

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL ROCKOFF

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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G. Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Daniel Rockoff on April 19, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I would like to begin by asking you some questions about your parents, both of whom came from Russia.

Daniel Rockoff: Right.

KP: Do you know why they came to the United States, both in general and specific terms?

DR: Well, my father came first. He was about eighteen years old. Well, things were tough in, ... it's now Lithuania, but, then, it was Russia, and he came over here. He was a Hebrew teacher over there, came here and he worked in the mills in New England. ... I guess he wasn't making a living; he was starving. He once saw an ad in the paper, they were looking for a Hebrew teacher in New Brunswick, and he went to a place in New York, was interviewed and was chosen. A man took him to a farm in New Brunswick, on Easton Avenue. He never wanted a teacher; he wanted a man that worked, and my father stayed there, working as a farmhand. ... The fellow had a milk route that went, a horse-and-wagon [route], ... from Easton Avenue all the way to Metuchen. ... The man said he had a son who used to run the route, but he stole. [laughter] Every week, when he collected the money, he'd get drunk and gamble. So, he replaced him with my dad. ... That's how my dad got [to New Brunswick]. He had met my mother back in Europe and, when she came to this country, he courted her and they got married.

KP: Your father came over unmarried, but he had met your mother.

DR: ... Yes.

KP: They knew each other, and then, she came over separately.

DR: Right, and they found each other again. She lived in New York and he lived in New Brunswick.

Michael O'Neill: She did not come here because he wanted her to come over.

DR: No. ... They just met.

KP: By accident?

DR: No, she knew about it and she ... looked for him and found him.

KP: She looked for him.

DR: Yes.

KP: It sounds like there was some romance there.

DR: Yes.

KP: It sounds like a tremendous romance

DR: They were a very loving couple all through their lives. Unfortunately, they're both gone. My mother lived to eighty-eight, my father to ninety-four.

MO: Was she from the same part of Russia as your father?

DR: Yes, yes, not the same town. There was a fire in her town and she was sent to an uncle in the town where my dad lived and that's how they met.

KP: This accidental career, in a sense, would be very influential on your father, but also on your life.

DR: Yes.

KP: He stayed in the business. He never left the milk business.

DR: Right. No, he ran the route. He had a route. He took over the route and, eventually, the gentleman who owned the farm sold it to him. ... Eventually, he had two routes. Then, he built a little milk plant, started a milk business and, eventually, we had the big plant. ... When I went to Rutgers, we were selling milk to Rutgers University, unbid. ...

KP: The milk that students drank in Winants Hall was your family's milk.

DR: Yes, right.

KP: It sounds like your father was tremendously successful.

DR: He was.

KP: In a period when it was very hard to succeed.

DR: Right. He was successful financially and, also, he was very active in the community. He was a Zionist at heart and he actually wanted to go to ... Palestine, but ... they wouldn't take you to Palestine unless you were twenty-one. So, he came to this country.

KP: Oh. Since he was originally from Lithuania, he wanted to go directly to ...

DR: ... What was then Palestine, yes.

KP: Did he remain active in Zionist causes?

DR: Yes. He was one of the founders of Israel Bonds in this area.

MO: Did the milk business and his success here stop him from going to Palestine? Did he still want to go after he settled here?

DR: He still had hopes. When I was about fifteen, getting ready to look for a college, he wanted me to go to a college in Palestine. It was still Palestine then. However, they had the big riots then, and so, he changed his mind and, once we got older, it was difficult to pick up roots and leave.

KP: Did your father ever get to Israel?

DR: Oh, yes. He was in Israel maybe five or six times. I've been there three times.

KP: Roughly, when did your father buy the farm? When did he start the milk plant?

DR: Well, he was on the farm, he was just a worker, when I was born, in 1918. He actually didn't buy that farm. He just bought the route, but I would say, in 1921, he leased a farm in Edison. You know where the Westinghouse plant is?

KP: Yes.

DR: He had a farm there for about three years. Then, he moved back to New Brunswick.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family and your father's business?

DR: Quite a bit, quite a bit. One thing, many people couldn't afford to pay for their milk bills, but he kept selling, giving them milk. ... I would say half of them, ... after the Depression, continued with him and paid their bills, but there're many people, he used to show me, "See this person? He owes me a big milk bill, but he won't buy milk from me. He's ashamed to buy milk." So, he forgot a lot of stuff. I remember, I must have been, in the Depression, what was I? about eleven or twelve; ... incidentally, my dad brought his whole family over. My mother's family never wanted to come here, so that they were all lost during the Holocaust, but his family came over here. Some of them worked for him, but I remember my mother telling me, "When we visit Aunt (Anna?), if she offers you some food or anything, don't take it." I said, "Why, Mother?" She said, "Well, they really can't afford to give away any food." ...

KP: For your extended family, it was very ...

DR: Very bad.

KP: Your father's success is even more remarkable because, at one point during the Depression, many dairy farmers were just dumping their milk. It just did not pay to even take it to market.

DR: ... That's correct, but, you see, whatever he produced, he would sell to his customers. When he started, I don't know if you realize [this], ... they didn't sell milk in bottles. They sold it out of a can. The people would bring their bottles and say, "It's a quart;" could be a quart-and-a-half, [laughter] but that was the deal. That, he tells me, is where the stories started about milkmen bartering the milk. Maybe that should be off-the-record. [laughter]

KP: It is remarkable. Your family, in this century, has seen the entire milk industry change.

DR: Yes.

KP: I take it that your father had a horse-drawn route when he first started, then, moved to convenience stores.

DR: Yes. In fact, he was the first milkman in New Brunswick to start delivering milk in a truck.

KP: Roughly, when did he move over to using a truck? Do you know?

DR: I really can't remember. How long have you been here at Rutgers?

KP: I came here as a graduate student in 1983.

DR: Oh, so, you're new?

KP: I left for a while. Yes, I am fairly new.

DR: ... Because the big milk company in New Brunswick was Paulus Dairy. So, you wouldn't know, because I remember, when my father first started, he'd buy a load of bottles, milk bottles, but he had no compunction to [not] use anyone else's milk bottles. [laughter]

KP: Since you have stayed in this area all your life, what has changed the most about it? What stands out about New Brunswick and the surrounding areas, both in terms of change and continuity? One obvious change is the fact that your family once owned a farm and, now, there are no more farms in Edison, that I know of.

DR: ... No, no. Well, New Brunswick, I think, was a self-sufficient town at one time, very thriving. Of course, after the Depression and after World War II, when the malls and the shopping centers started, it really went down. I mean, New Brunswick is really all together different than it was before the war.

KP: It sounds like you could do all of your shopping downtown in New Brunswick.

DR: Oh, yes, yes. We had some big department stores, what we thought were big department stores. They're all gone. I think, if it weren't for Rutgers and J&J [Johnson and Johnson], New Brunswick would be gone all together.

KP: Are there any other things that you have distinct memories of?

DR: ... Rutgers, when I went to school, was a small college, a private school. You knew just about everyone and you said hello to everyone. When I came back after the war, it was ... just becoming a state university and it has really grown. Everything was, when I went to school, ... right here on the campus.

KP: Yes, I know. There were no buses between the different campuses.

DR: Right. The only thing is, since I was going to the College of Agriculture, I had to take ... classes in both places.

KP: You went through the New Brunswick school system. What do you remember about the school system?

DR: Well, actually, ... we moved to Highland Park when I was in kindergarten. So, I went to; Highland Park only had school through [the] tenth grade, it was Franklin Junior High School, and then, we went two years to New Brunswick High School.

KP: Okay. How good was your education in the Highland Park system?

DR: Very good, at least I think so. I remember, one time, the percentage of children that went on to college was very high and New Brunswick High School was a very good school. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: People generally praise both the Highland Park and New Brunswick school systems of that era. I would be curious to hear your observations, particularly on the New Brunswick High School. It was a central high school not only for New Brunswick, but also for the surrounding area.

DR: Yes. Children from Highland Park, Edison, Milltown, South Brunswick, East Brunswick, ... Franklin Township, they all went to New Brunswick High School.

KP: I have been told that there was a real urban-rural split. Do you remember that, that you would have, literally, farm kids come to school?

DR: Yes, that's true. The children from South Brunswick were really on farms.

KP: When did you know that you were going to college? Did your parents assume that you would go to college?

DR: I think so, no. Well, in seventh grade, in Highland Park High School, you had to pick whether you were going to high school or [going to] take commercial courses and I just assumed I would go to college.

MO: Did you know you would go to Rutgers?

DR: Well, I didn't know in the beginning, and then, I realized that my dad couldn't afford to send me to an out-of-town school. Now, later on, my sister went to Michigan, but my younger brother went to Rutgers. Well, that was during the war already.

MO: Did many of your classmates stay here and go to Rutgers?

DR: Quite a few, quite a few. Incidentally, I don't know if you knew, my brother [Alvin Rockoff] was Chairman of the Board of Governors of Rutgers.

KP: I thought so, but I was not sure. I wondered if, in fact, you were related.

DR: ... Yes.

KP: I think he was chairman when I was a graduate student. Was he chair in the 1980s?

DR: I would say the late '80's and the '90s. ...

KP: Yes. Your father was originally brought here to be a Hebrew teacher.

DR: Right.

KP: I would imagine that he was very active in the local synagogue.

DR: Yes, he was, yes. He belonged to an Orthodox synagogue in New Brunswick. Then, when we moved to Highland Park, he was one of the founders of the Highland Park Temple, always active in education, Jewish education. He was one of the founders of the Hebrew school in New Brunswick, which was on Nelson Street, which, now, became the (Philip Raymond?) Yeshiva.

KP: I would imagine that your family was very observant, especially on the High Holy Days.

DR: Yes, but, being in the milk business, ... in the early days, it was a seven-days-a-week business. So, it was difficult. Just the Holy Days were the ones we observed.

KP: What about the dietary laws?

DR: Yes.

KP: You observed those.

DR: Yes.

KP: Your father was an active Zionist. I imagine that his feelings rubbed off on you and the family.

DR: Yes.

KP: How aware were you and your father of what was going on in Germany in the 1930s?

DR: I'm ashamed to say that I really wasn't aware of it, but my dad said he had heard rumors. In fact, he was trying to get a close friend of his from Europe to get here [immigrate] and he just couldn't get him to come here. Eventually, he was lost there.

KP: In other words, he wrote to him, urging him to come to the United States.

DR: Come here, yes, and he was willing to sponsor him. In those days, you had to sponsor an immigrant.

MO: When was that? How early did your father hear those rumors?

DR: I would say that was after 1940.

KP: Before America's entrance into the war?

DR: Yes.

KP: It was still fairly early, in a sense.

DR: Yes. In fact, let me tell you this, after I was thirteen and *bar mitzvah*, my mother's father was still alive in Europe and her mother had, my grandmother had, just passed away and she said to my father, "I would like to see my father before he goes." ... She took me and my brother, Alvin, ... I was thirteen, he was five or six, and we went to, at that time, it was Poland already. ... When we went through Germany by train, ... we knew that Hitler was rising in power already. He was getting, you know, ... popular.

KP: What year was this?

DR: ... It must have been 1932 or '33.

KP: You traveled through Germany in 1932.

DR: Well, just the train went through.

KP: Just the train, and then ...

DR: From Paris, we went to Warsaw, and then, to Vilnius.

KP: You went on a remarkable trip, which few of your classmates in either high school or college would have been able to go on.

DR: I remember vividly, and my mother was not, you know, [formally educated]. She was self-educated and I always had to address the envelopes to her family in Europe.

KP: You mentioned that, during the ride through Germany, you were very aware that Hitler had come to power. What else do you remember about that trip? A thirteen-year-old would have been very impressionable.

DR: Well, we spent some time in Paris. By that time, I was, I think, in seventh grade. I would have just had a smattering of French. You know that we learned [French]; school French wasn't very good, anyway. ... I actually remember my mother's family. They were quite well-to-do and that's why they never wanted to come to the United States.

KP: Since, in fact, they were doing well.

DR: Well, yes.

KP: What type of business were they in?

DR: Well, they were all in various businesses. The only one that survived there, whose family survived, was one brother-in-law who was a furrier; no, he used to treat the furs. ... He was, I guess they called him a Communist in those days. So, when Germany attacked Poland, he took his family to Russia and two of his children are now in Israel. They survived.

KP: Do you have any other observations about the trip?

DR: ... If I had time to think, I probably would remember, but I really didn't know what you were going to ask me.

KP: As someone who grew up in the United States, to see the world that your mother and father grew up in, what struck you as the most different and the most similar?

DR: Don't forget, I was only, say, thirteen or fourteen. Well, they didn't have the transportation that we did. I remember going from one village to another in a horse and wagon and they didn't have telephones at that time there.

KP: In a sense, it sounds like you grew up with more material possessions than they had.

DR: Yes, although, when I moved to Highland Park, we lived on Seventh Avenue. It was a dirt street. People don't believe me when I tell them that. [laughter]

KP: Was that the big trip of your childhood?

DR: Yes, that was the first time I'd really gone anywhere.

KP: Given your family's business, it sounds like you did not get many vacations.

DR: No, no, although, as things got better, my dad would take off for two or three weeks and they'd go up to the mountains.

KP: To the Catskills?

DR: Catskill Mountains, right.

MO: Did you work after school every day, helping your dad?

DR: Yes, I did. It wasn't a must. It was just that I was interested.

KP: It sounds like you were very interested in the dairy industry at an early age.

DR: Yes, but, I don't know if I told you, ... I wanted to be an engineer. In fact, when I enrolled at Rutgers, I was in the College of Engineering, but, after one year, I changed my mind.

KP: What led you to change your mind?

DR: Two things. One, a close friend of ours, who was an attorney, told me that he had gone to Rutgers as an engineer and he said, in those days, engineers, Jewish engineers, didn't make a go of it and he discouraged me. ... Two, it's a tough course. [laughter] I think, now, it's a five-year course. It's a tough course.

KP: I have heard both things from others. Fortunately, the former no longer applies, but the latter is still true.

DR: Yes.

KP: If you had had your choice, where would you have liked to have gone to college? Your father wanted to send you to Israel, then Palestine.

DR: Yes. Well, there was a Haifa University. That's where I thought I'd go, but we changed our minds. I really was very happy to go to Rutgers.

KP: You did not dream of any others.

DR: No, no.

KP: You lived very close to home. In fact, you were a commuter.

DR: Right.

KP: Did you have any regrets about not living on campus?

DR: I guess I did miss not living on campus. Now, my brother, when he went to school, he became a fraternity man and I would say most of his friends are fellows that he met in his fraternity. Most of my friends are fellows that I knew before I went to Rutgers.

KP: Were they fellow commuters?

DR: Yes.

MO: Did you choose to stay at home?

DR: Just couldn't ... afford it.

KP: One of my standard questions is to ask everyone about their memories of Dean Metzger.

DR: Oh, yes.

KP: He seems to trigger various kinds of stories. What do you remember about him?

DR: He was all right. He was a little tough. You know, we had to go to Sunday chapel and the only way we were excused was if we got a letter from our rabbi saying that we were going to synagogue on Saturday, but I think, as I look back, he's all right. ...

KP: You did attend chapel.

DR: Yes, I think for a year or half a year, until I found out [that] you could get excused.

KP: Then, you decided to get ...

DR: ... Get an excuse and get out of it, although, as I remember chapel, ... I would say it was almost like non-denominational.

KP: However, it did have some Christian overtones.

DR: Don't forget, I lived on Seventh Avenue. On that street were quite a few professors and Dean [Luther] Martin, he was the registrar. I think that's before your time.

KP: He was before my time, but his name has come up. You grew up with many Rutgers faculty members.

DR: ... Yes.

KP: Many of them probably bought your family's milk.

DR: Could be, yes. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that Professor George was your favorite professor.

DR: Yes, political science.

KP: He has been very popular.

DR: Have other people said the same thing?

KP: Yes. We have never actually counted up a list of the top ten favorite professors, but he would definitely be in the top five.

DR: I didn't realize I answered that question.

KP: Yes. What do you remember about Professor George?

DR: First of all, he really knew his politics and he had a great sense of humor. ... He was just a great fellow. ... We always enjoyed his class. You know, there're some classes, you keep looking at your watch, hoping it's over, but we enjoyed his class.

KP: I have been told by others, Republicans, Democrats and Independents, that even Republicans liked him, because he really made you think. You would echo that sentiment.

DR: Yes, yes, I would.

KP: You mentioned that you switched curriculums and entered the College of Agriculture. You had not intended to be an "aggie" initially.

DR: No, no, I was engineering. At the end of the year, I realized [that] this wasn't for me. I had to go to summer school to make up a lot of the science courses. There was a Professor Helyar there; I don't know if you ever heard of him.

KP: Yes, the Helyar House.

DR: Yes, yes.

KP: How did you like the switch? By changing to the Ag School, did you think that you were, in a sense, going into the family business?

DR: Yes, yes. See, I took dairy manufacturers. They had a small milk plant over there. I don't know if they still have it now.

KP: I do not know, actually.

DR: I see. We learned quite a bit. I learned how to make ice cream, which came in handy later on. I don't know if I mentioned it, but I was in the service for a while.

KP: No, you have not mentioned that yet. Since you have already thought of the story, how did learning to make ice cream come in handy in the service?

DR: ... Number one, since we were in the dairy business, I was exempt. I was always deferred, until just about all my friends had gone. So, I spoke to my dad and he said, "I guess you'd better enlist." I enlisted in the Signal Corps, went to a radio school here at Rutgers, I think six or ten weeks. Anyway, I went overseas as a replacement, not for any particular outfit, and, when I wound up in India, General [Joseph W.] Stillwell, who we all thought was a great general, but, unfortunately, the powers-to-be; well, that's part of your [history]. ... He was against Chiang Kai-Shek. He realized ... [that] he wasn't very honorable. He [Chiang Kai-Shek] was taking all

that equipment, using it for himself. Anyway, ... the soldiers that were up in the jungle, he [Stillwell] wanted to do something for them. So, he decided to build a small ice cream plant and, since, I guess on my record, I had put that I had once made ice cream, I was put in charge of this small plant in Calcutta. ... They used to fly the ice cream up as we made it, because ... we had freezing equipment, but they didn't up there. They'd fly it up there and pass it out and come back.

KP: In other words, you would make the ice cream, put it in containers and load it on a plane. They would land, immediately distribute it, and then, come back.

DR: ... Right.

KP: How long did you do this for?

DR: About three months. By that time, I was assigned to a signal outfit.

KP: While you were waiting, you were given this job.

DR: Yes.

KP: That seemed to have a high priority.

DR: It did. I think he was an excellent general. ...

KP: Did you ever meet him?

DR: Once. Once, he came into the plant.

KP: However, this was clearly carried out under his direction.

DR: Yes, oh, yes.

KP: It sounds like this was the kind of thing that made him very popular with the troops.

DR: ... Right.

MO: Which flavors did you make? [laughter]

DR: Just three, chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.

KP: How big was this plant?

DR: Very small, very small.

KP: A dozen workers?

DR: No, only about four of us, ... and it was one of these hand-[churned] ice cream machines.
...

MO: How much did you make at a time?

DR: We made maybe a hundred gallons at a time. ...

MO: Do you know how many troops you supplied?

DR: That, I don't remember, but they would go to different places all the time.

KP: That is such a great story.

DR: In fact, when I was finally assigned to the signal outfit and I was sent to Karachi, ... most of those men had been up in the jungles for about two years already and they were anxious to get home. One of them mentioned it. He said, "Boy, they used to send us ice cream once in a while." I said, "I was the one that was making it." [laughter] ...

KP: Backing up a little, it sounds like your major, not only for the ice cream making, but in general, was very useful in the career that you embarked upon.

DR: Yes, right.

KP: Your father was self-educated. Were you able to assist his business at all with what you learned at the Ag School?

DR: Well, I'll tell you, my father was really an amazing person. He was self-educated and he really knew what was going on. We built a new plant, I think in 1939, and he built a beautiful little plant for us. ... At that time, Paulus Dairy was the leading dairy and his place was like a junk place compared to the new plant my dad built.

KP: He really was, in a sense, on the cutting edge.

DR: Yes. He was always interested in looking for new ideas. For example, during the war, homogenized milk was just coming in and you couldn't get a homogenizer. ... The Raytheon Corporation in Boston developed the machine, the sonic machine, that would homogenize the milk; at least they said it would. He put it in and, I remember, when I came back, ... he told me [that] he had thrown it out and gotten a homogenizer, but that was one of his mistakes. ... He was suing them for a lot of money. They offered to give him stock in their company.

KP: In Raytheon?

DR: Raytheon. It was a small company then, because they developed a lot of equipment for submarines and whatnot, but he took the cash, I think about ten thousand dollars.

KP: If he had taken the stocks ...

DR: ... He would have been a multi-millionaire. [laughter] We're jumping around.

MO: When you went in for engineering, had you planned on going into the dairy business?

DR: No, no, I thought I'd be an engineer. I don't know what [kind of engineer], but I don't think, in those days, we really, at least I didn't, think that far ahead.

MO: You said you had always shown an interest in the business.

DR: Well, ... I worked in it all the time. Well, I found it very interesting, to go out with milk, with the drivers, and you meet people, found it very interesting. ... I think that helped me later on, when I became an executive, that we understood the problems of the employees.

KP: Because you had done most of their jobs at some point.

DR: Yes, yes.

KP: How well did your junior high and high school education prepare you for college? Was your math background strong enough when you got to Rutgers?

DR: Yes. ... I didn't have any problems in college.

KP: Yes. You did not switch from engineering because you were poorly prepared.

DR: ... No, no. The only thing is, I remember, I guess my English, ... my writing, wasn't too good. Freshmen then had to pass a composition course and I had to take it.

KP: That was the tougher subject.

DR: Yes.

KP: You played freshman basketball.

DR: Right.

KP: Did you leave basketball because of the time constraints?

DR: No, I realized I wasn't good enough for college basketball. The year I was a freshman, Rutgers was undefeated in basketball, until the last game. Then, NYU [New York University] beat them in the last minute, but we had a good team in those days.

KP: You were off campus. Did you get to most of the games?

DR: Yes, yes. In fact, ... they had an intramural tournament and we had a commuter team and we won the championship one year.

KP: Did you see a real difference between the commuters, the fraternity men and those who lived on campus?

DR: Not really.

KP: You did not feel separated.

DR: ... No. I would say ninety percent of the boys ... lived on campus in those days. The commuters, we had the building on the corner of, ... I don't know what it is now, College and Hamilton Street.

KP: I think it is offices now, but that was your building.

DR: ... Yes, [the] Student Union.

MO: Did you go to all of the sporting events?

DR: Yes, yes.

KP: Including the great Princeton/Rutgers game?

DR: That's right. [At] that time, the football field was where the ...

KP: Library is today.

DR: Yes, Neilson Field. It's a nice, little field.

MO: That was the big win over Princeton.

DR: No, at the stadium. That was the dedication of the new stadium.

KP: What are your recollections about what your fellow Rutgers students thought about politics, about Roosevelt versus the Republican candidates and, also, about the coming of the war in the late 1930s? Mike and my other students have looked at old *Targums* from the 1930s and 1940s. We get the sense that there was a fairly strong peace movement then. It seems as though many students really wanted to avoid another war.

DR: Yes. I think, ... when I was going to school, we were hoping we would never [get involved], that the war wasn't our problem. ... As I said, I wasn't really aware of what Hitler was doing to wipe out the ... Jewish population. I think we were all hoping not [to get involved], but, once we got into the war, I think everybody was willing, you know, was for it. We didn't have the feeling that they had when Vietnam happened.

MO: Did you participate in any of the peace rallies?

DR: No.

MO: I believe there was one in 1936.

DR: ... I was really not aware of it. There weren't too many. For a long time, you know, there were rallies by, what did we call them then? you know, isolationists, but, once we got into the war, I think everyone was for the war.

KP: However, you do remember isolationists on campus.

DR: Yes, oh, yes.

KP: We also noticed that, in terms of elections, Republicans did very well among the student body and even the faculty.

DR: Yes. Well, I remember, Hoover was the last Republican. Then, during most of my time, it was Roosevelt.

KP: However, I think Rutgers students in 1940 voted for Wendell Willkie, favored Willkie.

DR: Yes, Willkie was a very popular man. He was a great speaker, I'll tell you that.

KP: Do you remember his visit to the area in 1940?

DR: Yes, yes. He was a great speaker. ... At Rutgers, he was very popular.

MO: Why do you think that was? Was it because he was a good speaker?

DR: Well, he swayed us, I guess. [laughter] Don't you think; today, I think Clinton won, one of the reasons was that he out-spoke Bush in all the debates.

KP: You were an Independent, and so was your father, when many were either very strong party Democrats or Republicans. What did you and your father think of Roosevelt in the 1930s?

DR: Well, in those days, we thought he was a great man. It wasn't until later on that we found out he had some problems. Well, he did a lot for the country, I think.

KP: How did your father feel, as a businessman, about the New Deal programs? Many businessmen were upset by the regulations involved.

DR: Yes, but, don't forget, he really wasn't a big company. In those days, we had ... about ten routes. So, we must have had about forty, fifty people working for us. So, I don't think he was worried about some of the NRA [National Recovery Administration] rules and regulations.

MO: How big was that when compared to the other dairy?

KP: The big dairy in town that you competed against.

DR: Paulus? Why, it must have been twice the size, at that time.

KP: You were the two main dairies.

DR: Well, there was a third one called Krauszer's. I don't know if you had heard of them, because they had convenience stores.

KP: Yes, that is how I have heard of Krauszer's.

DR: Yes. When they went down, their sons went into the convenience store business, because they had lost most of their [milk] business, you know, house-to-house or stores.

KP: One person we are all interested in is Carleton Dilatush, who appeared in the 1939 and 1940 *Targum* and the yearbook.

DR: ... He was an Ag student. In dairy manufacturers, we had five or six boys and he was one of them.

KP: He was, and is even to this day, the man-about-campus in your class.

DR: Yes. Well, he's ... still president of our class, yes.

KP: Do you have any recollections about him as a student and a member of the class? He seems to have led your class almost from the moment you got on campus.

DR: Yes. I think the fact that he was a fraternity man helped him. Fraternities were strong, as far as electing officers. ... There were five or six of us in that class, in that group. He was as good or as bad as the rest of us, [laughter] but he was always a nice fellow.

KP: Yes.

DR: Very observant, tolerant of people. We called him "Dilly" in those days. ... Although he graduated as a dairy manufacturer, he went to work, I think, for Armstrong Cork.

KP: I have interviewed him. He talked about that.

DR: ... He played one-hundred-fifty-pound football. Rutgers, in those days, ... had one of the best one-hundred-fifty-pound teams. He would starve all week. [laughter] You had to be weighed in on Friday morning and, after Friday, why, you can eat all you want.

KP: He would starve from Monday on.

DR: Right, so [that] he could make the weight.

MO: He would just bulk up on Friday.

DR: Yes.

KP: In September 1939, at a convocation addressing the incoming freshman class, President Clothier said that this war was not our war. Did you have any sense, in 1939, 1940 or early 1941, that we might be getting into the war? Do you have any distinct memories of that?

DR: It was after I got out, in '40, '41, when we started, had lend-lease, stuff like that, that we realized, sooner or later, we would get involved.

KP: I imagine that your family was quite alarmed by the invasion of Poland, since it hit closer to home for them than for most people.

DR: Oh, yes. By that time, you couldn't correspond or get to them.

KP: Did your family try the Red Cross or any other agencies?

DR: My mother tried. There were some Jewish agencies that tried, but they couldn't locate them. In fact, about four or five of the younger cousins of mine did survive the war and, when ... they went back to Poland, they were killed by Polish peasants, because the peasants were worried that they wanted their homes back again. Only one cousin, besides the one that went to Israel, came to ... [the United States]. My father brought her over here, but she wouldn't talk about the war at all, never told us how she survived. Then, eventually, she passed away.

KP: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor occurred?

DR: Yes. It was on a Sunday and I was in the milk plant. I was listening [to the radio]. I would walk into the office to hear how the New York Giants were doing, and then, they announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

KP: Did you think of enlisting? What were your thoughts then?

DR: Well, at that time, my dad wasn't feeling too well and I knew, ... you know, I shouldn't enlist, and then, they were drafting at that time already. We had the draft and I had a high number. ... Every six months, I'd be called up and they would automatically defer me.

KP: Was that because of the agricultural exemption?

DR: Yes. It was, I think, in 1942 ... that I enlisted, went to Rutgers, to a radio school, which was a waste. [laughter]

KP: You were in the ROTC, like everyone else, for two years at Rutgers.

DR: Yes, for two years.

KP: What did that teach you?

DR: Teach me? I knew how to march [laughter] when I first took basic training. It was a lot of fun, I think, in those days; we didn't know [what lay ahead].

KP: War must have seemed a very distant prospect when you took it in 1936 and 1937.

DR: Yes, right, yes.

KP: You decided not to stay in advanced ROTC.

DR: Right.

KP: Was there any reason?

DR: I don't know why. I just didn't care to be in the Army, I guess.

KP: It sounds like you had many responsibilities in your father's company once you graduated. What did you initially do when you got out of college?

DR: Oh, the first thing I did was learn how to operate the plant, ... what we call a pasteurizer. ... In those days, you pasteurized the milk in tanks.

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DR: In those days, you pasteurized in tanks. So, you had to learn how to heat the [milk], you know, pasteurize the milk. It was much more difficult than it is [today], well, when we had what we called "short time." Are you familiar with that at all? because you're shaking your head.

KP: Someone else told me, but it is great that you are describing the process.

DR: Well, short time was a series of plates. ... The cold milk would come in, go in, and the hot milk would be cooled down, and then, there was a section where it was ice water [that] would cool the milk down and there was another section where hot water [would heat it], but, in [this process], see, [there is] a bit of waste or whatever. ... In about twenty seconds or sixteen seconds, milk was flash pasteurized. So, it was easier once you started the run; the ... raw milk was going in and the pasteurized milk was coming out and you ran to fillers, but, when I first started, you had a tank of, say, ... fifteen hundred cans, no, it was a hundred-and-fifty cans of milk, and you did each [tank in turn]. ... It was called batch pasteurization. So, that's what the first thing I learned [was] and I would then relieve the plant manager, who ... did the pasteurizing, twice a week, because we did it ... seven days a week, but they only worked five days.

KP: You were the one that filled in the other two days.

DR: Yes, right, and I learned the various routes and stuff like that, but, by that time, my father did have a so-called manager. ... After I left, the manager bought a little milk plant himself and business, for a while, it was tough.

KP: Was this because you were in the service?

DR: Right, plus the fact [that] farms were disappearing. There was a milk shortage during the war. When I came out, ... my father had difficulty getting milk. We finally bought a small dairy in New York State and made a receiving plant out of it. That's where farmers would bring their milk. In fact, ... I stayed up there a year. My dad stayed up there two years and I ran the plant in New Brunswick.

KP: The war really flipped things for your father.

DR: It was very bad. I'll tell you, when I came home, my father was really ... on the verge of bankruptcy, because of the shortage of milk.

KP: The raw of the raw?

DR: Right.

MO: Do you think the war was even worse than the Depression?

DR: For my father. It didn't help the dairy business at all. While other businesses really flourished, his did not.

KP: For part of the war, you were here in New Brunswick and Highland Park. How did the war change Highland Park, New Brunswick and the surrounding area?

DR: There were ... very few young people around. ... They were already having rationing then. I remember, for us, it was bad. ... We could only get so much gas and you had to keep close records. You couldn't buy tires, although my dad, he bought five milk trucks ... right before they were starting rationing.

KP: Before or after Pearl Harbor?

DR: ... After Pearl Harbor, and put them away, never used them, but, as the war went on, he had to put them in, because you couldn't get parts. Anyone that was in the delivery business, distribution business, was in trouble.

KP: Because of these shortages?

DR: Shortage of gas. You couldn't expand. Lots of times, you couldn't get gas. ... They eliminated Sunday deliveries. Then, they went to every-other-day delivery. Finally, it was, what? one set of customers three times a week and the other set three times a week. So, we only worked six days a week. So, some good things came out of it. [laughter] After the war, when I

came home, my wife comes from Connecticut, she couldn't believe that ... I had to work seven days a week.

KP: What did he do about workers during the war?

DR: Oh, that was very bad. I would say most of our drivers ... had to go in. The drivers, I don't know why, were not exempt from the [draft]. Just the men that worked in the plant were exempt from being drafted. We lost a lot of the drivers.

KP: Who did you substitute them with?

DR: The dregs, I'll tell you that.

KP: Did you use any women as drivers during the war?

DR: No, but there was a fellow who had his own [route], you know, bought milk from a dairy and delivered it. He went in the service and his wife, I remember, from Milltown ...

KP: ... Took over the route?

DR: Yes.

KP: However, you never used women.

DR: No.

KP: It sounds like you used older workers.

DR: Yes.

KP: Workers you might never have hired in peacetime.

DR: That's right. They stole. My father said [that] he knew drivers were stealing money, you know. They'd say, "Mrs. Jones owes money," but she never did, but there wasn't anything you could do. You just couldn't ... replace them. It was important to deliver the milk.

KP: Even if there was some thievery.

DR: Yes.

KP: Camp Kilmer expanded very quickly in World War II. What was its impact on the town?

DR: It was great for the town. The merchants did very well. It was a help, I think, for the town, but it didn't help us. [laughter]

KP: Due to the camp, there were many GIs around, most of whom were getting ready to ship out. Were there ever any problems with having so many GIs in town?

DR: Not that I know of, not that I know of. I never had the luck to be at Camp Kilmer.

KP: The troops would often come out to Highland Park and New Brunswick on leave.

DR: Yes.

KP: However, there were never any incidents or problems.

DR: Not that I know of. Those were the days, you know, where newspapers were pretty [compliant]. They didn't put in what the big shots wanted them to leave out.

KP: Since you said that, what were the stories that they did not put in, that you remember?

DR: Well, ... the soldiers would get drunk and try to rape women and stuff like that. You'd hear stories, but ...

KP: It never appeared in the papers.

DR: Papers, no. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

DR: We were talking about Camp Kilmer. So, I didn't know too much about Camp Kilmer at that time.

KP: Yes. Did your wife or anyone that you knew do any volunteer work during the war?

DR: Well, as I said, my wife came from Connecticut. Her father had died right before the war and she had a brother, he was ... a merchant that sold from his car, had customers that came there, and, when he died, her brother took over and he was drafted. So, she helped there for about a year. Then, when I went overseas, ... Bradley Field, near Connecticut, was an Army base and she worked at the base there. I don't know what she did. ...

KP: She contributed during the war.

DR: Yes.

KP: The *Targum*, particularly in 1941 and 1942, emphasizes the blackouts and the guards on the bridge between Highland Park and New Brunswick. Do you remember the blackout restrictions?

DR: I do, but, ... in fact, for a while, I was one of these wardens. I was a block warden, but, I mean, ... to me, it was a big joke.

KP: Even when you were a warden?

DR: Right.

KP: It sounds like you were a little skeptical of the possibility of bombers coming over.

DR: Right, right.

KP: What about the black market? Do you have any sense of how prevalent it was?

DR: Off-the-record; there wasn't any problems.

KP: There was, in fact, a black market, I guess.

DR: Yes, yes. ... Well, the gasoline company wouldn't give you more gas unless you'd give them the coupons.

KP: As more of your classmates, friends and even workers went off to the war, did you feel as though you should be going off with them?

DR: Yes. ... I felt; what's the word I should use? I wasn't thinking that I was missing something; I was a little embarrassed when I saw the parents of people. "What are you doing here?" and stuff like that.

KP: They would say that to you.

DR: Yes. In fact, there's one woman in New Brunswick who claims she reported someone who should be going and the boy went and, unfortunately, he was killed and the two families never spoke to each other after that.

MO: Did that feeling lead you to enlist?

DR: No, no. I never really encountered that. Well, I thought I was really doing something that was important. In fact, ... before I left, my father got some Army contracts at Fort Dix. So, that definitely would have kept me out, but I just felt it was [time]. I was embarrassed to be home. There weren't that many young fellows around. ...

KP: One of the first people I interviewed had a very amusing story about some mothers talking about him not going in. He was so embarrassed that the Coast Guard had not yet called him up. He had enlisted, but they had not issued his orders. Which branch did you want to serve in?

DR: I enlisted in the Signal Corps. That was part of the [Army]. ... After my classes were over, I went down. I was sent to Fort Dix. That's when I decided I [had] made a big mistake. [laughter]

KP: You were in the enlisted Reserves. You took your classes at Rutgers for about six months.

DR: ... I think so; it must have been that long.

KP: How useful was this training?

DR: It wasn't really. It was really theory of radios and, once we got in, ... I was sent to Camp Crowder, which was a Signal Corps base. I mean, they laughed when you told them what you did. ... They had a lot of men from the phone companies that really knew their stuff. So, after basic training, I took tests and I was put into a message center, a little bit, minor, cryptography and message center work.

MO: What made you decide on the Signal Corps?

DR: I'm trying to remember now.

KP: You enlisted in 1942, but you stayed home for six months.

DR: ... Yes. Someone must have told me about this course at Rutgers, because my father didn't want me just to go right in. He wanted, you know, [for me to] make arrangements.

KP: In a sense, you could join the military, but you could still stay at home.

DR: Right. I think it was a good six months.

KP: You mentioned that, at Fort Dix, you realized that you had made a big mistake. [laughter]

DR: Yes.

KP: It sounds like you have some stories about Fort Dix and your induction.

DR: Well, I was only there a week.

KP: That was enough. [laughter]

DR: Yes. I think I was on KP about three of those days. I remember, there was a Sergeant (Lidack?), who had been in the Army for; you heard that name?

KP: Yes, he left a distinct impression on a number of men.

DR: And he'd line us up in the morning and say, "Who would like this job, [to] volunteer for this job?" and some fellows would raise their hand. ... Then, he would say, "Oh, I know you college boys, you're too smart to do it, but you don't have to volunteer. I'll pick you out." I don't know whatever happened to him.

KP: Apparently, he was featured in *Life* Magazine.

DR: Oh, he was?

KP: Yes. Someone mentioned it, but I have not seen it. In addition to those three days of KP, do you have any other memories of Fort Dix?

DR: Well, the food wasn't so good, but we were only there a week. We got all our shots there. That was the famous [saying], "Watch that hook." I don't know if you ever heard that expression. Plenty a fellow would faint. I don't know why, but they couldn't take the thought of getting shots.

KP: Even big, muscular boys?

DR: Yes. They were the first to fall. [laughter] They were the first to fall.

KP: I have interviewed people who noted that they sometimes switched people around at Fort Dix. Were you definitely going to go into the Signal Corps? Was there any chance of you being switched?

DR: ... If there was, we didn't know about it.

KP: Yes. In other words, you were in Signal Corps.

DR: Yes. Within a week, ... by train, we were sent to Camp Crowder.

KP: You had visited Europe at thirteen, but had you seen much of the United States before your trip to Camp Crowder?

DR: Not really, not really.

KP: What did you think of your trip and of Camp Crowder, Missouri? The camp is located near the junction of Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

DR: Right. That was Jesse James country, Jesse James country. It was all right. [laughter]

KP: It was very isolated, relatively speaking.

DR: Yes, yes. We used to go into a little town called Joplin, Missouri, but it was all right.

MO: Did you have any trouble with the locals there?

DR: No, no. I think they were *gung-ho* out there. It was a godsend to them. ... I wasn't married yet, then, but, ... if my wife wanted to come out to visit me, it was tough finding [a room]. The only way you could get a room was to say that you were married, but they never asked to see anything to prove that you were married. I remember back, two of the fellows that I went [with] were married. ... They could only get one room. They just put a sheet between it and they both were in the same room, but, there, once we got there, the Army said, "Forget about

radio,” after we took basic training. I’ll tell you one good story. ... You had to do pole line climbing.

KP: Like in the phone company?

DR: That’s right, but they didn’t have ... the bars to climb up. ... Anyway, one of my fellows, he said, “I’m going to do this as fast as I can. I can’t take this.” He went up and down that pole in record time. Guess where they put him? pole line construction. [laughter] He had to see the chaplain. I think it took him about three weeks before he got out of it.

KP: What do you remember of your training? I assume it was broken up and that you had a basic phase similar to basic infantry training.

DR: Yes.

KP: What do you remember of that phase, the bivouacs and the marching?

DR: Well, I guess I was in pretty good shape, because I played basketball, baseball, but it was tough marching. ... It wasn’t too difficult, because I had the ROTC [training]. At least I knew what was right-face and left-face, about-face and, you know, forward-march, but, after we learned how to use a rifle, we had to go through an infiltration course. Luckily, the day we went through, unlucky, it was a rainy day and you had to crawl through this course. They had barbed wire and you had to stay below it. ... There were all kinds of rumors, “Watch out for the ...” The guys that were done would say, “Watch out for the snakes. [laughter] ... If you see one, don’t lift your head, because the machine guns,” I don’t know if they’re live bullets, but, you know, they were firing machine guns. That was the toughest part. Then, after that, they sent us out to a camp. It did help a little. ... By that time, it was the middle of the winter in Missouri. We had to cross a lake with our backpacks. ... Now that I look at it, it wasn’t too bad.

KP: It sounds like there was some gripping at the time.

DR: Yes. Well, many a man, it was so cold, they would really fire up the little stoves that we had and many a tent was burned down, [laughter] because of the pot stoves.

KP: Where were the men in your training unit from? Do you have any memories of the people that you met?

DR: All over, all over. Most of them, I think, were from the East, but they were from all over. ... You hear stories, or I met them later on, fellows ... who went in earlier met a lot of fellows from the country or from the South, where they didn’t know too much. ... I think most of my fellows, don’t forget, we were late, so, they had to be fairly well-educated.

KP: You did not have the poor Southern boy who did not know how to read in your training unit.

DR: Right, right.

KP: You mentioned Joplin, where there were not many rooms to be had. Did you go anywhere else while you were at Camp Crowder?

DR: We never had that much time off. Don't forget, we were still [in] basic training. They only gave you, you know, weekends off.

KP: It sounds like you did not want to spend most of your leave time traveling.

DR: Right, yes.

KP: How was the Army food at Camp Crowder?

DR: I guess it was edible. [laughter]

KP: How were the drill sergeants and drill instructors?

DR: They weren't bad, to tell you the truth. Maybe I had a happy look at things. I don't know. [laughter]

KP: What about the specialized training? It sounds like some of it was very good, but you would have preferred to pass on other parts of it.

DR: ... It wasn't too specialized. Not until I was really assigned to an outfit, in India, did I really get to know what I was doing.

KP: In a sense, you really only got a smattering at Camp Crowder.

DR: Right. ... From Camp Crowder, we were sent to Camp Reynolds in Pennsylvania, to await orders. ... We were sent to Newport News, Virginia, to be shipped overseas. I had one interesting thing there. We decided, three of us, that [since] we were going to leave in a couple of days on a ship, we thought we'd get out, go over, ... through the fence, into town. I'll tell you, when we saw the Navy patrols and the way they caught fellows and really beat the hell out of them, we went right back to camp. [laughter]

KP: In other words, they did not just escort you back to the base.

DR: They beat you up first, and then, sent you back.

KP: Where did you hope to be sent in the Signal Corps? Did you expect to be sent to the Pacific or to Europe?

DR: Well, once I was sent to the East Coast, to Camp Reynolds, I knew that we were going to go to the European Theater; never dreamt that I'd go to India.

KP: You really expected to go to the ETO, [European Theater of Operations].

DR: Yes. In fact, from there, we were put on a Navy vessel, without any escort, and we went to Casablanca ... for five days. Before I went over, someone said, "The food is terrible over there. You'd better buy some." I bought a big box of Hershey bars. About the third day on that boat, I was so sick [that] I gave away all the Hershey bars. [laughter]

MO: Did you have any preference in theater?

DR: No. I didn't have any. I spent about a month in North Africa. At that time, ... the Anzio Beachhead was just established and we thought we'd probably be sent there. The next thing I know, we were put on a British ship, went through the Suez Canal and we were in India.

KP: How did you meet your wife?

DR: ... Oh, boy. [laughter]

KP: Your wife enters the picture around this time.

DR: After I got out of college, ... my mother had a cousin that lived in Hartford, Connecticut, who was very close to my wife's family, and my wife's mother, by coincidence, came from the same town in Europe that my mother did. Anyway, they were going to Atlantic City one time and it was pouring. ... Atlantic City was not a gambling place then and they stopped at our house to say hello and my wife was there with her brother. ... Anyway, it rained so hard, they decided to sleep over in our house. I took her out that night and, slowly, [we dated]. It was a long-distance relationship. We would meet in New York.

KP: You would have dates.

DR: Have dates. She'd go back to Hartford. For me to drive up there, the only road in those days was the Boston Post Road. ...

KP: During the war, you could not get very much gas.

DR: No. So, that's how we met.

KP: Did the war hasten your marriage? Did it ever change your courtship?

DR: Right. I guess it did, because we became engaged ... before I went into the service. ... I had already enlisted, but, when I got notice to be shipped to Camp Reynolds, I called her up and said, "You know, I'm going overseas. You want to get married now?" ... I heard her ask her mother, "You think I should get married now?" [laughter] Her mother said, "Yes," and we got married. I came east. I was on a week's furlough. Her mother had made a wedding in two days.

KP: With rationing. Some guests had to have gas coupons.

DR: Yes.

KP: You corresponded with your then fiancée.

DR: Oh, all right, off-the-record now.

[TAPE PAUSED]

DR: So, she really knew where I was at all times.

KP: It sounds like you got a little seasick going over.

DR: Yes, a little, right. [laughter]

KP: What kind of ship were you on?

DR: It was the SS [*General Horace A.*] *Mann*. ... It was a small ship. It only took about two hundred or three hundred men, no escort. ... We left, ... it was leap year, February 29th, and it went across on its own, big storms. Man, everybody was sick, but, finally, after a while, you got used to it. You'd get in line to go to [the] mess hall and, [as] soon as you smelled the food, that was it. You'd go back to your bunk. The only thing, someone warned me, he said, "When you get a bunk, take the top bunk." ... I said, "Why? You have to climb all the way up there." He said, "You'll see," and I found out.

KP: Did you take the top bunk?

DR: The top bunk, yes.

KP: You saw why. [laughter]

DR: Right.

KP: How cramped were you in the ship? It sounds like it was a relatively small ship.

DR: You couldn't do anything and we were so sick, no one wanted to do anything. Every so often, you would hear [an explosion]; they must have been dropping bombs, you know, in the water.

KP: Depth charges.

DR: Depth charges, yes.

KP: However, there were no close calls with submarines.

DR: ... Not as far as we know; all kinds of rumors, but nothing.

KP: You were all replacements.

DR: All replacements.

MO: There were two to three hundred replacements, plus the crew of the ship.

DR: Yes.

KP: You landed in North Africa, which was probably a clear sign that you were going to be assigned to Europe.

DR: Right.

KP: What did you do during the month that you were in North Africa?

DR: Not too much, not too much.

KP: Did you just sit around the replacement depot?

DR: Yes. You couldn't go to town or anything. It was awful hot in Africa. During the day, you'd strip to your shorts and, at night, you froze, it was so cold, but they had a lot of hospitals there. ... We would see all these fellows coming back that were wounded. You know who I met there? Doc [Hyman] Copleman. I don't know if you knew him. He was the big Rutgers man. He was the football team's physician for many years. He's gone already. ...

KP: He was a doctor.

DR: Yes, a surgeon, right.

KP: When you say that you saw the wounded, did you go into the hospitals?

DR: No. ... They shared the same camp we did. ... Later on, when we got boarded on this British ship to go to India, there were a lot of New Zealand soldiers on there that had been wounded. They had been in the war now, what? three or four years. ... These were all men that were wounded. ... If we were nervous before about going to Anzio, they really told us. A lot of men ... suffered in the war.

KP: What did they tell you about how rough it was? I imagine that some of them talked about it, but others did not.

DR: Some. Well, they'd give their experiences and ... they said [that] you had to pray, hope that you weren't an unlucky person.

KP: In a sense, you circumnavigated the world during your Army experience.

DR: ... Right.

KP: You went over to North Africa on an American ship, but, then, you went to India on a British ship. Were there any differences that you noticed?

DR: The food. The food was terrible. I don't know; they'd serve you meat for breakfast.

KP: Was it mutton?

DR: Mutton, right.

MO: Did all of the replacements go with you to India?

DR: No, no, ... they were split up. ... There were still quite a few fellows that I hadn't seen that were being sent there. We didn't stop anywhere. It was interesting going through the Suez Canal, which was very interesting, and then, we landed in ... Bombay. We were put into British barracks. They had beautiful barracks there. ... I think the British soldiers during peacetime must have had a wonderful time in India.

KP: From the barracks?

DR: Yes. There; no, they didn't let us out in India, either.

KP: You saw a good part of the world, but did not actually get to see any of it.

DR: Right. Going from Casablanca to, I think it was Oran, we were in the famous forty-and-eight cattle cars, all jammed in. You had to eat C rations. They'd stop every so often, let you go to the bathroom, you know. You had to go to the bathroom when they decided. [laughter]

MO: What did you think of the British sailors or soldiers?

DR: They were all very friendly, very friendly.

KP: What about the relationship between the officers and the men on the British ship? Did you get any sense of that? Was it the same or different?

DR: I really don't know. Don't forget, I was not an officer. ... You know, with us, there were no officers being shipped with us.

KP: You had no commanding officer.

DR: If there was, I don't remember it.

KP: It does not sound as though you had many officers. [laughter]

DR: No.

MO: How did the British officers treat you?

DR: Well, there weren't any on the ship, that I remember. ... We really had no contact with the British officers. ... I don't want to say anything derogatory, but, when we got to India, you know, they were selling us the gasoline that we shipped [to them], we lent them. ... We had to pay for it. That used to burn us up.

KP: Who would have to pay for it, the Army?

DR: The Army, yes.

KP: The Army would then buy the gasoline in India.

DR: Apparently, the officers knew it and they were always telling us, "Be very careful. Don't waste any gasoline. We're paying a lot of money for it." [laughter]

KP: When you finally learned that you were going to India, what did you expect? What did you know of India in the 1930s?

DR: Well, I was shipped first from ... Bombay to Calcutta. That was some ride, in those Indian cars. ... I thought we were going up and, in fact, our camp was on the edge of the jungle, and then, they moved us up to another camp in the jungle. We slept in tents and we really didn't do anything during the day. I was lucky, because ... they were looking for someone who knew something about ice cream. ... I was taken into town and lived in a halfway decent building. ... I remember, when we first went there, I don't know if they were kidding us, they said, "When you put on your shoes in the morning, turn them upside down." We asked, "Why?" He said, "Well, the snakes like warm shoes." I don't know if they were kidding us or not. None of us ever saw it. ... We had to sleep under nets. Half of the fellows got malaria. I had dengue fever, which is a slight case of malaria.

KP: I have seen some of those old Bengali Lancer movies of the 1930s. What did you know of India then?

DR: ... I knew very little, probably about the same things you saw, but the poverty was terrible.

KP: When were you first struck by the poverty?

DR: Almost immediately, almost immediately. ... When we went to the railroad station to go from Bombay to Calcutta, people were ... laying in the streets. It was terrible. ... They'd come over and ask for something to eat. We gave all our candy away to them, cigarettes, very bad, and the British, that's the only contact that I had with the British, they really treated the Indians as dirt. I could understand why, when they [the Indians] got their freedom, they were very happy to get rid of the British.

KP: You sensed that.

DR: Oh, yes.

KP: Did you know of Gandhi before arriving in India? Did you have any sense of what was going on in India?

DR: Yes. Well, I really don't remember when I knew about Gandhi, but ... I knew about him.

KP: You were sent to the eastern part of India. I get the sense that you possibly expected to deploy in the Burma/China part of the theater.

DR: Yes, right.

KP: However, you were detailed to run this ice cream plant while you were waiting around.

DR: To be assigned. ... Once I was through with that, once my orders came through, I went to Karachi, which is on the west coast, which is now Pakistan. ... There was a big airbase there and we were really the message center.

KP: What was an average day like in Karachi?

DR: Well, you worked eight on and sixteen off. You worked, first day, say, morning to five, then, the next day, you went from five to midnight, then, the next day, midnight to eight in the morning. ... You got used to it and we didn't do anything except work in the message center, [for] which a truck would pick us up and take us to the center. In your free time, you could go into town, but ... you had to stay in the town. My wife asked me the other day, "Where did you eat?" I don't remember if we had a mess hall or if we had to go out. I know, at night, we always went out to eat in town. Buffalo meat was the big thing.

KP: It is interesting that you ate in town, because troops in other parts of India were given explicit orders not to eat in town, particularly in Calcutta. It seems like people were warned not to eat in town. However, you ate native Indian dishes.

DR: Yes. When I was in Calcutta, we would go out to eat. There was a lot of diarrhea and stuff. [laughter] You got used to it after a while.

KP: How was the cuisine? How did you like Indian food?

DR: It wasn't bad. My wife loves it. [laughter] When we went to India this time, she really loved the food.

MO: Your whole situation was a pretty easy time.

DR: Yes, yes, as I look back, I was lucky. ... Now, our outfit had been up in the jungle and they said it was miserable, but I was lucky [that I was] sent to a town and worked out of a message center.

MO: Did you receive any important messages?

DR: Yes, but you never knew, because, even when it was decoded, it was in code. For example, we handled the messages telling people up north that the B-29s were coming to bomb Japan. ... We never knew it, until, later on, the officer-in-charge said, when he found out, he said, "You know, you were sending messages about these bombers."

MO: About the atomic bombs?

DR: No. ... The B-29s were bombing China and whatnot.

KP: Even though you were in the message center, where a lot of traffic was going through ...

DR: ... You really didn't know what was going on. The only way we knew what was going on was, they would send news. We got the news faster than anyone else. They printed it.

KP: For you, the war became almost like a job.

DR: Yes, that's right.

KP: You did your eight hours of work, and then, you went back to the barracks.

DR: Yes.

KP: You were like a regular worker. You could do what you wanted.

DR: Right.

MO: How did you spend most of your free time?

DR: Oh, geez, isn't that amazing, how you can't remember? I guess we'd go to town and do things.

KP: Was there any gambling?

DR: Oh, yes, [laughter] ... but not in the barracks. The biggest, most gambling was when I was ... going [overseas], in Newport News; we had crap games. In fact, I took my money and bought a watch and sent ... what I thought was my good watch home. ... After the war, when coming home on the ship, we went all the way from Karachi, India, to New York on the same ship and there was a constant crap game going on. [laughter] The rumor was that one fellow finally wound up with all the money, thousands of dollars. I got on that ship with a full barracks bag. No such thing as washing your clothes; you threw your underwear, your shirts, overboard. When I got back home, my wife says to me, "Where's all your clothes?" I said, "I threw it away." She said, "Are you crazy? You can't buy underwear and shirts."

KP: You had to scrounge around when you got back.

DR: Yes, right. ... Isn't it amazing? I wasn't sent to Camp Kilmer. I was discharged from Fort Monmouth, but I never had the break of being close to home.

KP: Did you have much contact with Indians when you were in India? Did you get to know any Indians? Did other men get to know the Indians?

DR: Just the people that worked [at the base]. Now, you had to hire your own help to clean the barracks, or we would have to do it ourselves. ... They were usually poor people, but you got friendly with them. ... There was a USO with Indians, but, I'll tell you, ... there weren't too many Indians at these USOs. There were quite a few refugees from Poland there and they would man the USO. For example, one Passover, the Polish Jews that were there ... ran a *Seder* for us.

MO: You had Indians come in to clean your barracks.

DR: Yes.

MO: It was pretty lax, in terms of the officers.

DR: I think the officer would come in maybe once a month to look. [laughter]

KP: You had a lot of autonomy, as long as you did your job.

DR: Yes, as long as we did our job, right.

KP: You did not have to put up with a lot of "chicken shit" when you were in Karachi.

DR: That's right, no. In fact, I told you, we left the United States on [the] 29th. Well, I never got paid, and I never got paid for maybe four or five months. So, when I was in Calcutta, ... making the ice cream, I went in to see the lieutenant. I wanted to ask, "Could I borrow some money?" ... and I started saluting him. He said, "Forget that crap." [laughter] ...

KP: You did finally get paid. [laughter]

DR: Finally. I think ... the officers, they had some kind of fund. They gave me, I think, fifty dollars or so and I finally got paid.

KP: Did you do any sightseeing in India?

DR: Well, we had R&R. In fact, ... I asked my wife to find my papers. She couldn't find them. We went to British rest areas. They were beautiful, up in the mountains. Oh, once, for a week, I went to where they're having all that trouble now?

KP: Kashmir?

DR: Into Kashmir, on a lake. ... Six of us rented a houseboat that was, you know, anchored and we spent a week there, beautiful. There's a lot of beautiful spots in India.

KP: You were struck by the nation's poverty, but you were also impressed by the beauty of India's landscapes.

DR: Yes, oh, yes. Srinagar, that was the name of the town, Srinagar, in Kashmir.

KP: How much contact did you have with the British in Karachi?

DR: Not too much. Basically, Karachi was an American base.

KP: You did not have contact with the local British.

DR: No. Any other questions?

KP: When did you leave India?

DR: I was discharged January 1, 1946. I must have left India [at the] beginning of December of '45. We were on the boat about twenty days or so.

MO: Did you come straight back?

DR: Straight back, yes.

KP: Where did you learn about the atomic bombings? Do you remember?

DR: I'm trying to remember. We probably got a bulletin over the [radio]. ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Daniel Rockoff on April 19, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Did you expect to spend the remainder of your Army time in Karachi or did you think that you would be shipped out someplace else eventually, if the war had continued?

DR: We thought, ... eventually, we would be sent up to maybe Burma. There was a song, "We're on the road to Mandalay," but we never got there. We ... thought, this was before the atomic bomb, that, eventually, we would have to push them, country-by-country, out of the area.

KP: You expected to move forward eventually.

DR: Right, right.

KP: In some ways, that sounds like a fairly, I would not say totally cushy situation, because you still had work to do.

DR: Well, you never knew when you would be ... sent up to the jungles again.

KP: How did that work? Was there a rotation system between people at the main message center and those in the jungles or were the assignments permanent?

DR: No, they kept moving people around, but, apparently, in our message center, very few men were moved out.

KP: It sounds like you had a fairly good set of comrades.

DR: Yes, yes.

KP: Are there any friends that you remember distinctly?

DR: Well, for a long time, maybe five, ten years, I did correspond with them and see some of them, but, lately, I haven't. It's a long time ago, you know.

MO: How many of the people that you came over with ended up in Karachi, in the message center?

DR: Only about three or four, really, that ... stayed with me. The rest, some were sent to Ceylon, Srinagar, some were sent to other parts of India, but they were very careful. ... In the beginning, we used to try to correspond ... through the message center, but they stopped that after a while. [laughter]

KP: Did you consider making the Army a career?

DR: Well, they did try to convince us to enlist. Also, the Foreign Service tried to enlist a lot of men. They realized that they would need people all over the world. They offered great jobs, but I wasn't interested.

KP: Even the Foreign Service did not tempt you.

DR: No. Listen, I knew I should go back. I had a wife back home and I knew my father was waiting for me. By that time, my brother, I think, was almost ready to go into [the] service, but he had bad eyes and they rejected him. ... One interesting thing I meant to [mention], while in India, two or three times, we had men from the Army come in; they were looking for gay soldiers, even in those days. I was really amazed. ... In those days, you know, you really didn't think about those things. ... Apparently, it may have been a problem in some parts of the Army.

KP: They were actually trying to ferret out gay soldiers.

DR: Yes, gay men. As far as I know it, there weren't any in our unit at all.

KP: How did they go about ferreting them out? Did they ask questions?

DR: They asked, you know, “Do you know John Jones?” and I’d say, “Yes.” “Did he ever approach you for sex or anything?” and I’d say, “No.”

KP: It almost sounds like you looked at it funny, as though you did not understand why they were asking such questions.

DR: Yes, yes, why they were doing it, but, now that I look back, even in those days, they were looking.

KP: However, you never knew of any homosexuals.

DR: No, I never knew of any, right.

MO: They never caught any.

DR: Not that I know of.

KP: You took a long voyage home. How was that voyage?

DR: ... The weather was great, until we got ...

KP: You went through the Pacific.

DR: No. We went back through the Suez Canal, Mediterranean.

KP: You did not circumnavigate the globe.

DR: No. Then, when we hit the Atlantic, it was cold and we had summer clothes, but, when we got to, I think it was Camp Shanks ...

KP: In New York?

DR: No, near New York somewhere, they gave us winter clothes. My wife, she saw me in Penn Station. She met me [for] the first time. I was down to one hundred-and-forty pounds. ... I had this big Army trench coat on. She said, “My God, is that the man I married?” and her mother was with her. Her mother said, “Is that the fellow?”

MO: How much weight had you lost?

DR: ... I was only about one hundred-and-fifty when I went into the service. So, I really didn’t lose weight, but I’ve put it on now. [laughter]

KP: Had your skin tone changed because of the Atabrine, [an anti-malarial drug]?

DR: Yes, it had a yellow look, ... yes, and I had dengue fever. In fact, for about two or three years, when I got home, I used to get these attacks.

KP: How good was the medical care that you received in India?

DR: ... As far as I remember, ... it doesn't strike a bell to me. I remember, I was sick once, ... back in the States. ... I got pneumonia for about a week, but I never had any problems.

KP: Is there anything that we forgot to ask you about the Army and your experience during the war?

DR: Despite all the fuck-ups [laughter] that they, we, had, we managed to do all right.

KP: It is interesting that you said that, because some people are reluctant to talk about the problems they encountered during the war. They want the war to be remembered as a glorious struggle, which, I think, is partly unrealistic. Was there anything in the Army that you looked at and just did not understand, from the most mundane to the most monumental?

DR: ... Well, I would say I ran across a lot of officers, I guess that had come up through the ranks before the war, that really, to me, ... they shouldn't have been where they were. In fact, the main officer of our message center was one of these fellows, ... but he knew that his knowledge was limited and he trusted the workers, the men, themselves, but that was one of those things, I think, that there were a lot of incompetent officers. Of course, there were a lot of incompetent GIs, too. [laughter] ...

KP: Being in the CBI, did you ever feel as though you were in a backwater? You were in the war and contributing, but did you feel as though the attention was focused elsewhere?

DR: It didn't bother me. [laughter] I was very happy where I was, ... although, you know, there were the fellows that were flying "the Hump," [the Himalayas]. They had a lot of trouble.

KP: When I say "backwater," I do not mean it in terms of what people were doing. I have interviewed people who flew "the Hump." It was very hazardous, but it has gotten very little attention, relative to the Pacific or Europe.

DR: ... Did anyone ever tell you; you know, we had a glider outfit and Jackie Coogan was in it. ... Do you know of Jackie Coogan?

KP: No.

DR: He was a child actor ... in the United States. You never heard of him?

KP: No.

DR: ... I didn't realize I was that old. [laughter] Anyway, ... he was in the glider outfit and he was maybe twenty-five or thirty and he'd been a famous [actor]. ... They were attacking the Japanese somewhere and most of them were wiped out. So, things weren't that easy if you were in a combat unit. ...

KP: When did you join the Jewish War Veterans?

DR: I think, probably, almost immediately. ... I'll tell you, I went to one, I think one, meeting and they ran it like the Army. [laughter] I said, "That's not for me," and I never went back, but I still belong and send the money.

KP: When you say they ran it like the Army, do you mean in terms of ranks?

DR: I think ranks and you had to salute and they stand at attention. I don't know what. ... It wasn't for me. Yet, some fellows belong and became very active. They do a lot of good work. I know they go to the various hospitals and help. ... After one of our children [was born], my wife had an ulcer and she needed blood and, in those days, the hospitals didn't have blood banks and I think about twenty-five war veterans gave her blood.

KP: Although you enjoyed some of your duties in the Army, it seems as though you were not crazy about the idea of saluting and maintaining the officer-enlisted men separation.

DR: Don't forget, during most of my career in the service, I never had that formal Army life.

KP: You avoided that.

DR: Well, through basic training. Then, I went overseas and, almost immediately; ... I mean, you respected your officers and you said, "Sir," but it wasn't, ... pardon the expression, "chicken shit."

KP: In fact, you did not have to do a lot of inspections.

DR: No. You're right.

KP: I have interviewed men who are still resentful of their officers and the things they had to do.

DR: I never really resented it.

KP: Did you ever realize that other people had a different experience in the Army?

DR: Well, I realized that, for example, ... when we met the soldiers from New Zealand. They really had it rough, and then, when I got back here, you hear stories, like the Battle of the Bulge. When you watched all these movies, you can see it. ... It wasn't the war I was in. [laughter] I think if you ever get to Harold Bruskin, see, he was in combat all along, you'll get a different story. ... He was one of the first ones drafted. I think he was ready to go home when Pearl Harbor hit.

KP: We will definitely send him a letter and ask him to participate. Before coming home, did you realize how precarious the dairy situation was or did your father keep that from you?

DR: No. He never really told me ... what was going on.

KP: How much of a shock was it to see how precarious it was? You might have thought that, since you made it through the Depression, the hard part was over.

DR: Right. I realized it, you know, the first day I walked into the office and saw what was going on, but it didn't take long [to rebuild], because there were many good [employees]. ... Most of the men came back.

KP: You got most of your drivers back.

DR: Yes, most of them; only two or three died. ... I guess we were lucky. Well, one thing, ... for about three years after I got home, because of the shortage of milk, things were very bad. ... You'd buy a tank of milk, it would come in and ... it would have a slight odor. You'd have to reject it. Where they were getting milk, ... I don't think you see it today, but, when the cows go out on the grass, they're so hungry for fresh grass that they'll eat the onion weeds and stuff and that gets right into the milk. So, all that had to be rejected. So, it was tough for about three years, until we got things straightened out with a good supply.

KP: Up to 1948, it was still ...

DR: Bad, yes.

KP: Touch and go.

MO: Were you and your wife living with your parents or had you moved?

DR: No. I think we lived with my parents for about three months. Then, we got [an apartment]. You couldn't get apartments, either. I'll tell you how I got it. My father owned a house right next to the milk plant and we eventually got the person to move out and we moved in. [laughter]

KP: How did the milk business change over time?

DR: Right. Let me say this; originally, ... we were oriented to home delivery, which was very popular. At one time, we were the largest home delivery dairy in the state. We had over a hundred routes, and then, the supermarkets started to get into the milk, push milk. ... For a while there, we had a tough time, because we were losing home delivery, but we replaced it with stores. We got some supermarkets, we got Foodtown, and then, after a while, even the supermarkets started to have their own plants. So, we started a convenience store business. We wound up [where] we had about thirty stores. ... We tried to be modern.

KP: Unlike many other dairies, you were able to keep ahead of the changes.

DR: Ahead of the changes, right, and we bought some companies, too, along the way.

KP: I sense that other dairies were unable to make the switch.

DR: Well, today, there are only two or three dairies left.

KP: All through your career, you were very active in the community.

DR: Yes. I was active in our synagogue; I was president for four years. I was active in this Israel Bonds. I was chairman of that for a while; all due to the influence of my father, my brother, the same way.

KP: It sounds like your father impressed upon you the fact that you also had to serve the larger community.

DR: Yes.

KP: You served on the board of education in Highland Park.

DR: That's right, in Highland Park, six years.

KP: How did that come about? How did you enjoy your stint?

DR: I think I was upset once about what was going on and I ran and I ousted an incumbent. ... I found it very interesting. I was on the board when we built the addition to the high school. I was there for six years. I found it very interesting and, to be frank with you, when I see people talk about boards of education spending too much money, I felt that way, too, but, once you get on, you find it difficult. If you want to have a good system, you have to spend money.

MO: Why did you get involved? Was it because of your children?

DR: My children were there. I think ... I had two kids in the school system at that time.

MO: Was that the major motivation?

DR: I think so. I just felt that I should get involved. Gee, I forgot all about the Board of Ed. I was on when the Russians put up the first ...

KP: *Sputnik*.

DR: *Sputnik*.

KP: *Sputnik* was memorable for you as a board member.

DR: Yes. I remember, I had to deliver a lecture about Russian education versus our education.

KP: In a sense, trying to defend our system.

DR: Right, and so, we had some good people on that board. Dr. [Henry] Winkler, I don't know, was he here? He was already president at the University of Cincinnati.

KP: Yes, I have heard of the name

DR: He was a History Department [faculty member].

KP: I know I have heard of him.

DR: We had some good people, the History Department at Rutgers, with due respect to what you're doing.

KP: It is a very good department. I got my doctorate here, so, I know.

DR: Oh. Was he here then?

KP: No, not Winkler.

DR: ... Well, he may have been here; he became provost or assistant to the president.

KP: Yes, but I think he had left by the 1980s. I have heard the name. There is a dorm named after him.

DR: ... What's his name, who became President of Rutgers? He was on, what was it, *Twenty Questions*? [Editor's Note: Dr. Gross appeared as an expert on the TV quiz shows *Think Fast* and *Two For the Money* in the 1950s.]

KP: Mason Gross.

DR: Mason Gross, he was great. He was, I think, in charge of one of the departments. Was he a historian?

KP: Philosophy.

DR: Philosophy, when my brother went to school.

KP: You mentioned *Sputnik*. I am curious about your memories of Vietnam. What were your thoughts at the time?

DR: Well, don't forget, I'm of the school where whatever the government does is right, even though it [is] wrong. ... I didn't feel against the fellows that went to Canada or [who] were against it, but I just thought we have to [fight Communism], not until I realized what was going on.

KP: It sounds like it was only after the fact, after the war was over, that you realized ...

DR: It was a waste. For example, I have a friend who stayed in the service after I got out and he kept saying, "Oh, you know," the old domino theory, "if we let them take over Vietnam, before you know it, they'll go [everywhere]," which never happened, really, and then, you hear all these stories, how they didn't tell us the truth.

KP: You and your brother have stayed very active with Rutgers. The Class of 1940 started its own corporation and has also been remarkably dedicated to the University. What contact with Rutgers have you found most memorable or most enjoyable?

DR: Well, now, for a while, I was active with the Eagleton [Institute of Politics]. In fact, one of our class members, Harold Martin, gave a lot of money to the Eagleton, to the Library. I'm still interested in that. Of course, that's politics, but I'm really amazed that the institute does develop a lot of good students that have gone out in the political world. Of course, I'm very interested in sports. [laughter] ...

MO: What did you think of your education here? You already knew all about the dairy business. How much do you think you really needed?

DR: Well, ... I'll tell you what was interesting about it. I had an opportunity; [we] visited a lot of milk plants all over the East and that gave me some vision as to what we could do in the future and, don't forget, most of my courses were really over on the main campus, like chemistry. I took ... political science, what else? I took, at Van Nest, what did I take over there? botany, I guess, stuff like that. So, I think I had a good education.

KP: You never used any of your GI Bill benefits.

DR: No.

KP: Not even the GI mortgage.

DR: Well, I'll tell you, I did try for a GI mortgage, through a bank here. ... We were putting up our house, building a house, and, somehow, the schedule was wrong and I got out of whack and they said, "Your house isn't ready. We can't give you a mortgage." ... Then, my stepfather-in-law loaned me the money, that I paid back, but I never used it, [the G Bill].

KP: You never thought of getting an advanced degree.

DR: Really didn't have the time.

KP: Yes, it sounds like you worked a lot when you first got back.

DR: Yes, right.

MO: Did you have any desire to?

DR: Not really, although today, I realize, ... a college degree is really nothing. You really have to go ahead. I'm talking to you [Michael] now. [laughter]

KP: None of your kids went into the military.

DR: My older son, I really don't know why. He's doctor, so, let's see; he was never called for Vietnam. I don't know why and that was the only time [it came up]. My second one was a daughter. My younger son never had any problem. The other one, I don't know what; let's see, my son was born in 1947. So, when was the Vietnam War?

KP: 1965 to 1973.

DR: See, so, he was too young. He was still in college. Anyone going to college was never taken.

KP: If he had been drafted, would you have wanted him to go?

DR: It's hard to answer that now, obviously. It's "what if?"

KP: Yes.

MO: Are your kids as active in the community as you? I know that you got that drive from your father.

DR: Well, my older son is out in California, so, he's not active. My daughter is very active. In fact, her husband ... is going to become president of the synagogue in Bridgewater and she's active in the welfare board in Bridgewater. ...

KP: She took on the family activism.

DR: Yes, and my younger son is still trying to make a go of it. ... He was an attorney and he had a builder, a contractor, as a client who once needed money, and my son, through me, loaned [him] the money and, eventually, the fellow died and my son took over the business. ... He decided that he liked contracting, building houses, rather than being an attorney. ... He tells me it took him two years to make up his mind, because he was worried that we would be upset, but everyone doesn't have to be a professional, I tell him. [laughter]

KP: In a sense, he is a part of the family tradition of business. Your family had a long standing business. Do you regret that the milk business did not continue through another generation?

DR: To tell you the truth, yes. What happened [was], when we started the convenience store business, my brother's two sons and one son-in-law were in that and none of the children were interested in the milk business. So, we eventually sold it. ... I told my younger son that if he'd stayed in it, ... he'd be on easy street today, but, you know, it's a different world today. ... When I went to school, you assumed you're going to go into your parents' business. That was the best thing. Today, the kids want to do whatever they like to do.

KP: You had this assumption that if the engineering thing did not work out ...

DR: I had the milk business.

KP: That was fine with you. It sounds like you did not challenge it.

DR: Yes, right, and I have never felt sorry that I went into it. I always enjoyed it.

KP: Do you have any other comments on the milk business? I am struck by how you followed all the patterns; you went from home delivery to supermarket sales to opening your own stores.

DR: ... I'm glad I'm not in the milk business today. It's a tough business. It's tough, I think, because most of the milk is sold today through supermarkets and they have their own plants and ... you have to scrounge around to get more, different customers. ... Today, if you look in New Jersey, there are only three or four companies left. It's a different world today.

KP: When you started, there were hundreds of dairies.

DR: Right. When I came back after the war, there were dozens of dairies in New Jersey, in this area. Today, there are none left, no plants at all around here.

KP: You mentioned that you went back to India.

DR: Yes. For years, I had never wanted to go back, and then, my wife [and I went], and we went with the Bruskins; this trip came up. It was basically a cruise. We flew to Singapore and the boat stopped at all of Malaysia, where else? Thailand, I forgot Thailand, Srinagar in India. We stopped at three or four [ports] and it was a nice cruise. I mean, it was enjoyable and I would say the Far East, yes, that's the Far East, is really coming [up]. Malaysia, I was really amazed that ... they're big in electronics. Of course, Singapore, I think, is going to replace Hong Kong, I think, when China takes over.

MO: Why did you not want to go back?

DR: ... Well, outside of my Army life, I knew there was a lot of poverty there and I didn't think it was worthwhile going back, but I'm glad I did. I did enjoy it, but I'm sorry for India, that they really haven't progressed.

KP: You really did not see any changes.

DR: Very little, very little change.

KP: You did not go to Pakistan during your visit.

DR: No, no.

KP: Did you see any of the places that you had seen when you were in the service?

DR: Bombay. ... I really didn't see anything that I had seen before. I knew about all these towns, because they were names in our message center [that] we sent. The only place I was really impressed with [was] the Taj Mahal. It's really amazing. Through centuries, it has withstood the ravages of time. It was worth it. That made the trip.

KP: You mentioned that you had stayed in touch with some of your Army friends, but you eventually drifted apart.

DR: Drifted away.

KP: Did you ever have any reunions?

DR: No. Listen, it's tough; ... even a college reunion is. ... I don't know if you've gone back to any, but, after a while, you don't have anything to say to them. See, Dilly, ... through the years, I always saw him, maybe at Rutgers affairs. Also, I'll tell you, his son was a trackman and I had a son who was a trackman, so, we'd see each other at track meets.

KP: By staying in the area, you really saw Rutgers turn into a major university.

DR: Mushroom, right.

KP: Do you have any thoughts on that process?

DR: Well, I'm proud of what they've done. Through my brother, I was very friendly with Dr. [Edward] Bloustein and I know Dr. [Francis] Lawrence. I think they're trying to do a good job.

KP: Do you regret what has been lost? You mentioned that everyone knew each other and everyone said hello. Do you miss that part?

DR: ... I think kids miss that today. Maybe they do have it, but, when we used to walk up College Avenue, you said hello to everybody. Dr. Metzger is the one that started that.

KP: Yes, I have heard that there was an official hello.

DR: Yes.

KP: The Rutgers hello.

DR: Yes. Well, when I was a freshman, we had to wear these special beanies. They don't do that anymore, do they?

MO: No.

DR: Kids wouldn't stand for it.

KP: Apparently, as I have read, there was also quite a sophomore-freshman rivalry.

DR: Could be, yes, but it was a small school and you really knew a great majority of the kids.

KP: When did your family first learn about how bad the war had been for your family in Lithuania and Poland?

DR: After the war was over. ...

KP: How much of a shock was learning the full extent?

DR: My mother was devastated. She was the only [survivor of her generation]; she had three sisters and two brothers. ... Don't forget, ... she went back and met them all and saw how they were doing, but, when she was there, ... she told me that she asked some of them, ... "Don't you want to come to the United States?" They said, "No."

MO: How long after the war was it?

DR: ... It must have been after, maybe '46, right after the war, I guess.

KP: Did you try to make inquiries?

DR: Yes, we did. My mother went to various organizations, and then, we got [more details] when this one niece, who survived, came to this country. She told us what happened.

KP: Where did her niece end up living?

DR: She stayed here with us. She had married someone in one of the camps and he had a brother in Canada, in Montreal. ... His brother had a [business]. They made silk stockings or rayons. ... They made women's stockings and he went up there and went in business with him, but I'll tell you, the ravages of the war, he died at a young age, and then, she died very young, also.

KP: They never told you about what happened.

DR: No, she wouldn't talk about it. I think, especially women, maybe, had to do things that, later on, they were ashamed of.

KP: Did the Holocaust give you greater impetus as a Zionist?

DR: Yes, yes. Of course, I'm unhappy [about] what happened the other day. I think someone got a little trigger-happy, apparently.

KP: The attack?

DR: Yes, on that camp. They could make all kinds of excuses, but it's still not a good, legitimate one.

KP: Has the State of Israel lived up to your father's conception, and your own conception, of what it should be? What were you most proud of?

DR: I think we're proud of the fact that they have been successful, but we have to realize that, in this world today, you can't always be the righteous person. You have to do things to protect yourself. Now, I just heard ... John; don't get old too soon.

KP: I have a terrible time with names.

DR: He wrote the book about; he was the prosecutor at the Nuremburg Trials. ... He was telling us, you know Israel bombed, destroyed, a Navy communications ship, the story behind it. They did it on purpose. ... To the world, they say it was a mistake, but the messages that they were intercepting from Israel, they were giving to the Arabs, I mean, to Saudi Arabia. So, they had to destroy it, but they said it was a mistake. The United States agreed it was a mistake, because they knew it was the wrong thing. So, there are a lot of things that go on that we, as laymen, never understand or realize.

KP: It sounds like you would ideally prefer that they not go on with that, but ...

DR: They do.

KP: How do you view the peace process? Do you hope it will work?

DR: I hope so, but I think it will be very long, because ... the Arabs have developed a hatred for the Israelis and I can understand why, the way they've been treated. It'll take years, another generation, to wipe out their hatred.

MO: What do you think the current situation with Hamas will do to the peace process?

DR: It's not going to help it. I think we'll always have trouble with the Hamas. I mean we; I mean the Israelis.

KP: You have been very active with the Jewish community all your life. There is a long family tradition of that. What are your thoughts on the changes in both the Jewish community and, also, the status of Jews in American society?

DR: Well, the main thing I'm upset about is the fact that so many Jewish young people are, not converting, but they're becoming absorbed by [non-Jewish society, assimilated]. They're losing their Jewish identity, and I think that's wrong.

KP: When you were growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, anti-Semitism was a real presence. Even if you were not directly affected by it, it was still in the Engineering School. That has changed remarkably since your era.

DR: They say, when I went to Rutgers, that there was really a quota. I don't know if there was or not.

KP: That was the rumor.

DR: Yes. Don't forget, I had Luther Martin sign ... one of my papers of recommendation.
[laughter] ...

KP: You knew him before.

DR: Right, went to school with his two daughters.

KP: It sounds like the assimilation problem troubles you.

DR: Yes, yes.

KP: Is there anything that we forgot to ask you?

DR: I'll probably think of it later on.

KP: Please amend the transcript if there is anything else you would like to say.

DR: Okay, all right. I find it very interesting. I mean, you brought back memories that I haven't thought about.

KP: That is what we like to hear. Many people think that we are only going to do this for about thirty minutes, that they will be in and out.

DR: That's what I thought. How long have I been here?

KP: For about three-and-a-half hours. Most people have led more interesting lives than they thought. Rutgers prepared you well; you are all good observers of the world around you.

DR: ... Okay.

KP: Yes. ...

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

Reviewed by Taryn Wechsler 3/28/06
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/2/06
Reviewed by Daniel Rockoff 6/14/06