

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL AARON ROCKLAND

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins our fourth interview with Professor Michael Aaron Rockland. This interview is taking place on November 11, 2009, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Dan Rugiero: ... Dan Rugiero.

SI: Thank you very much for coming back.

Michael Rockland: Great to be here, guys.

SI: Thank you for spending Veterans Day here with us. Thank you for your service.

MR: Thank you.

SI: To begin, I wanted to just ask more about the Chancellor of Higher Education's Office. You mentioned some of the bad things, some of the relationship with Rutgers, during your year there. What about some of the positive things that you saw, in your opinion, that you were involved in at the office? For example, were you involved in the development of the Educational Opportunity Fund Program?

MR: A little bit, yes. That certainly was, I think, perhaps, the most important achievement of the Department of Higher Education. We were increasingly recognizing that higher education was a privilege, rather than a right, and that it should be a right, or close to a right, and that there were many very promising people of humble backgrounds who simply could not go to college. I daresay we're in a period right now where that's being repeated, [laughter] though not as badly as before. ... Of course, there was a long, not a tradition, but the fact is, Rutgers was much more of a lily-white institution. I don't know that this was overt racism, but it certainly was covert racism, ... and so, since those days, and the EOF Program had a lot to do with it, public institutions around the country, not just Rutgers, have recognized it as a responsibility of theirs to reach out to those groups who have been traditionally disenfranchised from a higher education, namely women and minorities, and among minorities, especially African-Americans. We seem to almost have succeeded too much on the women's front, [laughter] because we now find ourselves with a disparity between female and male students at universities around the country. We have more women students than male students; fifty-fifty sounds like a better idea to me.

SI: Do you remember anything specifically that you did at the Chancellor of Higher Education's Office that affected the EOF Program?

MR: Well, not me personally, because I was a staff member and I was secretary to the Board of Higher Education. That was one of my tasks as the Chancellor's executive assistant, and EOF was a much discussed and much debated program, ... but I didn't have a vote. I was the one preparing the documents, the papers, and maybe the public relations about it, and it was controversial at the time. There were some people who felt that this was going too far and that this was not government's function, that sort of thing.

SI: Did they ever have you go talk to anybody or try to twist any arms?

MR: Not specifically on that issue, no, but, here we are, all these years later, and it's still very much a viable program. ... I think it's just simply not only changed the complexion of our University, and other universities and colleges and stuff, but the societal [impact]. This has had so much to do with the growing black middle-class, for example. ... Of course, any kind of affirmative action that you get into is always going to have its downside ... and I think you have to recognize that. Almost any social program you're going to want to have is going to hopefully ameliorate some injustices, but you've got to recognize it's going to create other injustices, and to not see that, I think, is naïve. ... What I mean by that is, ... as you're trying to do something for a group identified as disadvantaged, do you simultaneously disadvantage individuals who come from so-called privileged groups, and is that fair? Do you, almost inevitably, in trying to redress a wrong, create another wrong, perhaps a lesser wrong? I think it was a lesser wrong in this case, but, still, a wrong.

SI: In the last interview, you used the example of Professor Angus Gillespie.

MR: Yes, right, Angus, ... who's been my colleague and friend, and with whom I've written a book [*Looking for America on the New Jersey Turnpike* (Rutgers University Press, 1989)] now. ... We've been together about thirty-five years, and he was on the brink of being fired by the University, simply because he was an untenured, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male. [laughter] ... So, you try to do things. If I haven't mentioned this before, I remember, at one point, the University was so keen on trying to get to our University, ... Latino professors that they said [we could hire someone], and we were so small, we were and still are very small, in American Studies, but we're a lot larger now than we were, but we were very small, and to get one more faculty position was gold, was everything I, as chair, wanted. ... So, I got me a Latino professor, was a nice guy, the only problem was, he couldn't speak Spanish, and I can, you know, and I'm a *gringo*, [laughter] and I had looked forward to being able to use my Spanish, to practice my Spanish on an everyday basis. ... This guy, who was a Latino, because he had a Latino last name, because his father happened to be a Guatemalan immigrant, became a member of our faculty for some time, and it always seemed to me, "This is pretty peculiar." In some ways, he was less Latino than I am. [laughter] He just had the right last name, and so, I think you see, often, when you try to ameliorate social wrongs, or disequities, that you make some mistakes, and this was one of them, I think. Nice guy, again, I'm not putting him down, I'm just saying he considered himself a Latino but he couldn't speak Spanish, or an Hispanic who couldn't speak Spanish, I should say.

SI: It was not just an expectation to hire a Latino professor; he was also expected to teach within that subject matter. Is that the issue you are getting at, to teach more Latino-oriented material?

MR: I guess we had hoped to expand on our material in that area, and maybe we did, a little bit, because of his interests, but, no, we had to get an American Studies guy and ... how many Latinos are there who have gone through PhD programs and gotten [them] in American Studies? I mean, you can probably count them on these two hands, yet, he was an American Studies guy.

He could do what the rest of us do, but he didn't necessarily bring an added dimension and, as I say, just personally, I couldn't speak Spanish with him. [laughter]

SI: Okay, the way you said it, I was not sure if his being there prevented you from teaching either something related to the Spanish language or Spanish culture.

MR: No, no. I teach a course, fairly regularly, called "The United States As Seen From Abroad," and, in that course, I try to bring in [my experience], and my first two books concerned how the Spanish-speaking world sees us, and, no, I've gone on teaching that course. [Editor's Note: Professor Rockland is referring to his books *Sarmiento's Travels in the United States in 1847* (Princeton University Press, 1970) and *America in the Fifties and Sixties: Julian Marias on the United States* (Penn State University Press, 1972).] Every three or four years, I do it again, but he didn't really bring us much of an international or a transnational [experience]. I'm not saying all Latinos one might hire would exhibit these characteristics, but it just always seemed, to me, terribly funny that I was teaching him Spanish, rather than him teaching me. [laughter]

SI: In the last interview, you also talked about the incident where the African-American students threw their trays in Cooper Hall, which led to your involvement in a committee that produced recommendations on how to better address the needs of the African-American students.

MR: Yes.

SI: We did not really talk about how that played out at Douglass. This all happened when you were a dean.

MR: Yes, it happened days, after I arrived to be a dean at Douglass, and it was really quite shocking to me, because I had spent my '60s, essentially, in the Diplomatic Service, and then, a year in state government. By the time I got here, it was January 20, 1969, and the day I started, same day, Richard Nixon started in the White House. [laughter] ... Not too many days after that, this event happened and I just wasn't used to it. It was emblematic of the revolutionary rhetoric and behavior of the '60s. There was such a perception, in the '60s, that this country had gone totally wrong. Vietnam was the main energizing force, but this, of course, ... the anti-Vietnam War movement, encouraged all kinds of other movements, and the most prominent of those was the ethnic movement, and the most prominent among them was the African-American or black movement. ... I had never experienced or witnessed behavior like this before. I didn't know that people were quite so exercised about things, because I spent the '60s in the Establishment. On the very lowest of levels, I was one of the guys that David Halberstam was talking about in his great book, *The Best and the Brightest* [(1972)]. I don't think I was either the best or the brightest, but, on a lower level, I was one of those who, at least at first, saw nothing wrong with the Vietnam War and didn't, at first, understand the dimensions of black anger. And as far as Vietnam, it took me awhile to change my mind about that. It helped when I was about to be sent there. [laughter] Then, I really had to think about it. ...

SI: Did your office, in your deanship at Douglass, do specific things to try to either address the African-American students' issues or bring in more African-American students?

MR: Yes. Well, this commission that I think I mentioned before was set up, and I was the chair. ... We had the president of the Black Students Congress, Maxine Sumey, and we had somebody named Josie Torres, who was of Puerto Rican extraction, and then, we had the Douglass president of the student body, and then, we had a guy named, Harvey Waterman, who's been with the Graduate School-[New Brunswick], I think, ever since then, as a professor, and myself as a dean and professor chairing it. [Editor's Note: Professor Harvey Waterman was then an Assistant Professor of Political Science, Douglass College. He began working as a dean at the Graduate School-New Brunswick in 1972.] I think it was the five of us, and we held hearings that went on for some months. ... We came up with a report, which was issued publically, and much was made of it, where we had ... certain very specific suggestions. In those days, as you can imagine, the whole notion of, for example, a Black Studies department was something that no one was thinking about, except maybe some black students were thinking about it, but nobody was thinking about Black Studies or Women's Studies or, later, Gay Studies. ... In a sense, my education at the University of Minnesota, way back then, ... in American studies, was kind of a reflection of where the nation was at that time. I've often said, hope I haven't said ... this before on this tape, that though we in American studies thought we were doing something revolutionary, we were beating on the doors of the English and history departments, which we felt; English was into the New Criticism, where they are ...

SI: Yes, you talked about that.

MR: Did I talk about that? and history, essentially, was about Presidents and wars, and, in a sense, American studies is cultural history. So, we thought we were doing wonderful things in American studies in the early days, but, pretty soon, we discovered that we, and it paralleled the nation, ... had swept so much of American history under the carpet, the genocide against American Indians, the treatment of African-Americans, three hundred years of slavery, a hundred years of Jim Crow and mistreatment, and women, gays, the list goes on and on. It was [a long list], and so, I arrived here at Rutgers just as that sort of thing was happening. ... At first, like a lot of other people, I found it rather astounding, because I thought, "Well, we've got American history, what are you people complaining about? You're in it," but, of course, we soon began to see how little they were in it, how there was an incredible bias in the way history was taught, and we in American studies shared that bias. We were not [above it]. Maybe we were doing cultural history better than the History Department, ... but we were ignoring so much of what America is, and so, that was really [a change]. It was a great privilege for me, from two points of view. First of all, I was a dean at a women's college. ... I was the male token and ... it educated me as a man, really. I think that was a very, very important part of my education, really coming to see women as people, [laughter] not just as sex objects. I don't know that I ever just saw them as sex objects, ... but I think I had typical male attitudes. It's interesting, unless I've talked about this before, how that's reflected in my personal life, that my first wife was a stay-at-home mom and my second wife is a professional woman, and I had as much to do. I couldn't bear the children, but, other than that, I think I had as much to do with the raising, the diapering and everything else, of my second set of kids as my wife has had, in some cases, more, because my schedule was more flexible than hers. ... Being at Douglass College, and, later, marrying somebody who was at Douglass College, really had a lot to do with enriching my life, really,

bringing a dimension into it that might not otherwise have come into it. Like a lot of other men, I guess, I thought some of this was silly, but, as more and more time went on, I saw it wasn't silly at all. It was dead serious and it was very, very important, and look at our situation in the world today. We generally recognize the notion that societies where women are fully enfranchised are societies which are more prosperous, get that right out there, happier, less warlike, perhaps, and less fanatical. An item in this morning's [*New York*] *Times*, Maureen Dowd, writing about some of these [issues in an op-ed piece], and [she was] wondering whether women have ... more common sense and are more practical than men. That might be a stereotype, but I think there's a lot of truth in that, that men do tend to think, sometimes, too much, in abstract terms; maybe that's why we go to war so doggone much. Women are much better, I think, at seeking a non-belligose solution to problems, both in personal relationships and, also, internationally. So, a lot of what happened to me at Douglass, in those early days, was being educated by women and was a great privilege. It really was.

SI: It is probably obvious, but Douglass, it seems, had already fully embraced the Women's Liberation Movement and feminism.

MR: Oh, yes. I would say that, certainly in those days, Douglass, being the largest women's college in the world, and, yet, at the same time, part of Rutgers University, was, ... if you had to pick a place, and I say this with great pride, the very center of women's studies, the growth of enfranchisement of women, getting women into sciences, getting women into politics, and, of course, the Eagleton Institute of Politics, being right here on our campus, and the Center for American Women and Politics. [Editor's Note: The Eagleton Institute of Politics conducts research into and provides current data about politics and government. As part of the Eagleton Institute, the Center for American Women and Politics provides scholarly research and data about women in politics and government and examines women's leadership and involvement in politics.] I think we're up to thirteen US Senators now; that's a hell of a lot better than none or one. We should have fifty, but, at least we've made headway and so much of the agitation for that was happening right on the Douglass Campus, and the Center for American Women and Politics, in particular, was instrumental in making a lot of this happen, and so, I was very privileged. I was this male who was cheering for the females, is really what I was doing, increasingly so, as I saw the justice and the benefit in that, and their desires to [be treated equally].

SI: You mentioned demonstrations and forms of protest related to the anti-war movement, the black student movement, the artist awakening; were there any in relation to the Women's Liberation Movement? Were there protests centered on advancing feminism?

MR: Well, I would say that Douglass was, in many ways, the center. Of all the colleges, I think it was the most distinct, not just because it was a women's college, but because there was more sentiment here to keeping the old Rutgers Federated Plan, and, to this day, I think this university has made a great mistake. I think we had a better university when the colleges were distinct. The deans of the colleges were essentially presidents and the colleges really took care of their own business, and then, there were, of course, university-wide concerns and the president oversaw those, and Douglass, again, was [more autonomous?]. So, first, in the reorganization,

they took the faculty out of the colleges and they set up something that was called a fellow's program, which simply did not work. [Editor's Note: With the reorganization of the faculty into the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1981, Rutgers University centralized its academic operations in campus-wide provosts' offices and separated many executive powers from the college deans. After 1981, the Deans of Douglass and the Douglass College Fellows were tasked with shaping the college's mission, setting policies on admission, honors and graduation requirements, established new programs, coordinated campus operations, administering student life and advising students.] The fact of the matter is, up until then, the Douglass Dean was your boss. Now, the Douglass Dean was, you know, sort of a dotted line out there, not a direct line above you, a dotted line, maybe out to the side, and so, Douglass, I think, was at the very center of, "Let's not do this reorganization," and, in fact, there was a New York Times article on President Edward Bloustein, and I was the one picked as his opposition. [Editor's Note: Edward J. Bloustein was Rutgers President from 1971 to 1989. The article Professor Rockland refers to is "Rutgers 'Unification' Plan Causes Division; Rutgers 'Unification' Plan Leads to Division at University 'Successes Have Been Marginal' Student Group Opposes Plan Part of Faculty Backs Plan National Ranking Debated," by Samuel Weiss, published on Thursday, May 8, 1980.] I was just one of the people, I didn't deserve such attention, ... yes, and then, just more recently, where now we were about to take the students out of the college, the rallies, ... that I know of, were all taking place on the Douglass Campus to oppose that, and I spoke at some of these rallies and I just thought this was another dreadful mistake.

SI: Let us talk about the early 1980s first.

MR: Okay.

SI: I guess it was the late 1970s as well when this must have started, talking about moving towards what became the Faculty of the Arts and Sciences.

MR: Yes, well, that was late '70s, because it happened in the early '80s. '81-'82, I think is when it happened.

SI: Did you join any kind of committee or group that was opposed to this, or was it just, like you said, that all of the Douglass faculty was vocally against this?

MR: I don't think there was any particular group as such. As you say, I think there was almost a universal feeling on the Douglass Campus that this was a mistake and we were all part of it. ... I guess I was as outspoken as anyone else, but I can't recall that we created some kind of organization as such. In retrospect, we probably should have.

SI: Do you think your concerns were at least listened to by whoever was making the decisions, I guess Old Queens? Do you think they gave you a reasonable opportunity to voice your concerns about this?

MR: Well, we did voice our concerns. I don't know that there were opportunities as such, but we held meetings, we held rallies, we did things. The thing that leaped into my mind just now

was how much attention was paid by the administration when it was decided to get rid of six Olympic sports just ... a few years ago. [Editor's Note: In 2006, following a massive cut in state aid, Rutgers University announced it would be reducing men's heavyweight crew, men's lightweight crew, men's fencing, men's swimming and diving, men's tennis and women's fencing to club team status.] The people opposed to that, and I'm one of them, were vocal and I think that was a very serious mistake. ... Partly, there were Title IX considerations, the idea of too many more male athletes than female athletes, and then, there's the whole issue of the football team, because the football team [is] as big as, you know, as ten other teams put together, in terms of total numbers, which is, of course, a problem, but, when you had parents, and others throughout the state, saying that they had three million dollars in pledges, ... which would have kept those six teams going; one of the teams that was discontinued was a women's team and five were men's teams. [Editor's Note: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires gender equity in any educational program or activity that receives federal funding.] I think it was the fencing team, both men's and women's, which was done away with; that was the only women's team done away with, and, apparently, ... those six teams, all together, coaches' salaries, travel, food, hotels, whatever, cost eight hundred thousand dollars. That's all it cost, and there were pledges of three million dollars, and, even if half of that had been collected, literally, these teams could have been supported by external funds, and, still, the administration turned a deaf ear to that. I think that's a terrible mistake, I mean, goodness, and those people are still out there and they're still doggone angry and it was just absolutely unnecessary, I think. So, sometimes, I think, ... you get something set in, either we as individuals, or institutions, get something set in their heads, or our heads, and we just plow straight ahead, and it is ironic, is it not? that Robert Mulcahy, who was then the Athletic Director [from 1998 to 2008] is the one who, well, he didn't fall on his sword, ... but he was definitely stabbed, done away with, when, as far as I know, he was doing his job and carrying out the University's mission as it was declared. [Editor's Note: Professor Rockland is referring to Robert Mulcahy's removal as Athletic Director at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 academic year.] ... It's as if he became the martyr, or the sacrificial lamb, for a lot of things we had decided to do in athletics, especially the doing away with those six teams, which, to me, was absolutely gratuitous and stupid. It was just plain stupid, absolutely unnecessary. So, yes, I love this institution. I've been here, they gave me a chair last May, [laughter] having been here forty years, and I would "do and die" for Rutgers, but I also think we've made some mistakes.

SI: When you first came here as a dean, you talked a little bit about your relationship with the faculty. The example that stands out is the professor who would not talk. You had to go try to convince him to talk. [laughter] Can you talk a little bit more about your relationship with the faculty at that point, what kinds of things you would do with them?

MR: Sure, yes. I may have already said that I felt like something like a double agent, because I was young, ... the youngest member of the administration, and so, in a sense, I was both trying to, on the one hand, reform the administration to make it more flexible and open-minded, liberal, ... progressive, all those good words; on the other hand, trying to keep a lid on some of the faculty actions which I thought would be deleterious to the University. ... I already mentioned, and funny how the arts became very political, I mentioned, I believe, the *Flux-Mass*, and it was followed by another event that I don't believe I mentioned before and that was the *Orgies and*

Mysteries Theater [*Orgies-Mysteries Theater*]. [Editor's Note: In 1970, Rutgers University Professor of Art Geoffrey Hendricks brought Austrian Actionist artist Hermann Nitsch's *Orgies-Mysteries Theater* and avant-garde Fluxus art movement founder George Maciunas' *Flux-Mass* to Rutgers University.] [laughter] I mean, it's funny in retrospect, but it wasn't funny then. The leader of ... those forces that thought that Rutgers, artistically, was out of control, ... and, again, let's remember that, even before I came to Rutgers, Douglass College was, in a sense, the very center of the Happenings Movement in the arts, which still goes on. Now, it's called performance art and that sort of thing, but goes on in all kinds of ways. Allan Kaprow, who was in the Art Department then [from 1963 to 1973], who I think recently died, was really a national figure in Happenings. [Editor's Note: Allan Kaprow created the "Happening" concept in art at an event at the Reuben Gallery in New York in October 1959. Professor Kaprow passed away in April 2006.] ... So, one of my jobs, as Assistant Dean of Douglass, was to serve as the administration's representative on the Voorhees Assembly Board and the Voorhees Assembly Board had private funds, which we could use to put on programs at the University, and, usually, often, these were of a political nature and world events-oriented and that sort of thing, but we also put on some artistic events. Geoffrey Hendricks, who was then in the Art Department and who was chair of the Voorhees Assembly Board, had been a major figure in the Happenings Movement, and he'd been a friend of ... John Lennon and Yoko Ono. ... By this time, John Lennon and Yoko Ono were doing all; life had become a Happening for them, rather than the music of the Beatles, and much of that was transported here and much of it was on the Douglass Campus and the *Flux-Mass* was the first of these. ... As I recall, the main opposition person was the Episcopal chaplain, a guy named Clarence Lambelet, and Clarence had come to the *Flux-Mass*, and after that, he got out his mimeograph machine. [Editor's Note: The *Flux-Mass*, a parody of the Roman Catholic Mass, was held at Voorhees Chapel on the Douglass Campus on February 17, 1970.] I don't even know if we had Xerox machines then, [laughter] but, in any case, he reproduced stuff and sent out stuff and there was hell to pay. ... One of the things I was trying to do was to calm Clarence down, "First Amendment, hey, free expression, look," but he felt the *Flux-Mass* was literally offensive, in particular. Although ... he was not the Catholic chaplain, he thought it was literally offensive to Catholics, that it was making fun of the Catholic Mass, and so, ... I did succeed in calming him down and he said, "Well, if nothing like this ever happens again..." I said, "Well, if it's up to me, it won't happen again." Well, I was wrong, [laughter] because I was outvoted at the Voorhees Assembly Board, which decided to put on something called the *Orgies and Mysteries Theater*. [Editor's Note: The *Orgies-Mysteries Theater* took place in the Round House on the Cook-Douglass College Campus on October 8, 1970.] This was a German artist named Hermann Nitsch and he came and we had this thing out at the Round House on the Cook Campus. ... I went to it, and, oh, nuts, there was Clarence, with ballpoint and pad in hand, ready to take notes, and this thing made the *Flux-Mass* seem like kids' stuff, compared to it. [laughter] ... The centerpiece of this thing was a sheep, a sheep's body, that was hanging in the center of the Round House on the Cook Campus; I don't know if it's still there. I suspect it is there. It's a place where you exhibit animals and you have stands around it and you can do things down in the center with animals. Anyway, this sheep was dead, and Nitsch was trying to say something about war and about the Nazis. I mean, his intentions were perfectly good, but, basically, he was playing Nazi music, and then, there was this whole thing that the sheep's body represented those murdered by the Nazis, or any kind of [victims of war], and, of course, then, it was the Vietnam War, any kind of wars anywhere and the victims of those

wars, and the terrible barbarism, etc. ... Then, people in the audience were invited to sort of climb inside the sheep's carcass, get their heads inside the sheep's carcass, and then, there was blood poured and there was urine. I don't know if it was actually urine; it looked like urine, it was supposed to be urine, poured on them and on the sheep and the Nazi music and the sheep's body swinging side to side, and I think he saw the sheep as ... almost as a Christian symbol; the sheep was Jesus or crucified, or I think that's what he had in mind. I'm not really sure, ... because I sat there next to Clarence. He was writing feverishly in his pad. I thought, "Oh, no," and then, to make things worse, the ASPCA [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] arrived and was going to arrest [someone], "Who's in charge here?" I wasn't sure who was in charge. "[Is] there a dean here?" I was the dean. "Well, we're going to arrest you," and ... they wanted to arrest Geoffrey Hendricks and myself, literally arrest us, and they had guns. I couldn't believe it, that the ASPCA carried guns, but, apparently, they are allowed to, in certain circumstances, be armed, and this was apparently judged one of those circumstances. They had come to make a citizen's arrest and turn us over to the police, and it was really [tense]. [laughter] At the last minute, somebody pointed out, "Wait a minute, this sheep had not been, first of all, ... killed as part of this ceremony." I mean, you see Hollywood movies where it says, "No animals were hurt in this [production]." Well, this animal was dead, but, then, it was discovered that the animal had been killed earlier in the day by the University slaughterer. I had no idea we had an official University slaughterer, but this person was attached, I guess, to the Cook Campus and had, according to law, ... killed this sheep, and so, it was legit, what was going on, especially because there was food to be barbecued afterwards; the sheep was to be eaten. ... So, the ASPCA retired from the scene, which I was very glad of, but, meanwhile, Clarence was still writing away in his pad, and, the next day, you should forgive my vernacular, the shit really hit the fan, because, ... now, he cranked up his PR operation and went out to every legislator, to the Governor, to every Congressperson, to everyone on his mailing list, I guess of Episcopalians around the state, ... and there were certainly enough of those. ... Now, this was an absolute nightmare, and it was my nightmare. In fact, I still have the file on this thing. It seems to me the perfect test case of, "Should there be limits placed on the arts?" I mean, it's a very difficult issue. On the one hand, you're for free expression, especially in the arts, and especially, as a writer, for me, that's true, but at what point do the arts become truly offensive? The whole issue of how do you define hate speech, for example, and is the University too PC? Is the University really a place for the free exchange of important ideas or do we stifle the free exchange of ideas because we think there are certain truths and those truths are not to be violated? It's a heck of an issue, and I don't know what the answer is, but my life, for the next six months, was something. I mean, Congressmen were coming to [campus]. Millicent Fenwick, I think was a Congresswoman then, and she came to Douglass and we had lunch and talked about this thing and I tried to calm her down, and, basically, I was just putting out fires. [Editor's Note: Millicent Fenwick was then a member of the New Jersey General Assembly. She served in the US House of Representatives from 1975 to 1983.] The *New York Times* had an editorial about the *Orgies and Mysteries Theater*, the *Star-Ledger*, every news media imaginable was commenting, and, in every case, I think, negatively. "This was a further sign of the idiocy of universities," from the point of view of the media. "University people were crazy and professors were egging on students," is what they would argue, and, ... again, this was taking place during a time of general ferment about a lot of other issues we've discussed, but, you know, what's so funny about it is ...

that this was coming out of the, quote, "arts," unquote, and it raised more of a hullabaloo than anything I could remember during those years.

SI: Was this after the shutdown in 1970 or before it?

MR: I don't remember the date exactly; I think it would have been after, yes. It was around that time. I was only a dean for three years, from January of '69 to January of '72, but, boy, [laughter] those years were packed with things like this on an everyday basis, practically, and in retrospect, I'm glad for it. It was very exciting, but it was so in contrast to the world I knew as a diplomat. Of course, that world has changed so much. The world I knew as a diplomat was one in which, as an American diplomat overseas, you didn't feel unsafe, you didn't feel menaced, you didn't take particular security precautions. Diplomats didn't get kidnapped and murdered, their houses weren't burned down or bombed or whatever. Embassies were open institutions. The cultural center I directed in Madrid was just a wide-open place. Anybody could come in there and everybody did, but things have certainly changed for us overseas. Embassies are fortresses. It's funny to be back in Argentina and Spain, embassies where I served, and I can hardly get in the building. ... One other thing I think I'd like to touch on, if I may, unless I have before, and that is the question of the Rutgers Police. Have I discussed that at all?

SI: No, you have not. You just alluded to it once.

MR: Okay, because I feel very strongly about this. When I first came here, we did not have any Rutgers Police. We had the Campus Patrol. They were unarmed. The Campus Patrol were our friends. The Campus Patrol were people of honor and they were here to help you. I remember, one time, I had a flat tire on this campus, in our parking lot, and a campus patrolman was helping me fix it. A campus patrolman would escort women students back to their dorms. They were lantern men often, and women. ... They did provide security, but with no evidence [of weapons]. They may have carried clubs, but they certainly didn't carry guns, and I think we were the better for it. I mean, if a university can't exist without armed people patrolling it, what institution can? and I don't know this for a fact, but, given my particular politics, I would bet we're a more violent place than we were then and this isn't what justifies armed police; I'd bet the armed police are one reason we may have more violence. ... So, what happened was, the New Brunswick Police and State Police kept making fun of the Campus Patrol, "You're not real cops. You don't carry guns. You're not real men. You're a bunch of sissies. You're a bunch of wimps," whatever. I think that was part of it, and I think that the Campus Patrol said, "Hey, we want to be real cops," and the Board of Governors, one day, gave them permission. They had to get the training, obviously, but, then, gave them the permission to carry guns in the dark hours, that is, those hours would change a little bit with the seasons, but, at night, they were armed, and then, some years after that, the Board of Governors, on a Friday, voted to have the Campus Police, as they were now called, not "patrol," I think that's a very importantly different word, ... gave them permission to carry guns twenty-four hours a day. ... I think, from that moment on, the feeling of students and faculty and staff, whatever, vis-à-vis Campus Police radically changed. They were no longer our friends. They were not necessarily the enemy, but, well, I don't like to talk to people who have guns on. I try to stay away from them. I mean, their guns might go off, and, as a kid growing up in the Bronx, I was nearly killed by a policeman, was

doing absolutely nothing, ... as I look back. ... Now, we had the police, and, if I'm not mistaken, I hope I haven't telescoped these events, but ... I remember, the Board of Governors always would meet on a Friday and I believe that the Board of Governors voted on a Friday that the police could carry guns twenty-four hours a day and the very next day, as I remember it, anyway, it's a long time ago, it could be that it wasn't the next day, but I remember it as the next day. So, what you remember is what's true for you, which is a commentary on these very sessions, is it not? I mean, you remember what you choose to remember, which is what's the matter with memoir, in a way; not the matter with it, but, in a sense, memoir is fiction, to a certain extent, even when you tell the truth as much as you can. Anyway, the very next day, as I recall it, a campus patrolman, patrolling on the Cook Campus, which was very much more rural then, we hadn't built all those buildings out there then, it was basically a farm, and he was out there somewhere and apparently tripped. ... Apparently, the safety on his pistol wasn't on and the gun went off and shot him in the abdomen and he bled to death before anybody had found him, and it was like, "Wow, the Board of Governors gives the cops," and, now, they were cops, "permission to carry guns, and the very next day," again, as I recall, "one of them dies." ... You can't make this stuff up. As somebody who writes fiction, I'd never put that in a novel. It's just too damn coincidental, but that's what happened, and it was absolutely shocking, so that, as I recall, the [Daily] *Targum* [the official student newspaper of Rutgers University], on that Monday, had two stories, "Cops now carry guns," and, "Cop dead over the weekend," [laughter] right there on the front page, but, again, that's what I choose to remember, or do remember, about it.

SI: Are we talking mostly about your reaction and your opinion or were you involved in any discussions about this on an official level?

MR: No, I remember no, and I think this was a mistake, I remember no, the University Administration, never asking for any kind of hearings on this. It just plain came up, almost as a *pro forma* thing. "Oh, sure, they're cops, they should have guns." You know, we, in many ways, are the murder capital of the world, here in the United States, and I think that's a sad thing about our country. ... You go to countries which have very much lower murder rates and you notice that the cops are very different and one of the things that's very different about them is they don't carry guns most of the time. ... The British "bobby" [police officer] is a ... very different kind of figure. In Japan as well, the police, I think, rarely carry guns and the murder rate in those countries is something like two percent, proportional to the population, two to three percent of what it is here in the United States, and you could say, "Well, we need the cops to carry guns because we've got so many murders going on." I would reverse that and argue that if the police were to, slowly, maybe not overnight, disarm, it would be kind of a signal to the rest of the population as to what kind of country we are, not to mention all the handgun laws that we desperately need, and look at the tragedy in Fort Hood the other day. [Editor's Note: On November 5, 2009, US Army Major Nidal Malik Hassan, who was a practicing psychologist at Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Hood, opened fire at a military processing center on base, killing thirteen and wounding over thirty others.] You know, you can buy guns in some places in this country as quickly as you can buy a lollipop, and that's just [unsettling], and the rest of the world thinks we're crazy, by the way. I went to Canada a little while ago and lectured in all of the major [cities], did a lecture tour straight across Canada, for our State Department, my old outfit, going through all of the Canadian cities and was interviewed on either radio or television

in each city. ... The one issue that came up every time was guns, that the Canadians think we're crazy. They just plain think we're crazy. They admire us in many ways, like us in many ways, and, let's face it, they are the people on the Earth closest to us. They're accents are almost indiscernible as different from American accents of all sorts, but, on this gun thing, they think we're nuts. ... I would love to disarm the Rutgers Police and go back to; if they want to call themselves "police," fine, rather than "patrol," but if we got to the point where, maybe, the only time they should ever wear a gun is where there is an absolute perceived threat, I think this would be a better place if that were to occur.

SI: To go back to, as you said, putting out these fires after the *Orgies-Mysteries Theater*, how much freedom did you have in doing that? I would think, today, somebody dealing with that kind of public relations nightmare would have to check with this office, check with that office, get the official line. What was the case then? Were you just given the freedom to try to calm these people down and explain the situation?

MR: Yes, well, I was the main actor in trying to do that. Obviously, I was checking with the Douglass Dean, because much of the flak was coming directly to her, and then, she'd pass it on to me, and the President of the University, of course, was very much involved. I remember, not only remember, but I have this file. Some day, I think, I should publish this thing as a case history, the two sides of free artistic expression, "Should there be limits placed and what limits do you place?" I don't know the answer to that, but there was a letter from, I think his name was Charles Brower, for whom Brower Commons here is named, to Mason Gross, who was then our President, saying, "Mason, what the hell goes on at [Douglass College]?" and he was then Chairman of the Board of Governors, Brower was. [laughter] ... He said, "Mason, what the hell is going on? What is it with these crazy people over there on the Douglass Campus?" in particular the Douglass Campus, and it's interesting that Mason, in his reply, said something like, "Well, yes, the Douglass Campus has always thought of itself as kind of separate from the rest of the University, a little bit, and I do have difficulties keeping things under control," which was kind of funny, that he would say something like that. [laughter]

SI: How did you get this letter?

MR: Well, everything that came into the Dean, in this case, when Brower wrote to Mason Gross, she was copied, and then, everything she got, I got. ... This particular folder, I should get it out, is just so amusing and so funny, really, and, by the way, it's interesting that, just about three or four years ago, Geoffrey Hendricks, who has by now retired from the Art Department, organized a redo ... of the *Flux-Mass*, which took place in the Voorhees Chapel, and it took place, I think, on a weekend. ... Geoffrey put out a book [*Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University, 1958-1972* (Rutgers University Press, 2003)] and I was asked to write a chapter in that book, and I did. I called it "[Not] Present at the Creation." I had, of course, been present at the Flux-Mass and *Orgies and Mysteries Theater*, but I arrived after the earlier period of Happenings led by Allan Kaprow I stole the title from Dean Acheson, who was [President Harry] Truman's Secretary of State, [the title of his 1969 memoir], *Present at the Creation*, and I was referring to being present at some of these events but not all. ... The book was all about the *Flux-Mass* and the *Orgies and Mysteries Theater* and the

Happenings Movement in general ... and it's a good little book. I mean, it's interesting, but, anyway, the fact that Geoffrey ... actually organized the *Flux-Mass* all over again, all these years later, and it happened quietly on a weekend. ... He actually found so many of the people who had been in it twenty-five [earlier], it was the twenty-fifth anniversary ... of the *Flux-Mass*, and he found so many of the same people. It was so funny to see these people, who I had never seen [in] all this time. The guy who acted as the head priest of the *Flux-Mass*, an Asian-American, now had gray hair, and they did the same thing that they did the first time, but it was done in a sort of a lighter and sillier kind of way. ... There were mechanical birds flying around in the chapel and, at the very end of the thing, Geoffrey did a headstand. Here he was, a retired professor, he did this interminable headstand. He just did [it], had nothing to do with the event, but it was terribly funny and, after that, there was a reception over in the Mason Gross offices on Livingston Avenue and it was a lot of fun. ... What was interesting about it is, nothing hit the media, nothing hit the press, nothing at all happened, that I know of. Of course, I wasn't a dean then, maybe some things did happen that I wasn't privy to, but, as far as I know, it came off perfectly without any dissent or any problems with it at all. ... Again, I think it was simply because it wasn't an all-campus thing, the press wasn't there, nobody knew about it, except a select group of people who were invited to it, ... many of whom had been at the original one, and this was like, it was like a reunion of the *Flux-Mass*, [laughter] is really what it was, a high-spirited thing.

DR: After the *Orgies-Mysteries Theater*, you said you spent about six months trying to calm everyone down. What kind of conclusion did they come to? Were they going to allow this sort of artistic expression or were you told to try to curb this type of thing in the future? Did anything like this occur afterwards, another crazy event?

MR: The *Flux-Mass* and the *Orgies and Mysteries* were the two biggies. I think we were in a position, and I was in a position as a dean, to say, even though I was compromised, because I was the administrative representative to the Voorhees Assembly Board that put on these things, so, in a sense, people are going, "Why didn't you stop it?" Well, the great virtue of the University, any university, is that deans don't stop anything. [laughter] I mean, that's both [good and bad], you know, from the point of view [of the outside world?]. The rest of the world is hierarchical; universities are very un-hierarchical. In some ways, it would be easier for the faculty to get rid of the President than for the President to get rid of a faculty member or two. The administrators, in a sense, are, and I was one for some time, ... the servants of the faculty, and of the students and of the alumni and of the parents and of the Legislature. So, faculty, and perhaps this is both good and bad, faculty have great freedom. I'm not sure why they pay me to do what I do, but it's nice that they do. It's generally considered that faculty, if they're allowed to be free and to do their own thing, and as long as they're not completely crazy, although we do have some people who are completely crazy; a guy in my building ... comes out of his office stark naked every once in awhile and has to be shepherded back into his office by the secretaries, or can be seen outside sometimes, ... diving into the dumpster, [laughter] and, yet, this guy's a genius. ... So, there's a general sense that if you leave faculty alone, they will do creative things, and, sometimes, we do, and, sometimes, we just do crazy things, and, sometimes, we do things that are both. So, again, I think, the University's not like the rest of the world. One of the reasons why I wish we'd get rid of the guns on campus is because I want to not be like the rest of

the world. I want the University to be thought of as a kind of a sanctuary, and almost in a medieval sense, and that we have a responsibility, ... because of our great freedoms, to be an example to the rest of society. I think, too often, we're not an example to the rest of society; we reflect the rest of society. I had a conversation one time with Bob Mulcahy, when he was Athletic Director. ... Our football coach, Greg Schiano, is a guy I like and consider a friend, and, yet, at the same time, there's something pretty obscene about the fact that he's paid four times as much as the President, who's paid twice as much as the Governor. I mean, you could ask, why would we pay the football coach four times as much as the President? The President's responsible for the whole University, and the football coach is responsible for a tiny part of it, and are we really an academic institution? The very soul of the institution is on the line when you start looking at these kinds of things, and Bob Mulcahy said, "Well, in order to have a good football coach, that's the kind of money you have to pay, and, look, Greg got invited to maybe go to Miami, go to Michigan, they would have paid him a million bucks more. ... We got a bargain in Greg Schiano. He would have got another million bucks elsewhere." I guess, when you get up into that stratosphere of money, what's the difference whether it's three million or two million? That probably doesn't make a damn bit of difference to you, but, again, I'm certainly glad he stayed here, and a lot of people are as well, but, still, there's something pretty strange about it, because Mulcahy said, "It's the market," and I said, "Yes, but Bob, why should we be a reflection of the market and the values of the market?" There are lots of things wrong with the market. I mean, one thing that we know is that the disparity between CEOs in this country and workers on the line is so extreme as to be obscene. I want to live in a country that has a strong middle-class, because I think that's absolutely essential to a democracy, and, you know, when a CEO is getting fifty million dollars a year and a worker on the line is making thirty-five or forty thousand dollars a year, what possible use does a CEO have ... for the fifty million he or she might be making, and wouldn't it be better if this money were distributed in some other kind of way? America is a constant, and I'm teaching a course in this right now, a constant struggle between individualism and communitarianism, and a lot of us feel that the individualistic side is what's out of control and the communitarian side is simply not sufficiently developed, and with community comes equality, too. Too much equality is a bad thing; it's called Communism. [laughter] Too much liberty is maybe a bad thing, too, because it's called anarchy. The collapse of our economy, in the last year or so, is, to me, an example that individualism, during the Bush years, was just absolutely and totally out of control.

SI: How did you feel at the beginning of this cycle we are now in, in terms of athletics at the University, when Ed Bloustein announced that we were going into "bigger time" sports and really made the football team an emphasis, and then, that continued strongly under the Lawrence Administration? How did you feel when that began? Were you opposed to it? Did you have an opinion on it? Were you supportive of it?

MR: I don't think I was either. I think it's only been in recent years that I've really gotten [interested]; well, that's not quite true, because, after all, way back in '75, '76, when the men's team went to the Final Four, this was a very exciting moment. Our men's team hasn't come close to doing anything like that since, and, by the way, that raises a very interesting question. That happened before we went "big time" in athletics; how come we went to the Final Four before we were big time, and, since we've never been big time, at least in men's basketball since then, it's a

fairly sorry picture, coaches being fired every three or four years and that sort of thing? but, no, I didn't think too much of it. I got involved in this, ... and really began to care about it a lot, because I did three different magazine stories, two for *New Jersey Monthly* and one for *Rutgers Magazine*, on football, and women's basketball, to a certain extent. One of them was called "Leap Year" [in 2007], looking at the year when the women went to play Tennessee in the [NCAA] Finals and the men's team went 11-2, and I must say, I was very caught up in it. ... On balance, in the articles I wrote in those days, though I did point out anomalies and injustices and things I thought were wrong, in general, what I was enjoying was the fact that people around the state cared about Rutgers University, maybe for the wrong reasons; in fact, not even maybe, definitely for the wrong reasons, but, nevertheless, they did, and I'd never experienced it before, the block "R" everywhere, and this was very exciting. ... We know, theoretically, that we should be caring about this guy, this scientist, who's working on a vaccine for AIDS or cancer or that sort of thing, that's what we should be caring about, but, nevertheless, the alumni, who are a great force in any university, most of them care more about the football team. ... When the football team suddenly emerged from about twenty years of misery; ... I mean, following up our decision to go big time, began to do very poorly, and, you know, 1-11 seasons, that sort of thing, and it was just, giant despair all over the place. "Why did we ever go big time?" Football used to be fun at Rutgers, when we would play Princeton and Lehigh and places like that, and ended up having a 9-2 record, and didn't go to bowls and weren't part of the big national football picture. Now, we are, and it's funny, because my wife totally disagrees with me about this. ... You know, you like to talk to your wife, but the one thing she won't talk to me about is football. She doesn't want to hear about football. She thinks football here is an absolute disgrace and that we have simply destroyed [Rutgers], and she went here, as both an undergraduate and got her PhD here, ... and four of my five kids have gone here. ... So, we are a Rutgers family, and so, I go to the football games with my sons, [laughter] because they like it as much as I do, but there's no question that football, in particular, has galvanized people in New Jersey to care about this institution in a way that I never experienced before. ... I think that's good. Having done my graduate work at the University of Minnesota and experienced what it was like to be at a school where everybody in the state cared about, and one of the reasons they cared about it was because of the football team, which happened to win the National Championship during the four years I was in grad school, that helped. ... Coming to New Jersey, I think Rutgers is in a very special position, and I'm not the first to say this, by any means. We're a small [state], the most densely populated state, more densely populated than India. We are an affluent state. We export the highest number of high school graduates going to college, about fifty percent. With the economy being down, it's a little bit less. All sorts of New Jersey-ians who weren't planning to go to Rutgers now discover they can't get into Rutgers, and they are *mucho* pissed off about that. They thought Rutgers was the safe school. It turns out Rutgers is not the safe school at all. We're a very selective state university. We probably should be a hundred thousand, not fifty thousand or so, in terms of numbers, but, in any case, people now care about Rutgers. ... I go to parties and people want to hang out with me in a [new] way. Suddenly, I'm a professor at the State University; I used to be a teacher, [laughter] you know, to use words, and they want to hang out with me, and the main thing they want to do is they want to talk about football.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You were going to tell us about Allen Ginsberg coming to Rutgers.

MR: Right. In those days, and this was part of what the Voorhees Assembly Board did, I think I mentioned earlier, we had these crazy artistic adventures, but we also had many political ones, and Allen, well, some people consider him the greatest American poet of the twentieth century. I don't know how I feel about that, but he certainly was a very distinguished poet and a very central figure in the anti-war movement. ... Allen came to Rutgers and ... he was going to speak in the Voorhees Chapel, and I was a dean, and so, I was going to introduce him. ... I went out to dinner with him before this, along with a guy in our English Department whose name was David Burrows. Three of us went out to dinner. David Burrows became the person ... who inspired my novel, *A Bliss Case* [(Coffee House Press, 1989)], which later became a *New York Times* "Notable Book of the Year," my first novel, and so, the three of us went out to dinner, and then, we went to Voorhees Chapel. ... When we walked into Voorhees Chapel, I sensed trouble. First of all, the place was full to overcrowding. It was a question of, "What am I supposed to do about this?" ... I didn't have anybody to enforce anything, but I was in charge, and there must have been several hundred people standing in the aisles, in addition to every seat in the auditorium and the balcony being filled, and so, we went up front and I introduced Allen, and he read from his poems, which was wonderful. A great poet reading from his poems, it just transforms the poetry, in a way, because you're getting the emphasis that he intended for it, or she intended for it. He read from his poems, and he also had a little concertina, kind of an accordion thing, that he played, and he sang and he chanted. He chanted various, I think, Buddhist things, and Allen, who used to spend a lot of time out in Boulder, Colorado, at the Naropa Institute. Boulder has a large Buddhist population and Buddhist practice in Boulder, was part of the whole "Boulder mystique." ... Allen would always call himself a "Jew-Bu," or a "Bu-Jew," and I have a daughter-in-law who's a Buddhist, and one of the great things, my son is Jewish and ... they have no religious difficulties whatsoever. It doesn't even come up. Buddhism really can work with anything. You can be a Catholic [and] a Buddhist, ... you really could, I think, assuming the Church would let you. Anyway, so, we were up front and ... he performed and, oh, the other thing is, ... when we walked into the chapel, not only was it filled to overflowing, but one hell of a lot of people had been smoking grass. ... I think I earlier spoke about how, in those days, smoking was allowed inside University buildings. ... You know, you could see the clouds of marijuana smoke arising everywhere in the chapel, [laughter] and you could get high just sitting there, you know, as I was up on the stage with Allen. ... It was a very joyous evening, and, when it was over, a few of us went downstairs and, in those days, the Religion Department at Douglass College was in the basement of Voorhees Chapel. ... One doesn't hear very much about the Religion Department these days, but, in those days, the Religion Department had one hell of a lot of crazy radicals in it. Let me put "crazy" in quotes; I don't think they were crazy, ... but they were sure radical, and so, we were having this reception for Allen downstairs, underneath the chapel, in the office of one of the Religion Department's members. ... In the middle of this reception, we just had a little wine and, I don't know, cookies and stuff, cheese, and we heard this sound. It was a sound that went like this, "Ohhh," like that, "Ohhh," and we kept thinking, "My God, what is that? Where's it coming from?" We couldn't tell where it was coming from. It sounded like a cat in heat outside the window. Now, when you're in the basement, you're below ground level, but there are windows and there are deep window wells, which let the light in through those windows, and we kept hearing this sound. ... Finally, I

opened the window and, there was a young woman laying there, with a broken back, in the window well. We just couldn't believe it, and she was the one who had been making these sounds. What had happened was this, that when ... Allen's program ended, there were a few students who were too impatient to wait to leave by filing up the aisle, and they opened one of the big windows and went out those windows. Now, outside those windows was a space about three feet wide, the window well, and, if you knew that space was there and stepped over the space, you would be on the grass outside the chapel, but, if you didn't know that there was a space there, you were going to fall about twelve feet. ... This woman had followed some guys out that window, and, apparently, she didn't know about the space, or didn't see it or whatever, and just simply fell down into the window well, and so, suddenly, an evening which had begun with dinner with Allen and this very joyous poetry occasion, again, sponsored by the Voorhees Assembly Board, [laughter] became a nightmare, and we called the police, we called ambulances. There was the question of, "How do we get her out of there?" They couldn't lift her the twelve feet up the well, ... but they needed to immobilize her and get her onto a stretcher and get her to the hospital, and this eventually happened. ... Now, my life as a dean was further complicated, because her parents brought a lawsuit against the University for [negligence?], and they were quite right. This was ... an accident waiting to happen. Even if you didn't go out the window, which nobody had expected, you could be walking towards the building, in the dark, and just fall into a pit. Outside of every window that was reaching to the basement was one of these wells, about three feet wide, and, maybe, eight, nine feet long, and, if you were to go over to Voorhees Chapel today, and, of course, this happened almost immediately, those window wells are covered by grates. They don't let quite as much light in, but at least nobody's going to fall in there and kill themselves, and so, so much of my time, from that point on, was involved with lawyers, giving depositions and all this kind of thing, "What happened?" and, "How did it happen?" and all that kind of thing. ... Again, it was a wonderful experience that turned into a nightmare, is what happened.

SI: Could you tell us a little bit more about the shutdown in 1970? You talked about having to deal with parents, like in this case.

MR: Right. ...

SI: Based on what you said last time, the parents really seemed to be the party that was the most upset about it, although the kids who also wanted to go to class were upset. What was the actual shutdown like? Were you on campus? Did you leave the campus at all? What was that atmosphere like during that shutdown?

MR: The main problem was the parents, and we had a big meeting of parents in Voorhees Chapel. Voorhees Chapel, in those days, seemed to be the center of all sorts of activities which you don't normally associate with a chapel. [laughter] ... The devil had taken over Voorhees Chapel, I think. [laughter] ... Well, one thing I remember in particular, is, we had this meeting for all parents of Douglass students, because it still was Douglass College, and who were mad as; I don't know, what do we say, mad as hens? I don't know, whatever we say, a thing, mad as something; mad as beavers? and because they wanted assurance, especially, that their senior students would graduate, and, as I said, this was [the time of] Kent State, this was early May

1970. [Editor's Note: On May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen fired on students at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine others.] I had been being a dean for about fifteen months by now, so, it was in the middle of my three years, and, basically, with many of the seniors, we just basically finessed the whole thing. I mean, some of them refused to show up for their finals and it was really kind of a mess. It was really a mess, and we just simply worked to get them out of here, to get them graduated, cutting some corners, perhaps that we shouldn't have been cutting, but the one thing I remember about it in particular was that, after this meeting with the parents, they left Voorhees Chapel, and, if you travel towards Hickman Hall from Voorhees Chapel, there was only one bridge then. Now, there's two; there's a stable bridge, which is held up, but there was a suspension bridge, which is still there, and one heck of a lot of people poured out of Voorhees Chapel at the same time and headed across this one bridge, because there was a huge parking lot, not just the Hickman [Hall] lot, there was another lot where a lot of those art buildings are now on the Douglass Campus, a big parking lot. They were all heading for that parking lot, and I was basically breathing a sigh of relief. I was sort of, like, accompanying them, just to sort of see them across the bridge and just to be courteous, diplomatic, whatever. ... So, I was the last one across the bridge, and then, I noticed several of the bridge supports had snapped. A suspension bridge goes up and down with weight. So many people, I think it's ... never had that many people going across that bridge at the same time, and I just couldn't believe it. We got away with a near disaster. ... I've written a book on the George Washington Bridge [*The George Washington Bridge: Poetry in Steel* (Rutgers University Press, 2008)], so, I'm a bridge guy, love bridges, and, at that time, though, I knew nothing about them. There's a main cable that [supports it], and then, there were forged iron supports, and those are what snapped. Cables are so much stronger than forged iron, and several of those forged iron supports had snapped and I just couldn't believe it. ... I quickly got garbage cans and put them on both ends of the bridges and just laid them down, put signs, "Do not cross bridge," and immediately called the Campus Police and asked them to come over with some really serious barriers to it. ... Eventually, it was fixed, although why they fixed it exactly the way it had been before is a mystery to me to this day, that is, they certainly could have put on cables instead of those forged iron vertical supports, and they simply replaced the snapped vertical supports. ... I'm absolutely sure if there was ever some kind of big meeting, just like that, with that many people heading across that bridge, ... those forged iron supports would snap again. So, that's ... what I remember most about it. Another thing that I remember is, unless I dealt with this, ... the kind of sexual aspect of the protest. Tell me if I've talked about this.

SI: Keep going.

MR: Well, one of the things is, many of the women students stopped wearing bras. I mean, it was part of the whole *zeitgeist* of the time. ... I mean, you know the musical *Hair*; we *were* the musical *Hair*, [laughter] at that time, in a way, and many of the men had long hair, just like women, and you couldn't always tell the gender of somebody from behind. ... The whole idea was freedom, and that could be expressed in very different ways. It could be expressed in the anti-war movement, but it could be expressed, also, in the sexual freedom movement, and it was expressed by a lot of women by simply not wearing bras, brassieres or bras being seen as imprisoning their breasts and that their breasts should be free, just like the rest of their bodies and why should women have to wear bras? This was, like, a big deal at the time. I must say, I

enjoyed very much that the women weren't wearing bras; it ... made them even nicer to look at, [laughter] but, again, I state it as part of the *zeitgeist* of the time. ... I've already talked about how marijuana was so universal and that sexual relations between professors and students were fairly common.

SI: You said earlier you wanted to discuss the sexual harassment policy in the University Senate.

MR: Yes, I was in the Senate when the [policy was passed]. I've served several different terms in the Senate, but I was serving a term years ago. I just finished one last year, a new term, ... and the sexual harassment policy was one of the major things that the Senate was trying to craft.

SI: Was this in the 1990s or before that?

MR: I suspect it was in the early '90s.

SI: Okay.

MR: I think we're talking, like, about, yes, I'd say maybe fifteen years ago, something like that, and ... there were various models from other colleges and universities. How not to control sex (a private matter) and, at the same time, protect young people from harassment? You know, real ugly things, like professors [saying], "Yes, if you sleep with me, I'll give you an 'A.'" I mean, we know what we think about that, but what do we think about amorous and loving relationships that emerge from everyday life where nobody's harassing anybody. Is that harassment? ... I remember very well that Antioch College, which I think has now collapsed, last I knew, unless they're trying to revive it, Antioch College passed a thing saying that, and it had nothing to do with professors and students, it had to do with anybody, that if two people wanted to kiss each other, they had to get it in writing first. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Antioch College issued its "Sexual Offense Prevention Policy" in 1993.] You know, flirtations and amorous stuff happens often in a kind of a freelance way, and, I mean, if you had to say to a young woman, "I'd like to kiss you; can we both sign a document?" or she might say that to you. If your relationship hadn't, from a flirtatious level and a chemical level, let's say, reached that point, it would be seen as bizarre and off-putting, whereas, if you just happened to kiss her, she might then like you a whole lot. I mean, you know, the question is, "What should happen first and second?" So, that was kind of an extreme thing, and there were also universities that had passed rules that said that any relationship, let's say, between a professor and a student, would be cause for dismissal of the faculty member, no matter how loving, no matter what. Well, I had some pretty strong feelings about this, [laughter] coming out of my own personal life, because I met my wife, my second wife, after getting a divorce and stuff, and fell in love with her, and I just happened to be a professor then and she happened to be a student. I did tell her, "Don't take any more of my classes. I can't handle it. You shouldn't be in my classes. ... How can I possibly grade you objectively, number one, and, number two, it would interfere with class." ... You know, it's really funny, because, a few years back, I was at the New Jersey Folk Festival, which our department puts on, and there was a student there ... from those days. ... She said she was from the Class of '77, and I said, "Oh, the Class of '77. I've always loved the Class of '77," and she

said, "We know," and I said, "What do you mean, 'You know?'" [laughter] She said, "Well, you were clearly having a relationship with somebody in our class." This was the (bestseller?) class in Ruth Adams 001, where I will be teaching this afternoon, and I said, "Well, how could you possibly know that? What do you mean?" She said, "Well, because you'd always come into the classroom and you'd always try not to look, you'd almost, like, be twisting your neck not to look, in a certain direction, ... but, once in awhile, you would sort of look over there and smile, and we sort of triangulated it." Students would talk about this, "Where's he looking when he looks over there?" and it all triangulated in on this one particular student, who happens to be my wife of thirty-one-and-a-half years. [laughter] ... She said, ... "A year or so later, I learned, ... that you had actually married that particular student." My wife and I had a good laugh about it. ... Anyway, on the sexual harassment thing, I obviously had to oppose the notion that any relationship between a professor and a student should be cause for dismissal, because thirty-one-and-a-half happy years later and two children, ... one of whom got married this past May, I have some pretty strong feelings on that. ... So, when it came to craft a sexual harassment policy, I expressed myself very strongly, and I spoke out, just as I am right now, saying, "Look, there are some good relationships. Yes, I agree that, in general, there may be a power disequity ... in such a relationship but what if it begins and is a loving relationship?" I said, "there's not enough love in the world. When there is love, it's a good thing. Should we really preclude it under all circumstances around the campus? Yes, she was my student, but she was my equal right from the very beginning, or we wouldn't have been having a relationship. I never had a relationship with a student [before]; I'd been at Rutgers a lot of years by then, and I'd never had an [amorous relationship]. I just didn't do that, but I fell in love with somebody, and still am, and what's the matter with that?" So, I was very much ... speaking out, that we cannot write a rule that says any relationship between a professor and a student is wrong and it should be a cause for dismissal. If love blooms, it blooms. You know, they always say, what's the dirty expression of that? "Don't stick your pen in the company inkwell." [laughter] I don't know if you've heard that one before. I would say, yes, in general, that's a good idea, and I would say, in general, it would be good if people did not have their amorous relationships where they work, but some of us do, and some of us did, and so, I was very outspoken about that. ... "We've got to craft the language in such a way that says that, ... keeping in mind the disequity in a relationship between a professor and a student, that there can be relationships where that disequity is immediately breached, and it's better, if there is such a relationship;" it happens more with graduate students. My wife, but it can be more dangerous with graduate students because you may be working with them. There was a guy in the Anthropology Department, in our building, who was an absolute creep. I mean, this guy had a graduate student ... with whom he had a relationship, and then, she wanted to break it off, and he was the example of, yes, stuff that ... we must prosecute, where she wanted to break off the relationship and he was actually her thesis advisor and said, "Well, you'll never get a PhD." I mean, God, you know, that guy should have been taken out and hung, and it took two years for the University [to remove him]. The University eventually got rid of him, but it cost us an absolute fortune in lawyers' fees, and we had to give him an extra year of pay. It cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to get rid of this guy, and he wasn't teaching during the time that his trial was going on, also, but he was being paid. You know, innocent until proven guilty, but he was guilty as [sin], you know. I mean, it was a most unfortunate thing, and there've been cases like that. Mine didn't happen to be one of those cases, and so, we crafted this policy, and the policy was brought back to the Senate and the full Senate looked at it and said,

"Oh, wait a minute. There's nothing in here about gay harassment." "Oh, we've got to have gay harassment also? Do gays harass people?" "Sure, gays harass people, so, we have to have some notation about that." So, back to the drawing board, and, now, we came up with language which would include any kind of sexual harassment, including same-sex harassment, I guess is the language we used, and we thought, "Oh, we've finally got it. Let's get this miserable document through the Senate." [laughter] ... I could hardly stand the issue any longer, it was just driving me crazy, and we presented it. ... But, there was a person in the Senate that I had only been subliminally aware of, who looked just like a character that had been on *Saturday Night Live* in those days. It was a character named Pat, and Pat, this is coming from a Patrick or a Patricia, my wife's name is Patricia, by the way, and I was only subliminally aware of this person. ... This person always sat very far from where I sat, ... and I never articulated to myself that I didn't know whether this was a man or a woman. I just didn't know. I don't think I was really familiar with transgender stuff, very much, although there is a story that I want to tell going back to the dean days, which is another great story, I think, and so, here was this person. ... When we brought in now what we thought was the enlightened sexual harassment policy, including homosexual harassment, this person now stood up and said, "There's absolutely nothing in this document covering transgendered sexual harassment," and we all looked at each other like, "What the hell is that, and who exactly is harassing who?" but it was back to the drawing boards now, ... and I should have been smarter about this earlier, because of a story I'd like to tell right now. I should have been more sensitive to this, but I just didn't think of it. It turned out that this person was biologically a female who was transgendered male, and that's what my confusion was. She had short hair, wore ties, she thought of herself as male rather than female. I mean, if there's a God, she sure is a pluralist, because she creates so many different kinds of people, and nobody asks to be transgendered. I mean, that is such a difficult life, and I should have been more sensitive because of a story I'd like to tell you right now, which is kind of interesting. While I was a dean, another one of the things that the Voorhees Assembly Board put on, and I was to be the dean there and introduce the guest: there was a high school teacher, whose name was Paul Grossman, who taught music somewhere up in North Jersey. ... Over the summer, Paul Grossman had gone to Denmark, where these things normally were done. [Editor's Note: The sex change surgery took place in 1971.] Now, you can do it in the States, but, then, you couldn't, went to Denmark and came back as Paula Grossman, and Paula Grossman was still living with her family, her wife and their children, who were trying to be as understanding of what he, now it's a she, had gone through, and her high school fired her as a music teacher. When she showed up on September 1st, or whatever, she showed up and she was fired, and she said, "Why are you firing me? I'm the music teacher here," and they said, "Well, we hired Paul Grossman, you insist you're Paula Grossman, so we never hired you." They just did not want to have somebody around in the high school with kids of that age, of any age. There's enough sexual confusion when you're growing up. [Editor's Note: District officials, who were supported by the New Jersey Superior Court, claimed that students would suffer adverse psychological effects if Paula Grossman were allowed to continue in her role as a music teacher.] I mean, I grew up at a time when I never heard of homosexuality, when I was a kid, I never heard of such a thing, not to mention transsexuals. I mean, that tells you a little bit about ... the times in which I grew up. Homosexuality was certainly there as much as it's here now, but I never even heard of it. It was never discussed, and there's a joke in my new novel, that just came out, a week or so ago, the novel's called *Stones* [(Hansen Publishing Group, 2009)], in which I joke about this. ...

My daughter suggests, "Yes, when I grew up, it was before oral sex had been invented." [laughter] ... Paula Grossman had been on TV talk shows, sometimes with her wife and children, and she was now coming to Rutgers and I was to introduce her, and I was very anxious about this whole thing. I didn't know how to handle it, ... and she came and we met in one of those big lecture halls in Hickman Hall, that I think holds five hundred people, ... and every seat was taken. Most, I think, had come to see quote, "a freak show" and I think everybody, certainly me, left with a new chunk of human compassion. I mean, she came in, and here was this person who looked like a linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers; she was about six-foot-three, weighed about 250 and was wearing high heels, carrying a pocketbook and wearing a dress, and I just introduced her. She reduced some of us in that place to tears, almost, just listening to her. She said, "There is no greater torture than," what she called, "gender discomfort." She called it "gender discomfort," and I'd never heard of that. That blew my mind, you know. I mean, I grew up and, you know, I had enough trouble trying to figure out girls. What are you supposed to do with girls, you know? [laughter] and imagine growing up and you don't know what gender you are, and, of course, that movie *Boys Don't Cry* [(1999)] helped me learn, and the documentary about that. Hilary Swank got the Oscar for it. I think [it] educated a lot of us to that sexual [category], and that there's such variety in sexuality, and that it's to be honored and respected, and so, Paula Grossman really taught me a lot that night. I said, "Thank God I wasn't born with gender discomfort, holy mackerel, to be in one body but think you're the other. Goodness. How do you deal with that?" and she talked about how, you know, "I love my wife, I love my children, but I always felt that I was a woman." ... So, I should have been, when this came up in the Senate, aware of it, but I certainly wasn't aware of it from a sexual harassment point of view. ... It just never occurred to me that there was anything there, and this person who spoke to it said she too was being harassed for her sexuality, or her persona, so, she felt some language should be included in this and we did put it in there. ... She was basically saying, "You know, every day, I take grief that none of you experience, and I didn't ask to be a female born into a woman's body with a man's sensibility. I didn't ask for this, nobody asks for this. This is absolute torture and misery," and, goodness, she's right. This is not a freak show at all, or, if there's a God, it's a "freak show" created by God and it needs to be respected. So, that was another incident ... during my dean-ing days. Those three years as dean, [laughter] you know, just produced; ... when I think of the times in your life that produce the great stories, there were times when it's like non-stop great stories. One was during the time that I've already talked about, working in a locked psychiatric ward in Japan with Navy and Marine mental patients. One was the book I'm working on now, about the four years I served with the Embassy in Spain, and the other is those three years as a dean. Maybe I'll write about that, some day. I hadn't thought about writing about that, but just, you know, one "crazy" thing after another would happen, "crazy" in quotes. They weren't crazy; they were just signs of the times. ... I feel so lucky that I was in administration during those three years, because, every minute, something interesting was happening. It is that way now? I don't think it is, you know.

SI: During those three years, did the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender movement become more public, or was it later? Were you involved with them, as an administrator, trying to address those issues?

MR: No, that sort of came later. I mean, you had the black revolution, when Stokely Carmichael said, "Black is beautiful," ["black power"] and, now, he's talking about "blacks," not "negroes," and, when I met- I think I talked about the Martin Luther King, didn't I?- and, when Martin used the term "Negro," Stokely used the term "black." [Editor's Note: Stokely Carmichael was a West-Indian born Civil Rights activist during the 1960s in the United States.] '65, that's also the year we committed a real army to Vietnam. I mean, just everything started to happen then, and so, you had the black revolution, and, when the black revolution happened, you had all of the other ethnic revolutions, one after another, after another, after another. I remember, one time, ... just as a joke, I bought a pair of boxer shorts which had a Star of David right across the fly, [laughter] and this was, if you will, "Jewish chauvinism," you know, ... especially putting it right across the fly, not black power but Jewish power. This Star of David was terribly funny, but it was like, you know, every ethnic group was having their moment in the sun, and, now, women were emerging as well, in the early '70s. So, the women's movement was underway when I was a dean, but the gay and lesbian, bisexual, gender, transgender, the whole BLT [gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT)], whatever, it sounded like bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich, whatever, movement was to come somewhat later, when I was no longer in the dean-ing business, yes. ...

SI: Do you have any questions you want to get in?

DR: No, I do not think so.

SI: The other times you were in the Senate, were there other issues that came out that you were particularly passionate about, that stand out in your memory?

MR: Well, this past period, which ended after this past year, I was very passionate about the *Targum*. There was a whole issue as to how much the *Targum* was private and independent and how much it; I mean, it's a tricky thing, because, in a way, you'd like it to be independent, so [that] it could be an independent voice. ... If I have any criticism of *Targum*; it's a great university newspaper, as university newspapers go. Just go down the street in Princeton, they put out a thing that looks like a high school newspaper, compared, but the thing I've always felt is that the *Targum* has never done sufficient investigative reporting. ... It'll report on national issues, it'll report on state and even local issues. It doesn't really report very much on Rutgers issues looking beneath the surface, and I think that's my one complaint about it. I think I've forgotten what the question was. [laughter]

SI: The issues that came up during your term in the Senate.

MR: Oh, yes. So, it was a very close vote, and all of the *Targum* students were there, and I felt the University was deciding to make it even more difficult, I think, for students to support *Targum*. ... Originally, everybody paid to support the *Targum*, and then, it was made that you could ...

SI: Opt.

MR: Not check it off, you could, and the issue was, as I understood it, now, if you want to support the *Targum*, you have to do something, rather than not do something. I mean, the way it was before, ... you didn't have to do anything. You would be charged nine bucks a semester, or something, for the *Targum*, and, by the way, the speech I made in the Senate had to do mostly with my feeling that it is absolutely wrong that only the students support the *Targum*. It's absolutely disgraceful. Why don't faculty and staff, administration, support the *Targum*? Why are we not taxed to support the *Targum*? I read the *Targum* every day. I read the *New York Times*, the *Star-Ledger* and the *Targum*, and I want to know what's going on at the University and I said, "We should be charged," and I think it's outrageous that the Senate didn't at least say, "All faculty and staff will [pay]." If the students aren't going to be charged directly, at least we should be. "Hell, we're the ones who've got the money. We're the ones who are getting paid. Students are paying to come here." I've always thought there was something funny about that, in some ways, because I love my job, I love to be a professor at the University, and I love the free time it gives me to write all my books and stuff. This is the dream job, and they even pay me, and there's something kind of strange about the fact that students, who work much harder than the faculty does, desperately trying to get through here and get on with their lives, are paying. I mean, I understand it, but it's kind of funny, in a way, that we have all the fun, they do all the work and we get paid and they don't. Well, I guess we had to get trained, to get a PhD and all that sort of thing, and write books, and that's why we get paid, but, still, at least on supporting the doggone university newspaper, we should be taxed to do that. I think it's dead wrong that we're not. So, that was the speech I made. The *Targum* people were very happy to hear it. A lot of the faculty ... said, "Well, I never read the *Targum*," and my thinking immediately was, "Why not? Why not?" See, it's a very curious thing, ... when you're a university professor, the extent to which you feel like you're a citizen of an institution. ... I've won five major teaching awards. I'm very proud of that. ... Some of the most distinguished faculty at Rutgers are distinguished because the research they do is perhaps considered cutting edge. Now, when you get in the sciences, that's easy to understand; the humanities, it's rather difficult to understand, and some of the people who are most celebrated by the University as distinguished professors, given name chairs ... and that sort of thing, are often the worst teachers and don't give a damn about the students. I shouldn't say often, I should say sometimes, and the University gives great lip service to teaching, but it's a lie. It's an absolute lie. I say this with no sour grapes. I'm a full professor and this university has rewarded me and my life has been very rich here, but, sometimes, I think it's slightly insane that we should ever hire somebody who can't teach and that we should stop just giving lip service to teaching and recognize great teaching in some sort of fashion, but we don't really. The faculty that the administration cuddles are the people they consider "genius-like," if you will, to use a word. I am not a genius; I'm a regular person. [laughter] I'm a well-rounded person. I like football, [laughter] for example, ... but I don't know that the genius-type faculty are necessarily very good with the students. Often, they're the worst with the students. Should they be here? Maybe so, but maybe they should be doing full-time research and shouldn't be in the classroom. The ideal is that you are both a researcher and writer, or scientist or whatever, and you're also a teacher, that you should do both, but the fact of the matter is, we fire people all the time who don't research enough, but we virtually never fire lousy teachers. ... You know, it's an up-or-out situation, here at the University. It's something I don't agree with. I think there are people who are great teachers and who read regularly and who are revered by the students, who don't publish very much, but, yet, who are great teachers, and could we not at least

keep them on, on a year-to-year basis? We give tenure to people essentially because they do research, and we give lip service to the teaching aspect, but, I'm telling you, we've given tenure and made full professors, and even professor IIs, out of people who can't teach their way out of [a situation] to save their lives. They're terrible teachers, and so, what I think is at least we should have more [recognition for teaching]. When I first came here, that existed; it doesn't exist anymore. Rutgers has to make up its mind: Do we want to be a state university or do we want to be Princeton? That is, I think, the great dilemma of being in the State of New Jersey, in the middle of it, with Princeton fifteen miles down the road. We have one hell of a lot of professors who live in Princeton. Indeed, I lived in Princeton for eighteen years (though I'd bought my house there while I was in state government), and, you know, there are professors here, who are considered very distinguished professors, who would leave tomorrow if they got a better offer somewhere else, especially from Princeton. They're like professional athletes. They get a better offer, they're out of here. They don't have any loyalty to this institution at all. Maybe I've been here so long and that's why I have so much loyalty to it. I mean, for some professors here, if Rutgers fell into the Raritan tomorrow, they could care less. ... They're not University citizens, they never serve on any committees, they never are elected to anything, the Senate or anything like that. They don't go to meetings, ... and, many times, they don't even show up for class. I mean, one guy I'm thinking of, in the History Department, would show up to class about half the time. He was too busy, "doing other things," quote, unquote. I think that's outrageous. I don't care how distinguished you are. I think he needed to be brought on the carpet and say, "Look, either you show up to class or we're going to fire you, make up your mind." His behavior, that, I think, was very, very wrong, but no one would tell him-not even his chair-because he was considered a hot shot.

SI: When you first came to Douglass, they did recognize teaching more than they do now.

MR: Yes, I think so, and the Douglass Dean ... was a key person responsible for whether you got promoted or not, or made tenure or whatever. Now, with the two reorganizations we've gone through there, the deans are deans of campuses. They're glorified deans of students. They have no faculty, ... they're responsible for the students who happen to live on those campuses, and people, I think, since reorganization, people are much more in their departments. Well, first of all, we consolidated departments. The whole History Department is in Van Dyck Hall, essentially, the whole ... English Department is in Murray Hall. You got all the people together; in some ways, ... that was seen as a way to improve graduate work at Rutgers. I think graduate work was just as good before it happened, and, ... meanwhile, you had people on the campuses who cared mightily about [their students]. I mean, I cared very much about Douglass students, as such. If I'd been at another college, I would have cared about the students there. Faculty saw students a great deal more. Students came to your offices, ... faculty were much more involved in student advising. Part of it was because that was your job. Faculty, today, are basically entrepreneurs. I'm in business; I'm in the Michael Rockland business. [laughter] I'm not in the Rutgers University [business], and I'm certainly not in the Douglass College business. Yes, a lot of the reward structure was very much keyed to, "Did you really look after your students? ... Were you there? Were you on campus? Were you available?" I used to have many office hours ... and, you know, there'd be lots of students waiting to see me and I'd see a different student every fifteen minutes, and, you know, every one of my office hours was absolutely crammed. As

a matter-of-fact, each time I've been over here, doing these things for the oral history project, I've been not having my office hours. Has anything been lost? No, because students hardly ever come to your office anymore, which I think is a shame, and I think part of it is because the faculty role has been so redefined. It's also because students are so absorbed with their Facebook and Twitter and their doggone cell phones. ... So, there's a student component to this problem, it's not just faculty, ... and I think that's too bad. I think that's kind of sad.

SI: Last question, since you have to go; what are your impressions of Ed Bloustein, since a lot of this happened under his administration and some of these programs, like the WCSs and the reorganization came out of ...

MR: You mean the WCSLs, "World-Class Scholarly Leaders?"

SI: Yes.

MR: Yes, I wrote a piece; oh, this is another funny story I really should tell, I mean, if you can stand it.

SI: Yes, of course.

MR: I liked Ed as a person. I disagreed with him. I think I told you that my father was his high school teacher.

SI: Yes.

MR: And so, when Ed came here and he first heard my name, "Are you related to Milton Rockland?" "Yes, I'm his son," and so, Ed had a fondness for me, I think, from that point on. I had a fondness for him. I disagreed with him about the reorganization. ... As I said, I think, when the first reorganization happened, the *New York Times*, I think I said, did a piece on it, putting us toe-to-toe, which was kind of funny, because we weren't really toe-to-toe. I mean, I liked him, I just disagreed with him. I was about to tell you a great story.

SI: I mentioned WCSLs.

MR: Oh, yes, ... and he came up with this notion of "world-class scholarly leaders," which sounded like something out of the old Soviet Union or something, you know. "World-Class Scholarly Leaders," they'd almost give you a medal that you would wear. ... He was for centralization, and, ... as somebody who has taught Alexis de Tocqueville often, I believe in decentralization as a way that, yes, there's disequalities, but it is the way to guarantee freedom, and I think centralization, for some things, is necessary, but, in general, I'm a decentralist. The greatest thing about this country is we have a central government, but we have fifty state governments and we have, in New Jersey, twenty or so county governments, and we have all of our municipal governments. To me, ... that is the greatest thing about this country. If you look at European countries, or countries all over most of the world, everything is centralized, especially centralized, even democracies are centralized. So, when Ed came up with, "We're

going to have 'world-class scholarly leaders,'" I thought that was terribly funny. For two years, by the way, I wrote a faculty column for the *Targum*, mocking out the University, which was a lot of fun; not when I was a dean, in more recent years, and somebody had to mock out the University. I mean mock it out in a loving way, not in a hateful way, but we need some humor around here. ... We need people who are, you know, making fun of the University once in awhile. Things have been too damn serious in recent years. Well, ... simultaneous with Ed announcing the WCSL Program, which I thought was terribly funny to call anybody something like that, that we were going to go out and get the best scholars in the world, and, again, some of these best scholars were probably going to be people who couldn't teach, not necessarily, but a lot of them indeed were that. Simultaneous to that, *Rutgers Magazine*, which comes out three or four times a year, and was in its infancy then, *Rutgers Magazine*, having read my pieces in the *Targum*, said, "We'd like to talk to you about doing a column for *Rutgers Magazine*." ... They took me to lunch at the Frog and the Peach, still, I guess, the best restaurant, or at least most expensive one, in New Brunswick, a real "power" lunch, and they said, "We'd really like you to do this four times a year, do a piece." I said, "Well, you understand, the stuff I write for *Targum* is kind of mocking out the University." "Oh, yes, we want that." "You understand, these are going to be funny. I'm going to be making fun of the President, I'm going to be making fun of faculty, students, whatever, I'm going to be making fun." "That's exactly what we think *Rutgers Magazine* needs." I said, "In fact, if I'm to do this, I have ... a title to suggest for the column. I'd like to call it 'Off the Banks,' as in off the wall, irreverent all the way, irreverent." "That's exactly what we want." So, I wrote a piece called "Hollywood" and it was a piece mocking out the WCSL Program, the "World-Class Scholarly Leader" Program, and mocking out Ed Bloustein, but, again, in just a funny way, and so, that was my first and last piece. [laughter] A guy named Bill [William] Owens then was in the administration, in public affairs, and he was the editor of *Rutgers Magazine* and one of the people who took me to lunch at the Frog and the Peach. ... I sent it over to Bill, thinking that [it would be published], and then, began to think about what the next piece I might do would be, and, a couple of months later, *Rutgers Magazine* came out and it wasn't in there. ... I thought, "Wait a minute, I submitted it in plenty of time. It was two months. It comes out every three months, I submitted it two months ago." So, I called him up and I said, "Bill, I noticed it didn't make the *Rutgers Magazine*. Was it too late? Are you going to put it in the next one?" He said, "No, Michael," and, by the way, I had shown this, before sending it in, I had shown it to various faculty members who thought it was the funniest thing I'd ever written, and I write a lot of humor. I mean, they were just collapsing. ... They were just dying of laughing. One faculty member actually threw up, he laughed so much. He'd just eaten lunch and he threw up. After reading my piece, he laughed so much that he got the hiccups, and then, he threw up. So, I was pretty sure that this thing was really funny. I thought it was funny. Anybody I showed it to thought it was funny. Anyway, this guy Bill Owens tells me on the phone, "Oh, no, we're not going to publish it." I said, "Why not?" He said, "It really isn't funny." [laughter] I said, "You're kidding." He said, "No, it's not funny at all. It's just not funny." I said, "Bill, you told me, we agreed, I would write irreverent pieces." He said, "Yes, but this one isn't funny." I said, "Oh. I'll tell you what, Bill. I'm going to call the President's Office tomorrow," Ed Bloustein at the time, and I was mocking Ed out in the piece. "I'm going to call the President's Office and make an appointment to see the President about this, because, if I know President Bloustein, he's going to think it's funny. Even though I'm mocking him out, he's going to take it with good humor, and so, I'm going to go see the President, because I don't

know who else to see about this." Owens says, "You don't want to do that." And I said, "Oh, yes, I do want to do that. I'm going to do that, and I'm going to go see him." Around eleven o'clock at night, I'd already gone to bed, the phone rings, and I debate whether to answer the phone or not, thinking, "What the heck is this, eleven o'clock at night? Maybe it's one of my kids, somebody in trouble, I don't know." I answered the phone and it's Bill Owens, and Bill Owens says, "Michael, I just re-read your piece. It's the funniest thing I've ever read." This is a true story, I'm not exaggerating. "It's terrifically funny," and I said, "But, Bill, ... two, three hours ago, around eight o'clock, you told me it wasn't funny at all." He said, "Yes, I don't know what was the matter with me. I read the thing and it just wasn't funny, but, now, I see it's terrifically funny," and they published it. If you guys want a copy of it sometime, I'll give it to you, and they published it, but that was the end of my column. [laughter] They discontinued the column. "Off the Banks" was a one-time shot. Owens was obviously scared to death that if he published it, he'd get grief all the way up to the President. Now, I was threatening to bring grief down on his head *from* the President, and so, he published it, probably hoping that Ed Bloustein wouldn't see it. As a matter-of-fact, I got a letter from Ed Bloustein saying, "Michael, I read your piece in *Rutgers Magazine*, it's terrific. It's terribly funny. I just laughed my head off." So, it shows you what a mid-level bureaucrat is, the kind of position they're in, and how different it is to be in the administration, let's say, than to be a faculty member. Faculty members are all, you know, wild and crazy, in some ways. We have the right to be, we have the permission to be. When you're in the administration, you are in a different position. You're responsible ... and you don't have tenure, usually, unless you're a tenured professor who becomes a dean. ... So, you're in the real world when you're in the administration, because, ... you know, you're like working for General Motors. You print something in the General Motors' house organ that's mocking out the C.E.O. of General Motors? Man, you will be history, and that's what Owens was afraid of, but, now, I'd brought an even greater fear to his desk, the poor bastard. He must have really been worried about this whole thing, "Which was worse?" and he weighed it and weighed it and weighed it, and it's just hilariously funny, but that's exactly how it happened. I just wanted to put that story into the file. Isn't that a good story? [laughter] I mean you can't make stuff like that up. It's one of those things I'd never put in fiction. It's just too ridiculous, too unbelievable.

SI: Yes, very good. All right, thank you very much.

MR: No, thank you.

SI: We appreciate it. We will be in contact about continuing further.

MR: If you can stand any more of it. [laughter]

SI: Thank you very much.

MR: Thank you.

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Reviewed by Jessica Ondusko 3/15/10

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 4/5/10
Reviewed by Michael Aaron Rockland 4/13/10