RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THEODORE STIER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEWED CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Althea E. Miller: This begins an interview with Mr. Ted Stier on March 17, 1997 in Sonoma Valley, California with Althea Miller and ...

Sebastian Bernheim: Sebastian Bernheim.

AM: First, I would like to start by asking you some questions about your childhood and where you grew up. I see you were born in Brooklyn.

Ted Stier: Yes.

AM: Did you spend any number of years there?

TS: One year, just one year, I remember. Then we moved to Long Island, lived in the town of Rockville Center in Nassau County. In 1941, we moved to Maryland. We lived on a farm just outside of Washington, DC. My dad was working for the government there. … Then after I graduated from high school, I went right into the Army, and after my service was completed, I entered Rutgers and graduated from there in 1949, and I took my Master's immediately in 1950. I worked one year as a guidance director at William MacFarland High School in Bordentown, New Jersey. Then I moved to Highland Park, New Jersey, where I was the director of guidance for about nine years, and then to the State Department for a year, where I was the state director of guidance. Then from there, I went to Kean College at Union, where I was the director of admissions until I retired about fourteen or fifteen years ago. I have been out here since 1984 …

AM: I want to ask you about some of your childhood experiences. Your father worked for the US Army for a while. He was a Rutgers graduate, also.

TS: He graduated in the Class of 1912. His brother was also a Rutgers graduate, both brothers, 1917 for Uncle Bob and 1926 for Uncle Ted. Dad was an ordained minister. He never had a church. He worked for the government in the Works Progress Administration. When the war broke out, he became an officer with the Army Specialists Corps, because he spoke fluent Japanese and German. He served as a lieutenant colonel … upon being discharged.

AM: Do you remember any of the WPA projects he administered?

TS: Not really. He was away from home most of that time … when he was doing that program. Most of the things he did were with professionals and artists and writers. So he developed projects for them throughout, actually, throughout the Midwest and the New England area, I think.

AM: How was your family affected by the Depression? Are there any memories you have of that time?

TS: I don't remember much … but my father, of course, was a, prior to going in the WPA service, before going into the government service, he was a secretary of a YMCA in Brooklyn

New York, and when the Depression hit, all of the executives were released for lack of funds. He lost his job and took the job with the government, with the WPA, at that point. It was about 1934 or '32, something like that. So the Depression affected him greatly, and he lost his job, and at the time, we were living on Long Island. But, no, I don't particularly remember having [any hardships]. [It was a] pretty good life for me living on Long Island where I was.

AM: So you went through some schooling there on Long Island.

TS: I went to junior high school on Long Island, in Rockville Center. … When the family moved to Maryland, I went to school in Washington, DC, Eastern High School, and was a graduate of that school. There were some interesting wartime experiences we had. … When I would come to school … [my father] was working at the Pentagon, at the time, and he would drop me off at school. It would be pitch black, and the janitor would let me in, open the door, turn the lights on, and I'd do my homework in the morning, so I wouldn't have to study at night. [laughter] I do recall that. We lived on a farm in Maryland, and I used to deliver eggs up around Georgetown to friends of my father's and mother's, and part of my job, once I got a driver's license, was to deliver eggs to several dozen families in the Washington, DC area.

AM: Was it mainly a chicken farm, or did you have several different animals?

TS: No, it was a tobacco farm, actually. We had 180 acres, but we did have some chickens, obviously, but mostly we raised tobacco. It was a tenant farm. We didn't know beans about farming, but nevertheless, that's what we did. It was a tenant farm situation.

AM: Was your brother older than you?

TS: My brother was eight years older than I am. He was a graduate of Syracuse University. He went through ROTC there, and when he graduated, he also received a commission as a second lieutenant and did his basic training with the armored forces, at Fort Knox, Kentucky and went to Europe as a first lieutenant. I guess he was promoted before the war broke out, before they went into action, but he saw wartime duty with the Seventh Armored Division in Europe. He was wounded and discharged shortly after I came out of the service myself. When I was in high school, I graduated at age seventeen, and like everyone else that year, 1943, '44, I forgot which, '44, I guess, we were all expecting to go into the service, and we all took examinations which would give us some sort of a, you know, jump up in getting in. I qualified for what was first called the Army Specialized Training Reserve Program. Because I was young, I was given three months of college experience that the government would pay for on an inactive duty, reserve status, and I was sent ...

AM: What was that program called?

TS: ASTRP. I was sent to the University of Maryland, where they made me a pre-engineering student. Math and science are not my forte, so I was very poor in those areas. In fact, we used to actually seek ways to get out of class. You can imagine, in a college in wartime, there weren't

many able-bodied men around. The civilian students were kids that were sixteen or seventeen years old, or 4-F students, 4-F folks, who couldn't get in the service, and the rest of the student body were either our group of Reserve students, most of them were just seventeen years old and in the Reserve program, or ASTP students, who were pulled out of the troops and because of their test scores were given some college, which would then give them a leg up towards becoming officers. So there was a larger group, there was a group of older men, I mean, older, maybe twenty or twenty-one years old, and these bunch of seventeen-year-old kids. So there were two Army groups, one regular and one Reserve. And the Reserves, we were all volunteers. One of the things you learned in the Army was never to volunteer. We were all categorized with a serial number, which began with one, and one indicated you were volunteers. So anybody that asked for your serial number, and every sergeant and officer did, knew that you were Reserve, and you wouldn't dare complain about anything you did, because the standard response was, "Well, nobody drafted you, son," which was okay with us, because … we were enjoying ourselves. Most of us had been in the Washington High School Cadet Corps; it was three-year cadet program, where we learned basic military drill. I was pretty active in that group in high school. So when I got there, most all of us became squad leaders and leaders in drill, but in the classroom, I was a waste. I would get out of math class and physics class. A lot of the professors then weren't particularly good, because the regulars had been drafted. I remember in one particular case this physics prof would be lecturing, and many of us would drop down behind the seats. It was an amphitheater deal, and we would crawl on our hands and knees out the door, because he couldn't see or hear us, and we'd sit on the grass until lecture was over and we'd get up and go to the next class. … When the lieutenant came in one day and asked for volunteers for a project out of a chemistry class, some of us raised our hands, me included. We got this assignment to set up a defense position against the members of the ROTC that were on campus, and issued a rifle, or in my case, I was given a mortar to fire. … This machine, this device, was nothing more than like a rocket. You'd light a fuse to a big firecracker, which was about three inches in diameter, and drop it in this tube. The first charge would propel it out of this tube, and the second charge would explode it up in the air above the oncoming troops. The first kid did it, and we decided it ought to be a little bit of a lower angle, so that it would go out and explode a little closer, and he put it in, and it exploded in the tube when I had my hands on it. So it blew my left hand apart pretty badly, and I went right up to the infirmary, which was about a couple hundred yards up the hill behind me on the Maryland campus. Within an hour, I was at the Walter Reed Medical Center, but they couldn't save my hand. I stayed the next six months at the Walter Reed Medical Center before being discharged. That was kind of my history of my Army experience, which wasn't very fun.

AM: They put you in an engineering program in the ASTRP, which you didn’t like. What were your interests in high school?

TS: Oh, I was interested in either personnel work, or maybe sales, or maybe anything, maybe even languages, anything in the liberal arts area, much rather than math or science. In fact, when I filled out the application, "This is what I prefer," but in the Army's wisdom, sometimes they didn't do that. … None of us got into [what we requested]. We were all pre-engineers; it just was assigned.

AM: What part of the Army do you think you would have gone into?

TS: Infantry. It would have been in infantry. I think most of the young men with me went to officer's candidate school at Fort Benning, Georgia in infantry school and then … got commissions, and some of them saw some active duty while the war was still on in the Philippines, since it was getting on towards the end of the war. … They missed the European Theater, but some of them got into the Pacific Theater in the Philippines. I don't know whether any of them saw any action or not. I've only been to one high school reunion. A couple of years ago was our fiftieth, and one man was with me in that unit. I don't remember that he ever told me whether he saw active, combat duty, because we were all on that edge of being old enough to get into the combat units as they were made ready. If you went through the college program, we had three, six, or nine months before we went in active duty, and that's the way it was. … We were probably very lucky we didn't get into that. I don't know.

AM: What was your first remembrance of the war going on in Europe?

TS: Oh, the first experience was Pearl Harbor, actually, because I was seventeen, sixteen, because we could drive at sixteen legally in Maryland. I was coming home from school, or somewhere, on Sunday and came back to tell my mother and Dad that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, and I remember they hadn't even heard about it on the radio, so that was it. But I was still a junior in high school, so I went through that year and the next two years, I guess. So we were well aware of the war right away, and my brother, of course, going into active duty almost immediately, well, as soon as he got out of college. … Then when my dad went in the service, well, we were pretty much involved in the war as such. We lived near an Army Air Force base, Andrews Air Force Base, near Washington, and so we were conscious of the planes going over, and we also got into what they called aircraft identification in spotting situations, where we'd look at planes as they'd fly over and report them in. I guess that was one of the civilian defense operations. We, my mother and myself, … each took a shift, you know. I remember that. … We were aware of the war. I'd say personally, no, not at all.

AM: Your mother married your father knowing he was in the military. How did she feel about the war?

TS: When Dad and Mother married, Dad was a divinity student, basically, and this business of the Army was totally foreign to him. He was not a soldier.

AM: He did not do that until the Depression.

TS: He didn't get into the Army until the war started, when WPA broke down. When the war broke out, you didn't need the WPA, because all men went into the service, and my father's background was such that they asked him to become commissioned as a major first and later a lieutenant colonel, basically, because of his knowledge of Japanese and German, but that [was his] original work assignment. He later got into intelligence, military intelligence, and then

military government. In fact, when the war was over, he served as military governor of the Chosin Province in Korea in the Korean War. When the war was over, he went and served on MacArthur's staff in Tokyo, as what was called the Chief Custodian of Allied Property in Japan. Mother and Dad loved that, that was about 1949, '50, or something like that, because they went back to Japan, and for the first time, as a couple, had a lifestyle which was really nice, because they started out in Japan after they were married and then came back [to the United States and] went back to Japan thirty years later or more, and they were treated like conquerors, you know. I mean, they had servants, and all that, but they spoke the language and had a great closeness to the Japanese people, so I don't think there was a great problem or animosity that existed between my family and the Japanese people.

AM: So you didn't really have a lot of ideas of the Japanese as bad people, which most people had during the war.

TS: I grew up knowing a lot of Japanese people and German people, because my grandfather came from Germany, was a German, Presbyterian minister, and he used to have his Presbyterian ministers over, and these were old, gruff, German, hard-nosed people, who hated Nazis and Hitler, and they would talk about this. But I just remember, as a kid growing up, that I had nothing personal in the war at all, nothing at all.

SB: There was a lot of propaganda at the time against the Germans and the Japanese. Knowing some Germans and Japanese people and having some previous experiences that were not negative, how did it make you feel to see that kind of stuff going on, hearing the things people must have been saying, at the time, against them?

TS: Well, during the war, it was kind of the thing to do. If you went to the movies, or anything like that, it was the "Krauts" and the "Japs," and all that. I didn't think too much of it, didn't take it personally. I know that World War I had a very deep effect on my grandparents. They resented it very much, living as Germans, loyal Americans of German decent. It didn't bother us at all. I don't think it had an effect on me. I can't remember being angry or anything, when I heard these words. They didn't seem to mean anything to me.

SB: So you never really got an opportunity or really got into a position where you would say to someone, "I know what you are saying and I know what your experiences are, but I know some people like that and maybe they don't all support your views."

TS: I don't think so.

AM: Was it more subversive?

TS: Yeah, I think I got into more trouble, living in Washington, DC, my experience with my classmates, who were very racist in their treatment of black kids and students. We were in an all-white high school, and their comments about black students and black people … bothered me more than anything else … coming from Long Island, where we lived with students and black

kids, [though] not many. There wasn't any great social interaction, but nevertheless, I didn't appreciate the things my classmates said. We never got into real fights about it, but I was definitely among the minority when it came to that attitude.

SB: Can you give us any instances or anecdotes of times you experienced something like that?

TS: In high school?

SB: Yes.

TS: No, except when a couple of my friends [made racist comments]. One of them really came from Vermont, initially, but he lived in the District so long. The other kid was my closest friend and came from the District, lived in Maryland nearby. We all came into the high school from different areas, and they would, you know, just call a black person a nigger, or something like that, and I didn't like that and I would tell them that. I didn't like that term. It would bother me that … there was no interaction, social, athletic competitions. There were no black kids, black schools, that we played against. I thought that was pretty stupid, and I let people know.

AM: Do you think that was on purpose that they didn't play with other students, minority students?

TS: The school systems were segregated, totally segregated. The whole area was segregated. We lived on a farm with a tenant farmer, who was a black man, and his wife. I would work with them. He would hire me to chop tobacco in the fields, and all that sort of thing, and I talked with him, would have dinner with him, socialized a lot. I mean, I was only a kid. … When we went into town, my mother and Dad, or one of us, would drive him into the town for shopping, and I was acutely aware that they couldn't go into the same stores we did. They had to go around back, where it says, "Negroes," and, "Whites," or, "White Only" stores. … When I'd go into a store, I was taken aback that he couldn't go in the same store. He had to be served in the same store, but from a different section. Drinking fountains were marked, "Negroes," and, "Whites," and, "White Only," that sort of thing. That really did disturb me … much more so than the wartime experiences, and that was still in the '40s, and appreciate that sort of thing. We know now it went on a lot longer than that. So that just disturbed me a lot. It, even today, when I see around here, the whole white, Anglo-Saxon community here … the retirement community … When I've had some black friends visit me, I kind of get some eyes, some looks, you know. I hear people talking about, joking about, "I wouldn't sell my house to a black person," you know, nonsense like that. Of course, I would, but I don't know whether, how that would go over in the village. I know it wouldn't go over well, even here, supposedly in an enlightened community. I never think too much about it, but nevertheless, it comes up. When you look in the sports pages, you don't see many black kids in local high schools. You see, with Mexicans, that's sort of the same kind of a prejudice against Mexicans here in California. Maybe I'm a little bit too liberal. [laughter]

AM: I don't know about that.

TS: I don't think so, but maybe my friends do …

SB: So after you had the incident where the mortar had blown up and injured your hand, what did you do? I mean, you spent some time in the hospital and then you got discharged. What happened after that?

AM: What got you interested in Rutgers?

TS: Well, my dad went there, of course, and he used to take me to football games occasionally, when he was home. We always tried to get to one football game a year, and I would try to pick a Rutgers game if I could, and so I had some kind of a background interest in the school, always. When the time came, it was interesting how it occurred. I was discharged from the Army ...

AM: What year was that?

TS: 1945, I guess.

SB: Did they discharge you straight from the hospital?

TS: From the hospital. See, originally, when it was an emergency, obviously, you were in a ward where they pretty much gave you constant care, and then as you got a little better, they moved you into a recovery section, and then after, it was pretty obvious all you were going to go through was rehabilitation, physical or mental, occupational therapy, and to try to get movement back into whatever was ruined. … I was assigned to a recovery unit … It was a unit sort of off-campus from the main hospital there, and everyone there was an amputee. There were leg amputees and arm amputees, primarily.

AM: Were these a lot of guys who came from the war?

TS: … Mostly all of them were military, were combat-wounded people. … It was a great experience … Well, to go back a little bit, I remember a story where in the recovery, in the extreme care section ... we were in this ward, and I was seventeen years old, and most of the other guys were pretty hardened veterans, and their friends and buddies would always sneak in a bottle of whiskey. I mean, they'd go from whiskey to women ...

[tape paused]

TS: … I was a kid, and this experience of these older men … I remember one guy, particularly, was wounded, and he was badly wounded, but he was also very sensitive. The nurses would try to scrape calluses. The guy had been walking in Europe for months and he … grew calluses on his feet, and one of the, and those things would dry and they would just scrape them off, or clean them off, but he always complained and cried. He would spend half his time crying in the bed,

and these other guys were really hurting. I mean, some of them were shot up real badly, and so they would tell this guy to shut up and stop crying, and, you know, I mean, they were hurt worse than he was, and none of us would cry a lot, or yell out, or anything like that. We just gutted it out. This guy constantly was moaning and groaning. Of course, the nurses would make it harder on him, because he was not a good patient. … They'd tell the guy, they'd yell at the nurses, tell him, "Hurt him, scrape his leg," you know, and he'd holler, "Cut my leg off. Cut my leg off." These guys with no legs, or both legs off, or something would say, "Yeah, cut it off," you know, and all that sort of business. So you'd learn. I remember one night; it was an incredible experience. The guys got in a bottle of whiskey, and they were drinking it. So they passed the bottle around. Since I was the only ambulatory person, my arm was in a big sling like this, I unhooked it, you know, and would walk around passing the bottle to everybody, and they'd all take a swig. … When we got to the end, they said, "Take one. Come on, take one, Stier," you know, and I stuck my tongue in the bottle. It was awful. But, anyway, when it was over, I said, "What do we do with the empty bottle?" He said, "Ah, throw it over the side." You know, we had a balcony on the ward. So I just went to the thing, opened the door, and threw it out. It fell right next to an MP ...

AM: Oh, no.

TS: I ran back to bed, and the guys said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I almost hit an MP down there." Well, soon, within two minutes, the lights were on. The MPs were up, and the whole ward smelled of whiskey.

AM: Oh, no.

TS: But there was only one guy that could walk, and that was me. So they knew that I threw it out. Of course, I denied everything. Nothing happened. It was one of those things they just ...

AM: They let it pass.

TS: Anyway, the best thing about that second hospitalization area was that we were expected to keep that place, that ward, in order. We had to make our own beds. We had to sweep the place, clean the latrines, go through a whole routine that we would have had to do, had we been able-bodied and been on assignment. That was good, because it didn't let any of us begin to feel sorry for ourselves. We had things to do, I mean, even the simplest things. Those of us who could walk would bring the cards around or deliver the mail. Those who didn't have an arm, or lost an arm, or a leg would shuffle the cards and open the bottles and do those kinds of things, so it was a shared experience. … New guys would come in and leave all the time, and I remember a fellow came in next to me one morning, and he had his arm right off at the shoulder. … He was wearing a 101st Airborne patch, and that was the division that fought at Bastogne. I looked down at his nametag on the bed, and it said "Vincent P. Utz." It was Vincent P. Utz, Rutgers Class of 1942. Well, I said, "Did you go to Rutgers, and did you play football at Rutgers?" And he said, "Yes." I'd seen Vinnie Utz play. He was really an outstanding player back in the '30s or early '40s. My dad had taken me, and I'd seen him there. So we, while we were in different age

groups, he was maybe six or seven years older than I was, we struck up some kind of a friendship. It didn't last, I mean, because he was … more quickly discharged than I was, or something happened. … He went back to New Brunswick and became very active and an officer at Johnson & Johnson, right there on the Banks, in charge of something, I forget which. Strange story, because he was killed in a fire at J&J, in which … he ran back into the fire to save some people, kind of a tragic story. I had mentioned that to a couple of people at Rutgers that knew Vinnie when he was in the service, but in that category, not as a soldier, inactive duty. But we had all kinds of different, strange people, cowboys, Indians, who were cowboys, and that was their whole life, they lost an arm or a leg, and they didn't know what they were going to do with themselves, because their whole life was built on being cowboys, riding horses, and stuff like that. Then these guys would come back with many problems. They'd come back from leave. We got a lot of passes. We were always on leave. Even if we didn't have leave, we'd hide a uniform behind a cabinet and would go off at night. Nobody would ask us.

AM: Where did you go?

TS: … [I went] nowhere.

AM: Or other people?

TS: Others went out drinking, or looking for women, and all that sort of stuff. Those that would come back drunk, some of them, at least one person was a real terror. He would come back and would be so drunk and mean that he'd dump the beds, threw everything off your bed table, threatened to beat you up, you know. Most of us were afraid of him, until one guy, I remember, he came in one night and he approached the new guy on the end, who just came in, and this fellow got out of bed, and he was at least a foot taller than him, and he just took his one arm, he only had one arm, and just took him and hit him on the head and knocked him down. He was gone. He never bothered us the same way again. I remember another case where a kid had been shot through the shoulder, just a single bullet hole, but the bullet had so cleanly severed the nerve that went down his arm that the arm was useless. It was perfectly shaped and formed and there was everything in there, but the nerve was gone, and all the surgery they did couldn't fuse the nerve, and so it was useless. He'd have to hang it and he'd bring it up and he'd throw it up in front of him and put it in the sling. He liked to read, a very intellectual kid, and he would read with the light on at night. One night, he fell asleep, and we all smelled flesh burning, because he'd fallen asleep and fell against the light, and this light was just burning his arm. He didn't feel it, but it was burning away. So I don't know what happened. I think they finally took his arm off, because they just couldn't do anymore. That was the kind of thing you went through. When I did get discharged, I remember … I was given an address in New York for a prosthetic appliance. At that time, they didn't have the things they have now. Hand surgery now might have made a difference in my hand, I don't know. At that point, the best they could do was fit you for a plastic hand in a glove, which was shaped to look like if you had gloves on and you had two hands. It didn't help much, but it gave you a little opportunity with what you had to grasp something against a fake thumb. They also created something for me that would give me some ability like this, none of which I cared for. But, initially, I was a little bit shy about having the glove, and so

I would wear it on occasion, because it made me look more normal, quote, unquote. But I remember I went in for this fitting in Brooklyn, and while I was there, I stopped at the Brooklyn and Queens YMCA, where my father had once worked, and asked about working at a summer camp where I went as a kid. My uncle had served as a counselor, as did my brother, a YMCA camp in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania. So I was just eighteen, and they offered me the job as a director of athletics. I mean, I was good at baseball, and I always was a good athlete.

AM: Had you always played sports in high school?

TS: Yeah, well, I didn't play varsity sports, because I was into the cadets and I was pretty good at cadets. I was a big man on campus in high school, you know, most likely to succeed, president of student council, and all that nonsense. But I enjoyed cadets very much. Anyway, I guess that's my German background. I like to march, you know, and dress in uniform. But, anyway, they offered me the job as a counselor, as the director of athletics, and I took it. I had a good summer. I mean, I learned to play baseball again, basically strapping the glove on my hand. It was still a little tender. I coached the counselor team. Most of those kids were sixteen, seventeen years old, and I was eighteen. I was the fifth oldest man in camp at eighteen years old. The responsibility was unreal, come to think of it today. I had to be responsible for hundreds of little kids, and I was only eighteen. It was really big, and my counselors were all no more than sixteen. The war was still on. It was towards the end of the war, but it was still on. But, anyway, I remember one time, we were well ahead in the counselor game, and … I put myself up to bat, and my goodness, I hit a homer. I hit it way out in left field over the fence, and everybody thought I was great, because that's the only time I got to bat all year, and they only saw me hit once. I really hit it one handed, but I remember that, because every year they remembered, “How good he was. If he was able to play,” you know. Anyway, but that was a good experience. Then that summer, when I went back home, we took the kids back to their homes in Brooklyn, or Queens, Long Island, somewhere, I got on the train to go back to Washington, where I lived. The train happened to stop in New Brunswick. It wasn't an express. It just stopped in New Brunswick. So I kept thinking as we pulled in, “Ah, I’ll go see the registrar,” who was Luther Martin, Class of 1911, a good friend of my father's. This was, remember, 1945. There wasn't an admissions office or admissions director. So I went in, walked up the hill, up Easton Avenue, found Luther Martin's office and introduced myself, and he knew who I was. I said, “I think I’d like to start college this fall, in a couple of weeks,” you know. He said, "Okay, you're in," just like that. I didn't take a test. They didn’t have SATs, or anything, at that time. So when I got back home, there was my letter of admissions waiting, and within the next week or so, I went back to New Brunswick and started college. I also had received a ...

AM: The GI Bill.

TS: Yeah, the GI Bill. As a disabled student, as a disabled veteran, I was entitled to the benefits under Public Law 16, which was a little more money. I mean, I was getting a hundred and fifty dollars a month, plus tuition, board, and all that … I had more money than I knew what to do with. I guess that was, excuse me, that was my second year I got the GI Bill. … I got a scholarship my first year, [an] alumni scholarship from my father's class. So I got enough

money, and Mr. Martin helped me out, and my parents helped me for that first year at school. But the second year, when I came back to school, I had this GI Bill and I had all this money. So I was really feeling pretty good about the fact that I had money and everything else. However, the end of my second year, I got a terrible letter during summer at camp, the second year at camp, that I, that all the money I had received for the previous year wasn't legal and I was to return it, because, you remember, I was on inactive duty, on reserve status, and only people who were on active duty would benefit from the veterans laws. So I took a time off, went back to Washington. I talked to the chairman of the House or Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, [Representative] Edith Nourse Rogers from Maine. They all sympathized with me, and very quickly, I got a letter from the Veterans Administration telling me I didn't owe them that money anymore, because it wasn't my fault. What happened was when I was discharged, the sergeant in charge of the discharge facility, when I filled out "time on active duty," I put in a zero. I said, "Sarge, I'm not entitled to this." He said, "Go ahead, fill it in anyway." So I filled it in with a zero. So I didn't defraud anybody, but they finally caught up to me a year later, to say that I wasn't entitled to it. Well, that went on for a couple of years. … I did finally get, again, another scholarship from the university, which got me through my first couple of years and graduate school. I did well enough in graduate school. After two years of college, I almost flunked out. I was in the wrong [major], business. I was a business administration major. I couldn't pass math or economics or bookkeeping. … My roommate left to go back and commute from Trenton, [because he] couldn't afford to stay on campus anymore. He did all my bookkeeping and accounting work, and from an A, I went to an F in the second semester. I went from a one to a five, it was a five, I guess it was. Anyway, so I flunked that. So I transferred the end of my sophomore year to the School of Education, mostly through the influence of the counselors, the older counselors, in camp, director, assistant director, etcetera, who were in teaching, and thought that I would like that, and I did, and the next two years I did very well. … From my senior year, I got involved and interested in guidance, Master's program in guidance and counseling, from a couple of Rutgers professors who encouraged me to stay on and get my Master's in the same field, which I did.

AM: Do you remember their names?

TS: Yeah, it was Robert (Poppendieck?) and William, Bill Atkins, good Lord, I can't remember. He was more important to me than anybody else. Oh, well, anyway ...

AM: It will probably come to you.

TS: It probably will. But, anyway, Dr Atkins. I got through my Master's program, and, again, I still didn't have any money from the government. I only had one year. So when I graduated with my Master's, with Army experience, etcetera, I began to seek a position in guidance. This opening through a agency, a teaching, placement agency, found me a spot in Bordentown, New Jersey. I had been married … for two, three, four years, and this job in Bordentown paid all of 2,400 dollars a year.

AM: Was that the average teaching salary?

TS: Twenty-four hundred dollars a year, 2,400 a year, yeah, nine months, but that was big money, I mean, not much money, but that's all they paid. Minimum salary in 1949, '50 was 2,400 dollars a year, and that's what I got, and I was the director. They gave me the title of director of guidance. I also taught a class in English and social sciences. But I took it, because it gave me the title, and that was important, because I wanted to get into guidance. Now, "It's been a very good year," I thought there, and the second year, the folks at Highland Park hired me for the same position. I'd applied the year before, but they had a guidance director, first one, and then they fired him. They asked me to come back. They offered me, Bordentown offered me a big salary increase of a hundred dollars a year, and Highland Park offered me 1,000 dollars more. There was no question. It wasn't much money, but I also coached tennis and did other things. I immediately went to Highland Park. But in the meantime, in the spring of my year at Bordentown, the last year at Bordentown, I got a telegram from my brother, a phone call from my brother. He had been contacted by the American Legion, who among other agencies and Disabled American Veterans organizations, the American Legion had taken my case when I went back, when I had lost my veterans benefits, and they were going to try to put something through Congress to cover my situation. Well, I kind of lost track of it, I mean, after four years or so. … He said a law had been passed by Congress, signed by the president, which made anyone who was killed or injured while on inactive duty status eligible for and entitled ...

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

TS: Basically, now I was entitled [to disabled veterans benefits]. Unfortunately, it wasn't retroactive. It was retroactive to the time I reapplied, but not retroactive for all those years. I went through all those examinations and veterans stuff, and the upshot was that I was entitled to, I think, it was forty percent disability, at that point. It subsequently has gone to seventy-five percent disability, and from that point on, my salary was always supplemented by the veterans benefits. So it made life quite tenable at that point, and so moving to Highland Park with more money and the veterans pension, etcetera, paid off all my debts. I was there eight years at Highland Park.

AM: Sebastian is from Highland Park.

TS: Are you?

SB: Class of '89.

TS: Did you graduate from Highland Park?

SB: Yes, Class of '89.

TS: Class of '89, yeah. You must know some people I did then. Dick Evans must have been there. Ann Schiffman?

SB: I think Schiffman sounds familiar.

TS: She was a counselor.

SB: I probably knew her. There was the guy in charge of the athletics department.

TS: Jay Dakleman.

SB: Dakleman, yeah.

TS: Jay and I are good friends.

SB: He was still around, actually, when I was there.

TS: Jay and I were excellent, good friends. In fact, he was a guidance counselor under me.

SB: They named a baseball field after him.

TS: They did?

SB: Yes, it's the Jay Dakleman Athletic Field now.

TS: It was strange, because he knew Bill Donahue then, of course, the history teacher that was killed. … Jay called that morning. He called me to tell me.

SB: Yeah.

TS: In fact, one day at the winery, I was working, and this fellow came in and he was from New Jersey … He was a teacher there, and he knew Jay and he knew the football coach. Do you know him?

SB: Palicastro?

TS: Yeah, Rich, no, Joe Palicastro.

SB: Yeah, that's right.

TS: … Rich was one of my students also. So we called Joe up right from the winery and talked to him. It was funny. But, no, I knew Jay very, very well. I knew Billy Donahue, Ward Ehrenfeld, Maude Stockman, and a lot of teachers. … Most of them were probably gone by the time you were there. But I worked there nine years. I was offered a job as Director of Guidance Counseling for the state. I was really the state director, and then when the federal funds became available under the National Defense Education Act, I was chosen to head up this program, and so I was really the state director. I was disillusioned by the state, a mad, mindless monster. You couldn't effect any change, and so after one year there, the opportunity came to get back into a

relationship with students, and I was offered the job as director of admissions at Kean, at what was then Newark State College and now Kean College. I accepted and was there for … almost twenty, nineteen, almost twenty years. I can't remember how long.

AM: What was the difference between guidance counseling at high schools, which you had been doing for several years, and then suddenly counseling at the college level?

TS: Well, the students were older and more reasonable. After a few years at the college, I wouldn't want to go back to work with high school students again. No, it was a different experience. … Still, I had that opportunity to relate to high school students by going out in the field and talking to students and counselors in my recruiting endeavors, and stuff like that.

SB: You were also at Kean during the ‘60s and ‘70s, which was an interesting time.

TS: Oh, yeah. During the Vietnam business, it was tough. We were subject to a lot of pressure, I mean, the administration was. I was more, you know, oriented to the student point of view and found myself siding with them on the war, and all that sort of business, as many of the college professors and administrators did also. But the campus was a vehicle for demonstration, and it's scary, no question about it, to be in it, to live through that circumstance. But, as I said, most of us were sympathetic. … Probably the most significant thing that I feel with my work at Kean was when Dr. King was assassinated. I was [in] the concerned faculty group that was interested in developing some kind of a program for disadvantaged or black students to get more into school … I remember getting very involved in that program. Educational Opportunity Program was what it was called there. That was good. I enjoyed my life at Kean very much so.

AM: You were happy being a guidance counselor.

TS: Well, I really wasn’t doing much counseling. I was helping students to get into school, and I liked the idea of working with admissions people, because they were, they had as an objective to help kids get into school. We weren’t in a very competitive situation. The only competition that we got was from, at that point, Montclair State College, which was competitive. Trenton wasn’t as competitive as it is now, but it was a little competitive.

AM: It is very competitive now.

TS: Right, but we were, you know, in a position where we were seeking to enroll students, and goodness … we’d admit just about anyone who would come in, that would apply.

SB: My mom actually graduated from Kean around that time.

TS: Did she really?

SB: Yeah, probably around 1977, around there.

TS: I probably admitted her, no question about it. I wrote my name on the admittance letter. … The early part of the admissions in the state colleges was ridiculous, the students had to apply [to only one college], only one application. They couldn't apply to different colleges. They had to apply to one major field, and some of the majors were extremely competitive, English, social sciences, for example … and others were really no competition at all. If you wanted to be an industrial arts teacher, for example, we couldn't get anybody to apply. All you could do was change your major. … [When] you were admitted, [it] didn't make a difference what your scores were practically. There was a state exam, and there was a minimum score, and we couldn't admit below that score unless the Department of Education, Commissioner of Education himself, would have to approve. In the first few years, everything we did had to go through the Department of Education, not even Higher Education, at the time. The commissioner's office, [the commissioner] himself, would finally give you a list of approved people based on their test scores and nothing else. We fought like heck to get that changed, and with some help from some guidance people in Middlesex, Essex, and Union County, we were able to convince the commissioner to make it competitive, so that you could apply to more than one college and that you could begin to select students... more reasonably. So it worked. That was a big triumph in that case, I remember.

AM: If you don't mind, I'd like to go back to some of the Rutgers years.

TS: Sure.

AM: Now, you lived at Winants your first year.

TS: … I lived at Winants Hall, which is now the alumni offices.

AM: Because Ford Hall wasn't built until 1915, your father must have lived there also.

TS: He lived in a room across the hall from me in Winants Hall in 1912, and I lived there in 1945. It's amazing. It really was a unique experience. I lived there a year, and then my second year I lived, or second semester, maybe it was, I lived up on the Quad, history area. I forget what those dorms were. … Then I was admitted to a fraternity or pledged a fraternity, Zeta Psi.

AM: What made you make that choice?

TS: I don't know. I wasn't ever thinking fraternity. My dad was a fraternity person. He was a Lambda Chi, and he didn't really pressure me to get into Lambda Chi. … He wasn't really enthused about fraternity life and neither was I. … I remember I had the flu. I don't know what year … probably my sophomore year, and the nurse that took care of me was the wife of a fellow who was a Zete, Frank Johnson. I got to know her pretty well, and we'd chit-chat around, and when I was discharged, I was invited to the fraternity. Well, at that point, the Zete house was occupied by, I think, some Army unit, and it wasn't until, I think, my junior year, that summer, in my sophomore year, that they rebuilt the house. The brothers on campus didn't do any pledging, or anything, but there was a number of fellows back from the service, and the place was kind of a

wreck. When the alumni and the fellows were around, they rehabilitated it. I did live in the fraternity house for my last two years. I was married in my junior year of college. Of course, my wife and I, my previous wife, lived in an apartment off of Easton Avenue, but it was close enough that I worked my way through. I waited tables and washed dishes. I wasn't a real, big fraternity jock. I didn't drink a lot, or anything like that.

AM: Yeah, there's a lot ...

TS: Although I learned to drink beer.

AM: There are a lot of stories about hazing, and stuff like that.

TS: We weren't hazed.

AM: No?

TS: They didn't haze us. We went through the mysteries of fraternity initiation, but we weren't paddled, or anything like that.

AM: Were there a lot of veterans at Zeta Psi at the time, in the fraternity, like Bill MacKenzie?

TS: Yeah. Bill will tell you more details about that, but we weren't really hazed. Bill and I were pretty close in college. He was a big man on campus, you know. He was editor of the *Targum* and other things and active in that field, a journalism major. … We used to go off with friends and drive up to big football and basketball games at Lehigh in Bethlehem, Lafayette, or something like that, and simply because we wanted to go to the games and do other things ... but we did a lot of close things together. I got involved in the band. I didn't play an instrument, but I was band manager for five years, all through graduate school. That was fun. I really enjoyed that. I got to go to all the games with the team, with the band bus, and all that sort of stuff. That was my big extracurricular thing. I got involved, I guess, with the yearbook. I played intramural sports, intramural everything … Most of the time I was in band, [which] was my big thing.

AM: Now, I'm not sure how you met your first wife, but did you ...

TS: Blind date at Douglass.

AM: Was it Douglass, at that time, or was it still New Jersey College for Women?

TS: NJC.

AM: NJC. Did you interact much with the NJC students?

TS: Oh, yeah. We would walk across campus, and we had to be tossed off campus at eleven o'clock by the watchman, who would chase the boys away. But that was a, well, you know,

looking back, it probably wasn't the best way to start a marriage, but nevertheless, it did. We had three children, and two of them are Rutgers graduates. The third is a Middlesex County graduate. My son is out here. My daughter, my youngest daughter, lives in New Brunswick, or Piscataway, still. She has three children. My middle daughter lives in Texas with her husband. She's not a Rutgers graduate. My son lives right here in Emeryville, which is just across the bay, near Berkeley. He's currently in Japan right now on business, and he'll be back tomorrow.

AM: So that continues, the Japanese interest.

TS: Well, he's never been to Japan. In fact, he was trying to get from me places where my dad lived, and all I could remember was where their summer home was near Tokyo, in a town called Takayama. He's in food science. His mother was a food science major, and his youngest sister is in food science also.

AM: They both went to Cook College.

TS: They both went to Cook [and] are graduates of the … food technology department … Rick, recently and within the past few years, has become an independent consultant, so he's really done some traveling. He came back from Belfast, Ireland last Wednesday and left the next day for Japan, and [we're] picking them up tomorrow, and then the next day, he goes to Portland and then to Dallas and then to India. He got this good job, but he works awful hard to do that. I don't know, at Rutgers, my enthusiasm for athletics and sports was just great. I didn't participate, but I was a great fan. When I graduated and worked in the Highland Park/Piscataway area, I had season tickets, you know, for all the football games. I never missed a game. I had season tickets for basketball. After Joan and I got married, we lived in Red Bank and then Union.

AM: So you two met in New Jersey.

TS: Yeah. She was a counselor at Union High School, when I was at Kean College, and we met sort of on like a blind date, or by mistake, or something. I thought she was somebody else. That's a long story. We've been married almost eighteen years this year ...

AM: What made you decide to move out here?

TS: Well, her son was living in LA at the time. Rick was here, and I had traveled out here to visit a college colleague, (Hutchinson?). … Your mom was a Kean graduate? She probably remembers Dr. John Hutchinson, who was in history. Anyway, they have a hall named for him, and he lives in Santa Rosa.

SB: I think she was at Kean for a year and a half.

TS: I see. But, anyway, John and I are close friends, and I would visit him, and he'd get me interested in wine tasting and wine, and all that. We moved out here in 1984, because we had been here and visited for many years, and so it was just the place we wanted to go. This is, you

know, a retirement community. You had to be, at that point, fifty-five to live here. We've been here since '84. We've done a lot of rebuilding and remodeling of this house, so it was totally different now than when it was when we first came here.

AM: You worked for a vineyard around here.

TS: I work at a winery. I worked for over ten years at Gloria Ferrer Champagne Caves, which is one of those places I'll tell you to go to. It's just on the way back toward the city, and that was, it's a Spanish house, and I worked there when they opened up. I got the job. I had been involved as president of the Sonoma County Wine Library Association and some other volunteer work with wine-related things, farmlands group and other things, which were sort of political but conservation-oriented deals to keep the vineyards here, not build houses and things like that, farming. That's kind of interesting. I became interested in wine and got this job. I was the tour guide and poured wine, sold wine. I learned a lot about wine and stuff like that. It's been a lot of fun. It's been really nice. That's been the good and totally unexpected part of life out here, but I retired last September. I had multiple by-pass heart surgery a couple of years ago, and … I've had some problems, and still do, with my shoulder. I had surgery, rotator cuff surgery, in my shoulder and repaired that. I'm getting old and you can't be a sissy and get old. … I just turned seventy …

AM: Are there any questions you might have?

TS: I can eat one more cracker.

AM: I see they now have the Napa train. When I was here, I guess, three or four years ago, they were fighting that, but I see they have it now.

TS: The wine train?

AM: Yes.

TS: That's an interesting story. The wine train was fought by many of the wineries, because they didn't think this was a good thing to do. We've gone on it. Joan's gone on it twice. Great food, great wine, real slow trip right through the vineyards. It goes from Napa all the way up to Calistoga, and then they turn the engine around and bring you back. There's a meal on the train going up or back, whichever you choose. It takes about two hours. It doesn't travel long, but it goes slow. But it's there and it's working. It's kind of accepted now, although some of the diehards still have the "Napa Wine Train-No" sign still planted in their fields, but it's still going on.

AM: Is there anything else you wanted to add?

TS: Oh, heck, I talked too much.

SB: Thank you for doing the interview.

TS: That's okay, that's plenty. Okay?

SB: Thanks

--END OF INTERVIEW---

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 8/19/02
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/22/02
Reviewed by Theodore Stier 10/02