RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEAN O'GRADY SHEEHAN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Jean O'Grady Sheehan on September 21, 2006, in Easton, Connecticut, with Sandra Stewart Holyoak. I would like to thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. For the record, can you tell me where and when you were born?

Jean O'Grady Sheehan: Well, thank you, Sandra. I was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on September 15, 1922, at the old St. Peter's Hospital.

SSH: For the tape, can you please say your father's name and tell me a bit about him?

JOS: My father was J. Vincent O'Grady. He was born in Wharton, New Jersey, up near Dover. His father was an iron miner up there, but he came to New Brunswick as, I think, an eighth or ninth grader, because his uncle was Monsignor John A. O'Grady, who was the pastor of St. Peter's Church in New Brunswick, and my father was hard to deal with. … His parents sent him to live with the Monsignor, to straighten him out, and he lived in the rectory during his high school years, went to St. Peter's High School and did all kinds of things, like throwing bags of water from the second floor of the rectory when parishioners were coming to Mass on Sunday morning. Once, there was a new Polish priest assigned to the parish and my father taught him how to say, "Good morning, Monsignor," so [that] he [the Polish priest] would know what to say, how to greet … his new boss, and [what] my father taught him to say was, "Go to hell, Monsignor." He was a problem. So, he met my mother in New Brunswick. She was one of eight children, five girls, of the Paulus family. … My grandfather, Charlie Paulus, had a butcher shop down on Hiram Street for years and years, and my grandmother, my mother's mother, was born in Strasbourg, France. … She was a lady's maid, an upstairs maid, at the Van Renselear, I think it is, family's home on Livingston Avenue in New Brunswick, right near where the State Theater is now, in that area. It was a beautiful, big home and my grandfather was a butcher and delivered meat to the family, … with his horse and buggy, and that's where he met my grandmother. So, they went on to have eight children. They had five girls and … three boys and my mother was the fourth girl, Mary, and she grew up in New Brunswick on George Street, … first on Burnett Street, and then, at 140 George, and went to schools in New Brunswick, including New Brunswick High School. … She graduated from New Brunswick High School in 1915 and my father graduated, finally, from St. Peter's about the same year, I think, I can't remember exactly, and they were introduced by a friend … of my mother's. So, that's how they met and they were married in 1921. I was born in 1922, and then, they went on to have two other children. My sister, Joan, is ten years younger than I and my brother's five years younger than me.

SSH: Which part of New Brunswick did you grow up in?

JOS: I grew up on Redmond Street, right near NJC, in the block between Commercial and Jones Avenue. So, the campus was right up the street. When I applied to NJC, one of the questions they asked on the admissions form was, "How long will it take you to get to the campus?" and I put, like, "Three minutes," [laughter] but we used to walk around the campus. As a little girl, I went with my father around the campus on Sunday morning walks, … and then, out to the Ag Farm, at the Ag School at Rutgers, around the College Farm Pond. It was a lovely place to live and we watched them build Jameson Dormitory there, which was right up the street, on Jones

Avenue. So, my connection with the college was, as a child, actually with the campus itself. … I went to New Brunswick High School and I graduated in 1939 and there was absolutely no choice of colleges. There's no money to send me any place and my mother suggested I go to the business school [Rider College, now University] that was down there near [Trenton] State College, [now The College of New Jersey], because she had been a secretary, and I really didn't want to do that, so, what I did was apply for a State Scholarship. The tuition was 199 dollars a semester at NJC then and my parents could not afford that. They could barely afford … for me to live at home, which I did, and not be bringing in any money. … So, I did, I got one of those State Scholarships from the State of New Jersey for the four years and I loved going there.

SSH: What did your father do for a living during the Depression?

JOS: My father worked his whole career, forty-five years, with Standard Oil in Newark, New Jersey, in the credit department, and he never lost his job during the Depression, but, … what happened was, his pay was reduced periodically, five percent, until his pay ended up being a total of twenty percent less in those years than it was [before]. … They had a house with a mortgage on it, a big mortgage, a privately-held, in those days, mortgage, on Redmond Street. … The mortgage payments, they had to make [them] to Mrs. (Forbes?), I think her name was. They had to pay the interest twice a year. I can remember that being a big crisis, every six months. So, my mother decided that she had to do something to help. So, what she did was, first of all, she took in [boarders], and that's [in] a little house in New Brunswick, three bedrooms, one bathroom upstairs, very nice house, on Redmond Street, near Commercial Avenue, but small, and there were three of us, three children. … She rented out a room … upstairs. We had one bathroom and she rented to a few people from NJC. She rented to a woman who was a professor. … My mother didn't like that, because she hung her clothes all over the bathroom, but, then, she rented to Roger Sweet. Roger Sweet was a long-term chemistry professor at NJC and, at that time, he was single, when she rented the room to him. She adored him and he adored her. … He had his main meal in the evening with us.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes, because that was another source of income. So, it was very interesting. He was a lovely, lovely man and she did that, and then, she took in people from the Ag School, which was quite near [to] us, students, and gave them their evening meal.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes, and you can imagine. I mean, … we were at the table, this big, brown dining room table, and these people, these men, came in, they were all men at the time, smelling of the cow barns and, you know, I'd be holding my nose at the beginning and my mother would say …

SSH: Stop?

JOS: Because they smelled of the cow barns, but that's what she did. …

SSH: Do you remember any of their names?

JOS: No. I don't remember. They had dinner with us; that's all I remember. Where they lived, I don't know. The only person who lived with us was Roger Sweet and we had to call him, "Dr. Sweet," and he was a lovely person, absolutely lovely person, and then, in 1939, when I finished high school and went to NJC, there was no choice about where I went, and then, when I graduated from NJC, in '39 [1943], … I majored in economics and I loved it. I loved the subject. I had no idea that's what I was going to do.

SSH: Were all of your courses at NJC?

JOS: They were all at NJC, although some of my classmates went to Rutgers for journalism. The journalism [course] was there, but, other than that, [no], and … we did not have students from Rutgers in our classes at that point. Now, I guess, they go back and forth.

SSH: As a young girl, growing up in New Brunswick, what did you do in the summers? Did you have any jobs?

JOS: As soon as I could work. I loved camp. I loved going to camp and I went to camp, the Girl Scout camp in Blairstown, until I was over-age, I guess, and then, I got a job as a volunteer camp counselor in a New York City camp for underprivileged children from the [Lower] East Side. It was called Camp Moodna and it was strictly volunteer, but I really wanted to get out of New Brunswick in the summer. In the first place, it was very hot and, in the second place, there were the mother-daughter issues and the Irish father issues of control. … I thought, "Oh, it'd be so nice to go away," and my girlfriends would say, "Oh, come and work in the playgrounds in New Brunswick," because that's what my good friends did, but I chose to go to camp. … That first summer, it was volunteer, but they did give me twenty-five dollars at the end of the summer. I loved it.

SSH: Did you also counsel the Girl Scout troops as well or was this in addition to that?

JOS: No, this was later. … I had one year at the Girl Scout camp, as a junior counselor, I think it was. I didn't have to pay, in other words, and then, I went on to this camp, this volunteer camp, and … it was from River-something Street in Lower Manhattan. It was a slum area that was largely Jewish at the time. … My mother was very [tolerant]. She accepted what I wanted to do much more than this Irish father, but she would let me go in, when I was in high school, on the train, … it was Rivington Street, on the Lower East Side, to work Saturdays in the [Grand Street] Settlement House. … So, the first year I worked, … [that] I could go as a camp counselor, I went to that camp and it was near Newburg, New York, and I was the only counselor who was not Jewish in this camp and one of the women, [who] was the music counselor, was Florence Cahn. Well, her brother was Sammy Cahn, who wrote a lot of hits at the time, and she was a wonderful music counselor. I kept in touch with Florence for a long time. Sammy Cahn had a one-man show on Broadway, maybe twenty years ago, and I went in and I happened to meet Florence backstage afterwards. She was living on Long Island at the time, but I did that, and then, I went to work for the Girls Vacation Fund camp for, I guess, four years. All I can remember is that I could hardly wait to get to camp when I finished that semester of college and I got paid a little more then. It was about 125 dollars for the summer and

they were up near Newburg, New York. It was a wonderful experience. I loved going there and [I went] even after I graduated from NJC and I had been accepted into the WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service] and the Navy didn't know when they wanted me. So, I went to camp that summer, after graduation, and my father said he'd call when I got orders.

SSH: This would be in 1943.

JOS: This would be in '43, and, in July, … I probably was at camp about a month that year and he called me and I came home, and then, I reported to … Midshipman's School at Mount Holyoke. [laughter]

SSH: You graduated from New Brunswick High School in 1939. As a young woman at that time, how much were you aware of what was going on in Europe?

JOS: Quite a lot. I happened to be interested in history and in politics, as opposed to any arts or sciences. So, I did know quite a lot and, of course, the headlines were glaring. In 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, on September 1st, and we started college on, I think the first day was the 15th of September. So, we were very aware. … I mean, I was very aware of what was going on during the war, but, then, you get kind of involved in your own routines.

SSH: When the draft began in 1940, do you recall some of your former classmates being drafted?

JOS: Oh, yes. I could remember, the first draft number was 158 and Ernie somebody, in New Brunswick, was my girlfriend's boyfriend and he got the first number, 158. Oh, she was absolutely devastated. He was the first one from New Brunswick to be drafted. … Yes, that was a concern for everybody, yes.

SSH: Through working in the Grand Street Settlement House and the camps, did you have any inkling about the labor camps or the situation for Jews in Europe?

JOS: Absolutely not.

SSH: I thought that it may have come up, since the community was largely Jewish.

JOS: No. I was completely unaware of any of that at all. The camp I worked in was largely Jewish. The kids came from, as I said, the Lower East Side. Counselors were mainly Jewish and … one of my jobs was, as a Catholic, … to take the Catholic children who were in the camp, as campers, to Mass on Sunday. So, they got to ride in the camp station wagon, a wooden station wagon. … They had a driver, the handyman drove it, and they stayed at the camp for a couple of weeks. So, there would be six or eight of us going to church the first week. When the other kids saw that these people were riding in the station wagon, they all of a sudden became Catholic and, the next week, they all lined up for the ride to Newburg, to go to Mass. [laughter]

SSH: What kind of activities would you do with the kids coming out of the Lower East Side?

JOS: First of all, you're talking table manners. Some of these children had never really sat down to a proper meal. … You sat at picnic benches, and they really fed them both extremely well and starchy, and wonderful milk. … Being there all summer, it was difficult. My mother kept watching me, when I came home … occasionally, but they fed them a lot of starches, but you sat at a picnic table and this little girl at one end wanted some more of something that was at the other end. It was served family-style. She just got up on the table and started to crawl down the table to get it. So, you had an impact on these children. They were wonderful children and so many of the things that we took for granted in our very [simple life]; we didn't have a very fancy way of life, but they had nothing. They were used to sandwiches being thrown from the fire escapes and that, for their lunches. They had very little. So, for a long time, I wanted to be Jane Addams and a social worker. That's what I really went to school for. I was going to be a social worker, and I did. I majored in economics, but it was with a sociology minor and that's what I really wanted to do.

SSH: What did you do when you went into the tenements? You said that you worked there on Saturdays as a young high school girl.

JOS: … We worked [in] helping these children read, we worked at handcrafts, we sang. We took them outside and played games, that kind of thing.

SSH: Who funded that? Do you know?

JOS: I don't know. I do not know who funded [it]. I'm sure there were a lot of volunteer agencies in New York at the time. In fact, the second camp I went to was … funded by the Girls Vacation Fund in New York City, and that was on the West Side. … I still get literature, every year, from them.

SSH: It still exists.

JOS: It still exists, and they're still sending girls to camp in that area of the Palisades Interstate Parkway area, in that area of New Jersey. They still have camps up there and they're still doing that.

SSH: What were your duties at the Newburg camp, other than teaching table manners?

JOS: Oh, well, I was a nature counselor. I was always very interested in nature. … You'd take these city children out and you'd identify a grasshopper or you'd pick up a garden snake; it was big time to them. They had never seen any of these things that we take for granted. So, there was that kind of activity, with the nature walks and the nature studies and the nature crafts, and then, there were the games and the campfires and the songs and the eating and the manners. They were wonderful children. It was a lovely job. [laughter] I enjoyed it. …

SSH: In New Brunswick, you were involved in the Girl Scouts.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Were there other activities? Were you involved in your church or the community?

JOS: Yes. I was always involved in church, church activities. We lived right near Sacred Heart Church and my father was very active in the parish. My father used to run the bingo games. In those days, in the '30s, bingo was new and the Catholics latched on to it like it was a God-given gift. … My father had this booming, lovely voice and he would call the numbers at Sacred Heart School and we lived fairly near the church. I could hear his voice, sometimes, if the wind was blowing in the right direction. Bingo was big and Sacred Heart Parish paid for their new school with the bingo, yes. … One night, I can remember, my bedroom was in back of the house and there was a miniature golf [course], miniature golf was big in those days, a miniature golf course right in the back, and then … the playground for the Catholic school. … One night, I woke up, because my room was lit by something. … This was in the '30s, early '30s. It turned out that the Ku Klux Klan had hung wooden crosses on the fence of the Catholic school, the new fence, all around it, and set them on fire. There was a lot of Ku Klux Klan [activity]. There were a lot of Ku Klux Klan members in New Jersey at the time. … One of the things they did was burn crosses wherever they were, and it was frightening, because my whole bedroom was lit up. There was just this miniature golf course here, and then, the playground for the school. …

SSH: How did your parents explain that to you and the other children?

JOS: Oh, well, my father was really … very political and very much an activist and very much aware of what was going on and very Catholic. So, of course, he didn't approve of that at all. That was a horrible thing to have right in your backyard and it didn't go on for very long, obviously, after that one time. Then, we just had the miniature golf course there, but that was an era when there was prejudice.

SSH: Do you know of other incidents where the KKK burned crosses in New Brunswick, either in the Jewish or black sections?

JOS: I don't know, no. I was about ten years old when that happened and I'm really not aware of how extensive that was.

SSH: Did you go to Catholic school?

JOS: No. … I went to Catholic school for a month. My mother and father had this debate. I was the first child and there was nothing but [that] I should go to Catholic school, as far as my father was concerned. J. V. O'Grady was going to have his child educated in a Catholic school. My mother, … as I said, her mother was French, they took a skeptical view of the clergy. [Among] the Irish, anything the clergy said was right, not with my mother. So, she said, "No, I think Jean should go to public school," which was Lord Sterling School, in New Brunswick. My father was very insistent. So, my mother agreed that I should start first grade, there was no kindergarten in those days, first grade, at Sacred Heart School. Well, I think I lasted there a week and I came home and told my mother how many people there were in the first grade, how many children, and there were sixty, and one nun, one dear nun, Sister Gemma, a young nun with these sixty children. Well, the next week, I was in Lord Sterling School and, from then on, none of us went to Catholic school. My father kept pushing when it came time for high school.

He graduated from St. Peter's High School, not New Brunswick High School, but my mother was very much a public school person. She was president of the PTA and she was involved and she believed in public education. So, we all went to public schools, and my father did not want me to go to NJC at all. He said it was a Communist college. [laughter] … He didn't like Roosevelt. … When he found out you had to go to chapel, compulsory chapel, twice a week; in those days, it was Tuesday and Friday, and Friday was always a minister from New York. We had some excellent speakers.

SSH: Do you remember any of them?

JOS: Names, no, but I know … some of the churches; the Presbyterian church is right on Fifth Avenue. … We had wonderful preachers in chapel in those days and we had rabbis, but I never remember, while I was there, a priest. I don't think, in those days, a priest was allowed to preach in … an unconsecrated building, but, no, there were always wonderful speakers and the chapel was compulsory.

SSH: Before we started the tape, you mentioned a grandfather who was Dutch Reformed.

JOS: Yes. … My Grandfather Paulus, who was a butcher, belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church up on Livingston Avenue and they had eight children, of which my mother was one. … All eight children were brought up as Catholics and my grandfather continued to go to the Reformed Church, and then, there were many grandchildren from these children. … Every night, all of us grandchildren, I'm sure, we got down on our knees, and they were all like me, "Please make Grandfather Paulus a Catholic." [laughter] That was the big thing, all through my childhood. My Grandfather Paulus was not about to become a Catholic. … He belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church and that's who he was and that's what he remained. … I think I told you, when we were talking before, that, … at his funeral, by then, I had a cousin who was a priest, a diocesan priest, in New Jersey, and he was there. … The minister who came, my grandfather's minister, deferred to my cousin and my cousin said, "No, my grandfather would not have wanted me to talk at his funeral service." He liked his church and he brought up his eight children in the Catholic Church, as he promised to do, and he fed all the people in the Catholic orphanage in New Brunswick, donated meat to the Catholic orphanage, but there was no way he was going to have anything to do with the Catholic Church, more directly. [laughter]

SSH: He was very Dutch Reformed.

JOS: Yes, he was Dutch Reformed. [laughter]

SSH: That is a great story. Your father was sent from the Dover-Wharton area to New Brunswick to be raised by the Monsignor.

JOS: The high school years, yes.

SSH: Did his family remain in the Dover area?

JOS: Oh, yes, they did.

SSH: Did you travel there as a young girl?

JOS: No. I never remember seeing that [area], because my father and mother met in New Brunswick and he stayed in New Brunswick. He went to Fordham for; I think, his first semester at Fordham, he ran away to join the Army. That must have been around 1917, I'm not sure of the dates, in that area, and his mother found him and brought him back.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes, sent him right back to Fordham, but, when he left the second time, she decided to let him be. So, I think he had a year at Fordham, that's all, and then, he wanted to join the military, which he did, and he went to Europe with the Army Expeditionary Force. He was a PFC [private, first class], I think, at that point. I'm not sure exactly when he went [overseas], but we found his journal. I think it was 1917. It was near the end of the war. We found his journal a while ago and, last Christmas, I had transcriptions made of it for all of my children and all my sister's children and it was a handwritten diary. Because he went to Catholic school, his handwriting was beautiful and it was his experiences in France, in going to France in 1917, and some of the places [he went]. … He was basically in France, but he was on the French-Belgian border and, a couple of years ago, I was in Flanders, which is on that border, and I was in Flanders Field. He used to recite poetry. He was an orator and he used to recite "Flanders Field," "Where poppies grow." He used to sing all the old Army songs. So, he was there probably less than a year, overseas, and then, came home, and then, he got a job with a new company, a pretty new company, a company in that area, Standard Oil, and he stayed with Standard Oil his entire forty-five-year working career.

SSH: Did he take the train from New Brunswick?

JOS: He took the train from New Brunswick, first, to Newark and, then, to Elizabeth, when they moved their offices. … He was in the credit department there and that's what he did. Every year, for forty-three years, he took the train from New Brunswick. [laughter] We didn't have a car. We never had a car when I was growing up. My mother and father couldn't afford a car. So, … that's what he did, and then, during the Depression, I don't know … exactly how this happened, but we would be getting ready for dinner at night, about six o'clock. My mother would be having dinner ready and she always had a wonderful, hot dinner. … My father would be coming home from the station and there'd often be a knock on the back door and it would be someone asking for a meal, and it happened pretty regularly. I think there must have been a network of people who were hobos on the train, traveling in that area, in that time, and word got out that 56 Redmond Street was a place to get a meal. … My mother always got up and she always had a lovely meal and she got up from the table and she would bring it out to the back stoop, if the weather was nice, and, if it was not nice, she would bring it into the basement, bring that [to] whoever it was that needed a meal, and that was a good lesson for us. I mean, what they had, they shared, and she worked hard for what they had. My father worked hard.

SSH: That is a great story. Did you do any traveling as a family, such as family vacations?

JOS: We never had a car, but we went to Silverton, New Jersey. I had an aunt who had a bungalow down there on Barnegat Bay, near Barnegat Bay, in the woods. Well, that was a highlight. That's where we went for vacations. We had Aunt (Lou's?) cottage for a week or two weeks, down in New Jersey, and that was the extent. I never traveled any place. I think I went to Philadelphia one day. I did go to New York a lot. My mother loved New York. … She bought all of our winter coats and spring coats and things like, major things, major purchases, in [B.] Altman's [and] in, I forget what other stores in New York, Franklin Simon, Lord & Taylor. So, we did go to New York City often, with my mother, but it was always to buy clothes, and then, the big thing at Christmastime was, my father would save quarters in a big glass jar he had. … At Christmastime, we'd go in and he'd take us to a restaurant to eat. He'd stand outside Altman's while we went shopping, but he would have all these quarters and all this money that he had saved all year to take us to dinner at a restaurant, which is something we rarely did. [laughter]

SSH: Was the city as decorated as it is now?

JOS: Oh, yes. Oh, it was beautiful. It was always beautiful. Yes, it was lovely. It still is. I still go to New York at Christmastime. I love going to New York at Christmastime.

SSH: Did you ice-skate in the winter as a young girl?

JOS: We ice-skated a lot. … We walked out, a couple of miles, to Westons Mills in New Brunswick. It was out beyond Route 1, where Route 1 is now. It was probably a mile-and-a-half or two miles, but, of course, you had to carry your skates and, when you got out there, you put them on, on the bank of the river, and your hands froze while you were doing it, but our feet were wrapped in boots with newspaper, and then, … as we walked out, [we were] in great, big galoshes kind of things, and then, we would change into our skates out there. We did a lot of ice-skating. We did a lot of bicycling, yes.

SSH: Were there other activities that you remember that were unique to that area and era?

JOS: No. It was just the ice-[skating], but there was the walking every place, for one thing, and what we did [was], we played a lot of tennis, up at Buccleuch Park. That was one of the things we did a lot of. So, we played tennis in the summer and we ice-skated in the winter, and then, when I was in the ninth grade, my mother finally allowed me to get a bike. She was afraid of the city traffic and I had wanted a bicycle for so many years and I got a two-wheeler, *two-wheeler*, bicycle and, again, I was off. I was able to go [places]. I had friends who had two-wheel bicycles and we would ride to Jamesburg and Milltown and places like that. We thought we were in Arabia; we were out of New Brunswick. It was exciting, but, no, as a family, we never traveled, just to the Jersey Shore, once a year.

SSH: When you were growing up, did your grandfather still have the butcher shop?

JOS: Yes. He retired from the butcher shop, he sold it, and he lived near us. He first lived on George Street, right across from where Dean Corwin used to live at the college, in this big, old house, and they lived there on George Street. Then, they built a house on Townsend Street, all

right within our area, and I had cousins who lived in that area in New Brunswick. So, I grew up with a lot of boy cousins. They were all boys. I was the first girl in the larger family and it was lovely growing up.

SSH: Did you often spend time at your grandparents' home?

JOS: Oh, yes, often, and my grandmother never learned to read English or write English. She could speak English, but, when I started taking French in high school, I'd come over and sit at her dining table, speak French to her. She hadn't a clue of what I was saying. She did not have a clue and she'd sit there and she had a little earring … in her ear and she'd sit there and she'd twirl it and she would look through *Life* Magazine. *Life* Magazine came out around the early '30s, someplace, and that was wonderful, because she didn't have to read, there were pictures there, but she would send us pies and cakes. … She used to make something called mutton broth, with lamb bones, and it was [in] a little, gray galvanized pail, and I would carry that home, through the backyards, for us to share. Yes, it was interesting, having a grandmother and grandfather there, and my sister was ten years younger than I. … My mother, at the time my sister was growing up, worked. She went to work at Rutgers and my grandfather would take her [her sister] to school. He'd cross her at George Street where she needed to be crossed, before there were traffic cops and whatnot. So, they developed a very close relationship. She loved Grandpa Paulus. [laughter] …

SSH: You really never had much interaction with your father's family then.

JOS: We didn't have nearly as much. … I remember my Grandmother O'Grady and she died when I was quite young, I don't remember how young, and I had an aunt in New Brunswick, Callista O'Grady, who married a Brennan, and she was the organist, for years and years, at St. Peter's Church and she was my godmother. So, I would see her often. … Then, I had an Uncle Clem who lived in, eventually, Bound Brook, my father's brother, who we would see occasionally, but I was much closer to my mother's family, because they were closer geographically. …

SSH: Without a car …

JOS: And without a car, right, yes. …

SSH: Were there holiday festivities that you remember being uniquely yours, especially with your grandmother's French background?

JOS: No. I don't remember any holiday activities [that were] especially French or with my grandmother and grandfather. I know that we believed in Santa Claus until we were embarrassingly old. [laughter] … My mother used to close off the French doors in the living room into the dining room and hall and put newspapers over the glass, because … she had to keep it cold. She had to turn off the heat because of Santa Claus. He wasn't used to the warm house, and that would give them time to put up a Christmas tree in the living room before Christmas Eve, because, Christmas Eve, we always went to Midnight Mass at Sacred Heart. So, they got all that done. We fell for the whole routine and my father would go down in the

basement, he had a chimney that went through the kitchen, and he'd go down in the basement and knock. Santa Claus would be knocking and we believed that. We were very gullible children and we'd tell Santa Claus what we wanted, [laughter] but we had wonderful Christmases, big Christmases, huge Christmases. … My mother and father always continued that, for many, many years. That was the place to go at Christmastime, until they sold the house. … My mother sold it in the mid-'70s, in New Brunswick, but, for years, that was Christmas. [laughter] …

SSH: Your father was very political and he did not like Roosevelt. Was that unique? I have always had the sense that New Brunswick was a Democrat's town.

RB: He did not like Eleanor, either. I used to wear a button; I have a collection of buttons upstairs. One of them says, "We don't like Eleanor, either." They're all anti-Roosevelt buttons. … There was a big controversy, during the time, about Roosevelt's son, Elliot, who became a captain in the Army, and how he got to be one, and it was something about, "Elliot, a captain? Me, too." It's this collection of buttons that he had that were all anti-Roosevelt and for anybody who opposed him, [Alfred] Landon, [Wendell] Willkie. Who else opposed Roosevelt? Landon and Willkie, I remember well. … He ran so often.

SSH: Was your father a supporter of Herbert Hoover?

RB: Yes, but I really wasn't too aware of that, because I was younger. I was much younger. … All I can remember is that, once, Eleanor Roosevelt, when she was First Lady, came to NJC and she was having lunch at NJC, … at the old Cooper Hall, and I was, at the time, the program director for the student government. So, it was my responsibility to sit next to her at the luncheon and introduce her. Here was the First Lady coming. Well, you know, I lived a block from the college. So, I went home that particular day to change my clothes for the luncheon and my father was home. I don't remember why he was home at the time, but I was so nervous. So, my father, he had quite a sense of humor, he tracks out his rosary beads and he starts pacing up and down the living floor and he said, "You're allowed to sit next to Eleanor Roosevelt." [laughter]

SSH: He did not make you wear the pin, did he?

JOS: No, he didn't make me wear the pin, but I sat next to Eleanor Roosevelt, who, of course, was a very gracious woman, and I was very nervous. I hope I wasn't obviously nervous, but, whatever; I was nervous about introducing the First Lady at the old Cooper Hall, but it was a wonderful experience.

SSH: Who was the dean of the college when you were there?

JOS: … Margaret Corwin, and she lived across the street from my grandmother on George Street, and that house, I don't know what it's used for now. … Once, the alumnae used it, at one point. It's a big, gray house; maybe it's not even there.

SSH: I think it still is. I am not sure what it is being used for.

JOS: Well, anyway, that's where she lived, and it was the era when you wore white gloves and went to the dean's house for tea and you had peanut butter and cucumber sandwiches. … She was a lovely woman. She had a hard time with public speaking. She was always nervous. She moved to Connecticut afterwards. She moved to Guilford and I saw her after she had left, several times, and she was very relieved … no longer to be dean and [to] no longer have to deal with the public speaking, but she was a lovely person and she was there the whole time I was there.

SSH: Was Mabel Douglass still alive then?

JOS: … I don't think so. I think Mabel Douglass died. Didn't she die in the early '30s? under very suspicious circumstances, as I remember. She was the founding dean, of course, but I think she died. No, she was not involved when I was there, no.

SSH: Are there other faculty members that you remember? You were involved in student government, obviously.

JOS: I was. I was involved in student government. There was Dean Boddie and Dean Boddie, I think that was her name, she was from the South and … she was a presence. She was under Dean Corwin. She was there at the same time. I don't know whether she was ever dean in her own right or not, but she was a very approachable, wonderful woman. Then, of course, there was Roger Sweet, whom I knew because he lived at our house [for] a while, but chemistry was not my thing. There was an old professor of chemistry, … you had to take so many years of science, that [is why] I took chemistry, his name was Gerard and I was absolutely scared silly of him. … It didn't wear off, even after being in his class for a year, because I took chemistry for a year and I think I got a D, the first marking period, and my father was rolling his eyes about this D. That was not my field, obviously, but I did get through it and I met the requirements for chemistry, but Professor [Francis] Hopkins, the economics professor, was a wonderful man. … We had a lovely, little woman from France for French and we had Professor Salas in the Spanish Department. He was there a long, long time and he was a very friendly, very outgoing person, but those … are the ones I remember.

SSH: Was there any opportunity for you to live in the French House? I know that you were living very near the campus.

JOS: No, no. My parents couldn't have afforded anything like that.

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

SSH: This is side two of tape one. I asked if you ever had any meals at Cooper Dining Hall with the different language houses, French, German and Spanish.

JOS: No, I never did. I never had any meals at Cooper. Occasionally, I worked as a waitress at Cooper, as a substitute waitress at Cooper, but, … except for major banquets and special occasions, I didn't eat, ever eat, at Cooper.

SSH: Did you ever hear about the Bergel-Hauptmann case, where Dr. [Johannes Friedrich] Hauptmann, a German sympathizer, did not renew the tenure of a young German professor, [Lienhard] Bergel?

JOS: I don't remember that. I don't remember the professor incident. I certainly remember the [Bruno] Hauptmann … incident, because … my father used to bring the paper home and I'd meet him at the corner from the station and the headlines were about the Lindbergh baby, in Hopewell, being kidnapped. … I think I was about ten years old and I think that was 1932 and that made a deep impression. My father used to get the *Daily News* and … read it on the train and bring it home and that was a big event in my life. You thought about that and you saw pictures of the ladder at the window, and then, the whole trial, later on, in Flemington, which was later. I don't remember when the trial was, exactly.

SSH: Was that several years later?

JOS: Yes, it was several years later, but that was certainly a big incident, and I've read, more than once, all of Anne Lindbergh's books. She's a wonderful writer. She's a beautiful writer and she's one of the people I admired growing up, very much, the way she handled that. They lived here in Darien. … When we moved here, I happened to have, for my children, the same music teacher that they had for their children and he, Mr. Ensor, went from here to the Lindbergh house in Darien to teach their children, whatever he was teaching. I think it was clarinet. … My children took clarinet lessons.

SSH: When you started at the New Jersey College for Women, what were some of the freshmen initiations?

JOS: You wore silly costumes. You wore a placard with your name, and then, you had a beanie, a green beanie, and there was more to it than that. There was some kind of cape, a green, cheesy kind of material cape, that you wore, so [that] you would stand out, and you had a big, green bow in the back of your head, and then, by sophomore year, of course, we had our class dresses. Oh, we felt so elegant, so superior to the freshmen. They were hideous dresses and they itched. They were maroon and they were one-piece maroon and they obviously must have had wool in them, but we thought they were lovely, for a while. [laughter]

SSH: Did you wear it every day, to class, or was it only for special occasions? How often did you have to wear the maroon dress?

JOS: … We didn't wear it every day. We wore it for special ceremonies. … I don't remember how often we wore the class dresses, but, at any service, … ceremony, service or whatnot, Christmas service and that kind of thing, we used to have beautiful chapel services at Christmastime, we wore the class dresses.

SSH: Were you involved in student government from the very beginning?

JOS: Yes, I was. I think I was a representative from the commuters. The commuters were separate. They had … a room in, oh, that building on Bishop Street; I can't remember the name of the building. Whether it was a science building, [I do not know], but the whole basement of it was a hangout place for commuters, which was nice, and there was someone named Lindamin, I think that was her name, who was the director of commuters. So, she organized activities for us and I can remember, senior year, … we had Christmas dances and, by senior year, it was 1942, December of 1942, and, by then, a lot of the men from campus were in the service. … We still had the dances, but there was no one place on campus large enough to have a dance, … because all the classes had their dances. So, we had dances in very many buildings. … Senior year, I was chairman of all the dances, there were five dances, and my boyfriend was overseas, and so, … obviously, I had to have a date, because it was my job to escort Dean Corwin to each of the five dances and stand in line, in the receiving line, with her. … This date would have to do that at five different dances. You had to get a guy from Rutgers, whom you really didn't know very well, who was a fraternity brother of somebody you did know, to agree to that, but he did. He was a very nice Lambda Chi and he came and he stood in line at all these dances with us, the receiving line at five separate dances. … I think of him a lot. [laughter]

SSH: Do you remember his name?

JOS: No. [laughter] I knew you were going to ask that. I can't remember his name, because I never saw him after that. He went off into the service, too. I know I could find out his name, because my cousin was in the same fraternity, but I don't remember his name.

SSH: How much social interaction was there between the fraternities at Rutgers College and the New Jersey College for Women?

JOS: Yes, there was a fair amount. I mean, that was the big thing to do, to be invited to a fraternity party at Rutgers; well, you were in. That was wonderful, to do that. So, it was very special. My father didn't think that was a very good idea, for me to ever go to a fraternity party. He held pretty tight reign. … My rules, living at home while I was in college, were more strict than the campus rules.

SSH: We have heard that they were quite strict.

JOS: They were. They were very strict. So, it was a little difficult.

SSH: Did your cousins in the area end up going to Rutgers?

JOS: I have a cousin, … his name was Fernand De Percin, and he was in the same class. He was at Rutgers and he was in the same class, in '43, at Rutgers. My other cousins, they didn't go to college. I think a couple of them might have gone to Rider Business School. One of them, the oldest, one of my male cousins, went into the seminary, Darlington Seminary, and, no, I was really [the exception]. No, there weren't a lot of them that went to college. They pretty much did something else, and they might have gone to … Rider, like I said. I had uncles who went to Rider. I had one aunt who actually got a normal school degree, Josephine De Percin, and she

taught in New Brunswick for a long time. She taught fourth grade at Lord Sterling School in New Brunswick.

SSH: Did you participate in the Sacred Path and the Yule Log?

JOS: Oh, yes, and my father went to everything.

SSH: Did he really?

JOS: My father loved those ceremonies. He went to everything, at "that Protestant Chapel," I used to call it before that, the Protestant chapel. He went because … he always loved ritual and ceremony and he went to all those things. He knew all the college songs. He could sing the college songs, later on in life, better than … I could. He remembered them.

SSH: Did you go to Rutgers football games?

JOS: Oh, yes. We went to the Rutgers football games and my father took tickets at the gate and we didn't have to pay for very many of the Rutgers football games. [laughter] It was all up on College Avenue, the old Neilson Field. … The stadium was built later on. I don't really remember when the stadium was built. I really don't remember when. [Editor's Note: Rutgers Stadium in Piscataway, New Jersey, opened in October 1938.]

SSH: As an NJC woman, did you go to the football games as well?

JOS: Yes, I went to the football games. Yes, we were allowed to do that. … We always managed to get to the Rutgers-Princeton game, no matter where it was played, whether it was played in Princeton or [here]. Somehow, we got rides to the Rutgers-Princeton game.

SSH: When you went to the football games, did you go as a group of women or with dates?

JOS: Usually women, sometimes groups, sometimes a date. Yes, we went as dates, but, you know, … not everyone had a car and Princeton was [far away]. There was no public transportation that took you. There was no bus transportation that took you. So, we mostly saw the games in New Brunswick, at the old Neilson Field.

SSH: What do you remember about the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked?

JOS: Well, Pearl Harbor, I think; … was it 1941?

SSH: December 7th.

JOS: It was. It was December 7, 1941. You know, I can only remember the September 1, 1939, invasion of Poland, more than I can remember Pearl Harbor as such. 1941, I was, I guess, … a junior, sophomore? and, I mean, I can remember it, but I don't remember it as being as big an impact as the German invasion of Poland.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes. I can remember it and I can remember listening to it on the radio, but I think, at that point, I was so involved in college life that the effect [was dampened]. At that point, it didn't sink in. That was peripheral.

SSH: I wondered if there was a reaction within the campus. It happened on a Sunday.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: I wondered if there was a reaction within your family, when you first heard about it.

JOS: Oh, yes. We sat glued to the radio. Of course, there was no television then. We didn't have a television then. Yes, there was a big impact. …

SSH: Were any of your cousins drafted?

JOS: Yes, yes. … There were any number of them that went, that served in various branches of the service. So, I had no idea what this impact was going to be on my own life until … after that. Then, it became apparent what was happening and I just had no doubts about wanting to be in the service.

SSH: How soon did you make up your mind?

JOS: … I had a job with GE, [General Electric], in the economics department, GE in Schenectady. Well, having never been out of New Brunswick, that seemed like I was going abroad, and it was a very nice job. They came to campus and interviewed and they hired me as an economics major, and then, after that, I had second thoughts. I really wanted to be in the service. Well, you had a lot of people to convince that that was [acceptable], in the family to convince, the men in the family. They really [balked]. Women in service, it was such a new idea, to have women in the service, except for the nurses, who had been in for a while. They have a long history, from World War I, actually, but my family was very much opposed. My father was very much opposed. My mother was not. I had an uncle who was in the Army at the time, on active duty in the Army, and he lived in Freehold and he came up to New Brunswick, and they were a favorite aunt and uncle, and he's the one that really convinced my father. …

SSH: It is interesting that he would do that.

JOS: Yes. … He loved me and I used to spend my vacations with him and he wanted me to do what I wanted to do, and so, he did convince my father, who eventually signed the papers. Then, you get … a letter from your pastor attesting to your good character. Well, this old Father (West?), over in the rectory near us, he took a dim view of that. He said to me, literally, "Nice girls don't join the service, Jean," but, with a little convincing, he did write the requisite letter, [laughter] and so, I applied.

SSH: You were still a senior.

JOS: Yes. … This was in December, senior year, December '42. So, it was a year after Pearl Harbor. Yes, I did apply and they agreed to let me finish college. That was the program they had set up and they would send me to Midshipman's School if I successfully completed college six months later, which I did, and then, I went back to the camp where I worked that summer, until I got my active duty orders to go to Midshipman's School at Mount Holyoke.

SSH: Before we get into the Navy, you said earlier that your boyfriend at the time had already entered the service. Had he graduated, then, gone into the military?

JOS: There was some kind of an early graduation. Rutgers had some kind of an early graduation program, … maybe fewer credits. In some way, they allowed men to not really finish the requisite courses, and they never had to come back and finish. So, they granted degrees. I don't know; you could probably find that out from the Rutgers annals, you know.

SSH: Was he Class of 1943?

JOS: He was '43, and he went overseas right away, as did so many people at the time. … He was in the infantry, in the Army, in the infantry, and I kept in touch with him for many, many years. He eventually moved to the South and to Georgia and, on my way to Florida, in the winters, I would stop and we'd always have breakfast or lunch or whatever it was. We had a lot of reminiscing to do.

SSH: What is his name?

JOS: His name was Ray Ceraghino and he lived in New Brunswick his whole life. We went to high school together, but he eventually changed it to Clark, … after he graduated from law school. He found the name [undesirable]. He thought the name was going to be a negative and, of course, we've completely reversed that now. Those names are wonderful. [laughter] They're probably positives. …

SSH: You said that, when you were a senior, there were very few men left on campus, because they were graduating early or leaving school for the ASTP or Navy "V" programs. I wondered if you were aware of people who did that.

JOS: Oh, yes. Yes, there were a lot of people who did that.

SSH: Was there anyone who was 4-F, either still on campus or in New Brunswick? Do you know what their reaction was or what the community's reaction to them was?

JOS: You know, I don't remember. No, I don't remember that.

SSH: As a young woman from New Brunswick, what do you recall about Camp Kilmer? It became a major embarkation point.

JOS: Oh, yes. The Camp Kilmer people would come to our dances. They'd be invited to come to our dances, which was wonderful, because you would meet interesting people. I belonged to the CYO [Catholic Youth Organization]. … They didn't call it CYO then. … I belonged to a Newman Club at the Catholic church, Sacred Heart Church, and we would invite the soldiers to come to dances there. We were very, very well chaperoned, [laughter] because these were older men, you know. A lot of them were older men.

SSH: You discussed how your father was very strict with you. The streets of New Brunswick were flooded with men on their way overseas. Was there any time that you remember that your father did not think it was safe for you to be out?

JOS: No, no. We used to feel quite free to go down to the stores in New Brunswick and walk down to the campus spa and the various places, the movies. I don't remember, ever, any restrictions, and then, one of the jobs I had during that college time was at J&J, [Johnson & Johnson]. They needed people. They needed people so badly, in their factory in New Brunswick, that they would take us even if we had just a full hour to spare, and they would pay us fifty-four cents an hour, when we were getting twenty-five cents an hour in the stores in New Brunswick. … We would have bicycles and, if we had two free periods during the day on campus, we could ride our bikes down there and make fifty-four cents. I mean, it was very nice of them.

SSH: What were you doing?

JOS: Yes, we were packaging. Packaging bandages is basically what we were doing. … They made it very easy for us. They needed us. They needed people and we were just a mile or so from the campus and we had bicycles and we were able to do that because, lots of times, you had several hours during the day between classes. So, that was a big plus, making that much money, when you were making thirty-five cents, then, in the stores per hour.

SSH: Was there a USO [United Service Organizations club] in New Brunswick?

JOS: There was a USO in New Brunswick. I don't remember going to a USO, but there was one where the people from Kilmer, soldiers from Camp Kilmer, came.

SSH: Was there a separation between Raritan Arsenal and Camp Kilmer?

JOS: I never even knew about Raritan Arsenal, and I should have. [laughter] All I knew … was that there was a Camp Kilmer. Later on, I knew more about Raritan Arsenal, but, whether there was a separation between them, I don't know, but … these men that we met were from Camp Kilmer.

SSH: Were you aware of the Italian prisoners of war that worked at Camp Kilmer?

JOS: Not at the time, no. I wasn't aware that they were there, but … there was no [ill] feeling, during the time that I was at Douglass, [or] restrictions about wandering around New Brunswick or going anyplace on your own at all. There were blackouts. So, you had to cover your windows

at night during the war and I was an air raid warden, … because I was living at home, in that Redmond Street area. … I'd get out there with my little armband and my flashlight and look to see if any light was peeking out from the neighbor's windows, curtains. Yes, I mean, really, when you think about it, it's very serious.

SSH: Did you have a messenger with you? I have heard of young boys on bicycles being assigned as messengers to transmit notes between wardens. Do you know anything about that?

JOS: No, no, I don't know anything about that.

SSH: What about the blackouts at the shore? What did you know about what was going on with the attacks on shipping along the Jersey Shore?

JOS: Well, we continued to go down to the shore for our vacations, but I really wasn't aware of that at all, because we went down to the Barnegat Bay area and we really didn't see much of that. I can remember going down there on vacations, but, once I finished, I don't remember doing that. I remember going down to the shore, but I don't remember blackouts at the shore during the war.

SSH: Did you listen to the radio? Were there certain programs that you listen to, or certain newspapers that you read, to keep up with what was going on?

JOS: There was Walter Winchell. … You listened to what your father listened to. Walter Winchell was a big deal on Sunday night. You listened to him. My father was selective in the radio programs we listened to. So, he had to approve all these programs. We used to listen to things like *One Man's Family*. They had some wonderful radio programs. … I can remember that, but, as far as these opinion programs that we get now, and whatnot, he must be turning over in his grave at some of these things. [laughter]

SSH: Did he listen to the Fireside Chats?

JOS: Oh, yes, he listened. He was very political … and, yes, he listened. He did not like [Roosevelt], but he listened, and so, he wasn't disloyal, but … he voted Republican during those years, I'm sure, every time.

SSH: What did your father think of the lend-lease program? Was he an isolationist or did he think that we should get into the war?

JOS: My father thought we should be there. My father was not an isolationist. He wasn't so sure we weren't getting the short end of the stick with the lend-lease program. He didn't have much tolerance for the British, or the French, [laughter] and that was sort of a bone of contention, with my mother's French background. He said, "The French," in France, when he was over there as a doughboy, "they sold you the doughnuts. The Red Cross sold you the doughnuts." [laughter] …

SSH: You worked part-time at Johnson & Johnson. Were there other war-effort related things that your family did? Did you save aluminum?

JOS: Yes, we saved aluminum. I can remember having a big ball of aluminum that I turned in at one time, because my father smoked and the cigarette packs used to have aluminum in them, and so, we made aluminum balls. I don't know where else we got it, besides his cigarettes packs, but, … then, the junkman would come around and he would weigh it and he would pay you for the aluminum that you sold and, yes, we had ration coupons. We had rations for shoes and sugar and gasoline. When I was in the Navy, and after I was married, we had a little car and you had an "A" book, I think it was, for gasoline. You were allowed a certain number of coupons a month. … We were stationed in Atlanta and, if we wanted to drive to New Brunswick, we had to apply to the ration board with a reason for extra ration coupons, which we were able to get. The next challenge was getting the old car to New Brunswick. [laughter]

SSH: It sounds like your senior year was a really exciting time in your life, because of your involvement with the student government and the First Lady's visit.

JOS: It was.

SSH: You had this job offer with GE, but your sense of patriotism made you want to join the military. Were there other women who had gone into the military before you?

JOS: Actually, there were other women in my class who became WAVES, but we were all making this decision at the same time. …

SSH: Individually? Did you talk about it?

JOS: No, independently. … I just thought it was exciting. I was going to get out of New Brunswick, I was going to be in the Navy and I was going to wear that cute uniform that Mainbocher designed, and there were all sorts of reasons, and they were going to send me to either Mount Holyoke or Smith.

SSH: Had you spoken to a recruiter?

JOS: I don't remember, ever, a recruiter, no. …

SSH: How did you research which of the branches would be best or what you wanted to do?

JOS: The uniform, the uniform. [laughter] That was what it was; it was the uniform. I liked the uniform and I decided, "I'd like to be in the Navy." There was no history in my family of Navy [service]. My father was in the Army, and that was the basis on which I decided and, you know, the speaker at our graduation, in 1943, was Mildred McAfee Horton, and she was the first commanding officer of the WAVES.

SSH: Did that impact your decision or had you already made your decision?

JOS: … I had already made my decision. This was very exciting.

SSH: Did you help to choose her as the speaker?

JOS: I don't think so. I don't think I had any impact, … at that point, on that, but, for me, it was most exciting, because those of us who had already been sworn into the Navy, in December, of course, met her at a reception. … She was an idol at that time. You know, she had been the dean of Wellesley, I think it was. [Editor's Note: Mildred H. McAfee Horton was dean of women at Centre College and Oberlin College before becoming president of Wellesley College in 1936.]

SSH: How many women had made that decision in 1943?

JOS: In my class? There were probably six. I was trying to remember who they were last night, but I think there were at least six. There was Ruth Gustafson, Jo Winchester, [Frances] "Frannie" Daire, Adele something [Wilkens Fuller?]. I can't remember the names of the others, but I think there were about six of us.

SSH: You made this decision independently.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Did you come back to campus and announce it or did you keep it under your hat?

JOS: No, no. We didn't keep it under our hat, because we were sworn in in December of our senior year.

SSH: Where were you sworn in?

JOS: We were sworn in in a recruiting station in Lower Manhattan, and that's where we took the oath, and then, as I say, we were committed then. If we didn't finish college successfully, we would be in the Navy automatically, when we finished, as apprentice seamen, and then, none of us was called until the summer of 1943.

SSH: At that point, how long did you think the war would go on? What was the general feeling?

JOS: There was no thought of it not going on. I don't remember. I mean, … you knew this was going to be a commitment. You didn't really know how long it was going to go on, because, in 1943, there was still a lot of fighting to come, as it turned out, and you did feel very patriotic, but there were other issues besides the patriotism. There was a selfish issue there, the traveling, the being away from home, getting away from home, the wearing the nice uniform. At age twenty, that was a big appeal. Yes, it was exciting for a young woman.

SSH: Do you remember if there was more coverage, in the papers and on the radio, of the European Theater or the Pacific Theater? You went on to serve on the East Coast.

JOS: I think we were much more aware of the war in Europe than we were of the war in Asia, just because of the geography.

SSH: At NJC, was any pressure placed on any of the women to change majors to something that would aid the war effort?

JOS: Perhaps, perhaps, but I wasn't aware of that. There was pressure, in that …

SSH: There was nothing put out there to make you go in that direction.

JOS: No. … The restrictions on men in dorms and those kinds of things, it was very strict. They were very strict, … even if you had a boyfriend or even if you were engaged. I remember, there was one woman in our class, [Mina] "Midge" Lehr, who became engaged, senior year, to Charlie Kelley and he was in the service. He was at Rutgers and he was in the service and she lived on campus. … There was no way he was going to get out of that living room in that house on Gibbons, no way at all. [laughter]

SSH: In the fraternities on the Rutgers campus, did something similar happen?

JOS: No, I don't remember anything, anything like that at all. It was just … [that] he asked you if you wanted his pin and you wore it, and sometimes you wore it a long time and sometimes you didn't, [laughter] but it was significant in your own eyes. …

SSH: Do you think more people either felt a stronger sense of commitment or a desire to get married, or maybe put off their marriage, because of the war?

JOS: Well, … yes, for people like Midge and Kelley. They did get married. She was married, and then, she could no longer live on campus. … She could live on campus singly, but there was no place [for her], so, yes. … There were a few others in our class who were married before they graduated, but that was a really big deal. That was a big policy thing for the college to decide, because this was an all-new field for them. So, I'm sure the deans had a lot of discussions about how to handle this.

SSH: Prior to this, if you were married, you were not allowed.

JOS: No, you weren't. No, you couldn't live on campus. You could go to college. …

SSH: Could you?

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Could a married woman attend NJC?

JOS: … Well, I say yes, but I don't remember any. I'm saying yes, but perhaps that wasn't true.

SSH: Did that policy change because of the war?

JOS: Yes. I'm sure that it was considerably liberalized because of the war. NJC was a great place to go to school. I loved going there. You know, I grew up there, I played on the campus, I went to school on the campus, I went back there often, until my parents sold [the house]. My mother eventually sold the house on Redmond Street.

SSH: You mentioned having tea with the dean. Did every NJC woman experience that?

JOS: Oh, yes, that was compulsory, and you had to wear white gloves and it was very formal, formal tea. …

SSH: Did you wear a hat?

JOS: Oh, I'm sure we wore hats. You wore hats every place, oh, yes. We got dressed and we wore hats. I don't even remember wearing pants a lot on campus. I remember a lot of skirts. We had jeans, we wore jeans, but I don't remember whether we wore them to class or not, but, yes, they were formal teas and we were nervous about going. [laughter]

SSH: You also mentioned some of the wonderful guests that you saw in mandatory chapel.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Were there receptions for these guests or other means of interaction?

JOS: I can't say there weren't. There might have been. I don't remember being involved in any of them.

SSH: Did you participate in choir or any other activities besides student government?

JOS: No. I was basically in the student government, the French Club, the Botany Club and just the general student government kind of things when I was there.

SSH: You graduated in 1943, committed to the Navy. Do you think that that period was a little more bittersweet for your class than it may have been for previous or subsequent classes?

JOS: Yes.

SSH: You had a big sister.

JOS: I had a younger sister, ten years younger, and a brother.

SSH: I meant …

JOS: Oh, big sister on campus. Yes, I did have a big sister. … We had big sisters when we were juniors. When we came in as freshmen, we had a big sister who was a junior, and I don't remember her name, which I'm sorry to say.

SSH: Were you a big sister? Do you remember?

JOS: I don't think so. I don't think I was a big sister. No, I don't remember being a big sister.

SSH: Did enrollment at NJC vary because of the war? Were there fewer women enrolling? I know it affected Rutgers College tremendously. Do you remember if NJC suffered at all?

JOS: … I don't think so, because the war … did not impact women as a group, on a large scale. It did from the point of view of recruitment. When I was in the Navy, the hardest thing, as I said, was to recruit the men, get the men willing to sign and agree to their daughters going into the service.

SSH: When you went in to sign the papers, did you go alone, when you were first inducted?

JOS: … No, I didn't go alone, but I don't think I went with the other five women from NJC. We all had individual dates. I didn't go in with them, yes. …

SSH: You graduated and went to camp. Your father called to tell you that it was time to report.

JOS: Right.

SSH: What did they tell you to bring with you?

JOS: Oh, I had a list, as if you were going to Girl Scout camp. They had a definite list of things. … I was at Holyoke, but you immediately went to Smith to be outfitted. The uniform company was in Smith and you were measured and you got your standard-issue uniforms and shoes. You had these black, low-heeled (ties?) that you wore. So, you got all that your first week and I lived in Rocky on the Holyoke campus. … I had to have my own room for my whole life, and it was very important for me to have my own room, and, there, I was with five other women, it's three double-deck beds, and I never missed a beat, as far as sleeping was concerned. They kept you very busy. You marched a lot. You marched and marched and I happened to become a platoon leader, and I'm thinking, "Oh, if I say, 'To the left march,' and it's to the right, … they're going to end up in the hedge." … Yes, you really did … a lot of drilling and you had a very rigorous [regimen]. Now, we had just finished college, four years of college. That three months in the Navy, those three months, I studied more and worked harder academically than I certainly did for most of my college years. You were up at night with flashlights, because you had strict rules of lights out at nine o'clock. You were under the covers, learning Navy ships, Navy regulations, identification of aircraft, Navy law and procedures. It was tough. It was a hard course for those three months and you felt as if you really accomplished something when you marched out there … for finished [graduation].

SSH: Did other women teach you to march?

JOS: Other women, yes, because I went in in 1943, but the WAVES were formed a couple of years earlier and a lot of the women who taught us, Hunter College was one of the first places where they had WAVE training and a lot of those women were from Hunter College, … were commissioned at Hunter College. I don't remember men teaching us all. … It was women who taught us how to drill.

SSH: At Holyoke, were you kept separate from the student body?

JOS: Yes.

SSH: You had a separate curriculum and separate courses.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Were the dorms just for you?

JOS: Now, when I was there, I was there for three months, but it was in the summertime; no, … it wasn't just in the summertime. … We took over Rocky. I don't know whether we were [alone]. … There weren't any civilians there. It was just Navy, as I remember it. You could probably go back to … find that out, yes.

SSH: We hear about the ASTP programs that came to Rutgers. They would march down College Avenue to the gym to eat. As soon as they arrived, they were almost totally separate.

JOS: Yes, well, we did that. We marched into the dining room. … They told you not to dare to faint, because you'd be out of there, you'd be on your way home if you fainted, and they came along … when they were giving you all these shots at the beginning, and you didn't faint. [laughter]

SSH: It was all female Navy personnel that handled your shots and records.

JOS: Yes. It was all female Navy personnel, completely.

SSH: It is amazing that they were able to get up and rolling that quickly.

JOS: They did. They had wonderful leadership, wonderful leadership. … They recruited women who'd had a lot of experience.

SSH: In those three months, did you write or call home often?

JOS: I wrote. I don't know if my mother saved my letters or not. I have a bunch of letters up there, she may have even saved them, but I did write, but phone? We didn't have a phone in my house for; I guess, by then, we probably had a phone, but the phone we just didn't use very much.

SSH: Did you telegram? Was that a way to communicate?

JOS: Yes. … People telegrammed. That's how I found out … when my orders came. My father got a telegram, but the phone wasn't used; well, at least it wasn't used in our family. We had a party line kind of thing. No, the phones were not used like they are now.

SSH: Were you still writing to your friend who had gone overseas to Europe?

JOS: Oh, yes, Ray, yes. I kept in touch with Ray for a while, but it was sort of hard. … You know, when I gave him back his fraternity pin, it was kind of a break. So, it wasn't really until years later, and years later … [that] we met, in a restaurant on Jekyll Island, years and years later, … when I was on my way to Florida, and I hadn't seen him in many, many years. … I thought, "Oh, my goodness, I'm not going to recognize him." Well, he drove up in his old car and it had his initials on the license plate of the car, so, I recognized him. I was on my bicycle, in Jekyll Island, at that point, and my sister was with me. I said, "Joan, please, stay here," and she said, "I'm not touching this with a ten-foot pole," and off she rides, on her bicycle, leaving me alone with this guy I hadn't seen in, … I don't know how many years it was. It was a lot of years, and he's just as nervous as I am and there's a restaurant there. That's where we met. … We went in to have lunch at this restaurant and … he said, "Would you mind if I have a cigarette?" and I said, "No, I don't mind." He's so nervous, he could hardly light the cigarette, and I'm just as nervous. … He leans over and he said, "You know, you broke my heart," and I thought, "Oh, my God, why didn't Joan stay? What am I going to do?"

SSH: Had you sent him the pin when he was already overseas?

JOS: Yes, I had sent him his pin and, you know, it was not a nice thing to do, but, anyway, … we see each other quite often now, as I go back and forth to Florida.

SSH: In the three months of training, what were some of the most outrageous things you were asked to do, or that you now look back on and say, "I cannot believe I did that?"

JOS: Well, the studying was difficult. The courses were difficult and they crammed [in], in three months, a lot of information, ships and aircraft, Navy law, and all these regulations and whatnot, and identification. … They gave you very little time in which to study and they kept you so busy marching, during the day, that you were very tired, and staying awake was one of the big things, staying awake and not being caught with the flashlight under the covers and getting through the academics. It was not easy. It was tough.

SSH: Was there any time to go into town at all?

JOS: Yes. We had free time, with certain restrictions. … We could go into South Hadley, which was a lovely, little town, as you know, … but we weren't allowed to go into [certain areas]. We weren't allowed to go anywhere around the Common in Boston, the Boston Gardens, the Green or any place like that. We could go into Boston.

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

SSH: This continues an interview with Jean O'Grady Sheehan on September 21, 2006, in Easton, Connecticut. Why were you not allowed into Boston Common? Why were those areas restricted?

JOS: … I think they felt it was just unsafe, some of these areas, that there wasn't enough control. Perhaps they were remote, [there] weren't enough people around. There were a lot of restrictions and we obeyed [orders]. I mean, there was never any thought that we … [would not] do exactly what we were asked to do in that area. You know, once we were commissioned and on our own, it was a whole different world, but, while we were at Midshipman's School, that's what the regulations were.

SSH: As the three months drew to a close, did you fill out a dream sheet?

JOS: Absolutely, absolutely. They gave you choices, … but, ultimately, it was the same thing as the Navy is now, as my grandchildren have found out, it was "for the good of the service." … They would look at your list, but they would send you where they thought it was good for the service and assign you where they thought you would do the most good. …

SSH: What was on your dream sheet? There are three choices.

JOS: Yes, there were three choices. I think one of my choices was the West Coast. Oh, the WAVES were not going to Hawaii at that time. They did a year or so later, but the West Coast was my first priority. I just thought that … would be so wonderful. … My second choice was the South, and I don't remember a third choice, but I did get the South, which was very nice, and I loved being in Atlanta.

SSH: What about specific training? When you were in Midshipman's School, did you know what your assignment would be?

JOS: … No. They interviewed you and they gave you an assignment sheet and the very smartest women were taken into, were assigned to, the communications school. These were the really bright mathematician majors. So, they were assigned there and they assigned me, I don't remember whether I requested it or not, to recruiting and they assigned me to Atlanta and I was just overjoyed [laughter] to be going to Atlanta. … I went to Atlanta and, in a hotel lobby, … where I was staying while I looked for a place to live, there was no Navy housing there, I met another WAVE and we looked for an apartment together in Atlanta, found one, and we were in, they called it the "USS *Healy*," it was an office building in Atlanta, an old office building, called the Healy Building. It's still there, I was in Atlanta a couple years ago, and we were assigned to the DNOP, the Director of the Naval Officer Procurement program, and that's where we were, … that office. We operated out of there and we were sent all over Georgia, mainly, and, occasionally, up into North Carolina, to recruit.

SSH: You got your own apartment. Were there any restrictions on where you could get an apartment? Were there any approved areas, anything like that?

JOS: No, no. They helped us. I mean, they indicated areas that they thought would be nice areas in which to live, and on bus lines, of course, but the apartment that we got was developed during the war. It was a single-family house and … it was in a residential neighborhood, a very pretty one, in North Atlanta. … Landlords, those owners, were allowed to convert their dwelling into apartments, when normally they wouldn't have allowed it in this particular district, if they rented to service people.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes. So, this woman, [who] was a real character, converted her single-family house into, she stayed on one side, three apartments, and so, it was a little [railroad] car, one room after another, apartment, small. I remember, we paid eighty dollars a month rent, furnished apartment, and it was on a bus line. So, it took us maybe twenty minutes to go downtown, to get downtown, to Atlanta, and that was very helpful. We had very nice neighbors. I loved it there. It was lovely, and then, Gladys eventually got transferred to a training station in Iowa, as an instructor, and I was there alone a little bit, but, in the meantime, I had met the man who was to become my future husband. He was a naval aviator. So, after we got married, he just moved into that apartment, because apartments were very difficult to find.

SSH: How did you meet him?

JOS: I told my mother I met him at a Navy dance. [laughter] The way I met him really was, my roommate and I, Gladys Gooding, were downtown, in the Henry Grady Hotel lobby, on a Saturday night, to meet a fraternity brother of my cousin's from Rutgers. He was stationed at a fort in Alabama and he was coming in. He was going to bring a friend for my friend and that was why we were there in the lobby of the Henry Grady Hotel. … We were there and, over the loudspeaker system, there was a message that said, "Would Ensign Jean O'Grady please come to the phone?" So, I went to the phone and it was this young man, who said he couldn't get leave. …

SSH: This is your cousin, De Percin.

JOS: This is my cousin, De Percin, Fern De Percin's fraternity brother, and he said he couldn't get leave. He was at Fort Anniston, I think it was, Alabama, [Fort McClellan, by Anniston, Alabama] and he couldn't come in. So, I went back and I told Gladys that he couldn't come. Meantime, Dan Sheehan and his friend, Charlie Nagel, were cruising the hotel lobby. … They were naval aviators and they were in their green uniforms and Dan heard this name, "Ensign Jean O'Grady," and he said to Charlie, "Let's see what this one looks like." That's the way I met him. [laughter] It was years later before I told my mother and father that story. … They came up and … we talked and found out where we were from and whatnot. Dan was from Springfield, Mass., and so, they invited Gladys and I to go across the street to some place where they served drinks, and Gladys and I conferred. We sort of went off and conferred, and Gladys said, "I don't want to go. I don't want to do that," and I said, "Gladys, we're right on the bus line. We can just get right on the bus and go home any time we want to." So, she agreed to go and we did have a drink. I can remember, I had an old fashioned and, in those days, you didn't drink, I didn't drink, never drank in college or anything. So, we had the drink with Charlie and Dan and we got

on the bus and we went home. The next day happened to be my birthday, it was September 15th, and, the next day, I got a dozen red roses from this guy named Dan, who was stationed at the naval air station in Atlanta. So, that was the beginning, [laughter] but he was only in Atlanta for a little while. He was actually stationed in Pensacola. He was at a training school in Atlanta, at the naval air station, for six weeks.

SSH: Had he already gotten his wings?

JOS: Yes. He had gotten his wings in May of that year and this was September. So, he was a naval aviator, and so, he went back to Pensacola and he got a lot of weekends off from Pensacola, somehow or other, and, when I started recruiting and going South, I was able to get weekends [off] and go to Pensacola, without the proper orders, but we managed to see each other. [laughter]

SSH: How long before he proposed?

JOS: Let's see, I met him in '43, in September, and it was February of '44. He came down. There was a drugstore in the Healy Building and he called me up, from the lobby of the Healy Building, and I went down from my office … to have a cup of coffee and he had the ring. So, then, I called up my father that night and my father, who had had such tight reins, it must have been hard for my father, … I told him that I was engaged. "Well," he said, "am I going to meet him before the wedding?" I said, "Yes, you'll meet him before the wedding." [laughter] So, he did. … I went home on leave at one point and Dan flew in from; … I went home on a train and he flew in from Pensacola and got rained out. He was flying Navy planes, not public transportation, and his mother and father were coming down to meet me and to meet my mother and father. Oh, it was scary, [laughter] … but his mother and father came. Yes, this was about three months before the wedding. His mother and father came before he came, that was even scarier, jeez, [laughter] and he was the oldest in his family, I was the oldest in my family, but it all worked out. Everybody got along fine.

SSH: They came to New Brunswick.

JOS: They came to New Brunswick, to my mother's house, mother and father's house, and they stayed at a hotel in New Brunswick, and then, Dan got there a day late, jeez. [laughter]

SSH: Did he fly into Lakehurst?

JOS: No, no. … I'm trying to think of where. He flew into, I think, Newark. I'm not sure. … He might even [have] come in a train. You know, I don't remember that. I don't remember how he came, yes; he might have come in a train, yes, right.

SSH: Okay, I was just curious, as things were so restricted.

JOS: Yes. I bet he came in a train.

SSH: How did that weekend go? Was your father impressed?

JOS: … My father, yes. They were concerned that Dan did not have a college education. That was very important to them, because I went to college and my mother and father had not gone to college. … In talking to them before they met Dan, over the phone, … that's one of the first things they asked about and, to them, that was very important. Dan did eventually go to college. It was interesting, because he didn't finish college, he didn't start, until we moved here. We moved here in 1951. We had been in Venezuela for those ten years, eight, nine years, and he went to the university, started at the University of Bridgeport, and he was still a pilot. He was flying for Mobil Oil. So, he went to college … on a part-time basis and, because he was away so much, it took him eleven years, and he actually got his degree the same year as one of the children did. … When he couldn't go, because he was away on a trip, if it was a class that I could understand, he majored in business, but, if it was anything mathematical, I did not go, but, if it was anything, like, in the liberal arts or history area, I would go and I'd take [notes]. Women take very good notes. I took better notes, and then, I would type them, because my writing wasn't so good, so, he'd have these [notes]. He'd be gone on a trip for Mobil Oil, for whom he worked, for a couple weeks and he'd come back with these typewritten notes and the kids in the class, who had been there all the time, would borrow his notes. [laughter] … Yes, so, he managed, after eleven years, to get his degree.

SSH: Did you convince your parents that someone who qualifies to be a Navy pilot has got to have something on the ball?

JOS: They were afraid of that. Pilots were not a dime a dozen at that point and I had a cousin who was in the Air Force, a cousin who was maybe five years older than I, and his plane went down over the Pacific at the beginning of World War II, and he was a close cousin. He lived in the neighborhood and I can understand their reluctance. They didn't know pilots and they cautioned me about this and they also cautioned me about being left as a widow. I mean, they were really worried about this and that's something that, when … you were my age, you didn't even think about, but they were concerned about that. … Then, Dan eventually did go to college and everybody came and we had a big celebration. [laughter]

SSH: When and where did you marry?

JOS: We married in New Brunswick, at … my parish church, Sacred Heart Church. … When I went over to speak to the pastor, the old pastor who [had] said, "Nice girls don't join the service," he said, "Jean, you're going to wear your uniform. We're going to have the flags on the altar." I said, "No, Father, I'm not going to wear the uniform," because we had lovely, white dress uniforms. I said, "No, I'm going to wear a wedding gown." So, I was married … in that church in 1944, in September. So, that was a year after I met Dan. In the meantime, he had gotten a transfer to Atlanta, to the naval air station, and so, that worked out very nicely and we never left Atlanta, actually, no. He never was transferred, and then, I was pregnant and I got out of the Navy in August of the next year, and Danny was born in November of that year. … We just stayed in our same apartment.

SSH: Did you really?

JOS: Yes. We stayed in the same place. Well, apartments were still hard to find, in Atlanta.

SSH: I was just going to say.

JOS: Yes, right.

SSH: What did your husband do? What was his specialty? Was he teaching?

JOS: No, he was a pilot, Navy pilot, and he flew out of NAS Atlanta. Actually, he taught, and he taught flight. He was a flight instructor, yes. … After he got out of the service, which was in 1946, we were still in that apartment in Atlanta, and then, there came the problem of, "What kind of a job [should he get]?" Well, I was all for his going right to college under the GI Bill. … We wrote to colleges and sent for application forms and Purdue had a very fine aeronautical engineering program, and probably still does, so, he applied to Purdue and some other places and he was accepted … at Purdue. So, that was wonderful, except, one night, he said, "I'm not going to do this," and I said, "Oh?" He said, "I always wanted to be a pilot. That's what I want to do, and I was a pilot when you met me and that's what I'm going to do," and that's what he did. So, … he turned down the Purdue offer and we started writing. He had a list, I don't know where he got it from, a library, I guess, of all the corporations who had airplanes. The airlines were hiring, but they were paying less than he made as a senior grade lieutenant in the Navy, and you had to buy your uniforms. It just wasn't feasible. They hired him right away. He went to Miami, got a job with National Airlines, because … they needed pilots, but it … would barely have paid our rent. … So, we got all of these letters out and mostly got no answers at all. … My family lived in New Brunswick and we were home on leave at one point and he had heard that Esso [now the Exxon-Mobil Corporation] had an airplane. Esso had airplanes and he went to Newark Airport and he hung out around the hangar and he met the pilots, and then, he found the name of a man, not in personnel, to see on Broadway in New York, in their Broadway offices, and he made an appointment to see this man and this man, who was the head of their aviation department, … ended up saying, "Well, I could hire you as a pilot, if you were willing to go to Venezuela." So, he comes home and … he told me that and he said, "Where is Venezuela?" I said, "I don't know where Venezuela is," jeez. [laughter] In the meantime, we had our little apartment in Atlanta, and so, we got out the map and my mother kept saying, "You wouldn't take that lovely baby to Venezuela, would you? You wouldn't take that lovely baby there, in the jungle." [laughter] We ended up in Venezuela. [laughter]

SSH: Let us go back and talk about your stint in the Navy.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: You met Dan Sheehan and he basically took you out of circulation. [laughter] What was the daily routine for someone working at the "USS *Healy*"? What did you do?

JOS: Oh, well, I took the bus to work and what I did was recruiting, so, it was my job to [recruit women], and I did a lot of traveling around Georgia.

SSH: Did you travel by car?

JOS: No, there were no cars. Atlanta had very … good train service, very good train service all over the South, and there was bus service, but, mostly, I traveled by train to these small towns, like Albany, Georgia, and Americus, Georgia, Columbus, and set up shop in the already existing Navy recruiting stations. That was where your headquarters were, so [that] you had a place to go and set up and interview and telephone and whatnot. So, what you would do [was], what I did when I would go into these areas was, … first of all, I'd go to the naval air station, the naval recruiting station, and they were usually manned by chief petty officers, who were invariably very helpful people. …

SSH: How did they treat a young ensign?

JOS: Varied, it was varied. I mean, there, they were chief petty officers, they'd been in the Navy twenty years, twenty-five years, and here comes this twenty-year-old. They were very polite, some of them were extremely helpful, all of them were very nice people, and … there wasn't any problem. I mean, I was pleasant and affable and I wasn't going to make any ripples and I deferred to them. I asked them a lot of questions, because I needed to know, and everybody likes to be asked a lot of questions. [laughter] No, they were very helpful people.

SSH: Were they?

JOS: Yes, they were. They would tell me where to stay, suggest where to stay, where to have dinner, and things like that. So, I would make contacts. It was my job to contact women and it ended up, really, [that] my major job was talking to men's groups. The women were more than willing to sign up for the service, but it was the husbands and brothers and fathers and whatnot who did not want them to join. So, I quickly found out [about that]. First of all, I'd go to the newspaper, the local newspaper, and they'd put my picture in [and] the standard article … you see, still see, in recruiting in newspapers. Then, I would go to the local radio station and ask for a spot, time, … maybe five minutes or three minutes, or whatever it was, to let people know that I was going to be at this particular recruiting station from Monday until Friday and whatnot. So, I gave my little spiel there, and then, my next job was to get to speak … to groups. Now, the women, as I said, weren't your problem. There was a women's college; you could get to meet women easily. The church groups, I would go around to church groups. I'd go around and meet the pastors of the various churches. There weren't very many Catholic churches in the South, but, invariably, I got a very nice reception from people and they introduced me to other people. I'd go to the Girl Scout office and I'd meet the chief executive of the local Girl Scouts. So, I met people and I asked for time at the Rotary meetings and Exchange Club meetings, the male bastions in those days, for time just to explain why I was in town. … Of course, I looked good, the uniforms were nice, I was young, and I didn't take up much time, and they were very happy to let me have the time. I mean, it was a patriotic time and they weren't going to say, "No." So, that's what I did. I went all over, basically Georgia, doing this.

SSH: You say that the most difficult aspect of recruiting was convincing the male population that this was okay.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Did you ever have any opportunities to talk to the African-American community? Was that ever done?

JOS: I never remembered speaking to an African-American group. There was an occasional; there weren't very many African-Americans in the Navy, male or female. So, the WACs [Women's Army Corps] may have had a different experience, but I didn't. The groups that I contacted were almost inevitably white. There just wasn't … that dimension.

SSH: Going from New Brunswick to the South, was there any culture shock?

JOS: Not really, not really, no. The fact that … the Catholic Church wasn't the biggest one around was. You had all these Protestant churches around. [laughter] No, it wasn't. It was lovely. I liked, I still like, the South. I like the South very much. I like the people in the South. They're very gracious and warm and it was an exciting experience.

SSH: For a young woman who had not traveled that much; you had been a camp counselor.

JOS: I really hadn't traveled. [laughter]

SSH: What was it like to travel, find accommodations and eat alone?

JOS: You know, I had no problems with that. I didn't have any problems being alone and, to this day, I don't. … Because, now, I am alone when I travel, and I don't mind eating alone or I don't mind going into a hotel alone. That really was not a problem. I had a mission, I was convinced that it was a mission, and it was just sort of exciting, being in a new place, having a new town to explore and meeting new people. It was a very interesting, very interesting job.

SSH: Did you keep in contact with NJC? Did you send letters in to the alumnae magazine?

JOS: Yes, I did. I remember, there was an article, which I probably still have in some scrapbook; no, wait a minute, that wasn't about the Navy. It was when we lived in Venezuela. It was an article about living in Venezuela that I sent into the magazine once and it was published. That was the only time, really. I did go to a few reunions … through that time, when I went back, but not very many. Now, I go to everything. [laughter]

SSH: You had an encounter with the Ku Klux Klan when you were young. Did you see any similar activity in the South?

JOS: No, except the dearth of Catholic churches, for one thing. … Other than that, no, I did not. I did not encounter any prejudice, religious prejudice, whatsoever.

SSH: I was just curious.

JOS: No, I didn't, no, because I was in uniform, you know, and that gave me, that was a whole different thing, people respected uniforms, and so, it wasn't a problem.

SSH: When you went out recruiting, you would be gone for a week, then, return to Atlanta.

JOS: Yes. I would usually go on a Monday and come back on a Friday.

SSH: Were you successful?

JOS: Yes. I had absolutely no problem recruiting.

SSH: Did you have a quota?

JOS: No. I don't remember there being a quota, *per se*. You had to be eighteen and, as I said, if you weren't eighteen, you had to have parental consent. Women came; they came to the recruiting stations. It was a question of whether they would pass the [physical]. Well, physicals were kind of rigorous and you had to be a high school graduate and, as I said, you had to have your parents' consent. No, I don't remember … it being a problem at all, and then, … occasionally, I would take a group to Hunter College, a group of women whom I had recruited, escort them on the train from Atlanta to New York.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes, and that was interesting, because the trains were old and they were steam-[powered] and you had your white hats and things and the soot would come in the windows. They weren't air-conditioned in those days and, in those days, the trains were pretty largely segregated, as far as blacks were concerned. I can remember, on one of those trips, I was on the first train from Atlanta to New York that was integrated. … There were black people in the car in which we rode, they were not sleeper cars or anything, they were just coaches, to New York, and … it was a celebration for them, to be in the same car with white people. Yes, it was still the black and white drinking fountains in the stations, everything well marked, "Black," and, "White." So, this was that era.

SSH: "Colored?"

JOS: Yes, "Colored;" I think it was, "Colored." So, there was discrimination in the buses we took to work in the morning. The black people were in the back of the buses, and it wasn't like that in New Jersey, but it was like that in the South. So, soon, that all began to change, too.

SSH: On the train to take the women to Hunter, were you their chaperone?

JOS: I was a chaperone on the train. It was an overnight trip. … I think it was twenty-six hours at the time, or something. Yes, that's what I did, because I went to Hunter College with them, and then, I would turn around.

SSH: You were basically delivering them.

JOS: I was delivering them, as a group.

SSH: How often did you do that?

JOS: Not too often. I probably did it about six or seven times.

SSH: Did you get a chance to see your family?

JOS: Yes, I did, I was able to see my family, so, that was a dividend, yes. That was nice.

SSH: Regular trains often had to pull off to let troop trains through. They had priority.

JOS: Yes, they would.

SSH: The trip could be even longer at times.

JOS: Yes, it was a long trip. It was a long trip, to sit up and to taste the soot, and you saw the countryside. Yes, it was interesting.

SSH: Were servicemen also on the train with you and your women? Did they peruse the aisles?

JOS: Sometimes, they looked right through you, sometimes, they obviously wished you weren't there and, sometimes, they would offer you a seat, … if there was not a seat. …

SSH: Really?

JOS: Yes. It was a shock for them, too, to have women in uniform, but, basically, they were the same ages as we were. …

SSH: Were the women you escorted in uniform at that point?

JOS: No. They were civilians. They didn't get their uniforms until they went up to Hunter College and got them there, yes.

SSH: At that point, could you be married and serve in the Navy?

JOS: Yes, but you could not have a baby and be in the Navy. Yes, you could be married, that was okay, but, if you were pregnant, you had to get out of the Navy. So, there was no choice, and that didn't last too long, either, but, when I became pregnant, I had no choice. I had to leave the Navy. I had to resign. So, I would have stayed in, because I loved the Navy.

SSH: Did you?

JOS: Oh, yes, I really did, and, as it turned out, you know, my grandchildren, I could not convince any of my granddaughters to join the service. By the time they came along, … there wasn't the impetus there that there was [in my day], but the boys were all in the service.

SSH: Were they?

JOS: Yes. Well, the older boys were in the service, not the younger ones.

SSH: Can you tell me about going to Venezuela, as your mother said …

JOS: "With that lovely baby," jeez. Well, Dan had to go six months before I went, … because they wanted to see if they liked him, and if he liked them, before they would go to the expense of shipping me and all of our household goods down there. So, rather than go to New Brunswick and stay at my mother's house, who would tell me exactly how to raise that baby, I stayed in our little apartment in Atlanta. I stayed by myself there and I had to learn to drive, like, right in three weeks, because I didn't drive, and we had a car, an old rattletrap DeSoto, '36 DeSoto, but I needed a car. I was living in a suburb of Atlanta, I had a baby [and] I wanted a car. So, Dan taught me to drive in a short time. With all the things that happened, as you can, I mean, you have to imagine it was very difficult. I never drove like he thought I should drive, but I did get a fifty-cent driver's license. That's what they were in Georgia at the time. I did have a driver's license and, at the time, I was collecting; they had something called a "52/20 club." When you got out of the service, everybody who got out of the service could collect twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks, while you found your new life, got a job or whatever it was, but you had to go in person, every week, to the unemployment office, which was downtown Atlanta. So, there I was, with a brand-new baby. After Dan left, I mean. He used to drive me to go and get it, he got his. After he left, I was left with the car and the baby and I had to go right down in the middle of downtown Atlanta, on Peachtree Street, to get this twenty dollars a week, which was very important. It paid the eighty dollars a month rent on this apartment. That was a lot of money then and I did and it meant I had to park the car and I had to prove to them, or convince them, that I was looking for a job. I don't know how I convinced them; I probably didn't. I'm carrying this baby into this [office] to collect my twenty dollars for the week and, I mean, how [could they not give it to me]? Anyway, I got my twenty dollars a week, which, as I said, paid the rent on that apartment, while Dan was off. [laughter]

SSH: In that apartment building, were there other young couples like yourself?

JOS: In the apartment?

SSH: Squeaking by as well?

JOS: Absolutely. It was all Navy, except for one couple, and they were all Navy aviators and they were all our ages and we had an awfully good time. We were all learning to cook. We shared what we cooked. … It was fun. It was fun being in that little house with this crazy landlady. I mean, she used to wear a bathrobe, parading up and down the driveway, carrying the American flag. She was a little bit strange. [laughter] …

SSH: Made great dinner conversation, I am sure.

JOS: Yes, but I stayed there those months, because I really didn't want to go live with my mother for that length of time, and Dan had to wait for company housing. I didn't know how

long it was going to be, because … we lived in a company camp in Venezuela and there were X number of houses, so, you just didn't go down and get a house. … As I said, there was a six-months trial program, to see if they liked him and he liked them, and, at the end of that six months, then, he was eligible for a house, and then, he had to wait a few months before he actually got one. That was a big day, when he called up, he phoned, and said he had a house. So, then, I went up to New Brunswick, drove to New Brunswick, with my father. My father didn't drive, but he came down to help me with the baby. He came down to Atlanta on this train and he drove up with me, took us one overnight, I think, … to get to New Brunswick, and then, I had the further job of driving the car; I wanted it in Venezuela. I could take it to Venezuela.

SSH: Really?

JOS: The company would take a car. They would ship it from the pier in New York, but it was my job to get it to the pier. Well, nobody in my family drove, so, it was literally my job to drive that car into New York City, through the Holland Tunnel, and deliver that car to the pier. I did. I got it there in one piece. It was an old Chevy. It wasn't an old Chevy; it was a new Chevy. It was 1946 or something.

SSH: You got a new one then.

JOS: Our next-door neighbor; … we were driving some jalopy. It was a …

SSH: You said it was a DeSoto.

JOS: We had a DeSoto. After we had the Touring, Ford Touring Car, we got this DeSoto, which was a real lemon, and then, my next-door neighbor was an International Harvester dealer. He was an older man and … the Harvester Companies also carried, the dealers usually carried, some kind of car and he called us up one day and he said, "How would you like a brand-new Chevrolet?" and I said, "Brand-new Chevrolet?" … This was during the war. It was hard to get new cars. He said, "I could get you a brand-new Chevrolet." I said, "How much would it cost?" It would cost six hundred dollars. Dan and I didn't have six hundred dollars. We had spent all our wedding money, gifts, wedding gifts, which were money. We didn't have six hundred dollars. I forget … how we got it. We got the six hundred dollars. I think it was some Navy loan or something that we took out to get the money for this car and we kept waiting for it to show up and the houses were very close together. Pretty soon, this new Chevy came into the driveway right by our dining room window. That was our new car.

SSH: You had the new car before you learned to drive.

JOS: I had the new car before I learned to drive, yes, yes. We had the new car, and then, Dan taught me to drive and I got my license and that was the car I drove and that was the car that went to Venezuela. … I was so glad I had it down there, because those were the days when … husbands had a lot of power over their wives. … In Venezuela, if a woman was arrested driving, I mean, if you got stopped for something, if you were in an accident, it was the husband who went to jail, if there was jail involved. I mean, talk about lack of women's rights; you didn't even have the right to go to jail on your own. So, therefore, a lot of men would not allow their

wives, even though the wives had driven in the States, … to drive in Venezuela, and so, whenever I went to town, left the company camp and went to town, I had a car full of women, naturally, who wanted to go to [town], … the town being a little village. [laughter]

SSH: Was your husband gone often? What did his job as a company pilot entail?

JOS: Well, we lived, we were stationed, he was stationed, in Quiriquire. It was a company camp in the western part of the country and … the company offices were in Caracas, so, he would fly back and forth between those two places. Later on, that was when he worked with Esso. It was Creole Petroleum, was the Esso subsidiary in Venezuela. …

SSH: Did he ever fly to the States during those six months?

JOS: Oh, I would say he flew within Venezuela, basically, so, I would see him. You mean the six-months period … when I was in Atlanta? No, no, I didn't see him for the six months, and then, the company sent me down on a Grace Liner, Grace Liner cruise ship. … They used to have … combination cargo and passenger boats, the old Grace Lines. They had two hundred passengers. I had never been on a boat before, a ship, … and I had this infant. Well, Danny was thirteen months. It was so exciting and my car was on the same ship.

SSH: The car was with you.

JOS: The car was on the ship and our household things came later. So, we stayed in [company housing]. We used company furniture. [The] company had furniture that they let you use until your own things came.

SSH: Did they immediately send you out to …

JOS: Yes, to the camp, yes, because that's where Dan was flying. So, I immediately went, flew. …

SSH: Did he meet you when the boat came in?

JOS: Yes. He met us at the pier. We spent a day at Maiquetía. Maiquetía's the airport area of Caracas. It's a little village there. So, we stayed overnight there, and then, we went back on the company plane to Caripito, where it was stationed, and so, yes, we went right back.

SSH: How did you get your car to the camp?

JOS: The car, the car, how did we get the car to the camp? Now, wait a minute, that must have come in later. … That must not have been on the ship with me. You know, I don't remember how I got the car.

SSH: I wondered who drove it.

JOS: I know what happened. The car came in on a company tanker to Puerto La Cruz, which was a few hours from where we lived. That's how the car got there. I didn't have it immediately. It came later, yes, right.

SSH: Did you have to drive yourself?

JOS: No, no, no, I didn't. I didn't have to do that. I didn't have to drive from Puerto La Cruz. … Dan must have gone to get the car. You know, I don't remember that. I don't remember that at all.

SSH: I was just curious. You had been brave in driving from Atlanta to New Brunswick and into New York City, for a woman who never drove, and, now, you were in Venezuela.

JOS: … No, I didn't have to do that then. Later on, I learned to drive in Venezuela. [laughter]

SSH: Was the company housing adequate?

JOS: The company house that we had initially was an older one. They had newer ones and, [if you were] the new people, you came and you lived in this house. It didn't have real windows. It had screens, but, … if it rained, it was raining, and you had a blind that was opaque, a wooden blind, so [that] the house was very dark. So, they were old-fashioned houses and … you had your washing machine out on the porch. You had … wringer washing machines and, … of course, they were white and I had a cover on it, on the porch, and then, one morning, I took off the cover and there was this big, black tarantula on the cover. The insect life was a little different. I think if … you had moved from Texas, or the South, perhaps it wouldn't have been such a shock. You got acquainted with … different species. But, then, after you'd been there a while, you were eligible for one of the newer houses, and they built lovely new ranch-type houses, with servants, from one end [to the other] with big, screened-in porches, lovely, new houses, but you had to wait your turn to get one of those.

SSH: How many people were in the camp?

JOS: There were forty families in that particular camp, at Quiriquire, forty American families. Most of them were from Texas and Louisiana, because they were involved in drilling, because, at that time, they were drilling for oil. They were finding oil in Venezuela. So, these were petroleum engineers and geologists, mainly, and so, those were the people whose families were there and there was a clubhouse and you had maids to take care of the children and maids to clean and you could have a cook if you wanted to. There was a little commissary and one of the things the company plane did was bring things [in] every week from the main company commissary on the other side of the country. So, you had American food, as well as local food. It was limited, but, … certainly, it was fine and it was quite a social life, as you can imagine. We were all in our mid-twenties, basically, and it was very nice. It was a nice clubhouse and lots of dances and parties and theme parties and there was a golf course there. There were tennis courts. It was very nice. It was nice living.

SSH: How long did you live in Venezuela?

JOS: Lived in Venezuela …

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

SSH: This is side two of tape two. What did you encounter in Venezuela that was different?

JOS: Well, one of the things that was different [was], … when we moved from the larger camp, where Dan flew for Creole, which was an Esso subsidiary, they sold the PBY that he was flying. He was flying an amphibian and they no longer needed it and they sold it, and then, he got another job flying for Mobil Oil. It was called Socony-Vacuum then and it was not called Mobil Oil, and that was on the complete opposite side of Venezuela. It was on the western side. We were originally right on the eastern side, near Trinidad. So, this was on the western side of the country and there were only two pilots there in the houses. There were a lot of company houses, but they were no longer actively drilling. They were just looking for oil. So, that's why the camp, at that point, was not populated. They had a lot of petroleum engineers and geologists, but they were bachelors and they lived in the bachelors' quarters. So, there were just the two families there. Therefore, there was no school and the children were little. One of them was born, Tim was born, … in Venezuela, when we lived in Quiriquire. So, when it got time for Danny to be in kindergarten and first grade, we were still there and I had never taught. I had never wanted to teach. My mother kept saying, "Why don't you be a teacher?" … It just didn't interest me. So, what I did was, I found out about this correspondence school in Baltimore, called the Calvert School, which still exists, and they claimed that they would send you the manuals and the materials and everything you needed to teach a given grade and that they had a clientele of diplomats all around the world. So, that's what I did. I sent to them for the kindergarten course and the kindergarten course was a lot of construction paper stuff. … I don't sew and I don't do construction paper stuff. [laughter] Well, I learned how to do things. So, I used the kindergarten course for Dan and we did some pretty nice things in the kindergarten course. … They believed in teaching a child to read the first day of school and it was a sight reading then, and he learned to read, and he did such crafts as I could show him how to do and it was an excellent program. So, I did kindergarten and first grade. I did [that for], you know, a number of years. … The other pilot had four children and we had two, when we were in this little company camp in Barinas, in the western end, side, of the country with Mobil Oil, and, eventually, the company sent a schoolteacher for the six children, … when they were all school age. … There was a little, abandoned building that they used for the schoolhouse and they would go and get the bats out and they would go and hunt the crocodiles that were around and they had this really laid-back man, young man, Joe (Philbun?), from Worcester, as the teacher. Well, they had a ball. They had a wonderful time, those six kids, each one in a different grade, believe it or not.

SSH: Really?

JOS: Each child of the six. So, … then, I didn't have to teach anymore. I still taught kindergarten and I had my own second child, Tim, in kindergarten, and the other pilot's child, the youngest child, [who] was also Tim, and a couple of other people from outside the camp who had young children, who worked for Sinclair and other oil companies, who did not live in our

company camp. So, I had a little kindergarten for a year and that … helped keep me busy. [laughter]

SSH: How often did you get to go on vacation? Where would you go? Would you go home?

JOS: Well, … the company would pay, every two years, for you to go home. They'd pay your fare home. I managed to get home just about every year. What I would do [was], you could go in a company tanker for fifty dollars and that's the way I went. I went over to Puerto La Cruz and I would take a company tanker back and that worked fine for a while. I can remember being pregnant with the second child and … the cabins in the tanker were at the stern and there was a catwalk and you had all your meals with the officers. So, you had to walk this catwalk three times a day and, if you were pregnant, it was a little woozy, and [I] had a toddler by the hand. [laughter] So, that's the way I would go home the alternate years and, other than that, I flew home. I flew, usually, to Miami, and then, I went to New York, but I managed to get home almost every year, which was nice.

SSH: Did you have any opportunity to explore other places in Venezuela, besides the camp?

JOS: We did a lot of driving; we had a car. Yes, we did a lot of driving in remote areas of the country. The roads were all dirt and all subject to landslides and, you know, we went back about, oh, on my seventy-fifth birthday, which is about … seven years ago, or eight, and the older boys and their wives and I went back and one grandchild, and those roads were still the same. Some of those roads hadn't really changed at all. There were more paved roads and whatnot, but some of those roads out around Barinas, where we lived, … hadn't changed at all. We were amazed, and some of the bridges, one bridge was still flooded out; it used to always flood. It was still flooded when we went. So, yes, we saw a lot of Western Venezuela. I was itching to see more of Caracas. I wanted to get to the big city, but we did see a lot. We saw a lot because we were out there and there were just the two families and the men hunted and fished and we'd go up into the Andes. They had these fourteen-thousand-foot peaks in our backyard to look up on, snowcapped peaks. It was very remote. … The camp was actually on the savannah and [the] savannah was just a series of grass plains, so, the hunting was good. I hunted. I had a rifle and I used to hunt ducks, a sawed-off shotgun thing that I used to hunt with, and hunt quail. The boys, even when they were six years old, used to get quail and we ate them. …

SSH: How far apart are the boys?

JOS: … The boys were three years apart, those boys, and the second two, eighteen years later, were also three years apart. [laughter] … The older boys are sixty, fifty-seven and sixty, and the younger boys are forty-two and forty-five.

SSH: Amazing.

JOS: So, it was eighteen years between the youngest and the oldest child. [laughter]

SSH: Where did you go to have the second baby, Tim, I think you said?

JOS: The horror show? I stayed in Venezuela. It was a mistake. What people did mostly was go home, wherever they lived, but you couldn't; Pan Am wouldn't take you on their plane if you were more than seven months pregnant. So, you were really gone three or four months if you went home to have a baby and I decided I didn't really want to do that, that I would stay in Venezuela and have this baby in Venezuela. … That is, if it was the first baby, [I would not have]; it was the second baby, so, I stayed. It was difficult, because … it was a Venezuelan hospital. It was half-an-hour, on a … dirt mountain road, away from where we lived. They did have a couple of doctors who spoke English, but, unfortunately, this baby decided to come at midnight on Christmas Eve, and everybody in Venezuela celebrates, big-time, Christmas Eve, with guns popping off and balloons and all kinds of outrageous things. You go to Midnight Mass and all you hear are gunshot things. … So, there was a doctor on duty who did not speak English and, at that point, I hadn't been there very long and my Spanish was very minimal and you had to bring all your own baby clothes to the hospital, and sheets and blankets for your own bed, and we knew that. … It was a half-hour on this winding, dirt road to get to the hospital, but that's where Tim was born, his birth, Timothy O'Grady Sheehan. So, I cabled my father. … This was [the] second baby. He wanted a Kathleen this time and he never got his Kathleen, but I cabled him that, "Timothy O'Grady Sheehan was born on Christmas Day." Well, my father immediately named him, "Jesús," jeez. [laughter] So, anyway, it worked. There I was, with this new baby, and it worked, it was fine, but I don't think I would make that choice, the same choice, again. [laughter]

SSH: You had help with the house.

JOS: Oh, I had help with the house and I had help with the baby. If you were a bridge player, you were in seventh heaven. You could play bridge [all day]. They would start to play bridge at ten in the morning, in this large company camp in Quiriquire, not in the other one, but you would play at ten o'clock in the morning and they'd play all afternoon and, … I mean, I knew how to play bridge and that was about it. There was no way I was going to get involved in that. So, I did not play bridge, but the maids were very helpful. They were lovely. They were usually fourteen and fifteen and they loved the children and there were a bunch of them, so, they would dress the children up after their afternoon naps. We had all these lovely clothes for them. That's the way we dressed them, with little button-on starched suits that we didn't have to starch. … The maids would dress up their charges and take them across the (Cabrado?) Bridge, which was a swaying bridge over to the clubhouse, and they'd gather around the clubhouse and sit under a tree and visit and chat and watch their respective kids and push them on the swings. It was a pretty nice life. It was very social. Any time anybody went on vacation, there's a party before they go, there's a party when they came back, and, as I said, bridge was another dimension of the social side of it. There were cookouts. … There was a clubhouse and there were dances all the time and, for a young couple, I mean, we were all in our mid-twenties, basically, [it was nice]. There were a few older couples there, who maybe were [in their] late-thirties, and they didn't go to all these things like we did. [laughter]

SSH: Was there anything that you particularly had trouble with or needed to change?

JOS: Not really, not in that company camp. There was a lot going on in the company camp and you had a lot of friends and you did a lot of things. You could garden and I had my car. As I

said, I could go around to these little villages. When I went to Barinas, where it was much more isolated, there were just the two families, I really liked it better. I did what I really wanted to do. … I taught the children. I did a lot of reading. I taught them religious education and I had the maids, so, I could go with Dan on more trips, if there was space available on the airplane. So, I was able to travel more and I went hunting. We had a lot of picnics out in The Llands and it was interesting. Ten years, … or nine years, being in Venezuela was too long. It was too long a time, as far as I was concerned. I really do enjoy being near cities … and I did get to Caracas, but not as often as I would have liked to get to Caracas.

SSH: What kind of interaction did you have with the native population, other than the maids?

JOS: Not a lot, no, not a lot. It was strictly a maid. No, there wasn't a lot of … social interaction. … There was with the Venezuelan doctors. There was always Venezuelan doctors and professional people who were in the company camp; that was different. Most of them spoke some English and the maids learned some English, too, but, no, it was strictly an employer-employee kind of relationship with the maids, but a nice one, because they lived there and they had boyfriends and they would tell you about their boyfriends. The big thing was to get a marriage offer, because that was a big deal, when I lost my best maid, (Ramona?), to (Heronimo?), because he offered marriage. [laughter]

SSH: You did your own religious instruction with the boys. Did you go to church often?

JOS: We always went to church, but it was all always in Spanish, and, to teach them catechism, the old CCD kind of thing, I taught them. I taught them that, yes.

SSH: Did the boys learn to speak Spanish?

JOS: Some. They learned some, but not a lot. The children they played with were the American family [children] in the camp. I didn't learn very much Spanish. I mean, if I had to do it all over again, I would certainly have learned more Spanish while I was down there. I was busy with the children and I didn't. I came back here and, when I moved here, I went to the University of Bridgeport right away and took Spanish at night, so, I was able to [speak Spanish]. So, I learned Spanish, yes, after the fact. [laughter]

SSH: When you returned to the States, you came to Connecticut.

JOS: Yes. We came to Connecticut.

SSH: Was he still flying for …

JOS: He was still flying for Mobil Oil and he got a transfer. He asked for and got a transfer to their Westchester operation. That's where they keep their planes here. … The planes were kept at White Plains, in the airport there. So, therefore, we started to look at houses in that area first. We'd never owned a house; we'd never even owned furniture. We used company furniture. … He didn't go to Westchester right then. They had a hangar in Stratford and they had one airplane there and it was a DC-3, which he had had experience in, and then, we began to look for a house

when he got that particular job and we … began to look around the Stratford area. … We looked in Fairfield and, after looking, either way, we ended up with this house, here in Easton, a long time ago. [laughter] … Eventually, the airplanes, the whole airplane operation, was moved from Stratford to White Plains, but that didn't mean we had to move.

SSH: What did he fly then? What was his route? What was he doing?

JOS: He flew company executives and … the last airplane he flew was a Jetstar and they flew all over the United States. With the Jetstar, they could fly overseas, too, because he would fly to London and he would fly to Germany. … Mobil had a regulation saying the pilots had to put a hundred hours on any new airplane. So, the Jetstar was a new airplane, and he was allowed to take anybody on the airplane. They didn't use them for company passengers, for Mobil Oil people, until they had a hundred hours and they made sure it worked, but we were willing to try it out. [laughter] So, we had some nice trips on it and we went to Palm Beach once for lunch. … They had to put a hundred hours [in]. … Pilots were looking for places to go to get that hundred hours on the airplane and we flew to Germany one year, during this period, because the co-pilot had relatives in Stuttgart. So, we flew to Stuttgart and we spent three or four days in Germany, in Bavaria, which was very nice. … The pilots were supposed to use all the same dishes, food, caterers as they would if Mobil's president was on the airplane. We used the same stuff. So, we were well fed. We had the lobsters, we had the whole bit, and I know, when we went to Germany, Danny was in high school, and so, he served all the meals, all these lovely meals, to us that we were trying for the Mobil bigwigs. [laughter]

SSH: Did either one of you use the GI Bill?

JOS: I used the GI Bill to take Spanish at the University of Bridgeport. Dan used it up to a point, I've forgotten [when]. He used it. I don't remember what portion of his …

SSH: You said he went for eleven years.

JOS: Yes, he did. I don't remember how long it lasted or when the expiration [was]. There was a time limit for people like him on it, but he finished.

SSH: When did you have your "second family," so-to-speak? How long had you been back in the States?

JOS: Oh, we came back to the States in 1951 and these children were born, the last two were born, in '61 and '64, I think that's right, yes, '61 and '64. So, [in the] meantime, … I was going to go back; oh, I was going to have a big career. … I was going to teach. So, I went to Fairfield University and enrolled in a master's program at Fairfield University and, [in the] meantime, I was substitute teaching in the schools. … Fairfield University, at the time, required six weeks, or two months, or something like that, of full-time teaching before you could get your master's in education. … I asked to be excused from that, because I had a baby at home and that would … upset the whole rigmarole. Dan was gone a lot and whatnot. Well, they were pretty bad about it. They said, "No." …

SSH: However, you had already done all this teaching in Venezuela.

JOS: Yes, but that was not classroom teaching, *per se*. Yes, I'd done it, but they did not consider that, and I got my Irish up and I decided, "Forget it, I won't do it." [laughter] I'm sorry I didn't. Now, I'm sorry I didn't go on and do it, but, later on, I got long-term substitute jobs in the Easton School System. … At one point, I had Tim in my sixth grade class for the semester. That was interesting, especially since the previous teacher who left had been a much beloved man; you get your mother to come in, [laughter] but, anyway, I did that for quite a while.

SSH: Then, you proceeded to have another family, right?

JOS: Yes, and then, I had two little boys.

SSH: Are there any subjects that we should have covered or memories that you would like to share about Rutgers, New Brunswick, your career, or your time out of the country?

JOS: Well, I enjoyed being out of the country. I enjoyed being out of New Brunswick. I had grown up there and I liked it and I always enjoyed going back. I have cousins and lots of family who still live there and a sister who lives in East Brunswick, so, I have lots of roots in New Brunswick. … Since I played around the college campus, I'll be driving down George Street now, you know, and I remember all these things that happened in that era. My mother's house is still there, on Redmond Street. It's sort of rundown, the neighborhood is sort of rundown, but that happens, but the college is lovely. They've kept up the college. I go back to any kind of a reunion. I wish I would have lived a little closer, so that I could take advantage of some of the programs, the evening programs, they have, because they do have some lovely ones, but, any time there's something to do with my class or a reunion, I go back. It was a very lovely time. … My years at NJC were wonderful years. So, I enjoyed that and I go to all the Navy reunions I can. [laughter]

SSH: Do they hold reunions according to, say, whether you trained at Mount Holyoke?

JOS: No, no.

SSH: Are they just for women who served during the war?

JOS: … Yes. There's a … WAVE group, it's called WAVES National, kind of … a WAVE alumnae group, and they have meetings. It's a national group, but they have a Massachusetts chapter. We don't have a chapter in Connecticut any more and I still go to those meetings, their luncheon meetings, maybe twice a year. They have them, I think, four times a year. So, I still go and meet people there, but that's really the extent of it. I have a good friend, … I go to Florida in the winter, a good neighbor, a good friend in there, who was also in the WAVES. So, that's kind of fun. As a matter-of-fact, the kids gave me, for Mother's Day, a WAVE visor, a navy-blue visor with, "WAVES," on it, "World War II," which I thought was wonderful, and I thought it was a fun thing to have. So, I asked them where they got it and I got another one for this friend in Florida and I'm going to send it to her on her birthday. [laughter]

SSH: Have you been to the World War II Women's Memorial in Washington?

JOS: I was there. Yes, I have been there. They had a big reunion there. Oh, it was a long time ago. … I went down for the weekend and it was very well done, the whole thing was. It was a Friday, Saturday, Sunday. So, I saw the monument. … I met a lot of other people, not people I had previously known, however. … As I said, I was active for a while in that Massachusetts WAVE National unit, but that's the extent of it. Now, when you find another person who was in the WAVES, it's fun.

SSH: I bet it is.

JOS: Yes. Well, we did a lot of fun things. One of the things we did in Atlanta, that I thought was fun, [was], the service … wanted publicity and one October, during Fire Prevention Week, which used to be a big thing, … when I was stationed in Atlanta, the fire department; they had had that fire in Cocoanut Grove in Boston. There was a nightclub fire, a very bad fire, and, you know, I forget, this was 1944, at the time I'm talking to you [about], 1943, I think it was the previous year and a lot of people died. I think it was in the fall of '42 that the Cocoanut Grove fire [occurred] and it killed so many people, including so many college people, in Boston. [Editor's Note: 492 people perished in a massive fire at the Cocoanut Grove Night Club in Boston in November 1942.] … So, during Fire Prevention Week that following year, they asked if the WAVES, if the service women, would ride a fire truck, a hook and ladder, in a fire prevention parade and I was the WAVE that they chose to go. So, I'm sitting up on top of this hook and ladder, there's a picture around here someplace, with a WAVE, a Marine, and a WAC, I mean, a WAVE, a Marine and a Coast [Guard woman], a SPAR. Anyway, [we] go all over Atlanta and they went to all the nightclubs in Atlanta, the firemen did, with us, to talk about fire prevention. Yes, it was a fun thing to do and there were other PR things like that you did, some of them silly and some of them not. [laughter] …

SSH: What do you remember about when Franklin Roosevelt passed away?

JOS: Well, we were living in Atlanta. I was married and we were living in Atlanta and that funeral, oh, it was heartbreaking, absolutely heartbreaking when he died, the Commander-in-Chief died, and that train came very [slowly]. I remember it so well. We went down to the train station. That came through Atlanta, so, it made the whole trip so very slowly when it came through these towns. There was genuine mourning for this man. He was beloved, basically. He was a beloved leader and so many people's lives had been entwined with his decisions and his leadership.

SSH: Did the military organize any memorials that you remember?

JOS: Not that I remember. I don't remember that at all.

SSH: What kind of confidence did the military have in their new Commander-in-Chief, in Truman?

JOS: You know, I don't know. … I was a new mother. I wasn't really aware of [that]. …

SSH: What did your father think of Truman?

JOS: My father liked Wendell Willkie. [laughter]

SSH: He expected Al Landon to really have won, right? [Editor's Note: Alfred M. Landon was Franklin Roosevelt's opponent in the 1936 Presidential Election.]

JOS: Yes, he did, he did. He really expected Landon to win. We were never on the same side of the political spectrum, but he became more tolerant as he aged. [laughter] …

SSH: Was there any chance that your husband would have been recalled for the Korean War?

JOS: No.

SSH: I know that you were out of the country.

JOS: … Yes. There was another reason, too, about school. … Then, if you lived outside of the country, you were not eligible for the GI Bill of Rights. That's why Dan couldn't do anything all those years we were in Venezuela. So, he waited until he came back here. No, there really wasn't [any chance].

SSH: In other words, he had not stayed in the Reserves.

JOS: There was some reason he couldn't stay in the Reserves. He did not stay in the Reserves and I've forgotten why. You know, that's going to come to me, because there was a reason, whether it was the timing in connection with his job, the time he would have to spend drilling, two nights a month or something, or the summer program, because he traveled so much as a pilot for Mobil Oil, but, no, he did not stay in the Reserves.

SSH: When you went out to recruit women in these little towns in Georgia, did you see the Gold Star Mother flags? [Editor's Note: The Gold Star Mother flag was a flag that indicated that a family had a son in the service or that a son had died in the service.]

JOS: Yes, yes, I did, yes.

SSH: Did women join because their brothers or boyfriends had joined and they wanted to do something, too?

JOS: … That was a lot of the reason, or, … maybe, in a given family, there weren't any men, boys, and the family was supportive, in lots of instances. As I said, it was the men, at the beginning of the women entering the service, … who had difficulty with it. You know, some of them had been in service themselves and there were a lot of high jinx and whatnot and you can understand that. … "Yes, it was okay for the daughter or the girl-next-door, but not my daughter."

SSH: Right.

JOS: Yes, … but they all came around. The WAVES did a wonderful job as a group. They really created these women's services so that the men could go into combat. Of course, later, the women now are practically into combat. The women are flying, the women are doing all these things which they could not do at that particular time, but … we filled the gaps. We filled the recruiting jobs and the office jobs and a lot of the skilled radar kinds of jobs and the communication jobs that were so vital to the service.

SSH: You were specifically recruiting women.

JOS: Yes.

SSH: Your counterpart was usually an old chief who was recruiting men.

JOS: Yes, right, or there'd be a lieutenant, … an officer, recruiting officer candidates, men for officer candidates.

SSH: Did the standards change at all from the time that you first signed up to the end, as the casualties depleted the reservoir of manpower and more jobs opened up?

JOS: They didn't change. I don't know about the men, but they did not change with the women. They were still the same … education requirements and age requirements and physical requirements that were in place originally. … I'm sure, as the war ebbed, they didn't need as many [women], so, their goals were far less than at the beginning.

SSH: Was there ever any talk of disbanding the WAVES after World War II?

JOS: Oh, I'm sure there was, I'm sure there was. I think a lot of people thought that women in the service was a wartime phenomena and, "It was okay, because we were at war, but, now, you give your job back to this guy," whether it was in the factory over here, … building airplanes, or whatever it was. Women had a hard time in the '50s, as far as work was concerned. They could be wonderful parachute riggers or they could have become wonderful mechanics in the service, but, when those men came back from the service, they were guaranteed their jobs [in the] first place. The government guaranteed that they [would have] had the same jobs or an equivalent. So, yes, it was difficult. It was difficult for women, because there was a whole movement, … in the '50s, of "*Good Housekeeping*" kind of women, with house dresses and going back and taking care of the kids, which is what they were always all meant to do. "Thank you for serving during the war, but this is where you belong." So, women sort of had to fight that whole battle again. In a way, I think it was harder to fight it in the '50s. You didn't have a war to propel you into these new careers. I think that was far more difficult. I think it was.

SSH: Did your sister go to NJC?

JOS: Yes. She finished, but she got married midway through, so, I think her actual degree might be from Rutgers, because, then, she went nights.

SSH: Okay.

JOS: By then, she had a couple of children and, when she went back, it was to finish and she did finish, and then, she went to Rutgers and got her master's in library science and she became a school librarian in East Brunswick and that's the job from which she retired, after twenty-five years, and she still lives in East Brunswick.

SSH: Okay. I was just curious if, by then, it was okay with your father.

JOS: … Oh, yes. Oh, my father, yes …

SSH: Mellowed.

JOS: That was fine, because my father and mother used to baby-sit for her when she went at night to classes. Yes, she did it all. She did it the hard way. It wasn't easy to go at night [laughter] … and her husband worked nights, too, so that he couldn't help with the babysitting. So, it was either my brother or my parents who came out and helped with her, with the babysitting for Linda, yes, and she still lives in East Brunswick, yes.

SSH: Is there anything else that we should put on the record, for the history books, as they say?

JOS: Not that I can think of. I'm delighted that you found me. …

SSH: I was delighted to find you, too, because you fulfilled every expectation and more. If there is anything else, please add your memories to the transcript as they come to mind. Hopefully, we have jogged a few other memories.

JOS: Yes. It's fun to be able to go back and do this. I wish I had saved more memorabilia, more letters and things. I wish my mother had saved more, more letters, because, … for me, it's been an interesting life. At eighty-four, I've done a lot of things and I hope I'll have time to do more. [laughter]

SSH: Your mother, having worked in the alumnae office for all those years, would have had some wonderful stories.

JOS: She loved Rutgers. My mother truly loved Rutgers and she loved this man for whom she worked. I think his name was Ernie, but he was in charge of the Extension classes for many, many years and she was so loyal to everything Rutgers and she was really a fan of Rutgers. … [In the] first place, she loved going back to work. … She'd been at Michelin as a young woman, and then, when the babies came, when I came, she left Michelin. It had been years since she worked. So, she went to Drake Business School in New Brunswick and took a refresher course in her shorthand and typing and she was a crackerjack secretary and she knew the English language and she corrected our spelling and our speech. [laughter] So, she went back to work and the first job she got was at night at the Western Union, down on Albany Street, in New Brunswick. My father was furious, this Irish husband, "What would people think of his wife

working, and not only working, but working at night, in the ‘40s?” Well, then, she got the job at Rutgers after that and she stayed there, as I said, twenty years.

SSH: Was he a little more accepting of the Rutgers job?

JOS: Yes. He got very used to it. … It was a little hard for him to get used to women doing certain things, but he did. [laughter]

SSH: Thank you so much.

JOS: Well, you’re welcome. It was such a pleasure meeting you. I loved meeting you.

SSH: Thank you.

JOS: It was delightful. It was nice to be able to reminisce.

SSH: Thank you.

JOS: Yes.

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

Reviewed by Michael Perchiacca 11/6/06
Reviewed by Michael G. Johnson 11/6/06
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 12/19/06
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 12/20/06
Reviewed by Jean O’Grady Sheehan 03/20/07