

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL SALAPKA

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Susie Sachs: This begins an interview with Michael Salapka, on August 28, 2006, in Rockville, Maryland, with Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Susie Sachs.

Sandra Holyoak: To begin, Mr. Salapka, thank you for taking the time to have us in your home this evening. Could you tell us where and when you were born?

Michael Salapka: I was born in Passaic, New Jersey, and born in March of 1947.

SH: Could you please tell us about your family, starting with your father?

MS: Both my father and mother's families lived in New Jersey most of their lives. My father's father, my grandfather, came over from Czechoslovakia back in, I want to say the '20s; I'm not sure exactly when, but I think it was the '20s, and [he] worked for a very brief time in a mine in Pennsylvania and then moved to New Jersey to work in a lumber operation where he worked [for] the rest of his life. My father joined the Army back before World War I. He was pretty young at the time; I surmise he was not quite of age, was in the Army for about two or three years, and then left to come back into civilian life, and then the war broke out, and he went back in and he became a drill sergeant, initially, in the Army, and then he volunteered for the new Army Air Corps and became a belly gunner on the B-17s and he flew something like eighteen missions. Was shot down once, and each time he had a crash, they crashed in friendly territory, luckily. But he was shot down once and crash landed twice, and then I forget what the other instances were, but, they apparently had pilots that were being rotated through pretty quickly and they really weren't ready for big combat aircraft. So, as a result, many didn't make it to the end of the runway, and, being a belly gunner, he was at the very bottom. [laughter] So, it was interesting, let's say that. He didn't talk much about the war, but when he died and my mother died, I inherited quite a bit of memorabilia, which showed his diaries, Air Force diaries and other things. They were pretty extensive.

SH: This is your father who was in World War II?

MS: Right, that's correct, yes. He went around the world; I know that. [laughter] I've seen postcards from everywhere, and he communicated with other members of the Army Air Corps that he knew.

SH: Did he stay in contact with them afterwards?

MS: Oh, yes. There's a whole line of people, kind of interesting connections.

SH: As a young boy did you grow up hearing these stories?

MS: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Were you introduced to them?

MS: Right, exactly. Now, I met the people, but, I never really heard the war stories *per se*, because that seemed to be *verboten*. Now, when he got older, he did talk about it to some

degree. You had to pull it out of him, but I got glimpses of things. You know, like, when we'd see an aircraft not taking off properly, he'd make a comment about that. It wasn't until, actually, a few weeks ago that I was in Portland, Oregon, visiting my daughter and her husband, and I went out to see the *Spruce Goose* out there, nearby, and they had a B-17, and it was right under the wing of the *Spruce Goose*. And they let you walk into it, ok, and see the whole thing, and you could see the ball gunner position. There was a navigator and a bombardier, who was, like, eighty-eight years old, and he described everything and it was really fascinating, because it put all the pieces together for me. So, it's kind of interesting.

SH: Did your father talk about some of the humorous stories that went along with his World War II experience?

MS: Well, his famous joke. He didn't really joke much about the war, apparently, he saw a little too much. He had to take over a plane once because the pilot got killed, and they had rotated through, the gunners still had to stay on the gun positions, so he was pulled out of the belly gun section and he helped fly the plane. So, he probably saw some stuff that nobody wants to see. But he did have one joke. Right toward the end of the war, he had been moved back here to the States, and he was on a dirigible, I don't know if there's such a word anymore, [laughter] that looked for submarines off the coast of New Jersey. He has pictures in his album.

SH: This is out of Lakehurst, I assume.

MS: Yes. He was in the dirigible for a while, and then they started flying, believe it or not, B-17s low across the water, like twenty feet above the water, to spot these submarines, because they didn't have enough dirigibles to go around. So, he was on several of those flights, and he has a picture of a submariner who had given up with the white flag. You could see the strafing bullets along the water. This is stuff I find [out] way after the fact. Anyway, he came back to the States and spent most of his time after the war, of course, after his tour of duty in Europe, over here. When he died, I don't know how many stars and Bronzes and God knows what else. He never talked about them, I never saw them interesting. It was interesting.

SH: We'll have to figure out a way to document all this and get it on the record. That would be wonderful as it is an incredible story.

MS: I never told you the joke. This is my problem, I tend to lose track; everybody tells me that. The joke was the war wasn't over. He was doing this submarine duty, off New Jersey, and they were shipping guys out to California, because, guess what? The next leg would be Japan. So, they shipped him out to somewhere in California, and his train crashed, right? He never got a scratch in any of the conflict, right? So, he refused, he said, "I'm never going on a train again, it's too dangerous." [laughter] Here he is, being shot at the belly gunner, especially, crashed several times, but he wouldn't go on a train, because he was afraid it was too dangerous. [laughter] He lucked out in a sense, because the bomb was dropped and that was the end of the game, so a lot of guys didn't have to go over.

SH: Did he take up a career after that? Did he go back to the lumber yard?

MS: Well, that was my grandfather in the lumber yard. My father was a mechanic. That was another thing he did, he worked on the planes. He knew how to do engine work and other things, and, I guess, he studied to do car mechanic work. He was a very good mechanic. He taught me a lot, but he never really got into that. For some reason, I don't know if it was the war that did it to him, or what, but he never felt he could lead people after the war. I guess, he saw what could happen. I don't know, I'm just guessing; but he always took very menial jobs. He worked very hard; he was very dutiful about what he did, but he never looked to get a big position, or anything, anymore. He just worked very hard at his job over his career. He was also a very self-sacrificing person. He gave up his job for somebody that had a family that needed it, had several kids, and couldn't afford to do it. He was in a union, [so] he gave up his job for that person, and he was out of work as a result, for several years, as a result of that.

SH: Was this all around the Passaic, New Jersey area?

MS: Yes. East Paterson, Passaic, that area. It was a different life, too, let's face it ...

SH: Did he talk about growing up through the Depression at all?

MS: Not so much.

SH: His early service kind of hints ...

MS: It sounded to me like that's probably where he had to go to earn a living, but I never got that from him. I got glimpses of it from my grandfather. My grandmother used to say that she got upset once because things were real tough. My grandfather came into some money, and instead of using the money to buy food and other things, clothes, he bought a brand-new radio, right, which is the most luxurious thing that you could have done in those days, right? She always made a comment, even in the later part of her life, "that wasn't probably the smartest thing he could have done." No, I got the impression that, at least on my father's side, things were pretty good. They weren't bad, they were tolerable.

On my mother's side, however, I got the feeling that they had to work real hard. My grandfather, luckily, was very good at real estate. He came over from the old country, one of the old, probably Romania or Poland, we don't know for sure. They apparently got married, either on the ship or as soon as they got on dry land, my grandmother and grandfather. The first thing they did, is, they worked as tenant farmers in Flemington. In fact, my mother took me to the dairy farm in Flemington where they worked, and the woman who owned the farm, apparently, was very well known in Jersey at the time. She was very rich. She had her own plane, and that in itself is kind of unusual. So, this is the '20s, I guess, '30s, and, so, they rented some property there. They managed the farm, the dairy farm, and then after a few years, apparently, they saved enough money that they moved to the eastern half of Jersey, Elmwood Park. My grandfather, having come from the old country, bought land. That's all he knew. He didn't know about savings, banks, and this and that, and blah, blah, blah, just buying land. So, whatever little money they had, they bought a piece of property, piece of property, piece of property. They bought the whole block in our neighborhood, and he built homes all the way up. Each of the kids, my uncles and aunts got a house as part of the deal, including my own parents. So, he,

basically, made a small fortune doing that, because, later on, some of that property got sold. He got some of the proceeds of it, and one of the funny stories of that is this okay?

One of the funny stories I had about that is I don't know how old I was pretty young. My grandfather would take me to get some ice cream in the town, and we'd have to walk through this long field, across railroad tracks, down into another part of town. As we were walking I see this open lot, right, just an open lot. It was fenced in, and all around it were these big houses going up. [A] development was being built, and, so, I said, "Hey, Grandpa, what's going on there?" He says, "Oh, a builder has come in, [and] they're building all these big homes around here." I said, "Well, it looks like things are going to change, with more people coming in." I was thinking more kids, and this and that, and then one week [later], we passed that same place. The gate was knocked down, and there was a bulldozer sitting there, and I say, "Hey, Grandpa, look at that, they got a bulldozer there." He had mentioned, somewhere along the line, that he owned that piece of property, so, I said, "Well, what are they doing?" He says, "Well, they're building my house." I didn't know what to make of it, right, so I said, "What do you mean building your house?" He says, "They're building my house."

So, anyway, weeks went by, a month, or two, three months. Of course, the house is up, beautiful house, and there's a "For Sale" sign out there. So, my grandfather and I walked in, and there's an agent sitting there, and he says, "Can I have the keys to my house, please?" The agent said, "Did you buy this house? Did you sign a contract on this house?" He said, "Oh, no, no, but you built my house." The agent seemed, like, dumbfounded, and then he explains that it was his property, that the development did not include that little piece of land. Well, needless to say, within a few weeks, there were lawyers coming and going. My grandfather didn't have any education to speak of, maybe a grammar school education, but he did know right from wrong, and contract laws, things like that, right. [laughter] I never heard what went on; I just saw people coming and going, coming and going in this house. At the end of a few weeks, he said, "Well, they paid me for my house." [laughter]

SS: Was it his plan all along to do this?

MS: Oh, no, no. That was his property; he never conveyed it to anybody.

SS: Once this all began, was this his ultimate plan?

MS: No, no. He just bought this way before this development was done. This was just a piece of property he bought, and, they just happened to assume, for some reason, that [it] was part of the package, right. Nobody checked; [it was] just the way it went. He didn't make a fuss, which really amazed me. If it were my property, even as a kid, I knew, "that's my stuff, right, make a big scene." No, he was a lot shrewder than I thought. He made a lot of money, a lot, in those days, and then when my grandparents were in their sixties, they moved from our neighborhood to a farm which they bought. Well, today, that farm you couldn't find it, because it's in the midst of a larger complex in Wayne, New Jersey. It was right in the center of Wayne. He had, like, eight acres.

SH: That's a gold mine.

MS: Yes, that's about it.

SH: Did they eventually sell that?

MS: Well, they died before [then]. They lived there until the end of their lives, and then my uncle sold the property for them. Yeah, it was amazing, [an] amazing story.

SH: Great story. Great family stories.

MS: Yes, and it's with little connections. On my mother's side, we had a big family, fairly big. Even on my father's side, they were one uncle and three aunts, enough to make it interesting.

SH: Had your grandmother and grandfather, on your mother's side, known each other before they got on the boat to come here?

MS: We don't know that. We don't know; we think they were runaways. They had to be about fourteen to fifteen years old, give or take. We think they were runaways. They never did tell us.

SH: They never told you why they left?

MS: No. They had family, and they connected with their family, way later, their sisters and brothers, never their parents. So, I'm not sure what went on behind the scenes there.

SH: Did either set of parents bring family from Europe here?

MS: No, not that I know of. The other little pieces [were] my grandparents said they told all their kids, that their wedding date was July 4th, right. Now, whether it was or not, it didn't matter; that was the wedding date, July 4th. They were interesting, very interesting people.

SH: Both of them were from either Romania or Poland?

MS: We're not sure. I've been traveling in Eastern Europe, and people tell me that it could have been Romania. It might have been Poland. You know, borders change day to day. I think we spotted my grandmother's city as L'vov, which traded places between Russia and Poland and several other places over the years.

SH: Was there a religious background that they both carried with them to this country?

MS: Yes.

SH: Both sets of families?

MS: Yes, well, [it's] a little bit of a funny story. On my mother's side, they were Catholics, Roman Catholics, and, of course, that was traditional in a European mix there. I don't want to say, they were not heavy duty, my grandmother was a little bit more than my grandfather, but

they did maintain the tradition when they came here. My grandfather, on my father's side, was funny because Czechoslovakia was kind of split; it was just a compendium of a lot of countries before the war. So, there were different ethnic groups, and everything, and he belonged to what turned out to be a Greek Orthodox Church. When he came here, for some reason, the Greek Orthodox group that he was with decided to become Greek Catholic, right, so he just switched. He said, "Yeah, okay, fine, if that's the way it's going to be, fine." [laughter] Neither of my families were real zealots, if you will, in terms of religion, but very accommodating, "Okay, fine, we're Catholic now." [laughter] That's how he said it, too, "We're Catholics now." [laughter] [Editor's note: He is referring to the tone of voice as being very nonchalant, regarding a customarily more serious decision.]

SH: How did your mother and father meet?

MS: The story I get, and I don't know how true it is; I assume it's true. My mother used to go with her girlfriends to New York from New Jersey. She worked for Curtis Wright Company for quite a number of years, and they would go to shows, dances, and movies, that type of thing. I guess, they had big band-type stuff going on. Apparently, my mother went with her girlfriend to wait in this line for this movie. I guess, it was a band, or some show. My father happened to be somewhere in the line. Well, her girlfriend fainted. You know, she hadn't eaten for a long time, or hadn't had enough to drink, or something, so she fainted. So, my father came up to help her. Of all the people in the line, he comes up and tries to help her. He asked her if she needs some water, or whatever, or something, or to take her somewhere. My mother was so impressed that she got his name, where he lived, right, and one thing led to another. They both went to New York, and went to shows and stuff. One thing led to another, and, next thing you know, they were married. [laughter]

SH: Was this after or before the war?

MS: This was right after the war. I guess, [the] end of '45, or beginning of '46.

SH: If nothing else, they could talk about jet engines.

MS: Right, exactly. My mother got involved in Curtis Wright. My father and mother, of course, had both been in the aircraft industry. I guess, I missed that little piece. My father got out of the war; he worked for Bendix for a number of years in [the] aircraft area, and my mother was in Curtis Wright. She was the executive secretary to the president of the company, so, she did a lot of his PR [public relations] stuff, and whatnot, and wrote up documentation and everything. So, she had a long history from the end of the war to, I guess, into the '60s, '70s.

SH: Good, so she continued to work with them. That's very uncommon, especially in that time.

MS: In fact, after she died, I had to talk to the company; the company had gone bankrupt. They changed the way they did business, blah, blah, blah. They no longer are in aircraft; they're in nuclear engineering, and God knows what else. This is the original, that goes back to Wright and Curtis, way back when. I called the company, and there was actually somebody that knew her there, "Oh, yeah!" You know, they referred to her. I couldn't believe it, like, "Well, yes, we

knew her. She was doing this and that." This is, like, many, many, years later, so, it was interesting.

SH: The reason that I know a little about it is because we have had some dealings with the New Jersey Air Museum up in Teaneck; they have honored many people. They do talk about how small the community was, even though it was huge in war production.

MS: Yes, very coherent group.

SH: That is a grand story. Do you have any siblings?

MS: No.

SH: You are an only child.

MS: Right, and so is Pat [his wife], and so is our daughter, and so are you [Susie Sachs], so is Marty [father of Susie Sachs]. [laughter] You know, let's talk about our little club. [laughter]

SH: While the war impacted your parents' lives, it also provided their careers, at least for your mother, thereafter. How important was it for you to attend college? Did you know from an early age that you would be going to college? How was education viewed as you were growing up?

MS: Actually, it was encouraged. My father was very proud. He graduated high school. He was the first kid in his family to graduate high school, so he was very proud of that. So, of course, for him, education was important. My mother was extremely ambitious; I guess that's the best word, because she brought herself up from [a] very clerical position to one of the highest positions in her field, mainly through on-the-job training. She realized how important education was. So, I never got the word that "you'll go to college." I never heard that, but, it was assumed that I would be getting some training after high school. In fact, I was thinking of going to Julliard; that was one of the things that I was considering.

SH: This is your instrument then. There is a beautiful, beautiful, grand piano here as we speak.

MS: Thank you. I had played from when I was about six years old. Like I said, there was no such thing as a college education imbued in me, but there was this idea that somewhere along the line, after high school, I would be going on for training, whether it's for piano or for some other thing. So, it turned out, I went in as a physics major. [laughter]

SH: I would like to back up a little, and talk about your growing-up years. Where was the family home, and where did you start school?

MS: Elmwood Park, which was East Paterson. They have to change the name, of course. So, I grew up there, and went to the East Paterson Memorial High School. Prior to that, I was at a parochial school in Garfield, New Jersey, which is (St. Stanislaw's?), I think it's called. It's a Catholic school, and, frankly, I hated that; but it was good training. They did do a good job of reading me the ABCs and 1,2,3s, so I got a good education. The high school I had in town was

very, very good. It was state-of-the-art. Even as I look back at it today, they had laboratories; they had everything. I was a science oriented-person at that point, so, they had more than enough facilities. They had great teachers, who really imbued you with a sense of, not just getting information, but learning, real learning, and a kind of anticipation of what you could do. So, that was a great school. I never regretted going there, and then, of course, on to Rutgers, of course, the best.

SH: I would like to talk about as you go into high school and junior high. Did you have after-school jobs? What kind of responsibilities did you have?

MS: I was a lazy bugger. [laughter] No, my family never encouraged me to work, even. It was never expected. I did work. Once I got into my high school, I worked part time, in summers; plus, in college, I worked part time in the summers. They never expected me to really work, and I never felt any ambition to work. [laughter] I made up for it since. [laughter]

SH: Were you into Scouting, or any activities?

MS: I touched on Scouting very briefly. It just didn't work out for me.

SH: Were there any hobbies or extracurricular activities?

MS: Yeah, I was into a lot of science stuff. I was always into science, and I was always working. A friend of mine and I would always get into trouble. We'd make rockets. We'd make all kinds of animal traps, you name it, we did it. In fact, we blew up his father's cherry tree. That's not George Washington, either. [laughter] What we did is make a rocket, right, and we figured, his father and he were both hunters, so, of course, they had shotgun shells available, right. We emptied these shotgun shells, and, when his father was out, of course packed them in a nice, little thing, rocket. We had it down like a science. We had a fuse, with a long, long wire, [that] electrically starts, not one of these, "do it right." Unfortunately, it was very close to his father's cherry tree a few feet away. It was in the center of the yard. It was a big yard he has, right, so we figured it'd go straight. Of course, it's never going to go any other way but straight up. So, we were in the basement looking out, and, of course, we touched the two wires together. It worked, but the sucker blew up, right, and when the smoke cleared, we saw this thing coming down, right. [It] took a lot of explaining, lots of explaining, more on his part than mine. [laughter]

Anyway, in answer to your question, I was into astronomy, a lot of biology with animals, all kinds of animals. I used to collect turtles, and fish, and every animal known to man I had. So, I was into that kind of stuff, and I had hobbies, other hobbies, rock collecting. I used to take trips. I was a big fan of the library; I stayed there for hours reading, learning all kinds of stuff, thinking ahead about where I wanted to go, in the rest of my life, in terms of travel, and all that stuff. It got me going; let's put it that way.

SH: What about the space race, did that impact you at all?

MS: Oh, yeah. In fact, I can recall exactly when it really got me going. It was October I wish I could remember the right date, '59 I think it was October 1959. I turned on the television, and they talked about *Sputnik*. I was watching this thing, and of course, we didn't have pictures in those days, they made drawings of what they thought it was, because, obviously, the Russians weren't going to let us see what they did. They mentioned that this thing could be seen, right, and I ran outside. I remember every night, for, like, a month or two, I was out there with my binoculars looking for that thing. I finally saw it, [a] little, tiny, little dot, and it was moving pretty quick, because it was on a lower orbit. Then we sent up *Echo 1*, and I followed that one for as long as it was up there, right, and I really got hooked. Astronomy was a big thing for me, it really got me going. Then one thing led to another, and I got into physics.

SH: In high school was there any kind of guidance to suggest that you go to this school for this or that? Why did you choose Rutgers, and how did that come about?

MS: Well, that's interesting, because most of the kids in our school came from middle-class backgrounds. They weren't rich kids. There were a few, I'm sure, but, basically, [they] were wage earner-type people, families. So, our career guidance counselors were basically, "College, trade school, that's your choice or fend for yourself, one or the other," right. Not that they were not good counselors, it's just that they were very practical for the type of town we were. So, of course, I had high ambitions. I don't know where that came from, but it started early, I guess, and I said, "Well, I'd like to get into science." I [wanted to] be, get this; I wanted to be a nuclear physicist, right, not just a regular physicist, a nuclear physicist. The irony of the story is, I hated chemistry. That was my worst. [laughter] I could not stand it, right, but I wanted to be a nuclear physicist. Somehow, I figured I could find a way not to have to do the chemistry.

So, anyway, I went to my guidance counselor and he says, "Well, where do you want to apply?" I had done a little research because I used to go to libraries, and, I said, "Well, I want to go either to Princeton, Fordham, Brown, [or] Rutgers." [It was] one of those four, because, I think, believe it or not, Rutgers was my backstop, right. [laughter] The career, guidance counselor looks at that, [and] he said, "Are you crazy?" [laughter] He said, "You're not going to get into any of those three." Now, I had straight "As." I was on the Dean's List, the equivalent the honor society. I'd been president of several of my groups outside of school and all, and the Science Club and all that, and, he says, "You're never going to get into any of these colleges." Well, it turns out, I got accepted to all of them.

The funny story is, here's the fault of life, I really wanted to go to Princeton. The reason I really wanted to go to Princeton was because Einstein was there, or, had been there. I knew that they had the cache with physics, which I wanted to get into to give me what I needed, I thought. Well, I got accepted, conditionally, and the condition was that I be interviewed by [alumni] at Princeton. There was an alumni vetting process. So, we went on a Saturday, I'll never forget it, went on a Saturday afternoon to visit this alumnus, and he interviewed me on why I wanted to join, or become part of, Princeton. The talk was all about money and lifestyle, and how would I fit in. In retrospect, I see what they were doing, or, I assume it was what they were doing. Nonetheless, my folks then got interviewed, and they were asked, basically, "How are you going to afford this?" It turns out they were pretty rich. Nobody knew that; I didn't even know it, but that was what was posed to them. They just took the attitude that if that's all it means to you to

the people asking, then this is not a place we want our son to go. So, I really got upset, and then the irony of the story is [that] I got accepted at Brown, but Brown was too far away. Fordham accepted me, but I didn't want to be that close either, because my parents kept talking about it. They were familiar with the Bronx, so, they said, "Well, you live at home and commute to Fordham." So, I found a better way. I thought, "Well, now it's Rutgers; it's got to be Rutgers." [laughter]

Well, the funny part is [that] Rutgers, for whatever reason, didn't respond when I had applied. All the other colleges had said, "Okay," right. Well, my counselor was amazed, right, and he said, "You got accepted to all these colleges?" I said, "Well, but I'm looking for Rutgers because..." I explained the whole situation, and, he said, "Well, they're a tough school, too." He said, "And you may have not made the cut." I was so confident. In those days, I knew nothing, right, but I was confident. Damn if it didn't come in. I said, "It was just delayed for some reason." [laughter] He was amazed. He just, like, fell over. He said, "I don't believe this." It was very fortunate, as it turned out, because, first of all, I realized after two semesters I didn't want to be a physics major. So, it was irrelevant that I didn't go to Princeton. Plus, I found Rutgers was very, very [much] more my type of school. It was more my personality, whereas, I knew what Princeton was like, and I also knew a little bit about Fordham. I probably wouldn't have fit in very well there, but I did fit in very well in Rutgers. So, for me, just by pure accident, if you will, I hate to put it that way, but it happened to be the best fit.

SH: You had talked about being able to go to Julliard if you had wanted to pursue that. Did you continue to play right on through high school and into college?

MS: Yes, I did concerts and other things. I played for myself when I was in college; I didn't actively participate. You know, I was in the orchestra but I never really got into it that heavily because I was focused on doing other things at that point. I kept up over the years, and I just tinker around. Even today, I just tinker around a lot, enough to make it interesting. Yes, sometimes you shouldn't get discouraged, now that I look back at it in retrospect, but, maybe in my case it was all right. I interviewed with Julliard, and they asked me to visit with a student. This was in high school, because you don't have to graduate high school. You can come in as a sophomore, and, I think I was a sophomore at the time. So, I met one of the students, and he was like a second-year student there. There's really no grade; it's not like grades in college. It's a little bit different, they gear you to your professional level of expertise. He was a pianist, and he started playing; I watched his hand, and I watched the way he did it, and I realized there was never any way I was ever, ever, in this lifetime, going to match that. This was just one guy in a school of guys like that, and women like that, and I thought, "No, I don't think so. Maybe I should stick with my day job." [laughter] That's when I shifted away from thinking about Julliard.

SS: Was it chemistry that made you decide not to go into being a physicist?

MS: No. I wish I could say that was the only reason. [laughter] No. Our physics class, my freshman year, had ten people in it, and one

SH: What year was this that you are going into Rutgers?

MS: '65. I graduated [in] '65 from high school, so, yes, '65. I walked in the domed building I don't know if it's still there, the one in Piscataway, the science lecture hall. I sat down, and I'm looking for all the students, and there's only ten of us. One of them was the daughter of the professor giving the course. [laughter] I thought, "Gee, this is tough," right. He was a great guy, and he really knew his stuff. He was very enthusiastic. When he talked, he would throw stuff in the air, and show us how things worked. He would gesticulate; he wasn't one of those [Editor's note: Mr. Salapka makes a droning noise]. He really, really, did convey the sense of it, and I really zoomed up in my knowledge. [laughter] I took my test, my first test, and I got a D+, all right, a "D+," and I worked my butt off. I got better grades afterwards, but in my second semester, I said, "You know, I'm busting just to keep up here." I thought, "I'm never going to make this," once it gets beyond a certain level. The irony of the story is, the thing that always worried me most is my math capability, right. Well, I think it was an eight credit calculus course, right, for two semesters, I aced them out. I'm thinking, "That was easy in comparison to this." It's like I never even conceived that it could be that tough, right. [laughter] So, I dropped out of the physics program in my second semester, and I moved into economics. Well, I had to make up economics courses, and other things. So, I went in the summer, made up some courses, and then went into economics. That was an eye opener. [laughter] Like I said, the chemistry would have been a piece of cake after that. It's like, "Oh, yeah, no problem." [laughter] It was different. He was a great professor ...

SH: Where were you housed when you first came?

MS: I was in Demarest. That was funny, too, because we had a three-man room, and it was one of those corner rooms. I don't know if they still have them or not, and I don't know if it was just by default, or what, but they tried to put people who they thought were similar together, by their last names. So, we had (Lapadapinsky?) and Salapka. [laughter] We couldn't have been more different if we tried, right. I guess, to somebody, it seemed, "They all end in Ys, As, what the heck, put them together," right. It was lucky though, we actually got along together. We actually didn't kill each other. We were right next to our proctors' room. There were two proctors, one was a nut case; he was really a nut case. The other was an economics major. [laughter] He was okay. The other one was but I don't know if you even have proctors anymore.

SS: Do you mean preceptors?

MS: That's right, they're preceptors. I take it back; they were called preceptors then, too. They were usually senior classmen, either juniors or seniors. One was a phys-ed major. He was stoned, he was always drunk, never stoned, they didn't have drugs in those days, couldn't afford them. He would drink day and night, and we would play games on him. It was fun. [laughter] The guy was a good guy. Our whole group was connected with sciences. That was the other thing, they tried to keep all the science guys together. Well, you don't want them running loose, keep them together; you got to keep your eye on them, right, because, you never know. [laughter] So, we had guys, let's see, Pinsky was a math major. Well, Patter was an engineer, and I was a physics major, and we had a genius in our midst, also, up in a room two doors over. He was a math major, but he was way up there. This guy was doing formulas, like, in his head. We tried to catch him on a heavy-duty calculus problem, and he'd go [Editor's note: Mr. Salapka

snaps his fingers to show how quickly the person could do math]. You look in the book, "Oh, that's the right answer." [laughter] We had fun. We had a good group, very, very, good group.

SH: How did you make the switch from the sciences to economics?

MS: That's a good question. What I did is, I went to the counselors, because I knew I was in trouble. When you have a big switch like that in your mind, you need help. I went to a counselor there, a guidance counselor, whatever they call it, to talk about what my options were. They gave me some psychological tests on how I would react under certain situations. So, it came out, number one, I would be a marketing guy. I thought, "How did that come out?" [It was] marketing, or self-employed, or economics, and business. Well, I couldn't see myself self-employed at that time. Now, I probably could. The marketing seemed way off the beam, although I understand why, now. The economics seemed to fit, because, I figured, I had some of the science, and the math and the statistics, and things. So, that all had pseudo-science in it, right. So, I figured, I probably could do okay with economics. [laughter] I might be able to do as well in physics, but, economics, yeah. It turned out that worked out pretty well. It wasn't probably the best fit for me ...

SH: Had you talked to the preceptor who was the economics major?

MS: Yes, I did. Yes, I did, actually. That's probably what steered me in that direction, I should say, in the beginning. He started showing me some of the books, and some of the issues, and some of the things they dealt with, and it was kind of intriguing. I thought, "There's an idea," so, yeah, in a way, the preceptor probably did help me on that. He was the guy with the straight, he, at least, was focused. The other one, I don't think I would have gone to him. [laughter]

SH: Was ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] still mandatory?

MS: No, but ROTC was offered, and was encouraged. That was like, you knew what the options were, right, and this is the Vietnam War. I guess, I blocked out a lot of that going into college. It actually bit me in the rear end, eventually, because, well, let me back up. ROTC was very, very, big on campus. Mainly because, I think that the Army saw Rutgers as a good field operation, in terms of getting officers on the line, and, obviously, this was getting to be heavy-duty fighting. They needed people, so there was never any pressure, to say, but, there was a lot of exposure to ROTC. Everywhere you walked, there was ROTC people. Most of the guys in my area were ROTC. My roommate in the first year was one of them, Lopata, was a ROTC guy, and, so, we learned a lot. We knew what was involved. A lot of people were gung ho to get in. It was still early, but things were getting hot. I tried to just ignore it; it's like, "It's there, I'm going to forget about it. It will go away." Then I wound up becoming a newsman for WRSU, the radio station.

SH: Was that in your freshman or sophomore year?

MS: In my sophomore year.

SH: Had you served with the ROTC as a freshman?

MS: I did not join ROTC. As I say, it was not mandatory, but it was pushed. It was encouraged, but, you didn't have to; you weren't required to join ROTC.

SH: It had been required as a land grant college up to some point in the 1960s.

MS: Right, early '60s. I think, they dropped [the requirement] right before I got there, that it was not a requirement.

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

SH: Please continue. You were talking about the ROTC presence.

MS: Because it was part of the campus, you really couldn't get away from it, not that we wanted to, it was, like, imbued with ROTC. Most of the people we knew either were in ROTC, or involved in some of the things that ROTC did. It didn't hit home to me what this all meant until I became a radio broadcaster at WRSU. I was a newscaster, and, in the morning, I had the early shift, because I was brand new. I'd get up at around three or four in the morning, and get over to the station.

SH: Where was the station?

MS: If you go all the way to the end of the campus, College Avenue, and you go almost to the end, where it intersects the major roadway there I forget the name of that, right by the Winants Hall, and all that off to the right, on that right-hand corner, there's a little, old building there. I don't know if it's still there or not. That was the old WRSU radio station, AM, local, just local thing. What had happened is, they put in the UPI [United Press International], and other things. There were like three messaging, AP [Associated Press], Reuters, that type. I don't think Reuters was around at that time, but AP, definitely, [and] UPI. I would come in the morning because I had a six AM broadcast, right. I would rip these suckers off the thing, and then I'd try to make sense of them, because they came in garbled. They weren't, like, on computer, where you have it all done. So, you get these yellow slips of paper coming out. Sometimes, nobody put the paper in, so you have to, and then, of course, you get a whole night's worth of crap coming out. Then, I'd read through it, and I tried to make sense of what it said, so I could talk intelligently on the radio. [laughter] Then, of course, I was starting to read, "Five thousand bombs dropped on such and such a place. So many killed, so many wounded. The next wave [is] attacking. President Johnson says he's going to increase war support to X number." That's what I was doing for, like, the first three months, was giving this. At first, it was just routine for me. I didn't think about it. I was new; it was me and the engineer first thing in the morning. I'm reading the stuff, and, it was like, just reading it. Then, after a while, I stopped reading, and started [really] reading it. I'm reading it, and I'm thinking, "Oh, my God, this is really nasty stuff." So, it started permeating, and the campus really never got that hot until, like, the last year I was there.

Then, there were demonstrations. Because ROTC was a big presence, so, they'd have a ROTC parade, right, and, of course, there were protestors throwing eggs and other things, smoke bombs, the whole nine yards. This was, like, unheard of on Rutgers campus, having armed revolution,

basically, right. [laughter] The deans never said anything about it, actually; they never really made an issue of it. Some of the parades stopped, they weren't that visible, and things started really heating up. I started hearing from friends of mine, in our dorm, that said one of them was going to go over, in [the] not too distant future, he said, "I'm going to kill every one of them, that's what I'm going to do, that's what I want to do." I never knew what did happen to him, but ...

SH: You were still in Demarest at that point?

MS: No. Let's see I moved to Clothier after Demarest. I think Marty, I think he was in Brett Hall at one point.

SS: He was in Clothier all four years.

MS: Anyway, I moved to Clothier, and then, somehow, Marty and I met.

SH: This is Marty Sachs.

MS: Marty Sachs. We became roommates for the rest of our college career. That worked out beautifully because he couldn't get along with his roommate; I couldn't get along with mine. So, this worked out perfectly. [laughter] We were both similarly crazy. [laughter] Yes, that worked out real well.

SH: What got you interested in broadcast?

MS: I'd always been interested in listening to radio. When I was a kid, I used to have a crystal set ...

SH: I am thinking of the grandfather with the radio.

MS: Yes, right. This must be something going on there. Yes, I used to tap my bed, when they had bed springs that you could attach. I put the wires together, and I'd get BBC [British Broadcast Company], and I'd get Germany and all these other stations. Of course, I got my folks into trouble at one point, because I started communicating with these stations that I heard. So, I heard this one station, Deutsche Welle, a German radio station; imagine, we're in a Cold War. My parents worked for high security organizations, right, they got top secret clearance. [laughter] Deutsche Welle was a German radio station on the West's side, but, of course, in the '50s, who knew who was on first, right? So they said, "If you can hear us, let us know, and we'll send you a little card telling you that this is the station, blah, blah, blah." Again, I had a crystal set, had no batteries, no nothing; it was just, [a] crystal receiver. So, I'm listening to this, "Ah, okay." I'll get the name, I can't spell it too well, but I'll try. I asked my folks for some stamps; they didn't know what the heck I was doing, right, the whole bunch, I didn't know how many [stamps] to take. I put a whole bunch of stamps on, sent it away, right, terrific. About a month later, I get this little brochure with a calendar from Germany. I get this nice card with [a] German radio station on it, "Thank you for your reception report. We're sending you a nice calendar. We're going to send you a monthly newsletter." So, I say, "Hey, this is great," right.

Then, they started sending equipment, because I wrote, "I don't have any equipment. I would like some equipment, how do I get it?" "We'll send you some equipment." So, they sent tuners. Well, this came in through the mail. One morning, Sunday morning, as we're walking out to go to church, Father looks across the street, and here's a car, big, black car. There was the biggest it's like your father's [Martin Sachs] camera, remember? Big, one of those that, pointed out, and they're pointed at our house. My father says, "What the hell is going on?" This went on for, like, a day or two, right. Every time we'd walk outside, there'd be a big, black car out there, right. Well, then, my father, apparently, or my mother, heard somebody contacted them that they didn't like the idea that somebody from this house was contacting Germany. They were working in secret establishments, right. My father said, "What the hell are you doing? What are you involved in?" [laughter]

SS: When was this?

MS: In the '50s. So, things were getting hot, and whether this was just a joke, or what, I don't know. He told me to cease and desist, right. Of course, Deutsche Welle never stopped sending stuff, it kept coming every month, right; he was pulling his hair out. [laughter] Well, it never led to anything, apparently, because there's nothing surreptitious about it. It was an open station, it was a West German station. Ironically, later in life, when I was in my forties, I became a ham radio operator, which I am today, and I've talked to all these countries. You're allowed to talk to different countries, and, so, you get the little cards, document[s]. I remember when I was talking to East Germany once, way back, and, I forget when it was, I guess it was in the '80s. I had just gotten my general class license, and you were allowed to talk. I think there were restrictions on transmitting messages between third parties; it was like third party traffic prohibitions. Anyway, I was talking to a club, I guess it was, in East Germany, Leipzig, or wherever it was. So they said, "We'll send you a card with our pictures on it, and some paraphernalia that we have from the station." They didn't have much. They couldn't afford their own stations. Well, by the time it got to me, there were so many fingerprints on that thing, and so many open and re-closed and opened and re-closed [marks], that you could barely read the damn thing. Everybody on both sides probably ripped that sucker apart three times.

SH: Terribly inspected. That is a great story. Were there any other activities or organizations that you were involved with on campus?

MS: Well, I was in the Pre-Legal Society. That was Marty, and he and I usurped the Pre-Legal Society. [laughter] We were real politicians; let's put it that way.

SH: Really?

MS: Yeah, we took over a staid organization, literally took it over. I was the treasurer, he was the president, and we managed to take it over and get it to do what we wanted it to do. We had people come in that were lawyers in the area, that could talk to the group. I think we had several meetings. We didn't pursue it that heavily, but I think for about two years we were involved in it, and it was kind of fun. You know, it's a different perspective. I thought I might at some point, maybe, consider law, but I never really got into that. It was fun to run an organization and get into all the machinations of it, and all of this.

SH: You said you played in the orchestra, too.

MS: Actually, I did that in high school, not in college. I played for myself, basically, in college, so, I never got involved in that. I don't think I was that active, actually, because I was dating. So that took a lot of my time. [laughter]

SH: How did you come to crash that dance at Fairleigh Dickinson?

MS: Fairleigh Dickinson, yes. A friend of mine who went to, I want to say, Newark College of Engineering of course, I knew a lot of science guys. He and I, from high school, knew each other, and so we were cruising, as Pat [Mr. Salapka's wife] said, and went to this dance, and she was selling tickets at the door. She got all befuddled when she was trying to tell me about this thing, about winning a raffle, and all this, and so I slowed her down, and I said, "Just take it easy." You know, one thing led to another, and I said, "Are you free to go out tomorrow [or] whenever?" She said, "Yeah, well, I got this stuff to do, but after that why don't you meet me in the park up here. I got a whole bunch of Girl Scouts that I'm taking care of we could have a so-called date while I'm doing that." So, I met her twenty-some odd, little, I don't know what they call the small Girl Scouts

SS: Brownies?

MS: Yes, the Brownies. They kept us busy, I tell you. [laughter] So, I wound up doing some work and learning some stuff, and then one thing led to another. Her mother was involved in Girl Scouting big time, and, so, I wound up getting involved in it a little bit. One thing led to another; here we are, thirty-seven years later.

SH: Did you marry after college?

MS: Yes, right after college.

SH: I would like to back up a little to Rutgers. How were attitudes on campus changing or becoming more evident, in particular regarding your reporting on the radio station? Which was your bend, and were you making that known in your broadcasting?

MS: On commenting on the war? I think I changed my style a little bit in terms of the way I reported. I never consciously went out and said, "I think this is bad," or The way I gave the statistics, "Here we go again, another day of bad news," or I'd say things like, "How many more of us are going to die for this?" [It was] something to that effect. Nothing I don't know, maybe that was controversial in those days, but nothing enough to get me yanked off the station, let's put it that way. Yes, I guess I made a few comments. I started to get a little more critical about how I ask questions. I got people very nervous when I started asking questions, and, so, I wouldn't get the nice you know. When I started out, I was a nice guy, threw soft balls, soft questions, out to get soft answers back. Then I started asking tougher questions, and then I started getting the zingers coming back. So, yes, I guess, I changed a little bit of my perspective. But I had yet, not clicked in my mind what was really going on, even with all that. We were in

an insulated world there. ROTC, really, I don't want to say that did it; but, I guess, it was the whole environment where we came out of, and our families, and the way ROTC was there. In other words, it's almost sacrilegious to talk about doing something against what we all thought was the right thing to do. You could see what the consequences were. That was obvious, so, it was kind of, for me, schizophrenic relationship.

SH: Did you cover teach-ins in your reporting?

MS: No, I didn't, really. [It was] mostly local politics, stuff that affected the campus, what politicians were doing locally that could affect the campus. They don't like getting asked the questions: "Why is this happening?" "Why is that road being changed?" "Why is this happening here?" "Why is that going on there?"

SS: Who were you interviewing? Were these professors, or were they actual politicians?

MS: These are politicians, yes, local, town politicians. I scurried out of campus a little bit, I moved a little bit away. In retrospect, I guess, I didn't do what a real reporter would do today, which is really get out there and try to get some major piece of work to try to work on.

SH: I have two questions from this. What were some of the major changes that were going on with New Brunswick and with the campus? Also, were you aware of any tension between the "townies" and the "gownies," so to speak, in New Brunswick?

MS: Again, I felt more insulated on campus. I went into town. I understood some of the stuff going on. The town was in bad shape. In the late '60s it was going down for the count, places were getting boarded up. There were a few places that were still operational, mom and pop shops, and things. It was still viable, but there were elements of the town that were starting to get really seedy. There was crime, although it wasn't reported like it is today, but we all knew it. There wasn't the crime on campus that I hear about now, not that Rutgers has that, but I'm saying, generally. We never really associated with "townies" that much. I didn't get that flavor. I did, as I say, get into it with the politicians, only when I found out that they were going to do some road changes, and things that were going to affect the campus. Apparently, we weren't involved in any of the decision making, so that was the piece that I got into.

SH: Was the Rutgers administration also feeding you information?

MS: They treated us as non-existent.

SH: Really? Was there a dean in charge of all of you?

MS: No.

SH: I ask because of the tension with the *Targum*.

MS: No, we never had that.

SS: Did professors give any slant in their classes?

MS: Oh, in the classes? Not politically, not politically. We had some interesting professors. We had Dr. McDonald, who was a history professor. I don't know if you know him or not; I think it was McDonald. He used to make some very controversial comments about society, generally, and why we are what we are, as Western society, which is interesting now, in retrospect, considering what's going on in the rest of the world. So, he was probably way ahead of his time. I enjoyed his course. I can remember that one, and, then, Professor Buss, ask your dad about Professor Arnold Buss.

SH: Is Professor Buss spelled B-U-S?

MS: I think two s's on it. He was a psychology prof, and he always peppered his lectures with innuendo and *double entendre*, and if he didn't like the audience, he would tell them in no uncertain terms. [laughter] He clapped when they booed.

SH: He finally got the point across.

MS: Yes. So, we had pretty good professors. In answer to your question, I never got the feeling that, maybe I was on another planet, but I never got the feeling that they interjected the political side of this. This time was so hot, you can ask your father about that, that you either were into it one-hundred percent. What was the group, SDS, Students for a Democratic Society?

SS: SDS.

MS: SDS, right. That brings back memories. They were only mildly active on our campus, only mildly active, because of ROTC. They would have probably been killed had they had a bigger presence, but, I guess, everybody was more shell shocked than anything, because of what was going on. So, internally, in these classrooms and all we never really got that political sense that you would today.

SH: What about Genovese, the history professor who spoke out?

MS: See, I don't even recall that. I don't even recall that. That tells you something, doesn't it? [laughter]

SH: There was a big controversy about academic freedom. He was hoping that the North Vietnamese would win.

MS: Oh, is that right? In fact, I'll tell you how strange this got. This will exemplify it for you. Our senior prom was hosted by ROTC, that was the tradition; ROTC did the senior prom. Who did they invite? Simon and Garfunkel, at the height of the Vietnam War, right. Simon and Garfunkel didn't know ROTC was the inviter. It was just Rutgers, right. They said, "Okay, we're coming." Two weeks before the prom, they realized, somebody tipped them off, that this is a ROTC-sponsored event. Now, can you imagine the irony and the controversy that would have engendered? They backed out. They said, "No way. This is impossible." They couldn't

believe it; they couldn't believe the ROTC group was sponsoring this thing, and they were asking Simon and Garfunkel. Well, they had great music, and that's how we all thought. It was really strange. There was this blinders. There was all this stuff going on out here, with all the bombs going off, people fighting, killing each other, and we were in this kind of isolated mix of people, who really were just looking straight ahead.

SH: What about the draft and the lottery? Were there discussions about this?

MS: Not really. There may have been, not with me; and I never participated. [laughter]

SH: You never thought your number would come up?

MS: Well, I expected to be drafted.

SH: It was just "wait and see"?

MS: Well, I fully expected to be drafted. I didn't know when it would happen, so, when I graduated, the first thing I did is I applied to the services. Of course, there was a waiting line to the services, the ones that you wanted to be in. It was interesting, because, I didn't know, I fully expected that if I didn't get into the services, that would be it; I'd be over there somehow. In what capacity, God only knows, right. Well, I was called, and, Pat, she really got into this with me, because it was a terrifying situation at the end. I got my notice, and I went for my draft physical, and, that was an experience in itself. We were all in this line, and there were some people busted up pretty badly, right, and my eyesight wasn't that great, even back then. They passed us all, right, and they just said, "A-I, you're in."

I remember going to the draft board, and it was as if it went from bad to worse. First of all, I didn't expect I would be drafted. Then, I got drafted. For the physical, preliminary induction physical, I was told, "You're okay," which really shocked the hell out of me. [laughter] I said, "What am I going to do if I lose my glasses? I'm going to shoot everybody around me." [laughter] They said, "That's all right, it doesn't matter." [laughter] Then, they called us into this big room, and they said that this is a pre-induction physical. "You will get orders within, like, six weeks, whatever, for your next leg." They said, "By the way, before we do that, we do pre-selection on where we're going to send each of you, before you ever get documented out." So there were like five guys, different services, and they came down the list, and say, "You, you, you, you, you," pointed to me, "over here." There were, like, five of us. Okay, so, we walk over there. "You, you, you, you, you, over here." Those guys walked over there. So, after a few minutes, they said, "Okay, this group here." They pointed to me and the four guys with me, "Marine Corps." I'm thinking, "I didn't think it could get any worse, Marine Corps, you got to be kidding me!" [laughter] The other guys, "Navy, Navy support. The rest of you are going to be grunts." That's how they put it, right. Well, they were teasing us, because we hadn't even gone through the second leg of our thing.

SH: The whole thing was a sham?

MS: It was basically a sham, but we didn't know. They were using psychological terror, and everything, on you at that point. Within the six weeks between the time I had my pre-induction, before any orders ever got cut for me to go in, they had the draft lottery, and I came up with the right number. It was high enough that I didn't have to serve, but, [I was] sweating bullets, sweating bullets, right up until the end. So, I fully expected, I was on my way out there.

SH: Unbelievable.

MS: You never know.

SS: Were you on campus when Martin Luther King was assassinated?

MS: When was that? What was the date, '67, or something? Right before Kennedy got killed, right?

SH: Kennedy was killed in 1963.

MS: Robert Kennedy.

SH: That was four years later.

MS: Yes, so it was '66.

SH: Lyndon Johnson refused to run or proclaimed he wouldn't run.

MS: Yes, I'm not sure. I'll be honest with you, as far as current affairs goes, I was out of it. I didn't pay any attention, mainly, because I was afraid to pay attention.

SS: My dad had said that in Clothier someone took a radio and started blaring *Dixie* onto George Street.

MS: He told me that. I don't recall ever hearing that. I may not have been there at the time, but it's possible. You know, the problem is, the campus was not integrated, really, in any sense, when I was there. I don't recall; there were blacks, but there weren't a number of them. You could count them on, what, two hands, maybe. At least, that's what my impression was. So, you really didn't get that kind of mix of feelings, in those days; at least, I didn't. We didn't even have issues, like I said. Again, I felt really isolated. It was almost like I was in a cocoon for a lot of those years. I wonder about that now. Maybe I did that purposely, I don't know.

SH: Was anybody considering going to Canada? Were there any discussions like this?

MS: Not on campus, not on campus, that I recall. Although, interestingly enough, I worked for a bank in New York, and several of my managers were ex-Navy officers, who had just gotten out of Vietnam. They encouraged me to go to Canada. These were ex-naval guys. Now, what does that tell you? These are guys with experience. Then, another guy I met came back, again, he was at the bank, came in right off the boat, from a destroyer; I forget where they were fighting,

but we were having a formal dinner. I was working for a very upscale bank in New York, like a wholesale-type bank, and we were at this big meeting ...

SH: This is after graduation in 1969?

MS: Yes, after graduation. We're at this big thing in New York, and all the bigwigs were there. There was all kinds of business people, and this guy was at my table, and we were talking. I was trying to get him to talk about [the] Vietnam War. He really didn't want to get into it. He was kind of keeping himself away, and a waiter dropped a tray behind us. He took the table, flipped it up, pulled me down on the floor, hit the floor. Literally, my nose is, like, pressed onto the floor. He leaned over me, like that, and that said it all. That was it. Now you should have seen the reaction. Top management, they were like, "Oh, my God, what's going on here?" Our bank had lots of naval officers. Our manager was naval, but they all were of the same feeling, when they got back. It was like, "Don't ever go there, don't ever go there for any reason, whatever it takes."

SH: Interesting. We talked about if you were aware of any differences between "townies" and "gownies," what about the fraternities, and those who were not part of the fraternities?

MS: It was interesting. We had some interesting fraternities there. Chi Phi rings a bell with me. [laughter] Well, when I got there, they had the rush, and so we all got into that, at least I did. So, I went to about five or six of them. They showed you the best of the best, dancing, beer, you name it, right, and I didn't quite feel I'd fit in that. You know, that was my person, I was more of a loner. So, I'm not a party animal. Across from Clothier, I don't know if your dad remembers this or not, but we had a Chi Phi [house], and every Friday night through Sunday morning they'd be throwing kegs out the window. [laughter] The kegs were piled up, a mile high. I remember, they had a fire there once, and the fire department hoped it burned to the ground, right. Unfortunately for the campus, and for the fire department, somebody gave them a big donation, and they rebuilt the thing. [laughter] I knew a few guys in different frats; some of them were the more intelligent frats. There were others. One of our frats got everybody into trouble in the yearbook. I don't know if you remember that.

SH: Please tell us.

MS: They took pictures of all the frats. Everybody stood out in front of the frats, right. One frat had several male appendages visible in the yearbook, which I have. [laughter]

SS: What year was this?

MS: 1969. Ask your dad. Anyway, they weren't malicious, or anything nasty. It was, just, they had a good time, they just did. We had a frat-like unit in the hall we were in, because a lot of us decided, rather than join frats, pay the fees, go through all the BS, [that] we all were different enough, but we liked each other. We, basically, found a way to lock up an entire floor. That was the days before the computers, even, right. We figured that out. So, we locked up a whole floor; we just all happened all to be on the same floor. So, it worked out pretty well. I don't know if that was before I met your dad, or what, but we just locked up a whole floor. It was perfect; we

all knew each other, we all liked each other. Yes, frats and I didn't [mix]; I liked the people there, I knew a few people, but it didn't hold any interest for me.

SH: Did you have any interaction with any of the administration at Rutgers, such as the president or the dean of men?

MS: Well, obviously, the professors I dealt with quite a bit. Not the administration so much. I think I talked to one dean while I was there, one dean, and it was administrative, "Yes, I paid my bill, how come I didn't..." I never, never got into that stuff.

SH: Did you ever set foot in Kirkpatrick Chapel?

MS: Don't think so. [laughter] No, just to be honest.

SH: Do you remember who gave your commencement address?

MS: Yes, Brown. He was a good one he was a sharp guy. I don't know what he does today, but he's pretty good. Yes, I remember that.

SH: Did politics interest you?

MS: No, absolutely not. That was the farthest thing from my mind. I really didn't like the backroom stuff, and all that, although I find I can do that. It's just that wasn't what gets me going.

SH: I wondered if any of your family had been involved with politics.

MS: No. The only thing my family was involved in with politics was my mother was very good at fighting politics, right, and politicians, and she always seemed to get her way. When they increased her assessment on her house, she made sure they backed it off and things like that. [laughter] No, I guess that's what I grew up learning, is that politicians were not to be trusted. [laughter] So, I never went there. [laughter]

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

MS: Boy, that's a good question. Actually, I can recall Dr. Schaefer, [who] was one of my economics professors. He taught me, like, three courses, I guess. I liked him a lot, because he was a practical guy. He actually worked in the NYSE [New York Stock Exchange] for a while. I think he was still connected in some ways, so he knew not just economics, but he knew the application of how that all worked, so, I was impressed with him. I think I learned a lot from him. McDonald, definitely, that guy was great. Buss, I learned a lot of psychology from Buss. There was an art professor, I can't remember his name now, but he was a very good art professor. Actually, he taught a compendium course of art, music, and literature. I took, like, a combination course, and he was just phenomenal. Of course, he had other professors come in to do some of the other things, but he was, like, the coordinator of it. He was very good. I just can't recall his name. He was from McGill University originally that's all I remember, but, he

was [a] very good professor. My science professor, I've forgotten his name, unfortunately, my physics professor was very, very good. Actually, like I said, I did not experience a bad course in Rutgers, not one; and I had taken a smattering of everything. So, I've always felt like I wanted to go to the course. I never felt like this was a drudge that I had to go there, "Oh, I got to do something," I never felt that. Geology, I had a great geology teacher. To me, it was like nirvana. I wish I [could have] gone back. [laughter] This stuff I'm doing now, give me a break. [laughter]

SH: At WRSU, were there meetings where you decided as a group in which direction you were going to go, or how you would continue or make changes?

MS: They just said, "Here it is; do it." [laughter] "Figure it out, and do it." They must have liked it, because they used to tape my programs and play them later in the day. [laughter] They never did that for anybody else. So, I don't know what it is, maybe my voice was something. I don't know I didn't gravitate toward organizationally linked groups. I was a very independent, loner-type guy.

SH: Was every announcer, basically, autonomous?

MS: Pretty much. Now, maybe, there were people that dealt with other groups there; but, no, we were pretty much on our own. We were a small group. There was only, maybe, a handful of us, and, so, we had different slots.

SH: Did you remain on in the early morning?

MS: Yeah, I stayed there. I enjoyed the early morning because it got me up, which, ironically, I can't get up in the early morning anymore. I liked that schedule, because then I could go to my classes. In those days, it didn't bother me, I could do the whole day without feeling it. So, for me, it was a good combo, I had that early morning stint, and do my classes in the afternoon, or, morning and afternoon.

SH: Did you listen to radio other than doing your own show?

MS: I tried not to. [laughter] In fact, I was shocked when I heard my voice on the radio. At lunch, they had a repeat performance in the eating hall the Commons, and, see, it's all coming back, and I heard my voice. I was, like, shocked, "What the hey is this?" I didn't listen to radio that much. It was ironic. [laughter]

SH: Were you the first group that used Brower Commons for your dining hall?

MS: Brower Commons?

SS: The Commons.

MS: Oh, the Commons, yes, I think it was, yeah. It was built only a few years before we got there. It was good, actually. The food wasn't anything like it is today, but it was good.
[laughter]

SH: What about interaction with Douglass women? Some of it was pretty organized, and some, just by chance, shall we say.

MS: I don't know. I didn't really now you're talking about what, the social side of it?

SH: Or if there were academic courses that you took at Douglass, or they took with you?

MS: Yes, there were in the physics course; the woman that was the daughter of the professor came from Douglass because, there were no women in Rutgers at that point, she couldn't get the physics course at Douglass. So, she was part of the Douglass camp. That was the only exposure I'd had until I had a German course. That was another, actually, a great professor, a German professor. I wish I could remember his name. I took three years of German with him, and he was just phenomenal. Anyway, in German, there were at least two Douglass girls that had taken that course there, but that was not routine. That was not my experience. It was only a few, very unique, situations. Now, I did go to Douglass on one or two occasions. I met a girl there at one point, just social, and that was it. I don't know, I didn't feel comfortable at Douglass for some reason; I just didn't. It was there, but ...

SH: During your final years at Rutgers, they are beginning to talk about making Rutgers co-ed, was any of this being discussed with the students? Was there any hint that this was going to happen?

MS: No. [laughter]

SH: You graduated in 1969. It is only three years later when it is, in fact, a fact.

MS: Again, I was oblivious. That's the word I've been looking for, oblivious, right. So, I really didn't get into any of that. Now, they did allow women on campus to visit, but it was not *de rigueur* to have people there. I think, the only time I got a hint that things were changing was, I was in the men's room one day, in our hall, and a woman walked in. I thought, "This is different." [laughter] I think she was there by accident, but that's another story. No, no one ever discussed that. You have to understand the mindset then. The mindset first of all, it was very macho, very macho, at least the people I was dealing with. This thing about women and men separate, that was not even considered, except for certain instances, but, they were separate. There was never any talk, at least among us, of bringing the sexes together for courses, or any of the erudite stuff that goes on. No. Didn't happen. [We discussed] how much beer was on the floor, how many, can I use the word, "gooks" [derogatory word for the North Vietnamese] were going to be killed, things like that. That was what was discussed. It was very male oriented; it was really a men's college when I was there. That's all I can tell you.

SH: There was one question I did want to follow up on. Do you remember who came to the senior prom in place of Simon and Garfunkel?

MS: It was unimpressive, and I never attended, so that doesn't matter. [laughter] I think they got some talent; I'm not sure where they got it and who it was. I guess, I could do some research and find that out. Yes, Simon and Garfunkel just stuck in my mind as being the most ironic [choice]. This was typical of what the whole country was going through at the time, because we were polarized, obviously. Yet, in our enclave on [the] Rutgers, New Brunswick, campus, we were all of one thought; not all, but a lot of us, that this was going to be the same as it always was. There was really no change, and some of these things that existed out here were just those things that were out there. It's much different today, I'm sure. It's just ...

SH: Did people watch television?

MS: We had one set in each dorm, which we went downstairs to see. I watched *The Man from Uncle*. We were all piled around and watched *The Man From Uncle*. We watched, maybe, two or three other shows, sports shows, that's it. No televisions in the room, nothing. [laughter]

SH: What about athletics at Rutgers?

MS: Yes [laughter] See, you're talking to the wrong person about all this stuff.

SH: Did you attend the football games?

MS: Oh, yes. Oh, sure.

SH: Since we talked about how everyone was all together, with the television, yet, there were different groups, I would like to know how powerful the football games were ...

MS: Right, for me, I went to football games on occasion, not that often. I enjoyed them as a sport, never really got into, "Go Rutgers" versus whatever. When Rutgers-Princeton played, yes, I was there, and I wanted to see that; and we beat them. [laughter] They were wimps anyway. [laughter] Other sports, I really didn't follow. I watched crew every so often, because I could see them from the river. The river was right below us, there, so we could watch them in the morning, and all. That was kind of interesting. I liked to see that. [I] never really got into the sports that much. Other guys did; they were really into the basketball, and this and that. Rutgers, at that time, really wasn't a force in a lot of those areas, you know what I'm saying? Like, football, they weren't one of the big league contenders, at that point. Yes, Rutgers was just a local you know, whatever they did. For us, it was important, but for the rest of the world, it wasn't. Now, I understand it.

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

SS: This continues an interview with Michael Salapka, in Rockville, Maryland. I was asking about when you interviewed the politicians about the war-related issues on the radio. What were the other things discussed on the radio station?

MS: Well, basically, since mine was the first newscast in the morning, I gave them the weather forecast. I gave them the campus activities that I knew of, because we'd get a list of them the day

before. We'd intersperse regular news with the UPI and AP information. The UPI and AP were almost all about the war. I did talk about some of the things we did locally, or that was pending in the city, but I don't think anybody listened to that, to be honest with you, first thing in the morning. [laughter] That was about it.

SH: How dominant was the agriculture school at that time? Had it become Cook College at that point?

MS: I believe it was Cook College at that point, come to think of it, the "Aggies," There were a few that I met. Most of them were up on the Piscataway campus, so you didn't see many down in the main environs. In fact, I thought your father roomed with an "Aggie." I'm not sure [if] he did or not. In any event, they were not prevalent; let's put it that way.

SH: The alumni from the 1940s talked about going to the Ag school and coming back to the main part of the campus.

MS: Piscataway was still the concentrated area for them. It was almost as if it was a separate college, really, in the way it operated, and everything, so, we rarely saw them. Of course, I was in the sciences. They were in the biological sciences, I was in the physical, and, so, we really didn't cross paths.

SH: Wasn't the college farm still by Douglass?

MS: I believe so, yes.

SH: You talked about the fact that you then went to work for a bank. Was that directly out of Rutgers?

MS: Yes.

SH: 1969 is a tough year, from what I have read

MS: They had come on campus, as did a few other recruiters, and they were looking for people. It was ironic because, in retrospect, you think they knew that all of us were subject to the draft, so, they were willing to take a chance even with that. Now that I look at it, I thought that's pretty remarkable when you consider it, because, how long would we have been there? Merrill Lynch came on board. You know, I interviewed with them. I interviewed with Chase, with several other banks, mainly financial, mainly because I wanted to go in. The strangest one of all was Ford. That's a story in itself. You know, I liked Irving, I liked Chase; they were two good banks, and I knew people that had interviewed with them. Irving was the one I joined, Irving Trust Company, which is no longer in existence. I had nothing to do with it. It wasn't my fault. [laughter]

SS: Would they have gotten you out of the draft, though, if you had been working there?

MS: No, absolutely not. There was very little that could get you out of the draft, short of going to Canada, or doing something else which nobody wanted to do. [laughter] I interviewed with the two banks. I had Merrill Lynch and Ford Motor Company at their Detroit operations; they came down, they sent somebody from Detroit to interview. Anyway, I got an offer from Chase, I got an offer from Irving. I think I got an offer from Merrill as well, I'm not sure, but I hadn't heard anything from Ford. Those were the only ones I really had applied for. I figured if I didn't get it from one of those, I'd have to do something else, had to figure out something else. Of course, very naïve in those days, you know what I mean, limited possibilities, right. It was a different age, and, so, finally, I decided to take the job at Irving because it seemed to offer a lot. It was better salary; it had all kinds of bennies [benefits] and things. I was in this unique, elite group of three people they were hiring, so, I figured I'd get better treatment and all that.

But I never heard from Ford, so I sent a message to the contact point I had with them, and I got some cryptic message. They had hired me, and they were expecting me to join their organization in New Jersey, in Mahwah, right, and they wondered why I wasn't there. Well, apparently, the messages never got to me, and somebody at the plant just signed me in as if I were an employee. [laughter] So, it's like one of those strange [things]. Well, I didn't even have to resign; I never showed up. [laughter] They probably got me down as a bum. That's pretty funny, though. In those days, I guess, we were just lucky in a way, in a kind of perverse way. Jobs were being created at that point; the war effort actually improved the job structure to a great extent. After the fact, we paid for that, but, at that point in time, things were still growing pretty rapidly. It wasn't until, I guess, the '70s that things started going off the edge; but there were a lot of opportunities, really were.

SH: Being that age, and being A-1, did they ask you what your draft number was?

MS: No. Well no. Well, at that point, there was no draft lottery. You were just assumed to go in. That was the assumption: you graduate, you go in within eighteen months or less, or whatever, but, I think part of it was the fact that the banks, in particular, were very militaristic in their management. That's their background, at least New York banks, so they felt comfortable with this activity, for some reason. If you went into military, so what? That was good.

SH: You would come back when you were finished.

MS: Right, exactly. Now, again, as I told you earlier, the officers I met, that wasn't their perspectives; things have changed dramatically. But, yes, most of the banks, and, again, I may be over generalizing, but the ones I dealt with were very much military oriented. That was their background. So, I guess, they felt very comfortable with the relationship. It was strange in retrospect, when you consider the economics of the issue, because there's money being spent.

SH: Right, a lot of money.

MS: Exactly.

SH: Where did you go from there?

MS: Oh, I was a wanderer. [laughter] I joined a number of companies in New York, the last of which was Martin Marietta, which is now Lockheed Martin; they brought me down here. I actually joined the company to come down here. So, because we knew Marty, we knew this area as a result. He would invite us down, and we would tour the area. Plus, Pat knew some friends that lived in Virginia, so we got to know this area pretty well, well enough to know that we liked it. So, given the opportunity, down we came.

SH: How long have you been here?

MS: Since '74.

SH: It was only a five year span?

MS: Exactly. I liked New York; Pat didn't really like New York that much.

SH: Did you live in New York City or commute?

MS: We lived right outside the city, in Teaneck. Literally, we could take a bus from our corner into the city.

SH: Did Mrs. Salapka work in New York City as well?

MS: She did. She was a computer programmer, and she worked there for two or three companies, but she never liked the city. She still doesn't. We go back once in a while, but, it's just the nice stuff ...

SH: For you, also, technology has tremendously changed.

MS: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. It's amazing.

SH: How have you stayed up with that? Have you gone back for more degrees?

MS: Well, I went for my master's degree in corporate finance with NYU [New York University], and, so, I got an MBA [Master of Business Administration] at NYU back in '74. I've kept up, in my profession, you've got to keep up with all the systems and everything. Plus, I'm a geek when it comes to computers and radios. I take apart stuff, put stuff together

SH: I was just going to ask if your background in radio had helped.

MS: Yes, it helped. It really did, it really did.

SH: The fact that you were going to be a physicist.

MS: Right, yes. You learn certain things. You may not know how to split an atom, but I know a few other things. [laughter] I know how to plug things in.

SH: Have you stayed with economics?

MS: I wouldn't say so. Right now, I work in government, as Marty does, but he's, obviously, a lawyer. I work in the finance side for the Treasury Department. I've been a branch manager for, like, seven branches in Treasury. I worked for the Farm Credit Administration for a while, as a supervisory agent there, and now I'm doing project management work.

SH: You came down here with Martin Marietta (now Lockheed Martin), and then went into government after that?

MS: Right. Somebody heard me speak down in Washington, and I didn't realize that guy was with government, and he said, "Would you ever be interested in a job?" I said, "I don't know, depends what you have to offer." It turned out it was a pretty good job, and I said, "Sure." I filled out all those forms, and, after a year, they said, "Fine, you're on board." So, that's how I got into government. I'm not sure that was the best move or not, but I guess it was a good move.

SH: Had you remained apolitical?

MS: Apolitical in what sense?

SH: Has your vision of politics changed? Now that you are working for a government that changes every four or eight years, has that impacted you?

MS: I don't know. I've been in government now almost twenty-five years. I've seen about three administrations, and I've been in and out of government. I went back out of government.

SH: You did?

MS: Yes, and then I went back in again. [laughter] So, I had my taste, and I went out, came back in. My reaction is that it's always much of the same, to a degree. There's some unique eccentricities each administration brings to the table. Basically, it's been, you know the bureaucracy is huge, even after it's been pared down, and it's really tough to change the bureaucracy. So, there's a lot of momentum. So, even if a new administration comes in, even, if it's got eight years, eight years isn't always enough time to change the momentum, right, the tidal wave. [laughter] So, I don't see big changes. I see the same things happening over and over again. You know like with Jimmy Carter's administration, we had zero-based budgeting, and then we decided to scrap that after he left, and we went to some other form now we're back to almost the same thing again. It's like repetition, one more time. Luckily, I'm in an agency that is not political. We don't have a political head; we're the only bureau in Treasury that doesn't have a political head. So, it helps us keep some focus. [laughter] Politics, really, I don't think has ever impinged us, in terms of my job, even when I was in Farm Credit. We were kind of a unique agency. We lent to agriculture, basically, and the politics really got pushed aside. They really tried to do what was right for the people, which was kind of impressive, considering what could go on.

SH: Were you ever out in the field? Basically, were you assigned a group of states where you would actually go, or were you insular and stayed here?

MS: I traveled the entire country. My job was headquartered here, and I was the administrator for credit reviews, investment, that type of thing, and I managed the oversight of the debt issue inside of New York for the agency, and so I did a lot of traveling. I've seen every state in the Union, several times. [laughter] I've lived in some states.

SH: Have you?

MS: Yes. I say that facetiously. I was there often enough to be a resident. Closed a few banks, that type of thing. That was a rough period, in time, for me, because that was at the height of the interest rate cycle in the '80s; things were not going well for farming. Banks were collapsing. I was sent to liquidate. In fact, the irony of life is, we just met with my friend out in Portland, Oregon, who I met as a result of having to liquidate a farm bank. He was a commercial banker at the time, and, so, we were working together to try to get this thing resolved. He's no longer a banker. He's a stock broker, but we kept in touch over the years. There's a linking to that.

SH: That says a lot for you, in your ability to form a friendship with someone who could have been a potential adversary. What are you most proud of?

MS: Wow what am I most proud of? Personally, well, bringing up my daughter; I would say would be my number one. My wife and I, I think we did a good job. Beyond that, I think that being in government, I've tried to imbue some of the things I learned in private, in terms of costs, integrity, the good integrity, not the bad integrity, to the jobs that I've done. I seem to have changed things culturally in my own little sphere so that things are now moving in that direction, at least for things that we have to do. I feel a sense of accomplishment that at least I've had an influence, however minor, to get things done. In my own personal situation, in terms of what I feel that I have accomplished, I did what I said I would like to do, which is, I got into business, I eventually became treasurer of a big company, Sallie Mae. I did things that I wanted to do. I took the risks. I went into government taking risks, and I feel like I've gotten a lot out of it. Oh, the one thing that I think I get a real kick out of, I don't know if this is a major accomplishment, but I took on the job of going overseas when the Soviet Zone started to collapse to help them change over to our form of banking and finance and stuff. So, I've worked with the Kazakhstanis, with the Moldovans, the Romanians, the Hungarians, all these other countries, and I've worked with their governments.

SH: When did you start?

MS: Back in the '90s, early '90s. I did that through the late '90s, and, so that was kind of a unique [experience]. I don't think I could have ever done that on my own. I got to work with the top government officials in every government. We tried to work out deals that would link us, with the West, and link them with the West, and us with them, and set up their central banks, train some of their people train their top bankers. It was kind of a neat situation.

SH: That is fascinating.

MS: That, to me, was a major accomplishment.

SH: It cannot be redone again, ever.

MS: Right, exactly. This was, like, so new. The Kazakhs they'd never even seen Westerners, and when I got there, they were still Russians. There were still German expatriates from World War II that had been moved to Kazakhstan by the Russians when they were captured. So, there were scientists, and everything. When I was touring parts of the country, there was this huge line of very old people, very old people, like, in their seventies to eighties. The line extended for miles, right, and they had little Valise cases, and I said, "Who are those people?" They said, "Those are the Germans." I said, "What do you mean, the Germans?" "The Germans that the Russians sent here during World War II." Germany had repatriated them, if they wanted, back to Germany. Here they were in their eighties, getting ready to leave the country, Kazakhstan, that they'd been there for, like, forty years, or fifty years, whatever it was, and it was quite impressive. I met a Russian general on the street. Oh, I take it back this gives me chills even today. They have a war memorial in Almati, Kazakhstan, which was their capital. It's beautiful, it's like Washington in many ways, and in their Central Park, in this beautiful Central Park, they have this war memorial that is the most impressive thing I've ever seen. [It's a] big, black, granite memorial, that's like one-hundred feet high, and, maybe, two-hundred feet long, with an eternal flame below it, and the faces of all the different Caucasians and Asians and everybody that was fighting in World War II. While I was there, it just happened that there was a Russian general. They don't call it World War II, they call it the War of Independence, the War of Liberation.

SH: In Kazakhstan?

MS: Right. And the Russians call it that, too; they don't call it World War II. They were having this ceremony, and here's this Russian general, with this huge wreath, and there's troops behind him. He's leading this procession to this memorial, and I'm standing there, kind of struck by this scene. I'm taking pictures, of course, and he lays the wreath down, says a few words in Russian, because they all speak Russian there, and the troops salute. Then they put the guns up, they fire the guns, right. Then, after the ceremony, the Russian comes walking up to me, he sees me on the side, and he had a scar here. I would say he was in his sixties, maybe ...

SH: The scar went from his temple across his face?

MS: Right. So, I'm not sure, he may have been in the Vietnam War, or something, I'm not sure, right. He walked up to me, and, in perfect English, said, "Get your ... out of here," and I'll leave you to fill in the blank.

SH: Why?

MS: This was after the wall fell, this is after we've had rapprochement with them. The Russian military really didn't like us. At least, that was my impression. [laughter]

SH: Even though we are talking, and everyone else is saying, It is Okay, he is telling you it is not?

MS: He was real clear to me, where he thought I should go. [laughter] Let me tell you, he scared the bejesus out of me. He looked tough.

SH: You were going to all these places, and you talked about your family being under surveillance. How closely were you watched when you were working with these projects?

MS: Oh, that was open. It was open surveillance. They assigned you an agent. When I was in Kazakhstan, we had an agent with us, and they followed you everywhere. You didn't go on a walk alone, even though you thought you were walking alone; you never were alone, right. I made the mistake of walking around. They were having some food trucks, feeding people potatoes and milk, and they kept off [on] the side streets so you couldn't see them. I made a turn, and I saw them, and I was quickly, quickly removed from the area. So, two guys came out of nowhere, right, and next thing you know, I'm being carted away, right. [laughter] I was told, openly, that you're not supposed to do that, you're not supposed to see that, that's not to be reported, right. In Romania, I had an open SDK, it's like KGB, follow me. This was after they'd said they were no longer Soviet. It was funny, because I had been there twice, two different occasions, and the second occasion I got there kind of late I was tired, fell into my bed, I ordered some soup, fell into my bed, that was it. An agent came in while I was sleeping, and I woke up, and he says, "Don't worry, State." They went through my belongings while I was laying in bed, right. [laughter] They thought this was normal.

Then, another funny instance was, I was going to a park on a Sunday, I wanted to take a walk. So, I asked the woman at the desk where I was staying, I said, "Well, how long is it to this park?" It's a beautiful park. They have carnivals and everything there, but it was quite a distance from where I was. I didn't know that, and she didn't understand English, so, she told me, "Just a small piece." Well, I started out on what turned out to be, like, a hike. I'm walking along, walking along, and I noticed there was a guy walking behind me, way, way back, and so I'm just walking, walking; I figured it's just somebody. He kept walking, and, finally, I hear him whistle, and a car comes flying up, right, and he jumps in the car. [The] car pulls up alongside me, and [they] said, "Where are you going?" I said, "To the park." He said, "Well, let's just drive there, it's killing his feet." [laughter] It was that way in almost all these East Zone countries. Some of them were more open than others. I was there right on the cusp of the turnover, so their mentality was still ...

SH: Were you traveling alone?

MS: Most times I traveled alone. There were two or three occasions I had I was traveling with other people, as a combination of presentations, or teaching, or whatever.

SH: What kind of equipment were you allowed to bring in?

MS: I brought in laptop computers. I brought in a ham radio. You know, I got permission from the Kazakh government to bring in my ham radio. Of course, it was useless, because they only

spoke Russian, and I spoke very little Russian "Hello, hello," "*da*, click," that was it. That was surprising to me; they didn't have any compunction about bringing in technical equipment, and all.

SH: How antiquated were their banking systems?

MS: Well, at the time I was there, the Kazakhs were just starting to turn to the West. You know, I don't know where it is now, but, at that time, their banking and our banking were like day and night. There was no profit motive. They didn't know what profit was; you want money, you ask the government. They give you money, right. Isn't that the way it works? It works like that here, now. [laughter] Anyway, they didn't understand that you had to make a profit; that was the biggest issue for them. They couldn't quite grasp it. We spent a lot of time teaching that concept. The infrastructure was different, too, because I guess we do this in certain cases, but, they lend to friends, right. You knew somebody, you didn't have financial statements, so, how would you lend to somebody, unless and the concept of lending was something else, too. What does that mean? It could mean anything. It could mean, "I'll give you my camel." I don't know; it could be anything, right. So we had a hard time, really, showing them. You know, we had a two-week course in this particular case, and, it was very difficult to convey the sense of what Western banking was like. Their banking was totally alien to us, in terms of, "Okay, I know Joe, and I trust him, because I know where he lives. So, he gets some money to help him out, but I'll get it from the government." "What about repayment?" "What do you mean, repayment?" "Well, that's got to get repaid." "Yes, well, the government can get that." It was disconnected.

SH: It is almost as if they were the mediators.

MS: Yes, right. It wasn't really banking, it was more conduit to "how do I get to what I want to get to." So, it was strange, and, for them, I can understand it was very difficult to understand our concepts of we have to make a profit on something. "Why? What's the point? You want money, go to the government." [laughter]

SH: What a wonderful story. Do you have any others?

MS: I got a few. I guess, Moldova was interesting too, because they still are, I guess, in the midst of a civil war, two sides. To tell you how difficult that was, the Russians were in the middle of that. They were the peace negotiators, right, does that tell you something? [laughter] They were the peace negotiators; you can imagine what it was like on both sides. So, when we were there, these countries are all trying hard, and they really are doing their best. They were starting at ground zero, and it's kind of unnerving, when you get there, to see; it's like walking back into time.

SH: Where did you go? Where were you located at that point? Where was their headquarters?

MS: You mean in Moldova? Well, as a country, it's a little country on the edge of Romania and the Ukraine. It's housed right in between that.

SH: They were almost in a civil war, so where were you?

MS: I was in the middle of the good part, what they said was the good part. Who knows? There was a river, Dniester I think it was called, that separated the two sides. The Russians kind of maintained the barriers for both sides. Both sides wanted to kill each other, basically, but ...

SH: They provided the no-fire zone?

MS: Right, exactly.

SH: The DMZ?

MS: Right, and the others on the Dneister side were actually the worst off, because they didn't have any resources. You know, they were the rebels. Of course, they got nothing, because they were on the wrong side of the river. [laughter] The other side of the river had everything. [laughter] So, it was like, how do you negotiate that one. It was a tough situation; the country was run differently, but we helped. I was there, I guess, for USAID at that point, helping them try to get systems, and computers, and other things integrated into their management. They really had nothing, really, nothing; but what they did with nothing is amazing. They showed us stuff that would blow your mind. You'd see this tiny, little, like, Atari computer, running the entire government, payroll system and tax collection system. They had geniuses, basically, working there that could figure out how to get the most out of [it]. If they had to compete with us, with our equipment, we'd be in trouble. We'd be in big trouble. [laughter] They're highly educated. That was the other thing I found in almost all these countries. The Soviets always put a premium on education. Now, it may have not been the education we have ...

SH: Did they want it?

MS: They made sure that you understood math, sciences, the key things that you had to get to, to succeed in that society. Granted, they steered you, but, nonetheless, we met so many PhDs, and, people doing routine work. You ask them, they're not stupid. They could tell you how to build an aircraft. Just, unfortunately, it didn't mesh with their economies. Their economies were agrarian, a lot of them, and here they were, being taught how to run magnificent industrial centers and things like that. That's great, except, look out the window, it's different. Yes, it was an experience. It opened my eyes. I'll never forget the day I flew into Kazakhstan. I'd never been overseas. Except to Canada, I had never been overseas, right.

SH: Really?

MS: So, I didn't know what to expect. Our government told us, "Expect the worst." [laughter] "You might not get food. Definitely don't drink the water. Watch out for mosquitoes. [laughter] Oh, yes, there's typhoid and other epidemics that go on from time to time. Oh, don't, whatever you do, don't ever mingle with the local populous."

SH: Were you sent alone?

MS: No, I was in a group of three. There were three of us that went in there, right. This is what we were told.

SS: Why were you not to mingle with the local populace?

MS: I'm not one-hundred percent sure what was behind that, except that I thought that because they were ex-Soviets, but newly ex-Soviets. Our government, I don't think, was very comfortable at that point with the interface. They thought, maybe, it was a safety issue from their perspective, that maybe they were more antagonistic to us than we would be to them. In other words, you could get hurt, bad things could happen, and you could understand it, because there was lawlessness in certain areas and you couldn't quite predict where that would happen.

SH: Kidnapping and ransom?

MS: Right. We took some chances. I got to the point where I just said, "The hell with you." I went out into the countryside, did whatever I had to do. The best thing though, my best recollection, [is when] one of the Ayatollahs was visiting. They were trying to link Kazakhstan to the Federation with Iran, and others, and so they had this huge, big sign, "Welcome Ayatollah," whatever. It was the official delegation from Iran, and we knew when they were coming, right.

SH: We have no relations with Iran.

MS: Right. So, I'm standing on a corner with my American flag held down like this, and as the Ayatollahs came by, I waved my American flag at them. [laughter] I'm sure they almost died.

SH: Nobody escorted you off the street?

MS: No, no. The crowd was in a good mood. The only thing [is] that the Russians were very uneasy over there. This was in a point where, at least in Kazakhstan they were moving out; they were officially being withdrawn. So, there was some unease about what their relationship was going to be, and how this was going to work out, and all kinds of little odds and ends that hadn't been ironed out. That's typical in these kinds of things. You're on your own and, so, the Russians were not exceptionally friendly. I tried to talk to one of the Russian guards, and they made every effort to try to keep away from me, because they were being watched. So, there were watchers watching watchers, watching watchers, it was one of those things. Of course, as I said, the Muslims were coming in. This was a Muslim country, and, so like I said, this Federation was trying to form, which, luckily, it didn't. They were offering all kinds of goodies to the Kazakhs at that point. So, it was interesting, it was very interesting.

SH: Did they know what their natural resources were at that time?

MS: Oh, yes.

SH: They were very aware of it.

MS: Oh, yes. Well, they had oil, big time. They had critical military minerals that are used for aircraft and other things, titanium, beryllium, other things. They also had a whole host of nuclear weapons, and that was another issue that we didn't deal with. They still owned the weapons, and the Russians, of course, were on sight. You know, that was their job, to maintain the weapons. They wouldn't tell us where they were, but they told us what was really unnerving, while we were there. They said they were still pointed at the US, and we were there in the '90s. They said they're still zeroed in at Washington, and New York, and Dallas, and California, and they were pretty clear about that. So, we were working behind the scenes, not we, but our government. I was just working to try to get that resolved. I think they did, hopefully. [laughter]

SH: If the numbers are right.

MS: Yes, right. Yes, right.

SH: I thank you so much.

MS: My pleasure. You got me going. [laughter]

SH: I thank you very much, and I hope that you add anything that comes to mind. Thank you so much.

MS: Right, well, thanks.

SS: Thank you very much.

SH: I just want to ask one more question. Had your daughter thought of going to Rutgers?

MS: Yes. As I say, I was taking her to Rutgers, just to get her used to it, when she was about seven years old, and we happened to be there during test time late in the year. [I saw] a professor I knew. I think it was English, and I asked him if he'd mind having her sit in and have a bluebook, right, and so she took her seat. Of course, all the other students were like, "What the hell is going on here?" Of course, she was scribbling in her bluebook little odds and ends, and everything else, right. At the end, she asked the professor some questions, and everything, so she got a feel of really what is involved in some of the things that go on, on campus. I tried to get her really involved in that. When it came time for her to consider colleges, she did look at Rutgers. I did call people at Rutgers to try to make the connections, including your father [Martin Sachs], and it turned out she really wanted a different type of school. She was into film, and creative stuff, and everything else, and she didn't think Rutgers [was right]. It was too big, that was one of the things. She wanted a smaller campus, more hands on stuff, and all. She went to Towson, University of Maryland in Towson, which turned out to be pretty good for her. She just didn't feel that she would fit in a school that big. She at least had a shot at looking at it.

SH: Did you stay involved with Rutgers?

MS: Only peripherally. You know, I've answered some surveys. I guess, I could say I really haven't done it like some people probably have, like Marty has. Yes, I keep in touch. I just try to see what's going on.

SH: Good. Again, my thanks.

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