

RUTGERS-THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK
AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. IRWIN J. POLK
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

KURT PIEHLER
AND
ANDREA MANOIU

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
MARCH 24, 1995

TRANSCRIPT BY
ANDREA MANOIU

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Dr. Irwin J. Polk on March 24, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Andrea Manoiu: Andrea Manoiu.

KP: I guess I'd like to begin by asking a few questions about your parents, and starting with your father. Your father came from Hungary. How old was he when he came from Hungary?

Irwin Polk: He was about fourteen. I will be a little vague about these details, because I don't have them. I am, in fact, trying to write a biography for my grandchildren. I started with that, and I had a lot of difficulty establishing the dates. I don't know very much about my father's background.

KP: Did he come over with his family, or did he come over alone?

IP: He came over with an older brother and they went into business together.

KP: In Perth Amboy, initially?

IP: In Perth Amboy, initially. And then they imported the rest of the family. There were six children, three men and three women, and finally they all came to this country. The parents decided to remain in Hungary, and ultimately immigrated to Israel.

KP: When did your grandparents immigrate to Israel?

IP: I haven't the foggiest. I never met them, I never heard very much about any of this from my father. I'm much better with my mother's side of the family.

KP: Your father didn't like to talk about the past very much?

IP: He didn't like talking about anything very much. And I don't think it had much to do with the past. He had all kinds of things that I kind of figured out for myself that he never talked about. One of the disservices he did me is he didn't teach me a foreign language. I would have loved to have learned some, but he was going to be a full fledged American, so we spoke English at home. As a result of this, I never learned another language. I fixed it so my kids could, however.

KP: So, he was very much a hundred percent American?

IP: Absolutely.

KP: What other things would he do to make it clear that he was an American? Is there anything, when you look back on it?

IP: He was very interested in politics. And he had some political appointments for himself and for other members of the family. I never could understand how he managed that, but apparently he had a lot of influence at local grass roots level in the Republican party, in an era when there weren't any Republicans.

KP: When you say he had political appointments, what kind of offices or appointments did he have?

IP: Well, he had a job with the Motor Vehicle Department. In those days you got your licenses from individual distributors and he was one of those for practically his whole lifetime. He also saw to it that his nephew became Postmaster in Perth Amboy. Little things like that. Those were two notable ones, but there were others.

KP: He was also a Republican in a very Democratic town. Particularly in the 1930's with Roosevelt. How did that go?

IP: I never understood it. He just was the bow-work of the Republican Party in that area and got lots of perks as a result of it, and I never understood why.

KP: So it's still a mystery?

IP: It still is. He didn't talk to me about those things. I know he did them, and I know my cousin was the Postmaster for a long time, and there were some other things. I had another cousin who wanted into the State Troopers, and he got there. Just lots of interesting things and I never understood why, and to this day I don't understand why.

KP: Your father also was a salesman.

IP: Yeah, he sold automobiles in a business that was owned by his brother.

KP: His older brother?

IP: His older brother, right, that came over with him. They originally came to this country when there weren't so many automobiles, and the business they started was a stable. Of course, apparently in Europe they had worked with horses and so

they had a business called the Central Stable, and it converted nicely to automobiles by the time I came on the scene.

KP: What year did they make the conversion from horses to automobiles?

IP: It had to be probably ten years before I was born. That would be about 1915.

KP: When they made that transition?

IP: Someplace in there. My father went into the service and they still had cavalry, and he was in charge of some horses, and his brother stayed with the business.

KP: Your father was in the service in World War I?

IP: Yes, he was.

KP: Did he see overseas service?

IP: He did. And, in fact, I have a volume that's the history of a New Jersey infantry division. If you'd be interested in it, you could have it. I don't know what else to do with it. But it is a piece of World War I history.

KP: It sounds like your father was very proud of his World War I service?

IP: I think he was, yeah.

KP: Did he see combat?

IP: He did, but not close up. I would imagine a distance of several miles. But he did get shot at, and he was under cannon fire and things like that.

KP: Did he ever talk about the war?

IP: Very little, even when I asked. He didn't talk about much. It's strange, but I think there were a lot of fathers like that in those days.

KP: And you didn't think it was unusual at the time, growing up?

IP: That was not an era when you delved into the relationships within families. I don't know how my family compared to the ones down the block. I have no idea.

KP: Was your father in the American Legion?

IP: Yes, he was. And after World War II he tried to get me to join the American Legion, and I went to two meetings and it wasn't my thing. So I didn't continue.

KP: Did your father ever try to get you involved in politics?

IP: Not at all.

KP: He didn't want you to knock on doors or anything?

IP: Not at all. He didn't want me to have anything to do with that. He thought I should be a professional, and dutifully, I was.

KP: So there was an expectation that you would go to college?

IP: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

KP: And did he want you to become a physician, or what mattered was being a professional?

IP: What mattered, I think, was being a professional, and in those days the good ticket in professionals was medicine. So, you went for the big ticket.

KP: You mentioned that you were stronger on your mother's side of the family.

IP: We were much closer to my mother's side of the family than to my father's, which I think is not unusual, and wasn't unusual then.

KP: And your mother was born in Hoboken.

IP: Yeah.

KP: How did her family come to Hoboken?

IP: Her parents all, let's see. Her parents came from Europe, [from] Poland and Russia. My grandfather [came] from Russia, my grandmother [came] from Poland and they met in this country and had four children. Three boys and a girl. And she, well, that's where they got together, and she was very close to her family, so I spent a lot of time with her extended family. Her extended family had a family organization to which we contributed, and which we attended meetings of about twice a year. And, in fact,

on Pearl Harbor day, 1941, on a Sunday, I was at a meeting of my mother's extended family organization.

KP: How big was the extended family organization?

IP: It was not unusual to have fifty or sixty people at a meeting.

KP: And money was pooled to lend to members and help members in times of trouble?

IP: Just exactly right. Mostly my father's money, as far as I could tell.

KP: Does your extended family, do they still live in Hoboken, or did they move?

IP: My goodness, no. My grandmother and grandfather were out of Hoboken when I was very small. I remember a few visits to Hoboken, but mostly to Jersey City after that. My mother lived in Perth Amboy. Her brothers lived in Jersey City or the immediate area.

KP: Your mother was a housewife. Did she ever work outside of the house?

IP: When she was a girl, she worked in her father's dry goods store, around the corner from Mrs. Sinatra and Frank. I'm serious. She knew Dolly Sinatra. She never said that she knew Frank, but she knew Dolly.

KP: Did she ever talk about them after Frank Sinatra became so popular?

IP: She didn't, because there was some faint odor of impropriety in the Sinatra family. I think Mrs. Sinatra may have been doing abortions, or something like that. I really don't know, but there was something like that going on, and my mother just suddenly didn't talk to her.

KP: So she never talked about the Sinatra family and what she knew about them?

IP: No.

KP: Which is unfortunate, for historians at least.

IP: A lot of unfortunate things. I generated my own stories. I didn't need Frank.

KP: What neighborhood did you grow up in Perth Amboy?

IP: Well, there aren't that many neighborhoods. There was an area down by the water in the midtown area, which had shopping, and then there were outlying areas, mostly up on the hills. The city, the better homes were down by the water. The not so auspicious homes were further up the line, which was just wrong. The good, the desirable scenery and coolness and everything else was way up, away from the water. And down along the water line, all the industries came in with access to shipping and whatever you can move on the Raritan River. So that was a funny town. Anyplace else, that would not have been. That would have been, you know, down at the docks, but in that town that was the desirable area.

KP: From people I've interviewed from Perth Amboy at the time, it was a very diverse place.

IP: Oh, yeah.

KP: How did you fit into that diversity?

IP: Well, you notice the diversity, but you just went along with the flow. I didn't have any particular problem with the town or any of its inhabitants or anything about it.

KP: In other words, you never were really picked on at school?

IP: Oh, no.

KP: Or had any type or anti-Semitism?

IP: When you say never, never is very all-inclusive. I would say minimally. I might have remembered a couple of fights in the street or something, but not a big deal.

KP: What did you think of your high school?

IP: I thought it was an excellent high school. The courses that I took there got me out of high school and with a good, would have gotten me with a good place in the University, if they were doing things like that in those days, but they weren't. But I did place out of a couple of math courses that I didn't have to take. Overall, it was a good school. I had no problem with that.

KP: And your teachers had high expectations for you?

IP: For me and everybody else.

KP: Really. They expected large numbers to go to college?

IP: They did, and from the area where I lived, many of the kids did go to college. From up on the hill, not so many.

AM: I wanted to ask you a little bit, jumping back and forth a little bit, about the Depression and how that affected your family.

IP: Well, we always lived pretty well, considering there was the Depression. I think my father was bringing home the magnificent sum of forty dollars a week, but it was forty dollars more than a lot of people, and this was in an era when a newspaper was a penny or two cents. And so we were comfortable through all of that. My father managed to save some money and buy some real estate, which he thought was the thing to do, and the bottom fell out of the market. The bottom fell out on his real estate, so he was saddled with those tax burdens, in addition to our own home, which he was paying down little by little. The mortgage rates in those days were one and a half to two percent. And you could afford to, you know, take on a good size mortgage, which might have been two or three thousand dollars in those days. So I did not feel the impact of any depression at all. I knew, you know, we knew it was there and everybody talked about money all the time, but it didn't seem to be an immediate problem. I did join some of the kids who went over to the railroad tracks and threw stones at the passing trains, in the hope that they'd throw pieces of coal back. And this is no joke. I went as a game, but some people collected coal from the railroads from along the tracks just by that.

KP: Throwing stones against the railroad.

IP: Throwing stones at the railroad people, they had coal burning engines, and there was a tender that had all this coal that people were shoveling. When the kids hit them with enough stones, they'd pick up chunks of coal and throw them and there was enough to heat a house for a day or two. It was a popular sport. I joined in that, not because I had to, but because it was what everybody was doing.

KP: Did your father ever comment on Roosevelt at all?

IP: He never talked to me about politics until I got out of the service.

KP: Really, so he never made comments?

IP: I never knew what he was doing. I never heard a thing about this, but one of his friends from South Amboy became the governor of the state.

KP: Harold Hoffman?

IP: Yeah. And Harold Hoffman, it was a really interesting thing, met with a fellow who was going to go on later to be the Attorney General of the state on my porch, before he was appointed Attorney General. That was a gentleman named Mr. David Wilentz. He was a Democrat who was appointed by this Republican governor, and it was something I just didn't understand then and still don't, that took place on my front porch.

KP: The meeting between Wilentz and Hoffman. And what year was that?

IP: Oh, it must have been in the early thirties. I'm not sure.

KP: So you actually met Governor Hoffman?

IP: Oh, lots of times, not just once. Many, many times. He came into the place where my father worked, we went to his house in South Amboy sometimes, I met some of his children, who were all much older than I.

KP: What did you think of him as a person, as a governor? Did you have any sense of ...

IP: I didn't think of older people in any regard. He was a governor, so I was supposed to be in awe, and I assume I was in awe. I wouldn't be now because I know more about things like that, but in those days, you looked up to the leadership, and I looked up to the leadership.

KP: How observant was your family religiously? Did they go to synagogue?

IP: They did, pretty regularly. I would say very observant, and probably Orthodox.

KP: So your father kept a kosher household?

IP: My mother did, yeah. I persisted with that as long as I had to, and then it faded into my background. All that stuff just never seemed too sensible to me, for any religion, and I did not. I was offered all the benefits of the education, but it didn't take.

KP: So you also went to Hebrew school?

IP: Oh, sure. From the time I was about five or six until I was about thirteen years and one day old.

KP: And then you stopped?

IP: Then I stopped. It was not for me. There were a lot of things that weren't for me. I liked music, but I couldn't learn to play an instrument. I tried a few, but I just couldn't do it. So some things were for me and some things were not. I think religion probably was not.

KP: Why did you come to Rutgers?

IP: By default. I applied to Rutgers because it was close. I applied to Princeton, Pennsylvania, and all the Ivy League schools, well, several of the Ivy League schools. Not having anybody in the immediate family who went to college, I didn't really know what I was doing. I applied to Rutgers because there was a war on, and I figured I was pretty soon going to be taken away. I might just as well go someplace close to home. So I did. I did get accepted to some of the other places, notably Columbia and Princeton, and Pennsylvania. No, I didn't. Columbia and Pennsylvania, but not Princeton. Princeton probably would have been my choice, just for propinquity or something, but I got here.

KP: And you arrived here. I guess, backing up, if you could recount what your thoughts were at Pearl Harbor day, because you mentioned you were at a family gathering, the meeting of the family association.

IP: Yeah. Well, I thought it was atrocious. It became very certain that I was going into the service. When there was a war in Europe, that was kind of distant, and it was one front, and as soon as the Japanese got in, it became apparent that there was going to be a real big fight, and I was going to get a chance.

KP: How did your parents view what was going on in Europe in the 1930's? Did they talk about it? It sounds like your father didn't talk about very much.

IP: He didn't talk about much, and my mother didn't talk about anything my father didn't talk about, except things having to do with the children in the house. But he was interested in what was going on, and I think he was very unhappy about it. And he was unhappy about some of the anti-Semitism he heard on the

radio, particularly from Father Coughlin! Big figure in the forties, big following, and avowedly anti-Semitic. And he was upset about that. He was really upset about that one. But he listened.

KP: To know what was being said?

IP: Yeah, to know what was being said.

KP: How did your father feel about the Zionist movement in the thirties?

IP: He contributed, but he wasn't particularly active.

KP: But he was supportive of that?

IP: Oh, yeah. He sent his check regularly, or whatever you were supposed to do, he did. It wasn't a big thing.

KP: How did he come down on, or did you have any sense, in terms of intervention in 1940, '41? Did he, in terms of peace time draft, and other issues, Lend-Lease, was he in favor of any of those?

IP: He never talked about it. He just never talked about it.

KP: What were your own thoughts at the time, before Pearl Harbor?

IP: Yeah, I thought we should have been in the war, and I was willing to volunteer and go if circumstances looked like that, and eventually I did. I didn't know a heck of a lot about what was going on in the world, not nearly as much as you do now, but it wasn't immediately available. You wanted the information, you had to dig for it. It wasn't just a question of turning on the tube, and having it thrust at you 24 hours a day. You had to make the effort, and I was not one of the people who made a big effort. Some of my friends did, and I used to feel somewhat left out of those conversations, but I didn't have time for all that.

KP: You were busy with your school work?

IP: Yeah. They were busy with school work, too, but some of them had parents at home who were more interested in current affairs and their interests followed. The fellow I remember most, was last heard of as a professor of English Literature at the University of Michigan.

KP: Was he one of your friends growing up?

IP: He was one of my friends who was really up on the day to day political situation.

KP: You were interested in sciences at an early age, it sounds like.

IP: Yeah, I think so. It's what was growing and expanding at the time, and I am still interested in things that are developing around me.

KP: When did you think that you would want to become a physician? Was it in high school, or was it even earlier?

IP: I don't remember. I really don't remember. I think it was probably after I got out of the service that I focused on that. I didn't really have time. I got out of high school, and virtually went into the army six weeks later. And it was something like six weeks. We graduated from high school June fourth or fifth, and August fourth I was in.

KP: So, you came to Rutgers in the summer?

IP: Right.

KP: The summer of 1943?

IP: '43, yeah.

KP: What was it like to come to Rutgers?

IP: For six weeks?

KP: For six weeks. You mentioned that the faculty teaching was a little messed up, earlier, before we started the interview.

IP: It was very messed up. ... A lot of the faculty got into the service one way or another and the ones who were left were spread pretty thin. And they were all, obviously older than draftable age and they just had people filling in wherever they could to get the work done. And I don't think I missed anything by leaving here after six weeks. This part of the campus is just what there was then. There wasn't anymore. There was nothing over on the Heights, and Douglass was independent, and the place was just what you see when you walk out the door here and turn right and go up to Old Queens. But there were some interesting things. We had to attend chapel on a compulsory basis. That seemed like a big waste of time from my particular viewpoint, but we had to do it, at least once or twice a week, and sign in.

KP: What did you think of chapel? Coming from an Orthodox background, what did you think of having to go to chapel?

IP: It wasn't denominational. The then chaplain was Christian of some kind, but it was not denominational. I had no problem with that.

KP: No, you didn't have, but you thought it was a waste of time?

IP: Yeah. And of course, dinner was in Winnants Hall, the cafeteria was in there. There was no, whatever you've got down here now.

KP: Brower Commons.

IP: Yeah, the Commons. That was not there. Most of this stuff was not there. And I had a six week flavor.

KP: Did you finish a semester?

IP: No. Six weeks.

KP: Six weeks.

IP: I started here in the beginning of July, and I know the fourth of August of '43 I was in the service.

KP: You enlisted in Newark.

IP: Yeah.

KP: You were only seventeen and a half when you ...

IP: That's right.

KP: So you could have waited a while before your number was [called]?

IP: I could have waited at least to 18, but I got fed up here. I really wasn't learning anything, and I didn't want to waste the time and the money, so, off I went. I think if things had been different here, I might have stayed longer and got drafted. But I really wasn't learning much in college, though, that first six weeks.

KP: Why the army? Had you thought of the navy or the Army Air Corps?

IP: There wasn't much Army Air Corps. It was Army Air Corps. You went in the Army and then they selected you out for the Air Corps.

KP: And the navy?

IP: It didn't interest me. I don't know why, it just didn't.

KP: Going into the army, what did you hope for when you enlisted?

IP: Well, I hoped for an opportunity to go to officer school, and I didn't get it until after the war. Then I got the opportunity. But, I think the main reason that I went to the service from here was that I was very impatient with what was going on in the war and very impatient with what I was learning at school.

KP: You were eager to get in.

IP: Excuse me?

KP: You were eager to get into the war.

IP: Well, I was eager to get out of here. This was a sure way. I mean, it was really just a waste of time. I had a chemistry course which was no different from my high school chemistry, and a physics course which was a little different, but it was taught by the professor of botany, and some other courses which I couldn't relate to. They went whipping by and I wasn't learning much, probably in part because of good preparation. You know, I came from a good school.

KP: You reported at Newark. After reporting, where were you sent to after enlisting?

IP: Reception at Fort Dix.

KP: And how long did you stay at Fort Dix? How many days, or weeks?

IP: I really don't [know]. Maybe a week.

KP: At that point, did you try to get into officer's training, officer candidate school?

IP: Yeah, I think I did. They said, if you want to apply, apply, so I applied and nothing happened.

KP: Where did the Army then send you, after processing you at Fort Dix?

IP: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, I think was the next stop. No, Georgia. Someplace, Fort Benning, Georgia.

KP: For infantry school?

IP: For TIS, The Infantry School. And I was there for infantry training.

KP: So you went to the whole sixteen weeks of infantry training?

IP: Absolutely.

KP: What was that like, in general?

IP: It was physically demanding. I was not in the best physical shape of any seventeen year old around, and I shaped up considerably. Other than that it wasn't particularly onerous. I was still mostly with the people from the East that I was used to.

KP: So, you didn't have a unit of a lot of southerners or westerners?

IP: No, not at that stage. A bunch of people came down from Fort Dix, and filled up the infantry school, and that's what I went through with.

KP: What was your instructor, your drill sergeant like?

IP: I've haven't got the vaguest idea.

KP: He obviously didn't leave a deep mental [mark].

IP: No.

KP: Had you traveled much before the war?

IP: Absolutely none. Travel was not what was done in those days. It was expensive, and inconvenient, and people didn't travel much unless they had lots and lots and lots of money. I didn't qualify.

KP: So, going to Fort Benning, this was one of your first long distance trips?

IP: Absolutely.

KP: And you took a troop train down?

IP: Yeah, we took the troop train down.

KP: What did you think of the South? You hadn't been to the South before the war.

IP: I hadn't. It was different than the North. They had totally independent facilities for non-white persons, which I had heard about, and I sought. And I didn't get a lot of time outside of the camp. You were there, except every other weekend you could get a weekend pass, and so I went to the Chattahoochee River, which was right nearby, and which I remember from somebody's poems. Maybe Sidney Lanier's "song of the Chattahoochee," does that sound, that's not familiar to you?

KP: Yeah, but that doesn't mean ...

IP: It doesn't mean much.

KP: Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of things I don't know.

IP: Well, anyway, I got to the Chattahoochee, and I got to a town in Alabama across from the camp. Alabama was a little more liberal than Georgia, and they had hot and cold running water and things like that in this camp over in Alabama, this site over in Alabama. And that was the extent of my travels in Georgia. Having had completed infantry training, in prime shape, I got shipped to Fort Leonard Wood. No, I got shipped to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and put in the paratroops.

KP: Had you volunteered for paratrooper?

IP: Yeah, I volunteered for it because I liked the boots. So I volunteered. Literally, it had a little more clout, a little more panache than the infantry. After I rolled off trucks a couple of times, the training included rolling off the back of a truck moving about fifteen to twenty miles an hour in a tucked position, so that you would land on your shoulders, keep your head tucked in and roll over once and get up and run. A few episodes like that and one drop in a parachute, on the tower, and I decided I had better volunteer out of that.

KP: And you could get out?

IP: You could, oh, it was a volunteer thing. You could get out and I got out. I was 102nd Airborne, which was very famous for

the Battle of Bastogne, where they rescued the troops. I got out of that and got into, that was the 101st, I guess I got into the 100th, which was also at Fort Bragg. That was a strange infantry division.

KP: Before leaving the 101st, people have often said that training was often tougher than the combat.

IP: The training got me out of there, I just didn't want to do that.

KP: How many people do you remember didn't make it? Were you an exception?

IP: I left early. Oh, I left real early. I realized after a week or two that I didn't want that.

KP: Oh, so you didn't stay for several weeks?

IP: No, not at all. Off the truck once or twice and down the tower and I was out of there.

KP: You didn't even have to wait to get to the airplane?

IP: No.

KP: So, you went to the 100th, which you said had a very unfortunate history.

IP: Yeah, it was demolished. They had a replacement rate of 120 percent, or some other thing, because they were the point that was bulged at in the Battle of the Bulge. And a lot of my friends, that I had been in training with, were in the 100th, didn't go to the 101st, and went directly to the 100th, and I met them again. They were all trained and ready to ship out, and I was a few weeks behind them, so I went with the next contingent. And the next contingent went to the field artillery. That was much better. Field artillery required a little math, and people who could add and subtract, and you know, whatever. And it was not as physically demanding as the infantry. And considerably more relaxed. So, I found a home. That was a good place. I was small and reasonably agile, and they decided I had better be an artillery spotter. That's someone who goes out with the infantry, or ahead of the infantry and can direct the gun fire. You see where the things land and say, "to the right 500 yards," that kind of thing. And I got pretty proficient at that, and then they told me that the replacement rate for that job was very high, so I looked for an opportunity to volunteer to something else, and I volunteered to be the observer in a light plane Piper

Cubs and that kind of thing. They were flying over enemy lines and the replacement rate for that was higher than anything in the army. I didn't stay there very long. By this time, they were looking for people. They wanted to spin off a cadre, a training group, to begin another artillery division, or artillery battalion, and I got on the cadre thing. And for some reason or other, that was the 483rd Field Artillery Battalion, and that started in Fort Leonard Wood now, Missouri. Once I was in cadre, we trained that group for six months and they spun us off again to go, and so I didn't have to go overseas. I was busy training people.

KP: Yeah, I guess I want to talk about cadre, but I want to go back to the 100th. How long were you with the 100th?

IP: Six months.

KP: And you could see that there were problems even ...

IP: Oh, yeah.

KP: What were some of the problems that you saw that made you realize that this was going to be a screwed up division that you wanted to get out of?

IP: Well, I didn't realize this was a screwed up division, I realized where they were going immediately. They were immediately going to Europe, and I didn't immediately want to go to Europe. I didn't want to go immediately to Europe.

KP: Why did you want to delay it? Did you think the division wasn't trained well enough?

IP: I didn't know anything about that. I just thought that the later I went to combat, the more likely I was to survive. That's all. It's a survival thing. It's nice to volunteer and it's nice to do your best, but you have to look out for yourself as best you can, and I spent a lot of time in the service looking out for my own best interest. Most of the time, that was in the army's best interest, but not all the time, but most of the time.

KP: But you didn't have a problem with the way the unit was being trained?

IP: No, I didn't have any problem with that. I didn't have any standard.

KP: Yeah.

IP: In the service, it's all new, and no standard against which to judge. So, you do what they tell you, and you work in your own enlightened self-interest.

KP: Any other thoughts about the 100th, in terms of the unit you were in, and in terms of your leaders?

IP: I wasn't there very long. The cast kept changing. They kept bringing in new recruits and taking people out to go overseas as groups, and nothing. I had a few hometown fellows who were with me, one of whom went to Rutgers. His name was Mel Silverman.

KP: Oh, yes. Mel Silverman.

IP: Have you run across him?

KP: Yeah, I interviewed him last semester.

IP: Did you?

KP: Yes.

IP: That's interesting.

KP: He grew up in Perth Amboy.

IP: Had another one, named Larry Bilbao. ... He didn't go to Rutgers, but he was somebody that kept turning up.

KP: Did you know Mel Silverman in Perth Amboy?

IP: Oh, yes.

KP: Were you friends?

IP: You know, not close friends. I played ball with him once in a while, that kind of thing. I knew where he lived, I'd been to his house, he'd been to mine, that kind of thing. When I went down to enlist in '43, one of the fellows who enlisted with me at the same time was a fellow from the Wequaic section of Newark, whose name was Julian Orleans. And we have since then had careers that parallel each other, and I see him, once a year, between his birthday and mine. They're a week apart, and someplace we have lunch or dinner or something together. Sometimes with our spouses, and sometimes without. But he was with me in the 100th.

KP: Did he stay in the 100th? Because Mel Silverman stayed with them.

IP: Yeah, he did, you're right. I really don't remember. I lost Julian someplace, and then he came back after the service. He went to college and medical school, and [the] same training that I went through. He was a year or two ahead of me.

KP: You went to an artillery battalion, and you mentioned that you liked the training a great deal.

IP: Yeah, it was more intellectual than the infantry on every level. You had to know what you were doing. The powder charges that they put on these howitzers had to be adjusted for the elevation and everything. The commanding officer would tell you where to shoot, but somebody had to decide how much powder to use, so I had to decide about the placement of the guns, and correlating them to the map site, and things like that. It was considerably more a gray matter employed than the infantry, which is mostly physical. So, I was more comfortable in the artillery. Finally, in the artillery, they asked for volunteers in the medical detachment, and I volunteered, and the rest, as they say, is oral history.

KP: You were part of a cadre and were an instructor. What was that like, as a teacher? You would eventually teach in your later career, but your experiences with teaching, with trying to get a unit ready for overseas service.

IP: Yeah. Well, it was the army. You told people what to do, and they did it.

KP: You didn't have problems with discipline, or proving authority?

IP: I never had problems. I came out of the service with a whole bunch of stripes and I never had any difficulty all along with any, or any serious difficulty. You have personal disagreements, but had no trouble with that. Discipline is something that people should have, whether they're in the service, or not in the service, at least over themselves, and that's all it was about. I'd say, "You have to do this," and they would do it. If they didn't do it, I'd say, "Well, you have to do it again." That's in a military framework. People do what they're told pretty much.

KP: How did you like the army?

IP: I didn't dislike the army at all. In fact, my last six months I was in a place called Camp Beale, in California, which is now an air force base, and I had five or six stripes, mostly from administration. And they're getting people out of the army on points, the point system. You get so many points for longevity, so many points for overseas service, whatever. And I had another six or seven months to go. The army sent me out to this place in California, and I was all by myself. I didn't go with a group or anything, and I was told to report to the camp commander, and I reported to the camp commander, and he said, "sergeant, here's this thing we have to do," and what his mission was, was to build a center where AUS Army officers could be converted to the equivalent of USA. USA officers are ones who graduated from West Point, and everybody else is temporary, or was at the time. And they were called Army of the US, which is different than US Army. And the AUS officers, some of whom were as high ranking as colonels and generals, a lot of them wanted to stay in the service, so they had to go through a screening procedure. The screening procedure included a physical exam, some psychological testing, review of their record, jackets, interview by a panel which would have at least one general on it. I walked in to the camp commander, and he said, "this is what we have to do. General Boone will be here in two weeks to begin the operation. In the meantime, do whatever you have to do, get the troops that you have to get, and clean the place up." So, I took a look at these orders, and I set the whole damn thing up the way I thought it should be set up. With the forms, and the doctors, and the psychological testing, and I invited, commandeered people to do the testing, and when General Boone got there, he said, "Well, it all seems to be done." This was the first one in the country, this center. He said, "this all seems to be done. Let's get the people and start screening." So, about a week after he got there, we were off and running, and it was a demonstration site for other places like that, that were doing the same work, you know, taking temporary officers and making permanent ones out of them.

KP: So in other words, you created ...

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

KP: So in other words, you created the whole mechanism.

IP: All the detailed stuff. The orders were there from a Congressional bill, but I filled in all the details.

KP: In other words, how you would evaluate people, what you would look for.

IP: Right ... Congress had said what they wanted. It's just I rooted the whole thing into a program.

KP: And you picked the personnel who actually ...

IP: Not the individual personnel, but the type of personnel. I requisitioned psychologists and physicians and stuff like that. It was all done in the name of the camp commander.

KP: So, he just gave you a blank check?

IP: Yeah, he was very happy with the whole thing. They were nice to me about that, though. The army has ways of paying off its ...

KP: People who do well.

IP: People who do well. For example, this was a pretty good sized army camp and it had Coca-Cola machines. And the Coca-Cola bottle you used to put in, I don't know if it was a dime or a nickel or something like that, and you'd turn the top and pull a cold bottle out. Well, there were something in the range of sixty of these machines in the camp and my additional responsibility was to see that these things were serviced. That meant I had to pay for a case of soda, which was twenty bottles, and the twenty bottles would bring in ten dollars. But it was only costing me something like six dollars for those twenty bottles. And I had a detail of enlisted people, who went around and did this and checked the money and everything, and I was effectively making a mark-up of what the soldiers were drinking in Coca-Cola in this particular camp. And it was a perk. There obviously were other perks, but that was one that they gave me ...

KP: Because you did such a good job evaluating?

IP: Because everyone was happy. Yeah.

KP: And once you set up the system, you didn't have anything to do with the evaluation?

IP: Oh, I didn't have anything to do with the evaluations at all. It was not for enlisted men, and we had a general, we had several generals, and a whole bunch of colonels. And all I did was the administrative stuff.

KP: But did you make sure that all the paper work went through?

IP: Oh, yeah.

KP: Since you saw all the paper work, did you get a sense of who the army was keeping and who they were letting go?

IP: No.

KP: That you didn't know?

IP: I didn't get to see the results of the interviews. These people came in, they went through this process, and they generated a packet of information. The board did what it was going to do, and I never heard what the board decided.

KP: Were you ever curious, though?

IP: I was dog-gone curious, and I was pretty friendly with General Milton Boone, who was from someplace in North Jersey, where his father had been the first locomotive engineer in the Lehigh Valley Line, or some other thing like that. But anyway, that was one of the perks. And the General was very happy with me, and he said, "How would you like to go away to OCS and come back and be my adjutant?" And I called my father about that, and I said, "Hey, I got this great offer, what do you think?" He said, "Come back and go to college." I said, "What's that all about?" He said, "Well, how much does a second Lieutenant make?" And whatever the number was then, it was like 212 dollars a month, or something. I was making more than that as a Sergeant, because lower ranked officers were paid less than high ranked non-commissioned officers. He said, "How much are you making now?" I said, "A couple of bucks more than that." He said, "Well, that should tell you something. Why don't you come home?" He said, "I'll pay you whatever the army was paying you if you come home and go to school." I said, "Okay, it's a deal." So I went back to General Boone, and he said, "Well, I really want to do something for you. What can I do for you?" I said, "Well, you can get me out of here before my assigned time is up." He said, "Okay, when would you like to go?" I said, "tomorrow." He said, "Well, I can't do it tomorrow! But we'll arrange it." So about two weeks later, I was told to report down to the camp headquarters for a retreat formation, or some other thing, and wear the class A uniform, everything, and they had the usual parade and the whole scene. They called me up, they handed me a medal, which was something called the Army Commendation Ribbon. That is on the level of a Purple Heart, for non-tactical duty. And I got one of the first ones. Congress had only authorized that just a little bit earlier, and I got one of the first ones. They handed me that, then they handed me my discharge. They handed General Boone the Legion of Merit for the same effort. The Legion of Merit was the next higher one above the Army

Commendation Ribbon. So, I learned something there. My father was right. The General got a medal for my work.

KP: So, you did a very good job in setting up this ...

IP: Yeah, I did a very good job. Remarkable. I mean, you know, a twenty-year old kid, and I did a really good job. And they rewarded me for it, but not as much as the General, who was nominally supervising me, but it was all done before he ever got there. Anyway, I learned something about the army right there.

KP: It sounds like you had lot of responsibility at a very early age.

IP: Yeah, I did.

KP: Were you scared at the time, or did it just seem like you were in the army long enough by that point?

IP: No, it seemed like I knew what I was doing, and I did it. It was all administrative stuff, it wasn't anything that was liable to kill anybody, and I was really good at administration. I still am. So, it didn't threaten me. It was a challenge to get it done right, but ...

KP: Because administratively, getting a lot of different groups to interact, even if you're giving them orders can be ...

IP: Well, I spent some years in industry, I didn't practice my whole life. When my kids got to be college age, got out of college, I went into industry. I worked the for American Medical Association, and I worked with some others. The last thing was about seven years with Hoffman-Laroche, organizing clinical research. That's all administrative stuff. I'm good at it.

KP: But you got your initial cut-your-teeth in the army.

IP: Yeah, I did. Absolutely. And I would never have the confidence to do the administrative things I did later if I hadn't had that army experience. No question about that.

KP: You look back very fondly on your army days.

IP: I was not unhappy. I didn't get killed. It moved fast and it was reasonably exciting, and I got lots of good opportunities to do things.

KP: You were also in ASTP for a time.

IP: Yes, that was very interesting. Now they shipped us up to Auburn, New York, where there was an old, closed, theological seminary. I think it had been the original home of the Union Theological Seminary, which is now Union College in Schenectady, something like that.

KP: Yeah. I'm not sure. I think it might also be in New York City.

IP: But anyway, this was the campus of the Union Theological Seminary, and it was a big, gray, stone building, like New Jersey Hall, here, in that same vintage. And it hadn't been used in ten years, and we went in and cleaned it up to make it usable, and we went to college there, makeshift college. I must say, it was better training than I was getting at Rutgers when I left, because they took all these people who were in the army, who had various degrees, and sent them out there to work on this. We started on the campus of Syracuse University, and after about six weeks, we moved out to this other place.

KP: And what year was this that you went to ASTP?

IP: 1943.

KP: Before infantry training?

IP: Yeah.

KP: And had you hoped to stay in ASTP?

IP: Oh, yeah. I hoped to get a degree and get a commission, and it didn't work that way.

KP: How much of a shock was it when they just broke up ASTP?

IP: Everybody was shocked, but we said that this was what ... There were some enlisted men with this detachment, and they kept saying, "that's the way the army is."

KP: Don't be shocked?

IP: Don't be surprised. And that was the way the army was. Our's not to reason why, you know, you just do it.

KP: The group that was in ASTP, where were they from? Were they from the east coast?

IP: Our particular group were all from the east coast. New York, New Jersey, I don't remember Connecticut, just New York and New Jersey.

KP: At ASTP, how military was ASTP compared to what you would later experience?

IP: It was like a military school, which was interesting too. They had a hierarchy. There was a student commander, and a student adjutant, and a student everything, and a regular military hierarchy. Instead of getting bars and things, you got things called pips, which were little round jobbies. And for some reason that I never understood, and I still don't understand, I got to be the battalion adjutant. The battalion commander was a guy called Jack Hanlon from Allenhurst, or some place nearby, whom I've seen since the service once or twice, not recently, and I was his adjutant, and I don't know how that happened. I really don't know how it happened. They just said, "Hanlon's the Commander, and you're the Assistant Commander." I never knew why. I don't know if it had anything to do with academics, which I was pretty good at, but that's the way it was. Hanlon was not particularly good at academics, so I ruled that out as a possibility. He turned up behind the teller window at Freehold Raceway when I first got out of the service.

KP: Were you surprised to see him?

IP: Oh, yeah. I knew he was from around there someplace, but he just turned up behind this teller window. I went to put down my two dollars, and there he was. [laughs] I was not dissatisfied with the military service. Remember, nothing bad happened to me. And I spent the whole time in this country, and I was given a lot of responsibility, and lots of opportunity, and the army doesn't owe me anything.

KP: Do you ever regret that you didn't get overseas at all?

IP: No.

KP: You were glad you had the ...

IP: Fine, just stay safe.

KP: Which is interesting, because you had volunteered for the paratroopers, which ...

IP: Well, that was, I don't know if that was a fit of peak, or something because I was frustrated with what was going on, but no way [did I want to go overseas].

KP: Well, you thought about making the army a career, but your father in a sense, either talked sense into you, or cut a budding career prematurely.

IP: Whatever.

KP: Your father wanted you to come home, and you came home in May of 1946?

IP: Right.

KP: And did you know that you were going to go back to Rutgers, and had you thought of trying to go elsewhere?

IP: Well, I knew that I was going to go to college, and I just figured I had been away from home for two and a half, three years, something like that. It was time to be closer to home, where all my friends were. So, I was enrolled in Rutgers, and I went to Rutgers. [I] didn't know any different at the time, and I went to Rutgers.

KP: You had seen a little of Rutgers, six weeks of Rutgers.

IP: It was quite different. At the time I got out, there were all barracks buildings on River Road, or wherever, and they had classes in some of those, and there were a lot of people around. When I left here, our freshman class was maybe two hundred. Less than a thousand people on the campus. And we had chemistry sessions that had five hundred across the campus here. It used to be called the Chem Building, but it's got somebody's name on it now. But we had classes that had more than the entire enrollment of the college. So it was quite different.

KP: And you were surrounded by a lot of veterans like yourself.

IP: Oh, yeah. And we were out to get through it. Everybody was wearing kakhi with white T-shirts and kakhi pants, and we wanted to get through it. That's enough. Get on with, you know, some kind of life pattern.

AM: I was just wondering, what was the general impression, you said there were a lot of other veterans at Rutgers, what was their general impression of service?

IP: Just like mine.

AM: Really?

IP: We're back, let's get on with out careers and put the whole thing behind us.

KP: You joined a fraternity. How did that come about?

IP: Well, I didn't join a fraternity, I founded one. That was different. I was living in a rooming house, right next to the church on Somerset Street, where there's a parking lot now. You know where I mean? Church on Somerset Street?

KP: Yeah. Oh, okay, yeah.

IP: If you're walking, looking downtown from Kirkpatrick chapel, there's a Catholic church there, and there's a parking lot, a triangular shaped parking lot there.

KP: Oh, yes.

IP: Well, there was a building there and I had a room. There were not enough campus accommodations for people, and I didn't particularly want one anyway, so I had a room. And after six or so months of that, scrounging around for something to eat, which usually meant the Corner Tavern, which is still there I think, with another name, we all decided maybe we should pool our resources and start a club. So we started a club that grew into a fraternity, and ...

KP: And the members of the fraternity, were they all returning veterans?

IP: Oh, yeah. There were a few people who hadn't been in the service after a while, but the original nucleus was a half a dozen guys. One of them was a fellow named Mel Kohn, K-O-H-N, who was at one time or another mayor of, maybe, Hazlet, New Jersey, was the chief engineer on the Garden State Parkway Authority. He was in that group. We just got together and decided we wanted to do something, so we did it.

KP: In creating a fraternity from scratch, fraternities were very important at Rutgers.

IP: They were.

KP: And there's also a lot ... Andrea and others have taken a whole semester of the Targum and have done reports. For example, one thing that's noteworthy is Hell Week.

IP: Yeah.

KP: Creating a fraternity from scratch, did you create initiations?

IP: Yeah, we did. But nothing much. We were too old for that foolishness. We did have a routine for the kids, when new members came in, they had to memorize all the names of the original eight or ten people on the charter, as they walked up or down the stairs backwards. They were supposed to recite one name for each step. It was that kind of thing, it wasn't anything physical.

KP: So you had no paddles?

IP: No. I think we had paddles, but they were there to worry everybody. It was a game, it wasn't ... No, we didn't do any paddling. I mean, you know, people who had been all over the world, and now in their twenties, instead of in their teens, we didn't have time for that.

KP: Is there anything else about setting up a fraternity that you remember, in terms of starting things?

IP: A lot of arguments.

KP: What would you argue about?

IP: Everything. There were all kinds of factions bringing up any topic. Do we need a building? Do we not need a building? Factions immediately. But, you know, you negotiated all that stuff, and eventually it happened. One of the fellows who was president, you could locate him if you wanted. His name was Don Kates, K-A-T-E-S, and he's down in Oakhurst, someplace like that. I see him occasionally on the tennis court.

KP: I'm curious, is he class of '49?

IP: Yeah.

KP: Yeah, he may well have responded to us.

IP: He would. The names I'm picking are people I think would be into this.

KP: Any other disputes that you remember? Did you wind up having a fraternity house?

IP: Oh, yeah. We ended up [having a house]. It may still be there, I don't know. Most of these fraternities have consolidated, it turns out. The one we opened a chapter of was

called ZBT, and now when I get their information, it turns out it's a conglomeration of ten or twelve fraternities which retained the ZBT name, but seem to retain their own individual characteristics. I don't know what the deal is, I'm past that, too.

AM: ZBT is no longer at Rutgers, though, as of last year.

IP: Excuse me?

AM: They're no longer at Rutgers as of last year.

IP: Is that right?

AM: Yeah, their house burned down.

IP: Ah. That'll do it.

KP: You mentioned that Mason Gross was your favorite professor.

IP: He was.

KP: Even though you were in the sciences?

IP: He gave me straight A grades and he was a nice man. And he was very memorable. He had a wealth of information, academic information, and he was very good at dispensing it, and he was just a nice person. We ended up, he lived down in Robeson for his last years, and we would see him socially occasionally, and he was just a nice guy.

KP: Were you surprised that he became president of the University?

IP: Not really. He was the Provost. When I was taking my Humanities courses with him he was the Provost, and the next step is to be University President, I guess, and he did it.

KP: You are also not the first to say that Mason Gross was their favorite professor.

IP: No, I'm sure I'm not. He was everybody's, a lot of people's favorite professor. He was able to take this business from the antiquities and relate it to modern times, and he was fine.

KP: Any other memorable professors, either for good or ill that you remember?

IP: Yes, there was a professor of economics, whose name I don't remember, I probably will after a while, who was excellent. [Professor Broadas Mitchell] He was a Socialist, and that was an enathema to me. But he let me get up and debate with him in class the things I took issue with, and he gave me straight As. So, I couldn't hate him. But he was an excellent teacher. He got me thinking about economics and things, you know, politics, which I might otherwise not have done once I got into the demands of the scientific disciplines.

KP: When did you decide to go pre-med?

IP: When I came out of the service. I had enough experience in the medics in the service to know it was something I could do.

KP: When you say you had experience in the medics, had you trained?

IP: I just got field training as they gave it, and I was the medical non-com for a detachment of artillery people for a while. I bounced all over in the service.

KP: So, from that experience of being an army medic for a time, convinced you? Had you thought of law school, or other professions? Engineering?

IP: I never thought of engineering. I did think about law school, but I just decided medicine was more fun. My army experience with lawyers was not good. I had some officers supervising me who were lawyers, and they were not among my favorite officers for a whole bunch of reasons. But no, I was not interested in law school. Medical school was fine.

KP: When you were in Rutgers, where did you hope to go to medical school?

IP: Any place that would take me. [laughs] That's not a joke. That's the way it was. You applied where you applied, but you'd be happy to get accepted any place, because in those days they had several thousand applicants for each position, like three thousand, thirty-two hundred applicants for every position. That meant you had one chance in, or maybe five chances, if you applied to five places, in thirty-two hundred of getting accepted.

KP: But you had a very good record. You'd been Phi Beta Kappa.

IP: Yeah. I had no trouble getting accepted to school. I went.

KP: Did you get into your first choice of medical schools?

IP: Yeah, actually, I did. My first choice was University of Pennsylvania, and that's where I went. Good luck. Good place.

KP: Anything else about Rutgers that you remember, that sticks in your mind? Did you go to football games regularly?

IP: Occasionally, not regularly. You, know, a lot of this stuff was kid stuff, once you'd been in the army. And I went to an occasional football game, but it wasn't a big feature.

KP: And did you date women from New Jersey College of Women?

IP: I didn't date anybody when I was in college. I was too busy going to school. I had a few dates during summers around town, around Perth Amboy, or New Brunswick, or someplace, but that was it. Once I got into medical school, things improved considerably, and I had time to date.

KP: So, in other words, your undergraduate curriculum was harder, or you just got better trained?

IP: I think the undergraduate career thing was more demanding, because you knew you had to have a certain grade level to get into medical school. When I got into medical school, they trotted out this old trite expression: "this is your first day here, I want you to take a look at the fellow on your left and the fellow on your right, because four years from now, all three of you are still going to be here." And that's the way they ran it. They said, "We have to put in more money to train you than your tuition costs, and if we have a flunk-out rate, we're not selecting the appropriate students."

KP: Or they're doing something wrong?

IP: Or they're doing something wrong, right. And we can't have that, so rest assured, they're not going to have a high flunk-out rate, and we run the school that way. That's what they told us, and that's the way it worked.

KP: Because not all medical schools operate like that.

IP: They didn't then. The Ivy League schools did. The others I don't know about. But it was another intellectual opportunity, and by the time I got to medical school, I was happy to live in a big city and enjoy the advantages of big city living. And that's one of the reasons I wanted to go there. I didn't really want to

go to Columbia, because that's New York, and I was familiar with New York, and I wasn't too happy with it then. And I think I applied to New Haven, Pennsylvania, and that was about it.

KP: It sounds like you liked medical school and medicine a great deal.

IP: Oh, yeah. That was fun. Except for the patients.

KP: Why? What about the patients?

IP: They're pretty demanding. And they make demands on their doctors that they wouldn't make on anybody else, including their clergymen.

KP: Really?

IP: Oh, yeah. And when I first started practice, people accepted that. The doctors accepted that. They don't accept it anymore. I used to make house calls. You know what a house call is? It's where the doctor comes to your house. And there are no house calls anymore.

KP: Well, in fact I interviewed two people who were doctors, they went out to York, Pennsylvania. It was also tough to be a doctor, until the sixties, financially. This one doctor said that his first year he lost three thousand dollars, being a doctor. And he said he did every thing from answer the police radio to making house calls.

IP: That's right. I made house calls for any doctor who wanted me to make them for him. And I would get these calls, saying, "do you mind?" And I had to do it, because it was a source of income. And you know, a ten dollar bill was a lot of money for a house call in those days. Mostly, it was seven or eight. You can't get to see the nurse's secretary for seven or eight dollars anymore.

KP: Obviously going to medical school obvious trained you to be a doctor, but how well was your medical education? How much, in a sense, did you learn about being a doctor? What did they teach you and what did they fail to teach you, you look back on?

IP: The theme of that particular medical school was evidenced by the way they taught us anatomy. They handed us a cadaver, and we had, you know, this was a human body, and the usual thing, and then they said, "this is an exercise not in learning anatomy, but in learning. We're not going to teach you this, you're going to learn it by yourself. Here's the book, there are instructors

around to help you find your way, do it." And that was the preparation for medical studies, and it was good, because you have to do your own research. You just have to figure things out for yourself, and having somebody say, "What are the branches of the spinal nerves, or the branches of the cranial nerves?" and giving them a list doesn't make it. So in Pennsylvania they did not ask very much for lists. They asked for the approach. If you had the right approach, you passed, even if the information was wrong.

KP: They were much more into teaching you technique in how to solve a problem than in rote learning...

IP: Yes, absolutely. Other medical schools were not like that. The good ones were and the result of that is most of my classmates through medical school are still up-to-date with the profession, even if they retired.

KP: They were taught how to learn.

IP: Because they were taught how learn and to study by themselves. And that's something that you, it's a gift. That's the best thing I got from medical school, was how to study independently.

KP: Although there were a lot of changes during World War II, medicine is very different when you were going to medical school from what it is today, in terms of the range of different advances.

IP: Oh, sure.

KP: What's been most surprising, in terms of how medicine has changed? In terms of your ability as a physician, or what you could see, observing?

IP: Well, I think the technology is the biggest change. There are things that are every day occurrences now, that you couldn't have dreamed of, even ten years ago. Technological change. The other thing that changed technology's impact on is the practice of medicine. They're managing patients quite differently than before the changed technology. The third thing that's related to this is the expense. We have a huge medical expense in this country, and it's nobody's fault. But the technology is expensive, and as a result of the technology, we have people around a lot longer than they would have been a decade ago, and that all costs money. There are people, like I am, almost in my seventies, and people in their eighties, and some people in their

nineties, and the older you get, the more medical service you require, and the more the technology is driven to improve, and the more the bills go up. And this is, that whole panorama, has changed dramatically. One of the things that I think is going to have to happen is we're going to have to ration medical care. There is no reason in the world to give a heart transplant to a seventy-year old man. His life expectancy is just about finished, anyway. I read one the other day that they're looking to give a second heart transplant to a sixty-year old patient. We can't afford \$150,000 for a heart transplant twice, in the same sixty year old. We just can't do that. It sounds heartless, but medical care is going to be rationed one way or another. It has to be, and it should be.

KP: You have also, in your medical career witnessed the rise of government spending on medicine. Any observations on how that affected medicine, the practice of medicine?

IP: Well, when I was in practice about five years, I was very dissatisfied. That's an interesting story, too. I did pediatrics. Although I had pediatric training and allergy training, nobody knew about allergies, and the patient population didn't, so I had to practice pediatrics. And it was very unsatisfying, not gratifying at all. And I decided I would have to change direction, so I went to the American Academy of Pediatrics, which is the governing body for that kind of thing, and I communicated with the President, who was a medical officer at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in downtown Manhattan, at about 14th Street and Broadway, someplace down there. And he said, "You know, I've been hearing this from some of you young fellows. If you want to speak for your group of practitioners, why don't I set up a meeting with some members of the Board of the Academy here, and we'll work on this." So, I agreed to that, and he set up meeting, and I walked into the meeting at the Metropolitan, and there was the professor from Columbia who wrote a textbook, the professor from NYU who wrote a textbook, the professor from Temple who wrote a textbook, and two other professors, who had written widely. They interviewed me at length, I mean, like this, but for four hours in the morning, a couple of hours in the afternoon. At the end of this time, they said, "Well, we've spent a lot of time, we'd like to get together and come to a consensus. Would you mind leaving the room?" So I left the room, and I came back a half hour later, and they said, "Well, we've decided you're trying to do too much. You have to cut down your practice hours, and you have to refuse patients, and trim the whole thing down to where it's manageable for you." And I couldn't accept that. I didn't think that that was, I told them that I thought that they were misrepresenting their training. When you're in the hospital, you take the training,

you get to see all these emergency things, and rare diseases. When you get out into practice, you see kids with diaper rashes and runny noses. And I was not prepared for that, psychologically. I was prepared to go out and make a serious contribution treating disease. And what I got to do was wipe a bunch of bloody bottoms and runny noses. And I thought that my training had not been adequate for that job. But before we got done, I said, "may I ask a question, too?" And they said, "Of course," so I started with each of them, and I said, "did you ever practice private practice of medicine?" And uniformly, none of them had one day of private practice of medicine. They'd been in hospitals all their lives. And I said, "I don't really consider you representative. You can't relate to my problem, because you've never been there. And I think you ought to get people on your board from the practitioner group." Ultimately they did do that, and ultimately I left pediatrics and never went back.

KP: Your discussion about what was expected of doctors, in a sense you weren't prepared in medical school that a lot of what you were doing was fairly routine, and that people were coming to you, especially parents, more out of concern, more out of someone to say that everything was going okay. In many ways you had different roles that in many ways even a nurse practitioner could have ...

IP: And have since done. That's right. The way out of that was to super-specialize. And of course that's more expensive for the public, and about that time I decided that medical practice was not for me, and I went back and got a Master's Degree in Public Health from Columbia. I did that while I was practicing more or less full time. And then I went into the New York City Department of Health and Hospitals, and ran a project for them which, as it turned out, was a pilot project for Community Medicine. It was supported by the government and it became the pilot project that people came to and the usual junk. After that, I was looking for the next administrative job, and the next administrative job had to be in some other town, or some other hospital. The offers I got were in places like Texas, and Ohio, and my wife didn't want to trek around with our two small kids, so I went back into practice. This time I practiced allergy. That was much better. That's specialized, and people expect specialized management, and specialized fees, and everything else. That was much better.

KP: You had originally [been] hired to practice allergy medicine before.

IP: Not enough people in the community who [or] not enough doctors who knew enough about allergy to refer patients. Not enough patients who wanted that kind of care to pay the bills.

KP: Why do you think? Had it been the community, or had it been the change in perception?

IP: Change in perceptions. We're talking in a period from 1950, maybe five, to 1965. In ten years, there were more people that knew me, and knew what I could do. [There were] more doctors who knew me and knew what I could do, and that opened the door to a different kind of practice.

KP: So you had really become a specialist, the way you envisioned in medical school.

IP: Yes. Absolutely. It's not easy.

KP: One of the things, I've talked to lawyers, and even to some doctors, they mentioned that one of the things they didn't teach you in medical school was really how to run a business.

IP: That's 500% correct. They did not. Fortunately, I had the army experience, and I was way ahead on that. I knew what you had to do. Or could learn what you had to do, and I learned it and we did it. At one time, I was administering a group of five doctors, who all practiced the same kind of medicine as I did. And administration has never been a problem, as I told you earlier. It is for a lot of people, but it wasn't for me.

KP: And in fact, you had an important administrative role in Lutheran Medical Center, I read.

IP: That was where we did the pilot project in Community Health.

KP: And that was to get greater access in the community to ...

IP: To the Lutheran Medical Center staff and equipment, beds, and whatever.

KP: To the community that normally didn't have a physician?

IP: Well, it was a welfare community, it was an indigent community, and we went on into the indigent community, and established clinics, so they knew they could come get treatment. The clinics referred them to the hospital for admission, if need be. When I decided I needed more money, I grafted on an ambulance service. Well, what happens, as you know, in

institutions of that kind, your take-home pay is based on your responsibility, measured in the number of dollars that are in your budget, and I had to get more dollars in my budget to get more money. So, we grafted on an ambulance service and a nursing home. So I spent some time as a nursing home administrator. Along with the regular day's work.

KP: What's it like to administer in medicine? I mean, it's a very broad question, but you administered in the army, you had set up this whole ...

IP: It's the same. It's the same, but in medicine, you have a different product. In the army, the product was a bunch of people who would or would not get their permanent army commissions, and the product in medicine is people with good health. You look at it as another facet of a business, a factory or something. Sick comes in on this end, healthy goes out on the other end.

KP: And you mentioned you had some bad experiences with lawyers in the army, but what about doctors, as a group from the perspective not of being one, but of administrating, and trying to lead groups of doctors?

IP: That's a problem. They are very, very independent. I had this group of five of us all together, and several of them were unwilling to let me make an administrative mark-up. I wanted more money than the other guys, and everybody came in and said that was fine. I didn't want much more money, I think I wanted five percent more money, ten percent. Anyway, as we worked through it, people were reluctant to pay me ten percent more than they got, and I was doing all the administrative work. So, little by little we told them to walk, and I ended up with one associate. Yes, they are difficult.

KP: What about Medicaid and Medicare? What did you think of it at the time, when you were in practice, when the program was first proposed, and then as the program got developed?

IP: Well, when the program was first proposed, I looked at that as the camel's nose getting under the tent, and that's what it was. Practically, it didn't make any difference to me, because we never billed any of those people anyway. It turned out, when I analyzed, I had a computer in my office in 1965.

KP: So you were way ahead.

IP: Yeah, we had a room just this size, fully air-conditioned, with the computer in it, and of course, that has twenty times the

fire power of what I had in the office, so we looked at the computer to see how many Medicare/Medicaid patients we got, and how much cash they generated, and how long it took us to get the money, and what support staff it required. Finally, we decided we would treat the patients and not bill. We treated the patients, we didn't bill, and it didn't cost us anything. They weren't paying enough to cover my administrative expenses. So, it didn't impact at all. When I left practice, we weren't billing them, and the people who are in the practice now are still not billing them.

KP: Because it just doesn't pay, in terms of administrative ...

IP: Administratively it didn't pay for what the government was willing to pay. It's a little better now, because they have all these managed-care things, and Managed Care clears the money out more quickly than the federal government does.

KP: I'm just going to change tapes.

IP: Sure.

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

IP: Well, my kids know as much about me as they want to, my grandchildren are the ones I would like to inform. As an aside, I am now in the process of looking for a publisher for a book I just wrote.

KP: Oh, really? On what?

IP: On asthma. There are something like between ten and fifteen million asthmatics in the country. It's the leading cause of disability for children and adults. And this is a do it yourself book for asthmatics.

KP: Oh, interesting.

IP: I got into this because you said I will be privileged to proofread the text. Well, I have proofread this text so many times, it's coming out of my ... I wrote the entire book which you don't usually do. These days, you write a chapter or outline of what you propose, and a chapter to show everybody you can write, and send this out for bids, and people call back and say they're willing to pay you X number of dollars to finish the book. But I wrote the book, because I wanted to write the book. I got an agent who is kind of compulsive, and he said he wants this book to be in camera-ready fashion. They used to photograph the type and make plates, that's what the term comes from, but he

wanted it to be such that you could pick it up and read it like a book, and they could print it just the way it was. So I went over the text for the number of spaces after a period, and all the nuances that the editors want. How you handle numbers, do you write the number one, or do you write o-n-e, and this is all highly stylized, and I'm learning about it.

KP: Yeah, my first book just recently came out, and they did the design, but I still know the proofing, the various stages.

IP: Yeah. So, that's what brought that on, you said that I am going to be privileged to look this over.

KP: Yeah, just let me give the official call. This continues an interview with Dr. Irwin J. Polk on March 24, 1995, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

AM: Andrea Manoiu.

KP: Going back, in interviewing several doctors, we've had a range of views on Medicare and Medicaid, and some have been very dispassionate, like you have been, and others have been sort of like it's the worst thing that has happened to medicine. One of the things they observe, which I didn't really realize until I started interviewing, and I don't think it is widely known, is that there was real expectations before Medicare and Medicaid, among physicians that you would have a certain number of pro-bono cases.

IP: Well, that was not expectation, that was reality. If you go back to when I first started to practice medicine, it worked something like this: you proposed to come into the community, and so you went to the local hospital, and said, "I propose to practice here, can I get on the staff?" Then they had a procedure. You went before a committee, you were reviewed by people in your specialty or general practice, or whatever, and then the name came before the hospital board, and they said, "Okay, you can practice here." Then you moved into the community. You couldn't do that. There were some communities that didn't want another obstetrician, or didn't want another Irish doctor, or a Jewish doctor, or something. You couldn't move on to those communities. You just effectively could not. Once you had hospital privileges, there were responsibilities with the privileges. The responsibilities were that you treat certain number of pro-bono patients. You had to spend time in the clinic in your specialty or general practice, you had to provide pro-bono care to patients who were admitted to the hospital, you didn't have to do this in your private office,

however. So that you spent, most hospitals, about three months a year, either consecutive, or not consecutive, taking care of free clinic and hospital admissions in your specialty. That was the way it was. The first thing that happened with Medicare and Medicaid was that those pro-bono patients disappeared. There weren't any pro-bono patients. They all had a check that they could write from the government. Not literally, but I mean, they all could draw upon the government funds to pay their bills. That took care of the pro-bono aspect. As a result of that, there were very few patients in the clinics, or there were fewer patients in the clinics, and there were few patients in the hospital who didn't have their own private doctor, all be it paid by Medicare or Medicaid. And that was the camel's nose, that we mentioned earlier, in the tent. But it was a part of life. You just did it. You didn't like it.

KP: It sounds like just like house calls?

IP: Yeah. You just did it, and everybody understood that that was the way it was. In exchange for your being able to send your private patients to the hospital, if need be, then you had to give all this time. Nobody minded, it was built into the system. We probably charged our personal patients a smidgen more for those hours in the course of the year that we had to give free time. And it was one of those Robin Hood things, steal from the well-to-do, in order to pay for the less well-to-do. But everybody accepted that and that was the way it was. After a while, the administrative expense I discussed with you got to the point where it wasn't worth while, and people refused to take the hospital appointments, because in many cases they didn't need them. One of the local hospitals down there decided to go big time, meaning they wanted an affiliation with a medical school, and they picked Hahnemann, from Philadelphia to affiliate with. That brought patients in, and it brought in, rather, medical students, and full-time staff, who then took care of the pro-bono patients. And the doctors in the clinics were no longer quite so responsible as they had earlier been. In New Brunswick, there is the Robert Wood Johnson Hospital and there's also St. Peter's Hospital.

KP: Yes.

IP: The medical school has managed to close out Robert Wood Johnson to most private practitioners, who are not on the medical school staff. Everybody else goes to St. Peter's. I don't know how the level of care is at Robert Wood. It's excellent at St. Peter's. And that is the fall-out from the affiliation of a medical school.

KP: With a hospital.

IP: With a hospital. We had that down in Monmouth County.

KP: A similar closing out?

IP: Yeah.

KP: How do you think that affected the practice of medicine?

IP: You better believe that doctors weren't happy. The patients probably didn't know the difference. The further you come from direct personal responsibility, the sloppier medical care gets. And medical school people make a lot more mistakes than they would countenance, and the non-medical school people. There's a thing in the *Times* today, about someone who should have known better, got four times the approved doses of an experimental drug for her condition, and died. Those are not isolated instances, but nobody calls a lot of attention to those things. They go on. What they call attention to is the doctor who took off the wrong leg, or excised the wrong kidney, or some other thing like that.

KP: So in other words, when you have a patient you've been seeing for thirty years, in a sense the doctors are much more careful because of the relationship that develops between patient and ...

IP: Yes. Absolutely.

KP: Whereas when you see someone who comes in, you haven't met this person before and not likely to see them ...

IP: Again. You give them the best effort you can under the circumstances, but it's quite different than a thirty year history. I had a boil on my back that needed to be opened, and I went to a friend of mine, and he said, "Well, you know, go ahead." And I said, "I got Medicare, why don't you just take the Medicare check?" He said, "All right, fine." So his secretary called me back about six weeks later and said, what did I do with the Medicare check? I said, "I don't have any Medicare check." She said, "Well, we applied for it. Somebody had to get the money." I said, "Well, it wasn't me. What does it say on the form they returned?" She said, "Oh, it says you haven't satisfied your deductible for the year, but I don't believe that." I said, "What do you mean you don't believe it?" And she said, "Well, it's December, how could you not have satisfied your Medicare deductible for the year?" I said, "I don't go to the doctor." Which I don't. I do my own private general practice medicine, which is head colds and earaches and little rashes and

things, and I don't go to the doctor. So, except for something special, if the boil had been on the front, I could have done it, but I couldn't reach back there. But, that's everybody's concept: "You mean to say you're sixty-nine years old and this is December and you haven't used up your Medicare deductible yet?" And the answer is no, I haven't. Everybody else has by about the beginning of March.

KP: So, you think Americans are seeing doctors more often?

IP: That's what the data says. They published this, and yeah, the number of visits keeps going up. And the less the patients have a responsibility for paying that, the more it's going to go up. [We've] got to reintroduce some personal responsibility, or the whole thing is going to come down. And even if we do, there is still going to be rationing of medical care, because we just can't keep giving all these goodies to all these people, and generate the cash to pay for it.

KP: Are there any other observations you have about private practice, and the pluses and the minuses?

IP: Yeah, I think what they are doing now with Managed Care is they are taking some of the doctors' mark-up and giving it to administrators. And it wasn't that bad when the doctors were getting the mark-up. The care was not nearly as bad as everybody would like you to believe, and there wasn't anybody dying in the streets. You read in the papers now, they are going to take school lunch funds and remove them from the federal budget. Well, they are putting it in the state budget. It's coming in as a block grant. All they do is eliminate one hierarchy, the state thing is there anyway, and you need somebody to do it, but you don't need it at the federal level. We have the same kind of thing with medicine. They have introduced, now, all these managed-care people, who are taking that same pie, and cutting a wedge out of it. So, we generate another bureaucracy. The doctors are going to get less, and the patients are going to get less, because the bureaucrats are not contributing to their health care. Real simple.

KP: It sounds like you are very skeptical of Managed Care now, as it is developing.

IP: It doesn't make any difference who the third party is in there. The third party takes some of the product for themselves. That's nothing unique. It happens all over the place. With a good run company, there is very little piece of the pie that goes to that. If you look at the stock market listed companies, they tell you what percentage of their gross receipts go to

administration. If the number gets too high, you've got the wrong company.

KP: You also do quite a bit of writing and you work for the American Medical Association, which in some ways gives you a unique perspective, because you are the umbrella organization, so you in a sense have a ...

IP: It's the umbrella organization mostly for general practitioners. Mostly for mid-western, old, white, male doctors. They have not successfully attracted many of the specialists who have their own specialist organizations. And they are not getting a lot of new, young fellows, although in the past two or three years, with all that is going on in medicine, the new guys are joining up. But it may never. When I was there, which was in the '80s, it never represented more than about forty or fifty percent of the doctors in the country. At one time, you had to be a member of the County Medical Society, and the American Medical Association, even to be considered for hospital privileges. When I first went into practice, they asked for your membership certificate. That was a real closed shop.

KP: You saw the power of the AMA slide over the years?

IP: Oh, yeah. That's not news. I don't know what they are going to do. They have a problem.

KP: So their being placed in Chicago really fits their membership pattern.

IP: Oh, yeah. Kansas City would be better.

KP: It's not surprising that they are not in New York or Washington.

IP: Right. They are in Washington.

KP: Yeah.

IP: They have offices there, which are lovely. All kinds of expensive art work on the walls, and they are really remarkable. They do have a lobbying office in Washington.

KP: But not their main headquarters.

IP: No, it's still in Chicago. And they are not hurting, whether they have members or not. Last time I looked, the AMA was the largest medical publishing company in the world. They turn out a whole bevy of journals and help publications for

patients, and specialty publications for doctors, and they are world-wide. They distribute their product all over Western Europe and to a lesser extent, Eastern Europe and China.

KP: Did you realize how powerful the AMA [was]?

IP: Not until I got there. Well, I didn't know what they were doing. They are doing medical publishing. The organizational stuff is frosting on the cake. It's to legitimize them.

KP: Because I would not have thought that they are that major of a publisher.

IP: They are a major medical, the major medical publisher in the country.

KP: It sounds like you learned pretty quickly.

IP: I did, yeah. Well, they give you an orientation when you get there. It starts out with, "We are not the AMA, we are the American Medical Association." And they tell you why. American Management Association, American Microscopic Association, there's this whole list of AMAs. They are the American Medical Association. They are not the AMA. And the orientation also tells you where the profit comes from, pie charts and that kind of thing.

KP: You've enjoyed writing a great deal, it sounds like.

IP: Yeah, I have.

KP: How did you get started writing?

IP: I got started writing as a protest against the misrepresentation of a lot of medical stuff in the lay press. And I have a doctor friend, who used to be on the Trustees at Rutgers, here, whose name is Art Kamin. And he was the editor and publisher of a paper down there where we were. Somebody came into my office from Point Pleasant, who was publishing a newspaper, and said, "How would you like to write a once-a-week column for a once-a-week newspaper?" And I said, "sure, I'll do that." And I did it, and then the guy from Red Bank, Mr. Kamin came in and said, "Hey, I see you are in the paper. How would you like to do our paper?" And I said, "Okay." So then I had two people. I decided if I was doing this, I might as well go whole-hog, so I wrote to some syndicates, and somebody picked me up. It was called the Copley News Service, out of San Diego, and the first thing you know, I was in X number of papers all over the world. And I say X number, because I don't know the number.

I had a contract where they were supposed to send me tear-sheets, so I would know where I was being published, and they were going to pay me on the basis of the circulation that I attracted. They never did. They sent me a flat check all the time. After several years of this, say six or seven, I went back and re-negotiated. They gave me more money, but still no accountability. Finally I said I don't need the few bucks that they're paying, and I stopped. So, I've been writing for a long time, and I did find that there was a lot of misrepresentation of things in the lay press, who are more interested in the scare factor than in the informational factor.

KP: What do you think, as you've had a long career, has been most misrepresented over the years? What the knowledge is that doctors have and other scientists have and what the public perceptions are? Because there have been a range of things, that I, having known some science, that I know that have been hyped.

IP: Well, it's an on-going process.

KP: Yeah.

IP: There are no highs and no lows. I had a personal high, but I guess in Jerry Ford's administration, they came up with a couple of soldiers in Fort Dix, who had the flu.

KP: Swine flu.

IP: And they drew some blood and sent it down to the National Institute of Health, and it came back that this was something called Swine Flu. Well, I looked in the literature, and I went down to Fort Dix to talk to the doctor who was taking care of the patients, and I decided there was no such thing as Swine Flu. Which, in fact there wasn't. The swine influenza virus does not attack people. But if people come in contact with it, they generate antibodies like they would to any other flu, but they don't get sick. And they had two pig farmers from Pennsylvania in Fort Dix, as recent enlistees, who got the flu with all the other inductees. But these two had swine flu antibodies because they came off swine farms. Everybody got excited and made a swine flu vaccine, which was needless. There's no such disease as swine flu. And I got quoted all over the East and they ran my column next to the government doctor who was promoting the vaccine. Well, it turned out that there was no such thing as swine flu, but there were something like sixty people who died from the central nervous system effect of the swine flu vaccine. That was a personal highlight for me, because I picked it right. Unfortunately for those sixty patients, it was not a highlight. But anyway, that's the kind of thing that goes on, that a little

more attention of the media to the individual researchers could prevent.

KP: In terms of personal health, what do you think patients have an overstated risk of or fear of, and where they should be more concerned about other things?

IP: Everything. They should be more concerned about their weight, and their diet, and the exercise that they take, instead of which vitamin supplement is the thing for people with silver hair. It's a great time to be silver. That sort of thing. It's just, stick to the basics, and everything will be okay. But nobody wants to do it. They are looking for the easy fix, which is take your silver age capsules and take your calcium so that your bones don't break down, and all kinds of crazy things. And that's everybody spinning their wheels and spending a lot of money for nothing. What they really need, a little sleep, fresh air, exercise, adequate diet, not overeating, not smoking, not using drugs. All the other bad stuff is probably much more pleasurable and much more attractive than the good stuff that you have to work on like exercise and not overeating.

KP: It sounds like you have some of the wisdom of someone who did practice with patients.

IP: Oh, yeah. I used to tell them all this.

KP: And what would they say in return?

IP: They would get very upset, some of them. I'd say, "Hey, I can't help you with your asthma, if you are not going to do what I tell you, and I'm telling you to go out and exercise. I'm telling you, you have to walk a mile a day to rehabilitate your lungs. If you can't do that, can't do it." They'd rather take medicine. Walking a mile a day is horrendous. That's what happens. "If you don't quit smoking, please quit coming to this office." How could you have lung disease and continue to smoke? Any kind of lung disease.

KP: You would go into industry at the end of your career.

IP: Yeah.

KP: You've had a lot of administrative experience, but now you were in a sense working for a corporation.

IP: Big corporation. Big, international corporation.

KP: Hoffman Laroche, which I think is Swiss based.

IP: Yes it is. Swiss based, and Swiss managed.

KP: How would you compare the organizational pattern from, say the army, to the various other administrative jobs you have had in the United States state medical groups to the Swiss method? Because it sounds like there were some unique ...

IP: Well, the army had everybody working in one specific format, one specific group. And in industry these days, you find yourself working in an interdisciplinary set-up with people from all kinds of disciplines that you wouldn't normally get in touch with. That's quite different. You can't run the army by committee, but you can run big business by committee, and they do. And that's, I think, the major difference. And it isn't even a discipline thing. There is as much discipline in industry as there is in the army. You pay with your job. The discipline is there. The approach is not straight hierarchical, it is varied. Industry has the same problems that everybody else does. I found it pretty informative, and I liked traveling to Europe. I'm kind of sorry I didn't go into industry sooner, because it was something I really had a knack for. It's all this administrative stuff, and I could do it. Unfortunately, I got to industry when I was 62. I got three promotions until I retired, when I was about 68. And if I'd gotten there earlier, I would have done better.

KP: So you really had regrets that you didn't start, say, when you were in your thirties?

IP: Yeah, I really have. I should have stayed with administration and I didn't. I just should have. That's what I do best.

KP: You made allusions to the Swiss. What was it like to work with the Swiss and a Swiss organization?

IP: Well, originally when I worked with the Swiss, it was an American organization. The president of the local branch was an American, and his staff were mostly all Americans, and along about 1988 the Swiss became dissatisfied with the way the American division was working, and had a hostile take-over. They came and took over the American operation completely. All the American officers are gone, most of the American staff is gone, they have been replaced by Europeans. And I think they were right. Roche made Valium, and until a year or two ago, they were still living off Valium. A year or two ago, it's a twenty-five year patent, it expired and it was open season, so the sale of authentic, non-generic Valium went down by about thirty, thirty-

five percent, and have been going down since. And the American people never had anything to replace it. They got too fat, and complacent, and didn't have anything to replace the Valium. I guess the Swiss, after a while, said, "the heck with this, we'll run the company our way." So all the Americans were dispersed. I think I know one, at the higher echelon who's still there, and he's still there for a unique reason. But that's the way it went. And that's why I was chuckling when you say we had a hostile take-over by the home country.

KP: Did you stay? You stayed under the Swiss reign for several years.

IP: No, I didn't. I got out before they had their real take-over. And it's too bad, too, because I learned yesterday if I had been there, if I had stayed another six months, I'd got this huge retirement package. I got a retirement package, but they were giving buy-outs, instead of firing people. I could have had another maybe fifty or sixty thousand bucks, if I'd just stayed another six more months. But you can't win them all.

KP: Sort of backtracking, this is way backtracking, I didn't ask it in the beginning, but you were in Perth Amboy for a few months when the war broke out. Did you ever see any submarine action? Did you ever see any ships silhouetted?

IP: No. We had heard about this, and I used to sail on Raritan Bay. The Coast Guard pulled me in one day and said, "You have to have a registration card, a license." So I got a license and went back to sailing, but that was the way all that impacted on me. I never saw any, never heard of any, and never even dreamed that there would be any.

KP: How about the blackout restrictions in Perth Amboy? Do you remember those?

IP: Yeah, I remember those. That wasn't a big deal. You pulled your shades down at night, and didn't have any outside lights on, and if you drove a car, you drove it with parking lights only. Yeah, I remember that. No impact.

KP: What about rationing? And your father was a car dealer. There were no more cars.

IP: They stopped making cars. They got along with used cars, and tuning-up cars, or one thing or another. Of course, cars got to be quite scarce, and repair parts got to be scarcer, so they had a business of just maintaining [old cars]. I was just barely old enough to drive when the rationing started, and everybody had

a gas stamp that you had so many gallons per week, but the automobile place had its own tank, for business purposes, and that was not a particular problem.

AM: I wanted to ask you a question, this is also backtracking a bit. I understand that toward the end of med school you shortened your name.

IP: Yeah.

AM: What was your ...

IP: Sales purposes.

AM: What did your family have to say about that?

IP: They encouraged it.

AM: Oh, really?

IP: Yeah. It's standard. I'm not the only one, and I think it was a good move, I think it's something I should have done. It's tough to market people who don't have recognizable names. That's the way that was. Part of the game plan. Nothing personal.

KP: How did you meet your wife?

IP: I met her on the beach at Loch Harbor, which is near Asbury Park. Somebody I knew tangentially, her brother, was in medical school when I was in medical school. You know, you meet people in the same circuit, and there she was.

KP: You'd been in World War II and your father had been in World War I. What did you think of Korea and Vietnam?

IP: Korea I thought was going to be much worse than it turned out to be. When I got out of the service, I was quite comfortable with the service, and I stayed in the reserve, and was working through a home-study course for officers' ticket. I was in medical school when the Korean war started, and I decided I did not want to get drafted, called up in the reserve, and miss the rest of medical school, so I resigned from the reserve. So I did think that there was enough likelihood that I would have got called into my reserve unit to where I resigned from the reserve. And that's okay, I didn't feel like I was cheating.

KP: If you had been done with medical school would you have ...

IP: I would have gone. Oh, sure. I don't have any problem with that, but I certainly didn't want to interrupt my studies in the middle and not know if I would be invited back, or be allowed to come back, or able to come back or what. So I resigned.

KP: So it sounds like by staying in the reserves, you had a very positive view.

IP: Oh, yeah. Well, you see that. I think the army was a good place, and I still think it's a good place. And I decry what I read in the newspapers about some of the things our President does. Our Commander-in-Chief. I think that the army is actually one of the better places for non-discrimination. They have a higher percentage of non-whites in positions of authority than any industry, or anything else. They are really good, and I don't think it's a bad institution. My experience with the army has always been first class.

KP: What about Vietnam?

IP: By Vietnam, I was a family man with kids, and I was not about to go unless somebody called me. If they had called me, I would have gone.

KP: You had two daughters, but would you want your son to go into the military, if you had had a son?

IP: Yeah, I would not object to a son going into the military, if he didn't have any other responsibilities. If he didn't have a family to support in time of war, then that's one thing. But other than that, I have nothing bad to say about the military. It was very good to me. Oh, good, we're winding down. How nice.

KP: I guess the only, one of the standard questions I also ask is where were you when the atomic bomb was dropped and V-J Day took place? Do you have memories of those two events?

IP: No. I don't know where I was when the atomic bomb was dropped. I know I was in California at V-J Day, because I was in what became an Army separation center, where the troops came and were ready for discharge or whatever, reassignment. I was in California, which is where I got the thing that got me to the General from New Jersey, General Boone. I was in California then. I was in a different camp, in a marine base, for some reason or other, and that was when V-J Day was. Then I went to this separation thing. I do remember Pearl Harbor. Incidentally I had a small radio, couldn't have been any bigger than that, at that lunch meeting of this family organization, and they did make little radios, General Motors made one that my father was selling

for General Motors and he brought one home. And I was listening to this when they announced the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was before transistors, but they had small tubes and a small radio.

KP: And so you were the one that announced it to your family?

IP: Yeah. Everybody at this, they said they didn't believe it. I said, "Well, just listen." And finally, they brought a radio in from another room. This was a little thing and it didn't make much more noise than that.

KP: You mean the recording machine?

IP: Yeah.

KP: Of your family who were at the family gathering, how many went into the service?

IP: I haven't the vaguest idea. My mother's brothers were too old. I was one of two people in that room who were close the appropriate age. The other one was named Jerry (Hirschfield?), who had a career as a cinematographer in Hollywood, and now his kids have something called the (Hirschfield?) Agency, or something. They are the group who selects actors for various roles, a talent agent, or whatever. He and I were the only two. He went in as a photographer, because that was his hobby. He was a little older than I, and he went in as an Army photographer, and he got out. We were the only two that were male and the appropriate age. I can remember that. How old was I in 1941? It was December of '41, so I would have been 17. He was probably 19. I think I've run out of ...

KP: Yeah, no, unless there is something we forgot to ask you.

IP: Anything?

KP: No, unless there is something we forgot that you could think of, about Rutgers, or World War II?

IP: Okay. I don't know. As long as I am here, and this is going to out in print, I really would like to say that I am not happy with the management of Rutgers University. Would you like me to explain it?

KP: Yeah. Please do.

IP: Also, I am not happy with the management of most of the Universities. Did you read about Yale the other day? They gave back a twenty million dollar grant, because the grantor wanted

them to teach American history? European history? I don't go for that. I used to send a few dollars to the University of Pennsylvania and to Rutgers, and University of Pennsylvania had some poor administrative decisions. You may have heard about the young student who was going to get thrown out of the University because he extensively called some black girls "water buffalo." Did you hear that story? I'll tell you something interesting. I heard that, and I didn't contribute to the University of Pennsylvania that particular year, and I got a call from a fundraiser. "Hello there, I'm calling about fundraising for the University of Pennsylvania." I said, "Yes." She said, "I see that you usually give some money, and you haven't given any this year. Is there any reason for that?" I said, "Oh, yes. I'm not happy with their administrative policies." And she said, "Particularly what?" And at that time I could remember three or four things that I was unhappy with, and I said, "this is the way it is." And she said, "Well, I'll tell you something. You are not the only one. I'm getting this response from a lot of people who give money." And we chatted a little bit about this, and she gave me some specifics. "Now I talked to somebody here, and they're all saying the same thing." I said, "Are you passing this word along to the administration?" She said, "We have to. We are supposed to ascertain why people are not giving, it's part of our job." I said, "Okay." She said, "tell me something. Would you give a hundred dollars?" I said, "No." And we talked about this for a while, and I said, "I feel the same about a hundred dollars that I do about any more than that." And she said, "Would you give five dollars?" I said, "Hey, this is getting ridiculous. If I wouldn't give a hundred, I'm not going to give five." She said, "It's not the amount." I said, Well, what are you after me for?" She said, "Well, the University of Pennsylvania participates in a government program, whereby they get matching funds from this pool in proportion to the percentage of graduates who contribute." Rutgers does that, too. In proportion to the percentage of graduates who contribute. And so, all she wanted was my name, and the names of some other people, so she could bolster that list, and I said, "No." Lately, I'm not contributing to Rutgers, for pretty much the same thing.

KP: In particular, what are you annoyed with at Rutgers?

IP: I'm annoyed with this last business, with the faculty complaining extensively, launched against the President because they were not satisfied with three little words that he let out. Aside from the words, there probably was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with him because of tenure, and I think I'm on his side with regard to the tenure. Aside from what three little words he might have mis-said, which brought the whole thing

crashing down. And so I don't contribute to Rutgers. It's not a big contribution, we're not talking about millions of dollars, but that's just the way it is.

KP: Is there any other sense of Rutgers that you are not pleased with, or unhappy with? How much has the institution where you went to school changed in your mind?

IP: This is not the institution I went to school at. It isn't from before the war, certainly, and it isn't even close from after the war. The policy was you passed the SAT's and you got good grades, and you got admitted. Period. After a while, they opened a campus over near Metuchen. It's not there anymore. Is it there?

KP: Metuchen? No.

IP: It's not called Metuchen. It used to be part of the Raritan Arsenal, and they put a Rutgers division there. They opened it to accept people who academically were not prepared.

KP: Livingston College?

IP: Livingston College. I wasn't too keen on that, but okay, it's there, and things have not gotten better since. I taught at Columbia for a while, and I was amazed to have people coming through in medical school, who could not speak English. Who could not do simple math. Tell them you wanted so many percent solution in an IV, and they didn't know how to do it. This is not affirmative to anybody's health, and I think academia is the one place in the world where a lot of the stuff which hasn't worked in Russia hasn't worked anyplace else. Still exists, and is protected. I don't know how you fall out on that, either of you, but I went back to when you got there because you could do the work and not because somebody thought you should be there.

KP: It's interesting what you're saying, but it's strange in terms of the people I've interviewed. I did have a doctor who said he got in on a quota in the Thirties. He was not Jewish or Italian, but he said all the Jewish and Italian doctors had to have straight As. But he only had a B+ average. He got in because he had then the quota for white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Do you think you had any of that in your era? That you had to be better?

IP: Oh, yeah. That went without saying. There is no question about it. The interesting thing about medicine, when I went to medical school ...

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

KP: You were saying when you went to medical school ...

IP: What were we talking about before that?

KP: I mentioned how hard it was to go through medical school.

IP: Oh, yeah. There was nobody there, regardless of how they got in, who didn't fulfill the criteria. Now a B+ average, it may not be an A or an A- average, but it's certainly adequate. I never took the SAT's, I don't think they had them then, but if they did I did not participate. But my two kids took the SAT's, one of them got a 1600. The other one didn't do quite as well, she came out with a 1540, or something like that. They were qualified for any university in the country. And there should be some return of serious academic credentials or credentialling to admissions, to graduate schools, and everything else. What's happened over the years is kind of interesting. When I went to college, everybody on the faculty was a white, Protestant American. A few Catholics. When I went to medical school, all the doctors on the faculty were white, Protestant Americans and a few Catholics, one or two Jews. After a while, it became apparent that the white, Protestant Americans with a lot of money, were not interested in medicine anymore. They let in more Jews. And more Catholics. And more of this, that, and the other. They weren't interested. Give it up! And they gave it up. And now, if you look, people my age, a large proportion of the doctors are Jewish. And they in turn are giving it up. They are going to Wall Street, and law school, one thing or another now. When I look around some of the hospitals, I don't see any old standard American faces anymore. I don't see many. I see Orientals, and aside from their qualifications, it's a social phenomenon. A bunch of people don't go there anymore.

KP: And you've seen that transition over your career?

IP: Oh, yeah. I used to be in awe of these people named (Piu?), who owned Sunoco, and whose son was a doctor. And these people, named something else, who owned Coca-Cola, whose son was my radiology instructor. They could afford this. It was what the leisure class did to feel useful. That has sure as hell changed.

KP: Those are interesting observations, all around.

IP: Well ...

KP: Thank you.

IP: If you are done asking, I am done talking.

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

Scott Ceresnak Reviewed 3/3/97

Sandra Stewart Holyoak Reviewed 5/10/99