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AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN G. SIMMS

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Stephen G. Simms on May 24, 2010, in Charlotte, North Carolina, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Simms, thank you very much for having me here today.

Stephen G. Simms: It's absolutely my pleasure.

SI: Wonderful. To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

SS: I was born in Charleston, West Virginia, October the 28th, 1940. Charleston, at that time, was the capital of the State of West Virginia, still is, but it was much larger, probably ninety thousand population, and, today, it's about sixty thousand population. West Virginia's had its difficulties, to say the least.

SI: Can you tell me your parents' names?

SS: My father's name was Fredrick Eugene Simms. He was one of four boys. … My mother's name was Helen Louise Gardner Simms, and she's also from Charleston, [her] family was raised there, grew up there, and they married. Both were divorced prior to marrying, and then, having myself and my three brothers--so, was a good life.

SI: What do you know about your father's family history, such as how the family came to settle in West Virginia?

SS: Well, the Simms Family goes back to pre-Revolutionary War out of the northern tier of Virginia, and they moved to West Virginia, then Virginia, back in the 1800s. My paternal grandfather was a judge in Fayetteville and in Charleston and, later, became the founding partner in the law firm of Simms, Simms, Simms and Simms, which included my two uncles and an aunt. My father went to Ohio State, but did not finish. We have a complete written history of the Simms Family in Kanawha Valley, Charleston area, West Virginia. I have it, if you'd like to see it.

SI: That would be great. I would like to see that afterwards. Is it a published work?

SS: It's published, by the State of West Virginia, in their historical archives.

SI: Okay, great. We can put the title in the transcript for our readers' reference. [Editor's Note: The West Virginia State Department of Archives published "The Simms Family in Kanawha County" in *West Virginia History Quarterly* dated April 1947 (pages 283 to 304). Simms' grandmother, Emma Anderson Simms, was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She also had her history published by *West Virginia History Quarterly* in January 1946 (page 109).]

SS: If they'd like, sure.

SI: What about your mother's side of the family?

SS: My maternal grandfather was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and his father was an immigrant from Hannover, Germany in the early 1900s. My great-grandfather was a butcher and he, the way I understand it, ended up with a lot of land, but lost it all during the depression in the 1930s. My grandfather had a taxi company, and he'd lost that in the depression as well. My maternal grandmother died in a car accident sometime prior to my memory. I understand that they were driving along and the latch on the door opened in a pretty old car, and she fell out. My grandfather never remarried after that and he ended up living with us. My paternal grandmother died when I was seven or eight years old, of cancer. So, I don't recall either grandmother at all. I vaguely remember my paternal grandmother, going to her house and she was sick. My Grandfather Simms, the judge, provided me fond memories. When we were really little, we'd go to the movie theater, cost five cents, and we'd stop by his office on Sunday and he would give us a quarter and we would talk to him for a while. Then, we'd go over to the hotel and get a milkshake. He'd always have some peanuts for us to eat.

Later, he had a stroke and lived for about three years after the stroke. He was about eighty years old when he died. His mind was completely lucid, his voice was very, very clear, but he lost his eyesight and his mobility. So, we had to move him into our house in Charleston and had a nurse with him during the day. We had to read to him, because he couldn't see, but he was a very, very smart guy. His mind was very clear, up until the time that he died.

My grandfather on my mother's side lived to be ninety-four. He lived with us for a long time as well, and it's interesting with the older families that parents moved in with the children. He later got a house right behind us, and even when he was older, Mother would cook his meals and we'd take them up to him, and so, we saw him quite a bit as well. The Kanawha Valley and Charleston was where everybody ended up, for some reason. I'm not real sure why the Simms Family moved from Virginia to West Virginia or why Herman Gardner, my maternal grandfather's family, moved to Charleston, West Virginia. That'd be an interesting story. I wish I knew it, but I don't know the answer.

SI: Were any German-style traditions passed down to your family through that line?

SS: No. My grandfather was born in the United States, so, to my knowledge, he didn't speak German. If he did, not to me. His wife, my grandmother, as I understand it, was Irish. So, you know, my mother was a completely indoctrinated, US, English-speaking citizen. So, she was of Irish-German ancestry, and, of course, I am as well. My father, on the other hand, was English and Scotch-Irish. So, I would say, no, there was no cultural difference for us.

SI: No different foods.

SS: No.

SI: Did your grandfather who lost the cab business in the Great Depression ever reestablish his business later?

SS: He later began working for *The Charleston Daily Mail*, which is one of two newspapers in Charleston. By the way, Charleston, West Virginia, still has two newspapers, for a city or town

of sixty thousand people--the county is 250,000--but, today, they still have two newspapers. Charlotte is a million and four [hundred thousand] population, has only one newspaper.

SI: The newspaper industry is slowing down.

SS: He was in charge of distribution as an employee and did not reestablish a business of his own. He was in charge of distribution of the newspapers in the Charleston area. I can remember, on Saturday night, he would load his car up with newspapers and go around to the drugstores and the places that dispensed newspapers and drop off new newspapers and pick up the old ones, and I would go with him. I would run in, put the newspapers down and pick up the old newspapers, the returns, as they were called. Afterwards, he'd buy me a comic book for my helping him. It was a great thing for me and my grandfather, at that time.

Matter-of-fact, I actually slept in the same room with him from the time that I was six, or maybe younger than that, until maybe nine or ten. Our house had four bedrooms upstairs, two of them very small. In the two small ones, we had two sets of bunk beds, one in each, and that's where the boys slept, whereas my parents had one of the bedrooms, and my grandfather had the other bedroom. Then, as I mentioned, my Grandfather Gardner moved out and my Grandfather Simms moved in and they added another room downstairs for my Grandfather Simms. So, that was for about a three-year period. Then, later, my parents moved into my Grandfather Simms' rooms after he died, and then, that gave us more room for the boys upstairs.

SI: You had three brothers.

SS: I had three brothers. My youngest brother was killed in a car wreck when he was fifty years old, but I still have two older brothers.

SI: Could you say their names for the record?

SS: My oldest brother, Gene, Fredrick Eugene, Jr., is a graduate of Rutgers, 1956, and he went on to University of West Virginia, got his master's degree, then, University of Cincinnati, has his PhD. He lives in Birmingham, Michigan, and he's still teaching at a community college. My second oldest brother, Robert Alderson Simms--Alderson is a family name--is in Greenwich, Connecticut. He's a graduate of Rutgers University, 1960. Then, of course, myself, and my youngest brother, Richard David Simms, attended Rutgers from 1960 to 1962, but he quit school and moved back to West Virginia. He started working to support his new family and did not finish college. So, all four of us did go to Rutgers, though, and three of us graduated.

SI: What did your father do for a living?

SS: He worked in various jobs. I can recall, he was with the Corps of Army Engineers in real estate acquisition. He was with the United States Post Office, also in real estate acquisition. He worked for a cemetery called the Spring Hill Cemetery, where he was the superintendent of it. I'm not quite sure of the timeline, but, then, later, he was a real estate broker. When I was in high school, he was with the cemetery. When I was in law school, he was with the Corps of Army Engineers, and, also, with the Post Office. While I was in college, I worked at the Post

Office during my winter breaks and one summer as a letter carrier. When I was in law school, he was with the Corps of Army Engineers in a little town called Fairmont, West Virginia on a temporary assignment. I could remember going down to visit him at his apartment. While I was in high school, all of us worked in the cemetery, digging graves or cutting grass, from the time that I was thirteen, during the summers. So, he had a variety of work experiences, but all of them were associated with real estate.

SI: Do you have any idea, for both your father and mother, how World War II affected them on the home front in West Virginia?

SS: Well, my father's three brothers were all in the military. My Uncle Philip, who was the oldest, was a captain in the Army. My Uncle Alderson was an officer in the Army, but I can't remember his rank. My Uncle Edward was an officer in the Navy. My father, because he had four children, didn't serve. He was born in 1908. In 1941, he would have been thirty-three. So, most of the people in the military, at that time, were young, but my wife's father, who was born at the same time as my father, did volunteer and he went into the Army Air Corps. Of course, my wife Marilyn will tell you that her mother was really mad that he did it, because he had two children as well, but he went in, nevertheless.

I can remember, times were tough. I was born in late 1940, so the war was over [when] I was five years old, but I can recall the ration stamps. They were protected like money, and I can remember, when the war was over, beating on pans out in our yard, you know, cheering, although I'm not really sure if I was completely aware of everything that was going on around me at that age, but it was a tough time, I know that for sure. We had a garden. [As] a matter-of-fact, one of the things I did was put the extra squash in a little, red wagon, and go around our neighborhood to sell the squash for five cents each. I made twenty-five or thirty cents and helped the family.

SI: How old were you when you sold squash with the wagon?

SS: Well, five, at the most. I mean, that probably continued after the war, too, I mean, because, you know that even though the war was over, the economy was still pretty difficult.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

SS: Not to my knowledge. I think she was always a housewife. Well, she had her hands full, with four wild and crazy boys, I mean. I can remember her making statements that she couldn't leave the house without one of us getting hurt. My oldest brother, Gene, ran a nail through his foot and he was actually on crutches for a long time, because it got infected, with rust on it. My brother Bob ran a pencil through his foot. I ran a nail into my knee--I mean, you know, just one thing after the other. We were always hurting each other. I can remember the BB gun battles that we used to have. [laughter] You did crazy things when you were little.

We lived in a little area called Capitol Hill in Charleston, West Virginia, and Capitol Hill overlooked the capitol. So, we had a great view of the valley. You know, Charleston's in the Kanawha Valley, which, during the war, was known as the chemical center of the United States,

had all these chemical plants. It started with Union Carbide, DuPont, Westvaco, Monsanto, Goodrich, Gulf, FMC Corporation, and I'm not even naming them all, but they were all chemical plants that were just lined up down the river in that valley. Of course, you couldn't swim in the river back in those days, because it was pretty bad, but some of us did anyway.

Capitol Hill is probably an area of a hundred families and a lot of them were my parents' age and all had children my age. So, we had a great experience, playing baseball and football on the side of a hill. We had this one field, that you wouldn't say, "Run to the left," or, "Run to the right," you'd say, "Run uphill," or, "Run downhill," and the same was [true] with baseball. You know, you'd just do whatever you could to keep from falling over each other and falling down the hill, because it was fairly steep. Sometimes, we played in the street. Capitol Hill was such a small, little area, everybody knew each other and no one ever locked their door--never any crime. Of course, that was pre-drugs and all that other stuff. It was a fairly homogeneous group. I think there was one black family that lived there and we were friends with the boys. I remember, their last names were Miller. The boys' names were Sonny and Porky. I don't know why they called him Porky, I'm sure that wasn't his real name, but that's what we knew him as. He played on our sports teams with us. We didn't know anything about segregation, although the schools were segregated until my junior year in high school, when they desegregated and they closed the black high school and moved all of their kids into the Charleston High School with us. It was never a problem, just never an issue. So, I never really understood all the turmoil that other cities and towns had with the race issue, because we just didn't have it. It was a good life.

SI: Was it mostly a working-class neighborhood?

SS: I would say so, or maybe middle to low-middle. There, I remember, my best friend, at that time--he's still living in Charleston--his aunt was the schoolteacher. His father always wore a suit, coat and tie. So, I'm not sure what he did, and my father always wore a coat and tie. So, I would say middle to low-middle management, and some working-class, blue-collar, but I really didn't think of it. I mean, I can remember, one man owned a paint store, and the reason I know that's because I used to go out and deliver circulars for him. He didn't pay me much, a penny a circular or something like that--probably wasn't even that much.

SI: It sounds like you started working very early on and were pretty industrious.

SS: Well, we had to. I don't think my parents had much money. I can't really relate to how much money they had, but we needed everything. I mean, my brothers all worked from the time that they could as well. I could show you a picture on our wall where we're working in the cemetery. We always had a summer job. My father was very, I think, concerned about us working and playing sports. He was at every sporting event that I can recall. If he missed one, it must have been an emergency or a problem, because he was at every track meet, every basketball game, every football game, for all my brothers and myself. He's always there to cheer us on, as was my mother. I mean, they were very supportive, and it was a good family life.

SI: You mentioned playing those games on the hill. How organized were sports when you were growing up? Was it mostly just kids organizing themselves or was there any kind of Little League-type structure around?

SS: We had Little League, and I played on a Little League baseball team when I was ten, eleven and twelve, but our neighborhood games were pickup games. We just show up and played. Then, we'd choose sides. I can't tell you how we chose sides. We had some adults in there playing with us as well, helping us get the sides together, and they were very supportive and helpful and some of them would actually play, not just coach. You know, our basketball court was on a dead-end street with an actual bushel basket. We didn't have a real hoop but put it up on a telephone pole and that was our basketball goal, but football games were all pick up until the seventh grade, junior high, at which time football, basketball, baseball, and track were organized.

I can remember, my first track meet was when I was in the fifth grade and we actually went to Laidley Field, which was the football/track field in Charleston. That's when we actually had organized sports from the school system. Little League was sponsored by businesses throughout the city. I remember, I played for the Woodrums Furniture and for the Park Pontiac teams. It was a good time.

I only played Little League for a couple years. My father was very protective of us. My younger brother was playing on the same team. I remember, the first game, I hit a homerun and, the second game, I remember my father talking to the coach and said, "Well, you're not playing Dick enough. He needs to be in there." Now, remember, he's two years younger than I, and I don't remember what the coach said, but my father said, "Well, if Dick doesn't play, Steve's not going to play," and that was the last time I played baseball. My father said, "Okay." He was trying to force Dick onto a team, which wasn't right, and I sort of truthfully didn't think that that was fair to me, but that's what happened.

Baseball didn't make any difference, though. I played football, basketball and ran track. Then, in tenth grade, I went out for the basketball team in the high school and I said, "You know, this isn't any fun," since I wasn't starting. So, I went to a church league and we were undefeated. Football was the big sport at that time.

SI: Was that your favorite sport?

SS: Yes, but I liked track a lot, too. I did a couple of things in track. I threw discus and the shot put and ran on the relay team. I played those three sports in high school. I held the high school record for discus for about thirty years. I didn't know it until this friend of mine, who still lives in Charleston, sent me a copy of a newspaper article with the records and still had me as the discus record holder for Charleston High School. [The] high school's not there anymore, so maybe I ended up being the record holder. Who knows? In the state championship meet, I was first in discus and third in shot put. I was all-state and leading scorer in the state in football.

SI: That is great. In West Virginia, was there one sport that was kind of the main sport? I think of Texas, where football is clearly *the* sport. Was there a particular sport in West Virginia that one longed to play or that was really popular in the community?

SS: I think football was *the* sport. It certainly dominated my life and my family's life and of my friends. There was a game every Friday night in the fall and people were there. You know, this is when television was very new. The first TV that I ever saw was when I was ten. So, it was really new. Most people didn't have a television. So, Friday night, they would go to the football game. It was their entertainment and, of course the NFL wasn't around, at least to any extent. Nobody really watched it. Baseball was big, though, especially Major League Baseball. I can remember my father-in-law watching baseball all the time. I mean, he loved it on TV. This is later on, though, but I think football was probably *the* sport. We had more football activity than any other, but a lot of people liked basketball and baseball. Track was a great sport for me, but it wasn't something a lot of people followed, as you might imagine, but it's great for exercise and conditioning. So, that's the reason I liked it, but, anyway, it was also a lot of fun.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your early education, your elementary school and junior high, where you went, your favorite subjects, that sort of thing?

SS: Sure. I started out in a one-room schoolhouse that had the first three grades in it, called Sunset Elementary, and it was on Capitol Hill. They had the first grade in one or two rows and the second grade in rows two and three, and then, the third grade in rows four and five, and the same schoolteacher taught all three grades. I thought it was great, but it was one room, one teacher, for three grades. That's where we stayed and then moved to Mercer Elementary School, which was grades four through six, and it was a long walk. It was near downtown and probably took about a half an hour to walk to it. We usually ran, and we had a long stairway to get us off the hill and to get us back up the hill. It was a concrete stairway that started at the top of the hill and went down to the bottom of the hill, and we'd run up those steps. I remember 208 because we counted them every time we went up and down. Mercer Elementary was a fun place to go. I remember, I was on the school boy patrol. They probably don't have it anymore, but we used to be the street crossing guards. They didn't have volunteer adults at that time. They'd give us a little sash that we wore across our chest, with a badge on it, and we'd control the traffic, so that kids could cross the street, and I did that in the fifth and sixth grade.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SS: But, Mercer was a fun place, where I met a lot of new, good friends. Of course, all of the people in Capitol Hill went to the same school. So, while it was a different school, it was with a lot of the same people. Then, of course, it mixed up with others from the immediate area as well. So, I made some new friends and kept my old friends. After that, I went to Thomas Jefferson Junior High School for grades seven through nine. This began my first experience with organized football. We actually wore leather helmets back in those days.

SI: No facemask?

SS: No facemask. Facemasks came along a lot later. I can remember that, when I was in high school, I got my first bar, because my nose had been broken twice. So, they gave me a bar and, by that time, we had different kinds of helmets, you know, the plastic or the fiberglass helmets, but, anyway, facemasks came along a lot later than that, I believe. In junior high school, I can remember the seventh grade [football practices] and we would go out real early in the summer.

This is pre-school starting, you know, prior to Labor Day, when schools typically started, and it was really hot and we'd go down to this practice field, which wasn't the kind of field that you would recognize today as a place to practice on, because it was rough and it had holes and clumps of grass and torn up turf. When I was in seventh grade, my next oldest brother was in the ninth grade, and I can remember this ninth grade fullback hit me as hard as he could, knocked me down, made me cry. I said, "Bob, why did he do that?" and he said, "He just wanted to see how tough you were." So, I'll never forget that. Here I was, seventh grade, so I must have been twelve years old. I started school when I was five. I weighed 125 pounds and was five-foot-two. By the time I was in the ninth grade, I was 175 pounds and five-ten. In other words, I grew eight inches and fifty pounds in two years--ate a lot of bologna sandwiches, I think. Then, I went to Charleston High School, which is one of three high schools in the Kanawha Valley. There was a Catholic school and another public school called Stonewall Jackson. They were our big competitors, and that was a great place. I still have our yearbook upstairs that brings back fond memories. Of course, that's where Marilyn and I first met. She was a year behind me in high school. We didn't date in high school, didn't date until after I was almost finished law school, as a matter-of-fact, but met her there for the first time. High school was a wonderful lifestyle.

SI: How large was it?

SS: Fifteen hundred students. Stonewall Jackson was probably the same size and the Catholic school was smaller, but we had about 450 in my high school class. I think I mentioned to you that we integrated my junior year and, probably, of the fifteen hundred students, maybe seventy-five or a hundred of them were black. They made our football team better, because there's some good athletes, as you can imagine. We lost one game my senior year and it was to Huntington East, I'll never [forget], which is a town about fifty miles away. Huntington is now the largest town in West Virginia. Charleston used to be. We had a good football team, a good track team, and a very good basketball team. We had three members of our basketball team who were All-State, one of them was an honorable mention.

SI: You mentioned that the integration went smoothly. Was that just on the students' level? Was there any opposition to integration within the larger community or in the city itself?

SS: I can't say for sure. I mean, I'm not really aware if there were or there weren't. We integrated far in advance of most other places. That would have been in 1956. I graduated in 1958. So, I can't answer that. The only thing I can remember that was a conflict was when some of the black guys tried to put the moves on some of the white girls. Several of us told them to stop and they stopped. Maybe, today, there wouldn't be an issue, but, at that time, it was. The community wasn't integrated, because most of the black people lived in one area, as is not unusual even today, and most of the white people lived in other areas. The black community wasn't that large. I don't recall any specific instances, no riots or disharmony to my recollection at all. I mean, it was very smooth, I believe.

SI: In terms of classroom work, what interested you the most?

SS: Well, I was always college prep. I mean, they didn't have the AP classes that they have today, but they had shop and woodworking, and then, they had college prep. I did have a

woodworking class in junior high, which I really enjoyed, as well as a printing class in ninth grade. I liked math the best of all. I took Latin. I didn't like Latin much--couldn't speak it. [laughter] Later, when I went to Rutgers, I took several more years of Latin, because you had to continue taking a language. I should have taken something worthwhile, like French or Spanish. Spanish would have been the best language to take, obviously, but I liked math and history best.

I wasn't a great student, but I was a "B" student. I was in the top quarter of my class. I can remember that pretty vividly. My algebra teacher gave me a "C+" one time and I went back to her and pled my case and she changed it to a "B-." I promised her then [that] I wouldn't let her down. Then, I got "A's" thereafter. I mentioned to you in the pre-interview, I have always liked history. I think history is fascinating. Geography was one of those things that you had to take. I remember, my English teacher might have been my favorite teacher of all. I can still remember, her name was Mrs. Steadman. I was walking down the hall one time. She looked at me and said, "Steve, tuck your shirt in," and I said, "Yes, ma'am," and I tucked my shirt in. Can you see that happening today in the schools? Different world, but, you know, you'd do anything the teachers told you to do back in those days, and it was really [ideal]. I wish it could go back to that way, in a lot of respects.

SI: Was there anything like a dress code?

SS: No. We wore blue jeans and T-shirts, like the students today, but the clothes were always neat and clean. Maybe some of the kids wore khakis. I remember, I wore blue jeans, because that's probably all we had. When we had proms, a coat-and-tie were required. My coats were always hand-me-downs from my older brothers, you know--couldn't wait until they'd graduate or move on, so that I could get their clothing items from them. I mentioned that I worked in the cemetery in my high school career, digging graves, and, after a funeral, we would take some of the orchids. My father would have them made up into corsages and we gave them to the girls for the formal dances. There weren't many of them, but that's the way we got our corsages to give to the girls. They were going to throw them away anyway, so it wasn't like it was hurting anybody.

I was president of my fraternity my senior year. We had two fraternities in the high school and our fraternity had sponsored a spring dance and it was called "Spring Has Sprung." The girls had sororities and they had dances as well, and that's the way most of the formal things took place, either through a fraternity or a sorority. I know that the high school had a prom. We did not have that in junior high school. In junior high school, we used to go to the YMCA or the YWCA for Friday night dances. We had a great swimming pool in Charleston, West Virginia, called Rock Lake, and that pool must have been, I don't know, a couple acres with several big sliding boards, real high ones, and swings. During the summer, we'd always go to the pool to go with our girlfriends. I remember being there in the seventh and eighth grade, but I had to take a bus to get there. It was worth it to go there on a Saturday or Sunday and run into all your friends at the swimming pool.

SI: Before you left West Virginia for Rutgers, had you ever really traveled much outside of Charleston?

SS: I went to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, between my junior and senior years with my friend and his family, and that was the first time, to my knowledge, that I was outside the state. We traveled within the state to football games. You know, we'd go to Bluefield and Huntington, Parkersburg and some other places, but my recollection is, I had not left the state, although I could [easily] be in Ohio, or Kentucky, sixty miles [away]. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina was a ten-hour trip. I remember, it took all day and it's hot, pre-air conditioned cars, middle of summer, but it was the only time that I could recall, prior to going to college, that I went out of state. I can remember driving to college with this friend of mine, a guy who went to Stonewall Jackson High School, our competing school across town. He went to Rutgers as well. My father became a big football recruiter for Rutgers. We rode to New Brunswick together. Both of us got homesick on the way up. [laughter] I mean, we had only left that day and we were already homesick, wondering if we're going to be able to make it and last that long. I was seventeen at the time. It seemed like it was really a traumatic event, to go away to college.

SI: What was his name?

SS: His name was Jack Berger. Later, he flunked out or left Rutgers, and then, he went back to West Virginia Wesleyan. Then, later, we regrouped in law school together. He was now two years behind me. We started out together, but he ended up two years behind me in law school, and I think he became a lawyer for NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] in Nashville. Last time I talked to him, that's where he was. It's been, probably, three or four years since I talked to him last, though we were good friends then, but you lose track of [people]. Another one of my best friends and freshman roommate at Rutgers, fell out also and I lost track of him completely. You hate to see people leave school, but, probably as today, when we stood there in one of the big halls, [during] our freshman orientation, they say, "Look to the left and look to the right. Only one of you are going to be there at the end of your senior year," and I think that's the way it was. A lot of people fell out. I can't remember how many started out, but let's say there were a thousand--probably more than that, probably twelve, thirteen hundred, started out my freshman year--and ended up with four hundred or so.

SI: Yes. I am not sure. We can look up the actual number, but that seems to be the way it went. They took in a large freshman class, and then, they would whittle it down to maybe a third or half of the original number by the senior year. Could you tell me a little bit more about the fraternity in high school, how you got involved in it, and what role fraternities played there?

SS: Fraternities were [playing] a significant role, interestingly enough. We had a meeting every Sunday some place, usually at somebody's home.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SS: The fraternities were pretty much the social scene for high school. As I mentioned, we had two fraternities. We met every Sunday, then, we would go out later and met at a drive-in restaurant. One was called, at that time, Bob Phillips and the other one was called the Parkette, and the Parkette later became Shoney's. Alex Schoenbaum lived in Charleston, West Virginia, and he started a little firm called the Parkette. He expanded, they opened up a couple more, and then, he wanted to go out of state, into Ohio and some other places, but a competitor had the

name Parkette. So, he had to change the name and he had a contest for people to name his restaurant chain, and it later became Shoney's. So, we used to go out and hang out at Shoney's or Bob Phillips, which was, you know, a carhop thing. They didn't have speakers. They'd actually come up to your door, take your order, then, go back and get it. We used to cruise those drive-in restaurants looking for friends and come up with something to do. There wasn't a whole lot to do during the weekend otherwise. So, fraternities filled that role, gave you something to do. Formal parties, we had our fraternity parties and we had our spring dances and there were actually dues collected. It was a formal thing, and I was elected president in my senior year. I can remember, the president junior year was a guy by the name of Bobby Lance, who was a good guy, too, and that was, you know, pretty much the way it went. I actually ran for an office. I ran for president of my class, too, but I was defeated.

SI: What was the name of the fraternity?

SS: You know, I don't know if I can remember. I'll tell you what--I can get the yearbook out and show it to you. It'll have the name in it.

SI: Was the name comprised of Greek letters?

SS: Oh, Greek letters, yes.

SI: In very rough numbers, what percentage of the high school would be in a fraternity?

SS: Probably a small percentage. If we had 1450 students in three years, three classes, probably fifty were in each fraternity.

SI: Okay, not too many.

SS: Yes, maybe, you know, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen from each class. So, it wasn't a large number, and probably same was true about the sororities, but, then, you had the majorette corps and the cheerleading corps. They had their things going on as well. The football team, the basketball team and track team, we weren't organized for social things, but the fraternities were where a lot of our social activity came from.

SI: What position did you play on the football team?

SS: Well, when I was in junior high school, I started out, because I was a little bit bigger than the other kids, I was started out as a tackle. Then, when I went to high school, in tenth grade--I think I mentioned to you, when I was in ninth grade, I was 175 [pounds], five-ten--I asked the coach if I could try out for fullback. He said, "Sure," he said, "this is open." So, I tried out for fullback and I became the fullback for the next three years, and linebacker on defense. [It was] sort of interesting how I made that transition, because, you know, I probably wouldn't have been big enough for a tackle later on, although, in high school, I was big enough, you know, 195 pounds by then. People weren't that big back in those days. I think our biggest tackle was maybe 215 [pounds] and some of the guards were smaller than that, but I just tried out for it and I made it and that's how it ended up.

SI: You said the big rivals were the two high schools in town. Were there other rivals?

SS: Oh, yes, there were two high schools in Huntington, which were Huntington East and Huntington High, which were fifty miles away, Parkersburg, which is about seventy-five miles away. It was one school for the whole area, so, it was a big school, and they were probably our hardest school to beat, because they had more students. Then, there was Bluefield and some other smaller schools, but Stonewall Jackson was the biggest rival, then, Huntington. Both the Huntington schools were probably [our] second biggest rival. You know, you had--I can't remember whether it was a nine or ten-game season. We played everybody once, and we were not state champions, because we lost that one game. Somebody was undefeated. I think it was Huntington East was undefeated, but it was still a good season. We had a lot to be thankful for.

SI: If you could recall your most memorable game in high school, what would that be? You can bring up more than one example.

SS: You know, I don't know if I could recall a most memorable game. I can probably recall the first time I got my nose broken, [laughter] was a memorable game, but I was very fortunate. We had a good team. I think I mentioned to you, I was playing fullback, so, I was able to score a lot of touchdowns. Matter-of-fact, my senior year, I had more touchdowns than anybody else in the state and was elected to West Virginia All-State. All the games sort of went together, I mean, one right after the other, it seemed like. I don't have any special game, one that stood out more than others. They were all hard. I remember how sore we used to be afterwards, how, you know, you just have to limp around, because you're always bruised, and I got bloody a lot. I can remember, after some of the games, I would go home, or, I can remember, particularly, one time, I went out with my girlfriend at that time and all I could do is just lay there. I mean, I was in such pain that I couldn't move, but, as far as one game versus the other, they were all important, they were all good and they were all hard. I can remember, one of them was played in the rain. It was awful, awful conditions to play in, but we did it anyway. As I mentioned, my parents were always there and you always had a good support group, you know, cheering you on and trying to make things better for you. You know, we rode a team bus to the game, if it was an away game, and there was a lot of camaraderie, a lot of good friendships, but all the games sort of went together as far as one being better than the other. [I] wish that I hadn't lost that one game and would have been state champions, but didn't happen. So, that's the way it went.

SI: Today, even in high school, they have a heavy practice schedule and they have summer practices. Was there a lot of that in your day?

SS: Well, even when I went to Rutgers, there was no spring practice, no pre-season practice, but, in high school, there clearly wasn't any other practices, other than pre-season. That's the reason you did track or baseball in the spring, you know, for conditioning, and, I mean, I didn't think of it as that being the reason. I mean, we just always had a sport, you know. I played basketball in the winter and did track in the spring, and worked in the summer. I think I mentioned, I worked digging graves from the ninth grade until my twelfth grade. One year, I worked on road construction. In college, I worked for a refiner, taking oil and gas tanks out of [the ground] and planting tanks, you know, for gas stations. We'd take them out, put them in, and a lot of manual

labor involved. That was pre-big machinery. There was some machinery, but not a lot. In the graveyard, for example, we had to dig by hand and we'd use jackhammers and dynamite when we hit rock. Today, they just use backhoes. They come in, dig a grave in ten minutes and it's finished, but, back in those days, it would take us a half or three-quarters of a day, depending on how much rock we hit, whether we had to blast it or jackhammer it. It was all hard, manual labor. We were in great physical condition, and I really attribute that to some of my success in sports, just the hard labor.

SI: Were there other aspects of your job in the cemetery, aside from all the manual labor that you described, other things that you had to do to help your father out?

SS: Well, now, I was actually working for him, he was superintendent, but I didn't actually report to him, because he had a foreman that we worked for, but, in addition to that, we used to take on side jobs, mowing people's grass around their grave plots. We had to mow--I think I had seventeen different grave lots that I would mow every week. So, after work, I would go out and mow those lots, made extra money that way, but, no, after work, we would go home and do whatever we had to do. I mean, it was summer, it was hot. My mother would fix our lunch, and usually each of us would have four sandwiches, bologna or something else, and a gallon of Kool-Aid. We would share the Kool-Aid and have our own sandwiches.

I ran into some interesting characters there. One of them was called Saginaw Henry. He was a black guy and he drove the truck. You know, there was one big dump truck, and he was really a character. All he talked about was going to Saginaw, visit relatives or something. That's the reason we called him Saginaw. Then, there was another guy called Carp and he was a foreman. We had to do what he told us to do, and most of the people that worked there were country guys. You know, they came in from outside the town and, you know, they wore their bib overalls and [were] just working guys, and they would all just make fun of us younger kids. We were kids, but they treated us really well. I mean, they made fun of us, but we worked real hard, so, they never mistreated us, and I really liked working there. I mean, it was good experience, for the summer, but, no, I didn't have any other responsibilities beyond that.

SI: Were your parents--and you and your brothers, as you got older--involved in the community, community activities, volunteer activities, politics, maybe?

SS: My father was involved in politics, to an extent, not as a candidate. I think he did run for city council one time and did get elected. He was on the city council, one term. The other thing we did was build a church, a Presbyterian church, up on Capitol Hill, and he was very involved in that. I can remember him acquiring the land for it, and then, helping in the construction of it. Then, he became disenchanted after certain ladies took over and started running it and he was out of there after that. So, then, I started going to First Presbyterian Church, which is downtown. All through high school, I'd go down to the First Presbyterian Church, although Sunset Presbyterian, which is very close to my house, was the church that I actually worked on. I mean, I actually physically got out and leveled some land and, you know, didn't lay any brick or cinderblocks or anything like that, but I actually worked on it. Another thing we did in back of the church, we leveled it down to make a tennis court, and that was really hard work. [I] remember just a bunch of young boys out here with a wheelbarrow and shovels and picks

leveling this [area]. You know, everything in West Virginia is sort of hilly and not level, but we moved that dirt and leveled it off, made a tennis court in the back of the church. My brothers and I built a tennis court in our backyard one time, too. My oldest brother Gene was really involved in tennis. We had our garden during the war--I guess we had a couple of acres of land--and it was on the side of a hill, but we got out there and, you know, moved the dirt from the high area and put it into the lower area and leveled it off and made a tennis court. It [was] probably one of the levelest pieces of land on Capitol Hill at that time. [laughter] That was an interesting facet. I don't think we ever really played much tennis though, because, after we got it leveled off, we couldn't really afford to buy a net, you know, the net that goes across for the tennis. We had tennis racquets and we'd hit the balls, but we didn't have a net to put up there, so it didn't work out well.

We used to have a lot of [pets]. When I was growing up, we had all kinds of animals there. When I was six, we had a horse, [its] name was Rex, and my favorite story about Rex is that I claimed him to be my horse. We just had him for a summer, because we didn't have a barn to keep him in during the winter. We had a holly tree and something spooked him and I was on his back and he just took off. As we went under the holly tree, instead of leaning forward, I had to lean backwards. [laughter] So, after my father finally caught him--and me--I had all these scratches all over my [body]. I was bare-chested, I didn't have a shirt on. I had all these scratches all over my face and my stomach where he'd taken me under that holly tree, and you know how sharp those thorns are, and just made all these little scratches. We also had a goat. We had all kinds of dogs, every kind of dog you can imagine, from Doberman Pinschers to Boxers to Collies, and even, one time, we had a sparrow hawk.

My brother found this fledgling. We had this hawk and, actually, my mother fed him. We used to feed him hamburger and anything that we could feed him and he grew up. I mean, he would fly off and come back and land on my mother's finger, and, finally, one time, he flew off and didn't come back. We had white mice, we had gerbils. We didn't raise them, we just had them, you know, for pets or for something else. My grandfather did raise chickens, not in our backyard, but, I mentioned to you, he had a house behind our house and he raised chickens. I can remember having a chicken dinner one time and, before we had that dinner, he went out to his yard and I went out and watched him and he grabbed a chicken, took him by the neck and just wringed it, you know, just spun the chicken around. The neck flew off and that chicken just ran around. If you've never seen that, it's really a wild thing, a chicken with its head cut off. It's really unbelievable. We had little ducks one time from Christmas--no, Easter ducks--you know, just little ones. My brother Gene, we had a bow and arrow and he shot the arrow straight up in the air and it came down and impaled this little duck right in the middle of the ground. The little duck was just stuck, and, of course, my mother was really mad at him for doing it. Of course, shooting an arrow straight up in the air, we could see it, but what if it came down on one of us? We did all kinds of crazy things. Gene was also a discus thrower. He's four years ahead of me, but, one time, he took one of the weights off of a set of barbells, was out in the yard practicing his discus and unleashed it and it came right through the window of our house. I mean, that's the kind of neighborhood and house that we lived in. We did some really crazy things. When I was twelve, Gene decided to enroll me in the soapbox derby and we worked all summer building this soapbox derby [racecar]. I guess they still have it, don't they, the soapbox derby races?

SI: The ones where you build little cars, yes.

SS: Yes. Well, we had this sleek-looking car. I mean, it was really, really pretty looking. We used to get out there with the wheels and roll them and spin them, you know, get to work on the ball-bearings and oil them up, and I won the first race. In the second race, this kid and I locked wheels, and so, somehow or other, to get loose, one of us had to go one way and the other had to go the other way. I ended up crashing my soapbox derby [car] and broke it, broke the thing up and destroyed it. So, we weren't even able to keep it after the race. It was sort of heart rendering, after all that work we went into building that soapbox derby [car], to have it wrecked like that, and [it was] my fault. That's what happens. We were always into something, though.

SI: We can come back to your childhood in West Virginia at any time, but I wanted to ask how the relationship with Rutgers began with your family, leading into your going to Rutgers.

SS: My brother Gene was really, is, the smartest in the family. Now, he would resent me saying this, but he could read a book and remember it almost verbatim. Matter-of-fact, I was told stories that, during fraternity parties at Rutgers, everybody else'd be partying and he'd be sitting there studying and just had a focus, that he could just absorb it all. The part that he'd resent is that I sometimes thought he didn't have any common sense, because he'd leave his money laying around, couldn't find it, you know. He [was] sort of an absent-minded professor. I mean, that's the way we used to view him. I mean, he's really smart, but, sometimes, he was so focused on his education that he'd forget other things. He was a good athlete, played guard on the football team, was on the track team and had really good grades. So, we couldn't go to college without a scholarship and I think he had a couple offers and he was thinking about going to McGill in Canada. I don't know, my father had a friend that went to Rutgers and he said, "Gene ought to go to Rutgers." Harvey Harman was the coach. So, my dad contacted Harvey Harman some way. Rutgers did not give athletic scholarships, but they gave a merit or academic or alumni scholarships, as they called them, and you didn't have to play sports, but they expected you to be involved in extracurricular activities.

Well, anyway, Rutgers gave Gene this scholarship and he went and he loved it. It's six hundred miles from our house and you had to drive. There were no interstates back in those days. The Pennsylvania Turnpike was in existence, but it was a long way to get to it. It's a twelve-hour trip each way. So, he went, and then, my father really became thankful for Rutgers, to give him that scholarship, and he became really involved in Rutgers, sort of adopted it as his school. So, my brother Bob came along and he's a good "B" student. He was an All-State football player and he had several offers, but he wanted to go to Vanderbilt and had a scholarship offer to go to Vanderbilt, to play football, and that's where he wanted to go. My father and my older brother prevailed on Bob, who was offered a scholarship at Rutgers as well, along with some other places. So, he went to Rutgers as well.

Then, I came along and I was a "B" student and I interviewed a lot of schools and had several offers. I went to visit Pittsburgh, Wake Forest, Duke and Rutgers. Those are the four that I visited, and could have gone to any of them if I wanted to. Matter-of-fact, I can remember Art "Pappy" Lewis, the coach at West Virginia, came to our high school awards banquet. He said, "Simms, you know you have a scholarship at West Virginia if you want it," and I said, "Thank

you, Coach," but I didn't even go visit and that was the total conversation about that one. I wanted to go to Duke. I loved it. I mean, I loved the campus, loved everything about it, and it was actually closer to home, maybe eight hours instead of twelve hours.

My brothers took me to a weekend at Rutgers. I went to the Columbia game in New York and they introduced me to my first alcoholic drink, and, I can remember, it was a Brandy Alexander. We were at this restaurant and my brother Gene says, "Have a drink, Steve," and I said, "Well, I wouldn't know what to drink." I said, "I don't think I like, you know, alcohol," or I didn't drink beer or anything, and he said, "Well, have this Brandy Alexander." So, I had one and, I can remember, probably had two or three of them, got sick as a dog, but I had a great time. Here were my two older brothers there, and Gene was getting ready to graduate, but Bob would have been a junior as I was a freshman, and he had a car and it was close to New York City and that was really interesting to me--told you, I hadn't been out of the state. I did go out of the state to visit those colleges when I was a senior in high school, but, so, I remember doing a pro and a con list on both Duke and Rutgers and ended up going to Rutgers, for whatever reason. I mean, I can remember a lot of reasons I wanted to go to Duke and a bunch of reasons I wanted to go to Rutgers and Rutgers won out, but it was a men's school and that was a negative, because, I can remember, we used to stand out on College Avenue, hoping a girl would drive by. I mean, it was a lonely life, just a bunch of men. [laughter] It's changed a lot, hasn't it?

SI: Yes.

SS: At Duke, they had ladies who were really cute, and I can remember talking to two of them who were ahead of me in high school and, I mean, they were really gorgeous. That's one of the reasons I wanted to go to Duke, and then, later, my brother Dick came along and it was just sort of a given. I don't think he ever really considered going any place other than Rutgers, and did. He played sports and he was good. He was faster than the rest of us, and except for that event with the lady, he would have done fine, except he dropped out and didn't finish. So, Rutgers has, you know, captured us and it all just started with my oldest brother Gene, who was smart enough to get a good scholarship. Then, we all followed thereafter, went into the same fraternity, Chi Psi, and I think it was a good life. I mean, there are a lot of things I didn't like about it, you know. Driving up there and driving back was really hard. Especially in the earlier years, you're always homesick. You couldn't run home for a weekend. You probably went home for weekends, when you were [at Rutgers].

SI: Yes.

SS: [laughter] I couldn't do that.

SI: Twelve hours is a bit much.

SS: It was a lot much, [laughter] but we'd drive home for Christmas. We didn't go over spring break, because, I remember, two spring breaks, we went to Florida. A bunch of guys just jumped in the car and drove down to Fort Lauderdale. I don't know if they still go to Fort Lauderdale or not, but, for spring break, that's what we did then--probably go to Cancun now.

SI: People go all over, to Panama City, and so on. You described that car ride going up, that you were homesick before you even got to Rutgers. What about your first few days and weeks at Rutgers? What was it like?

SS: Oh, I thought it was really hard. Of course, we went up early for football practice. That started before the school started. So, we'd get out there two or three weeks before and that probably helped going through school, but, then, we had what they called two-a-days. You practiced for two hours, take a break, go back out for another two hours, and we lived … at "The Heights," [now Rutgers' Busch Campus in Piscataway, New Jersey]. That's what they used to call it, in an old barracks-type building. Those things aren't there anymore.

SI: I think some of them may still be there. [laughter]

SS: But, they had a lot of married students that lived up there, too, in these, and, when I say barracks, they really were barracks for the military.

SI: Camp Kilmer.

SS: Yes, exactly, and so, we stayed up there for the first couple weeks, and then, my freshman year, … when school started, we moved to campus, and they made us wear these funny little hats called dinks. They still do that?

SI: No.

SS: Well, that was awful. I mean, the sophomores'd harass you. I guess that was their fun. A sophomore'd say, "Your dink is on crooked," and try to make you do silly things, and I thought that was [bad]. I didn't like that, but, other than that, other than being homesick; well, that was the part I didn't like. Then, I went into the fraternity, Chi Psi, which I really loved, being in a fraternity, but they had crazy stuff that I didn't like. I mean, I was trying to play football in the fall and they would make you do all kinds of crazy things. I remember, there was no paddling--there was no physical harm in any of these events. Most of them were just humiliating, you know, just verbal hazing and making you do silly things. I can remember one thing I didn't like--in [the] fraternity, whenever you would smile, you'd have to dip your face in water, then, dip it into flour, and then, that would cake on and, if you smiled again, it would crack. So, I was always having to re-dip my face and, finally, the one guy, I ended up disliking him, because he hazed me so much. They put food coloring in my food and I didn't like that. So, I wouldn't eat the food, and I can remember, they had to slip me back into the kitchen after dinner a couple times to give me some food, because I wasn't going to eat the food with food coloring. Really, sort of independent and silly myself, but I just didn't like it and I wasn't interested in putting up with it.

Then, when I was a sophomore, I ended up doing the same thing to the freshmen as they came in, so, sort of self-perpetuating, but we really didn't do anything bad. Nobody was hurt, and, you know, if you could have done without that stuff, I thought it would have been a better acclimation to starting school. You know, you leave your home, you know, your bosom of your mother, and your friends and family, and you're off by yourself. All of a sudden, you get up to

college, where it's a big, scary place. For me, I was a babe in the woods, lost, and then, you're hazed. So, it was sort of multiple trauma for me, but, anyway, it was short-term, not harmful, but it worked out well, and I, you know, got a great education at Rutgers. So, what can you say?

SI: Was there any of that in relation to the football team, when you first got on the team?

SS: No, there wasn't, no, not at all. Now, I did try out for the [NFL's New York] Giants and there was then. Rookies had to put on a show. The veterans hazed the rookies a little bit, but I wasn't there long enough to be hazed very much. I mean, they didn't really haze me, but we did have to put on a show, which was sort of silly.

SI: What would the show consist of?

SS: Well, it was some sort of singing and dancing-type thing, I mean, dressing funny. I think we had to put on a lady's skirt or something like that, to just make the veterans laugh. Again, it was no physical harm, was just a humiliating type thing. It was all in good fun. In retrospect, it was all in good fun, but, when you're the victim of it, and I'm going to call myself a victim, [laughter] you didn't like it much, but, no, that was the only part that I didn't like. You know, the other parts, the fact that there weren't any girls there, bothered me a little bit, but that's gone. I mean, that's changed. That's the way it was with all men's schools, and girls' schools, I presume. [I] think if I had to do it over again, I might have gone to a school that had had some ladies there, but I didn't.

SI: Did you have much interaction with Douglass?

SS: Well, some. I actually dated a couple girls there and enjoyed that, but they used to say that--and this is no disrespect to the ladies at Douglass--but they used to say, "Ninety-nine percent of the women in New Jersey were pretty and the other one percent went to Douglass." [laughter] Douglass was a good school, I mean, really smart, intellectually, you know. They had some really smart people there and I did find a couple pretty ones, but, for the most part, they weren't pretty. [laughter] I didn't think, you know, and this is a stereotype, I guess, but, you know, it seemed like Northern people--and I wasn't really a Southern person, but they used to call me "The Reb," you know, for rebel, because of [the Civil War]. West Virginia wasn't a Southern State, but, you know, Virginia was. Virginia was part of the Southern rebellion until 1863. That's when West Virginia became a state, right during the Civil War. They used to call me "The Reb," and it seemed like all the girls in the South were blondes and attractive and seemed like a lot of the girls in the North were darker hair colors, and it's probably a false stereotype, but that was what we were led to believe, for whatever reason.

SI: Were there other manifestations of culture shock between West Virginia and New Jersey?

SS: Well, only what I said, was that they used to call me "The Reb," and they used to make fun of the way I spoke, but nothing, nothing of significance. I mean, it was more of a culture shock for me, because [I] tried to acclimate myself to the different environment, most of it being college and being away from home, as opposed to the school itself or the people. I mean, I really ended up learning to like everybody I met and loved it. I would have stayed in New Jersey had I

not gone to law school or had to go to the military, because by the time I was a senior, New Jersey was my state. I mean, my parents were still in West Virginia, but I didn't get home much, as I mentioned to you earlier. So, I ended up liking the Shore and I had some great friends that lived there full-time, and still do. Matter-of-fact, my later roommate, Pete Hall, still lives in Basking Ridge and I've been up to his house, visiting. Pete was an All-American baseball player, Rutgers, fraternity brother, roommate. I wish I could see him more, but I don't, just too far away, and that's the unfortunate part about being in North Carolina versus being near your college--you lose that contact. You lose that contact, you lose the interest. I don't know anybody else who went to Rutgers here. So, you know, [I] don't have any close relationships to Rutgers, and that's really hard.

Just as an aside, the last time I was going to Rutgers, to see Rutgers play West Virginia, I was going to meet my brother, who lives in Connecticut, and Alex Kroll, who was a Rutgers graduate, same year I did, and we were going to have Alex [meet us]. I was best man at his wedding, and Alex and Phyllis were coming down for the game and I was flying up. I was in the plane, on the tarmac, waiting for them to take off and we'd been there about half an hour and, about forty-five minutes later, the pilot came on, and said, "The weather in Newark is so bad, we're going to take you all back to the terminal and cancel the flight." So, I went in and I said, "Okay, what other flight can I get on?" They said, "Well, we can get you into Newark by one o'clock tomorrow." I said, "Well, the game starts at one o'clock." So, I ended up cancelling that flight, and that was the last time that I tried to get to Rutgers. That's two or three years ago. Other than that, it's sort of out of my way. [laughter] You know, it's not on the way to anyplace that I go. When my son lived up in Connecticut, I used to go up there more often. Now, he's back here in Charlotte--so, just haven't been back up for a while.

SI: Before we get into other aspects of your Rutgers days, how are we on time?

SS: Well, we might want to think about going to lunch.

SI: Okay.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Your first season on the Rutgers Football team was 1958. What stands out about that season?

SS: Well, in 1958, they still had freshman football. Today, freshmen can play on the varsity. At that time, they couldn't, and so, we had a very good freshman football team. I think we had five or six games that season and, typically, we played the same schools that the varsity played, but only Lafayette, Columbia, Princeton, et cetera. We had some good, real good, players and had an undefeated team. One of the guys was Pierce Frauenheim, who is still around Rutgers and [is] a great coach in the New Jersey area, and another guy I mentioned earlier, Jack Berger, he was from Charleston, West Virginia, he was a guard and he really was good, but we had a good, cohesive group. I'm trying to remember who our freshman coach was and I'm having trouble remembering his name, but, at the time, our head coach was a guy by the name of John Steigman, and a crotchety old guy. He was there my first two years, running the varsity, not the

freshman team, but he certainly influenced the freshman team for sure. We ran a single-wing and I had not played single-wing before. It's a different stance for the fullbacks, and all the back field, for that matter. It was completely different. It was a foreign formation to me and I had to start from a standing position, as opposed to a three-point position, and I had a little bit of difficulty converting, but, ultimately, did, but it was harder. That's the same way it was for the first two years that I was there. Even my sophomore year was single-wing, until John Bateman came in my junior year and converted it back to a split-T. Back in those days, our coaches included Frank Burns, who later became head coach, and Matt Bolger, who was our end coach and he was head baseball coach. The coaching faculty was a small group of people. As compared to today, it's probably fifteen coaches. Back in those days, we had five or six--you know, a line coach, an end coach, a backfield coach and a head coach, and maybe another assistant or two--but our freshman year, it was an adjunct to the varsity and it was sort of a training ground or a proving ground for trying to make the varsity.

We went to all the varsity games, but only as a spectator, but we had a good team. We were undefeated. I still have a few recollections. I remember playing Bucknell once, and have a picture someplace, Jack Berger and myself, standing there with mud all over our uniforms and smiling after we won, but, again, no particular game stands out. They were all just fun and just glad when they were over, because you were always so sore. You had to go up to The Heights or the stadium on the day after game day to get massages and take some whirlpool baths, try to get the kinks and muscles back to some semblance of normalcy. I can remember being bloody. I can remember, one time, my hand was hurt so bad that I couldn't move my fingers. They took me over to the sidelines and sprayed some stuff on my hands that numbed it and sent me back in. [laughter] It was fine after that, but, you know, it really hurt there for a while, until they numbed it. … Freshman year, you know, was a traumatic year for me, because I left home, I was seventeen years of age, turned eighteen the end of October--so, the season was, for all practical purposes, over before I turned eighteen--you know, being that young, away from home for the first time. My parents did come up one time during that season. You know, they came up primarily to see Bob play, who was playing on the varsity team at that time, but, you know, two for one, they also came to the freshman game, but freshman was, you know, not really much thought of. They also had 150-pound football. I don't know if they still do or not.

SI: No, I think they got rid of that in the early 1980s.

SS: But, that was, you know, for smaller people who wanted to play football, couldn't make the varsity. So, it was a great facility for everybody to participate, but freshman, I wish something stood out [as] being particularly exciting, but I can't think of anything.

SI: You mentioned that you had a little trouble converting to the single-wing formation.

SS: Oh, I had a lot of trouble, yes.

SI: What did you think, in general, of its effectiveness?

SS: Well, you know, not many--I don't know if any school uses the single-wing anymore. They've proven that the "T" is a better formation, and I played the "T," split-T, from the high

school [team] and that's what I was used to. A lot of it has to do with, you have a quarterback under center, receiving the ball and passing it or handing it off. [In] the single-wing, the tailback and the fullback are in the backfield, with a wing back, and the center would deliver it to whoever was going to run the ball from that point, or throw it, and it was a lateral three or four-yard pass from the center to the person who had to catch it, and start from a two-point start, as opposed to a three-point start. So, it was harder to get moving and to keep from being offsides. If you lean or move your foot some way, it would either put you offsides and cause a motion or tell the opposition which way you were going. [laughter] So, you couldn't really--you know, from a standing start, it was just harder and it took me a little while to adjust myself, but it eventually happened, and the same thing in sophomore [year], pretty bad, but, other than that, you know, we still succeeded. I guess maybe some of the other players had single-wing experience when they came in--not me. I mean, it's just one of those things that I just never even thought about. If I had thought about it before going to Rutgers, I might not have gone there, because [I might have said], "Single wing, I can't play single-wing." You know, it's not another game, but it's another aspect that you'd never experienced. So, it was not starting all over, but it was pretty close to it.

SI: Did you also play a defensive position at that time?

SS: I was a linebacker. You know, later on, I just played offense, but, again, back in those days, they had what they called a two-platoon system, as opposed to unlimited substitutions. You had a restriction on how many substitutes you could put in a game at a time. You could only put one substitute in during a play and you were limited to how many substitutes you could put in completely, but, at that time, when I was a freshman, we played both ways. On defense, I was a linebacker, on offense, I was a fullback, which is pretty typical. I mean, that's not unusual at all. Then, the halfbacks usually become, you know, deep backs or cornerbacks on the defense and the fullbacks were linebackers, along with the center. Usually, the center was a linebacker, and then, you know, the line, tackles and guards, stayed where they were. They'd just switch from offense to defense. The same is true for the ends. So, I went to the linebacker position and I really liked it. I thought I was a pretty good linebacker. Later on, I became strictly offense and I didn't play any defense, because of the two-platoon system that John Bateman put in in our junior and senior years.

My sophomore year, I was playing softball during the summer and I slid into third base. I'd hit a pretty good hit and I tried to stretch it into a triple and I slid into third base. My right ankle caught in the bag, you know, the base, and sprained it really bad and I couldn't walk for about a week. I mean, it should have been broken, but it wasn't broken, but it was black-and-blue from the bottom of my calf all the way down to my toes. So, when I reported in to play football that, you know, late fall, Steigman saw it and he was really irate and he couldn't believe that I'd been out playing baseball when I should have been, you know, just [taking care of myself]. You know, we didn't have training rooms or spring practice; I think I mentioned that earlier. So, you just did whatever you wanted to do. There was no formal program. So, when I showed up with this sprained ankle, he couldn't have been madder. He was on my back so badly that I was ready to quit football, and, matter-of-fact, I told my brother I was going to quit and he wouldn't let me. He was smarter than I was, but I was really discouraged, and I went from--I guess I was going to be second team my sophomore year. There was another guy, by the name of Bill Tully, who was

ahead of me. He was either a junior or senior, and so, before it was over, that I was fifth string, four fullbacks in front of me. So, I can remember going to Bob and he said, "Well, go talk to this coach. Maybe he can help you." DeWayne "Dewey" King was the backfield coach. I went to him and I said, you know, "I'm thinking about quitting, but I tell you what I'll do--I'll switch to guard, because I want to play," and he said, "We'll get back to you." Then, they, I guess a few days later, came back and said, "No, we want you to stay at fullback," and I did. Finally, my ankle got better, but I will tell you that John Steigman had me out working on it after the practice was over. He'd have this big blocking dummy and he'd stand on this movable sled, this blocking dummy thing, and just made me hit it. Everybody else has gone home and I was out there by myself with him and my ankle was just about to kill me. I mean, it was really painful. I mean, they had it taped up and I guess there was no danger of being injured any more than I already was, but I can remember how I was hobbling around, trying to keep from, you know, showing the pain, and I was really mad at him. I got to the point where I didn't like him. I guess he did what he thought he had to do to get me back into condition, but I really was pleased when he announced that he was going, that he went to [the] University of Pennsylvania. I was pleased when he didn't show back up my junior year, and then, John Bateman came in as [coach]. I don't know if you've ever heard of him or seen pictures of him, but he was a jolly, little guy, [laughter] not very tall, but very round. Have you seen his picture?

SI: Yes. He came from the University of Pennsylvania, right? [Editor's Note: John Steigman left Rutgers in 1959 to replace Steve Sebo as the head football coach at the University of Pennsylvania. John Bateman had served as a line coach under Sebo just prior to coming to Rutgers.]

SS: I guess they switched jobs someway. I can't remember how that worked, but Steigman went to University of Pennsylvania and I think Bateman, if he didn't come from Pennsylvania, he had been there before, but, anyway, I really liked him. He was a good guy, and so, then, the sophomore year, I didn't play a whole lot, but, by the end of the season, I did work my way back up to second team and that encouraged me a little bit more, you know. So, when the season was over and [I] went away for the summer, I felt better about coming back my junior year. So, junior year, we had a great team then. We only lost one game to Villanova, and I could remember that one very well, because we lost 14-12. It's the only game we lost that season and I could remember, I scored one touchdown on a run and one on a pass, but we missed both of our extra points and that's how we lost, 14-12. That's the only game we lost that season. We had some great players. You've heard Alex Kroll's name, first team all-American, but we had Sam Mudie as a great quarterback and Bill Speranza, who was a great quarterback, and Pierce Frauenheim and a lot of other players. We had the two-platoon system at that time, the Red Team and the Black Team.

SI: I was reading about that in the book. Was it black or blue? [Editor's Note: The book being discussed is *Rutgers University Football Vault: The History of the Scarlet Knights* (2008) by Rutgers University Archivist Thomas J. Frusciano.]

SS: It was red and black.

SI: Okay.

SS: Well, you know, our school colors were red and black.

SI: Yes.

SS: Does it say blue in the book? He has it wrong then.

SI: Yes, here it is, scarlet and blue.

SS: No, it was black.

SI: All right.

SS: But, anyway.

SI: Just for clarification, the Black Team had Speranza and you as the key elements.

SS: That's right, and the Red Team was Mudie and myself.

SI: Was the Red Team Mudie and Kroll, or am I misunderstanding you?

SS: Well, see, on offense, I played on both teams.

SI: Okay.

SS: So, I was on both teams, and a fellow fullback by the name of Joe Kowalski played defense on both teams. We were the only substitute. So, we'd play one quarter. I guess it was Black Team [that would] start, and that was Kroll and Moody, myself and whoever else is on the Black Team, and then, the second quarter, Speranza was the quarterback and I was the fullback, but it was a whole new team, except for me. Joe Kowalski would stay in on defense, come in on defense, substitute on defense, and I'd go out, and then, I would go in on offense. Every play, every time there was a switch, from offense to defense, Joe and I would alternate, substitute for each other.

SI: You would play the entire game.

SS: On offense, yes. Now, on defense, he played the entire game, but it was definitely a red and black team, not blue--could have been black and blue [laughter]--but that's the way it worked, and both teams were really good. I guess they called the Black Team the first team only because we started, but the Red Team was equally capable and did as well, I mean, because they were in there for half the game. Black Team was in for half, Red Team was in for half and I can't remember exactly who was on [which team]. I know Pierce Frauenheim was on the first team, as halfback, but I'd have to look at the roster to recollect who was on which team, because, you know, I knew them all pretty well and played with both teams, so, never really thought of it as playing with one group versus the other, because I played with both groups, but it really worked

for us. That junior year, we only lost that one game, and then, of course, our senior year, we didn't lose any and that was a great season.

SI: You did not have spring practice or much lead time going into the season. Was it difficult to adjust to all the changes from the Steigman system to the Bateman system? Was it difficult to integrate them in?

SS: It was probably easier for me, because I never liked the single-wing. I mean, for me, the single-wing was hard. The split-T, where I could get down in a three-point stance, was a lot easier for me to get a start. You know, you could go faster and you could break through the holes. I mean, on a single-wing, where you're starting from a two-point stance, that the hole in front of you is open for, you know, just a fraction of a second, you've got to be there at the right time when it opens up, because, if you're late, it's closed up by then. Somebody's filled it up. So, from a split-[T] standpoint, in a three-point stance, I could get through the hole faster and it was really very helpful, and that's all I'd done all the way through. Except for the two years, my freshman and sophomore years, I was always in a three-point stance. It was just easier for me. So, to re-acclimate myself, I think it came pretty easy, and I don't remember any difficulty at all going back to that new formation, because I liked it better, I was better at it and I was used to it. So, there was [no problem]. It was harder for me in my freshman year and my sophomore year than it was my junior and senior year, because I liked the split-[T] better and I was accustomed to it and the transition was a lot easier. For the other guys, I can't really speak for them, you know. They may or may not have liked it, I'm not sure, but, for myself, from my standpoint, I really liked it.

SI: In 1960, was the Princeton game the first game of the season?

SS: It seemed like it was, but it might not have been.

SI: We can check, but I just wanted to ask because of the historic rivalry between Rutgers and Princeton.

SS: Yes. We had that historic rivalry and I'm sorry that it's over now, but I can't remember exactly whether it was the first game or a later game. Until I arrived at Rutgers, my freshman year, Princeton had had a long string of victories over Rutgers, beat us every year for a number of years, and then, my first year there was the first year that we'd won in a long time. I mean, I didn't play, but my brother was on the team and that's the first time. Bill Austin was there. Do you remember his name?

SI: Yes.

SS: He was the tailback, and that was the first time that they beat Princeton in a number of years, and then, after that, we beat Princeton all the time. [laughter] I mean, it was a big rivalry, but it turned from Princeton winning all the time to Rutgers winning all the time, and then, later, Princeton broke it off. I heard that they broke it off. Rutgers changed from the Mid-Atlantic Conference to another conference. They went "big-time." When I was there, we were not in the biggest conferences. You know, smaller teams, we played smaller teams, some good ones, but

they were not the Penn States and the Syracuses, and so forth. Mentioning Syracuse, did you see the movie *The Express* [(2008)]?

SI: No, I have not.

SS: Are you familiar with what it's about?

SI: I am familiar with it, yes.

SS: It's about the football career of Ernie Davis at Syracuse. He was everybody's All-American and [the 1961] Heisman Trophy winner, but he was at Syracuse the same years I was at Rutgers. So, it was fun for me to watch it, because it was the same era. They were doing some of the same things, but they're playing different teams. They were playing bigger teams and we were playing the smaller teams. My senior year, we ended up fifteenth in the nation, being undefeated. We were one of two undefeated teams in the nation, along with Alabama, in the higher levels, in the bigger levels. There might have been some lower division teams that were undefeated, but none that I recognized, but that was a good year. That was one of those victories that you just never can forget, and particularly the last game of our season, in my senior year. That was the Columbia game. [Editor's Note: Syracuse capped its undefeated 1959 season with a win over Texas in the 1960 Cotton Bowl to become the National Champions.]

SI: The Columbia game, yes.

SS: Yes, that's when little David Brody [turned the game around]. We were behind, 19-6, going into the fourth quarter and they kicked off, after scoring a touchdown, or after scoring. David Brody got it, ran it back to the, I think it was twenty-five yard line, their twenty five yard line. Then, we went ahead and scored, and then, proceeded to score a total of twenty-five points that quarter and won 31-19 and remained undefeated. I'll tell you, it was sad to see people leaving the stands. I mean, you looked up and people were vacating it like rats off of a sinking ship. I know they had to be disappointed when we came back and won, that they weren't there. I've thought about that a lot, what it would have been like to be there, watching, witnessing a team go undefeated, you know, especially if you were a Rutgers fan and never seen it before, and to leave, and then, to see a quarter when your team won handily, scored twenty-five points in one quarter, to go undefeated, what it must have felt like to have left and not seen it--glad it wasn't me. [laughter]

SI: What was that day like? Can you describe the game a little bit?

SS: Well, the day was pretty. It was clear, weather-wise. It was cold, as it usually is in that time of the year, but it was perfect football weather. I don't know why we did so poorly the first three quarters. I mean, I really can't explain it. You know, it just didn't work. They scored and maybe we let our guard down or something. We were a better team, clearly. I mean, we'd beaten everybody we'd played, and maybe we just didn't think enough of them, you know. We thought we were too good. It's a mental thing, as much as a physical thing, and maybe we didn't call the right plays or maybe we didn't execute or maybe both, and they scored and we didn't. I mean, the first three quarters, we scored six points, one touchdown, no extra points, and they scored

nineteen. Then, maybe in the fourth quarter, they thought that the game was over and, when Dave Brody ran that ball back to their twenty-five and we scored, I think it was Lee Curley caught a pass for the score, if I remember correctly, then, we couldn't be stopped. You know, every time we got the ball, we'd score, and they didn't keep it very long after that, you know. The momentum just switched, from one direction to the other, just like that, you know, in a thirty-second period of time. It was really a lot of fun, and then, they had a big gala occasion for us at 21 Club. A guy by the name of Sonny Werblin, who later owned the Jets--actually, it was the Titans, I think it was the New York Titans was his first team--and he invited us all to the 21 Club, and what a wonderful season. [Editor's Note: David A. "Sonny" Werblin, a Rutgers College Class of 1931 *alumnus*, organized and led a five-man syndicate that bought the American Football League's New York Titans in March 1963 and changed the team's name to the New York Jets shortly thereafter.]

A few of us went to some of the bowl games afterwards. You know, Rutgers followed the Ivy League tradition of not going to bowl games. So, I think we were invited--I mean, that there was a lot of hype and talk about us being invited--to the Rose Bowl. Of course, you know, that's not true, because they have the Big Ten and the Pac-Ten champions go to the Rose Bowl, and I think that's the way it was then, too, but maybe not, but I can remember a newspaper clipping saying that Rutgers hyped for the Rose Bowl. Well, I think we were invited to some bowls, but we turned them all down, had to, but Alex Kroll and myself went to three bowl games. Sam Mudie went to the North-South Game with us, so, three of us, and Coach Bateman was the coach … on the North team at the North-South Game--not the head coach, but he was assistant coach under a guy by the name of Duffy Daugherty from the University of Michigan, who was the head coach. Then, Alex and I went to the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Alabama, and then, both of us went to the All-American Bowl in Tucson, Arizona. So, that was a fun Christmas, traveling in all these places. We spent about a week in each place. I know we lost the North-South Game, which is sort of interesting. In the North-South Game, which was in the Orange Bowl, in Miami, first off, a little bit of background, they gave each two players a convertible to drive.

I recall that six of those convertibles were wrecked over that week period, and another thing is, Alex Kroll married Phyllis. Alex was our captain and everybody's All-American and Phyllis was his sweetheart from high school and they decided to get married. He arranged it to be done at Miami Beach and the Mayor of Miami Beach officiated at their wedding, and he asked me to be his best man and I was thrilled to do that, but, then, after the wedding, there was an article in the local paper about, "The North team practices on champagne," because he had champagne at his wedding. So, the headline's, "North Team Practices with Champagne," or something like that. I don't know. So, they're just a couple of interesting things, but it was great for Alex and Phyllis to get married then, but that was before the game. So, then, we played the game and the South won. The quarterback on that South team is now one of my best friends here in Charlotte, guy by the name of Ray Farris, [Jr.], who went to the University of North Carolina. He was a first team high school All-American, and then, he was, you know, [with] University of North Carolina as their quarterback and he was the quarterback on the South team. I didn't know him at the time, but, since, became really good friends with him, and I can't recall the exact score, but they beat us. One score, I carried the ball and, at that time, the field goals were right on the goal line. They've since moved them to ten yards off, and I can remember having the ball, with my arms wrapped around the goalpost, holding on to it while these guys were pushing me back.

[laughter] They didn't give us the touchdown at that time, but they gave it to us the next day. I guess they looked at the [film]. You know, they didn't have instant replay back in those days, but they looked at films and saw that I had actually scored. It didn't change the game outcome, but at least the score was made official the next day. It's sort of an interesting thing.

Then, the Senior Bowl was really pretty. They had a great parade, had all these convertibles with all these pretty girls, you know, riding in the convertibles. They said, "Okay, all you guys just go ahead and get in one of these cars." So, I jumped into one of the cars and it turned out I was with the Queen of the Senior Bowl Parade. She was supposed to ride by herself, but I just jumped into her car and I ended up going out with her later and, I mean, that was really nice. She was very pretty and we had a great time. In the All-American Bowl, I remember, I got sick. I think maybe I just had flu or something, but I felt terrible, but played anyway. That was in Tucson, Arizona. They took all of us on a bus to Mexico one night and it was a wild night. [laughter] Boy, that was a dirty place. I remember, you know, unpaved roads and all these bars and, I mean, it was wicked, but those are some recollections of different things, other than football, that happened during those games or the game periods, I should say, but that was a lot of fun. Then, you had to get back to realism after that and finish your [semester]. It was pretty hard to study. It's not like this now, but our exams were after Christmas.

SI: Yes, I have heard that.

SS: They were after Christmas and I remember carrying this whole bag of books with me through all three of those games--never opened them once. Fortunately, I passed. [laughter] I mean, I was probably lucky to get out of school. You know, back in those days, it was four years. Today, they can stay in five or six years if they want to, to graduate, but everybody graduated in four years back in those days.

SI: Was there a lot of academic support for football players, or athletes in general?

SS: Well, there may have been. You mean tutoring, that type [of thing]?

SI: Tutoring, yes.

SS: I never had any, but, you know, maybe some people had it. I guess I was fortunate enough that I didn't need it. My grades were pretty good. I mean, I didn't have any trouble getting into law school later. So, I mean, I don't recall exactly what they were, but probably had a lot of "Cs," but had a lot of "Bs," too, maybe had an "A" or two. I think I had an "A" in ROTC, [laughter] probably had some other "As," but mostly "Bs." I didn't apply myself as much as I did later in law school. You know, law school is a voluntary thing; you didn't have to do it. College, you sort of had to go to college, and then, well, especially if you're playing sports, just thought about graduation. If I were doing it over, you know, you would apply yourself more. The kids, [I] call them "kids," but the students who were married, and there were a few, they always did better, because they knew that they had to--think they studied harder. Those of us who weren't married were standing out on the corner of College Avenue waiting for a girl to drive by, or going to Corner Tavern and getting a carton of beer. I remember, I had an ID card. I'm trying to remember how I got it, but it was a regular Rutgers ID card that somebody either gave to me or

sold to me or something. I mean, it's just a brand-new, unused card. I took my picture off of the previous card and put it on there and had it laminated, and so, [I] had [ID] saying I was twenty-one. I can remember going to this one, the Corner Tavern; is it still there?

SI: Yes.

SS: Remember going to the Corner Tavern and the guy says, "I can't serve you. You're not old enough." I said, "Well, I've got ID," and he said, "Yes, let me see it," and he knew who I was, you know, because you know that [if] you're a sophomore in college, you're not twenty-one. He said, "How do you get these things?" [laughter] I said, "Well, you know, it's mine." So, he served me a beer. You know, I didn't drink before I went to college, but, then, after that, I drank some and I couldn't handle it very well. I know that--you know, no experience, used to get sick.

SI: What were fraternity parties like? Was there a lot of drinking there?

SS: Oh, sure, I mean, you know, six or seven kegs of beer for a party. Is it probably pretty much the same now or not? I don't know.

SI: I do not know, but some of the people I have interviewed, even into the late 1950s, talk about chaperones having to go to the parties.

SS: Well, my parents came up and chaperoned a couple times. Yes, there was always a chaperone, and, of course, the fraternities had an in-house [housemother]. We had a lady who lived in our fraternity house. I'm trying to think of her name, Mrs.--can't think of it. We had, actually, two of them. One of them, you know, retired. She'd been there for years and retired. Then, we had another lady came in and lived the last two years in the fraternity house, but we had a full-time house mom or housemother, and then, for every party, we'd have a couple chaperones. Of course, back in those days, you know, females were not allowed up above the first floor, except some guys did slip them up, tried to. Some of them got caught, too. Then, on big weekends, you know, like, we'd have house parties. The guys would move out--I can't remember where we went, don't have a clue--but the girls would move in upstairs and that's where you'd bring [a girl]. I remember, I brought a girl up from Duke one time, wherever you could find a date to come up for the weekend, and the guys would move out and the girls would move into the fraternity houses. At our fraternity house, we had a dorm atmosphere to sleep in--in other words, two large rooms on the third floor and just a row of bunk beds--and that's how everybody slept. Then, we had an individual study room, and I call it individual--actually, you had two people that would study in the same room. That's sort of a strange arrangement, but that's the way it was set up.

SI: Was the house on the corner of College Avenue and Bishop Place then?

SS: Yes, same place. It was closed for a number of years.

SI: I do not think they are in that building. It is a sorority now.

SS: No, they're in the same building.

SI: Are they?

SS: They're in the same building that they were when I was there, and it was on College Avenue and you say Bishop Place. I can't remember the intersection. It was on the corner, though. It's a white building, white brick.

SI: Yes, they are back in there. I was thinking of Chi Psi, maybe.

SS: I'm Chi Psi.

SI: You are Chi Psi. There was Chi Phi, too.

SS: There was Chi Phi, yes.

SI: Maybe that was Chi Phi there. [Editor's Note: The interviewer confused the Chi Phi House at 95 College Avenue (now home to the Sigma Delta Tau Sorority) with the Chi Psi House at 114 College Avenue.]

SS: Okay, but the Chi Psi is in the same place that it always has been. The alumni own the building. That's the reason I know that they didn't give up the building. The last time I was up there--maybe it wasn't the last time, but it was at least one time that I was up there--they were just renting the rooms out to graduate students and whoever wanted to rent a room. The fraternity was closed up. The fraternity was kicked off campus or whatever and, oh, it was a shambles. I said, "I lived here?" couldn't believe I lived in that place, because it was a dump. … Another time I went there, I went up into the dormitory area and looked up and I saw a big hole in the ceiling. I said, "What in the world is that?" and there was a ladder and I went up and looked and there was all these candles and everything. It turned out that that's where they went up and smoked their dope, you know, up into the rafters. How they kept from setting the place on fire, I don't know. You know, it's just a different environment. I just couldn't imagine it, and it was totally unlike anything I'd ever experienced. So, then, they kicked them off and, now, they're back and, as I understand it, they're really going great. They have some good kids in there that are academically-oriented. They won the Thayer Trophy, which is a big deal in the Chi Psi Fraternity. It's the best fraternity in the Chi Psi group, which, when I was at Rutgers, there were twenty-seven Chi Psi chapters. I don't know how many there are now, but the Thayer Trophy was a very important thing to win. You know, you got it through academics and participation in extracurricular activities, just all-around everything, and the Chi Psi Lodge won it this past year. So, they really made a strong resurgence.

SI: Now that I know which house you are talking about, they do always have their members out fixing up the lawn and fixing up the outside of the house.

SS: They do?

SI: Yes.

SS: Good for them. I mean, it's a nice building, but it was really rundown there for a long time.

SI: Until a few years ago, most of the fraternities were kind of rundown, but I think a lot of the alumni and the University have tried to build them back up. When you were a student, what kind of relationship did you have with the administration as a fraternity? Also, did you personally have any interaction with the administration?

SS: Some. The Dean of Students was a guy by the name of Boocock. Do you remember his name?

SI: Cornelius Boocock?

SS: Yes, and the assistant dean--I can see his face, I can't think of his name.

SI: Was it Howard Crosby?

SS: Howard Crosby was there, but was he the assistant dean? There was another guy. It was a younger guy. The Assistant Director of Athletics was Fred Gruninger, and who was the Director? Was it Boocock [who] was the Director of Athletics?

SI: No, he was the Dean of Men.

SS: Yes, well, okay, who was the Director of Athletics? but I did interact with all those people, if I could think of the name …

SI: Al Twitchell?

SS: Twitchell, exactly, thank you. You have a good recollection, even though you weren't there. I guess you've read all of this.

SI: Yes, I have read it over.

SS: But, I had to go to Dean Boocock a couple times. One time, this assistant dean came in, and I can see his face, if I could think of his name. It was a snowy night and we decided to do a panty raid over at Douglass. So, we went over to Douglass and the girls were up there. They were throwing stuff out. We didn't go into their house. They threw stuff out of their windows, you know, bras and panties and everything else, just it was all fun, you know, throwing snowballs. So, we went back and we had this big moose over the fireplace and hung all these trophies on his antlers. So, then, this assistant dean came in and saw all this stuff and he said, "You're on probation." [laughter] So, we went on probation for six months. One time, I was sitting there, playing poker with some other guys, you know, one late afternoon or early evening. We had nickel/dime poker games. We also played a lot of bridge, and this [guy], one of my fraternity brothers, name is Bill Harrison, came in. He says, "Okay, guys, good news. You can stop studying for music." We said, "What are you talking about?" and he said, "I've got the exam," and he said, "For five dollars, you can have a copy of it." So, I threw him five dollars, said, "Okay," and then, I never got the copy. Music was a gut course. I mean, for heaven's sake,

who needed a music exam? Anybody could pass the thing. So, I never got the copy, I mean, afterwards. I threw in the five dollars and I didn't think anything more of it, but, apparently, some of the other guys got together and actually studied it, and then, they found out that the exam was out and who had it. One day, Bill Harrison came in. He says, "Steve," he said, "you've got to go down to the Dean's office." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because, if you don't go report yourself, I've got to report you." "For what?" "For the music exam." I said, "I never had the music exam." [He] said, "But, you paid me five dollars," and I said, "Well, I mean, that doesn't count. [laughter] I mean, I didn't do anything with it. I didn't have to cheat. It was just a spur of the moment, 'Here's five,' … playing poker. I was winning, I had five dollars, so, I threw you five dollars." By the way, five dollars was a lot of money for me back in those days--doesn't sound like much today, but it was a lot of money, and maybe that had some influence. So, I said, "Okay, Harrison," I said, "I'm going to go down and report myself, but I'll hate you forever," and I still hate him, don't like him at all. So, I went down to Dean Boocock. I said, "Here's the situation--I did put up five dollars, but I didn't see the exam, I didn't sit in any meetings, I didn't cheat on the exam. Maybe, for a brief instance, I was guilty, but, ultimately, I wasn't guilty." That was my confession and I didn't go on probation. All the rest of the guys went on probation, or were kicked out of school. So, those were a couple of instances.

Al Twitchell, after my senior year of football, I signed a contract with the Giants and they gave me twenty-five hundred dollars. A scholarship, back in those days, was worth maybe fifteen hundred bucks. Twenty-five hundred dollars was a lot of money. I've already told you the circumstance--I had no money, never had any money, always waited tables when I was in college, at the fraternity house, you know, to make extra money, and worked every summer, worked during Christmases, you know, to help go through school. So, I got this check for twenty-five hundred dollars. By the time you took taxes out of it, and I don't remember how much that was, but it wasn't a whole lot of money, but most of it was to pay off, you know, things that I owed or whatever else. Anyway, we were on our way to [the] North-South Game, on the plane, and I told Bateman and Alex, I said, "I just signed with the Giants." So, after that was over, we came back and Twitchell called me into his office. He said--might have been Boocock; one of those two called me in the office, said, "Did you sign a pro-football contract?" I said, "Yes." I thought nothing of it. I mean, I was proud. He said, "Okay, we're going to take your scholarship away from you." I said, "You're going to do what?" and it was about 750 dollars for a semester. He said, "Yes, we're going to do that," and I said, "If you take that scholarship away from me, I'll never donate to this university when I get out." Well, they took it away and, of course, I went ahead and didn't make the Giants, went to law school instead, but that was my interaction with the administration of higher education. I don't think I ever had any other. I mean, I always had a good experience.

Rutgers was not a big school at that time. I mean, it was easy. Everybody was accessible. I knew who they were and I guess they knew who I was and we always spoke to each other and always cordial and everybody was nice. You know, you'd meet at events, either before games or events or sporting events or afterwards, and they were always nice to me and I was always nice to them, except for those couple things that I recall as being not nice. The probation thing was nice--I mean, nothing happened. I mean, that music test thing and being put on probation, the fraternity being put on probation, wasn't any big deal. We just didn't have any parties for six months. After six months was over, we erected this big champagne bottle out in front of the Chi

Psi Lodge, went all the way to the third floor, was all *papier-mâché* and wire. It was the "Old Pro-Party." That's what it was. We had an old-pro, coming off probation party, and had the champagne bottle out there and we had a great party that night, when we went off probation. So, the experience was always good, except for them taking my scholarship away.

SI: Was there some kind of policy against that or do you think it was due to something else?

SS: I think some of it was that my scholarship was based somewhat on need and I guess they thought I didn't need it. They didn't tell me. I mean, I don't recall being told why, but I can remember that it was really expensive to me and that meant that I had to pay--you know, out of the money that I'd been paid, after tax--I had to pay my tuition and books. The Duke scholarship was worth more. At Duke, they gave you fifteen dollars a month laundry money. At Rutgers, they gave you room, board and tuition, maybe some books, too, I'm not sure, but I think it was just room, board and tuition, and didn't have any extra money. That's the reason I went through ROTC, you know, in my junior and senior year, got twenty-eight dollars a month to be in ROTC. That was one of the reasons I went into ROTC, was for that twenty-eight bucks. So, when they took that scholarship away, it was very meaningful, very hurtful, financially. Of course, my parents were really upset--didn't cost them anything, because it came right out of the money that the Giants gave me, but [I] did some other stupid things. I had an old fraternity brother call me and he sold me a life insurance policy for 150 dollars that I kept for one year. Boy, that was stupid, kicked myself for it. [I] bought a car that I had to sell when I went to law school, so, I kept it for about six months. I got, you know, rich overnight--you know how long overnight riches last you? a blink of an eye, it was gone.

SI: In some of the research I did, it seemed like Al Twitchell was lukewarm about going to bowls and getting into "bigger time" football. I was not sure if that was an extension of that. Did he look down on players going from Rutgers to the pros?

SS: If he did, he didn't express it to me. You know, if he felt that way, I wouldn't necessarily be surprised, because there was a lot of interest in maintaining collegiate football as a secondary issue to scholastics, as opposed to, you know, the way things are today--football is primary and scholastics is second, or maybe third, I'm not sure, in some of these universities. I think there's a lot to be said--if he felt that way--there's a lot to be said for scholastics first, sports second, and, when you go big-time football, you have to pour more money into it. It's a very expensive thing. They're starting up a new football team here at UNCC [University of North Carolina at Charlotte]. They haven't had one and they're doing a big fundraiser. They have to collect forty-five million dollars to start up a football team, you know, to include a stadium and get uniforms and scholarships and whatever else it takes, hire employees and coaches. I mean, it's a big-time thing and we had a little stadium in New Brunswick, held about twenty thousand students. It was never full. So, I don't know what kind of gate receipts they had back in those days, but it probably wasn't enough to support big-time athletics. I mean, it's a big, expensive thing. I don't know what was going through his mind. I don't remember him saying that he was not in favor or was in favor of escalating the sport. I just don't really know, but I can see the other side of it, but why he took my scholarship away--it couldn't have meant that much to the University at that time, but it really hurt me. I really looked upon it with disfavor and [it] sort of capped off my college career with a little bit of negativity about Rutgers--not completely, but, you know, it was

a downer, didn't have to happen, you know. It was very expensive to me, meant almost nothing to them, but they did it anyway. So, after I tried out for the Giants, didn't make it, they gave me a train ticket home and that was the end of that, went to law school. So, you know, of course, looking back on it, I guess I could have hid it, kept it secret for a while, until I got my tuition paid and got my room and board check. Maybe that's what I should have done. I could have held off signing for as long as I wanted to. I didn't have to sign right away, but I was excited about it, yes.

SI: It seems like it was an uncommon thing. I know Alex Kroll went to the Titans, but did other players on the team go into the pros or get offers from the pros?

SS: No, I don't think so.

SI: You were the only two.

SS: From our team.

SI: Yes, the 1961 team.

SS: Yes. Of course, my brother went to the Giants. Ernie Davis made fifteen thousand dollars. He never played, but they gave him a check for fifteen thousand dollars and he was the Heisman Trophy winner. Today, they'd give him multi-million-dollar checks. So, I think my contract was 11,500 dollars, if I'd made the team. They gave twenty-five hundred dollars in advance, which I was able to keep, but, no, there weren't very many. Matter-of-fact, I have something here, recently, that I don't know who sent it to me, might have been John, about the Senior Bowl, how few people from Rutgers played in the Senior Bowl. [Brian] Leonard just went, and maybe there's one other guy that went in '76, and Kroll and I went in, I'm going to say it's '61 or '62. I can't remember whether it was New Year's Day or Christmas Day. It was either '61 or '62. There's only been about five or six people from Rutgers who went to the Senior Bowl. You know, I don't know why. Of course, Rutgers can go to regular bowl games now and that would preclude a lot of people. When Leonard graduated, did Rutgers not go to a bowl game?

SI: It was 2006 that he graduated.

SS: That was the year before Ray Rice graduated. Ray Rice graduated two years ago.

SI: I think he would have graduated in 2009. [Editor's Note: Former Scarlet Knights running back Ray Rice left Rutgers before graduating to enter the 2008 NFL Draft, in which he was drafted by the Baltimore Ravens.]

SS: So, okay, say 2006. Did they go to a bowl?

SI: I think they were in either their first bowl game or their second bowl game.

SS: Well, I was thinking that he probably went to a bowl game, so, I was sort of surprised he went to the Senior Bowl, but he could have, you know. They could have played at a bowl game, then, he went to the Senior Bowl after that.

SI: I think the bowls they have played in have been pretty early in the bowl season. Perhaps there was time in-between.

SS: Turn that off a second.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We looked it up. Brian Leonard went to the 2007 Senior Bowl after the 2006 season, in which Rutgers went to the Texas Bowl.

SS: Yes, and it's interesting that only seven Rutgers graduates have gone to the Senior Bowl over the years.

SI: You and Alex Kroll were the first two.

SS: That's correct, yes, and that's a well-thought-of bowl. It's been around a long time, but that season was a magic season, that senior year, magic.

SI: Obviously, there was a lot of press coverage and excitement on campus. What kind of pressure did that put on you and the other players, or was there any pressure?

SS: I don't recall any pressure, other than just everybody speaking to you and … cheering you on. I'm not going to call it adulation, because it wasn't that at all, but it was, you know, a lot of encouragement, but I don't think there was any pressure that wasn't self-imposed, you know. Everybody wanted to do well and to succeed and have a winning season. We were very team-oriented, and the coach called a lot of plays. The quarterbacks called some, but, mostly, the coaches called them. So, it was a good season. I was very interested to see that, during my junior and senior year, I averaged six yards a carry and, you know, even today, no running back has averaged more than that. It's still a record at Rutgers, on average yards per carry--astounded, astounded that somebody hadn't beat that, but, on the other hand, I only carried a hundred times a year, you know, for six hundred yards a year. So, it came out to six yards a carry and, probably, some of the other running backs carried it more, which, you know, put their average down some, but that's a record that's still standing.

SI: Pretty impressive record.

SS: Yes, I was pleased. [laughter] I wish somebody'd beat it. Then, they wouldn't have to talk about it anymore.

SI: You were also on the track team for most of your time at Rutgers.

SS: I was for my first two years and I did get a letter, a Rutgers letter, for track, but, then, after that, I lost interest in it. The track team wasn't [as tight-knit]. I didn't know anybody else on the track team. I still threw the discus and, you know, won a couple of events and got a letter, but it just wasn't the same. The turnout for the team was very low. It was a tertiary sports at Rutgers. I mean, it was behind lacrosse, behind baseball, behind basketball, behind football. Wrestling was even bigger, [laughter] and track was just not a well-thought-of sport. I don't know what it's like today. Hopefully, it's more thought of, but it just wasn't as much fun. So, I just sort of lost interest and quit going. My last two years, I didn't try out for that team.

SI: Tell me about ROTC and what that training was like.

SS: Well, I thought it was really good. I enjoyed [the] military and, my first two years, it was a prerequisite at Rutgers. Isn't Rutgers a land-grant college?

SI: Yes, it was.

SS: That's what I recall. So, as a land-grant college, the first two years was mandatory, but I enjoyed it. So, the second two years, junior/senior years, was voluntary, but they paid you, and I think I mentioned to you that twenty-eight dollars was really important to me. It wasn't a ton of money, but it really helped, but I also liked it, and I liked the [instructors]. I remember Captain Champion, was one of the instructors and he was a really nice guy, and some of the other people, the instructors there, were nice. I can remember, it was just a break from everything else, and I ended up on something called the Colonial Color Guard. Do they still have that?

SI: No, not that I know of.

SS: We actually dressed in colonial uniforms and, during some of the military parades and even a parade or two for other reasons, other than our military things, we'd march in this colonial garb and carry the colors in that fashion. I ended up being the head of the Colonial Color Guard in, I guess it was my senior year, and I thought that was fun. You know, it was different and was fun to do, but what I recall the most was, one time, we were out on a field in New Brunswick, in our military attack uniforms, and we were charging across, attacking something, and everybody laid down. I said, "Come on, men. Get up. Let's run." So, I got up and ran--nobody followed me. So, Captain Champion called me over and he said, "Steve," he said, "I just want to show you something," and I looked out. All these people are laying down. You could see them all. I mean, they weren't hiding from anybody--they were just laying on the ground. He said, "Do you see how they were exposed and that they could have easily been shot if they had an enemy with a machine-gun?" As a matter-of-fact, when I was getting ready to graduate, they asked me if I would consider going into regular Army. I told them that I was a Reserve officer and I said, "You know, I really don't know. I might consider it later, but, right now, I just don't know." After I graduated, I had a two-year commitment and, if you went regular Army, you had a five-year commitment. So, I turned down that option at that time. Then, later, after going to law school, I still had a two-year commitment and I married just before entering the service. To take Marilyn to Germany with me, I had to go for a third year. So, I opted to go for the third year, so [that] I could take her with me and so [that] she could live on base housing and be recognized as a dependent. Otherwise, we would have had to live on the economy and there wouldn't have

been any benefits for her, and so forth. So, I did end up going three years anyway, but I loved my military career. That was after law school; that was three years after I graduated from Rutgers.

SI: Where did you go for ROTC summer camp?

SS: Between my junior and senior year, of all places, I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and it was all sand and pine trees and hot as Hades. We were there for six weeks and, on the weekends, we would go out and rent a motel room. Back in those days, they didn't have nice motels. They had these all single-story things where you park right in front and walk in. We had no money, but to get out of there and to find [relief]--none of the barracks were air-conditioned--we'd go to a motel. So, we could swim in the swimming pool and get some air-conditioning and get off base. Otherwise, if you stayed there, they would find work for you. So, at noon on Saturday, we left, went out Saturday night and just rented a hotel room, just to cool off and get away, but it was hard. Fort Bragg is hot, sandy, terrible, but, then, I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and it was the same way, [laughter] when I went to my officer's basic school. Interesting enough, one of my platoon members, a guy by the name of Bob Hoard, moved to Charlotte [and I] ran into him. He says, "I remember your name." I said, "I remember your name." We looked it up in our old picture that they'd taken. There we were, the both of us in the same platoon at Fort Bragg, fifteen years later, ran across each other again. So, [I] made some good friends, I had some good memories of it, but it was hot, hard, and long.

SI: Since it was at Fort Bragg, was there any kind of paratrooper training?

SS: We jumped out of a thirty-two-foot tower, and it was sort of intimidating at first. I mean, thirty-two feet doesn't sound high, but, if you are above the top of my house [laughter] and you look down, it looks like it's a long way. You know, you're on a guide wire with straps attached to it and you have to jump out, but, at first, I was a little bit intimidated, but, after I did it, I said, "Let me go again." You know, it was fun, but that was the only time that I'd ever jumped. They did have a lot of paratroopers down at Fort Bragg at the time and they said, "Stay away from those boys. They're mean." You know, ROTC guys, we didn't have any connection with them. I mean, we were completely separated and isolated from the regular military, but it was all over the place. 82nd Airborne was there.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your studies at Rutgers, how you chose your major, if anything stood out about your professors?

SS: I chose my major, which was political science, primarily because my brother Bob suggested political science. Gene, my older brother, was geology. When you're seventeen years old, how do you have a clue as to what your major's going to be? The reason for political science, I mentioned to you earlier that my grandfather and two uncles and an aunt were lawyers and, when Bob and I went to Rutgers, we'd talked about going to law school, and then, having a law practice together. Political science doesn't necessarily have anything to do with law, but, for some reason or other, it's the most connected of all the majors to law. I mean, you could have just as easily been English, or a lot of other fields for that matter, history or some other field, but political science just seemed like it was a connection to law. That's the reason he went into it

and that's the reason he said I should be in it, and so, that's how I selected political science. My key professor there was Dr. Baker. I can't think of his first name, but I think his son is still there. I told you I had some Latin, took a couple years more of Latin from Dr. Hall, and I took the other prerequisite courses, everything from statistics and some of the math requirements. You know, basically, I just fulfilled the requirements that were mandatory, and political science wasn't a special love for me. I mean, it wasn't something that I really couldn't wait to get to class. It just wasn't. I think the courses that I took were pretty much expected, as opposed to something that I really wanted to do and to understand and to appreciate.

If I could do it over again, I probably would have done history, as you did, because it's a favorite subject of mine now, but, at that time, seventeen to twenty-one years of age, I think we just wanted to go to college and graduate, so [that] we could earn a living. I didn't have a strong desire to learn any particular facet of school. I just wanted, as I think I mentioned to you, to just go on to law school and, hopefully, practice law, and so, Rutgers was the means to an end, you know, getting the college degree to go on and do something else. Political science is, you know, as good as any. If my brother had done history or if I had a friend who had done history--and I'm just using history as an example, because, you know, you were a history major--[I] could have easily been there. My older brother Gene had graduated. He was a geology major. He might have influenced me to be into geology, you know, one of the sciences, as opposed to, you know, arts. That's really the only reason, you know. From an educational standpoint, I can't tell you that I was a career student or loved a particular facet of it. I went to class because I had to, did what was necessary. I was fortunate enough to get decent grades, not great grades, and a means to an end, to get into law school, which I did. Beyond that, football was a great part of that career; having a good time was a great part of that college experience; being involved in a fraternity was a good part of that experience; being close to New York City and seeing some of the highlights there. We went in, you know, to see some plays and things like that, which, in anyplace else, I wouldn't have had that opportunity.

SI: While you were at Rutgers, how much awareness was there of what was happening in the larger world? For example, one big thing that comes to mind is the Nixon-Kennedy Presidential campaign in the middle of your college career. Were those events that you followed or studied?

SS: I'd say just a very limited amount. I don't think I ever read the newspaper. I don't think we watched television. If we watched it, it was probably a particular show or maybe a sporting event. I don't think I ever watched a newscast. I would say I was not tuned in to the world events--probably too young. Being from West Virginia, sort of a non--well, what I'm going to say is just not very rounded, probably had a limited background to develop an interest in it. Even though my father was involved in local politics, he was, you know, a staunch Republican, but I don't know how he stood out in national politics. I don't think I ever had that conversation with him. So, I would say, on a very limited scale, did I have any exposure or interest in national politics. I was aware of Nixon and his facial hair and his perspiration during the debates--did a terrible job, didn't he? [laughter] I mean, his appearance was awful and he just did a terrible job, and Kennedy was so smooth, that he just made him look like a fool, almost. Of course, I was in law school when Kennedy was assassinated. So, I was very aware of that. I remember where I was standing when he was assassinated. Were you born then?

SI: No.

SS: Okay. That was 1963. So, you know, that three-year period was a pretty [key period]. I just had what was happening to me, locally, in mind. I don't know if I ever voted. You know, you can vote when you're eighteen, but I don't think I ever voted until after law school and the military, probably. [Editor's Note: The voting age was lowered to eighteen with the passage of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the US Constitution in 1971.] I could remember, when I was in high school, that my father asked me if I wanted to drive people to the polls and I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "We'll pay you a dollar an hour," or something, "and you use the car and we'll tell you to go pick up somebody, and bring them to the poll. Let him vote and take him home." So, I said, "Sure," and I say a dollar, it might have been a dollar and a quarter, wasn't much, but, then, after the election, the polls had closed, I remember this, standing there, listening to this one guy. He asked another poll worker, said, "Well, did you get enough money?" and he says, "I have a few dollars left over," and he said, "I have enough to buy a pint," and those were his words. I said, "What's he talking about?" It turns out that when I would bring somebody to the polls, they would slip him five dollars to vote a certain way. I didn't know, had no clue, that that was going on until after it was over, and I guess that was my closest exposure to politics at that time. Later, after the military and after I went back to Charleston, West Virginia, for a couple years, I did run for city council and didn't win, but I did run. That was an interesting thing, because I went around all of our neighborhoods, just in our precinct, knocking on all the doors, passing out a little brochure, telling people to vote for me. I lost by fifteen votes, to the incumbent. He was a Democrat, and West Virginia was a Democratic state and the whole area is Democrat. I'm obviously more interested today than I was then in politics, but, when I was at Rutgers, I'd say I had a very limited exposure and interest in national politics, or even local politics for that matter--you know, just wasn't on my radar screen anyplace. Do you recall if it was on yours when you were twenty-one years of age?

SI: I do not know, but, today, everyone is encouraged to be aware of what is going on and to have an opinion.

SS: Well, I think it should be. I agree with that. You know, at that age, I just wonder--maybe I was just naïve, and probably immature.

SI: It seems like there is a different set of priorities between the generations, that has been somewhat created since then.

SS: Probably.

SI: When did you start looking at law school in general? When did you settle on West Virginia?

SS: When I was a senior in college, these good friends of mine that I went to junior high and high school with, and they went on to West Virginia University, I was talking to him on the telephone. He said, "Billy and I applied to law school." I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "West Virginia," said, "Oh, okay." I said, "I've always wanted to go to law school." I said, "Maybe I'll apply, too." Now, I'd already signed a contract with the Giants and I don't know if I knew that I wasn't going to make it or knew that it wasn't going to be a long process or what. So,

I said, "Send me an application." So, he did. He was right there at Morgantown, West Virginia, and I filled it out and sent in five dollars, or whatever it was to apply, and, all of a sudden, I got an acceptance. So, I was at Fairfield, Connecticut, with the Giants, and I'd been there for thirty days. This is right after I graduated from college, still twenty-one years of age and trying to beat out Alex Webster, who was the fullback for the Giants at the time. I don't know if you recall his name, but he was third in the NFL in rushing at the time and he was a little bit bigger and probably not as fast, but he was older and he was tired and probably hurt more.

Then, there was another guy by the name of Phil King, who was from Vanderbilt, and he was six-four, 225 pounds, and he had had shoulder surgery the year before. I said, "Well, I'm going to beat one of these guys out." Well, I'd gained [weight]. I played at 213 pounds at Rutgers. So, I'd gone up to 219 or 220 pounds and I had exercised some during the summer, but I wasn't in great shape.

When I got there, I was the last guy out at camp, but, anyway, Allie Sherman, who was the coach at that time, called me and he said, "Simms," he said, "I've got a problem." He said, "The problem is that you're not fast enough for fullback or big enough for guard. We're going to have to let you go." He said, "Go see Wellington Mara," and so, I walked into Wellington Mara's office and he said, "Steve," he says, "I'm sorry this sport didn't work out," he said, "but I've got connections in Canada, if you want to go up and play Canadian football." I said, "Mr. Mara," I said, "you're really nice." I said, "I'm going to take some of that money that you gave me, go on to law school," and he said, "I think that's really smart," and that's the way it happened.

Now, the other thing that I knew is that I had a two-year military commitment and that I had orders to report to the military in January the following year. So, I would have only been able to play one season, unless I could have been deferred, and I tried to get into a six-month program, which my brother Bob was in. He went to active duty for six months, during the off season. So, he was able to play three years in pro ball. Well, they had cancelled that program. So, there was no longer a six-month program. I graduated in '62. This was before, you know, pre-Vietnam. Why they cancelled it, I don't really know, but they did, and so, I was looking at a two-year tour. So, I could only play pro ball one year.

So, then, when he told me that, I immediately applied for and got a deferment to go into law school and went to West Virginia Law School, because I had friends there, because I'm from West Virginia. It's the only place I applied, because they told me that's where they were going. So, it was easy, cheap. It was not expensive. I can't remember what the tuition was, but it wasn't expensive. I remember that, you didn't ask me this, but my parents gave me forty dollars a month and I had the money for my first semester from the Giants--told you I sold my car, that's how. That was the money I used for my first semester. Then, I applied for and got what they called a proctorship or preceptorship, which is, you know, in the men's dormitories. So, [I] got free room, and then, I applied for and got a counselor's job, which gave me my board. I worked in a law library, which gave me ten dollars a week for money, and sold blood, fifteen dollars, every chance, every six or eight weeks or whatever you could do. So, that's the way I got through law school. We played poker and played bridge, but I was deferred from the military for three years while I was doing that. So, when I went in the military, I went in as a first lieutenant over three [years], which gave me more pay, a little bit more prestige, but not a whole lot,

because I still didn't even know how to salute by that time. I mean, after you're out of it for three years, you sort of forget a lot, but I was older and I was smarter, more mature, you know, than the other second lieutenants who were there. So, I guess it was fair.

SI: Was there any kind of specialization in law school or anything that you particularly tried to concentrate on?

SS: I really considered going into tax law and, matter-of-fact, when I was in junior high school, I dated this girl whose father turned out to be a tax judge in Washington, DC, a guy by the name of Bill Drennen. When I was a senior, or a third-year law student, I said, "I'm thinking about going on and getting a master's in tax law," and he said, "You don't need that." He said, "Just go ahead and practice," said, "You'll get more experience practicing than you would going to school." He said, "If you want to be a tax attorney, do that." So, I would say tax. My best courses, my best grades, were in contracts, taxes, and I think math was always sort of easier for me than some of the other courses, but also I thought trial law would have been a lot fun. We had a moot court case, and my partner in my senior year [and I] won and beat the number one guy in our class and his partner. We won the verdict in a mock trial, which, you know, made us feel really good. We did a good advocacy job. So, I thought about, you know, going into trial work, which would have been a lot of fun, just being in court a lot, or tax law--ended up not doing either of them. After I got out of the military, [I] applied to a couple law firms and they wanted to pay me less than I was making in the military. Yes, back in those days, they didn't pay anything. [laughter] So, that's how I ended up in business, got a better offer in business. So, I went into business, just as simple as that. Law school was fun. It was three years and it was West Virginia University, which, you know, had some pretty girls there, and I was president of my legal fraternity while I was there and did a lot of things. Matter-of-fact, when I was upstairs, picking up this thing, I saw this old brochure. This is my Class of '65. That was me, back in those days--different look, isn't it?

SI: Yes, a little bit.

SS: But, I was pretty active then. I may have told you some of the things I did for pay, but I did a lot of other volunteer things, you know, president of the fraternity and was the attorney general for the college, for the university.

SI: What did that entail?

SS: Not a whole lot, you know. If anything, it was mostly honorary, I guess. Actually, I don't know what it did. We didn't go to court or anything.

SI: When I first saw that Phi Delta Phi was a law fraternity, I assumed it was more of an honorary thing.

SS: No, no. It was an active thing. Yes, it was. I was the magister of Brook Inn and that was the legal fraternity, but we actually had parties and we formulated concepts of law and discussed law. It wasn't a substitute for law school or anything like that, but it was one of those things that [we did]. I remember raising the dues, which was controversial at that time, so [that] we'd have a

better party than we'd had the year before, but everybody went along with it. I sort of connived a little bit to get elected, and, when I say that, I mean it in a nice way, but I thought one of the guys that I thought would be my biggest adversary, who might be elected, was a guy by the name of Warner. [So, I] asked if he'd nominate me. [laughter] He said, "Sure." Well, it took him out of the running. [laughter] So, he nominated me and I was elected, but, you know, maybe he had no intention of running anyway. I might have been elected anyway. I don't really know, but I can remember doing that. When I was applying to law school and needed that proctor's job-- to work in the men's dormitories, which got me free room--at first, when I applied, I was turned down. They said that they didn't have any openings, and so, a girl that I went to high school with's father was president of the alumni association. So, I called him and asked him if he would help me get that job, and I wrote a letter to one of our senators and one of our congressmen. I said, "I'd really like to have this job." Before I knew it, I had a call from the university saying, "We have an opening. You now have the job," and that's when I discovered, then, that a "no" doesn't always mean "no," and that gave me a couple of opportunities later on in life that I'll tell you about, when I was in the military, or after I was graduated from law school, getting ready to go in the military.

I was going to graduate in late May and I'd received orders to report to the military in February. What do you do for eight or ten months between graduation and going into the Army? I mean, you can't get a job. You're unemployed. Nobody's going to hire you for that period of time, so I said, "I've got to do something." This same friend who told me that he was going to go to law school and sent me the application, he was going to be in the Marines, said, "I've got to go over to [Camp] Lejeune to get my housing," because he was married, and that's near Washington. So, I said, "I'm going to go to the Pentagon and get this thing straightened out." We got in our car one weekend and drove over to Washington, stayed at a friend's house who had graduated before us, and I walked into the Pentagon. Seventeen miles of corridors, "Uh-oh, what do I do now?" I went up to the information booth and I said, "I'm looking for the artillery office," and this lady said, "Well, here's a book." [laughter] [I] looked under, "Artillery," and then, "Personnel," and, finally, got to this personnel guy and I called him on the local phone right there. I said, "I want to get my orders changed," and he says, "Lieutenant," he said, "I can't help you," and I said, "Why not?" He said, "You're under orders from Fort Wadsworth in New York. I'm here in Washington." I said, "Well, I came all the way to Washington to get this thing resolved," and he said, "Oh, you're here?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I'm not in the Pentagon. I'm over at Fort McNair, about ten minutes away. Come on over and I'll talk to you." I walked into his office--he was a major--and he said, "Okay, Lieutenant, what can I do for you?" and I said, "Well, I received these orders to report in February and I want to go in June." He said, "Well, that's okay." He said, "Hold on a second." He called Fort Wadsworth and said, "I've got this lieutenant in here. Would you release him to me to get his orders changed?" They said, "Okay," and he said, "All right, now, I can help you. Let's start talking." He had all these yellow pads out in front of him with all these names on them, you know, different sections, and he said, "Okay, now, tell me when you want to go in." I said, "I'd like to go in in June." So, he took a guy's name off of June and moved him over to another date and put my name in at June. He said, "Okay," said, "now, where do you want to go?" I said, "What do you mean where do I want to go?" He said, "Yes," he said, "where do you want to go?" He said, "You want to go to Fort Bliss, Texas? You're in the artillery. You [could] go to Fort Bliss and be in air defense, or you can go to Fort Sill and be in field artillery," and I said, "Gosh." Here, I'm twenty-four. I

didn't have a clue, and I said, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "Well, I'm field artillery," and he said, "I've been told that the guys at Fort Bliss sit around hoping to see a blip on a screen sometime," and I said, "Sign me up for field artillery." He took another guy's name off a list and put me in field artillery. He said, "Now, you want to go in June." He said, "I'll put you in officer's basic school." He said, "How about June the 8th?" "Perfect." He said, "Okay, you'll report to Fort Sill. You'll be there for nine weeks and you'll get out sometime late in August." He said, "Okay, after that, where do you want to go?" and I said, "Well, what do you mean where do I want to go?" He said, "Well, you know, I've got to send you someplace. Where do you want to go?" and I said, "Well, what's available?" and he said, "Well, I can send you to Alaska, Okinawa," started [listing places], "Hawaii." I said, "How about Hawaii?" This friend of mine says, "Steve, that's a great place to visit, but you don't want to live there for two years," said, "You're right. What else you have?" and he named a couple other places. He said, "Germany." "I want to go to Germany," took the guy's name off of one list and put my name in his place, so, here it was, I was going to Germany. He said, "Okay, now, what do you want to do? What's your MOS?" I said, "What do you mean, MOS? What's that?" and that means military occupational system.

SI: Specialty.

SS: Specialty, and I said, "I don't know." I said, "What's good?" and he said, "Well, my specialty's communications." I said, "Well, I don't know anything about radios, but maybe I can learn." He said, "Didn't you say you're a lawyer?" and I said, "Yes," and he said, "How about administration?" I said, "Yes, administration." So, he took a guy's name off and put my name in his place. I mean, he had all these legal pads, all these military careers of these young officers just lined up on yellow pads, and he's moving them around. He just had them in pencil. He was erasing one and putting another one in it, like shuffleboard. I left there, and everything he said was going to happen to me happened.

Everything he said happened, and then, later on, I received orders, over when I was in Europe, to go to an artillery facility in--I think it was Hanau, Germany. Yes, it was Hanau, and it was right up on the East German/West German border. Now, at that time, it [was] still Cold War. Marilyn and I-- she was teaching school over in Germany--drove up one weekend to look at Hanau, and it was the bleakest, most desolate area I've ever seen in my life. I said, "This isn't any good. We've got to do something else. So, okay, well, I'm going to USAREUR [US Army Europe] Headquarters in Heidelberg." So, I drove down one day and I walked into the personnel office and I said, "I heard of a job in Giessen. I've got these orders to go to Hanau, but my wife teaches school in Giessen and I've heard about this job in Giessen that's available and I'd like to apply for that one." He said, "Well," by this time, I was a captain, he said, "Captain," he said, "look, you have to go where the military wants you to go." I said, "Major, you're exactly right and I will do that." I said, "The only thing is, this would be better for me, to be in Giessen, where my wife teaches school. You have this job opening, so, you know, you need somebody," and he said, "Well, that's a supply officer's position." I said, "Well, my MOS is administration." He said, "Oh, okay. Well," he said, "tell you what I'll do--I'll get you an interview. If they'll hire you, you can have the job." I went up, interviewed and they hired me. I didn't have to go patrol this East German/West German border. It ended up [being] with the European Exchange System in

their depot division. It was commanded by a colonel, a lieutenant colonel, major and myself, and, at that time, I was a captain, and included thirteen hundred civilians.

It was the best military job, from an experience standpoint, that you could ever imagine. We were running this depot, sending merchandise all through the European Exchange System, all through Europe, and we were closing out of France, because France had dropped out of NATO at the time. So, the US had to get out of France. This is 1966 or 1967. We had to import all this stuff that was coming out of France, and we had to absorb it into our system. What a mess, anyway, ended up getting an Army Commendation [Medal] for my work there. It was good for Marilyn and I, because I was able to get a lot of time off. I didn't have to do special duties, you know, officer of the day or any special [detail], had no other special outside responsibilities, just did my job there and went home afterwards. So, going from law school to the military in the Pentagon, [to] go to the top to get my issues resolved, turned out to be a smart thing to do, the best life experience I've ever had. Ever since then, every time I had a problem, I went to the top. You bypass the people who are going to put roadblocks in your way and just go right to the people who can make a real [difference]. A lot of people avoid making decisions. I guess you know that. [Editor's Note: Beginning in the late 1950s, French President Charles de Gaulle withdrew France from NATO Command, which led to the gradual removal of NATO forces from French soil over the following decade.]

SI: Yes.

SS: And it's easier for them to say no than to make a decision to do something different. So, [I] learned a lot from that experience.

SI: Most people are just sort of left to their fate in the Army.

SS: Oh, yes. I mean, it's unbelievable how you can change things.

SI: You told me off tape about meeting your wife in law school. Can you tell me a little bit about how you met your wife and when you were married?

SS: Well, Marilyn and I went to high school together. She was a junior when I was a senior, and so, we were actually in high school two years together, but we didn't date or know each other well. She was always dating some friends of mine or I was dating somebody else, so we never went out. I graduated and went to Rutgers, and she went to University of Kentucky. We never really saw each other again, until between my second and third year of law school. I was in West Virginia with a friend of mine, and he said, "Let's go to this dinner dance." I said, "I don't know anybody that I could ask," and he said, "Well, I heard Marilyn Rogers is in town." She was teaching school in Atlanta at this time. I said, "Well, that's a good prospect. I'll definitely call her." I called her and asked her out, and she was home visiting her mother for a week and she said, "Sure, I'd love to." We went to the dinner dance and had sort of an average time, nothing special or anything, but I had to borrow somebody else's dinner jacket, because I didn't have one, and it didn't fit me very well. So, I was a little bit uncomfortable, but, nevertheless, it was okay. While we were at this dinner dance, this other mutual friend came up and he said, "Marilyn, Steve, I didn't know you all were in town." I was working road construction, out of

town, was just there for a little while, and he said, "I'm having a party." This is on the 3rd of July. He said, "I'm having a party on the 5th of July. Why don't you all come?" So, I took her home and I said, "Do you want to go to that party?" and she said, "Yes." So, we went out again the second time, had a great time, and then, saw each other a lot after that.

Then, she went back to Atlanta to teach school and I went back to West Virginia University. We saw each other every two weeks. I made two round trips, driving trips, from Morgantown to Atlanta, seven hundred miles each way, no interstates, fourteen-hour trip each way, on two different weekends. She came up to Charleston on Thanksgiving and I went to Charleston, and then, finally, over Christmas, she resigned her job in Atlanta and moved back to Charleston, moved in with her parents and started teaching in West Virginia. Then, we saw each other more often, and this is a funny story. [laughter] [I] told you about going to Washington. So, after this guy set me up with this thing, told me I was going to Germany in September, I called Marilyn from this friend's house that we were staying in in Washington. I said, "Marilyn," I said, "I just found out that I'm going to be going to Germany in September. Do you want to go with me?" Now, she had moved back from Atlanta to Charleston, because, you know, we'd talked about getting married, and, I mean, we were in love. She said, "Let me get back to you." I said, "What?" [laughter] I couldn't believe it, you know. She said, "I'll call you back." So, I hung up and I stood there, ranting and raving, "I can't believe that she didn't say yes. I mean, what happened here?" Finally, she called back. She said, "Yes, I want to go to Germany with you." [I] later found out she wanted to get married, she just didn't know if she wanted to go to Germany, and she thought about it and decided that she did.

Anyway, I graduated from law school on May the 28th, and we married on June the 5th. I was admitted to the bar on June the 6th and we were at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on June the 8th, and in Germany September the 1st. So, we had a real wild [summer]. I mean, it was hard, because Marilyn had to set up a wedding from something like April to June. So, we had a small family wedding, you know, thirty or forty, only family members there, beautiful wedding, as far as I'm concerned. I didn't have any input into it at all, and our reception was in their backyard and a great, pretty day in Charleston, and it's been bliss ever since. Now, we'll be celebrating our forty-fifth anniversary this June the 5th.

SI: Congratulations.

SS: Yes, a long time ago, and then we waited five years to have children. We had our first child, a son, on November the 21st of 1970, and he was born in Charleston, West Virginia, and then, had our second child, our daughter, on January the 24th of 1974 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Then, we soon moved to Charlotte in 1975 and they both were raised here. Even though they're not born here, they were raised in Charlotte all their childhood period of time, and they're both in Charlotte now, fortunately. So, it's been a good life, actually, when you think about it.

SI: Tell me about Fort Sill. You said the environmental conditions were not very pleasant.

SS: They were like Fort Bragg--I mean, you know, the middle of Oklahoma, in the middle of summer. I was there from June the 8th until the middle of August sometime. I mean, it was hot.

Gosh, it was awful. It wasn't as bad as Fort Bragg, because at Fort Bragg, we were actually doing tougher stuff. Fort Sill is officer's basic school, so they were more trying to teach us, as opposed to getting us in shape. Fort Bragg, we were out doing [exercises]. I mean, we were in fatigues, crawling under wire with machine-gun bullets flying over our head. At Fort Sill, I was in the artillery and we were trying to zero in artillery rounds and a lot of classroom work, and so forth. We did have one experience there that was not really cool--turned out, when I reported in, that there was this one person, named Roger Tompkins, who had gone to West Virginia University, was president of the class and a Rhodes Scholar. After studying in England, he went back to Yale Law School and was a graduate of Yale Law School. He was a couple years older than I, but because he was deferred longer, [he] came in the military [the] same time I did. He came in as a captain, so he was our class leader at officer's basic school. Since he was from West Virginia, we became great friends. Also, I was a first lieutenant, so, I was one of the higher ranking [trainees]. I guess I was his second-in-command, and we became really good friends--turned out, we lived in the same complex, same apartment complex. When we got to Fort Sill, Marilyn and I rented this apartment that had a swimming pool, and so, we became really good friends with he and [his wife]. Of course, that story is a longer story, because we went to Germany together. He was in a different city, and we continued seeing each other, and he, Roger, later became godparents to our son Colby and Marilyn and I were godparents to his daughter. He became Attorney General of the State of West Virginia. He died of Alzheimer's when he was sixty, unfortunately.

At Fort Sill, we were together. There were five of us. This is before his wife arrived out there. There was another couple in the back seat. Marilyn was in the middle and I was driving. The day before, [on] Cache Road, the stoplight was hanging from a guide wire out in the middle. Someplace along the line, they came out and put it in the middle of the road. It was a traffic signal, middle of the road, and I was driving and [turned to] look at them and darn if I didn't sideswipe that new light. I said, "Where'd that light come from? It'd never been here before," and it was obviously my fault, because I didn't have it [under control]. Nobody else was injured or anything, but tore up our car, and so, we didn't have a car for about a month while we were at Fort Sill, trying to get it fixed, but that was probably the worst thing that happened at Fort Sill. The rest of it was education and, you know, learning how to fire a howitzer, and ended up being in self-propelled howitzers when I got to Germany. We didn't even study those at Fort Sill. We just used the, you know, regular wheeled pedestal howitzers. I wasn't a very good forward observer. I think my depth perception was poor. I can remember being out there and calling [for artillery fire], you know, looking through binoculars. There was a target out there and you'd fire one and say, "That one's over the target by two hundred yards. Drop two hundred yards, left fifty yards." They'd fire another one and I'd look at it and I said, "Yes, that's just in front of the target. Add five-zero and fire for effect." The instructor came over and he said, "Lieutenant, that last round was behind the target. If you add another five-zero, you're going to be well behind the target." I said, "I thought it was in front." I was lucky to get through that course, because my depth perception, apparently, just wasn't that good.

Fort Sill really wasn't bad and being there as a newlywed, I was sort of on my honeymoon. Except for it being really hot, it wasn't bad. We had this real one-bedroom apartment with a window air-conditioning [unit] in the living room. It was so hot [that] we couldn't sleep in the bedroom. We had to pull our mattress in in front of the air-conditioning unit in the living room

and sleep there, because it was the only way we could stay cool and sleep at night. The night after I got married, we told everybody we were going to the Greenbrier Hotel, the resort in West Virginia, and we instead went to the Holiday Inn in downtown Charleston. The next day, I got out to the pool and, just sitting there, ran into another friend that we knew. Before I knew it, I was badly sunburned. I mean, I didn't put any lotion on. Marilyn woke up in the middle of the night and, there I was, sitting on the [chair] and my tail-end on the edge of a chair, because I couldn't put my back up against the back of the chair and I couldn't sleep. So, that's how bad it was. When we got to Fort Sill and I jumped in the swimming pool, I had skin bubbles on my legs.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SS: I had all these skin bubbles all over. [laughter] I mean, I looked awful. I was just so sunburned that the skin just left little pouches when water got in there, and I came out of the pool and had little pouches of water with water squirting out of them. [laughter] Marilyn said, "Oh, my, what did I marry?" but, anyway, that lasted for a little while. We went to Germany after that and we had a wonderful three-year experience in Germany.

SI: The first year-and-a-half, you were with the Third Armored Division.

SS: That's correct. I was with Third Armored Division in--we were actually in Friedberg--with the Second Battalion, 27th Artillery, and I was the forward observer at first, and then, later, became liaison officer. I was also the athletic officer and, after I was there about nine months, they needed officers to go to Frankfurt to participate in this Troop Test "Frontier Shield." It was where they were studying a new concept of modular support--in other words, having small groups of people spread out all across a big, wide terrain and being specially protected--because if, "the balloon went up," that is, Russia came across the East German/West German border and they started attacking us. If they used nuclear weapons, how were we going to protect ourselves? We had to disperse, use all kinds of coverage, and this [is] what this troop test was doing. I was the executive officer on that and that lasted nine months. I had to do TDY [temporary duty assignment] in Frankfurt. It was only about a twenty-mile drive, so, it wasn't a big deal, but the hardest part about that [was], we had to go to Southern Germany, near the Berchtesgaden area, for our tests. After we designed the test, we had to go there to perform the test, and that was about a six or a seven-week period of time that I had to be away from Marilyn. So, that was the hardest part. I sent her pictures of myself with a mustache--she didn't even recognize me--and then, came back after that test was over. That's when I got these orders to go to Hanau, because, by this time, they had filled my position [at] the Second of the 27th Artillery. I didn't really have a home. They reassigned me and I didn't want to go there. That's when I went to the European Exchange System.

SI: How effective was the program that you helped to develop?

SS: Well, you know, after the test was over, they said it was fine, but we never really heard any results. We gave them a report and a recommendation, and I know it was pretty secret at that time. I mean, there, I had a top secret clearance and everybody on that test had top secret. It was

pretty confidential. We made a recommendation. I don't know what they ultimately decided to do.

SI: How many men were involved?

SS: Well, first off, you know, the people designing it, we had seven phases and had a person in charge of each phase, and I was the executive officer. We had a commanding officer, and then, some support staff, probably fifteen or twenty of us, in the whole design phase of it, but, then, after that we went to the southern German area. We had battalions of men who participated in the test, who were to actually implement what we had designed. Then, we tested it and we analyzed it, made our recommendation. It was totally different and, again, I didn't have any extra duties. Being on TDY, I didn't have to do officer of the day or do weekend duty, you know, that you would normally have. So, I liked that part of it, too.

SI: What would you do on a typical day there?

SS: Well, it was mostly administrative office work. I mean, we were actually designing the test and, when I say designing, we had to determine what the men were going to do. Then, we developed the questions that we'd ask after we were physically deployed and after a "nuclear blast" occurred. I mean, these weren't big megaton bombs. These were small nuclear weapons, you know, to demolish a field force. I mean, it's all theoretical anyway--I mean, there was no actual dropping of a bomb. [laughter] So, it's hard to test something like that, but we designed a test. Then, we asked questions as it was being tested in the field, and then, we came up with the analysis of [it], you know, based on the answers to the questions, and then, made a recommendation. So, it was mostly office work, except for that test phase. There was some pretty good people in there. I remember, I didn't get an Army Commendation [Medal], but I did get a certificate of merit for it, but I was glad to get back. I didn't like that six or seven weeks away from Marilyn. That was pretty hard, six or seven weeks, and, when I was with the Second of the 27th, we went off on field tests during that phase, too. All field exercises were in Southern Germany, where it was real cold. The heavy tanks and self-propelled howitzers could go across the farmland. It was so frozen that it didn't harm anything in the wintertime. You couldn't do it in the summertime, because it was all muck and mud and you'd destroy the farms. All the tests, all the troop bivouacs, and so forth, were always conducted in the winter. You couldn't sleep in the self-propelled howitzers, because if you touched it with bare skin, your skin would freeze to it, was so cold. So, we would put a poncho down and put a sleeping bag down, get in the sleeping bag and cover yourself up with another poncho, or whatever you could find. I remember waking up one morning, I had to uncover myself from the snow. I mean, it was just completely covered up with snow. It was so bad. It was totally different from Fort Bragg and Fort Sill--where it was hot in both those places--it was cold in Germany.

SI: How likely did you think the prospect of a war with Russia was?

SS: Oh, at that time, it was highly considered, highly thought of. You know, the Cold War was a serious thing. It was 1965 when I arrived there. The real war'd been over for twenty years, but Russia still occupied Berlin. We had West Berlin, they had East Berlin and East Germany. It was so significant that, one time, Marilyn and I wanted to go visit West Berlin, which was

isolated. We had to drive through an East German/Russian corridor. When we got to the American checkpoint, they turned us away. The reason was that Marilyn's ID card said, "Marilyn Rogers Simms," and her passport said, "Marilyn Walker Simms," and they said, "If you don't have two IDs that are completely, exactly compatible, then, they can't let you go through." So, we couldn't even go through that corridor to go visit Berlin. The Russians and Americans did not like each other. The East Germans and the West Germans were completely opposed to each other. There was always concern that, "the balloon was going to go up" and there was going to be an attack and we had to repel the attack, and that's all we trained for all the time. We'd have exercises and we'd have emergency deployments. We'd have, you know, the siren go off and we'd be called out at three o'clock in the morning to stand up. When we got ready, they would time us, and then, they would stand us down. You know, we'd be up from three until six, and then, we'd go home, because they just wanted to see how fast we could get there to be ready when the balloon went up. It was perceived by us, at least at my echelon, you know, as a lieutenant/captain, to be real, and talked about it all the time. Nothing ever happened, as you know, but the thought was there that it was going to. Now, again, I was still not that political at the time, but, you know, there was a true fear there.

SI: Was there much talk about the war in Vietnam? Was it seen as something that could potentially pull you in?

SS: Well, as a matter-of-fact, a little bit. The war in Vietnam was, I guess, started earlier, and then Kennedy started sending more people to Vietnam as instructors. I told you, I had a chance to go to Hawaii and, of course, if I'd gone to Hawaii, I'd been sent straight to Vietnam, probably, but I was in Germany and there was an occupational force there, that it was fully implemented. I told you, I decided to go for three years, so [that] I could take Marilyn. During the last six months of my tour in Germany, I received orders in late 1967 to go to Vietnam. They were continuing to build up the Vietnam forces.

I called the personnel officer. I said, "Okay, well, I received these orders, but it says it's a thirteen-month tour and my time is up in less than six months. What does this mean?" He said, "Well, you can voluntarily extend for the period of time it takes you to finish that additional tour or you can finish up your three years in Germany and get out," and I said, "Well, I think I'm going to stay here and get out." I was still a Reserve officer; I wasn't regular Army. Just a little aside, the colonel who was my commanding officer at the European Exchange System, he said, "Steve," he said, "would you consider staying in the military?" and I said, "Colonel, if I could be assured of having good commanders like you the full time, I probably would consider it, but I know that we change bosses all the time. You never know who you're going to be reporting to. I mean, some of them are good and some of them are bad." He said, "Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about." He was the guy I was talking about--I mean, he was completely erratic. One day, I'd have this job; next day, I'd have another job, you know. He had a driver and a car and we went out and played golf together. I mean, I thought he was a terrible commander, but he was a "full bull" [a colonel] and he wanted to be a general and I guess he knew how to be, what it took to be a general. I don't know, but he played with us. [laughter] I had no idea what my job was going to be the next day. So, I opted to get out and it was a good decision for me at the time.

SI: They started scaling back after that; maybe 1968 was the height.

SS: Well, Nixon is the one who took them out. He didn't get out of office until '74, didn't he?

SI: Yes, but I think we had turned it over to the Vietnamese by 1972, maybe early 1973.

SS: When did we actually leave?

SI: I want to say 1972 or 1973. The fall of Saigon was 1975. [Editor's Note: The number of American troops deployed to Vietnam reached its peak of 543,000 in April 1969. The Nixon Administration advanced the policy of Vietnamization, turning the prosecution of the war over to the South Vietnamese military, which resulted in the last American troops leaving in April 1973. North Vietnam invaded and overran South Vietnam in the Spring of 1975, leading to the evacuation of the US Embassy in Saigon in April 1975.]

SS: Okay, so, '68, when I would have been there, would have been a big deployment. So, I had orders to go there, but I ultimately decided to not accept them, and I didn't have to, because of my three-year deferment and my three years of active duty. When I was discharged in Germany, I was offered a job in Germany. They offered me the same job that I was doing as a military guy as a civilian, and the pay was good. Instead of a GS [General Schedule] job, it was a UPS job, a United States Personnel job, but it was the equivalent to a GS, and I'd actually considered doing it. When we left Germany, we left all of our household goods and cars over there. Now, remember, I'd been there for three years. Marilyn did come back here for six weeks about halfway through. So, when we came back, I looked around, I said, "My gosh." I'd forgotten what America was like. I said, "I don't want to go back over there." [laughter] So, then, I ordered all of our stuff shipped back over here. We had it in storage, ready to be shipped. So, they shipped it over and we had to drive up to New York to pick up our car, but, then, I started applying for jobs and got a job. That's what happened in the military, [laughter] but I had a good three years there. After I got out, after I was discharged, then, I applied for a release and it was granted. Even though I had an eight-year obligation, because I had three years of duty, it counted extra toward the eight-year obligation, and so, I didn't even stay in the Reserves after that.

SI: You initially wanted to go into a field of law, but decided business was a better move for you. Tell me about that transition into business at this point.

SS: Well, what happened is, the first thing I did was apply to law firms, and this is right after I got back to the United States. I applied to this law firm in Charleston, West Virginia, and they said, "Yes, we'll hire you, at 550 dollars a month," and I was making the equivalent, with housing allowances, and so forth, with the military, about ninety-five hundred dollars a year. You know, that came out to less and I said, "Yes, this is not a very good deal." I ran into this fellow law school graduate of mine, who's also a CPA, and he said, "Steve," he said, "I'm driving down to Charlotte, North Carolina. I have an interview with a bank, called First Union National Bank." I said, "Well, why don't I go with you?" I didn't have an appointment, but I just rode down with him and I interviewed the same guy and darn if they didn't offer me a job for eleven-five, and I said, "Well, this is good." Then, we called Wachovia, up in Winston-Salem, said,

"You know, we're just looking for jobs. Would you have time to interview us?" So, we went up there and they offered me a job. Interestingly enough, the other guy didn't get any offers, [laughter] although I thought he was smarter than I was. Well, anyway, [I] had this [offer]. I said, "Gosh, this is really easy."

Then, I went back and interviewed this local [insurance] firm in West Virginia, called McDonough, Caperton, Shepherd and Goldsmith, and Gaston Caperton was one of my best friends, still is a good friend. [I] don't see him very often, but he later became Governor of West Virginia, [from 1989 to 1997], but he's the one who encouraged me to take Marilyn out the first time, and I introduced him to his first wife. He's now on his third wife, but [that is] neither here nor there. Anyway, he said, "Steve, why don't you interview [James] Banks Shepherd, because our company's looking for a person," and it was the association group insurance for [the professional associations]. You know, it was mail-order insurance. We'd send out all these advertisements, maybe you get [them] from the historical society, about disability insurance or health insurance, or some association that you belong to, maybe you get these mailings. Well, that's what we did, and they had ten associations, the state lawyers, state doctors, the nurses--and I said, "Okay, I'll sit and talk to them." He sent me up to New York to be tested, to see if I would have an aptitude for this type of work, and, while I sat there, the testing agency sent me over to Oppenheimer. I wasn't interested in what they were doing, but I also interviewed a warehousing company up in New York and they offered me a job at ten thousand dollars a year, to be their associate counsel. I didn't think I could live in New York for ten thousand dollars a year. You can tell me what it cost to live up there now, but New York City sounded [expensive]. I knew how much ten thousand was because that's about what I got from [the] military, and I didn't think that was a very good living condition. So, anyway, McDonough, Caperton, Shepherd and Goldsmith offered me a job, making less than the banks would have paid me, but they paid for my, you know, club membership and some other things, so, it came out about equal. So, I took that job--discovered I didn't like it. It just wasn't my forte, but I stayed there for three years, and then, I got a car dealership. While I was there, I found out that the Chrysler-Plymouth dealership was available, startup business, and I applied for it and got it. Marilyn hated the idea of me going into that business to start up, and she was smarter than I was, but I really wanted to do it--would have bankrupted us. This is in 1971. You don't remember the 1974 oil embargo.

SI: No, I have read about it. [Editor's Note: From October 1973 to March 1974, in response to the United States' support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War, OAPEC (the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) and its allies imposed an oil embargo that had severe global economic repercussions.]

SS: It was pretty awful. I mean, you could drive down Independence Boulevard--here [Charlotte] in '75--and all these car dealerships were just vacant, couldn't sell any cars, because nobody could get any gasoline to drive them. We would have been broke if we'd done that--would have had two or three good years, then, after that, it'd have been all over. So, I took that job and didn't go into practicing law, simply because I couldn't make enough money. Then, after I was working on that car dealership, this friend of mine, his name is, coincidentally, Simms, was with a company called Piece Good Shops, that his father had started back in 1937 in Charleston. We became friends after I invested in a franchise business, and he came to me and he said, "You know, we're going to start expanding this company." He said, "Why don't you join us?" He had

moved to [Winston-Salem]. His brother was in Huntington, West Virginia, and John Simms moved his office to Winston-Salem. They had seventeen stores and they had about another ten stores as franchise stores. He said, "We're going to buy back the franchise stores and we're going to open all new stores, and then, go public." I was making about fifteen thousand dollars a year at that time and they offered me a job at twenty-five thousand. Now, that was a big jump--had to move to Winston-Salem. This is right after I'd ran for city council and lost. I called the Chrysler people, I wrote them, actually, and told them that I wasn't going to take the franchise.

We moved to Winston-Salem and stayed there for four years. We loved Winston-Salem. It was a great place, but that's another story, which I'll tell you about in sequence, if you'd like to hear it. I was on the corporate board and [was] the corporate secretary and was Director of Development for this little company that was going to expand its stores, and then, go public. We merged all the franchise stores, and then, we opened up a bunch of other stores, ended up with eighty stores and went public, and it was a great thing. The stock started out at thirteen and ran up to eighteen, and then, the recession heated up, the '74 thing I was telling you about. All of a sudden, Marilyn and I took every bit of money that we had and put it into stock. We were buying it as it was going up and it started coming down. We were buying it as it came down, to the point that, when I finally left, in 1975, to join Family Dollar Stores, here in Charlotte, we had lost more money in the stock than I'd made in the four years I worked for them. I mean, it was hard. Marilyn said, "I'm getting ready to write this check, but we don't have any money in the bank." I said, "You write the check and I'll get the money." Somehow or other, we made it through.

I mentioned I was on the Board. One day, [I] walked into a board meeting and Dudley Simms, who was president of the company, handed out this sheet, where he had admitted to the IRS that he'd been using company funds for personal use. He had agreed to pay the IRS the money back, plus fraud penalties and interest, and he agreed to pay the company back the money that he'd taken in, plus interest, and I said, "Whoa." [laughter] You know, I was a licensed lawyer, but I wasn't a practicing lawyer. This is a problem, so I hired a lawyer. He says, "Steve, you've got a problem." [laughter] He said, "Either Dudley is going to have to resign from the company, or agree to indemnify the company, or you're going to have to get off that board." There were five directors, myself and this one outside director and John and Dudley Simms and their father, who was also Dudley Simms. We were no relation, although we told people we were cousins for convenience. Well, I made the first motion for Dudley to resign, and that motion was defeated, 3-2. The other outside director made the second motion that he indemnify the company, and that motion was defeated, 3-2. So, I had to resign. I resigned from the board, and they said, "Well, why don't you stay on until January and just not stand up for reelection?" I said, "Well, I really can't do that." I left the board meeting, went back to my office and they came back later and said, "Okay, well, you've done a good job. Sorry you're in this position. Just keep doing what you're doing and everything'll be fine," but it wasn't fine. You know, I was, all of a sudden, a "traitor." I didn't support them, and so, I could just feel the tension. Maybe it was self-[imposed], maybe I was paranoid, maybe it was something that wasn't really there, but I felt it and I wasn't enjoying it anymore. I really liked it before. I had tried to buy the company earlier--can tell you about that later.

I started secretly interviewing and I saw this ad in [*The*] *Wall Street Journal*, where Family Dollar Stores in Charlotte, North Carolina was looking for a corporate attorney. I called them,

interviewed, and they offered me the job. I gave Piece Good my two weeks' notice and they asked me to stay on longer and, finally, after three or four days, I said, "Look, I've got to get out of here." [laughter] I said, "I'll come back, if you need help." By this time, because of this announcement, they'd stopped expanding. They didn't really need me anymore. I was doing several other things, too, but, you know, I wasn't needed. You know, anybody could have picked it up. I didn't feel like they needed me. So, they said, "Okay, go ahead and go," and then, they wouldn't pay my final legal bills for 238 dollars, or something like that. I wrote them that, "I need it more than you do." They sent me the check with a nasty letter. That ended my relationship with them, even though [I] tried to leave on good terms. I did the best I could, but that was the experience in Winston-Salem.

While I was in a board meeting, just before they announced the taking [of the funds], one of the other directors--at this time, there were seven directors--he was an attorney in town by the name of Wade Gallant. Wade said, "John," he said, "is this company for sale?" and John said, "No," and he said, "Well, that's funny. I got this call from this attorney out on the West Coast that represented this other fabric company. He said that Jim Humphries," who was another attorney in Winston-Salem, but wasn't on the board, "was out there trying to sell the company to him, and wondered why I, being listed as the outside counsel, wasn't out there representing them, versus this other attorney." John started sputtering, "Well, you know, you know…" Wade says, "Well, you're lying to me, so, I resign from the board." This other outside director said, "Well, [if] he resigns, I'm resigning, too, because it sounds like trouble to me." So, actually, they left. I said, "You all want to sell the company?" and [they] said, "We'd consider it." [I] said, "I'd like to buy it," and so, I put together a financing package, with North Carolina [National Bank]. It was NCNB at the time, which is now Bank of America. The guy that later became a good friend of mine, Jerry Thompson, met me on a Sunday, along with the head buyer, the head accountant, and the CPA guy, made a proposal and they agreed to lend us the money to buy it. This is back when leveraged buyouts were not known of, but we were going to do a leveraged buyout. We didn't offer the brothers as much money as they wanted, so they said, "Okay, well, is that your best offer?" We left some negotiating room. Well, they just came back the next day and said, "Well, we've decided the company's not for sale. Just go back to work," but I put a lot of time in it, trying to buy that company. They later sold it to some venture capitalists. The two guys that I was going to buy the company with stayed on and managed it, but it later went bankrupt and closed up. It disappeared.

I joined the Family Dollar Stores as the corporate attorney, and then, later, after I was there for a while, started doing their real estate work. They had a real estate guy and, every time he submitted a location for approval, he had to submit it to me first. Usually, his wife was the broker of record. I said, "Well, who's doing all this work, she or you?" He said, "Well, she found it," and he said, "Well, you know, somebody's going to get a commission, might as well be her." I said, "Well, I can't work that way. You know, if she's actually finding the locations, then, that's fine, but, if she's finding them, you're not, then, that's a problem." I said, "Don't submit anymore with her as the broker of record." He came in--they submitted another one. I said, "Is your wife the broker?" He said, "Yes." He wasn't going to tell me that until I asked him. I went to the president of the company and I said, "I can't work with him anymore." We fired him and hired another person; fired him, hired another person; fired him--went through about three people. Finally, they came to me and said, "Steve," said, "we've decided we could find another

attorney easier than we can find a good real estate person. [laughter] Would you move over and just do real estate?" I said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Well, you know, we'll make you vice-president." There weren't any vice-presidents at the company. They had two hundred stores, but there was the founder/president and the guy I was reporting to was the executive vice-president and they had one other guy who was vice-president of operations. I said, "Well…" So, they gave me a big raise and a title, and so, I moved over from attorney to real estate. It's the best thing I ever did. It was a lot more fun, and so, I was traveling a lot, and I mentioned they had two hundred stores.

SI: When did you make the switch from attorney to real estate?

SS: After I'd been there about a year.

SI: Okay, 1976.

SS: '76, right, and they hired this guy who came in in September. I continued doing both for about three months until another attorney came in from New York, George Mahoney, who's still a great friend of mine and lives three or four blocks from here. He came in as the attorney, and then, I was doing strictly real estate and construction. I stayed there twenty years and, when I joined, as I think I said, there were two hundred stores. When I left, there were twenty-four hundred stores, and I was the only person that'd seen them all in thirty-eight states. We had two company planes and I was on a plane every week, as much eight to ten flying hours a week. I would just come home on weekends to sleep, I was so tired. Going up and down in these little planes, you know, they're oxygenated for about eight to ten thousand feet, so you're always flying at low oxygen rates. It's like being at an eight to ten-thousand-foot elevation, and so, just exhausting. So, after twenty years, I was fifty-four and I said, "I'm out of here." Fortunately, they'd given me enough stock options that it worked out okay. That was a good twenty years. I left twenty years to the day that I was there--got a watch that didn't work, because the batteries ran down and [the] wristband was too small for me, and they gave me a nice party and dinner and I went back for a few annual meetings, but I haven't been back since then. Fortunately, their stock has continued to do really well.

SI: You were with the company at a very interesting time in its history, through its great expansion and several changes in policy. When you first joined them, were they still only in North Carolina or were they further south?

SS: Five states, yes.

SI: However, they were still all in the South.

SS: Yes. They were in Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee, and just a few stores in each of those--Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia, I mean, very few stores. The expansion was, I think the first year I was doing real estate, I think we did maybe twenty stores. Then, I started hiring people to work for me and, by the time I left, I had sixteen real estate managers and six construction managers, four attorneys, four pilots. [laughter] The travel

section was reporting to me. It was fun, but I was just traveling all the time. I was just tired all the time.

SI: Can you describe for me what was involved in getting a store operational and how you were involved in it? Were you deciding where the store should be purchased or should go?

SS: We did several things--either we would buy a piece of land and build a building or we would have somebody build one for us, a free-standing building, or we'd go in shopping centers, either existing shopping centers, take existing space, or go into new shopping centers that were being constructed. If it was an existing building that was rehabbed, it was the easiest way to do it all. All you had to do is negotiate a lease and sign it, make improvements to the building and open it up. If you had to construct it, you had to go through all the zoning. First off, you had to buy the property, get the title cleared and get the zoning, make sure the zoning was correct, get the building permits, then, hire a contractor, then, watch the construction phase go on for about six months, and make sure it was built right, and then, move in and open the store. The real estate manager would do the acquisition. The construction manager would supervise the construction, either rehabbing the store or building it from ground up, or, if a developer was building it, he'd supervise, to make sure that they're building it according to our specifications. The attorney finalized the leases or the purchase of the property, and the contracts with the contractor. We used a lot of form documents, so the attorneys only got involved when we had something that was off the wall, but there was enough of those.

In my last year there, we opened 250 stores a year, which is about one per working day. [laughter] So, we had a lot going on. The twenty years I was there, you know, I started out with one real estate manager, two real estate managers, finally hired a construction manager, and, you know, it was a buildup. There was no real estate department when I got there. I told you, in my first year there, we went through three real estate directors. There was no continuity, no formula, no principles to go by, no standard leases. So, I standardized the lease and standardized the purchase contract, standardized the construction contract, and, if we used something standard, then, it was a no-brainer. If we had to change it, then, that's when the attorneys got involved, but the selection process became more complicated later on. At the beginning, you'd go down and say, "Yes, this looks like a good location," [laughter] and then, later, we started analyzing it.

I remember, my first years, the founder of the company, Leon Levine, and the executive vice-president was his cousin, Lewis Levine, and they were the hardest-nosed businessmen I've ever met in my life. I mean, they can negotiate your ears off your head, if you believe that's possible. If anybody could do it, they could, and I can remember being with him in the beginning stages. This is when I was the lawyer, because, after they made the decision, then, they'd turn it over to me and I had to make sure that everything they had decided on was implemented or finalized. I mean, they would use each other to battle the landlord or the owner of the property. They would bounce everything off, "No, Leon won't agree to that." "No, Lewis would never agree to that." You know, the art of negotiation was something I really learned from the masters.

Well, after I started doing it and got more involved in it, then I developed what we called a location analysis. I put all the information about a location on a form, including demographics, population, traffic, where you're going to draw your customers from, all the competition, the

supermarkets. We took photos, including aerials, so I was flying over sites. The real estate managers would submit a proposed location and I would review it, fly over, and take aerial photos. I remember, one time, this lady submitted one location. As I was flying the location, I looked down and saw a K-Mart about half a mile from the site. I looked on the map that she had submitted--there was no K-Mart. I went down, drove up and there was the K-Mart. I called her and I said, "What do you think of that K-Mart?" She said, "What K-Mart?" and I said, "The one a half mile from the site." [laughter] I mean, you really had to check everything that was done, because people gloss through things or they don't do a full workup. Anyway, by the time I was finished, the location analysis [was] probably half to three quarters of an inch thick, probably twenty pages, with attachments, you know, everything from maps to demographic reports to aerial photos and ground photos, east, west, south and north, complete competition maps and diagrams, site plans, and on and on. So, we'd always [double-check]. Even if we approved of the site and decided that the shopping center was okay or the lot was okay, then you would make sure that your position within the shopping center had to be just right. There was a lot that went into the selection. We'd probably turn down ten for each one that was approved. I mean, it became highly selective and we were very successful at it.

We did sales projections, first year through the fifth year, based on our history of comparable type stores, in comparable type cities, in comparable type locations. What amazed me is how accurate we were. A new store would do ninety percent of the sales of an existing store in the first year, which is pretty good. I mean, we had a lot of stores opened up better than average, and there was no downside to it if you kept doing that. If you had stores that didn't have to build up to get to the average, if you could start out, right in the beginning, doing what an average store sales did, I mean, you had a winner, because you're going to make money the first year. We projected sales and had pro forma P&Ls [profit and loss statements] as part of the analysis. If it didn't make a profit, we didn't do it--if the rent was too high or advertising cost is too much, or whatever, you know, the expense formula didn't work. The sales were based on competition, population, and demographics. If it was too high income, we couldn't go in there at Family Dollar Stores. Piece Goods Shops looked for middle to upper-middle income. Family Dollar looked for middle to lower-middle income, and then, in some cases, it was lower than low middle, but you didn't go into too many of those, because the risk was too great. That's the other thing we did--we appraised the risk. You know, shrinkage is a big problem. The more difficult the site was, the greater the shrinkage rate, and that could affect the profitability and would be a "no" vote.

Our real estate committee was composed of me and the president and, if they got through me, they had to get through the president, who was usually [amenable]. After a period of time, he respected my opinion and, most of the time, they were approved once it got through me, but it was amazing how often people would present things that were just not quite good enough. Maybe it was a good enough location, but the rent was too high, so, the expenses were too great, so, didn't make an adequate profit. I'd tell them to go back and renegotiate it and, if they were able to do that, then, it was approved. I approved a lot of locations subject to qualifications. If they could meet those qualifications, then, it was an approved deal. I'm not saying we're mass producing them, but, my last year there, we were putting up a lot of sites. I told you, we opened 250 stores the last year I was there. I probably looked at ten for each one that was approved, so, that's twenty-five hundred sites that I looked at that last year, or the year before, because it

usually took about a year to get them open. I would review eight or ten city locations in one day. I had to fly in, rent a car or get the police to pick me up at a small airport, however we could get transportation from the [landing strip]. Some of these airports are not even occupied. I mean, there's nobody there. You have to call ahead and ask, "Can you send somebody from the chamber of commerce or police to meet us?" but we'd always get a ride. One time, I had to hitchhike off, [laughter] I mean, stand out on the road, hitchhiking, trying to get to town from the airport. You know, those were trying times, but they really worked. It was a good ride and very successful for me. The company is really doing super, even today. Now, they have sixty-six hundred stores. Matter-of-fact, I saw, two or three days ago, J.P. Morgan recommended their stock as a buy, even though it's already up forty-eight percent this year. I don't know if you follow the stock market or not.

SI: Not really, but I did look into the history of the company. I saw the huge growth that you were a part of creating. One of the documents I looked at compared what Walmart was doing in the same period with Family Dollar. Was Walmart one of your major, if not *the* major, competitors?

SS: Oh, *the* major competition.

SI: One of the main points of the article was that Walmarts were generally outside of town, whereas Family Dollar Stores were in the towns.

SS: Didn't start out that way.

SI: Okay, please tell me about that.

SS: You know, because Walmart started out with, you know, forty-thousand-square-foot stores, they could have them very close to town then. Now, with two-hundred-thousand-square-foot stores, they need twenty acres of ground. You don't get twenty acres of ground without going outside of town. Family Dollar only needs an acre of ground, you know, for their [average store]. At that time, it was six to eight-thousand-square-foot stores. Now, they're more like eight or nine-thousand-square-foot stores, but, with an acre, we could put up a store. They now need twenty acres. So, that's a reason, but we used to stay on the opposite side of town from Walmart--I think they still do--Walmart being the key competitor.

SI: Was that part of your strategy, though, to make it within walking distance or a short driving distance?

SS: Convenient, yes; convenience was the key. I mean, we wanted to be on the corner. We had to be able to afford it first, but we wanted to be very convenient to our customer. Some of them would walk in. I mean, a lot of them drove in, but some of them would walk in. You know, if it was a half mile away, they could walk---more than that, who knows?--but a lot of our customers walked in. So, convenience was an important thing, but Walmart was probably more aggressive than we were. They don't have more stores, but their stores got bigger and bigger and bigger and they got into technology faster, you know. Their distribution--point of sale and their distribution facilities--were par to none. They had satellite transmitters on the top of all their stores. When

they sold an item, not only would it immediately be transmitted back to their headquarters, but it would be transmitted to the supplier or the vendor of that particular item. If they sold a tube of toothpaste, Colgate would know it the same time they sold it. So, their distribution was flowing immediately. Family Dollar, on the other hand, distributed to a store--the big stores, high-volume stores, twice a week, the littler stores, once a week. They would have to go through our distribution center, have to be broken down into [boxed orders]. If one of our stores only got six tubes of toothpaste, you had to break up a big case, take out six, put it in a box to ship to that store. Walmart'd send a whole case--makes a big difference. Trying to resupply the stores was a major problem--still is--and they got into technology very early. We were late getting into it and, when I say we, meaning Family Dollar.

We were also late in taking credit cards. They're just now starting to take credit cards. Before that, they didn't want to pay the two to three-percent fee that the credit card companies charged and, also, we wanted to make sure that people could afford it. We were a cash-only business for the longest time. [If] you had cash, you could buy something in our store. If you had a credit card or a debit card, you couldn't--wouldn't even take checks unless they were pre-approved, [if] you had a check cashing card. You had to come in and apply for a check cashing card. We'd check the bank, make sure that their credit was good, and then, they could cash a check. They do better than that now, but, back in those days, it was a cash-only business, and that's one of the reasons it was so successful--never had a credit problem, never had to write off a lot of money, unless people stole it from us. I'm not saying people wouldn't. Your cashier would be there and their friend would come in. They would get a cart full of stuff, and the cashier would charge you for one, slide one, charge you one, slide one, and you couldn't catch them. You know, if they didn't ring up every item that their customer was buying, it was almost impossible to stop them. We had a little office with one-way glass, trying to watch right over our cashiers, and then, the Americans for Disability Act [the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990] made us quit doing it, because it had steps up into it and a disabled person couldn't climb up those steps and there wasn't any room in our store to put a ramp up. So, we had to stop doing it, and we'd say, "Well, look, we don't have any disabled managers." They said, "That's your problem." It was just impossible. It was really an unfair act for a lot of people, for a lot of reasons, but it was fair for those who were disabled, but we couldn't hire a disabled person. They couldn't do the job. They couldn't stock the shelves, they couldn't unload the truck, and they couldn't service the customer. If they couldn't walk up three or four steps to get into the office, they couldn't do any of the work. It's interesting, isn't it? If you have a disabled relative or friend, they are now more advantaged than they were before, but they still won't be hired at Family Dollar Stores, because they couldn't do the work. Dollar General was also a major competitor.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Do you mind if I record this?

SS: No.

SI: We were just talking about some of the policies discussed in the management committee at Family Dollar Stores.

SS: Well, you know, the management committee discussed every aspect of the business, but one of the things we were talking about earlier was the decision on whether or not to have credit cards or no credit cards and the cost of running the business. We had a pro forma P&L statement that pretty well dictated where we could go. In other words, we applied a certain percentage of business, of our sales, to advertising, to personnel, to rent and to all their other expenses. There were fixed expenses you couldn't get around. That was electric and phone; then, you had transportation, which was a big expense. The farther away from the distribution center to the store had to be taken into consideration. So, with our margin, which is, you know, as a discount store, we had a very small margin, every time you raised that margin, trying to make a little bit more business, then, the sales would go down. It had a reverse effect. You couldn't just raise your prices and expect to make more money. There just wasn't enough money to be able to pay the credit card companies a couple percent of our sales, or of that particular sale. Believe me, if you went from an all-cash business to accepting credit cards, everybody'd bring a credit card in. It was always a financial decision as to whether or not credit cards or debit cards could be accepted and we just made that decision that we couldn't afford it at that time. Now, with credit cards having such a widespread popularity, I think that they had to change that decision and make accommodation for it in their margins, maybe taking it out of something else. We would take it out of personnel, take it out of rent, take it out of advertising or whatever. That was part of it, but the management committee made all kinds of decisions related to all aspects of the business--whether to open a new distribution center or how many stores we're going to open in a year or whether or not to add a person on the staff. We budgeted everything and we did bottom-up budgeting, zero-based budgeting, as opposed to adding a percentage on to what your last year's budget was, which is what government does, [laughter] and that's the reason government's broke. We did zero-based budgeting and it all started with how much it cost to operate our business, including real estate expansion. Every department did the same, and the bottom line was, the overhead expense was a certain percentage, and then, the store expense was taken into consideration, and that's how we came up with it. Family Dollar Stores was one of the few companies [that] never borrowed money. I shouldn't say never borrowed, because they occasionally did, but it was always for a short term. Like, when we built a distribution center, we'd have to borrow short-term money to build it, but we always paid it back in six to nine months. If you look at their balance sheet today, you'll see that there's no debt, and that's the way the company's always operated--very sound business decisions.

SI: In the late 1980s, particularly in 1987, the decision was made to never be undersold. Can you tell me a little bit about what led up to that and how it was implemented?

SS: Well, some of that's advertising ploy, but we'd send shoppers out to our competitors--in that case, Walmart, Dollar General and anybody else that might claim to be a competitor. We had a lot of variety stores back in those days and we'd actually have price checkers, and so, our effort was designed to be the lowest price guy in town, if we could. It turned out that we couldn't necessarily do that. I think I mentioned to you, if we were in a high-risk area, we had to have more personnel or we had to have more security and, sometimes, we had to have more margin to accommodate it. We actually had what we called a "high risk" category of stores and added more personnel and we had a higher margin. We'd actually charge more for those goods. If they went across town to the Walmart, they might find Walmart had a lower price for those things, but, typically, what our plan was [was] to be competitive across the board, but you couldn't

always beat everybody on every item. We just had to represent ourselves as being the best that we could be. In 1993 or '94, we went to an everyday low price, meaning that we stopped advertising, with few exceptions. So, we cut out the advertising dollars and lowered the sales price, and that was very painful, cost us a lot of sales. You know, all of a sudden, if you knock the price down three percent or four percent, unless your business picked up, your sales automatically went down three or four percent, and it was hard to pick up those sales without the advertising. We found that we were training people to shop based on our ads. We would advertise something at a dollar off or fifty percent off or twenty-five percent off. Instead of buying something during the week that there was no ad, they would wait until the week that there was an ad and buy it at a lower price. We were advertising every two weeks with a circular in the newspaper or delivered in mail--found out people were shopping us based on the promoted price, as opposed to the regular price. So, then, we went to an everyday low price and that was the smartest thing we ever did, but it was painful at the beginning. All these changes that you make have an adverse effect short-term, but, for the long-term, it was good for the life of the company.

SI: You worked for two companies that were family companies, Piece Goods and Family Dollar. In general, as a non-family member, what are your impressions of working for family firms? What is positive and negative about it?

SS: Well, Piece Goods Shops, it was a much smaller company. When I left, sales were only ten million dollars and we had about one hundred stores. When I joined Family Dollar Stores, they had two hundred stores, doing about fifty million dollars. Even though they were public, they were still family companies. The decision makers were family members and [they] made all the decisions. One person can control your whole future or destiny. In bigger companies, like General Electric or IBM, have a hierarchy and they have management courses for you to take, they have a planned career path for you--for most people. At Family Dollar and Piece Goods Shops, there was no such thing. You just sort of did the best that you could and, hopefully, it was the right thing. In my particular case, what I found is, if you worked hard and produced, then, you were well accepted and well compensated. If you didn't, then, you didn't last. I mean, you were quickly replaced. You can't hide in a small family company. You can hide in a bigger company and, for that reason, I think that there's greater risk, but greater reward, in a smaller company. I happened to like it myself. You could go up faster, especially with a company like Family Dollar, and even Piece Goods Shops. We were growing at a rapid pace and, with the exception of the decline in stock at Piece Goods Shop, it still could have worked out well, if we hadn't hit that recession. [At] Family Dollar Stores, we sort of go right through recessions. You know, the sales aren't as adversely affected as the mainstream retailers, such as the department stores or the jewelry stores or even the clothing stores, because, when you have the lowest price in town and you're dealing in basics and consumables, people have to buy our merchandise to live. I mean, they might not buy clothing or shoes as much, but they're going to buy most of the hard goods and, you know, the items that they use on an everyday, regular basis. So, Family Dollar has survived recessions a lot better than the mainstream retailers. I liked being with a family company, because you were recognized for what you accomplished and you could have been penalized if you didn't accomplish what you were suppose to, too. I mean, you were highly visible, there was no hiding, but it was greater reward if you were successful. From that standpoint of taking one over the other, I would much rather be with a family company. Now,

both these companies were public companies. Family Dollar is New York [Stock] Exchange, and, back in those days, Piece Good Shops was over-the-counter. They don't even have an over-the-counter anymore, but still public and had to produce annual reports and shareholder reports and [Form] 10-Ks, [Form] 10-Qs, you know, tell the public what you were doing. So, it was family-controlled, but it was a public company. Both companies I was with, the founders still controlled the shares, so that they could dictate who the board was going to be and still control the company then.

SI: Is there anything else that you would like to share about your time with Family Dollar, or any other part of your career? We did not really get into the last portion of your career in real estate development.

SS: Okay, well, all I can say is that it was a good career and it was a great ride. I was very happy to be able to--can't say retire, because they didn't have a retirement plan when I left Family Dollar--but it was good to be able to leave a company situation and not have to worry too much. So, from that standpoint, it was a good time for me to get out, fifty-four years of age, and could go work for myself, not have anybody report to me or have to report to anybody else, work my own hours and not have to travel as much, be with Marilyn more. You know, by this time, our children had both left the nest and she was here by herself. So, it was a good time to spend more time with her, since I'd been traveling so much during the course of my career. No, to answer your question, there's probably a lot of aspects about it, over twenty years, that you could ask me, or, if I could think about, I could tell you, but nothing pops up. There were some good years, some tough years. I can remember, there was a number of occasions when I said, you know, "I'm going to quit this job." I mean, it was just too hard, and then, I would say, "Well, if you quit, what are you going to do that's easier?" and I'm a great believer in a positive attitude. I would then convince myself that it wasn't so bad where I was. I had a lot of job opportunities offered to me over the course of my career. People would call and say, you know, "Would you make this move?" I thought, "Well, maybe I should," but it wasn't worth it. It's not necessarily going to be better someplace else, as long as I was fairly treated, which I always was. I'm not saying it was easy all the time. I'm not saying that I wasn't criticized, or certainly was not patted on the back very much at all. Family Dollar was not a company to give you much accolade, or didn't give you much credit for doing what you were supposed to do. That was your job and, even when you exceeded what you were supposed to do, you weren't given any credit or any accolades for it, but you learn that that's okay. Other than that, there was one year that was really bad. We didn't meet our goals and expectations, and that hurt. Other years, I exceeded the goals and expectations and, you know, that was just the course of events. It was a good career and, looking back, I don't think I could have improved on that career by being anyplace else at the same period of time, but it was also a good time to leave.

SI: Is there anything you would like to say about your life since then, outside of business? Are there any community activities that you have been involved in?

SS: Well, you know, after I left Family Dollar, I started doing real estate development and I built some CVS Drug Stores and little land developments--that is, buy the land, put the roads in, and sell the lots. [I] even had a partner who built some houses, and those were real good things, fun to do. I'm glad I'm not doing them anymore, especially now, considering the economic

environment, but, at that time, building the drug stores was-- and still is--profitable, and I say still because I'm still getting rent income from them, but I'm glad I quit doing it when I did, because it became too hard. The last store that I built took a year-and-a-half, and as you get older, you know, a year-and-a-half is a lifetime. I guess I stopped doing that about--the last one I built was probably seven or eight years ago. I just hope that CVS renews the leases. They had twenty-year leases on all the stores. If they renew the leases, then, the mortgages will be paid off and it'd be more income for me, but, basically, I retired four or five years ago and actually closed down Simms Properties last tax year. I can't say that I really am active in construction or development anymore, although I still do real estate investment with other people who are developing. The thing that I do now, I guess, of interest is, I belong to this one club, up in the mountains, called Elk River Club. That is a golf course community. It's about four thousand to five thousand feet high and it's very cool in the summertime, and I'll be leaving to go there tomorrow. When it's eighty degrees here, it's seventy degrees up there and, when it's ninety degrees here, it's eighty degrees up there. I'm on the board and president of the property owners' association, and have been for the last year-and-a-half, which keeps me very busy. I'm surprised, because it shouldn't be that hard of a job, but it's turned out to be. It's not a full-time job, but it's taken up a lot more time than it should or that I expected it to take. My term is over in September and I'm glad to be able to pass the baton on that, but that's been a lot of fun. Other than that, I'm not very involved in community activities, other than social things. I make contributions to charities, but I don't spend any time with charities. You know, there's a couple ways to support them, I guess more than a couple ways, but one of them's just giving money and the other is to spend time with them. I've elected not to spend any time, but I am spending a lot of time with my grandchildren.

I have a six-year-old and a four-year-old by my daughter, who, coincidentally, is now pregnant with a boy and girl twins. So, she's going to have four and she's going to need a lot of help. Marilyn and I are both looking forward to that. My son Colby is married, has been for almost five years, and they don't have any children yet, but they will. We were very fortunate. Colby lived in Connecticut for eight or nine years and decided to move back to North Carolina. He says it was too cold, too expensive, and too crowded. So, he came back here and the company that he was with asked him to stay on doing the same thing he was. He telecommutes. He's director of technology and trading for a financial management company. My daughter Kassie lived in Richmond after college. She was with Travelers and she met this guy, dated him for about three years. She called one night and she said, "Dad," said, "I've talked to Scott," and they weren't married, but said, "Scott wouldn't object if I moved back to Charlotte, and he's even thinking about moving back," quitting his job after moving to Charlotte, also. So, they did and they got married here and he, coincidentally, is working for Family Dollar Stores in their real estate department as director of real estate. Nothing could be better than to have both your kids, who were out of town, thought that they would never be here, both move back. Now, to have these grandchildren, it's a great life.

SI: Wonderful.

SS: It is wonderful--it really is. [laughter]

SI: Congratulations. Particularly with two grandchildren on the way, it is wonderful.

SS: Who could expect it to happen that way? but that's pretty much the career at this point in time, unless there's aspects in-between that I haven't told you about, that I've forgotten about.

SI: I cannot think of anything off the top of my head that we have not covered to some degree, but, if there is anything that you want to add, please, go right ahead.

SS: I'd be happy to. If I think of anything later, I'll call you, and I would hope that you would do the same as you listen to this or read it, however you do it. You say, "Well, he didn't answer that question," or, "He didn't give me a clear answer," or, "I should have asked him this question," you know the phone number.

SI: I think you answered all of my questions fully. That is the most I can ask of anybody, so, I thank you for that. This concludes my interview with Stephen G. Simms on May 24, 2010, in Charlotte, North Carolina. Thank you very much.

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

Reviewed by Paul Shi 1/24/11
Reviewed by Andrew Esler 4/25/11
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/17/11
Reviewed by Stephen Simms 3/20/2019
Reviewed by Lauren Smith 7/14/2019
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 7/18/2019