the war. I've told a lot of stories, maybe some stretched a little bit. My three sons have met the four or five fellows who were so close to me, because we've gotten together every five or six years over the last fifteen to twenty years. And we tell tall tales, and when the kids were around we let them know that we weren't the ... old geezers they think we are now.

KP: [Laughs] ... Did your father ever join the American Legion, or VFW?

RO: My dad belonged to the American Legion. It was Post 88 in Highland Park, and I would say he was reasonably active. When I was a kid I went to the Second Avenue Reform Church in Highland Park, and they had a Boy Scout troop. So when you're twelve years old, they didn't have cub scouts in those days, you're twelve years old you joined the Boy Scouts. So I joined the scout troop associated with the church, which I was forced to go to every Sunday by my mother and dad. And the American Legion post ... also sponsored a Boy Scout troop. So I left my troop and joined the American Legion troop for a very simple reason. Right after the First World War, these fellows came home and established this American Legion post. They had a drum and bugle corps. I can remember as a kid in the Memorial Day parades and stuff, very fancy uniforms, shiny hats. When they got to a certain age, they said, "We don't want to do this anymore, parade around, so we're gonna' give our Boy Scout troop the drums and bugles." And I wanted to be a drummer, so I changed troops to join that troop to become a drummer in the Boy Scout troop that the American Legion sponsored.

KP: It sounds like you remember marching in some of the Memorial Day and Armistice Day parades.

RO: Oh, I was a proud young kid. Boy, ... in fact I was a lead drummer. That doesn't say much for the drum and bugle corps. But yes, we must have marched twice a year, always. And for all Boy Scout events, since we were the only drum and bugle corps in Middlesex County then. We would get invited to everything, to play the three or four tunes that we knew.

KP: What rank did you make as a Boy Scout?

RO: I missed one merit badge of being Eagle, but I never decided I wanted to pass bird study.

KP: [Laughs] Did you go to the national jamboree in Washington?

RO: No, no, I never did. In fact, my scouting days lasted from the time I was twelve or thirteen until I was about fifteen when I was a sophomore in high school, because all of a sudden other things became more important. And this may sound sort of jerky to say in this day and age, but when I was in high school I felt that athletics was the thing that you did, and you looked at girls, and Boy Scouts became secondary.

KP: That's actually pretty common. You haven't been the first, particularly with Boy Scouts.

RO: It was great while it lasted though. It was an important part of my young life.

KP: Do you know how your parents met?

RO: Yes, I think I do. My mother was the youngest of four sisters and one of those four sisters, who died at a relatively young age, knew my father's cousin. And my father and ... his cousin were just close, close buddies. In fact, my middle name, Frederick, is after his ... cousin Fred. I believe that she's the one that got my father and my mom together.

KP: You mentioned that your grandparents came, your grandfathers, came from Germany. Was there any German spoken when you were growing up?

RO: Both grandfathers and both grandmothers came from Germany. Yes, when I was a youngster, I was born in 1923, like when I was eight/ten/twelve years old, I could actually speak a little bit of German, and understood quite a bit. Because my grandparents spoke it in the home all the time. My grandfather Ochs, who worked on the dairy farm that his older son had started, usually always spoke in German. In fact, I guess I could cuss better in German than I could speak the language. Because I remember he used to have horses that they'd put on milk wagons and these horses would back him against the sides of the stall and he'd let them have it. But ... the most dramatic thing I can remember about this is the ... *Hindenburg*. It came to Lakehurst, New Jersey in the '30s and she blew up, and when that happened we were down on the Jersey coast, in Lavallette on vacation and my grandfather Ziegert, Z-I-E-G-E-R-T, he was my mom's dad, his wife had died and he used to rotate with his remaining daughters where he lived. And during the summer was his chance to live with us. And I remember saying to him, "Grandpop, those Germans can't do anything right." And when I picked myself up from the floor, I understood that maybe they could do a few things right. That was the first time I ever had a feeling about being German and being American. Before that, so you were a German, you were sort of proud of it, but it didn't mean anything. You didn't know anything about it. But that was the first time it hit home with me. The second time is, ... as Hitler began to make his moves in the late '30s and the '40s, my grandfather Ochs, who died in 1942, became very sensitive to this, and all of a sudden when we'd visit with him, he would speak in broken English rather than German because his ... pride of being a German was, sort of, shattered. I'm not saying I was smart to recognize this, but my dad was, and that's how I remember so vividly,

his talking. I was the oldest of three kids in my family, so he, my dad, would talk to me more like an adult than my younger brother and sister.

KP: So this is even before we'd even entered the war, that he was increasingly ...

RO: It was in the, ... yes, it was in the late '30s, '39 and '40 about. When I was about, in 1940 how old was I? Seventeen years old. So I was old enough to begin to recognize and accept certain facts.

KP: Right.

RO: Where, before this, ... Grandpa was Grandpa and he spoke German and that was all there was to it.

KP: Your father, before going to the war, was a factory worker. Where did he work?

RO: He worked for the Michelin Tire Company.

KP: In Milltown?

RO: In Milltown. Like a lot of other people did. In fact, the French in Milltown are still known for that Michelin Tire Company. They shipped 'em over here. A French outfit. But he went to work for them before World War I, because they had a secret room which was something to do with how they mixed the rubber to make the tires. And that secret room, the employees there made more than any other employees in the general area. So his comment was, that was his objective to get in that secret room because that was where the most dollars were. He never graduated from high school, like a lot of folks didn't back in those days. I'm jumping the gun, but after the war he went to the New Brunswick Business College, I think it's called. On one of the side streets in New Brunswick, the building still has that inscribed on it, on top of it. I've seen it. He went into the insurance business where he spent his career.

KP: And how did your father, how did your family, cope with the Great Depression? How well did they do, or, in a sense, not do?

RO: I only remember my own family. We lived in Highland Park. And I can remember the Depression, but I have to hasten to say that I don't remember going without shoes, or food, or anything else. My mother reminded me later in my life of the time that she and my father went down to Atlantic City for three or four days. For some reason I can remember, most likely because having your Mom and Dad going to Atlantic City was the big deal. But the essence of the story was that the Depression had come, like millions of other folks my Dad had lost whatever few bucks he had put in the bank, and what have you, and because of the Depression that he experienced they went down there for a couple of days, and try to recoup. But I remember things like the WPA, and NRA. And the original Rutgers Stadium, for example, was built by WPA. I used to have a paper route up there, the old *Daily Home News*. In those days you got two-thirds of a cent for each paper you delivered. I got a penny a paper because my route went from Highland Park, out as far as

where they were building the Rutgers Stadium. And those guys were my last customers and I could get a ride home every night by holding on to the back of a dump truck. I was on my bicycle, and the guy lived in Highland Park and that's how I'd get home. So I remember watching that stadium go up from the time it was a hole in the ground 'till it took shape. Never recognizing that as I got on in life that all of this got so important to me because of ...

KP: Well, you would play in the stadium, you would eventually be charged with security of the stadium ...

RO: Yes. Yes. The whole thing just develops. I think that it's part of the reason, I'll be very frank with you, I'm on my second wife. If you talk to my first wife; she'll tell you that I loved Rutgers more than I did her. The reason she left me. There might be some essence of truth in that, too.

KP: [Laughs] Growing up, I guess before leaving your parents, your mother worked for New Jersey Bell Telephone.

RO: Yes, she, I don't know how you know that. Did I tell you that? [Laughter]

KP: You told me.

RO: Yes, … she worked there before they were married. Because I arrived on the scene, I think, thirteen months after they were married, or something like that. I'm smiling as I talk about this, Kurt, because she will tell you two things with great pride. My mom would have been one-hundred and three years old, next month in fact. One, that she was the first woman in South River, New Jersey to have a driver's license and drive a car. She owned a Model-T Ford. I have a picture of it someplace. And the second thing is that she is the youngest chief operator in whatever district she was in at the telephone company. That was her great pride and joy. That's what she did before she married my dad.

KP: Did she work after?

RO: No, in those days moms stayed home and was always there when you needed her.

KP: She didn't work during the war at all?

RO: No. Well, see my dad died in 1942. He was forty-six years old when he died. And my mom went to work shortly after that. She worked for a furniture company in New Brunswick, and then for the rationing board. I wasn't around in those days, but I remember her talking about the enemies she had to make in the rationing board for not giving people what they wanted. After that, after the war was over, her health declined and she didn't work any longer.

KP: You mentioned going, somewhat unwillingly, to the Reformed Church as a kid. How active were your parents in the church?

RO: Well, my mother and dad belonged to a Reformed Church in New Brunswick on Livingston Avenue. And believe it or not, they actually gave the sermons in German. And I didn't understand them. And to get me to Sunday school, and whatnot, became a problem. So they shipped myself, my brother, and my sister, both younger than I am, to the Second Avenue Reformed Church in Highland Park. And I have nothing against the Reformed Church. To this day I'm not really a churchgoer. But you gotta remember that if you're twelve and thirteen years old and you wanted to do things on a Sunday morning. You went to Sunday school maybe nine o'clock or 9:30. You got out of Sunday school, you went to church. And the most boring minister in the world, they had there. You came out of church, went home, and in those days you got a Sunday dinner. Mom cooked the whole thing. The family sits around the dining room and had Sunday dinner. By the time this got finished and you did your chores, we always either had to wash the dishes, or dry them, or do something, you went outside and could play for a couple of hours. [Then] you had to come back in for supper because at seven o'clock you had to be back at church for Youth Fellowship. So it wasn't the Reformed Church, it was just this routine they had me in, and the first chance that I got to rebel I did.

KP: You mentioned a paper route. What other activities did you do growing up, because people told me that after Highland Park, it was woods and farms? It's a very different central Jersey from what I know.

RO: The Highland Park when I grew up was a town of maybe five or six thousand people at most. In our high school, for example, we only had four hundred kids and, sort of interesting in a way, that Highland Park had a school that went through the tenth grade. It was called Franklin Junior High School. After that, kids went to New Brunswick High School for the last two years. So when you got up to sixth grade you went to Highland Park, Franklin Junior High School, which was seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grade. And when I was in the seventh grade the Board of Education said they're going to make a High School out of it. So the kids who were in tenth grade then went into eleventh grade in Highland Park and twelfth grade. So [it] ended up I was in the fourth graduating class of Highland Park High School. Still a small town. You knew everyone. In fact, if I were to go into Highland Park this afternoon, you'd say, "Hey, I live in that house there." "You do?" And I say, "Hell, that was the Pete Campbell house." And I still look at the town that way.

KP: You could still pick out …

RO: Oh, yes. Kids I knew, where they lived, that's their house. Most have been sold four, five, or six times since then. But, other than the paper route, and the Boy Scouts when I was a kid, when I became a freshman in high school, ninth grade, they started their first football team in Highland Park High School. And I remember watching them practice two or three times, and asked the coach, who was a Rutgers man, if I could go out for football. He said, "You have to get your father's permission." So I went home and asked my dad. He said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, Dad, there's one thing. You have to buy a pair of shoes." They didn't issue shoes. So I became obsessed with football, and because I was a football player they kept me on the basketball program to run my big tail, stay in shape, and then in the springtime I either threw the shot or the discus or

played a little baseball. And that became my whole life. The school ran things morning, noon, and night. … All of it, period. That's where you went. You didn't do anything else.

KP: You mentioned earlier the dances you all used to go to ...

RO: Oh, yes. Last week here, in Wilmington, North Carolina, the Glenn Miller band was down here. And some of us went down and heard great, great music from my time. And we were sitting around and having coffee afterwards and talking about this and, you know, in my high school because of the Depression, the WPA paid musicians, dance band musicians, who would come to our high school two or three noon times a week and play and, you went to dance. Didn't cost anything. The kids just went there. And, ... for example, I could still tell you, a girl named Paula Castro taught me how to jitterbug. Took great pride in that in those days. But there was such a, you must of heard this from a lot of old guys, there was such a community spirit. Drugs were unheard of, and if you kissed a girl you had a big night. And you did all these things together, and it was, a corny phrase I suppose, but fellowship existed. And there was dedication, and loyalty, and honesty. It was, as a guy seventy-four years old, I told my kids a hundred times, "I'm grateful that the Lord let me be born in 1923, and experience what I did." Because I don't think a lot young people have the same opportunities to enjoy their youthful part of their life like we did. It was much simpler.

KP: Yes. It is somewhat remarkable. You getting the great musicians who were just coming in and playing for you. Which, now...

RO: You pay for.

KP: Exactly.

RO: They had a job. The government gave them a job. They even paid them. And it was great. We weren't the only place. They would go all over, and I'm sure all across the country they had very similar programs. But again, my whole life, in those days, centered on Highland Park, New Jersey. That was it.

KP: Did you have any other jobs besides the newspaper route?

RO: I had one other job that might be of importance. It represents why I went to Rutgers. The football coach at Rutgers was a man named Harvey Harman. He came to Rutgers in 1938 from the University of Pennsylvania, at the age of thirty-eight. His claim to fame was that they dedicated the old Rutgers Stadium in '38. Princeton came to town. Rutgers beat them twenty to eighteen. I remember the score. I remember I was playing against Westfield High School that day. Harvey Harman became a hero. I ought to add that Rutgers played them the first time in 1869, beat them, and the second time they ever beat them, sixty-nine years later. Anyway, Harvey lived in Highland Park, in an apartment house with his wife, Mrs. Harman, and his mother-in-law, a lady named Mrs. Aiken. And he owned an English bulldog. And he used to walk up to a corner confectionery store on First Avenue and Raritan Avenue in Highland Park to buy his newspaper and whatnot. This was after football season. And that's the corner I hung out at, with four or five other guys. Now, you're

fifteen years old, and you're in love with football. Here comes Coach Harvey Harman who just beat Princeton. You worshipped the ground he walked on. I used to say "hello" to him, he said, "Ochsie, how are you?" Oh, this is wonderful. So one day he comes to me and he says, "Ochsie," he called me Ochsie when I played for him in the '40s. "Ochsie," he said, "I'm going to Florida, Mrs. Harman and myself. Felix can't go." That's the bulldog, Felix. "And I don't want my mother-in law to go with me. So they're going to stay home. So would you walk Felix and buy my mother-in-law's groceries?" I said, "Yes, sir." I did this, I think, they went away, like, two or three weeks. I did this faithfully, once every day and twice on weekends. Jeez, he gave me ten dollars a week.

KP: During the Depression that was a fortune.

RO: It was a fortune in 1938. I did it for two summers. That's how I got to know Coach Harvey Harman. I'm going to jump the gun on you a second. I graduated high school in 1941, so my last high school football season was 1940. We had, most likely, the world's lousiest high school football team, but I was the big fish in this little, small pond, and got some recognition for this. These All-State honors you get. My heart was set on going to the University of Pennsylvania. Believe it or not, I wanted to go to the Wharton School in those days. But I also looked at their football schedule and they were playing Navy and Notre Dame. Big time football compared to Rutgers, who was playing Susquehanna, or I forget, Worchester from Ohio, Springfield, Massachusetts. Just jerky little schools in my judgment. And it was in the springtime, 1941, and actually a couple of schools were recruiting. It wasn't very elaborate in those days. A couple of schools had recruited me. The fact is, I went up to Newark, New Jersey one day and got on a bus with thirty nine other guys, who I didn't know, and came to North Carolina, to Raleigh, and North Carolina State. They gave us a try-out. The line coach in those days was a guy named Herman Hickman, who was five feet tall and five feet wide. A real character who made quite a name for himself as a coach at Yale after World War II. But anyway, we got a try out. I was so dumb I didn't know what we were down there for, but that's why we were there. I wasn't good enough, because they didn't offer me anything. But that was my one exposure to big-time football. Anyway, this evening in the spring, I came walking home. When I say I was out, it was nine o'clock. I'm on my way home because it was my bedtime. As I approached my house, I could see this like it was yesterday, a Terraplane, which is an automobile made by Hudson Motors, convertible, parked in my driveway. And I knew that Harvey Harman owned that Terraplane. There weren't many of them around. So I walked into the house and sure enough, he's there, talking to my dad. And he stands up, walks over, and puts his arm around me, and says, "John," that's my dad, "if I had a son, I'd like him to be just like your Bob. You want to go to Rutgers, don't you, Bob?" I didn't have guts enough to say, "No." So that's how I actually ended up at Rutgers on a five-hundred dollar Upson Scholarship, which they had in those days, which was a lot of money.

KP: So it sounds like Harman really took care of you, in a sense. I mean, he really was very interested in having you go to Rutgers ...

RO: I think he was anxious to get warm bodies over there. [Laughter]

KP: Some of it was also your football ...

RO: Well, it wasn't me. I'm sure. ... I had potential to be a decent football player, but I hadn't been cultivated. But he most likely saw that. He was a heck of a football player at the University of Pittsburgh. And I think, as a youngster, his build and mine, were never too muscular. We were the same. I think he saw in me, and he never had any kids, "Maybe this kid has the same potential I might have had." I don't know. I never talked to him about that. That's how I sort of look back on it. It also, you have to remember, that even to this day, when we know Rutgers is trying like mad to get New Jersey kids to come there to play football, that if you were a local guy and went to Rutgers, it didn't hurt; neither the individual nor the University, to have kids from the immediate area playing.

KP: Just backing up a minute, you mentioned that you wanted to go to Penn. Partly because of their football schedule, but also partly because you were interested in the Wharton School. Can you talk maybe a little about what you thought you wanted to become when you were growing up?

RO: I'm not so sure I knew what I wanted to become, in honesty. In my high school yearbook I said a dairy farmer, because my uncle was in that business and I liked the fact that it had horses and wagons and milk bottles. It was, sort of, fun. I picked Pennsylvania because of the schedule, to be honest with you, and a young guy from South River, New Jersey, who I did not know, went there and made a name for himself. I picked the Wharton School, from the little bit I knew about it, had to do with mathematics if you will. And one of the few things, subjects, I really liked in life, didn't have any trouble with, was high school math, and algebra, trig, and all that sort of stuff. And so, again, just so naïve it's pathetic. But that's what my thinking was.

KP: When you said you didn't have trouble in math, what subjects didn't you care for in high school?

RO: Latin. I flunked Latin in high school. I had to take three years of Spanish in order to meet my requirements. She flunked me in Latin, rightfully so. I didn't particularly like history, although I told you earlier that I actually minored in that when I went to Rutgers years later. And I despised sciences. I flunked out of Rutgers as a freshman because of biology and botany. Didn't pass either one of 'em.

KP: You mentioned about your grandfather and Germany, that Germany was starting to act up. What did you know about the war, growing up? You were a little more conscious of Germany because of your relatives, but what did you know about, say, Japan or China or the rest of the world? Looking back on it now.

RO: You hit the nail on the head. What Germany was didn't mean anything. In fact, I knew it was a country over there my grandparents had come from, and never went back. And, on the Ziegert side, my mother's side of the family, when her dad settled down in South River, all the other folks who came from his home town, went to East Lansing, Michigan. I remember as a kid once going out there to a reunion in East Lansing, Michigan, all these "krautheads." But it didn't mean a thing. China: so we had a Chinese laundry in town. Japan: I remember that he always felt something

cheap came out of Japan. Tin toys, or something you buy in a Cracker Jack box, or something. But the world didn't mean a hoot and a holler to me, I'll be honest with you. I used to read the papers about the good old US of A. The fact is, I was working in a gas station in Highland Park, on a Sunday, on 7 December, 1941, when Pearl Harbor broke out, and I had to go get a map and find out where Pearl Harbor was. It didn't mean a thing. Hawaiian Islands was some romantic place you used to see in the movies, or something. But I was not world-wise, at all.

KP: You mentioned going to East Lansing, you mentioned your visits to the Shore, and your parents going to Atlantic City. How much did you travel before the war?

RO: I'd been to East Lansing, Michigan.

KP: That was the furthest west.

RO: And up the Hudson River, as far as West Point, and Coney Island, and once my dad took us to Washington, DC, to see the tour. But that was it. Other than that, I'd say a hundred miles from Highland Park was a big deal for me.

KP: It sounds like you spent some time up at the Jersey shore.

RO: My folks rented a house in Lavallette, New Jersey, practically all the time I could remember. And yes, we went down there every summer. And in later years I didn't always go, because I had a job, and I had to work at home. Oh, yes, I became a Boy Scout counselor. I forgot about that. For two summers I worked at Boy Scout camp, because the guy who ran the camp was also the football coach at Highland Park High School. So he kept an eye on me all summer.

KP: It sounds like your coming to Rutgers was, somewhat, because of Harvey Harman, preordained. Did you actually apply to the Wharton School?

RO: No, I did not.

KP: It was preordained.

RO: This was all mental thinking on my part. And when he said, "Would you like to go to Rutgers?" I said, "Yes, sir." And so, I went because, oh, for example, the registrar, a guy named Luther Martin, his daughter was the best looking girl in my class. So I had an in with the registrar, or at least I thought I did. The librarian lived in Highland Park. It was, you knew people when you walked over there. And it might have been, I don't know how many freshmen there were, if you had two hundred of us it was a lot. And on our football team we had exactly twenty-two guys, freshmen football players.

KP: I'm curious in terms of Rutgers being such a close knit world. One was President Clothier, and particularly his son. The son you knew. Was he the one that died during the war?

RO: No, Bobby didn't die. That was his older son. Bob is about my age. I have no idea if he's dead or alive, because I don't know where he is. But, Dr. Clothier lived in the president's house out there, and because of Bob, not just me now, it was not unique to go up there. In fact, we used to play on his front lawn. It was a great football field. Massive front lawn out there. And Dr. and Mrs. Clothier, who I don't profess to have known real well, they were like somebody else's mother and dad, as far as I'm concerned. You showed respect. And he was the President of Rutgers. Took me a long time to understand that they were mixed up with Strawbridge and Clothier in Philadelphia. I didn't understand that. But we got to roam around that house once in a while, and more important, the houses next door to it. The Voorhees houses, up on the hill next door to it. They had two good looking daughters up in that house. We could ride our bikes out there, from Highland Park to Ryders, out to the house down River Road. It was not dangerous. It was most likely, what, a fifteen minute bike ride?

KP: One of the things I've been struck by is ... how little traffic there was compared to, what today, it'd be dangerous for a kid. You wouldn't want to send him on a bike.

RO: No. You would not. I had one of my best buddies in high school, a fellow from Stelton, New Jersey, which now Route 27 goes to Metuchen, the same way there. We walked back and forth there, if not ride your bike. You didn't want to walk on the road, you went down and walked through the fields, where Camp Kilmer now is, through the Highland Park garbage dump, which now is a housing development area. I'm sure everybody says that. Then when you go back home, you say, "Oh, what happened to this place since I left?" It was kind of fun.

KP: You mentioned going to Rutgers. Academically, you had a tough time your first year.

RO: I flunked out after one semester. Well, I can tell you why. I was going to flunk out. I went there, I took Ag, not realizing the Ag curriculum. The only good thing about being an Ag student, in those days, you did not have to take a language. But I didn't know how many sciences you had to take, either. And I was, I think, I had just turned eighteen. Yes, I was eighteen years old in August. I went there in September. Went out for football, loved every minute of it, got beat to a pulp every Wednesday when we used to scrimmage the varsity. We played five or six games, had some success, and old Ochsie was not doing his homework. There's no question about it. And … Pearl Harbor came, the war broke out, and in those days, you took your exams after the first of the year. One of the smartest changes was to let kids take exams before they went home on Christmas vacation. But I went back to school after the week vacation that it was, and two week exams, which were modified exams, so it'd end up that one was every day, and start my second semester. And the Dean called me in, he says, "Ochsie," actually, he said, "Mr. Ochs," to be honest with you. That's what they called you in those days. He said, "You have flunked two subjects. You're going to be on academic probation, and you have to pass," whatever the certain mark was. In those days, four was the highest. One wasn't the highest one. Four was the highest grade you could get. So I think I had a 1.1, or some such thing. Pearl Harbor had come, so I went to school for a few weeks, and I said to myself, "Ochs, you are in trouble." First time in my life I ever felt somebody had punched me right square in the nose, knocked me on the ground, and I was beat. And I think I was most, I don't think, I know as I look back, that I was more ashamed of myself, and embarrassed, than anything else. I said, "I have a choice to make. I can go home and tell my father that I'm

going to flunk out of this University, or I can join the Marine Corps." I took the lesser of two evils, and joined the Marine Corps. My dad died shortly after that, and so we never … really had the chance to talk about that, and I often wish I had told him, "Dad, I joined the Marine Corps because I was too ashamed to face you eyeball to eyeball." So I tell everybody, in a sense, World War II was a savior for me. With a little honor I could be a college flunk out.

KP: Well, in some ways, I mean, we're, sort of, getting ahead of the story, but you obviously did better when you came back.

RO: Well, I was a lot older. I was four years older.

KP: Right.

RO: Although, I'll tell you another thing. I came back, four years older, GI Bill, with thousands of other guys, returned to Rutgers in February of 1946, and promptly flunked a math course. Of all things to flunk. Went to summer school along with eight or nine or ten of my buddies, ... and a lady professor, whose name I forget, if I could remember I wouldn't tell you for this reason, she taught at NJC, now Douglass, and we went there for six weeks, summer school, five days a week. This lady was an excellent teacher. But to make sure I could pass this course, I had to pass it to play football, to make sure I passed this course, I got ahold of a guy, whose name is Alan Voorhees. The Voorhees-Zimmerli Museum is named after his mother. Al gave the money. Al went to high school with me. I don't know how much he's worth now. His brother Ralph's a hot shot stockbroker in town. In fact, he's my broker. He's very active in Rutgers. I think he runs the Foundation, the Rutgers Foundation. But Al had gone to RPI, and MIT, and I don't know where else. So I said, "Al," this is the summer of 1946, now, "I got to pass this course." He said, "Okay." Every night he'd come over the house, and for about an hour we'd go through this stuff. And Al, with all due respect to the prof, talked to me, as two buddies, and said, "Look. You don't go this way, you should go this way." And, I caught on to this stuff. And when we took the final exam, there were five problems. And four of 'em, bingo [snaps fingers], just like that. I got 'em. And the fifth one I had trouble with. So, I went to see the prof. I didn't get it right. She said, "Well, you know, Bob, you've never done this work the way I've taught it. How come?" And I told her, "Every night I'd be with Al Voorhees, and this is how we'd do it." I said, "Instead of giving me a," let's say four was the highest, "instead of giving me a three plus, give me a four in this course." She said, "I can't do that. You didn't pass everything. The last problem." I said, "Now, if I gave you two tickets to every football game next fall, would you give me a four?" She looks at me and smiles and says, "No." So that took care of my grade. But other than that, … that one math course, I'm jumping the gun on you, I was no brilliant student, by no means. ... I don't think I ever pushed myself. With one exception. I had a course with Oscar Burroughs. And his text book was a twelfth year mental measurement book. It was a, sort of, a math course. And this guy, he lived in Highland Park, his wife made a lot of money making masks, that they used in theater. In fact, he and his wife donated quite a bit of money to Rutgers. They're both deceased now. But this guy challenged the living hell out of me. He just, ... and he gave me a one. I took him two semesters. He gave me a one both times, because he'd draw something out of me. In fact, my buddies who took the course with me said, "Why do you sit up in the front row for, Ochs?" Our theory was you sit as far back as you can. I said, "'Cause I like Professor Burroughs. And this guy's going to teach

me something." So that's the greatest academic success I had. But I didn't flunk anything else, and I did enough to get out.

KP: The dean who called you in, was it Dean Metzger?

RO: No, I remember Dean Metzger. No, this was ... Yes, it was, too, from over the Ag school. His name was Metzger. Wait a second, no. It wasn't. I'm sorry. Carl Metzger's father was the Dean of Men in those days. We had the Dean of Men, not Dean of Students. There weren't any women there. No, the guy over at …

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

RO: ... experience back when I was a freshman there. When he walked by I would come to a sharp attention. Saluted him. But he was … king. But I think he was very fair. Because we were so few students that they could really give you hands on treatment, in those days. And they did. And they were more than fair with you. But they also represented what my father did to me. Firm. If my dad said, "You will cut the grass tomorrow morning," you would cut the grass tomorrow morning. And so there was a father figure, and a great deal of respect for him. But the profs were that way, too. I don't know how some of these profs make out today, but the profs were that way. I took an economics course once, with a guy named Agger. Great economics man. But on Sunday nights he used to invite us to his home. Not every Sunday, but maybe four times a semester. We'd sit on the floor, Mrs. Agger would serve hot cocoa, or cookies, and he'd lecture us. Well, in those days, it was, "Well, yeah, I'm going to the prof's house, have cookies tonight." But you didn't know how important that was until just a few years of your life went by. And I recognize it can't be done today. Maybe some profs still do it, but the place was so small in those days, it was so intimate, that that was part of your education. And like most things in life, ... years go along before you recognize what that man really did for you. You've got to help me here. This was my favorite history professor. He ended up in a wheelchair, and he died. I know this gentleman.

KP: Was he long-standing at Rutgers?

RO: Yes.

KP: Charanis?

RO: No, not Pete. No, no. He wore glasses.

KP: Kelsey Grimes?

RO: No, no. … His son … married a girl from Highland Park. Bus Lepine was a Rutgers graduate, was the football coach, basketball coach at Highland Park High School for years. I'm gonna think of his name, but I'm going to tell you why he comes to mind. It's now after the war. February, '46, in the Bishop House, history, I forget what level it was. Prof says, "We don't know who won World War II." Now I'm sitting there like everybody else. I still have my Marine Corps dungarees on. It's the only clothes I own, and I raise my hand. I say, "What do you mean, prof, we

don't know who won World War II? What was I doing the past ... three years in the Pacific, chasing those Japs around?" He says, "We don't know who won World War II. We won't find out for years." I said to myself, "This prof has been looking at a book too long. He doesn't know what the hell's going on." I want to jump then from 1946 to when I went back to work at Rutgers, in 1958, or '59. … And I walk in the Commons one day, and sitting there at the table, by himself, is the prof. I say, "Hey, Prof. I'm Ochs." He said, "I remember you, Bob." I said, "Can I sit down?" He says, "Yes." Well, the whole reason for this was to tell him how right he was, and how wrong I was. And, in a sense, to apologize. This conversation, that day, started a friendship with this man that remained to the day he died. Because I realized, again, later on in life, that if I would listen, and not react, it's amazing what I could learn. I'm not going to tell you this gentleman's name, I'm embarrassed to tell you.

KP: Well, it's also someone you could add to the transcript. I mean, that's the part where we give people their transcripts.

RO: Why?

KP: ... Well, you were there only a semester, and in many ways, the last semester was pre-war Rutgers, and also, the small Rutgers, pre-war. Add any memories you have. I guess one of the things a lot of people I've interviewed is chapel, which they didn't particularly like ...

RO: Well, we had that beat. It didn't take me long to learn how to beat that. Yes, we went to chapel. I remember, two or three days a week we went to chapel. And you sat there like a bunch of tin soldiers, and so you'd get to know the guy next to you, and pretty soon you'd only have to go every other time, because he'd sign you in. See, the chapel only lasted about fifteen or twenty minutes. It wasn't a long session. They started that right after the war, too. I went back in '46, they had the compulsory chapel, but by that time, my kid brother was in the same class I was. There were two Ochses in a row, and the next guy's name was Nuldig. Anyway, we never went. One guy went and signed everybody in. They disbanded that in short order. You could beat systems. Things you didn't beat, though, for example, when I was a freshman, they had a freshman reception in the College Avenue gymnasium. And you lined up, and the girls at NJC came into town by bus. Hats on, and white gloves. And the two lines would meet. And so you had a partner, and you'd go through a reception line. First one I went through in my life. And you actually got to meet the President of the University and his wife. I used to think, "Ah, this is terrible." But it wasn't till you got older, again, you'd say, "Hey, Rutgers was teaching me something there, and I wasn't smart enough to recognize it at the time." Those things don't happen anymore.

KP: No, I mean, if you tried to do a freshman reception ...

RO: You'd get laughed out of town. It's a shame. It really is.

KP: You asked earlier, before we started the interview, about what my students thought of all this. One of the things they do is, they read the *Targum* from the '30s and '40s, and actually, it's interesting their reaction now. There are many of them who actually, well, they wouldn't totally want to recreate that world where you grew up, but they're very envious of aspects of it. And one,

there is, this really full social calendar. And so, it was after the war, ... as a freshman, you came into this. There was a very full social calendar, and we've often termed it, "The Three Fs:" the football, the fraternities, and the fun. Could you maybe … reflect on that?

RO: Well, as I indicated, and I know I'll beat this to death, but football was the most important thing in my life, so during the football season that's what we did. And when you were a freshman, I indicated this before, you were the target of the varsity on Wednesday, when they scrimmaged, for two days. And you got the living pulp beat out of you. That's why all those fellows who played for Rutgers in the late '30s, early '40s, I know, 'cause they beat me to death. I was an eighteen year old kid, weighing about two hundred and fifteen pounds. They used to like to just line up and just knock the stuffing out of me. You got associated with a fraternity if they wanted you, and in my case it was the DU house. And you went down there, and you saw. I saw another aspect, you know, how they hid the beer in the basement. True story. When I was a pledge they had a fraternity party, and they were going to serve alcohol. So the pledges were lined up on College Avenue, didn't have radios in those days, and if the Dean was coming down the street, we were the relay system. And one time, the Dean actually came down the street, and I put the system into effect so the guys could hide the stuff before the Dean walked in the fraternity house. I was never a gung-ho fraternity man. Never joined after the war because it just wasn't part of what I wanted, at the age I was in. But the fun, again, in a sense, reflected around what I described about high school, because Rutgers became your life. You didn't shove off and go other places; you just did things there. And there was a lot going on in those days. Not as much as … they have today, as I remember from my years of working there, but there were enough activities where you kept going. You didn't have the automobiles that you have now, you didn't try to drift as far away, and if you went over to "The Coop", as we called NJC, you know, they blew a whistle at eleven o' clock, and you were off the campus anyway. So it, sort of, took care [of that.] And it was tough to try to buy illegal beer. Taverns were, ... you had to prove you were twenty-one to get a beer, in those days.

KP: Before talking about the ROTC, do you remember your freshman initiation? You had to wear a dink, and …

RO: Oh, yes. I think I still have my dink, to be honest with you. You wore the dink, first with a little bit of fear and trepidation, after that, with pride. The Dean of Students in those days also used to lecture us about how you said "hello" to everybody on the campus. I thought to myself, "Now what the devil is this guy talking about?" But you did it, because you were told to. And again, it's a tradition that was so meaningful, because you actually did know everybody's name, but you sure knew who they were, and you could walk by, and the next thing you know, by the time you're a freshman, six weeks old, guys are saying, "Hey, hi, Ochsie, how are you?" I wasn't head frosh anymore. So there wasn't a lot of punishment, but the thing was a sign. … To me it became a little sign of distinction. I wore my order with pride the whole time. In fact, it was the only hat I owned, I think. Took ROTC, and I used to enjoy that, marched around with a rifle and all that sort of stuff. Never shot it, but went up there, marched around. We did that, but it also gave you a chance to mingle with upper-classmen. Like one of the best friends I had, a guy by the name of Don McFarland, who's now dead, who was a sophomore when I was a freshman, was next to me in line. You know, 'cause I was a freshman, he was a hot-shot sophomore. He enjoyed tripping me as we

marched down the field, and tried to make a jackass out of me, you know? But that became, we became close friends as a result of that. He happened to be a football player, too.

KP: I'm curious. One of the first people I … interviewed was Ralph Schmidt. And he was an Upson Scholar, and ... he remembers ... he can almost tell, like it was yesterday, that he, sort of, got out ... and he looked around, and there were these other Upson Scholars there, and he said, "Well, I guess I'm coming here to play football." I get the sense that you have that sense that the Upson was given to you to play football.

RO: Oh, I accept it as such. In fact, you had to belong. The Upson Scholars, you had to belong, I think, to the Reformed Church, to get the thing. Maybe that's how narrow it was, you know? You know, you mentioned Ralph Schmidt. Ralph's the Class of 1942. He was a fullback on the football team. When I was a freshman, he was a hot shot. He's one of the guys who beat the pulp out of me. Ralph was also a wrestler. In fact, last time I knew, he was in personnel work, right outside of Busch campus, there somewhere.

KP: He ended up working in pharmaceuticals. He did quite well. He's now retired to Virginia, but just recently.

RO: I didn't know. I remember Ralph very well.

KP: ... I guess, one other colorful person would be Vinnie Utz.

RO: Oh, well, again my ego's gone down. I was most likely closer to Vinnie Utz than any other person at Rutgers, except a few guys he played with. I'll tell you why. Again, now, I'm in high school. Utz is playing for Rutgers. And when he first arrived from Bridgeport, Connecticut, he's a krauthead, too, incidentally. They were in pre-season football down in Sea Girt, some guy from the media picked up the expression, "Utz is Nuts." And that stayed with him. At Highland Park High School, our biggest rivals were Metuchen High School. This was bitter. And the guy who was the captain of the Metuchen football team, and I was the captain of the Highland Park team, [we] had been at Boy Scout Camp together. We were friends. I used to go visit him. His name is Bob Thompson. And he went to the Naval Academy. Made a career out of the Navy. His sister, his older sister, … Dottie Thompson, was Vinnie's girlfriend. So I knew Vinnie Utz from the time I was in high school. When I'd be out there at the Thompson's house, I had an old Model-A Ford in those days, Utz used to say, "You can drive me home, Ochs." And I'd drive him back to the Kappa Sig house, where he lived, on the corner of College Avenue and Hamilton Street. So I knew him very well. And ... during the war, I've got to tell you, this may not be important, but this to me is a bit funny. I'm in the Marine Corps, and I think it's 1944. I came back from some islands to Hawaii to go to a rest camp, and I knew that Utz had a brother in the Marine Corps. Now I'm walking down the street one day, and I say, "... That's got to be Utz's brother." Now, his brother joined the Marine Corps in 1937/'38 some time, he was a salty old Marine. So I walked up to him and said, "Hey, Gunny," that's an expression, "My name's Ochs. Are you Vinnie Utz's brother?" He said, "Yeah, but what the hell do you care?" That was the whole conversation. Years later, I meet this guy in Vinnie's house. Vinnie lived in Metuchen. He says, "I don't even remember you, kid, talking to me, saying that to me." But after the war, Vinnie, ... all the guys in the post-war teams

told Utz, "It's a damn shame that he didn't have the privilege of playing with us, because we could have made him a great football player." But he hung out with us. In fact, he was instrumental in my getting my first job at Johnson & Johnson. And Vinnie was a friend of mine. The day he died I was in the house an hour after he was dead.

KP: Because he had had a tough time after the war.

RO: Well, he lost his arm, up by his armpit, and never let it slow him down, but he was a thick-headed German. That's all. Just a thick-headed German. Period.

KP: Why the Marines? Why not the Army, or the Navy, or the Army Air Corps, Air Force?

RO: Well, I think there's two reasons. One, my best buddy from high school, who was then up at Lehigh, joined the Marines. He didn't flunk out, he just joined the Marines. And the second thing is, I'd look around and say, you know, they had the reputation, at least in my eyes, of being the best of the military, and I didn't want to be drafted into the Army. ... I wasn't eligible for the draft yet, but I didn't want to go to the Army. I sure as hell didn't look good in a Navy suit, so I just had this burning desire to be a Marine. That's all.

KP: Looking back on it, was it a movie you saw? Was it a novel you read?

RO: No. I just think it was most likely word of mouth is supposed to be the world's finest or something, you know? But, I had seen Marines, like seeing them walk in their blue uniform. I never wore one of those dress blues. But, no, I just decided, "It's not as bad as you think." It's not. On Parris Island, down in South Carolina, it's not as bad as they tell you it is. So anyway, I never thought about anything else. I just went down to Perth Amboy, and signed up. My dad died, so they gave me a deferment so I could take care of that, then went back in ninety days later.

KP: Do you know where, roughly, you reported after your deferment?

RO: Where?

KP: Yes. Where did you report in, and what date, roughly?

RO: It was September, 1942. I went to Perth Amboy, got on a train, went into Church Street, New York, passed the final physical, put on a train, ended up in Yemassee, South Carolina. If you've never been down there, you should go. Every year my wife and I go down to Florida in the wintertime, to visit her relatives. We drive down there, and I go through Yamessee. And always stop, and tell her, "Babe, this is where we're going to retire next." You'd have to see Yamasee, South Carolina, to appreciate it. But … September, 1942, I reported to Parris Island, South Carolina.

KP: And ... what do you remember of your basic training?

RO: Hell. Scared. Scared to death. First experience I had, first night I'm there, bright moon night in Carolina, we'd just gotten on base about six o'clock, and the DI, the drill instructor, who was the king, has us lined up, and he's teaching us how to do a right face. I knew how to do a right face. I'd been to ROTC at Rutgers. So I did it. So he walks up, he said, "How you know how to do that?" Well, I thought I'd be honest. I said, "I learned how to do that in ROTC, sir." You called him "sir." "Oh, you're a college kid." Well, I didn't have a chance to tell him I didn't last long in college. "You're a wise-ass. You will ride the range tomorrow morning." So I had no idea what this meant. So you got up at five o'clock in the morning, you went outside, and get counted and do exercise. And he tells me to report down to the mess hall. So I report, like I'm told, and I tell the guys, "I'm Private Ochs, sir. I was told I had to ride the range." So the guy gives me a ball of steel wool, and sticks my big head inside of an oven, and what I did was scrape that oven for the whole damned day. That's riding the range. So that's when I learned, I had not been in Parris Island twenty-four hours, and I learned that you keep your mouth shut, and you volunteer for nothing, and you don't tell anybody anything. And that was my career for the twelve weeks I was down there. I didn't tell nobody nothing. Took my orders, and kept my mouth shut. Which wasn't a bad way to behave.

KP: What else do you remember? I mean, you weren't at the hottest point of summer, but South Carolina's pretty warm.

RO: Well, ... I've been back there two or three times since. The drill field, which was about the size of fifteen or twenty football fields, was pure sand. It's now asphalt. And close order drill was one of the things they did almost every day. Close order drill until you're blue in the face. I learned later, "Why? Why, why, Marine Corps, do you send us out there for hour after hour, parading around on that damned sand doing close order drill?" And again, it's a lesson you learn in life, that the theory was, and it works when you get into combat, that as you're marching there, with your rifle on, sweat, miserable, mad at the world, and the guy says "Right flank march," you right flank march. If he says "the rear march," you did it. You never even thought about it. You just did it like that. [snaps fingers] But the whole point is, when you got to combat, and the order came, you did it, too. You never thought twice about it. So again, there was a reason for it. But, ... I saw my first general, when I was a kid down there. Didn't know what to do, salute him or what. I was so nervous. And I had never really … fired a weapon in my life, and we went to the rifle range, which, in the Marine Corps is a rather elaborate, detailed process. I became a good rifle shot, and I took great pride in this. Fired that rifle many times there, and later, and since the end of World War II, never fired a weapon 'til I came down here. Met another former Marine, went out in the woods one day, and shot at some pie plates to see if I could still squeeze them off. But the accomplishment was with the weapon, because the weapon was foreign to me. A lot of guys were born and raised hunting, but not me.

KP: So, I'm just curious, ... even when you created the Rutgers Police Department, you yourself never carried a weapon, or never ...

RO: I never had the desire to, nor did I ever feel it was necessary for me to carry one. You know, that's a whole different story.

KP: Yes. It's interesting, that in fact, once you left the Marines, that was it.

RO: Right. I never went hunting in my life, and had no desire to. I suppose a lot of other guys in combat felt the same way, for obvious reasons.

KP: ... You remember the rifle range. What else do you remember about your basic training? What was a typical day like there?

RO: Well, I'll most likely be careless with the truth. I don't remember the details. But we were up by five/five-thirty in the morning. You went outside and stood at attention, you did some exercise, rushed to shave, I didn't have to shave while I was there, but I shaved every morning because they told me to, brush your teeth, you would march to chow, you'd come back, you had to clean up your barracks and what have you. And then, when you were on the rifle range, that's what you did all day. But other days, you had combat training. We'd go around the obstacle course, make some forced marches, bayonet drills, all that sort of war stuff. But, for example, I learned how to play the game "Abandon Ship." We're out at the rifle range, and the sergeant says, "Today, gentlemen, we are going to play 'Abandon Ship.'" It's like 'Ride the Range,' isn't it? I didn't know what the devil the guy was even talking about. "Abandon Ship" consists of this: you're in the barracks, and you take everything out. I mean everything. Beds, anything that moves, out it goes, in the front yard. You then go in with pails and scrub brushes, and you scrub down the barracks. The pipes, everything. Then you come back out, and you move everything back in, in a very military manner. And then the sergeant comes through, to see what kind of job you did. And he doesn't like it, so he'd say, "Gentlemen," he didn't say gentleman, "we will again play 'Abandon Ship.'" Well, I played this game three times in one day. And there wasn't one ounce of dust in that whole mess hall. I remember that. Another thing I remember, I was, you know, still in Parris Island. Christmas Eve, 1942. I had guard duty on the beach, with a loaded rifle, which I knew how to shoot in those days, walking on the beach, the Atlantic Ocean, all by myself, colder than cold. Two hours, I did this. And when I get relieved, I came off at midnight, first Christmas I'd never been home, and I go back to the guard shack, you're allowed to get four hours sleep before you have to go on guard duty again, and cold, miserable, feeling sorry for myself, mist in my eyes, didn't dare cry out loud, just absolutely miserable. Unload a mattress, unfold it, full of cockroaches, don't give a damn, hop up in there, I'm back there, and in the sergeant's room, he had the radio on. There was a song called "White Christmas." The first year it ever came out. Bing Crosby. Well, you know, I figured, eighteen years old, you're in this cockroach ridden mattress, Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas," and you're in South Carolina, which meant that it was three thousand miles from nowhere, and you didn't feel very good. I spent … three Christmases away from home. That's the most miserable Christmas I ever had in my life, and whatever happens Christmas is always a great day from then on. But that time I remember vividly. And every time I hear Bing Crosby's "White Christmas," the Christmas season will come out again, I think about that. It came out just that time, it's the first Christmas song I can remember hearing down there.

KP: What do you remember about your drill instructor? Was he an old Marine?

RO: No. Neither one of them were. Number one, the head drill instructor was a guy who stood about five foot eight, he wore glasses, had pimples on his face. Nothing what I expected to be a

Marine. He was a SOB, this guy. His assistant was a guy from Massachusetts, who was a big, well-built Irishman. Both of them I respect, because they did what they were supposed to do. They taught. I was a squad leader in boot camp. And so you went to the PX, you went to go buy your necessities. So once a week, you were allowed to go to the PX, the squad leader was. He'd have to take his orders. And you carried a pail. Then you went into the Marine Corps, they issued you a brush, and a pail, that was to wash your clothes, which they deducted from your salary, I might add. Twenty-nine dollars a month. So you brought this pail, you'd go up and knock on the door, and the DI would say, "Who's there?" "Private Ochs is here, sir." "What does Private Ochs want?" "Sir, Private Ochs requests permission to go to the PX." "Why does Private Ochs want to go to the PX?" Well, he gives me this whole rigmarole. And he says, "Private Ochs, you will buy me two packs of cigarettes," which was not unusual in those days, "and three bars of pogie bait." Pogie bait is candy. "And you will not buy any pogie bait for you, or those slobs in your squad, you understand?" "Yes, sir." So you go to the PX, that's where I ran across the general, come back, you've got to unload your pail, show him everything you bought, which was really toothpaste, and soap, and things like that. But this routine, everything you did, it made life miserable. And yet the day that you graduate, which wasn't a formal ceremony during the war, when the DI came by and shook your hand and said, "Welcome, Marine," 'cause that's when you became a Marine. Before that you weren't. You were nothing but a piece of meat. But you became ... you sort of shook hands, with firmness, and say, "Thanks." Because you were excited. I always have to remind my wife when we go up there to Camp Lejeune, and she always says, "They're so young!" I say, "It's just what they were, Babe, during the war, we were kids, that's all." And you reacted with the emotion that people have. Things like the flag going by meant something, still do to me, but they meant something.

KP: What about the guys in your training company? In your barracks in particular.

RO: Never saw any of them again.

KP: Well, what were their backgrounds? Why did they join the Marines?

RO: There were two kinds of guys there. There were, well, I happened to become the squad leader of twelve guys. There were three or four of them from the CCCs, Civilians Conservation Corps, who were older than I was, and they had some sense of military. Most of them from the Midwest. Great guys. Couldn't find a job, just needed some work. With one other exception, there was a guy there who had two years of college. They were a bunch of foul ups you never saw in your life. I mean, two guys that the judge told 'em, "Join the Marine Corps or go to jail." With the exception of that one older guy and the CCCs, we were all the same age. One guy was a misfit. His discipline was, we were told to take him into the shower one night, and to scrub him down. We did that, we were told to do it, and next morning he wasn't there. I don't know what ever happened to him. But, the guys I was with there, I never saw again. The platoon next to me, as you got in the platoon and they marched you place to place, they give the boots, the rest of us, the chance to be the counter cadence. We marched on the side and counted off, "Three, four..." We used to pass that other platoon all the time, and this guy used to make a lot of noise, so I said, "I can outdo him." I took great pride in that I could count cadence by singing "Anchors Away." Well, that guy, he and I

ended up in the same outfit several years later. That's the only guy I can remember from Parris Island.

KP: It sounds like it was a pretty, overall though, till you finished, it sounds like it was a pretty miserable experience. Is there anything you look back and …

RO: Well, yes. I thought about this during the war, after I got out. Was it pleasant? No. Was it tough? Yes. And I think I took pride in that. But did they teach me a lot? Oh, yes.

KP: What was the most useful? Particularly in combat, you said, "I'm really glad ..."

RO: Trust my fellow man, the guy along side of me. Believe what a person told me. I think the basic things of what we like think of character and integrity in individuals. That was so important. But you're there with a bunch of guys your same age, and you got, also, there was a war going on in those days, and that's all you hear each night, we used to be able to read the newspaper for a couple of minutes a night, and that's what you've really been trained for. You didn't worry about your career, or what you were going to learn. You knew you were being trained because there was a war, and that's where you were headed. And I'm sure everybody in the military felt the same way. So the thing was, try to learn as much as you can, and listen to what they were teaching you. Used to teach us how to, the Japs were going to strangle us with piano wire. Never happened to me, but when we were going through that drill, yes, that was important. Maybe that's what the Japs were doing. But they did tell us, "You've got to learn how to operate a weapon." The fact is, on a weapon, when you were going through inspection on Parris Island, the DI would take your weapon, and make sure it was clean, and all that sort of stuff. He'd throw it back at you. And if you missed it, you slept with your weapon. And that's no joke. It went in the sack with you. And sometimes people don't think that's uncomfortable. Try it some night. Just put a rifle in bed with you, and see how it is to sleep with it. But that was your best friend.

KP: No. People have told me … if you referred to it by the wrong name, if you called it "your gun," I think, instead of "your weapon."

RO: Oh, yeah! … It wasn't a gun. It wasn't a rifle. It was your weapon. No. That's true. Very, very true in the Marine Corps. That's very, very true. And when I got to be a sergeant, my troops felt the same way. Part of the routine. There was great pride in the Marines. There is today.

KP: No, I've been struck ... just having a conversation with my friend, I increasingly thought to myself, if I had joined the service, it would probably be the Marines. Which I might not have said that before doing this project. Because one of the things I've been struck by, particularly once you did graduate, there was quite a bond for Marines, which, I think it's a real genuine …

RO: Well, I can tell you very honestly, Kurt, that here it is, fifty-five years or so later, since I first went to war in one outfit. And I became very friendly with five other guys. One of them never came back. The other four did. And to this day, those four men, one of them on his deathbed as we talk, are my very, very best friends. I was only with them for a year, a year and a half. My second group of best friends, and the only other group I had, are guys I played football with at Rutgers.

But, yes, I'm sure psychologists could tell you why. Your youth, your mission, and the fact that you're together and alone, that friendship just develops over night. And these fellows and I are spread all over, but we still get together about once every four or five years.

KP: After finishing at Parris, where did they send you next?

RO: Came up the road here to Camp Lejeune. We were in a place called "tent camp," with hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of other guys. Because that's where they mustered you. The first night we were up there, I got up there, and this was right after Christmas, early January, maybe. It was cold in North Carolina, and they had a potbellied stove, and these tents with sixteen in a tent, double decked. And the first thing that happens in our tent, the damn stove explodes, which means soot beyond belief, and your sea bag, everything you own, is covered with the stuff. So the next day, the sergeant marches up, and says, "You will now wash your clothes," which means you will go out back, where they had a board, with some water faucets, and a scrub brush, which you had, a pail, which you owned, and you scrubbed your clothes for three days. That was my indoctrination at Camp Lejeune. I smile every time I go up there. I go up there rather frequently. I smile every time I think about that. But anyway, this outfit, after two or three weeks, they found out what they were going to do with us. I'm sure in all branches of the military, they had so many guys all of a sudden, they didn't have all the facilities to move them. We all were broken up, ... and I was sent to another outfit to start my formal training. The first time I was going to go to war was with this outfit. I was only in Lejeune for four or five months before I left.

KP: And then where did you train with the outfit that you joined?

RO: Well, we trained in Lejeune. The fact is, we only took a ride after we were up there ... . We'd ride through those woods. I'll tell you I covered every damn ounce of these woods up here. Take us out on Monday, bring us back on a Friday, and we sleep out, and go down to the beach, it's called Onslo Beach, and they practice landings in Higgins boats is how, in those days, you actually got on the beach. You came ashore on those boats. And they just worked the living daylights out of us. But again, we didn't know any different, and that was the deal.

KP: Just jumping ahead with this story, but this area has been very significant to you. It sounds like ... you picked this area to retire...

RO: It sounds corny, but, yes. As a kid up there, early 1943, there was something about this thing that captured me, and I said, "You know, if I ever live long enough to retire, I'm going to come back." And when the time came to leave Rutgers, I looked at western North Carolina, but I came here. And it's like I'm home. I'll be very honest with you. Been here nine years, it's like I'm home.

KP: The unit you joined, could you maybe talk about it a little? Particularly friendships you developed with your officers, both sergeants, but also your contact …

RO: Well, the outfit that I joined was really a weapons outfit at first. Our senior sergeants were guys who had been on Midway Island. These were guys who had been in the Marine Corps at least

since 1938 or '39. And they were old salts. The rest of us were just nothing but recruits. And they accepted us, but they were our … NCOs, and they showed us a lot of the know-how. And we spent a lot of time crawling around on our bellies, and all that sort of stuff, and playing games, in a way, and yet it wasn't playing games, because we knew there was a reason for this. During the course of this training, by dumb luck, I made corporal. And some of these other fellows, who had been in the Marine Corps, then, three/four years, were only corporals. And on the weekends up there, you have to have guard duty, of course, and the Sergeant of the Guard is the highest post an enlisted guy has. Of course, no sergeants had that job, weekend corporals had it. So the corporal is the acting Sergeant of the Guard. So when it came, my outfit's, my battalion's chance to be Sergeant of the Guard for the weekend, being in the Marine Corps seven or eight months and being a corporal, and all the other corporals being in the Marine Corps four or five years and being corporals, I don't have to tell you where I spent most of my weekends. I was acting Sergeant of the Guard. That's how they got even with me. But half a chance, some of those guys never got further than corporal. I ended up being a platoon sergeant, and I had a couple of them working for me at one point.

KP: [Laughter] I picture a certain irony of fate.

RO: ... That first outfit I was in up there, I'm a private, I'm out on guard duty one night, and we're not guarding anything. We're out in the woods guarding a water tower. And I smoke cigars. Ten/twelve cigars a day in those days. So I'm out there on guard duty, it might have been ten/eleven o'clock at night, I'm smoking a cigar, walking my post in a military manner. I think I was guarding a water tower around there. I don't know what from, but I'm guarding the water tower. But anyway, I hear this jeep pull up. And I say, "Oh, that's the Officer of the Day coming." So I put the cigar in my pocket, in my fatigue pocket, and go through my routine of the Officer of the Day, and he doesn't leave right away. He says, "Where you from, Ochs?" "From New Jersey." "You ever go to Rutgers?" "Yes, sir." He said, "You a freshman football player?" "Yes, sir." This guy's name was Herbie Gross.

KP: Herb Gross. I've interviewed him.

RO: Have you?

KP: Yes. Yes! He was one of the first people I interviewed.

RO: From Trenton?

KP: Yes!

RO: Sells food stuffs.

KP: Oh, yes.

RO: Oh, Herbie Gross! That's my lieutenant! [Laughter] So I said to myself, "Goddamn it," I said, "I've got to take this cigar out of my pocket, it's burning the hell out of me!" Well, he didn't turn

me in, but he reprimanded the hell out of me. I always remember that. If it wasn't for him, I'd have burned to death, most likely. You interviewed Herbie Gross?

KP: Oh, yes! You were in his unit?

RO: Yes, I sure was!

KP: Oh, yes. I have an extensive interview with him.

RO: Do you really? Is he still alive?

KP: Oh, yes. He's still in business.

RO: Still hustling?

KP: That's ...

RO: Piece of work, that guy. Herbie Gross.

KP: You went over with his unit overseas?

RO: I went to the Marshall Islands with him. Yes. Then they broke us up after that. I went to the Marshall Islands in with him.

KP: I'd be curious ... to hear what type of officer he was. Because I've, sort of, heard the war from his story. It'd be interesting to compare these two interviews.

RO: ... I've only seen this guy once in my life since, ... maybe 1948? We're playing Princeton, at Princeton. No, I saw him twice. That's right. Anyway, I worked at the Peddie School for a while, in Hightstown, and Herbie was then peddling foodstuffs. I remember he came to see me. I'm going to go back and answer the question this way. Herb Gross went in the Marine Corps as an officer, and I went in as an enlisted man. So when he made first lieutenant, I think I became corporal. When he made captain, I became a sergeant. So while on different levels, we both moved along a little bit. I'll be brutal. I'll tell Herbie this to his face. I didn't think he was a very good officer. But that's me saying that. But I never had any problems with him.

KP: Well, why didn't you think he was a very good officer?

RO: Well, I think he got carried away with the fact that he's rank, to be honest with you.
KP: Well, rank does have its purpose in the services.

RO: Yes, it sure does, but you also know that if you're a captain, and dealing with a sergeant, your success reflects on that sergeant reacting. But I never had any real trouble, but he's not one of the guys I remember. I got another officer. I joined, I went to Okinawa. I was then a platoon sergeant. This guy was a second lieutenant, he lives out in Scottsdale, Arizona. He's a doctor. He's the

finest officer I ever worked with, that guy. But then the circumstances I went through in Okinawa are different than the ones I went through in the Marshalls, too.

KP: What about your sergeants … in your first unit? You got to be corporal.

RO: I had a gun. I had a forty millimeter gun, and I got to be … gun captain as a corporal. And the other guys were sergeants. But it didn't make any difference, I mean, once you got to the Marshall Islands. I guess I made, yes, I know I did. I made sergeant, you know, on the Marshall Islands.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Robert F. Ochs on November 24th, 1997, with Kurt Piehler in Wilmington, North Carolina. … Just before we had broken for lunch we were talking about your first unit, and the men in your unit. Maybe you could talk a little bit about your experiences with the men in your company. It was your first company, particularly your heavy weapons. You were gun captain as a corporal.

RO: I had a crew of, I think there were six or seven of us, as I remember. All of us went into the Marine Corps at the same exact time. In fact, some guy went in a couple of months earlier than I did, and that was so important in those days. You went in in February, March, April, May, or what it was when you joined. They were a senior, if you will. But we were kids, and ... we had worked together. And, in fact, ... it was them that made me a corporal. We're up here, at Lejeune, before we went overseas, firing at a target, an airplane pulling a target across the ocean, and my gun crew hit the target. We were the only one out of four or five gun crews. We hit the target, and a colonel walked up and he said, "What's your name?" And I said, "Private Ochs, sir." And he turns to the gunnery sergeant, walking out, and says, "This man will be a corporal." First of the month I made PFC, and the first of the next month I made corporal. These guys made me corporal. They never let me forget it. We were together four or five days and some sergeant comes in, and they transfer me from that gun crew that I had been with for five or six months over to the other island on a brand new gun crew with a bunch of guys who, I didn't even know who some of them were. So I wasn't really with them.

KP: So the guys you trained with, you didn't end up fighting with?

RO: That's right. ... Then they broke us up shortly after that, so I never even saw some of those guys again, till after the war. Because … the Marshall Islands was no big deal. It was a three day battle to take it. We had one air raid there. You know, they dropped one bomb on us. But the thing I saw on the Marshall Islands, it was a hell of an impression, that if you rode around in a jeep, around these two islands on the beach, you would have gone four and a half or five miles. That's how small it is. You'd make your way to the jungle where they'd try to drive these guys off. But the remaining Japanese, that we hadn't killed, they drowned themselves. I actually stood there on the beach, and watched them drown themselves. And this also, in a way, bothered me, saying, "What kind of an opponent do I have here?" 'Cause the American way, and the way we were taught is that you saved everybody. If a Marine got killed, for example, you brought him back. You didn't leave him, come hell or high water. And ... the loss of the, rather, no regard of human life that the

Japanese showed us, and I thought if I had to face him again, that sort of bothered me. But, ... to try and answer your question, the fellows that I was with, from Camp Lejeune to Marshall Islands, again, we were all guys about my same age. I can tell you where they came from. One guy from Brooklyn, New York. One guy from Rushville, Indiana, who didn't know who Wendell Willkie was. That's how sharp he was. Wendell came out of Rushville. One guy from Tampa, Florida. One from Carlsbad, New Mexico. And ... we just, we spent so much time together, doing nothing, that we became very, very close friends. For example, the guy from Tampa, Florida, he wrote to his dad, and he said, "Yeah, I got this guy Ochs as a friend of mine, and he smokes cigars," and I did. I smoked sixteen cigars a day. Next thing I know, his name was Bill (Lentz?), he's a stroke victim now, his father started sending me cigars, called "The cigar that breathes," with the end that you put in your mouth. Instead of having to chew on the end, it had a hole already put in it. Up until the time he died, I never met the man, up until the time he died I got these cigars from him.

KP: Was this after the war?

RO: No, just during the war.

KP: Just during the war?

RO: In fact, he died before the war was quite over.

KP: But even after you were out of the unit.

RO: No. No longer with him.

KP: You still got those cigars.

RO: Mr. Lentz, who I never met in my life, sent me these cigars. Bill Lentz, married a girl named Grace Helen after the war. I knew as much about Grace Helen as I knew about my sister. This guy, they were never alone. Every night he wrote her a letter. Every night he wrote her a letter! We used to play, in Camp Lejeune, this guy fancied himself as a great basketball player. We used to go up to the gym, he would play basketball. One of the guys we'd play with there ended up playing football for Brown University. He played two years in a row. Joe Paterno was their quarterback. He is now the Penn State coach. This guy and I played basketball as kids up here, faced each other two years, right opposite of one another, two years. One year we beat him, one year he beat us. And ... that's the type of thing I remember. One good guy named Vozer came out of Jersey City, I got to be real friendly with. He was the first dead Marine I ever saw in my life.

KP: What happened to him?

RO: He got shot. Period.

KP: Where did he get shot?

RO: In the Marshall Islands. I was just walking along. When finding a dead Marine you take his rifle, stick it in the ground bayonet first, put his helmet on top of the rifle butt and cover the Marine with his poncho. I went to see his mother and father after the war. But, I know I'm saying this over and over again, Kurt, but it wasn't fear. This was just a part of life. This was like, "Okay, it's Saturday, so I have to go out and paint the house because my father says so. So that's what's going to happen next." ... I can see now why the guy who was married was not the same as we were.

KP: Did you know any married men?

RO: Oh, yes. Used to tease the living hell out of him. Terrible. Ungodly. Yes. But I know why they were the way they were, you know, they were concerned about a wife. And I understand. A couple of years ago the Commandant of the Marine Corps said, "No married kids should be allowed in the Marine Corps, and you can't get married until you're a corporal," or something. He got boo-hooed all over. But he's right. He's right. Not just the Marine Corps. I got two kids who're professional military men: one's a Naval Academy graduate, one's a Coast Guard Academy graduate. They'll tell you the same thing. Take a submarine out for six months. Guy better be in the Navy for a while, … and then get married, before he should be a young kid going out and just getting married. So that was a great experience. They remain my, those four guys, have been my closest buddies from the service for all these years. But there was nothing so dramatic that ever happened. I think we did what we were expected to do. We'd all get drunk a couple times on hooch juice, homemade hooch juice. We knew everybody's family even though we never met 'em. You were with 'em, like, Bill Lentz, his dad died. I wasn't with him. Another guy, his name was Jim Farrell, so I called him Jake, 'cause he came out of Brooklyn. His dad died, and I was with him. And never knew his father, but you suffered along with him because his dad died, and you're nineteen years old. Oh, another thing, something like that happened. Let me see, where were we then? I think we were in California. Anyway, he got leave to go home. Well, everybody throws in the few bucks they have, make sure he had enough money to get home. We thought nothing of that. Used to gamble. Haven't gambled since. Well, I used to play cards with those guys from football. Used to gamble. You didn't win a lot. Won two hundred dollars. Used to shoot dice 'cause you didn't care. You didn't have any place else to spend your money anyway. You'd shoot dice, you win two hundred bucks, you had a hell of a night. … I shot dice on a ship going back to Hawaii one time, Christmas time, 1944, won two hundred dollars. Didn't sleep until I got back home, so I could wire the money to my mother, my kid sister and brother.

KP: You didn't spend it on a good time? [Laughs] I'd be curious though ... if you could talk a little bit about your, before talking more about the Marshall Islands, could you talk a little bit about your journey to Hawaii. Because you'd said you'd had to look up where Pearl Harbor was.

RO: I was a kid. Now, of course, I'm going across the country in 1943. We went from Camp Lejeune to San Diego.

KP: And you took the train?

RO: It took six days. And you had, it was a sleeper. You had four guys, and the sleeper could hold three, one on the top, two on the bottom. So one guy stayed awake when there wasn't anywhere to

sleep. But, we went across country in six days. I remember crossing the Mississippi River, how big it was, 'cause I went back to look at it last month. It's a mile wide, or so. I remember stopping in New Orleans. They took us out in the train station, and exercised us. Exercise, they always took your rifle. And that's exercising: physical training.

KP: Up and down?

RO: Yes. Twisting and all that sort of stuff. And went down to the railroad station in New Orleans. I didn't recognize it, but I remember being there. I went and looked that over. My greatest impression of that train ride was, number one, how big this country is. Now when we got to California we got in someplace around Los Angeles, and we went down to San Diego. And that whole trip was through orange groves. You could see the ocean once in a while, on your right, and orange groves. But by now, you shouldn't even know it's called Orange County. My son, one of my sons, lives in Redondo Beach, California. And I made that trip lots of times, by car, and it's like everything else. You would never recognize it. But I remember that. I remember going up to this guy Bill Lentz, from Florida. Grace Helen was his fiancée. Grace Helen had a sister, who was married to a guy who ... lived in California. He had invented some way for a belly-gunner to escape the turret they put him in there. Had a lot of money. We got to California. They invite us up to their house. We went up to spend a weekend there, the three of us. They treated us, they took us out for dinner, to the Brown Derby, and I had my first whiskey sour. Thought it was lemonade. I had my second and my third there, too. And sitting on the other side of the room was Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth. In those days, Welles was sawing Rita Hayworth in half, or something, for a USO show or some such thing. And Orson Welles, the only thing I knew about him, he was the guy who put on the famous Halloween show on, which took place over there in Plainsboro, and I used to live in Cranbury. But I knew where Plainsboro was. And so I get up, with three whiskey sours under my belt, cocky ass Marine. I walk over and introduce myself, he says, "Sit down. Buy you a drink?" He buys me a drink, and I talk to him like a Dutch uncle for like ten, twelve minutes, and leave. Big deal. Tell everybody, "Yeah, I had a drink with Rita Hayworth." I remember she had skinny legs. That's what I remember about her: skinny legs. But then, that'd be a big, big night out. I also remember there was a circle up there in LA. I can't remember the name of it. And we're walking around there one day, and the guys had a lot of Model-A Fords that had been modified. Way back in the Dark Ages. California kids did that way before anybody else did. Now I'm walking around there, one of the guys standing next to a Model-A Ford was a guy who had been in the Boy Scouts with me, umpteen years before. He had moved out there. He had a Model-A Ford. I remember seeing him. San Diego is the town I fell in love with, in nothing flat. Every time I go back there now, I just, I'm always amazed at it. I think I mentioned to you before, I went to see Glen Miller the other night, talking about old bands. The night before I went overseas, in the Grant Hotel, in San Diego, I saw Ted Lewis. Ted Lewis, the half-baked ... clarinet player, but he had a black gentleman who always went in back, mimicking, "My Echo, My Shadow, and I" or "Me and My Shadow." The San Diego Zoo. I thought it was fascinating. A town called La Jolla. If I had any money, I'd move to La Jolla tomorrow morning. But I had never been exposed to this before. All of a sudden California became the great, great romantic place that I thought it should be.

KP: Did you ever think that you'd be able to live out there?

RO: Oh, I'd go there today if Alice would go.

KP: Really?

RO: She won't go. No. I don't know if I could afford it or not. But I would move. One of my sons lived out there for six or eight years, so I've been going out there at least twice a year to see him. … But another thing about being in, we were in California maybe, I don't know, eight/ten weeks before going overseas, and because there were so many troops out there, when we got there, they just, they put us up in the Marine Corps Depot, which is the Parris Island of the West Coast, but it's right in the city. We lived in tents. And at the end of these tents was a great big wire fence. Now, on the other side of that fence, they were making B-24s. Every two or three minutes, a B-24's taking off. Now we weren't recruits. We were all salty old Marines waiting to go overseas. So we go down to that fence, lunch break, coffee break, and all the girls who worked ... in the shop would come over. So that took care of our social life. All you had to do was communicate between the fence, and that's it. I remember this one girl, she said, "I have a 1941 Buick convertible, four door." Oh, she could have been the ugliest lady in the world, I would have been there. That's how you knew. When she came by in a '41 Buick, that's the girl I talked to. So that's how you had your social life. It was great. It didn't last long, but it was great.

KP: People have told me, and California may have been overrun, but often you could, in town, if you were in uniform and it was a Sunday, you could get a dinner date.

RO: Oh, yes. It wasn't unusual. In this town right here, … Jacksonville. When I was up there, I came down here to liberty a couple times. And there were eight thousand Marines, and I don't know how many sailors, all coming for the same thing. Somebody told me about this place called East Carolina Teachers College, in Greenville. I looked it up on the map. It's not that far.

KP: No.

RO: I told you I had a semester of college, right? Said to my buddy, "Come on. We're going up to Greenville." So we'd go up there. They'd have dances on Saturday nights. We must have been up there ten times. I met this young lady, correspond with her. She died here, a couple of years ago. Correspond with her. She got married, and I got married. True story, with not one ounce of romance associated with this. … Her dad was a farmer, she'd invite us up to the house, we'd have dinners. In fact, we stayed up at her farm a couple of times. ... Just like, seriously, two cousins. Two kissing cousins. That was some nice hospitality. Now I wrote, and wrote, and wrote to her. And she just passed away about three years ago. In fact, I saw her once after we got here. … I didn't recognize her. I'm sure she didn't recognize me, either. You can't tell, but I used to be good-looking.

KP: ... If I were to do that now, it wouldn't get the same reaction. I mean, if I were to attempt the same with a woman now. The uniform has a certain ...

RO: It's not the uniform ... but ... it is the war. I'll tell you why this is so important. In Vietnam, I'm working at Rutgers, and the stuff starts. And my oldest boy was then a student at Rutgers.

Anti-military. To the point he and I almost didn't talk. And I'd get so goddamned mad at those kids. ... This is oversimplification, but following the war, in the paper, you see that, "The Marines took hill number One-Twenty-Five today." You'd say to yourself, "Good, that's what they're there for." Then five days later, it'd say that, "The Marines took hill number One-Twenty-Five." Well, they just took that five days ago. Then I began to get smart, to find out, "What's going on here?" Well, we aren't keeping what we take. In the war I was in, you kept whatever you took and just kept going. And so my whole outlook on Vietnam changed because of the kids. When they used to have those demonstrations I'd mingle with them, and there were some floor flushers in there, but there were some kids who, they were dead serious. Dead, dead serious. One time I went to a fraternity house on College Ave. I got called there to pick up a kid who had blown his own cork. And he was telling me, he was all shot, that he was convinced there was going to be a nuclear war. He was afraid of it. I figured, "This guy's had too much to drink." But the truth of the matter is, this is what it did. That's what was bugging him. So again, how you learn. You got to look into people's eyes, and find out just what is motivating this irritating action they're taking. But, … in Vietnam, kids taught me that. But I go back to hear, "We were all so united. Everybody was doing their fair share." And that's the whole point. Everybody was. You know, you read now, maybe they'd have to go without sugar. But the fact that people were sacrificing. We got a battleship tied up down here, the *North Carolina*. It was in every single battle in the Pacific. In fact, I remember seeing it once. But that thing was brought up here by the kids in North Carolina throwing pennies in a jar. And they paid. That's why it should never be moved. In fact, I gave them a few bucks to help maintain it. It's got to be maintained. This is how important this thing was. So all those things that happened during the war, World War II time, I just think it reflects, and I know this is corny again, what a great nation we are, when we all put our oar in the water, and pull together. Which we can do when we have to. But people ... were kind. There's no question about it.

KP: What about your voyage over? You went first to Hawaii.

RO: We were run by ship.

KP: How was that voyage?

RO: Oh, that was no big deal. It was some half-baked Kaiser ship we went over there on. Again, I remember six days. We didn't hit any rough water going there. And ... they put us in a place that had been a pineapple field a couple months before that. So every time I ran through it, it was muddier than mud. It was just slick. We were in Hawaii, we got liberty once a week. We worked from ... eight o' clock in the morning 'till six o' clock at night. We were allowed out after six o'clock. We went to the Marshall Islands on an LST, and this guy Lentz, his dad sent me cigars, he gets seasick if he sees a boat rocking. And he crawled into the barrel of a cement mixer, which we had on the boat, and stayed there for ... thirteen days and thirteen nights, or something like that. We used to bring him bread and water to try to keep him alive. We hit rough water with that thing. I never got seasick much, but I can remember that LST. You'd be up there, looking down, towards the bow, and when she hit the waves, you'd see the deck ripple. Then a submarine came up along side us, scared the hell out of us. It was one of ours. And ... on that ship out there, I volunteered for gun duty. Because that meant you could be outside all night, not locked up. So every time I traveled after that I always … volunteered for gun duty. I would sit out in the turret and not be

locked up. On transports ... you'd get about five decks down, you can't even breathe down there. Guys were getting sick and ...

KP: Yes. People have told me it was pretty ripe and pretty ...

RO: The bunks were five high. ... A guy my size could just about get in. You couldn't turn over once you lie down. The smell. So back in those eras, this guy from Carlsbad, New Mexico, he and I played cribbage. I used to be able to play cribbage in my sleep. So we'd play cribbage down below all day when the troops were top-side, and at nights, he and another guy and I would sit in the gun turret. Drink coffee, never shot anybody.

KP: In Hawaii, did you do much training?

RO: Yes. Basically, what I remember, is physical fitness: run, run, run, run. Hikes. We'd take forced marches. If life got boring I'd volunteer to be a truck driver. In fact, I got my Marine Corps driver's license. Because the trucks were going up to an Air Force base, where they had an ammunition depot, I don't know whose it was, it wasn't ours, hauling it down to the Pearl Harbor docks. So I had this big Marine Corps truck, with a license and a lot of other guys. But you went in, sort of, a convoy, four or five trucks at a time. So the guy who was leading us, the parade was smart, ... would stop to get a Coke, and a sandwich, ... and see other people. I did that for two or three weeks. It was a good duty. It'd break the monotony. You've heard stories about Eleanor Roosevelt. She came to visit us there. We worked three weeks to get the place ready, and she went by, five minutes, just, you know, in a car. I'm not sure I saw her.

KP: But you knew about her coming.

RO: Oh, we knew. We had the bags out. You know, we did everything.

KP: Just in case she got out.

RO: Yes. Yes. I was there in football season. ... I remember we used to go to football games, Saturdays. Some of those high schools had to go play with bare feet, kids, and everybody went down to Honolulu. We went down there to make out, and none of us did. There were only 30,000 Marines running around, with sailors. We'd get into fights with sailors. That was a big thing. We'd get into fights with some sailors.

KP: Because Honolulu, particularly, was overrun. I mean, I've heard accounts of it that are just simply ...

RO: All you could see was either a khaki hat or a white hat. I'm serious. That's all it was. And people were making a fortune out there, selling us booze. I still have this someplace. There'd be some girl dressed in a hula skirt. You've got to remember this was back in the Dark Ages now. She'd lean over and show her leg, and hold you and let you take a picture for a buck or something, you know? One of the reunions we had, we all took the pictures that we had left, and I'll be damned if every one of us, the five guys, didn't have the picture the same day. We were showing

our wives, all telling them, you know, "This was my girlfriend, during the war." [Laughter] But she was your girlfriend for the ninety seconds it took to take that picture for a dollar. Honolulu was, again, I've been lucky enough to be back there half a dozen times the past ten years or so, and it's unbelievable. I don't even go to Honolulu anymore. ... When I came back from the Marshalls, they broke our outfit up. ... I went to Kauai to join a new outfit, and that was truly beautiful. I went to Kauai a couple of years ago and didn't recognize the place. But then it was a beautiful little island.

KP: You mentioned that you had visions of Hawaii being very romantic and very adventurous. How much of a shock was the island of Kauai?

RO: It was a dirty mess. You know, the pineapple field I lived in, I tell you, it was a strip of mud. … To get into Honolulu you could ride a, they call it a "miniature railroad," and you would go through some green areas. But I never saw, ... even the beach, like from the Royal Hawaiian. It was the only hotel there, the Royal Hawaiian. That beach just disappointed the daylights out of me. I mean, the Jersey coast is nicer than that. Except for some palm trees sticking up. So until I came back from the Marshalls and saw Kauai, I never really saw what those islands are like. And, oh, I guess we used to take those forced marches. They'd take us up through the hills. I wasn't paying attention to what the whole scene was, you know? [Laughter] That was the least of my concerns.

KP: The Marshall Islands, you mentioned, was not a very long battle. But it was your first combat.

RO: First one.

KP: What do you remember of your first experiences of someone firing at you?

RO: Well, the first thing I remember more vividly is standing on that ship, watching the Navy battleship throw sixteen inch shells at this island, and watching the dive bombers going over them. We might have stayed there two or three days and watched that. And when I went ashore I was scared. There's no if, ands, or buts about it. But I was the sergeant, so I couldn't show my fear, I thought. But a million thoughts went through my mind. A million thoughts. And they all were, I don't know what it took, the time to get off the boat, to actually get your foot on the beach, I don't know, it might have taken an hour and a half. They ride around and all that stuff. Once you hit the beach it's all over. It's just like a football game. You can have your guts churn, but as soon as the kickoff goes, you're all right, 'cause you're doing something. The same thing was there. Now I equated that, believe it or not, to playing football. "Okay, kickoff's over, now just go through what we were supposed to do." But the, seeing dead Japanese, for example, even, didn't bother me. Didn't bother me at all. But the thing that amazed me is they had these blockhouses. They, the Japs, had these blockhouses. They put machine guns in these blockhouses, and what they'd do is, you figure you've got … a hundred yards of beach site, and there's a couple blockhouses between there, the beach, and the ocean. They put machine guns in there, and they cross fire. One machine gun shoots the right, the other the left. So you come ashore, that's what their theory is. That's how they mow you down. They get all this cross fire on the machine guns. Well, they had bombed this island for a week or two, maybe three, I don't know how long, with sixteen inch guns, and dive

bombers. And those blockhouses were standing there intact. They were there. And that just amazed me. The other thing that amazed me is that, I found out later, well, before we landed we were told to look for signs of Amelia Earhart. I remember that.

KP: Really? They actually instructed you seriously?

RO: Yes. We got instructed on the ship. Amelia Earhart. And I remember that vividly. But the Japs had had that island for twenty-five years, and when we landed, there might have been, I don't know, ten Jap trucks, and some motorcycles, and what have you. But a half-hour after we landed the United States had more equipment than that island had ever seen before. Trucks, tanks, everything in the war. I once had a Japanese truck on that island for a while. It was a Ford truck with a right hand drive on it. It was a 1937 or '38 Ford truck, in fact. But it was how little equipment they had, compared to what we did. And if I ever talk seriously about the war, which I don't do very often, we won that war through some brilliant work and some great fighting by the type of guys, but we had the power to out-man our opponents.

KP: It sounds like this first invasion you really got that.

RO: It was the first time I ever saw it. All of a sudden I saw by what, three or four hours, fifteen/twenty thousand guys on that island. You could pick the island up, put it on your shoulders, and walk away we had so many guys, you know, and everything you needed. We talked before, all the sudden, there's a guy to make sure you've got water. There's some guys to make sure the ammunition's coming ashore. Make sure the gasoline's coming in. Because they put down a runway right away, ... so the airplanes can go. It was just ... a team effort. And that's what it took to do the job.

KP: You mentioned that you saw your first dead Marine there. … Did you see him get killed?

RO: No, I did not.

KP: You just recognized him from earlier.

RO: I was coming down this path, and we were going someplace to see if this guy was there. I can't remember why somebody took his poncho off, but somebody did, for some reason, and I recognized who it was. I happened to know the first one I ever saw.

KP: You mentioned that the blockhouses were left intact. Did your unit have a role in taking any of them?

RO: No. ... When I went over there were two islands called Roi and Namur, they were joined together. I indicated before the Japanese drowned themselves. The part that I played there was driving these guys … through the jungle. And it was real jungle. You had to hack your way through parts of it. Three weeks after that's all over, there was one tree left on that island. Plus there was all coral.

KP: What did you do?

RO: Seabees came in, cleaned the thing right out. Great outfit, the Seabees. A really great outfit. Great outfit. But, no, I never fought.

KP: Then you would stay on this island for a while.

RO: I stayed there forever. Because MacArthur was getting ready to take the Philippines, at the time. I don't know General MacArthur, I've read about him, but I don't think highly of him. He took everything there was in the Pacific to get ready to go there. We sat there for, I don't know how many months. And I'll tell you. Here's the duty of standing gun duty every night, have to do things to the weapons to make them go low enough. A gun at zero degrees is like this. So my gun only went to zero degrees, and some donkey says that ... it's got to be at minus ten degrees. So I come back to a Seabee outfit. The chief there had been a World War I Marine. … They had hot bread, and refrigeration, the Seabees. So we lived like kings with those guys. So I'm telling him my problem. He says, "Oh, I'll fix that for you, Bob." So he sends over a couple of bulldozers, and road scrapers, and in an hour and a half they move all this up in my gun to go to minus ten. The next time the guy comes back and says, it's an officer, "How'd you get that done so fast?" I said, "Nobody told me how to do it, you just told me to do it. Period." It bothered him. They ... figured they'd give us three weeks work, you know, dig this out. The guy did it for us in two hours. But anyway, my point is that we sat there. There was no Japanese Navy. Nobody was going to hit us, and we knew it.

KP: You knew it at the time?

RO: Yes. We knew it. Every damn one of us knew it. We sat there on that beach, and I had to take the four to six AM watch every day. I used to watch the sun come up. Now you sit there. In those days you had a radio headset you put on your head, and everybody on the island was linked to it. So all we did was hear dirty stories all night long. This'd go around the whole outfit. And shoot rats. Rats this big. ... You'd hear gunshot. There were no Japs, guys shooting rats. You'd here it all night. Including me. Pop off the rat. But anyway, they were going to Guam and Saipan, the Navy muster. ... This was the biggest natural harbor in the world. And I could remember that morning, sitting there, watching those guys go to battle. I mean, they were just ship after ship after ship. You could just see the silhouette of them going out there. And you'd say to yourself, "We've got to win this war. We've just got to win this thing." We had so much manpower. But we killed time. Played volleyball, softball, taught the gooks how to play volleyball. And they took all the female groups off the island. And the fact is, I had, for a carton of cigarettes, which I think you could buy for sixty cents in those days. It was a nickel a pack. And I never smoked cigarettes. I don't think I smoked two cigarettes in my life. I smoked more cigars than I should have. … I got a carton of cigarettes, and I bought from this gook, that's a native guy, an outrigger canoe, a sail, not a nail in it. You know, outrigger, hollowed out? We used to sail around the lagoon in this thing, and when we needed some good chow, we'd go out, throw a hand grenade in the water, and go scoop up the fish. Bring it in. Make the best coffee in the world. Take an old beat up sock, throw in the coffee, tie it up, throw it in boiling water. Watch guys make homemade booze, hooch juice, terrible stuff. Making big number ten cans, where the damn tin would peel off into the stuff ...

KP: So you were really fighting boredom on that island.

RO: We built a house. Yes. … Go out and steal lumber at night, just, you know, to have something to do. Boredom is absolutely right. Then when they finally put us on ship, we were on ship once … No, we weren't. I'm sorry. We got on the ship. We're gone maybe a day. Oh! To get this ship, they say, "All right. We'll get you guys back to Hawaii ... if you unload the ship," which was cement. We said, "We'll unload it." We go back out to sea, we aren't gone but a day, we get sent back, because they say, "MacArthur wants this ship." Now they bring us back to the same island we're on, and we had more trouble the three or four days we stayed there than we had than on that ship the whole time we were there.

KP: What kind of trouble?

RO: Guys so mad they were going out ... Turn it off and I'll tell you.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: You just had mentioned, off the record, that your only USO show, apparently …

RO: Yes. You know, somebody's got to help me. There was an all girl orchestra put together during World War II. They were there. And it strikes me that Betty Hutton was a part of that orchestra, and sang. And Jack Benny was there, but Rod Cheston wasn't with him. That's the only USO show I ever saw.

KP: So you never saw Bob Hope?

RO: I never saw Bob Hope. Nope. That's the only one I ever saw, was that one, and enjoyed it.

KP: Did you ever use any of the USO clubs?

RO: I did up in Jacksonville, up here in North Carolina. Because there was nothing else in Jacksonville in those days, but the … USO club's still up there. I walked through it recently to see what it looks like. But no, other than that, I didn't. Which is nothing. … I was never a drinker, to be honest with you. I'd take a drink, but I was never a drinker. And when I had spare time during the war, if it was someplace I'd never been, I'd look it over, of course. I went to see the Rose Bowl in California. Everybody had to go see that. But otherwise, if we could play basketball or something, I'd spend my spare time doing that. There were too many guys out there, and with nothing really to do, besides go look at something.

KP: … You finally did get back to Hawaii.

RO: Yes.

KP: ... And you mentioned they put you in a much more beautiful location.

RO: I got put in an R&R camp, they called it. And they broke up our outfit. So after about three or four days, most of them all were gone, except one other fellow who happened to be a sergeant. His name starts with "P," and mine starts with "O," so we got transferred together. First thing I had done when I got back there was, had two wisdom teeth pulled. This was done by a dentist who came out of, Navy dentist, came out of Wisconsin. He must have been an All-American football player. He didn't use novocaine. Did nothing. Put a pair of pliers on me, pulled out two wisdom teeth. Bang, bang. So I sat in a tent someplace, trying to drink milkshakes for three or four days until the swelling goes down. And there's a casual company, and that's where I met Utz's brother. In this place. And I saw a thing ... on a board for a try-out for a Marine Corps football team. So, "I'm gonna go down to try out for the football team." Well, they had this all the time because, unlike the Army or the Air Force or the Navy, the Marine Corps didn't have permanent personnel playing football. Say the football season was twelve weeks long, they might have had five different squads, 'cause guys come and go. Like, I played two games for them.

KP: … 'Cause in the service, in the other branches, they literally had professional teams.

RO: Yes. That was part of their morale thing. That's right. So I went down, and I didn't make first team, but I went down, and I made this football team. Played two games. And I think it was an Air Force team we were playing. And I get in the game with a tackle. I tackled the back. And when I stood up I said, "Damn, I just tackled Johnny Kimbrough!" And the guy looks at me, and he says, "You're not the first one, kid." Now you've got to go back. Johnny Kimbrough may not mean much to many people, but when I was in high school, he was a senior at Texas A & M. All-American. And his picture had been on the cover of *Life Magazine*. And I knew Johnny Kimbrough like he was my next door neighbor. And the thing that tickled me, when I think about it, he said to me, "Hey, kid, you're not the first one to ever tackle me." But big deal! I had tackled him. He didn't give a damn who tackled him, or who was playing the game. But, so we played football, and then next thing you know I got transferred over to Kauai. Which, I think it was in early … 1945, as I remember, to join another outfit.

KP: And this would be the outfit that you would ...

RO: That's who I went to Oki with. Okinawa was on Easter. April 1, 1945, Easter Sunday.

KP: The outfit you joined, was this a newer outfit that was being created, or ...

RO: It was ... an outfit that had been in existence, but ... it was being trained for some different missions. Besides some heavy guns, there was some scouting work that they were being trained to do. So, there were, most of the people in the outfit were either brand new kids, or guys like me who had come from different outfits, and been transferred over there. And we spent, maybe, two or three months on Kauai, getting ready to go to Okinawa, not knowing where we were going at the time. And the colonel there was an ex-Annapolis guy, who was a physical fitness "bum," you know? No, "gentleman." Every morning we ran. That was the first thing we'd do. Like twelve/fourteen miles every morning. Which was fine. That was his routine. And he would lead us. He'd be there every day, running. But we had NCO mess over there, which means if you were a

sergeant, non-commissioned officer, you had your own mess. You paid a dollar a month or something. You had a table with a tablecloth. You had silverware, not mess gear ...

KP: And this was unique to this?

RO: I never experienced it before, but in the old Marine Corps, they always had this. This was the first time I was ever exposed. I think I was a four stripe sergeant. Three above one rocker. I was exposed to this. … I was a counselor of Boy Scout camp. I had somebody waiting on me, you know? It was very, very nice.

KP: 'Cause you mentioned earlier, you never got dress blues.

RO: Never.

KP: Never. There's certain things they just couldn't do away with?

RO: Well, there was no reason to give them to me.

KP: Okay.

RO: They gave me a green uniform, the United States. When we were in California we turned it in. And two and a half or three years later, I got one back when I came back to the United States. There was no reason to have the uniform. You worry about your dungarees, that's all. The most important thing for a Marine to have in the world were socks. Carry extra socks. Uniforms didn't mean anything.

KP: The invasion of Okinawa, what part did your unit play? When, for example, did you actually land? Did you land on D-Day?

RO: On D plus one, I think it was, on Oki. Number one, Okinawa …

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

RO: … So I knew a little bit more about that, than I did about the Marshalls. I've learned a lot more reading over the years, but I knew it was ninety miles long, and fifteen miles wide, and where the Japs were, and all this. And that the decision had been made that, instead of landing where the Japs thought we were, we were [to] go around the other side of Buckner Bay, which is named after General Buckner, [who] got killed there, East China Sea. And I knew a little more about the place just from the maps. And we landed without having problems. We landed, and I headed north. Everyone who was in the group headed north. And my first shot I had to fire in Okinawa was at nighttime. I curled up, went to sleep, trying to square ... things away in my mind, and all of a sudden something goes over me. I thought for sure I was dead. And I get up and let go, and what I shot was a pig. A wild pig. That was my first shot in Okinawa. And there were a lot of wild pigs around. But that thing scared the daylight out of me. I thought the Japs had me. And we went all the way up north, some isolated fire, nothing too exciting. And down the south end, where the Japs

decide to put up a stand, and have the real battle, the river goes across there, by Naha. I often told people it reminded me, in a way, of what the Raritan River was like. And very frankly, the Army had great problems down there. And so they yank us down from the north, and we went south to finish off the battle. And there was another lesson. We're marching down, the Army's going back, and one can just imagine the verbal exchange that was going on. And not that I was so unique, but the thing that blew my mind is that guy, that dog face, if you will, is no different than I am. He, maybe he got drafted, maybe he didn't. Same age. He happened to pick the Army, I happened to pick the Marine Corps, and that was when I knew that I was better trained for my mission than that guy. Not his fault at all, but considering us, two Americans. Because, after the war, I also thought about some of those Japs, who, in their wallets were pictures. And, they could be like me. I carry a picture of my mother, my kid sister, my cousin, my brother. You know, they could have the same thing. How different were they than I am? At the time I thought they were a whole world apart. But how different is the typical guy? Not the hot shot leaders. ... He had the same love, affection, feelings towards people, just like I did. But not that it made any difference. But anyway, Okinawa, without going, I don't want to go into the depths, except to say, … that it was an experience that I feel fortunate to [have] come out of alive. It's one I wouldn't want to repeat, or wish on anybody else. But the very fact that I had made it, I feel has blended into this thing that's become known as Bob Ochs all these years. And I also just came ... to tell you, I don't hesitate to tell anybody, for better or for worse, that the Marine Corps molded my way of life. If it hadn't come along, I don't know what my life would have been like. And I think a lot of guys would say the same thing. I'm active in the Senior Men's Club here in Wilmington. We meet every Friday morning for an hour, we have a speaker, before that we have coffee. No big deal, no formality. And one of the fellows I met there, he's seventy-eight years old. He was a Marine for six years. And he was a Marine on Iwo Jima. And, not so long ago, on the anniversary of Iwo Jima, happened to have lunch with a flock of guys. And somebody said to him, "Harry, what'd you do in Iwo Jima?" He said, "Oh, not much." Well, I know he got the Bronze Star. So I said, "I heard you got the Bronze Star on Iwo." And the guys applauded. Now he's seventy-eight years old, what, fifty-four years, or whatever the hell it was ... after, tears come to his eyes. He wouldn't talk about it. And I don't think you'll find many guys who are ever going to sit down and tell you about the first one they squeezed off, or the first time they got nicked, not killed, but nicked, because, it's not important. That is not the important part about the whole thing. The important part is the lessons learned, camaraderie, some of the damn cool things that are funnier than hell. I'll deviate for a second. I've got a brother who was a POW in Korea for nine months. Locked up for six months by himself in a hole. Brought out, with no clothes on, put on his knees, gun put to his head, "Tell me what you know." He's stronger than I am. He made it. During those six months, the only thing he ever hid, the Chinese had him, not the Koreans, the only thing he ever hid was a Rutgers ring. My mother had given them to both of us. We graduated the same class. He hasn't worn that ring since. But ... the whole time he was a POW he hid that ring. That's how important it was. Then he gets put in a POW camp three months before they had the prisoner exchange. I went to Mama Leone's to meet with him and a bunch of guys, and the only thing they talk about are the dumb things, like how one guy would try to irritate the Chinese by making believe he was riding a motorcycle. Well, … his experience is much more explicit than mine is. But that's the things that guys remember. It's those other things, that they play a part in your life, but they aren't really important. I told you, I haven't discussed those things with my kids, nor have they ever bled me for information. They have said to me

before, "Did you ever kill a human being?" My answer is, ... "If you went back to World War II, and if a Jap was a human, then the answer is, 'yes.'" But that's the answer to them.

KP: I'd be curious. Well, there are some questions, because I want to fill in some more. But one I can't resist because, in many ways, the Marines, ... they've often been paid the ultimate compliment by some Army people I've interviewed. Particularly on Okinawa, I think Roland Winter, he really credits the Marines for saving his life at one point. And he really thought very highly of the Marines. Which I think is the ultimate compliment from another service. What did you think about the Army? What led you to think that you, in fact, were trained better? It had nothing to do with the guys, it had a lot to do with the organization and the training?

RO: This is going to sound silly. You're playing football, and you're winning the game thirteen, nothing. And they take the first team out, and put the second team in. And the next thing you know that second team's got their backs up to the wall. They say, "Hey, first team, get back in there." That's exactly how I felt. We were better than they were at what we had to do. And, I tell you, … what I say now isn't fair, 'cause this is what I've learned since reading about Okinawa, and I've read quite a bit about it, is that, if they had met the Marine Corps general, if the Army general that commanded the operation had accepted the Marine Corps general's suggestion, which was a simple thing, to go back out to sea and invade them from behind, by water, which the Marines had been doing for three or four years by then, it would not have been as bloody as it was. But I say this afterwards now, Kurt, but the command personnel didn't do what was in the best interest of all concerned. Has nothing to do with the poor soldier any more than it did with me. Because you're nothing but a pawn. One of the things I have to be careful about whenever I talk about either the Marshalls or Okinawa is what I've learned from reading books, that I never knew at the time.

KP: Yes. Because one of the things I've been struck by, and particularly you have reflected a lot on the war, but other people have honestly said to me, "I really haven't talked about the war. I haven't even thought about it," is that you often, particularly as a sergeant or a private, you don't know very much.

RO: You don't know anything! ... I've gone over, for the first time I had a map, I knew where we were going to go. I knew what we were supposed to do. I knew how big the island was, you know? Because you had a hunk of paper. I still got that map. A piece of paper. But I just read here, in the past year or so, an account by a Japanese commanding officer who was taken off, Japan took him off Okinawa a couple of days before the end, listened to his account of the thing. So I sent this to a guy who was a colonel, who knows more than I do, and wanted to get his reaction to the thing, which was different than mine. He said, "Eh, Japs are full of, 'you-know-what.'" But you read his account, and you say, "Hey, yeah, if I could remember this halfway correctly." That's the other problem I have. The older you get, it's become a little bit too glamorous. Are you factual? No. You aren't, you know? You really aren't.

KP: Well, I guess, to bring, at least what I've read, and what other people have written about, Okinawa ... was that it was a very muddy campaign.

RO: The end of it.

KP: The end of it was.

RO: The end of it. Down on the south end.

KP: Right.

RO: Because the Japs had themselves dug in on those ridges. They came out at night, which you'd never been used to, shooting at you at night, and they're determined to go, and they don't give a damn. It was, I think it was reported in history as the bloodiest battle in the Pacific. People say, "Hey, you're a Marine. Were you in Iwo Jima?" "No, thank Christ I was in the hospital when Iwo Jima took place." Because "Howling Mad" Smith was a Marine Corps general, who screwed up on Tarawa years before. Been there. I'm damn glad I never served under him. They used to say that guy'd get you killed. As we used to say in the Marine Corps, "Patton should have been a Marine Corps general." Yes, George Patton should have been a Marine Corps general. [Laughs] … My gunny sergeant, that's the top guy you could be, a gunny sergeant, three up/three down, his name was Patton, and we used to say to him all the time, "I'll tell you, Patton, your guts and our blood, we'll get rid of anyone." [Laughter]

KP: As a sergeant you were responsible for men.

RO: I had one squad.

KP: One squad?

RO: One squad.

KP: How many men did you lose in Okinawa? How many didn't make it, either killed or wounded?

RO: Well, let's see. Killed: six. Wounded, they didn't come back. That doesn't mean … that they didn't die. I think there were seven. Because what I used to, my work was at night. We'd get reports that one of our gun crews was being bogged down, fired upon, our job was to go help them. We did this in the evening. If you lost a guy, this was another hard part of life to accept, you went down to the beach, they would, almost with a slip of paper like your mother sent you to the store to buy a quart of milk, and you're requisitioning two new, warm bodies to replace the guys. I'm down there one day to pick up a couple of kids, and the guy's name was Tanner. Little guy, buck teeth, didn't look anything like a Marine. Young, young kid. … You know, I'm, on Okinawa, I'm either twenty-one or twenty-two years old. I'm a sergeant, man, I'm an old salt. This guy treated me like I'm the commandant of the Marine Corps. I said, "Get in the truck, goddamn it, kid." I pick up his sea bag, I throw it in the truck, shove off, and, "What the hell have you got in there?" He says, "Cans of pork and beans, sir." First thing I told him was, "I'm not a sir, I'm only a sergeant." But he had gotten the word [that] we were not being fed, so he brought his own pork and beans. Cans. And that became his name. Pork and Beans Tanner. Period. [Laughter] Kid was from upper New York state. And that kid became the best scouting man I ever had. He took us through places

where there were reported mine fields, and nothing ever happened to us, this kid. One night he made a mistake.

KP: What do you mean he made a mistake? What happened?

RO: He stepped on one.

KP: He was killed?

RO: Sandbag. Had to bring him home in a sandbag. I went to see his mother and father after the war, in New York State. This is 1946, ... early part of '46. They had a house with a dirt floor, farmhouse with a dirt floor. And again, as an aside, you would have thought that I was the President of the United States going to see them.

KP: It really sounds like they were very glad you visited.

RO: Who wouldn't be, though? When you lose somebody?

KP: Well, 'cause I think a lot of family members … wonder what really happened.

RO: And after a couple of months they're ready to accept. Without trying to be to gory. … Pork and Beans didn't get a medal for this. He didn't get anything. He was just another guy. But I put on my uniform, I was out of the Marine Corps by then, I was going to Rutgers, in fact. I put on my uniform to go up there. I wouldn't go civilian. And, you know, I didn't have anything to give them. I had nothing. They'd sent home everything they got out of the kid. But just, I was only there maybe two and a half hours, just to say "hello," I hate to use the word, "put on the dog," but to try to express your sincere feelings about this kid, who I only knew for, gosh, five or six weeks, that's all. That's all I knew him. I knew he was from a farm, 'cause they had horses running around Okinawa. Beat up horses. Right where we were, we used to sleep during the daytime, in a ravine down there, a meadow, there was a horse down there. I said to Pork and Beans, "I'm going to go get that horse." He said, "I'll help you, Sarge." Well, by gosh, on our way down he takes a piece of rope so he can make a bridle out of it, so I know he knows something. And we catch this horse. And we used to ride him around once in a while. Didn't go anyplace. It was slow as hell. But Beans knew how to take care of the horse, you know. And I finally said, "You know, that horse isn't worth more than a nickel." He traded that horse, for a, he got a piece of meat or something. He didn't kill the horse, but some guy who had some meat gave us ... But I only knew the kid for five or six weeks. And I always think, because I mentioned him, his death most likely had the greatest impact of everybody I knew. And I have no conception for what the guys in Europe went through, with the cold weather and the snow, and being mowed down, like the war I fought never experienced. But I don't know how their reaction is to death, compared to what mine was.

KP: 'Cause, in many ways, they viewed the Pacific as far worse. … Even guys who saw a lot of bad combat around Europe.

RO: I don't know. It was the only thing I knew, was out there. The only reason I, again, I'm reflecting on history, we know we were in a serious second class war for quite a while. But …

KP: You felt that at the time?

RO: No, I don't think I was smart enough to know that. [Laughter] The fact is, one time, this is on Okinawa, our shoes wear out. We had, the Marine Corps, had the best shoes in the world. Boondockers. … They wore out. The coral would chew them up. And so you'd tell them, "Hey," at the supply store, "I need some shoes." I knew this guy. He says, "Hell, Ochs, I don't have any shoes!" I say, "My guys need shoes!" He says, "Go get your own shoes!" So what did we do? You take your boys, you take your weapons, you go up, throw a guy over the side of a barbed wire fence that was at the Army Depot, and when the Army guy comes, he puts his weapon in his face, no, he's not going to shoot, it's just to let him know to keep your mouth shut and stand still, you go in, you requisition the shoes you need, you take them, you come back out, and that's how, seriously, the Marine Corps operated in a lot of ways. You had to go requisition your own material in the best way possible. But was I smart enough to know that the military in the Pacific wasn't getting all it needed compared to Europe, and why? Because of Stalin and Churchill and all that stuff? No.

KP: ... One of the interviews, Roland Winter, I mean, it's very memorable, 'cause he describes how he was in an Army unit in Okinawa, and they literally came close to running out of ammunition. And they did run out of food. He remembers, at one point, they were hunting for small game. But, it sounds like you, … in fact, had enough food.

RO: We had K rations and C rations.

KP: Right. You never ran out of stuff.

RO: No. But you know, if you're moving, say for three days, you're only going twenty yards a day. One pack of K rations is going to last you all day. That's the least of your concerns. You're more worried about whether you have enough water in the canteen to have a little drink. But see, here's how you innovate, though. Again, in Okinawa. ... I wasn't on the move at the time, we were standing still someplace, and we decided we needed to have some meat. Fresh meat. There's only one thing in the world that has fresh meat out there. That's a ship. So they make these bridges, the pontoon bridges out to the ship. Like an LST. LST would go out to a big ship and get the stuff. So I said to them, "Fellas, we're going to have requisitions of meat today." "Well, how we going to do that? We need a vehicle." I said, "Well, first, we'll steal the truck. That's the first thing we'll do." So we go borrow a truck. I'm the truck driver, I'm driving the truck. So we get down there, and, "We have some bona fide Japanese flags," taken in our own hands off the dying enemy, which we made two days ahead of time. Easy to make. "For these two Japanese flags, if you've got fifty pounds of beef, we'll make an exchange for you." Well, to make a short story shorter, we made the exchange. So I backed the truck down on this damn bridge to throw the meat on. It was more than fifty pounds. And the tide goes out. So a pontoon bridge is made out of sections. And the bridge is like this. I can't get the truck up. We have to sit there for a whole tide to come back in. This is a borrowed truck now I'm supposed to get back, right, before they find it's missing. So we finally come up. We're riding down the road to where our mess sergeant dines. And a jeep pulls along

side me with a driver and a bird colonel. Literally whistles me down. Now I have three stripes on my arm. Stripes. He says, "Is this your truck, Sergeant?" "Yes, sir, Colonel." "What outfit you in, Sergeant?" "Eighth Regiment." He says, "Come here, Sergeant." I didn't think about this. In the back, there's a stencil. And that stencil tells you who owns this truck. It's his goddamn outfit. [Laughter] That stencil is. So I says to him, "Colonel, I borrowed this truck," and I told him what I was going for. And he says to me, a bird colonel, "When you going to serve that?" "Tomorrow." "Where?" he says, "I'll be there. Will that be all right?" "Yes, sir, you'll be our guest." And goddamn if he didn't let me go. And he showed up to make sure we served the food. Now see, that's something about the war that's important. I'll remember that story forever. Because that was important. When I look back on that, I laugh. Would I have the guts to do that today? No. No way. [Laughter] No way. But that was important in those days. I think ... guys can tell you hundreds of stories like that, and that's why when you meet a colonel, that's the sort of stuff you go through. That's what is important, you know? That stuff. Like the flags. We made these flags.

KP: You said you literally made the flags?

RO: I didn't make 'em. A couple of guys in my outfit made 'em.

KP: What did you make them out of?

RO: An old piece of canvas, with stencils! [Laughter] All I know is, the Japanese flag has a white background, it's got a red dawn on it. That's all anybody knew. ... But one time we did run across, this is again on Okinawa, in a place, it was a blockhouse, we had some sake. A whole lot of sake. Which we took. And I'll tell you, we lived like kings by trading that sake. Anything we needed. I had a monkey. Ever own a monkey?

KP: No.
RO: The most filthy, dirtiest animal alive. I owned a monkey. I got the monkey for a Japanese sword, which I didn't take from anybody. I got it from somebody, I forget how. Pilot, he was. Traded him for a monkey. This is, again, at Okinawa. Dirty, filthy animal. So I had this little hammock I used to sleep in, during the daytime, and I had gotten to the Seabees, a guy from New Brunswick, New Jersey I met, and I got to the Seabees, and they had some cigars. So I had about ten cigars, and I threw 'em on top of this hammock, when I went someplace. When I got back, that monkey had gotten in there and chewed all those cigars apart. Boy, the monkey was gone the next morning. Dirty. I would never want a monkey.

KP: How often, when you were in Okinawa in combat, how common was a hot meal … ?

RO: You'd go steal it. You'd go borrow it at Seabees. Now that was common. Because the Seabees had the equipment. For example, the galleys that we had, now I suppose the Marine Corps had hot galleys someplace, but not in the areas I was in. So we had mess guys, and they'd cook, like, powdered eggs, and those potatoes that came out of the can, but if you went to a Seabee place, they usually had bona fide hot coffee, and refrigeration. So you could get something cold to drink. But they would make bread. Now that sounds silly, but a loaf of bread. That was like having a cake. … No, 'cause the stuff you had in your rations was hardtack.

KP: Oh, it was pretty old?

RO: Yes. Well, even if it wasn't old, even if it was made yesterday, it tasted like it was ten years old today. But it tasted like bread. And the other thing would be, like, jam. You know, the funny thing about this day and age is, that in all those C rations, they were the can, the K rations, cigarettes were part of the package. I didn't smoke cigarettes.

KP: But you could get cigarettes, I've been told … you could get cigarettes. They were ...

RO: They were all over. I smile when I think... they were issued to you, you know? Now things have changed over the years...

KP: Now they're trying to take it away from you.

RO: Yes. And most people smoked. Very, very few guys did not smoke. Most people smoked. This guy Lentz, I tell you, he never smoked a cigarette in his life. But, he's the only guy I can think of who didn't smoke.

KP: … What was your most dangerous mission?

RO: I would think on the tail end of the war, on Oki, on those ridges, trying to get rid of the Japs.

KP: Any particular day?

RO: ... The time I remember, the worst, was three days, maybe only a week or so before the battle ended, of just not being able to make any progress over there. Seeing too many people get nipped, while we were there. And almost, at times, thinking, "Maybe they got the best of us. Maybe they do. Nothing's going to stop it." I think that was the worst time I ever had. So the time I remember, it was difficult. The other time I remember, this has nothing to do with being down there, there was a truck going along pulling a water tank behind it. And I, we bummed a ride. I'm sitting on the back of the truck, like this. Here's the water tank, ... like riding a saddle. The truck's going this way, and you'd hear a rifle shot once in a while. All of a sudden I look down, and there's water coming out of this tank. And I'll be goddamned, but the shot had gone right between my legs, and hit the water tank, and water was coming out.

KP: Wow, you almost got it. I mean …

RO: Well, I never really got shot. I got nicked. Not enough to …

KP: But you were close enough ...

RO: I don't know if it was even a Jap, or even someone shooting at me, or who it was. But the fact that, all of a sudden, there I was saying, "Hey, I'll be damned." Because, they always say, "it's quick." You know, when it happens, it's quick. And you know, when you get nicked, it burns, I

can tell you that. It had a real burning sensation. But I think the thing guys dreaded most, though, was malaria. … Every Marine I knew, almost every Marine I knew, had malaria at one time or another.

KP: Did you have malaria?

RO: I had it. Yes, I had it three times. That it hit me. And the third time was after I came home. Right after I came home. I got it twice before that.

KP: How good was the ... how often did you take the ... ada icene?

RO: Every day.

KP: Every day? You took it regularly?

RO: Like clockwork. And you'd look pink, and all that sort of stuff. But you spend your time, anybody, hacking through those jungles, which could only be, maybe three hundred yards. It may take you two days to get through there. What nature put in those jungles is unbelievable. The bugs and stuff. And the thing is that, people say, "Don't you hate the South? It's so hot." It's not bad. Because there, you sweat, you never dried out. I mean, you got wet, and you just stayed wet. You know, for days and nights. And they say that if you're going to run across the mosquitoes, ... that's where they're going to get you the best, is when you're soaking wet all the time. You don't really feel 'em. Then you take your clothes off and see these big welts on you. It was miserable, but it wasn't fatal.

KP: ... How good was medical care? How competent, ... if you did, in fact, get seriously wounded?

RO: ... From observations of, I was in an Army hospital when I was in Hawaii, for two days I think it was. It was great, I thought. It was a tent, but it was great.

KP: What were you in there for?

RO: I had malaria. … They checked me in there for two days, two nights, and on the third day, I got out. I left. But the most important thing in the Marine Corps, though, I'll tell you, is a corpsman. And he's a Navy guy assigned to the Marine Corps. And I think that they had sulfur. They deserve all the credit in the world for winning the war. Skilled, well-trained. You know, they always used to carry sulfur packets on their belt, but those guys risked their life. This is absolutely terrific. … Again, looking back, considering the era, and the knowledge we had of medicine, that they did a superb job of taking care of anybody. Whether you had a hung toenail, or a left arm blown off. And the hospital ships there, you could see them out there with the big crosses, you'd get a great, great feeling of satisfaction. Whenever they got out there, a great feeling. "Look at 'em, boy. There they are. Uncle Sam's out there with the hospital ship." I fought through the whole thing, and I respect them. I think the government did one hell of a job taking care of the kids they sent out.

KP: You, in a sense, even though you were in combat, you felt as though there was a lot of support. You were not ...

RO: I felt like a team. I felt like a member of a team. Used to moan and groan as much as anybody, but I felt just like a member of a team. I really did. With a mission. And the point, when I first came home, I got home the day before Christmas, 1945, I don't want to call it "depression," but there was. Because the change of pace, and leading the lifestyle of this caliber guy, becoming readjusted, if you will, to civilian life. Mason Gross was mostly the guy who kept me in school after the war. I forget the guy's name, the records someplace will show you, some Communist was teaching economics. He'd run a bookstore on the street that St. Peter's Church is on, Somerset Street, during the war. Teaching this class on the third floor of Winants Hall, and for whatever the reason, I picked the guy [up], and threw him down the stairs. I got so mad at him. I told him before that. And he was a half-baked prof. He was one of those guys they hired because they were looking for somebody to be a teacher. They sent me up to that fraternity house on Mine Street, I closed that house up. [Laughter]

KP: I know exactly …

RO: It was the VA Headquarters then, and I didn't know this at the time. I'm going to a head shrinker, that's what they're doing, to see if I'm nuts or not. I realized that. I know I'm not nuts. This son of a bitch is making comments, he doesn't deserve to be an American. So I get mad. And see that, again, in that era it was not unusual to have physical activity to take place to relieve your frustrations. You didn't go to a head shrinker. Two guys had a fight, they have a fight, the guy who'd get up won. And that's all. It was all over, you go about your business. And I found this out in 1948. We had just played Brown in football, Thanksgiving Day, up in Providence. Brimson Hotel in Providence, having a turkey dinner before taking the train to go home. We beat Brown that day and so, you know. And I'm in the head, Dr. Gross is standing next to me. This is my last Rutgers football game. I remember the conversation went around, something like, "Hey, Bob, do you know why you're allowed to stay at Rutgers the last three years?" And he brought up this thing. He says, "They came to me," and these are my words now, "they wanted to know if you were loco or not. I told 'em, 'no,' you were all right." Again, things you never know about. But he's, you know, he had been in Army intelligence in World War II, and most likely had seen a bunch of meatheads like me, along the line, who were going to overreact physically. And I most likely did overreact, in those days. But it was a way of life.

KP: It's striking, because … Roland Winter also told a similar story. He got into a classroom, and the professor decided to call on him, and he wasn't prepared. And it was … one of the first days of class, and he was going to embarrass him. And he got up, and was ready to just slug him. And he also saw Mason Gross, and he, you know, Gross was similarly, he struck me as a gentle soul, in the best sense of the term.

RO: Yes. I tell you, you know, of course, you know, smart. I watched him go from, I respected and admired him beyond words, to a guy who got sick. He was a cancer victim. And because of the changing times, he no longer could control Rutgers. He had to get out. Just like all of us. You run through your cycle, and then it takes a different type of personality. But he had what it took.

And you know what the other thing is though, you have to remember, in life in general. You take you: let's say you're mixed up with fifty guys who are in the same … profession you're in. You're not going to like all fifty of them. There's going to be two or three guys who irritate the daylights out of, for some reason. It's the same way when you're there, and that guy's a teacher. If his personality … can't win you, or can't convince you to listen to him, that's how this guy was. I mean, he told us he was a Communist, and in those days out there, if you were a Communist you had to be the scum of the earth. You were as bad as a Jap, you know? So when he said, I even forget what he said, but that's all. Period. You know, and that was my way of life. Live by the sword, die by the sword in the old days. Mason Gross is the guy who saved me.

KP: Going back to Okinawa for just a little bit. Did you, and actually, in the service in general, … how often did you see a chaplain? How often did you go to religious service?

RO: I don't know how often they had 'em.

KP: It sounded like you weren't seeing them that much.

RO: … Through, on the Marshall Islands, I told you, my buddies. The guy from Brooklyn was Catholic, the guy from Carlsbad, New Mexico had started to be a Jesuit priest through his sophomore year in college, and it got to him. He dropped out. He was about six years older than the rest of us. Used to call him "Padre." He was Catholic, and Bill Lentz from Tampa was Catholic. The guy from Rushville and myself were Protestants of some sort. He was about as good a Protestant as I was, the guy from Rushville. So I used to go to church, to the Mass with them on Sundays. Because they used to play alter boys. They used to act as alter boys every so often. Which gave me whole weeks of fun to irritate 'em. So, my churchgoing was really with those guys, going to Mass. Oh, and the only chaplain they had was a Catholic chaplain, too, so I got to know him. … But, other than that I didn't. I didn't go.

KP: What about the Red Cross? Any contact with the Red Cross?

RO: Never had any contact. Salvation Army on the island of Kauai, which was great. I heard all these stories about the Red Cross, I never experienced any of that. In those days, in Kauai, you were on liberty … I took Alice over there, a while back. We used to go to this little place, a restaurant on the side of the road, and there's a big orchid garden right there, where they made a famous movie. I can't think of the name of it right now. They used that spot. You go in that restaurant, you would buy a steak with two eggs on top of it, potatoes, vegetable, a quart of milk, pie and ice-cream for a dollar and a half. That was, I mean, liberty on Kauai, that's where you went. That place. There wasn't any place else to go. We went up there, to that place. And I found that joint with her. It's not even a restaurant, but the building is still standing there.

KP: What is it now, today?

RO: It's an old, beat up, shack, just ready to fall apart.

KP: Just ready to fall, but it's the same …

RO: Yes. But it's right there in this cross-road. What made me think about that is that the Salvation Army had a place around the corner, that a guy, and his wife, and two daughters ran, where they always had the coffee and donuts. And you could have, you know, consultation, if you wanted to, with those fellows. That's what made me think about that. But that all changed. There were no big hotels in Kauai then.

KP: Did you ever have any knowledge of anyone, in Okinawa, who couldn't make it? Who broke down psychologically?

RO: … In my squad, no.

KP: No.

RO: Never did. No.

KP: And you heard …

RO: I heard about guys. I knew one guy who, they say, intentionally shot himself in the foot. I don't know that for a fact. I, you know, I saw guys … who would break down two/three days later. Not enough to take them away. But I never experienced any of the real traumatic things that I've read about. Never did.

KP: You talked about it quite a bit, but I guess I wanted to ask you more directly, … what you thought of the Japanese at the time?

RO: Scum of the earth. They aren't even humans. When I first came home I once hit a dog with my car. I suffered more from that than I ever did from eliminating a Jap in the war. But I think, you know, we talked very early on about the Japs. They made … cheap products that you bought in the Cracker Jack box. And I don't want to say that the Marine Corps deliberately taught me, but they certainly made me believe, intentionally undoubtedly, that I was fighting the most terrible thing that God ever put on this earth, it had to be a Japanese. And that was feeling about it. And to this day I wouldn't buy a Toyota. I just bought Alice a Buick. It's probably got as many Japanese parts in it as a Toyota, but I would not drive a car with the name Toyota. I know it's not fair, but I have to be honest and tell you, I wouldn't do it.

KP: Right. Did you ever visit Japan after the war.

RO: No. I have no desire to go, and wouldn't go tomorrow if I was invited. And maybe I should. Down the street I got a former Marine, who I never knew before I moved here, who's a career Marine. And he was stationed in Japan for four or five years, and marvels at the people. Right next door to me is an Irishman, from Erie, Pennsylvania, who was married to a Japanese girl he met over there after the war. I love her. Great, super girl. She and Alice are in a card club every week, we socialize, and I always have to be careful around her. But I, you know, I suppose if somebody said,

"Ochsie, here's a good deal to go to Japan," I'd go. But I'd rather go see parts of the United States that I've never seen, to be honest with you.

KP: But you were also saying that you had some sense that, did you ever look at any Japanese billfolds?

RO: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Sure.

KP: It sounds like you also had a realization that they had families.

RO: Oh, yes, I realized that.

KP: Which must be weird, I mean, I've never had it, 'cause I've never had to kill anyone in combat, but it must be a weird emotion.

RO: Well, you know, it's like if a guy kills a deer, which I never have, they go look at it. "Hey, this is eight point," whatever the devil they are. And the same way is when you're new in this business. And curiosity, the one thing they're looking for, you know, I don't want to use an excuse, but we do as we're told. … We see [if] they've got any maps in their pockets, or anything that's gonna be of any military value, and so you lift the wallet. I never kept the whole wallet. I looked at it, saw these pictures. I think the only thing I ever kept, I got a couple of Japanese bills, the originals, the real Japanese bills. I got some that we issued on Okinawa, the United States issued them, but I think I got a couple of those. I wasn't a great souvenir keeper.

KP: There were also a lot of civilians on Okinawa.

RO: Oh, yes.

KP: How often did you encounter them?

RO: Well, initially, a lot of them. We were going north, through all these little villages, they were all around. And they didn't know what to think of us. They had been taught, you know, on the other island, Saipan for example, the Japs convinced them we were gonna rape all their kids, all their daughters and whatnot. But they were very cautious. They didn't know how to … One of the biggest problems I think I had as a sergeant, was making sure that the guys who were with me didn't react and treat these people wrong in any way. Now they were, I don't know how old they were, but they were war torn, and whatnot. But I remember in the rice patties, there the rice patties were built on dike forms, that you see lots of ladies squatted on their haunches all day long, most Orientals, with their babies strapped to their back, working in the rice fields. And when I got down to the south end, it was the first time I ever saw a unisex head, … where there's nothing. You're going to the head, and there'd be lady right next to you. She would just park it. I'd never seen that before in my whole life. Either it said "men" or it said "women," but that was a common thing. Once I got down there, … we got across the river, I didn't see any civilians. And on the other islands I was on, Kurt, as soon as we landed there they rounded up all the women. I think our government did. And it got them removed, and kept them there for obvious reasons.

KP: How hard was it to keep the men from mistreating the civilians? Did you have a lot of …

RO: One exception in my whole life. One guy from Brooklyn, not my buddy, guy from Brooklyn. Other than that, 'cause I think that as we grew up, the standards that we had been taught as youngsters carried over. I mean, you know, theoretically you didn't cheat, or steal, or commit adultery, or what have you, not that it's always true, but if you said, "Hey, look fellas, hands off." "Okay." They accepted that. One exception.

KP: So it sounds like you had a pretty good bunch of guys in Okinawa.

RO: Oh, I had a great bunch of guys.

KP: … 'Cause in other units you could do that, and most would do it, but you'd always have two or three …

RO: I had one guy, and at the end of the day I beat him to a pulp. Seriously. He had attempted to molest a girl, a young kid. I'll never forget that either, 'cause I came across that. And I bet this little girl was no more than sixteen, and looked in her eyes, I told you I looked into that kid's eyes when I was working at Rutgers, I yanked this off and I thought I would have killed him, almost. I just felt so mad. But, no, I had a bunch of good guys. They did what they were asked to do, and they didn't bitch, and didn't moan, and they did it. And, although there is one thing …

---------- END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO ----------
KP: This continues an interview with Robert F. Ochs on November 24, 1997 with Kurt Piehler in Wilmington, North Carolina. You had mentioned that you don't go to … too many reunions, except you did go to one in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

RO: That was about ten years ago, I was up in Hershey, Pennsylvania. This was the outfit I was with in Okinawa, had this reunion. And you go to a Marine Corps reunion, and the first thing they have is a hospitality room, and that's where you go to get a drink if you want. But that's where people gather and a lot of these guys, I even forget the names. Some guys you don't even know. Anyhow, I walk into this room and I guess I stopped and picked up a beer or something. I'm walking around and I hear this guy say, he's sitting there, he says, "Hey, Maria," that's his wife's name, "See that guy there? That's Sergeant Ochs, and I hate that son of a bitch." I heard my name, looked down, and he means this. His name was Jake, somebody. He came from York, Pennsylvania. I shook hands with him, and about a day later I said, "Jake, what is it you have against me? I don't remember. And we didn't go to war together. We lived together someplace for a while." Evidently, I outranked him. I had given him an order or something he thought was unfair. It doesn't make any difference. The point is, no animosity on his part, he was simply telling his wife what he thinks about me. And yet, we're not enemies, you know? And I smile and laugh about that. The other thing I said, "Jake, what do you do for a living?" And he said, "… I'm the world's best kitchen cabinet maker." And another thing I say, here's a guy, all walks of life, what does he do? He makes kitchen cabinets, and he tells me he's the best in the world. There's a man who enjoys success. As you get older, you look back and say, "What did this guy do, and was he

successful at it?" Another thing, a guy at Rutgers told me, a professor, a professor. Same professor. His name escapes me.

KP: History?

RO: Says to me, I'm going to remember this before I'm finished, "Why does man work?" "Oh, that's easy. For money." "You're not right." "What do you mean, 'I'm not right?'" Years later, the three things he taught us that day are so true. One, is a feeling of belonging. Team, faculty, you don't care what it is. Something you belong to. The second is recognition. I found in the newspaper a nice block, "Hey, great book you wrote." Period. The third is more nice than not. You go to bed, put your head in the pillow, and say, "It's been a satisfying day because I did the best I could." It is so simple. I used this the whole time I worked at Rutgers. The same darn three terms of that, 'cause how true it really is. I mean, you look back at anybody's life and say, "Was he successful?" Well, that's how I now measure success. Not by whether he's got three Cadillacs, or whatever, crossing the water he's got these fifty-foot yachts sitting out here, you know? That's not the important thing. Wait 'till you get my age.

KP: … Where were you when you learned the war was over?

RO: Okinawa, … getting ready to go, and I guess our radioman heard this, and the word went like wildfire. And we didn't quit right then and there.

KP: No, I mean …

RO: But that was it. And every time I see that people protest about us using the atomic bomb. No, again, hundreds of thousands of guys like me, sitting there, I say, "Thank you, Harry. Thank you."

KP: Now you expected to go to the invasion of Japan.

RO: We were being trained slowly. We had time, on street warfare. The first time the Marines ever had a street warfare was in Okinawa. It's the only place you could go where there was a town, and that was a half-baked town, Naha. But … they were getting us ready to go to Japan, where we were going. … We didn't have time for this, all day, every day, but let's say we decided we'd have to go out tonight on a mission. All right, so they'd take us out and we'd start on this training. The sergeants were started in schools, classrooms. Did I expect to go? Oh, yes. I think everybody did. We knew they weren't going to quit.

KP: How long did you think, before the bomb was dropped, after Okinawa, that the battle was over?

RO: Two more years.

KP: You did expect to '47. It was going to be long.

RO: Yes. What was the famous song? "Golden Gate in 48," wasn't it? "See the Golden Gate in '48." No, I really thought about it. When the war ended I had two and a half, a little more than two and half years, on the other side there. And I feel, "Okay, I got another while to go." Period. And that's another thing, again, just in the past three or four [years], I've done more reading since I retired than I did in my life, if we ever went, oh, God, what a mess that would have been. I don't know how many guys would have, both sides, would have got killed in that mess. Then I thought we would beat them. We could just overpower these bums. I never worry about the logistics of how you get the bombs there, the ships there.

KP: You were confident.

RO: That was beyond me. All I knew, "Do I have enough ammunition in my back pocket to do what I'm suppose to do today?" Okay. If not, I'll go down to the supply tent and get it, you know?

KP: You mentioned about "Howling" Smith.

RO: "Howling Mad" Smith.

KP: Yes. Which other people have brought him up. How much did you, and you mentioned, it sounds like at the time you weren't too crazy for MacArthur.

RO: Oh, I despise him. And just because, maybe, he was an Army guy. I thought he was an egotistical maniac. And he took the ship away from us, you know? "Howling Mad" Smith I only knew from reputation. A little bit. I don't know anybody that really fought under him, but after (Tarawa?) and reading up there in Iwo. I'm glad I'm not serving under him.

KP: What about your own commanders?

RO: I had nothing but respect for them. I never had a guy I disliked. … I told you my best friend ended up being a second lieutenant on Okinawa. Was a doctor, radiologist, Scottsdale. One day he comes in, and I hear my name being yelled about four o'clock in the afternoon. "Sergeant Ochs, Sergeant Ochs." And I climb out of this little place I was, and I said, "Yes, sir." Give me his name and all that. He's a second lieutenant. He says, "You move out at 1800." Six o'clock. What they use to do, you get in a truck, they ride us someplace, and they get out of the truck and go about our mission. Typical me, I said, "Lieutenant, we'll be ready. For the past six days we moved out every damn night at 1800. We'll be ready to go tonight." So anyway we get in the trucks to go down there, and we get out of the truck. I got these twelve guys, and he's with me, and he said, "Sergeant, what do we do here?" "Lieutenant, Pork and Beans got us through here the past three nights in a row. Let him go first, the guys know what they're going to do." Now here's our mission. I was up on a little knoll. We have to get up there. "I suggest you follow the troops and I'll bring up the rear," which would have been the standard process. And he said, "Okay." So we came back. Everybody got back safe and sound and he was going up to the place and … he said, "I want to thank you." He said, "I heard stories about second lieutenants. … But you did the right move, not because it's me because I've been there. Don't try to be the hot shot. These kids know more than you and I, put together, know." And that's why we became best buddies. And I was only with him,

again, for maybe two months, at the most. In fact, when we were in south, really got in the midst of it, he got transferred to another platoon when I was in it. But I think he is the guy I respected the most. Now I had an interesting experience, just two months ago. We had the commanding general of Camp Lejeune come down and talk to the Wilmington Senior Men's Club. And when he's there, he invites us up to the Lejeune, to see the Marines training, training action. And so I was the vice president of the thing last year, so I put this little thing together and we go up there. They show us all sorts of maneuvers. There is one of how they rescued that Air Force pilot from Bosnia, interesting stuff. … No conception of what I remember of the Marine Corps. This is unbelievable, whole new thing and all the guys with me, they weren't Marines, necessarily. We were old fossils shaking heads the same way. "Look at the weapons they have compared to what we had." We're standing there, about 100 yards from a Harrier jet that's coming at us. They give us earplugs and say, "Stand fast." That jet comes right down the road at us, and goes up over us just like that. Watch them make a mock invasion of a town from the water. Boy, they use to bring the Higgins boats up, drop the ramp. These boats come speeding by at about thirty miles an hour and the guys propelled themselves off the back and swim into the beach, and all that sort of stuff. There is no fixed target for anybody to shoot. Anyway, it was a great, great day. … They have a mock village up there. Watched them take over a town. Now they have to worry about the gas, and put on their gas masks, and all that stuff. So when it's all over, the guy who is the president, and I, put together a couple of the pictures of Wilmington and a plaque on, we go up to see the general, who is one year older than my son. The general, two star. And we're sitting in his office, and the other guy, and myself, and the general, just making small talk. He says, "Hey, General how are you?" Who comes walking in the place but the Commandant for the Marine Corps. Four-star general. And he spent about ten/fifteen minutes talking to us and I said to him, "How is your dad?" "You know my dad?" "No, but I knew who he was in World War II." Lieutenant colonel for the Marine Corps in World War II. So this guy, this gentleman here, he doesn't know whether I ever saw his father or not. I just remember his name to be honest with you. But, you know, you say to yourself, "Hey, at this age you stand there and all of a sudden the Commandant of the Marine Corps walks in with just you and one gentleman, two civilians, and he stands and talks to you for ten/twelve minutes." It was great. Was it a thrill? Yes. Vince Kramer will tell you it's a lot of donkey dust. I'll be honest with you. Was it a thrill for this guy? Yes, it was. It sure was. We didn't tell him anything important. He said, "What unit were you in.?" I said, "The last unit I was in was the 8th Marines." "We have them right here," he said.

KP: How long did it take you to leave Okinawa? How long did you take you to get back to the States?

RO: Well, you came back on a point system. And whatever the first number of points you needed to come home, I didn't have that many.

KP: Now you had a lot of points, because you got home earlier than a lot of people.

RO: … I came back home. I went to … San Diego, went to Chicago, and I walked in my house in Highland Park the night of the 23rd of December. Now, how long did that take? I forget to be honest with you. I know I was in the second batch of guys. I had enough points. That I remember. And they put us on a ship going to San Diego, a beat up, old troop ship, and we were allowed to sit

up on the deck and smoke at night. This was, you know, real novel. Everybody wild around there just telling, no more discipline. You just didn't have to worry about anything. And I had a guy on there from Oklahoma, a preacher, who everyday held these lectures about how we were returning to civilian life. These are my words. "We were trained killers, and we had to be taught how to be civilians." And I took offense to this guy. They were saying I didn't go to his lectures. I said, "You know, I'm not very smart, but I'm not that dumb." You know, I understand how to be taught, how to do something, but the whistle blew, and that game is over. I'm not going to go out and strangle people on the street corner. That part bothered me, that the military thought it was necessary.

KP: … The military wanted this lecture?

RO: Yes. Yes. Now, they also had a film. You know, the guy who wrote "Jaws," the movie, and wrote the book Jaws? He's from Princeton, I think. His father was a movie actor. What was his name?

KP: Benchley.

RO: Yes. Who put together, sort of, a comic thing about returning to civilian life that they showed us. That was good. That was good. Saw the readjustment tools. You know, I think they were trying to avoid guys like me doing what I did to that prof. Most likely was the object of the thing. But the trip home, one of the things about that trip home. I didn't know this guy before. We were sitting around talking and this guy said that he was a graduate of the Colorado School of Mines, and that he was going to go to Kuwait. Where the hell is Kuwait? I didn't know where Kuwait was, and he told me. And then, after the Persian Gulf, it dawned on me how important Kuwait was. But this kid was actually a petroleum engineer, by training, and that's where he was going to go. Other guys, what did they talk about? Success in life? No. They're going to get married, look for a girlfriend, or hope to go to college, or go get a job. Their father worked for Standard Oil. They could get a job at Standard Oil. It was just very ordinary chitchat.

KP: What about the GI Bill?

RO: It's the answer to a Marine's prayer.

KP: When did you first learn about it?

RO: I don't think until I got home.

KP: Really? You didn't know about it coming home? You had to wait until …

RO: I think it's when I actually got, maybe, when I got discharged. I don't know whether they told me about it. That didn't mean a thing, until all of a sudden, then. And I remember going back to Rutgers, and the registrar's office was in Old Queens. I told you his name was Luther Martin. I went to school with his daughter. I walked up there one morning and I said, "Mr. Martin, Bob Ochs." "Oh, Bob, welcome back. How are you?" "Fine," I said. "You know, I flunked out of this place a few years ago. Will they let me back in?" He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Bob,

we're letting everybody in." But you know, our whole football team. We had a hell of a football team here. [Laughter]

KP: Yours, in many ways, was the golden age.

RO: Yes. That's what they call it. But, on that football team there were only about four scholarship guys. The rest are all freebies, like me. And that GI Bill, as everybody has known, what did it cost? I forget how many, not very much money in today's money market, but what that did for, not only all those fellows, but what they returned in the way of taxes, and whatnot. I can't speak highly enough of it. … I support, I think, doing the same thing today, especially for guys who want to go in the military. Because with no draft we have to keep a certain caliber of individual in the military. What happened just before the draft was eliminated, you know what our military went through? I use to hire those guys at Rutgers as campus cops. They all had their GEDs, and what have you. And you gotta have a different way to breed the cat. So if military is an incentive, even more than they offered to them now, I would be all in favor of it. Although I'm not in favor of the draft list.

KP: You mentioned several times … it was tough becoming a civilian again.

RO: Yes. For me it was.

KP: Yes. It almost sounds like it wasn't because of traumatic reasons. I mean, did you have any bad dreams?

RO: When I first came out, I had some reactions.

KP: Did you dive under tables when you heard …

RO: No, no, no, no.

KP: 'Cause Bert Manhoff tells a story of, sometimes when you hear a sound.

RO: You can put this on tape and you can play it. Bert Manhoff is very careless with the truth. Period on period. I just wrote to him the other day, Bert Manhoff. No, I never experienced that.

KP: You never experienced that?

RO: No, no, no. I would think about certain things, like going up to New York State was a reaction to one of them. No, I'll tell you though. Why? I enjoyed the military. If I didn't want to play football, I would have stayed in the Marine Corps.

KP: Really?

RO: Very honestly. I wanted to play football in the worst way. Now I want to go back to Parris Island, boot camp, and, "My name is Ochs." The only Ochs who is well known is the guy who

owns the *New York Times*, started it. He is of the Jewish faith. I'm not. So I'm down in Parris Island and this guy says, "Are you a Jew, Ochs?" "No, sir." "What are you?" "I'm a German." And he says, "That's why you will be a good Marine because of that damn krauthead." I think there is a certain thing in the genes that the military sort of attracts, and yes, I enjoyed that part. And to this day I enjoyed, and you ask my kids, knowing where we're going and what our objective is. So I think I, in general terms, I not only enjoyed it, I told you it molded my life.

KP: But you decided not to stay in?

RO: I wanted to play football.

KP: You stayed in the reserves for a time?

RO: Yes. I got out, because I'm going up to Morristown, New Jersey twice a month for drill. After drill we're going out and playing tough Marine, drinking beer. I'm coming home four o'clock in the morning, five o'clock in the morning, and I'm saying, "I can't do this. I have to go to class in the morning. I have enough trouble as it is. I gotta get out of here." I dropped out. It wasn't eight months later that Korea broke out, and they took that outfit to Korea. I didn't go. [Laughter]

KP: But, I mean, you mainly dropped because you wanted to finish school, it sounds like.

RO: I'll tell you, I had gotten to the age I didn't want to go out and play Marine anymore. To see how drunk you could get, or all those damned fool things. I just didn't want to do that, but I was. I didn't have guts enough to say, "No, I'm not doing that." In those days, there was no [Route] 287.

KP: Oh, no.

RO: You're back across those hills, all by yourself, narrow roads, dark, some nights it's raining, some nights it's snowing. I said, "No, the hell with this." I got out. And that's the only reason.

KP: Otherwise you would have stayed in the reserves?

RO: Oh, yes. I'll tell you, because my brother, when Korea broke out I tried to get back into the Marine Corps.

KP: Oh, you did? You did try?

RO: Loopie Lewis was the guy who was once my commanding officer. Was a one star general down in Washington, but I only had one condition. "I want to go back as an officer." To be very frank, I knew they do a lot better than the rest of us. And I said, "If I go back in, I'm going to try and make a career out of this." But, I was too old. See, yes, I was twenty-six when we graduated from college. Graduated twenty-five. I was twenty-six in August. And I think twenty-five, whatever it was, even the general, nobody would help me. I was thinking, "Well, what the hell. I'm a goddamn World War II Marine. They'll make exceptions." I was just another name in the book. There are no exceptions.

KP: … One or two other questions I wanted to ask about World War II. Did you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?

RO: I've heard her, yes.

KP: When you were over …

RO: Yes, I heard her.

KP: Okay.

RO: In the Marshall Islands we were killing time, we could pick her up almost every night. What was good about her, she played nice music. Good, big band music.

KP: … It sounds like when you came back you didn't join any veteran's organizations?

RO: No. I belonged to a Marine Corps League for a little while, but, no.

KP: Because your father was in the American Legion.

RO: I was not motivated by what the, no, I just wasn't motivated.

KP: You've already given us a lot about … Rutgers, but, I guess, one of the things that is a standard question I ask is, I mean, there are all these GIs on campus. You are dominating the football team, the fraternities, and everything. What … was the relationship with the guys who were just regular college students, who had just been eighteen, who were coming to the school? What was your sense of that?

RO: Well, I think I can talk only from a football viewpoint. We had a pretty good football team. There were three bona fide stars on that team. One was Frank Burns, the quarterback, never been in the service. One was Herman Hering, a halfback, never been in the service. And the third one was Bucky Hatchett, black guy, never been in the service. Two of them went in after the war. Frank Burns was three or four years younger than the rest of us, the captain, the king, the boss of the football team. No questions asked. He was that good. The other two guys were exceptional. Most likely better athletes than any of the rest of us. Because we're playing football, and they excel at what they do. It was nothing. Now, if we went on an away trip … We were up to play Harvard one year, and right before the game we went down to Scully Square to a burlesque house down there. I think Sally Keeth use to be the dancer. We'd go down there. Those of us who sat in the balcony, you could smoke cigars in the balcony in those days, we go up there to smoke, and the lights go on intermission, and we're all fossils up there. We're all puffing cigars. Sitting down in the first two rows are Burns and Hering, the two little angels, came out of the same high school in fact. You know? There was a difference … there, when you socialize, and their interests were different than ours. A lot of guys were married, for example. Other guys had steady girlfriends, you know, that weren't just puppy love, and sort of serious girlfriends, so there was separation there. As far as

walking around the school was concerned, I think there was so many guys who didn't pay attention to the guys in your class. And I never looked at a guy, "Was he in the service?" It didn't make any difference whether you were in the service or not.

KP: I wish you could urge Frank Burns to give us an interview. We haven't interviewed too many people who were just students then. Because …

RO: He won't do it?

KP: Apparently, I haven't asked him directly, but we've done mailings to the entire '49 class.

RO: I'm in close touch with Frank.

KP: We'd really …

RO: I'll talk to him, seriously. He is very sensitive about the military. He could have gone in the Navy after the war but he was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles as their … number two man, and he fell in love and got married. That's why he never went into the service. And I know he is sensitive about it. As you get so much older, some of the few guys who I knew were not in the service are sensitive about that.

KP: Oh, no. I understand that.

RO: But they shouldn't be. I don't remember anybody, of us, saying anything. I pick out Manhoff, because I don't know what the hell Manhoff did, if anything, during the war, too. Manhoff is a professional BSer, and you can tell him Ochs said that. [Laughter] It doesn't bother me one bit, one bit. I know Manhoff only too well. I understand his wife is a very sick girl now.

KP: But one of the things that a lot of people who were in the GI years tell me is that, you didn't talk about the war very much. In fact, people look at me in puzzlement, like, "Why would we talk about the war?"

RO: I think 'cause you are trying to get a whole different perspective. If you talk about the war with just a bunch of guys, you're going to end up telling lies. And it's not important. Look at all that has happened since World War II, for example, you know? What did World War II mean to a guy like me who maybe has what eight/ten years of life left, or whatever you have, not very many? What does it mean? Well, that's the reason why I talk to you. It molded my life. Whether right or wrong it molded me, and I think that as you fellows in the history business, it would be great if you could come back 100 years from now and read what they say about World War II. What the historians really write about this. It not only molded me, it molded the kids that I raised. It changed, up until the 1960s. You are most likely one of those '60s students. I watched the country go to hell at Rutgers when they took a look at "Prime Time" and said, "No. No more." And I've seen, I swear to God, Kurt, I've watched things change and I think I can almost pinpoint since the '60s, over what I think should be right, from my generation. A large part of it is that, I told you, I'm not in favor of the draft necessarily. I got three boys, two have been in the service, one isn't. I can

see the difference in those three kids. I think the two in the military have benefited more than the other fellow has, though all three are successful, but who am I to say that? Alice and I, Alice is my second wife, argued about this. I went to see my oldest boy, that's the one who has never been in the military. When I left, I had to really change my mind, 'cause I said, "That young guy," young as fifty years old, "is experiencing personal happiness." What's the bottom line in life? Good personal happiness. So, you know, guys, they can ramble on forever, and somebody will say, "He's so full of donkey dust it's pathetic." And that guy's right, and somebody agrees with you on a few points, fine. 'Cause I'm so old I think there ought to be a little more discipline in life. That's all.

KP: I'd be curious if you could reflect on some of your memorable football games. 'Cause you enjoyed playing football a great deal … . My students have been … really struck by the post-war period, how active all these veterans were here, but you really participated in a lot of activity.

RO: Yes. Some guys wanted, like the newspaper, to join it.

KP: To join in.

RO: Other people believed in the big social events, you know, like big bands on campus.

KP: Right.

RO: That wasn't part of my act. I use to cut tickets and make money for them. Guys like Manhoff got involved in every do-good thing going on the campus. He thought he was the biggest man on campus, Bert. But as far as football was concerned, I was eligible to play football for three years when I came back after the war. I had been in the Marine Corps for almost four years. I come back in the season of 1946, where before we opened up against Columbia, which was a pretty big team in those days, we had had two or three scrimmages. I forget how many with outside teams. And I beat my way up to become the starting tackle. Columbia kicks off to us, I get clipped, my football season for the year is over. Never played another minute. I had a cartilage torn. And in those days, it isn't like today. I was done. So the next year, '47 comes, and there were five teams out there. I was on the fifth team. I had to beat my way up to the first team. I think it took me three games. I think it was Lehigh. I'm not sure it was Lehigh. We're playing Lehigh. Lehigh has the ball, I come crashing across for some reason, the quarterback fumbles the ball, it falls in my arms, I run twenty-two yards for a touchdown. A guy named Albi Booth was the official. He had been a great, great Yale football player and a good official. He says to me, "Hey, kid, isn't that quite a thrill?" You know, big, old, lard-ass tackle scoring. I throw him the ball like a hot shot, and I said, "No. When I was in high school I was the highest scoring back in New Jersey." One time I was. I was a back in high school, but that was a big thrill. I think the next week, or the week after, we were playing Harvard, the same damn thing happens. And I'm going to catch the ball and some guy on my team taps the damn thing. Otherwise, I would have had a second touchdown. So that would have been terrific. I think the other biggest score I had, Rutgers had never, never beaten Princeton in Palmer Stadium. And my senior year, we ripped them twenty-two to six, or some such score.

KP: In Palmer Stadium, too.

RO: In Palmer Stadium. Yes.

KP: And it's not like Rutgers had beaten Princeton too often.

RO: Well, they beat 'em in 1938. We beat them in '47 and '48.

KP: Right.

RO: All three wins 1869, '38 and '47 were in Rutgers, and '48 was the first time we won in Palmer Stadium. They went a long time before they won again after that. But that, we licked 'em, we didn't just beat 'em, we licked them. And because Princeton also had GIs in those days, it wasn't like the reason they gave us up now. They were a good football team. They were a good football team. Even Lafayette and Lehigh were good football teams. They had the same thing. They had a bunch of guys like us that came in.

KP: Did you do much dating at the Coop after the war? Is that where you …

RO: No, I didn't. One of my buddies who became a medical doctor did, had a girl He was going to med school. He was not accepted for medical reasons, during the war, so he was going to medical school. Going to Rutgers during the war, was in medical school, and we all came out. And he was a student up there. And his routine on Sunday night was a young lady from Perth Amboy. He use to go up there, and take her out, and we'd go to some bar on Georges Road. Still there, had a jukebox. And so there's a girl in the house. She lived on the Shoe campus. What are they, Corwin Shoes?

KP: Yes.

RO: We said, "Come on." There wasn't any dates. But we came, we would go out there. Other than that, no. In all honesty, I really didn't have a girlfriend. I use to take a few girls out, but not the Coop. I thought they were too young for me. I looked at myself as an old man. I did go up there and participate in a couple of Variety Shows they put on of some sort. Me and a bunch of guys went up there and did it.

KP: When you were in school, what did you think you would do after finishing college?

RO: Be the best football coach the United States ever had. That was my …

KP: You really wanted to stay in football?

RO: That was my desire and I was an assistant football coach, freshman football coach, at Rutgers for two years, and after the first year I was convinced that I was going to be the best football coach they ever had. And after the second year, I knew I wasn't, because the talent wasn't there. So I learned early, you're as good as who you recruit to play the game. I looked at it as, sort of, a rat race, and all the guys that I played with, half of them became football coaches. I even taught high

school for a year. "There's gotta be a better way to make a living than this." What I ended up doing what I never expected to do.

KP: I guess maybe, I mean, you never expected to make a career at Rutgers, did you?

RO: I got out of Rutgers and I had four or five jobs in about a ten-year period. In a sense, all were related to one another. And I'm working for Westinghouse Electric doing grievances, and I go to a New Jersey Taxpayer's Association meeting one night and in walks a guy named Wally, who is a PR man for Rutgers, and the vice president, and a guy named Elmer Easton, who was the Dean of the College of Engineering. And the PR guy, Wally, looked to Elmer and said, "There is just the man you want." But he didn't know how much I wanted to get out of Westinghouse. And so I called the dean up, and he knew me, he was there when I was playing football, he knew my name. Anyway, he was starting a fund-raising program for the College of Engineering, and the only gimmick was I had to make my salary twice. So if I wanted $5,000 I had to make $10,000. So I had done some fund-raising for the (Peddie?) School, so I said, "Okay." I said, "Dean, what does a full prof make?" This is 1958. I knew it was $8,000 a year. I said, "I want $8,000 a year." He said, "That means you have to make sixteen." "I understand that." So I made more than sixteen. And the second year I made more than that. It was during the second year that they decided to put in parking. And the guy who had been the assistant dean at the engineering school had moved Queens to organize this thing. This guy takes me to a meeting, some … outfit from Cleveland. He was in the engineering business. A presentation about the parking program for Rutgers. I said, "Oh, this is very interesting." Moore, the guy's name. "This is very, very interesting. Good luck." About two days later, Dr. Gross calls me up, and says, "Bob, I want you take this on." "Dr. Gross, I came to Rutgers to be a fund-raiser at the College of Engineering, 'cause that is going to get me in every industry there is in New Jersey. I'm going to find myself a good job." I was looking for a public personnel job is what I was looking for. That is the reason I took this job. And I've been getting …

KP: You had no intention of staying at Rutgers?

RO: No, that was a temporary place to pay my bills while I was working between jobs. So he let's me go, and about two weeks later, he calls me back. He says, "Bob, … you are going to take this goddamn job." I said to myself, "If I want to be on the payroll," I learned this a long time ago, "I better do it." And so I did it. Gross goes to all the faculty meetings. I mentioned this earlier. There is going to be a parking fee. I think it was ten dollars a year.

KP: Yes. It was ten dollars.

RO: Silly, 'cause when I left I had moved up to one percent of your salary. …

KP: No, that's why I was so amused at the ten dollars.

RO: It is higher than that now. … He said, "Bob Ochs is coming to faculties." Well, I'll be damned, I got invited to the faculty meeting, after faculty meeting, after faculty meeting. "Go stand up and defend these ten dollars."

KP: Well, 'cause it was funny, 'cause you even, at one point, did a comparison. I saw it in Gross' papers. You had done a comparison to other schools. Penn was fifty dollars, and I forget the other schools you showed.

RO: When he told me give this program, I said, "Doc, all I knew was how to park a car. I didn't know anything about parking." So he said, "Go visit some schools." I said, "What ones?" He says, "Bob, you decide what ones." These were my orders. So I got on my bicycle, I went to Michigan, which had a parking program, Wisconsin had one for a long time, Illinois, Urbana had one for a long time. Where the hell else did I go? Ohio State. I don't know, but whatever I got, I stole from all these people. They had formal parking programs. … But I would go to these faculty meetings, and you'd think that I was taking 150 bucks out of these faculty guys' back pockets. You really would. The abuse I took, whew, man. And then I put my guys in some sort of uniform to supervise the parking lots. They became the campus cops. And in 1959 or 1960, I started a program in '59. '61 I started this. It might have been '62. I went on the Newark campus one day and Dr. Gross was there, not that was I going to get with him. My parking job took me to Camden and Newark in those days. There was some sort of demonstration going on, and the Newark Police Department comes by, on horses, up those steps with their clubs, hitting the Rutgers kids on the head. What were they demonstrating about? I remember just seeing it from a distance. It was no business of mine. So, anyway, I don't think it was two days later, John Swink, who is the senior vice president, the greatest guy I ever met in my life, calls me in, and I don't really know him, and said, "I taught your brother at Sunday School." I remember saying, "My condolences, John." He said, "Well, go upstairs and see the President." We go upstairs, and Dr. Gross, who is a hell of guy, made you feel right at home. And when he spoke there was no deviation. It was just boom, boom. He said, "Well, you know why John brought you up here?" "No, sir." He said, "I want you to start a security program. No guns. I want a security program." I says, "Dr. Gross." He says, "Bob, I told you to start a security program," and we left. Walking down the steps, I said to John Swink, "What's my budget? And he says, "What budget?" So Rutgers gave me the opportunity to start from absolutely nothing, no guidance, no direction, but to build … a police department exclusively created for an academic community. And that was my attitude and theory. And that's how we started.

KP: Well, 'cause I've read some of the Gross Papers, and it was interesting to see that it literally did evolve out of parking. I mean, it was very clear …

RO: Because people went to these guys, they had a tin badge, and a blue shirt, and a blue pair of pants on. They became the "Campus Cop." People would go to them. And why did guns come about? Because, whether you like it or not, and this was my argument for years, "In the United States, you are not a cop if don't have a gun on." And so these guys were getting beat up at night. Put a gun on them, and they stopped getting beat up, but Gross never let me put a gun on them. It wasn't until Bloustein came in.

KP: Really? Bloustein was the one that armed them? By the time I got to campus … they were armed.

RO: They were armed in 1971. '72 they got armed. '72 they got armed.

KP: And before that they weren't? Even in Newark? I mean, Newark at that time …

RO: Guys beat up some in Camden, Newark, we had a couple guys in New Brunswick get beat up. And as God as my witness, you put a gun on them and they became a bona fide cop all of a sudden. They were looked upon as a cop. But … Bloustein did that. Well, actually, in 1970 we had legislation passed in New Jersey, which allows for the creation of a police department in an educational institution. Clyde Szuch, an attorney for Rutgers, wrote it. And we railroaded that through with all sorts of stuff. Got that through, and since that time it's been copied in many other states. Now if you were, like, the University of Wisconsin or Michigan, you wouldn't need this because when their state constitution was established, the education was included as part of the state constitution. In New Jersey that wasn't true. So we had to create this legislation in order to give us this door to go through so we have that now. Then another thing, during my time things changed. I mean, crime, it just changed. So all of a sudden, you need a police department.

KP: Yes. 'Cause what is so striking, particularly when I interviewed people from the late '30s and '40s, when campus security was a night watchman …

RO: That's right.

KP: Yes.

RO: It was the guy who was a janitor in the daytime, and he went out and checked buildings at night, and fell asleep. That's right.

KP: Yes. Now it is fairly sophisticated. It's a very sophisticated operation.

RO: Nationwide ... it is, seriously, across the whole country. It's become very, it is a profession, if you will.

KP: It was also, I was reading through Gross' papers, I mean, you have, … in terms of the ROTC building incident, but, I mean, you had for example, in 1970, you had a series of bomb threats.

RO: Series?

KP: I mean you had …

RO: We led the nation!

KP: I mean, there was a whole file of people. You even had done a summary, for Mason Gross, of what parents thought you should do, including one who thought you should have all the phones tapped, not just a few of the phones, but every single phone to find out what was happening.

RO: You know how bad that was? It was ungodly. And theoretically, you gotta go empty a building to make a search. I wasn't doing it half the time. And we had meeting, after meeting, after

meeting. Nothing happened. So finally, my concern was, one semester they didn't have to take finals. Nobody had to take a final. So we got to the point, Kurt, and this was my idea and Dr. Gross, that we would set up exclusive areas for exams. And when a kid reported to Scott Hall, that's the building, the classroom that I was trying to think of before, they'd be told by the campus cop, "You will go to Blake Hall on the College of Agriculture campus to take your exam." Now we had to do that for two weeks, but we held final exams. And then the *Parade Magazine* picked up those numbers, and I can't tell you how many parent groups I met with for weeks, and weeks, and weeks, about how dangerous it was to go to Rutgers. And my argument with Dr. Gross, it wasn't an argument, I said, "Doctor, we're reporting every damn bomb threat. You go down this road here for twelve miles to this famous sister institution of ours, whose security director is a good friend of mine. They're not. I tell you they're not. We are." 'Cause my attitude about the whole situation was that if we had five rapes, we reported five rapes. Period. Better get them out there on the book and let everybody know what happened.

KP: Because in fact, colleges now reporting has led to legislation.

RO: We did, too, yes, uniform crime report.

KP: I mean, but you were ahead of that, in terms of, you felt it was important.

RO: Every day, every Dean of Students at the University, …when they came to work the next morning, they knew exactly what happened.

KP: Every Dean of Students had a summary of the crime?

RO: Two robberies, whatever it was, I don't know what. Period.

---------- END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE ----------

RO: My whole point is there was no secret about it. If it happened, it happened. Let the chips fall where they may.

KP: You also had … a lot of demonstrations and sit-ins to deal with. For you, what was the most memorable, and what were the most difficult to deal with?

RO: Well, I can't remember any one specific, because there was one common factor about all these demonstrations. I don't care what the issue was. Because New Brunswick is where it is, we would attract TV from New York and maybe one from Philly. And so we gear up for that, 'cause as soon as the TV trucks left, the demonstrations went down to almost nothing. Period. I remember one with Jessie Jackson there, very memorable, not because something happened, just 'cause …

KP: That's actually one I remember. … That was more recent.

RO: Remember that one out on College Avenue?

KP: Oh, yes. With the anti-apartheid.

RO: Yes.

KP: I remember that. I walked over to listen to … him speak.

RO: Some of the demonstrations that they put on for the Board of Governors, they were dramatic. I mean, these kids really worked at putting these on. But I think Louis Farrakhan spoke out at Livingston College. … He spoke. He wasn't a demonstrator. He spoke. We had to put up metal detectors. We actually caught a guy trying to bring a gun in there. Jerry Falwell, that was an interesting experience. We had him. But because there was so many of them, those of us who had some responsibility had this down to a system where … we really could keep control, reasonable control, and we got rid of the nonsense going on in the '60s. We didn't have any firebombs, or some of the other, building sit-ins went out of style. I bet they took over Queens eight times, when my office use to be in Queens. I get a call at two o'clock in the morning, "Bob, they took over Queens." "Okay, I'm on my way." I lived in Cranbury then. I'd come up. Were they in my office? They knew damn well they don't go in that office. I'd bring Dr. Gross in there, everybody. It was a suite office. It wasn't mine. It was for my boss. My little cubby-hole was in there. Bring 'em in there. And there's one thing, this is sort of funny now. We even had some good kids who use to run and shut the shutters in the building during those days. But they had taken over the building, and I forget what the issue was. Dr. Gross was still the president. And finally, he said, "I'm going home." "I don't blame you." He said, "What are you going to do about this?" And I said, "Well, you want them out of here by tomorrow morning, eight o'clock?" "What are you going to do?" I said, "Dr. Gross, I just asked you if you want them out, that's all." 'Cause he was always concerned that I'd be too militaristic with my approach. He said, "No, I don't want any violence." He said, "They're my guests." And I said, "Yes, sir. They're your guests." So anyway, after he goes home the Superintendent of New Jersey Police, who just died, was a very good friend of mine, very good. And I called him up, and I said, "Dave, I got a problem." So I tell him my problem. He said, "Well, what do you want from me?" 'Cause the governor had to tell a state police guy to come help us. I said, "How many cars do you have in New Brunswick barracks?" white, great, big NJSP and the sign. He said, "I don't know, five or six." I said, "Look, will you call up that sergeant out there, and tell him to send those cars to New Brunswick, and have them cruise around this building every direction, as often as they can?" And he does. Not a half-hour goes by, looking out the window, I can see these white and black cars going by, just riding by. So a guy named, Larry Pervin, who was the Dean of Students at Livingston College. He is a head shrinker at Princeton now. I don't know if he teaches at Rutgers anymore. But he was the Dean of Students out there when Ernie Linton started that place. He's in the building, and he says, "Bob, Bob, what are all these cars?" I said, "What's going to happen here Larry, these guys, the troopers are moving in. My hands are tied. I won't do anything. They're going to move in. They're going to clean this place out." And you know, in an hour and a half they were gone. We sent the New Jersey State Police cars back, never used them, but I tell you that because I did that so many times with success. It was a chess game at the moment, but what satisfaction. I could resolve something without ever lifting a hand.

KP: … I would be curious if you could verify this. The rumor, people have told me that … Gross was really, he really understood, "students were students," then. That even if they were acting up, or protesting …

RO: Very much so.

KP: That they really, "They're students. You should treat them as such. You don't need to overreact."

RO: Constant lecture. They put up a bunch of wigwams in the back of Queens one time. Don't ask me what the protest was. And I said, "What should I do about that?" He said, "What do you mean? Let them stay there." They took over Queens. They were his guests in Queens. But when they would meet in this outer office of his, he's got an office of his own, you walk into this great big living room, he had a favorite chair. It was never occupied. The kids would be in there, shoulder to shoulder, but that chair was never occupied. When Doc Bloustein first came on the scene, some of the same bunch of donkeys are in there, they're in this chair. I told them, "Get out." A guy named Krantz, the kid's name was, from Livingston College. His old man was the Class of '45, was an absolute rabble-rouser. He's a very successful guy now. This was his kid, a redheaded guy. Dr. Bloustein said, "Oh, that's all right, Bob," and Bloustein sat on the floor. So after that I got him aside. I said, "Ed, you'll never do that to me again. You are the President of this University. You never sit on the floor." And I told him about Dr. Gross. My point is, the kids respected Dr. Gross, but they aren't going to do anything like that. He was a unique guy, Kurt, he really was. Bright, whew. But … his time, the changing times, he had outlived his time, like everything else.

KP: … It was funny, I just interviewed Norman Reitman last weekend, and I had a long discussion with Jim Reed. And he was often talking about different styles, and, you know, what would be accepted in one era, would now, you would suspect, and I just bring this up with Gross because Gross had a habit. … His habit was, he would go to the office, work until noon, and walk up College Avenue …

RO: Drive up and have his martinis.

KP: Have his martinis.

RO: You never saw him after lunch, Kurt. Don't call him after lunch.

KP: Yes. Right. … Now if a president, or anyone, if I was in the faculty club, and had three or four martinis, the History Department would be a sea of rumors in six months, you know?

RO: Everybody knew that about Gross though, I mean, he did. He went up every noontime, had two or three martinis. You know, when I thought about the time I left Gross, I left Rutgers nine years ago next month. I was sixty-five. Bloustein asked me to stay another year. It would have been worth my while for retirement purposes. But I said, "No," 'cause I was no longer marching to the same drumbeat the rest of the place was, and that's important. I said, "That's when it's time for anybody to get out." 'Cause what I think is wrong isn't necessarily wrong, and it may work well

today. I never sat back in that police department since I left because whoever runs it now will run it the way they think is best to run. Not the way how I think. That's not important. So we're all that way. I mean, you look at Ed Bloustein. His tenure as president is what, I don't know, fifteen/seventeen years. When you look at the presidents, what, six or eight years is about the average tenure for a president, and you can see why. The guy is going to do his job.

KP: You also had responsibility for both Newark and Camden, which I can actually pay you this compliment, I just spent my last year as a TA at Newark and I was very struck by how good the police department was run.

RO: It was good, wasn't it? Did you drive to work?

KP: No, I took the train.

RO: … Okay. Did you take the subway up, or did you walk up?

KP: I walked up from the Morris/Essex line. I guess, I won't even put this is on tape for the record. What really struck me is, I was there one Sunday morning and they were very polite about letting me in the building. I never got the sense that I was hassling them, that I was a bother for them. And when I was really struck is, once they made an arrest. This cop had seen this guy hanging around the building, he had an outstanding warrant, arrested him, and then apologized for being late, which was, sort of, "That's okay." And I was really struck because, I was saying to a friend, "They don't even catch murderers with warrants outstanding."

RO: The guy who ran that program, Jimmy Rose, is over here in Fayetville now.

KP: Really?

RO: He's a black guy. Great, great guy. Took him out of the Army. Got his GED in the Army, and brought him along at Rutgers. Terrific guy. He ran a hell of a program up there.

KP: Yes.

RO: But you see, hopefully, that way you'll experience why we try to say, "We are an academic police department. Opening doors is part of our job."

KP: I was very struck by that.

RO: Most cops think that is a janitor's job, you know? That's part of our job.

KP: I was also struck though, how difficult, because in many ways I thought it was an easier campus to patrol in Newark because it was very compact. You could really saturate the campus.

RO: Theoretically, Camden is easiest, and Newark is second, and New Brunswick is the hardest.

KP: Right.

RO: 'Cause the way it is at Newark now, when we first took it over, there was no street intersection anymore. You got a great, big cement plaza up there. The central high school is right in back of it. We use to raise hell in the student center up there. You could patrol that perimeter rather easy, whereas, New Brunswick, you can't.

KP: There is no perimeter.

RO: No. And you figure, you gotta go from, number one, when you make an arrest in New Brunswick there is one of seven police departments for the arrest. Well, you know the place as well as I do, but you go out to Busch campus and you're in two different townships out there. And somebody just sent me a clipping, one of my cops got stabbed out at the Livingston College. … I hired that kid. He's a former Marine out of Plainfield and Washington. But if you look at Livingston College, how do you protect Livingston College? It is a resident campus. How do you protect Busch Campus? It's a resident campus. Well, you get a couple of rapes out there. You can't have it. You can't.

KP: I was struck how, when I was a resident counsel there, on my post doc.

RO: Where?

KP: I was out in Crosby Hall.

RO: Where?

KP: And I was really, 'cause I had been used, I had TAed, I also taught part-time in Newark for several years, and in a weird way, I feel much safer in Newark than on Busch. Especially when one or two nights I had duty calls, … I was duty counsel for the whole campus, and I had to go somewhere, and I'd go, "This is crazy. … This campus could use more lighting."

RO: That's right.

KP: And even if you had a lot of cop cars out it wouldn't make a dent.

RO: … You've been resident counsel and you understand a lot.

KP: Oh, yes. No. I really thought that was one of the most eye opening [experiences.] I thought every academic professor, I did it at a good time, because I had done it on a post doc. I was a graduate student, so I had been around, in a sense, for a few years, and I …

RO: That's interesting.

KP: It was interesting how it changed my attitude in terms of academics, 'cause I gave a lot more work in the first semester.

RO: What was the babe's name, who took over the whole admissions program? They don't call it that anymore. She was assistant provost in Camden.

KP: I can't …

RO: She started her career as a resident counselor. I remember when she first went out there, one of those quads. Jeez, I didn't know her too well, but I hated that provost in Camden, just retired. She was his assistant. I can't remember all the names I want to remember.

KP: You mentioned about cops being armed. … I mean, New Brunswick became a very dangerous campus. I mean, it wasn't just the bomb thing.

RO: Dangerous town.

KP: Yes, dangerous town. I mean, I had a brother-in-law who was mugged twice in the River dorms.

RO: Where, Frelinghuysen?

KP: Yes, I think it was Frelinghuysen. You know, when he was waiting for an elevator. Once, the kids took his money, once they looked in his wallet, and laughed, and gave it back to him. But I mean, they pulled knives on him, so they weren't just going to rough him up. I mean, they were a little more serious. … And I remember, it progressively got better during your tenure in the '80s. What do you attribute, in terms of policing? What did you do that worked?

RO: Not being nice to them. I got some signs hanging in my garage we use to put up, telling them these dorms were for residents only, and their guests. But the point is, that I made my mind up, "I'm going to arrest anybody who shoplifts." Like a twenty cent pencil out of the bookstore got arrested. Period. "Anybody who is in this building who doesn't belong here gets arrested." I want the word to get out that you're not supposed to be in here. I also think it is difficult, but you can do it with resident counselors, to educate how you educate these kids. We also got some money, you know, Kurt, to put up some student desks in some places. So … one entrance is open to a certain hour, and everybody has to go through that entrance, and there's a kid sitting there that monitors the thing. That was important. The problem you have is that that kid who wants to hang out at the university, either maybe to steal, he's also a frustrated college student. He doesn't want to pay the price of being a student, but he wants to go hear the guitar players in the student center, and all that other stuff, bowl for twenty-five cents instead of a buck, and play the slot machines, and all that. And how do you get rid of them? That was the most difficult task we had, because the student centers, the directors give you a healthy lip, they want that income. Because they're operating on a budget like everybody else, and they got to use that money. So if we could confine 'em there, it would be the easiest. But the secret of good crime prevention, or success in crime is, "What the kids want you to do, they're going to help you do it." Period. When we had all those bomb threats, I think we had 256 in a semester or something. Some ungodly number.

KP: I think you are almost right to the number. Exact.

RO: It was unbelievable. So anyway, a guy named Earl Clifford, who was then the Vice President, says, "I'm going to put up a reward." I said, "Earl, every place I've talked to, rewards don't work." He said, "I'm putting up a reward. A thousand dollars." So he puts up a thousand dollars reward. So some girl, who lived around the Bishop House there, someplace in the dorm, calls in telling, not to us, to somebody, the name of the person who called in the bomb threat. So Clifford called me, and said, "I got the man for you. See that, Ochsie, a thousand dollars, I got the man for you. Go get him." So we go get him, bring him in, interrogate him. Yes, he was turned in by his girlfriend. Yes, he called in the bomb threat. He was going to admit it, 'cause the deal is he and his girlfriend will split the thousand dollars. You know? So you say to yourself, "Hey." Period. And the other thing is, that lots of times there was pressure put on you not to prosecute. Dr. Bloustein never, never said that.

KP: Really?

RO: Never once. Dr. Gross didn't either, but we weren't in the same era then. But we had a football player, Dick Anderson was the coach, got drunk in the tavern on Easton Avenue, going back up towards Douglass, had an automobile accident, his fault, killed another football player in the front seat. Period. And he was charged for … cause of death through intoxication. And a couple weeks after that the prosecutor, who was a hungry, publicity guy down there, calls me down.

KP: Oh, yes. Yes. I know which …

RO: He's back to being a judge now. He was a judge before he started to judge again. He is a Rutgers graduate. Geez, I can see the guy right in my mind.

KP: I had a friend, who was a lawyer, who worked for him. I know. I know.

RO: So we get down there, he said, "I'm holding a press conference, Bob." He says, "I want you there." We go to the press conference. Got, I don't know, three/four/five television sets there. And he said, "I'm going to ask you why Dr. Bloustein doesn't want this football player prosecuted, who caused the death of this individual." I said, "Who told you he didn't want to prosecute him?" He said, "My men." So I said to him, I don't remember his first name, "Let's go to the press conference and ask me that question." "Why?" "'Cause I'm going to tell you what the straight dope is." Oh, man, everything comes to a halt, and I'm mad now. So I said, "All right," he's got these guys sitting in the corner, "which one of those donkeys told you that the President said we couldn't do this?" I said, "Well, you're wrong. I'm here to tell you that we are not only encouraging you, but we are telling you to prosecute, and when you get done with them, we're going to take care of them in the university disciplinary system, which some people may laugh at. But when you get all done, this guy's going to get out with a, he won't go to jail, $500 fine, fifty hours community service. We're going to throw his tail out of school. What's more important in the long haul?" And that took care of that problem. You know? And I tell you that, because I don't care what Bloustein said to any group, when push came to shove, he's a street fighter. He was a New York street fighter.

KP: Actually, 'cause … we talked a little bit about Gross' style. If you could maybe talk about Bloustein's style, 'cause he was there, you almost saw him through his entire tenure. You just missed his, in a sense, his last year when he, unfortunately, he died. But you had really seen him from …

RO: Start to finish, when he came down from Bennington.

KP: Right.

RO: Number one, he came down and the first thing I had to do was give the challenge, from Ochs, about these weapons things. These cops have to be armed and he told me … [Door bell rings] Turn it off now.

KP: … If you could give me another fifteen/twenty minutes. You have a lot of good stories. But you were saying about Bloustein and his ...

RO: Well, came down from Bennington, and from my personal viewpoint the first challenge was, "We've got to arm the police department." And it took him about a year to feel his way along before he supported us on that, and we were granted that. But when he came down, the campus life was starting to reach a crescendo … on demonstrations. Building takeovers, not so much anymore, but a complete invasion of every Board of Governors meeting, to disrupt it, that was the objective. Harass him at his home. If you ever go out to the President's house, you drive up the driveway, before you get to the patio, if it is still there, you're going to see two posts with a great big chain. Well, I put those up. I use to put those across at night, and paint them black, so when the kids went driving through there in a hurry, to throw stuff at the President's house, they wrecked their car in the chains. We got more than one car that way. Take care of them. But this sort of stuff. We did have a fire bombing of the ROTC building, when he was first there. And he was brought out on the scene, and one of my guys gave him a radio. Now that was our secret of success, the radio. 'Cause we could communicate with one another. And every time, like, my call number was 99, I forget what his was, 98 I think, or something. And I hear, "This is 98." So finally I said, "98 where are you?" "Well, I'm under a tree." So I said, "Mr. President, give me the radio." I said, "You go the hell home." I didn't want him on the scene, but he was new on the job, and I can understand his wanting to be part of this thing. He wasn't trying to interfere, but he was. Now, my theory was that when something goes wrong, he is going to be the guy who is going to say, "You are right," or "You are wrong, Ochs," so I don't want him there. Let him make his own decision and he stayed away after that. But, I told you that he would allow full input, and we felt if my decision was right, that we'd go that way. And by the time he arrived on the scene, Kurt, my militaristic way of doing things had subsided. And I told you I had enough exposure and I thought we could do this in an educational way, meet our objective by not making mass arrests. You don't have to go hit a bunch of kids over the head, using all sorts of devious means to accomplish our mission. One of the ways was not carrying a weapon. One time … they had weapons. So I said, "Well, I don't carry a gun, fellows. Want to me get down in my underwear so I can come in and talk to you?" Well, they let me in to talk them. I had to get down to my underwear. But, you know, this sort of stuff.

KP: … Even though you eventually ran the police department, you never, yourself, carried a gun?

RO: Never carried once. I told you, before the Marine Corps, down here, I use to fight. There use to be woods in my backyard, with a golf course, I use to go out there and shoot my rifle once in a while. Never fired a weapon in all those years, never. Had no desire to. I didn't want to carry. I don't think a campus security director, what you want to call him, needs a weapon. Because my attitude, and I mean this honestly, I was as much as an educator as you were as a prof, in my own little way. You don't need a gun, and I don't need a gun for my business.

KP: … Because it's a great story to put on record, in terms of presidential styles, 'cause Gross had a great way with students. I mean, I think he, in many ways, became president for Rutgers because simply, he was such a great professor.

RO: He was philosopher, but he demanded that he be president. I mean, he demanded it. My experience with him, as an undergraduate, was just a warm, good one.

KP: And Bloustein, who was, for me as a graduate student, very remote, but I've gotten a much fuller sense, and if you could tell the story about what he would do in terms of undergraduates. How he would …

RO: Well, I told you that story.

KP: Yes, but it's not on tape. It's a great story to put on tape. I mean, when he got angry letters.

RO: All right. Every so often, Dr. Bloustein would call me up and say, "Bob, I want you to come out the house for dinner." Very informal. Just he and Ruth Ellen, his wife, and, which wasn't unusual. Not that I went every week, but it was no big deal. So he said, "All right, here." He gave me a whole flock of letters he had received, maybe for over a period of three or four weeks. And I told you, he use to pick on me, 'cause I knew where the dormitories were in the whole, Douglass, or wherever you're going, and he didn't necessarily know. We're going to visit these people. So I said, "I want to go see Susie Jones, Room 147, Campbell Hall." So we go up and see Susie Jones, I'd knock on the door, "Susie Jones home?" "Yes, I'm Susie Jones." "Hi, Dr. Bloustein's here. He wants to see you about the leaky faucet you were complaining about." Well, the girl's mouth would open a mile and a half, as would the guys, and in Ed would walk. And he would talk to them for fifteen or twenty minutes, ask them how everything is. He's got these people on their knees before him, and he's not working at this. And he comes out, and he tells me, "Mark that down, Ochs, and make sure," not that this was any big deal, but tomorrow the physical plant guy, that was fixed. … Somebody else would complain about the lack of security, no heat, I don't care what it was. And we'd make, say, between 7:30 and 11:30 maybe, seven, eight or nine of these calls.

KP: And how many years did he do that for?

RO: I did it with him at least three, four or five times. At least.

KP: Did he do it with other people?

RO: I don't know. But I'll tell you another thing he did. He use to tell me, "You know what we're going to do today? We are going to ride the campus buses." And we rode the campus buses. Get off, we walk around the building, he'd go see somebody, ride the bus to the next stop. We were always getting complaints about the campus buses. They came under my umbrella, too, in those days.

KP: Yes. I remember seeing, in fact, in 1961 you sent a memo, because apparently one of the unions was upset that they were in complaint, because the bus drivers weren't unionized.

RO: Oh, is that right? I don't remember that.

KP: … Did you also set up the bus system?

RO: Yes. That was my first job: buses and parking. That was in 1961 we started that. In '63 the police department started. We use to rent those buses. Those buses started when you were out there in Crosby Hall. We built the, what's the dining hall across the street from there? We built that dining hall.

KP: Davidson.

RO: Davidson, with the dorm behind it. There were 1,000 Rutgers college freshman in that dorm. That was the only thing out there, except for a small chemistry building. And Dr. Gross said, "I want those 1,000 freshman treated the same as all the freshman moving in on College Avenue." That's why the bus system started. Six buses at six dollars an hour. When I got done with it, six, or seven, or eight million dollars a year. I forget what it was.

KP: Now it's a big operation. … You were also public safety during the civil rights demonstration, and Black Power movement rights, which got very [heated], particularly in Newark, in Conklin Hall.

RO: Got started, two twin brothers took that over, black kids. They're both in jail for rape, but they were …

KP: Afterwards?

RO: Nothing to do with that incident.

KP: And actually, those demonstrations were significant. The person who gave your roast, in fact, wrote a book on that. What was your reason on how the university handled it, and from your perspective, your role in those demonstrations, particularly in Conklin?

RO: I think, if I remember right, the riots in Newark had taken place before that. So that didn't involve us, but that set a pace of what you have to worry about in Newark. And when the Newark thing happened, it was two brothers. Their names started with a "W," I think. Twin brothers, they were. Took that building over with a couple of other kids who were hanging out on the second and

third story building. And I'm up there, and Dr. Gross is up there. We didn't go together, and we're standing on the street corner, and it's cold. I forget what time of year it was, but I just had a raincoat on, the kind with no liner in it, just to keep myself warm. And he said, "Well, Bob, what are you going to do about this?" I said, I had them right there, "Here are the plans to the building, and if you go home, I'm going to drop some gas down the vents, take them out, and it will be all over." He says, "You are not!" So I said, "Well, he's the boss." And I was going to do it. This was one of my first experiences, and I said, "We'll get them out. Just drop a little gas down there. A little tear gas."

KP: So your thinking really changed? At first you were willing to do …

RO: I was about the military way. I wasn't going to fool around, get cold, stand out there for three or four days. [Laughter] So I waited about an hour and a half, I went up to him and said, "You know, Dr. Gross, if you are not going to let me do that, I might as well go home. I'm getting cold." And I left. My office was in Queens in those days, and he came to work at eight o'clock every morning. He walks in the building at eight o'clock. He used to stop in my office almost every morning, and say, "What went on last night?" Walks in the next morning, and I'll show it to you when you leave, and he says, "Here, you deserve this," and leaves. Gave me a sign out there, it's hanging in my garage today. It says, "Don't Let the Bastards Get You Down," in Latin. You know, you've seen those signs, but he gave it to me. And he said, "That's to show you weren't right." "Well," I said, "Okay. From here on, never again am I going to, … " and I learned from that. … We sweated it out for four, five, or six days, and before a guy named Malcolm Talbot, who is dead now. Was he in Newark when you were there? No, he was dead by then.

KP: No. No.

RO: He was an odd ball. He gave the shop away at Newark. And that's what you got to be careful of when negotiating "pieces," that you didn't give the shop away. And, I gotta be frank with you, there are certain professors who are urging to give the shop away. That was true the whole time I was there, and they suckered me as a, you know, a damn hard hat. In fact, the *Targum* articles, I sued the *Targum* once. They use to call me a "Nazi general" after some storm trooper during World War II. They use to put pictures of the storm trooper with my mug on it, you know? That went on during the '60s, maybe for, I think my face was on the *Targum* four days a week, seriously. And I sued them. Never made a nickel out of it. But there were profs who I thought were softies, and they looked at me as a meathead, who shouldn't have anything to do with the university, "The way he approaches things," you know?

KP: You also, I mean, you saw the end of loco parentis?

RO: I can remember the day it stopped. When Dick Schlader announced, "We will no longer have loco parentis."

KP: Really? He …

RO: I can remember it, in a meeting in Queens, like it was yesterday. I had to make sure I knew what the hell he was talking about at the moment, but yes, I did. [Laughter]

KP: I mean, in your day, … you were telling [me] earlier, … the whistles would blow at Douglass, and all the men would have to …

RO: When I threw that guy down the steps, after the war, the dean called me into his office. I went with my knees shaking. 'Cause I knew that guy could say to me, "Ochs, you pack your bags and be off this campus by the time the sun goes down." That was it. No due process, no nothing. He was the boss. And when we got rid of that, I think it weakened the university's whole position. But conversely, more than once, I'd have a kid, a good kid, who had some damn fool thing. Okay? Rather serious, but damn fool. I said, "Now look, Charlie, I admit that I am a bullshitter, but enjoy listening to a professional, and that's what you are. So what I'm going to do, here is your father's number, I'm just going to call up dad and ask him if we can meet him for supper tonight." "Wait! Wait!" Man, what power it had to resolve the issue. Dad didn't get involved, but I would have gotten dad involved if necessary. Because I wasn't trying to put this kid behind bars for one night, or three days. But if, you know, he was wrong, we were going to get to the bottom, as far as I was concerned. So, you know, parents still have a very important role to play. Those who want to play. I also can show you, no, I can't, I threw them all away. I must have been sued fifty times by Pete Smith, an attorney for some guy's father who owns a shirt factory. He's got an attorney, and they sent these letters threatening to sue me.

KP: I remember one guy was threatening to sue us, because I read some of the big bomb threat correspondence, and one parent … had threatened to sue the university for not taking good care of his daughter. Even though no bomb had gone off, he was ready to contact his lawyer. … You mentioned that, while we were having lunch, in some ways you were very protective of students, particularly in protest, because you had mentioned after the "teach-in," apparently, Genovese, that the American Legion had come. And you didn't want students to be attacked by outsiders, even though they may have been wrong, you thought that they …

RO: I didn't want the outsiders around, 'cause a university is a unique place. A lot of people don't agree with this, and lots of times, in my heart, I didn't either, but this academic community is a very unique place. And it's made up of scholars. Well, between you and I, you know there's as many non-scholars on the campus as there are scholars. But nevertheless, that's the pretense you get. But we could solve our own problems, and control, without having these emotional outsiders in, because Eisenhower wrote in his biography, "Never react under emotion." Truest words he ever said. So, if you can deal with your own people, you can eliminate that deal of emotion. I got to the point that I felt that the kids demonstrating, where were the unions when they use to do it, was as important a part of the whole educational process, just like going through boot camp is an important property of being a Marine. You know, it's not going to make or break anybody, it's not going to change the world tomorrow morning, so let's control this with reason, and let them go. Period. That was the attitude. I use to block off College Avenue. New Brunswick Police Department would be on my back, citizens would be on my back, "Oh, terrible, you letting these kids sit on College Avenue. Kids interfere with the free flow of traffic." What in the devil is the difference tomorrow morning if they block the street off? Now, I'm not going out there and hit them over the

head. We moved the buses around, put cops up and detour people down the side streets, and let them sit there. I use to love it in the summertime. Let them sit on College Avenue. It was asphalt. Get hotter than hell. They wouldn't sit there too long.

KP: But you also, I guess, besides the occupations of the Black Power student movements, the Cambodia invasion …

RO: Yes. You know, that's the emotional stuff that the politicians got involved, you know? That's what brought in Genovese. No, that was Nixon. That brought on a lot of stuff with Nixon, and what have you. But it all became open. Let me throw you a quickie, not to prolong this. The first black movement we had, Rutgers College might have had two dozen black kids in the whole undergraduate student body, Martin Luther King is assassinated. I happen to have known Martin Luther King with a job I had before this. He was a Baptist and I worked for a Baptist school. And he and I spent four days in a dormitory, up in Wisconsin together, sleeping next to each other. I use to go out and have my beer at night, he didn't go. I use to bring him back two packs of Lucky Strikes. I got a picture here, he and I standing together. So when he got assassinated, not that I felt great remorse, but a guy I knew was killed. So the black kids are going around, they come to Queens, take the American flag down, hang it upside down, put it back up. They go over to Douglass, do the same thing. Then they go over to Cook, do the same thing. There wasn't any Busch campus in those days with a flag on it. So when they left the Queens campus, I had my cop go by, take the flag down, put it right side up, hang it back up again. We kept doing this all day, maybe two days. In those days, Winants Hall held the accounting department, and all that sort of nonsense. They could look out on the scene and see these five/eight black kids, well-dressed, polite, take the flag down, upside down, place it back up. They're calling me. I'm in Queens. I can see the same thing out of my window, exactly the same. "What are you going to do about it, Ochsie? Geez, I'm a World War II veteran …" I can't go out there and stop them. I don't have a right to go out there and stop them. My attitude was, "What in the hell harm are they doing? We'll play this game with them for five days if we have to, because I think they got a right to display their emotion." Now, some people thought that was a sin. See, if somebody burns the American flag, I still get more upset, just the idea of they burnt it. But that's not gonna, you know, that means distress: to the American flag, upside down, is the symbolic reason. So they are in distress. What the hell is the difference? Anyway, I think that is sort of the attitude we can follow, you're going to keep the place moving. And this sounds corny, but even if an education institution is supposes to provide a variety of broad experiences that may never again happen in one's life, then let's let them happen on that campus.

KP: It's interesting, because … it didn't work as well on other campuses, you know?

RO: Well, Wisconsin brought out the National Guard.

KP: Right. And other campuses.

RO: Berkeley listened to Salvo. … My counterpart in Berkeley had a heart attack because of Salvo. I told the world, "Nobody is going to give me a heart attack. I'll give you one, but no one is going to give me a heart attack in this job." Period. It's all how you react. You know, Wisconsin

started the deal. They had been on the National Guard. I went out there. They got these National Guard guys standing there, on the wall, with rifles. This was right after Kent State. Okay? You know what happened to Kent. They got bayonets on their weapons, and they're standing there like this, on a wall. All the kids are walking in the path of the rifles, like this. I said to my buddy, who was a Maine State trooper, "How dumb can you be?" "What do you mean?" "If some guy doesn't like it, he kicks one of those guys in the back, they go in the crowd bayonet first, you're going to have somebody hurt. Why display bayonets? Not necessary. The damn rifle's not even necessary, in my judgement. But why do this?"

KP: 'Cause it sounds like you did not, except I mean, you told a great story about having the police cruisers just, sort of, circle around. You really didn't want outside police forces, or outside …

RO: I had my campus twice, stacked up, hidden in the building out of a physical plan point. One was when Louis Farrakhan was there.

KP: You were prepared with …

RO: The Jewish Defense League. Who is that guy who runs that? He's still is a hot shot. He's still a rabble-rouser in New York City.

KP: Was it Kahn then?

RO: Little, short stocky guy. He came down to see me, to tell me what they were going to do, the Jewish Defense League. I told them, "No, you're not." So I had about 300 cops stacked up, never used them, outside.

KP: I assume that people didn't even know that they were …

RO: No. The only people that knew it [were] the treasurer and the president, 'cause I had to bill them for the services. [Laughter] I didn't want to take any chances. This guy came down and, seriously, really giving a threat to what he was going to do on that campus. He was violent. And one other time the kids at Livingston College had taken over the place where they were going to, I thought maybe, either try to burn it down, which they had threatened to do, or physically hurt somebody. And I had another at that time, about 200 of them stacked up.

KP: But again …

RO: Never came out. Never came out. No. Lots of times I would have them. You know where the police headquarters is there?

KP: Yes.

RO: I would have them in my basement there, every cop I owned in that basement, but I never had to use them. … Were you there when I had horses?

KP: Oh, they still have horses.

RO: I got four horses. I got them from the New York Police Department. And they were my main line of defense.

KP: It's interesting, … I, at one point, had thought the idea of cops on horses was sort of quaint, but then someone had told me, who had been in a protest in the early '60s, and was a student when he was protesting, he said, "Horses in crowd control, you can't beat that."

RO: Do you know how you sell a horse?

KP: What?

RO: Do you know how to sell a horse? You go up to a student and say, "Did you ever see anybody pat a police car?" [Laughter] The horses I had weren't so smart, but just the very fact that they were there. But we had the Grateful Dead one time out there. And the Grateful Dead, I didn't realize this, must have 300 people follow them, and they aren't kids. These are guys in their thirties, or maybe older. And they're bound and determined to get in that concert hall, and it's sold out. I had those horses … parade back and forth. "You guys stay on that curb, the horses stay on this curb. You have a nice night." They never moved. You know, the horses. He didn't know what the hell to do. What's the cop going to do? I told him to put the horse right in the middle of the crowd and hope they step on their feet, 'cause they were able to do it. You know, if this does the job, there's nothing magic about it. There's no special training. All you had to train the horses for was the noise for football games, so they didn't jump off hell's half-acre when the band played. [Laughter]

KP: And I guess …

RO: That's enough, huh?

---------- END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO ----------

RO: Ken Wheeler, exactly right. Ken Wheeler is the guy. And what was found, around in those days, is one of your historians, John Salatarie. Do you know John?

KP: No. No.

RO: He was a history prof. He's not in the classroom anymore.

KP: I guess one of the things, Jim Reed, who is now Vice Chair, I was chatting with him last week, and he remembers you very fondly, and you got very concerned about the fraternities. They changed quite a bit now from what your era of the '30s and '40s were. Where there might have been some drinking, but that was pretty contained, and otherwise fraternities really ran the campus.

RO: Well, see, we had, in one house, we had a kid killed in initiation, by pouring so much alcohol down his throat. We had constant rapes, which, see, rape was something I was very, very cautious

about. Because if some girl accuses you of rape, and you are found guilty, you're dead. I would try to make sure it was a bona fide rape. I can tell you lots of stories about cases on that. But they came about because, yes, some freshman girl thinks, It's the thing, boy, getting invited to a fraternity house. Get a couple of beers in her, and the next thing you know the guy puts her in the sack, and you know what's gonna happen. And it's bad. But the thing that bothered me the most is that, the Dean of Students, he was a weak guy. Staten. Staten Worth.

KP: Dean Worth.

RO: A very, very weak sister. Hated my guts, that guy. He would not enforce these rules and regulations. So he would say, "Okay, the Zeta house cannot have anymore social events." So I'm riding around the campus on a Saturday night, which was habit of mine, and behind the closed doors, they're having a social event. So, I go get Worth. Well, the point is, I got a copy of it. If that house did not abide by the dean's ruling, then they gotta go. That was just my attitude, because there are rules and regulations. And the dean is going to say, "You can't have any social events," then that house has to say, "No social events." If they decide to have them, they go. Now, we closed the DU house, that one. The one up there, I think there was a Jewish community up there.

KP: It has been torn down.

RO: That house where the kid got killed, initiation, got killed. The one over on Union Street, they wouldn't take care of the fire regulations. Anyway, about four of them we closed down.

KP: … I was struck when I first came to campus, I think [the] .. fraternity movement had hit a low point, because I would read, periodically, that they would be shut down by the town, a lot of them, for health and safety violations. … If they needed to be shut down, they were.

RO: You know, on Union Street, there were only about three houses on Union Street were designed to be fraternities. The rest of them are private residence. When I was a kid going to Rutgers, before the war, that was a prestigious street to live on over there.

KP: No, the fraternity movement, I mean, I've gotten a real appreciation of the '30s and '40s. Those were really where the "men about campus" lived, not always, but eighty percent of the "men about campus" lived in fraternities.

RO: Right. Right.

KP: I guess I need to ask about drug use, because you saw the whole change in attitude.

RO: Well, we started out by walking through the halls of dormitories, trying to sniff who was smoking marijuana, and going in after it. Okay? Then the use of marijuana got so prevalent, that I use to say, "We're just wasting our time." In the meantime, other parts of universities started all sorts of drug education, you know, for the kids. But when hard drug use started, or they use our facilities to buy or sell, not always college kids either. Like, the first big drug arrest I ever made was over on the Cook campus, on the other side of the highway. Route 1 was the drop off point. It

had nothing to do with Rutgers, but there was a massive drug ring. Livingston campus became an area used for drug trade. So we said, "Well, we are not going to tolerate it." So our attitude was that if we could find anybody, either buying or selling, we'd arrest them. And I think we kept the drug trade on the campus reasonably under control. Marijuana became so prevalent though, I even went to the state police about that. I said, "What do you guys do about it?" … It's at the Garden State Arts Center, down the Parkway, bringing all these. "What do you do? I know you've got troopers working down there." He said, "Bob, we don't do anything." I'd been in our Rack, up there for a concert, when you couldn't hardly see the stage. For a guy, I told you I use to smoke fifteen cigars a day, I used to get high if I stay in that building too damn long. Did I know it was there? Yes! Everybody and their first cousin knew it was there. How are you going to stop it?

KP: I'd be curious, because you had told me a great story over lunch about Vince Kramer, of the ROTC building, wanted to sort of single-handedly, you know …

RO: Show those kids who's the boss, yes.

KP: But you were very much the center of things, … particularly during demonstrations. Yet, you are part of this group of alumni, the GI Bill class. What kind of reaction did you get from alumni? I mean, this was very much on campus, too.

RO: There were a few guys like Vince who thought I was a very, very weak sister, you know, tolerating this sort of stuff. On the other hand, I didn't. I'll tell you, it's a hell of a thing to say, I had complete confidence in myself. Do you know, in a way, it goes back to being a twenty-year-old platoon sergeant in the Marine Corps? I had confidence in what I was going to do. I really looked at what I was trying to do, and said, "Hey, I think I understand this is an educational institution." I told you, I loved Rutgers. It cost me one marriage. I loved Rutgers. It was the most important thing in my life, anything that happened there. And if I approached this like it's mine, Rutgers, I own Rutgers, then we're going to make out all right. What little criticism I got, even from Kramer. I didn't get that much criticism.

KP: Yes. I'd just be curious, 'cause the most …

RO: Oh, I go out with some of my old buddies and they tell me what weak-kneed old donkey I was, and that sort of stuff. I never got any real criticism.

KP: You mentioned, and I need to …

RO: I got more criticism for being tough, especially on certain faculty guys. One of them is in your department yet today, and I'm not going to tell you which one.

KP: Was it Norman?

RO: I'm not going to tell you. [Laughter] I got abuse. I tell you the worst one is the little guy who died. I don't know if you ever knew him. A little fat guy who died.

KP: Yes. I don't think I knew him.

RO: He gave me more trouble than anybody else, poor guy.

KP: Oh, Warren Susman.

RO: Warren Susman, yes. The poor guy, but … he and I didn't see eye to eye. He hated me. I told you Berkowitz didn't like me. They are all out, I'm sure. … I've seen the comments almost every day, intentionally, and I tried to sit with them faculty guys. I was very interested in what their reaction was, not to me, but what was going on. See, the other thing was, that Doc Bloustein told me part of my job is to be his liaison with every dean in the student's office. So … every week I met with every Dean of Students, in the staff. And I could get the feedback of how they were thinking. They were all assuming what the kids were thinking about, and that was important. Bloustein was tolerant of a lot things, too.

KP: No, that's also the sense I've gotten.

RO: Hang up the sign and say, "Bloustein is the east end of a horse going west," at graduation. "Do you want it down, Ed?" "No, leave it up." "Okay." He would just accept that. It didn't make any difference, 'cause a sign like that, "Look at that sign. Terrible." Go to an ECU football game. What kind of signs do they hang up there, right? I mean, the point is, it doesn't make any difference after the thing is all over. Twenty minutes after the final whistle blows, what's the difference?

KP: You mentioned that, and I think if you want to put it on the record, … in a sense, you became a cop, and that's tough on marriages. And it sounds like your first marriage …

RO: I don't want to blame it. I got divorced. My wife left me after some twenty-five or thirty years of married life, and Rutgers wasn't all to blame. Most likely, most of it's my fault, but my point is that my life revolved around Rutgers. And for example, if we went out, my first wife and I, on Saturday night, let's say somebody's house for dinner, and came home at 11:00/11:30, I would change my clothes, and say, "I'll see you," and be gone for the campus. Because I was on that campus every Saturday, or Sunday, of almost every week that I worked there. Sometimes on Sunday it was just in the morning to see reports. And Alice and I went up there the first year I was retired. The first thing I did, she wasn't my wife in these days, "Well, let's take a ride around the campus and see how things are." And I was over in back of the Douglas College Student Center, and it might have been eleven o'clock at night, and it was in the summer, there were no cars there. I got out of my car, and looked around, and I said out loud, "You know, this isn't mine anymore." And that was the thing that finally changed me. I told you, I really thought that I owned that place and it was my personal responsibility that not a thing was going to happen to anybody when I was in charge. I know it sounds silly, but it's what motivated me. Most likely wrong, but that's the way it was.

KP: What's retirement been like? I mean, you had done this a long time, and you remember the stadium being poured as concrete, the first stadium. I mean, what was it like to leave after so many years?

RO: Well, I retired at the end of December, 1988, with great emotion on my part. I was sixty-five years old. Ed had offered me a reason to stay, and I said to myself, "I'm sixty-five, and I don't know how many years the Lord gives you, but I better get the hell out while I'm sixty-five and I still can move." We had built this house in the interim period, by remote control. I came down here. The first year was absolute misery. Nobody called me up and asked me anything. I couldn't do anything. I had a little boat, which I lost in the hurricane. I got tired of going fishing. I got tired of doing everything. So finally I sat down, I said, "Okay, Ochs, about time for you to call it 'an adjustment period.'" So I've been very, very active in affairs with kids, handicapped kids, mentally thing. I took a course down at the local campus down here. It's called an "Adult Leadership Course." A bunch of old guys take it, and women. And we've got a little alumni association, and we play a part now in some of the things. We help the schools in volunteer work, so I do that. I love working with these kids. 1997 they give me the same song and dance those kids gave me in 1967 up at Rutgers. It is no different. I remember a bunch of them the other day, and I smiled to myself, I started off saying, "Look, we're here to discuss about this little problem that you think that we haven't been handling this way you guys think we should. So I want you to know, before you open your first word, that I know I'm the east end of a horse going west, so start there." And I used to do that at Rutgers all the time, and that put the kids at ease. And the other thing, I give a lecture once a year to a bunch of kids that are sociology students. The prof's a lady. And this is a little bit dramatic, but she says, "You know, these young girls," there are few boys, but most of them are girls, most of them are pre-nursing students, "think that after sixty-five you die." I'm seventy-four now. So I go down there, put on my shirt and tie, go down there. I got through this routine, ask if there was any questions, have a little fun. Before it is all finished, I said, "Now, before I close," I said, "not a single one of you have asked me the most important question in life. You know what that is?" Nobody's going to ask me. I said, "Okay, I'm seventy-three years old. Is there still sex in my life?" Well, goddamn it, they just, like this. They don't discuss this with me, but the point is, I have fun doing this, just great fun. The other things I'm mixed up with are, just do-good type things. I got a reason to be out of this house, part of the day, at least three days a week, because too much togetherness will kill you. And, you know, Alice does her little thing, too. So it's been great.

KP: But it seems like you've made an adjustment to retirement.

RO: Yes, but it took a year. I felt sorry for myself the first year.

KP: It almost sounds like you started to wonder, "Maybe, I shouldn't have gone … "

RO: I knew I had to get out.

KP: You knew.

RO: I had to get out of that job. That's why I wasn't marching the same drumbeat the rest of the university was.

KP: I guess, to close, … what would have changed? I mean, Rutgers did change. I can even tell that Rutgers was changing, in retrospect, the late '80s and early '90s.

RO: Well, as far as I was concerned?

KP: Yes.

RO: … The two things that I felt very strong about, one, that the discipline, as I thought right or wrong, was being dissipated. And the second thing I saw, was like I think you two fellows represent, a whole new breed of cat coming into the academic profession, where I had been born and raised with that old prof, before World War II, with those fellows that would be retiring. So all of a sudden, you guys were younger than I am, and you weren't thinking necessarily that way. You were thinking more like my kids think. And I never said, "You were wrong," but I said, "No, this is why I'm not on the same wavelength." And I wasn't astute enough to know how to adjust myself, as dramatically as maybe I should have. That's why I said, "At age sixty-five," I feel that way today about anybody who is sixty-five, with rare exception, "get out of that business." You know, there are too many other good people coming up. That's why the military throws them out at age fifty, you know? Get rid of them. You got all these other guys coming up. They want their shot at being the command. But I sit back and look at Rutgers with great interest. I have some pipelines up there, and this can go on the record, I'm extremely disappointed in the leadership at the university right at this minute.

KP: Right now.

RO: And that really reflects the athletic program, because when I worked there, I'll close with this. When I worked there, I'd tell anybody, "I'm not telling you that I know anything about the academic side of this program, I don't. I'm not questioning that. I'm only questioning that aspect of the social, and the Dean of Students, what we do with these kids." I probably say, "That guy is a lousy prof." I don't know he is a lousy prof or not. Seriously, it was none of my business and I never even got involved in that. Never. That's enough, Kurt.

KP: Well, thank you very much. This concludes an interview with Robert F. Ochs on November 24, 1997 with Kurt Piehler in Wilmington, North Carolina

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