RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RIPLEY WATSON, JR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
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TRANSCRIPT BY

G. DOROTHY SABATINI

[Dear Readers,
With my vision variously estimated from 20/400 to 20/800 in 1942, I could not join 1944 classmates in World War II service. What follows is my best recollection -- sixty years later -- of what campus life was like during the war. Other Oral History interviewees can tell you about the fighting, but this is the way things were then at Rutgers. RW]

SSH: This begins an interview with Mr. Ripley Watson, Jr. on October 8, 1999, at Rutgers University. First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Watson, for taking time out of your schedule this weekend to talk with us. To begin the interview, I would like you to tell us where and when you were born and then I will begin to ask you things about your family.

RW: Okay, fine. I was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on May 11, 1922. The next year my parents moved out to Maplewood, New Jersey, which is one of the suburbs along what was then the Lackawanna Railroad. They thought it was a better place to bring up children and also my eight year old brother had been going to Bergen School for Girls and he was too old for that

SSH: Can we back up a little bit and tell me about your father. You told me before the tape began that you come from a very long line of Rutgers gradates.

RW: Well, Pop was in the class of 1908. He also went to Rutgers Prep before he entered Rutgers. His family lived in Jersey City at that time. … My grandfather, William Perry Watson, Class of 1875, was a physician and practiced in Jersey City. He also taught at Columbia University in the medical school. … My mother grew up in Jersey City, also. I don't remember right off the top of my head how they happened to meet, but I guess they traveled in the same circles. They both belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, so they met and were later married on November 12, 1912. My father was an attorney. My older sister was born on the following September twenty-first, my brother on November twenty-first in 1915, and then my younger sister on October twenty-first in 1920. They were all born on the same day of the month, and I came along and changed it to the eleventh of May 1922.

SSH: Can you tell me a little bit about your mother's family?

RW: Yes. Her father was Joel W. Brown. He owned a shipyard and he had been a sailing captain … for a number of years. He liked to travel and he had an older daughter who was much older than Mother. After my mother graduated from Wellesley in 1907, he took her on a tour of Europe. A Grand Tour is what they did in those days. Everywhere he went he registered in the hotel, Joel W. Brown, wife and daughter Hattie, which was a family joke for many years. Unfortunately, I'm not sure how old he [my grandfather] was, but he was fairly old when my mother was born. After my parents were married, they went on a honeymoon in Natural Bridge, Virginia and, while they were there, Grandpa Brown had a heart attack and passed away. So, that was very difficult for them. Things happen. So, as I said before, we moved out to Maplewood, it was then a suburb under construction. One of the main streets at the top of the hill from our

street, Wyoming Avenue, was a dirt road. They were busy paving it, but in 1923, [Maplewood was a growing suburb.

SSH: It sounds like many generations lived in Jersey City.

RW: Well, … yes, that's true. The family had lived in Jersey City for many years. My Aunt Ella, who was much older than my mother, had a daughter Lou. Lou and her husband, John McCoy, lived in Jersey City their whole lives. My father's uncle Reynier J. Wortendyke, a member of the Class of 1882, lived in Jersey City. He was the son of Jacob R. Wortendyke, Class of 1839.

SSH: While growing up your education was in Maplewood?

RW: That's right. It was so small when I was growing up that the one high school served Maplewood and South Orange, which are adjoining towns. By the time I graduated from high school in 1940, there were 1,700 students between the two towns. It was a big high school.

SSH: What stories do you remember in your family about the Depression?

RW: My father's law practice, I guess, went along. For a number of years we had a house in Lake Mohawk, one of the first ones to be built up there, but my younger sister had asthma and the lake was not good for her in summer. So, they rented it out in the summer and then sold it after a few years because it just didn't work out.

SSH: I was going to ask you about your father's law firm.

RW: It was in Jersey City. … Then during the war he worked as an expediter to help the war effort; after it was all over, he practiced law in Maplewood. Also, he and my mother moved to Hamburg, New Jersey, and he practiced law up there ...

SSH: Why did he move to Hamburg?

RW: Well, liked Sussex County, where Hamburg is. … We had all gotten married and after a few years they decided to go to Hamburg. It was the same story as the kids get married and leave home; the parents move.

SSH: When you were a child growing up, did you have hobbies or a job?

RW: … Most of my hobbies were playing sports my the grade school. Jefferson school played one of the other grade schools and we got to know the fellows from those schools. In fact, in the past ten years, or so, why, four of us have gotten together with our wives just about every year. One was from Tuscan School and two fellows from South Mountain School, which had just about opened then. So, we kept in touch over the years and had good times. … I cut some lawns, you know, like a lot of boys. I do remember some of the neighbors complaining because I

got out at seven o'clock, Saturday morning, to cut the lawn so that I could play in the baseball game, for our team, which was called the Boiler Makers.

SSH: What did you do with your summers?

RW: Well, we went to Lake Mohawk as I said for a while, and after that I went to the Orange, New Jersey, YMCA camp, Camp Kittatinny, which was also up in Sussex County on Fairview Lake. … I enjoyed that very much. It was a good camp. The last year I was there was 1937, and in 1938, my family thought it was a good idea if I tried working on a farm. My brother, Bill, had graduated from Rutgers in 1937, an ag [agricultural] student and he worked in permanent farm program. I forget what it was called.

SSH: Extension Service?

RW: Extension Service, right, thank you. For a number of years, he was the secretary of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. The fellow from Tuscan School, Charlie Thayer, my roommate in freshman year, also became an ag student. We worked on a farm in Sussex County in the of 1938, helping with the milking, weeding the corn, picking the corn, and that kind of thing.
The farm was right along the Delaware River, and we spent the summer there. It was just enough to convince me that I didn't want to be a farmer. So, the next couple of summers, I guess, I cut more grass and then it was time to go off to college.

SSH: In high school what were your favorite subjects?

RW: The best course that I took in high school was something, which at that time was quite radical; instead of separate subjects, the first two periods were combined in a history and economics course. When we went in there the first day the taller of the two teachers says, "I'm Ackerman, I'm tall and skinny, and this is Young, she's short and fat, but we're going to teach you history and economics," and they did. … What they also taught us was how to take a test and how to organize your answers and make notes in the margin, how you're going to do it, and then proceed to do it. It seemed to work.

SSH: Wonderful.

RW: I think we learned quite a bit of history and economics and the interaction between the two, which, I guess, none of us had ever thought of worked well. That was in my senior year, also in my senior year I decided that I'd like to try out for the school paper. I knew the sports editor and I said, "Can I give some sports stories to you?" He said, "Sure, fine. Why don't you cover the football game the week after next?" So, I did, and I liked it and the story was okay. Somebody had to read my writing, which was difficult, but that's how I got started in journalism.

SSH: Now you said that your family was Dutch Reformed. Were you active in the church?

RW: No, when we went to Maplewood we were in the Methodist Church. Charlie Thayer, '44 and I were active in the high school group the last year, so, that they got one going; before that there hadn't been any.

SSH: Had there been any activity in Boy Scouts for you?

RW: No, I was going to go to the Boy Scouts one night and see how it was and then I had to do some chore, or other, at home and then I never got there

SSH: Coming from a long line of Rutgers graduates was there other school that you thought you might Apply to or was it just Rutgers?

RW: Well, it was really going to be Rutgers. … It started with Jacob R. Wortendyke, Class of 1839, and his daughter married my grandfather, William P. Watson 1875. So, that became the second generation and then my father, my brother and I followed. My son came to Rutgers also and graduated in 1970. He also was a journalism major, and he had some of the same teachers as I had.

SSH: You didn't then apply to any other schools?

RW: No, there really was no thought in my mind or the family's mind because, well, for one thing, Jacob R. Wortendyke … had started a scholarship and Uncle Reynier added to it. … It was for members of the family, a family scholarship.

SSH: I didn't know they had family scholarships.

RW: Well, in those days they did and it was supposed to cover the tuition for any member of the family. It did not cover the fees or anything else, but it was a big help, obviously.

SSH: Your sisters ...

RW: Well, my older sister went to Douglass, then it was called NJC. She majored in dramatic arts, and in senior year, was director, of a play. … I remember her practicing at home and having the cast there, and so forth. It was a pretty big deal. She didn't pursue that after she graduated from college. It's too bad she didn't because I think she might have had the personality for it. She was so intense and projected herself into things very dramatically. … My brother, as I said, was an ag student and he went into the agriculture field. He joined the New Jersey Farm Bureau. They used to have lunch once a week and their nickname was the "Fanny Farmers." My younger sister went to Randolph Macon College in Lynchburg, Virginia. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree and didn't really make good use of it because she worked at war jobs after being graduated in 1943.

SSH: You worked on campus for the *Targum*?

RW: Well, my first year, freshman year, Charlie Thayer and I roomed at 313 Hegeman. In my second year I had a job working in a private home, at the end of Landing Lane as a dishwasher, kind of jack-of-all-trades, chauffeur, gardener, butler, etc. Then, my junior year, I lived in the Beta House. I'd pledged Beta the first day I came to New Brunswick. It was really no surprise. My grandfather was one of the three men that founded the fraternity in Rutgers.

SSH: Did you come to campus before you arrived as a freshman here at Rutgers or did you come to football games?

RW: Oh, my goodness, yes. We went to football games when we had the place in Lake Mohawk. Pop liked to go up on weekends in September and then Saturday we'd drive down to a game. Different teams in those days such as, Providence and Johns Hopkins. Of course the big thing was Lafayette and Lehigh, and we went to a lot of Princeton games. One of the great regrets of my father's life was that in 1938 he thought, "Well, I'm not going to go see another game, Princeton always wins," and he was sorry forever after. We went to more games in the early 1940s and in '47 he got to see Rutgers beat Princeton. So, he got it, that was great.

SSH: What sort of initiation did you have to go through coming down here?

RW: The initiation into the fraternity customary, I guess in those days; some paddling and hell week, when we had to get up and do sentry duty up and down Union Street and silly things like that.

SSH: Can you tell me some of the outfits that you had to wear, things like that?

RW: No, I don't remember if we had to wear different outfits, but we should have suspected something was wrong when we had to eat together. I don't know quite how to phrase this delicately but they gave us something that changed the color when we went to the bathroom, bright blue, that was a shock. Things like that, you know, and, then, we had to smoke cigars, very strong cigars and chew tobacco at the same time. I don't know whether they still do it or not, but, you know, the whole idea was to unite the pledges into a group of their own, so that after the seniors had graduated, why they'd have some ties together. … I think it worked pretty well.

SSH: What were your favorite subjects as a freshman?

RW: Well, I started in business administration and I liked economics, but I went out for the *Targum* and worked in the sports department. No big assignments just the freshman soccer team or things like that. So, we gradually worked our way up.

SSH: Did you start out as a freshman at the *Targum*?

RW: Yes, I continued in sports until part way through my junior year, when the managing editor came to me and he said, "We'd like you to switch over to the news, the main news department." So, I said, "Well, if you want me to do it, I suppose I can." So I did, and that's how I became the

editor in 1943. … A classmate of mine, Livy Goodman, and I were competing to be sports editor. When I moved, Livy became the sports editor. He might very well have been, anyhow, but what was the way it worked out. One thing I remember was that someone had written on the wall "Sic transit gloria, Mundi et Thursdi." I guess, he was a Latin scholar. Monday and Thursday, were the two nights that we worked. It only came out twice a week, so this is all we needed.

SSH: Were there other activities? I know you were involved in sports also.

RW: Well, freshman cross-country and freshman basketball. We did fairly well in cross-country but, I never made a point for them because I never was in the first five Rutgers runners. I really had planned to go out for track, but I thought I'd run cross-country in the fall. We had a measles epidemic, and I came down with the measles the night before the Junior Prom, so I missed the whole thing. I sent some flowers to the gal, you know, who I intended to go with, who was over at NJC and that kind of threw me behind. So, I never did go out for track and probably wouldn't have made much difference anyhow. I played on the basketball team but, we only won one game. The guy who put out the Scarlet Letter made a mistake and credited us for winning two. The activity that really helped me the most as far as the future in journalism was concerned was being a member of an organization called Pi Gamma, which was made up of campus correspondents of New York and Philadelphia papers, and the wire services. They had an apprentice system, and freshman and sophomore years, you did all the legwork and told them what happened and they would send it in and they would get paid.

SSH: They would get paid?

RW: They would get paid, and when you became a junior, why, you had an apprentice that worked under you. Well, that kind of went by the boards with the war. That was one of the effects of the war. But the beneficial effect when you were a junior in 1942-43, was that the number of correspondents on hand, on the campus, gradually dwindled because people were going off to the draft, or whatever. The result was that each of the correspondents still on campus got to do two or three stories on sports events, instead of only one, and you obviously made more money for more work. I also got some working experience in reporting on a murder that took place at a theater on Albany Street called the Opera House. A worker there killed a woman and threw her body over the back of the stage or from a balcony or something like that and the tabloids had "Murder at the Opera House." I heard about it from the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin (now deceased), which was one of my papers; I sent a story to them and also to the *New York Times*, another paper I handled. While working on the story, I met a fellow from the *New York Daily News* I didn't know what I was doing, so he helped me. You know, he took me around to the coroner's office and said, "Well, we got to do this and we got to do that now, and so forth," so, that made me feel good about the newspaper business; that people would help you like that. … That was really … more help than working on the *Targum*.

SSH: [Cannot understand what she is saying.]

RW: The yearbook, but she doesn't say much about it.

SSH: One question I wanted to ask you, what did you know about the war that was going on? Did you talk about it?

RW: Well, to tell the truth I don't remember that we talked about it all that much. We were more concerned with things going on with Rutgers and our courses. We all knew, of course, for sure that the US would be involved directly and we didn't think too much about it until Pearl Harbor.

SSH: You had taken ROTC your first two years?

RW: Yes, everybody had to take it for two years. I didn't have any particular interest in what was going on with it. My eyes were so bad I was sure I couldn't pass the physical. In fact, when it came time for the draft I was sent down to Newark and went through the physical exam. When I got to the eye testing the doctor said, "Read the first line under the light down there." I said, "Sorry, I can't; I see a light down there but I can't read any of it." … The doctor may have thought, "Oh, another guy, another faker." So, he said, "Let me see your glasses." So I handed him my glasses, which were very thick, because very poor eyesight, and he just whistled. He put a red circle around that number and that was it. So, they estimated my eyes at 20/400 to 20/800. They really weren't sure what, so anyhow, so that's why I didn't go into [the] service. That's why I thought maybe it would be a good idea if I came down and told what it was like for the guys that didn't go.

SSH: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

RW: Yes, I remember very well. As I said earlier, I worked my sophomore year for a family named Walrath on River Road as a jack-of-all-trades - -, kitchen helper, butler, chauffeur, house-cleaner and so forth. I was running stuff through the dishwasher and I was listening on the radio to the New York Giants playing the Washington Redskins. They broke into the broadcast to say that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.

SSH: Were you aware of where Pearl Harbor was?

RW: Well, they said it's in Hawaii. I probably didn't know too much about it.

SSH: What did you do after you heard it?

RW: I told the Walraths about it. I guess I called home and then we all listened to the radio; it was a very confusing day. The next day, Mrs. Walrath and I had lunch in the kitchen and we heard President Roosevelt make his speech about the "day of infamy". It changed things right away because some fellows in our class and other, young men all over the country went right into the service, you know, they responded right away. Other folks were thinking about, well, how does this affect me, and the ROTC fellows figured they were going to go on to advanced ROTC. They didn't know how long they'd be able to be around. … Others went into Navy programs,

called V5, and V7 and they weren't called right away. The Marines and what was then called the Air Corps had the same thing.

SSH: Do you remember how the fellows got into the Navy and Marine and Air Corps programs?

RW: I guess they heard about them through the ROTC people.

SSH: Were there any discussions in the chapel?

RW: Well, we had to go to chapel once a week in those days with a brief service. After Pearl Harbor, everybody talked about the fact that Rutgers would continue as best they could. President Roosevelt thought that education should continue to some extent, and after a while it got to be the people in pre-meds and things like that that stayed in school. The big change came on July 1, 1943, when the Army Specialized Training Program got underway here, and changed the semester system to [a] quarterly system.

SSH: That was what changed?

RW: Yes, to quarterly. At the end of the twelve weeks you got one week vacation. In a very short time the men from other colleges who were taking part in the ASTP were in some of the dorms of some of the fellows who left. We'd see them marching around, you know, from one course to another, and it kind of struck home that we were really involved in it.

SSH: Was there any interaction between you and the ROTC?

RW: Not between the ROTC and ASTP men. They had a pretty advanced, a pretty hard program. They were kept busy longer than we were, so they didn't have much time to fraternize with the undergraduates at Rutgers. These courses that they took were, I guess, only three months, some were six months, but they weren't long. There were language courses and other things that would help them when they were onto different assignments, in the Army.

SSH: Did they do any social events?

RW: Well, I think once in a while, there'd be a dance, for students in the Engineering Building. We didn't use the gym anymore because in the first place there weren't enough students to make it worthwhile, and the ASTP people ate there. I think the invitations, the billboards, [and] the stories in the Targum would say that the ASTP people were welcome, you know, but I don't think very many of them ever came. I suppose maybe some of them got to know girls that were at the "Coop" as they called it, "where the chickens are." There really wasn't that much. We did have intramural basketball continued so, by that time I was a preceptor and lived in the Beta House. When it was made available to the University for a dormitory for students. We had a basketball team and a fellow from another fraternity who lived in the house, was really a good basketball player and so we won the intramural tournament. … Then we made the mistake of playing some guys from the ASTP who were really good, and they beat us, badly. I forget the score but it was a one sided game.

SSH: Any dances or parties?

RW: The big dances – Soph Hop in November, Junior Prom in February, and Military Ball in May – fell by the wayside, but I do remember a "V Hop" in March of 1943 in the Engineering Building that was well attended. Fraternities had house parties sometimes, but social life changed almost completely. Those who had girlfriends at home would go home for the weekend to see their girls as much as they could before they got called into service. Some left school, got married, and then went into the service, so yes, really, the social life changed a great deal.

SSH: Were there a lot of weddings here on campus?

RW: Well, I don't know whether there were a great number. My brother got married in Kirkpatrick Chapel in 1943. He went into the Navy in September of 1942. He was on convoy service to Africa as a communications officer for about six, seven, months or something like that. They decided he'd be a good communications teacher and so they assigned him to San Francisco to teach a course in communications there. Before he went out there, he and his [wife] Sara… were married.

SSH: Did you work in your freshman and sophomore year?

RW: Yes in the summer between the freshman and sophomore years I had a job running the camp store at a YMCA camp where I had been a camper from 1934-37 and that was a lot of fun. This was before Pearl Harbor and one of the fellows that had been my counselor went into the Army early and he was engaged in some kind of a project they had. Balloons that would stop the Germans from bombing in England; the idea was [that] the German planes would hit the balloon cables, and it would bring them down. I think most of the counselors didn't know for sure whether they were going to get involved or we were going to get involved in the war. A couple of fellows that I knew got jobs in defense oriented plants or lumber warehouses or something like that in 1946. In 1942, I was fortunate to get a job in a steel rolling mill in Harrison, New Jersey. One of my fraternity brothers' father was the treasurer or something like that, so I went down there and I think it was seventy-three cents an hour, or something like that. They got steel in big ingots, heated it and then rolled it down into bars. … Another fellow and I weighed each bar, and had a code number, and we'd write down the weight and so forth. Then it went to the grinders to grind out the imperfections in the bars. Then they would heat the bar again and roll it down into wire. They had men who would hold these wires when they came through the mill, turn around and feed this wire through another mill at a high speed and red hot. Boy, I wouldn't have wanted that job for anything. The wire was called a resistance wire and I think a lot of it was used in the Navy because I can remember one of the production supervisors coming around shouting, "Come on men, there's a war, and we've got to help the guys in the Pacific." That was a good experience. One of my old friends from grade school also got a job there. He was very strong and he could handle the grinding tool, and he got a job as a grinder working overnight. They had three shifts of course, and so we worked out a system where I would buy the Herald Tribune and read it on the train on the way in. Then I'd give it to him and he'd read it on the train on the way home. … The classes all stopped on the first of May 1942, so I was able to

work there from May 10th until September 10th . It was a long summer with one streak of working forty-one days in a row. We got overtime and double time on Sunday and all that stuff, but it felt like you were doing something. … During my junior year, (1942-43), I lived in the fraternity house, and I went back to the same mill at the end of the school year. Did the same thing until late June when I got a letter from Dean Metzger asking would I be interested in becoming a preceptor in Winants Hall. He would give me a state scholarship; The fellows who had the state scholarships went into service, Metzger said, "If you do that, you wouldn't have to finish your senior year after the end of the first semester in January 1946."
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The journalism school didn't change to the quarterly system. They stayed on the semester system because of the simple reason there were many more girls from NJC taking journalism than there were boys still taking journalism. So, they kept to the semester system, and we had our journalism courses in Van Nest Hall, as we would have otherwise, since we'd learn reporting and layout and editing and libel and stuff like that, as we would ordinarily. But we also had to have some background courses in history and economics and other subjects which had to be taken at NJC, so we went over there for those courses.

SSH: Were you aware of any difference in the education style from NJC professor's and from the ones you'd had at Rutgers?

RW: Well, no, I don't think so, some were tougher and they weren't too happy about boys being in the girl's courses. They figured with some logic that we were paying more attention to the girls than what we were supposed to be learning and that some of the girls were paying more attention to us. … So it was kind of disruptive I guess you could say but, they put up with it because they had to. Some [professors] were tougher and some were easier.

SSH: A lot of people talked about the sprint from here to NJC between classes. Did you have to suffer through any of that?

RW: Well, no, not really because we had the courses in the morning over there, and the journalism courses were in the afternoon. It was just one trip over and back, but of course, that was farther than when we were taking all our courses over here.

SSH: Now you had talked about how the supervisor or someone had come to you, a production supervisor and tried to spur you on, were there complications or talks given here at the University that were either for the war, or against the war, or getting involved in the war, or not getting involved in the war before the Americans were?

RW: Well, the supervisor was at the steel mill.

SSH: Right, I know, but I'm trying to back up a little bit before the war. Was there anything like that here at Rutgers for getting involved or not getting involved or …

RW: Well, yes there were some organizations, I'm not sure which ones, that discussed such things. [They] would talk about it and have meetings and people would write letters to the editor of the *Targum*, and so forth. … There was some effort to make everybody realize that there was a war going on in Europe and we should pay attention to it and so forth.

SSH: In your own home were there any discussions of FDR's policies or Lend Lease or …

RW: Oh, yes sure. A lot of it, you know.

SSH: What did your family think of FDR?

RW: Well, my father described himself as a Jeffersonian Democrat. … I never asked him who he voted for, … I think he probably voted Republican, or voted for FDR a couple of times, but by the third term or the fourth term in 1944, Pop was against him, and my sisters were pretty much for him and, I think, I was too. …

SSH: Why was your father against him?

RW: Well, he thought FDR was too liberal. … Of course, he supported him as far as the war was concerned, but he, as I recollect, as far as … FDR had gone too far on some things.

SSH: Before the war your father supported him?

RW: Well, really before the war.

SSH: Right. It wasn't before the Lend Lease or the New Deal policies?

RW: Oh, he didn't dispute the Lend Lease …

SSH: The New Deal policies?

RW: Yeah, the New Deal, that kind of upset him, and a lot of people, although he had lived in Jersey City, which at that time everybody was a Democrat with Mayor Hague.

SSH: Really?

RW: Oh yeah. One year, Hague, he won by one hundred thousand to six thousand as mayor.

SSH: How did your father maintain his autonomy as the situation went on?

RW: Well, he was his own man and he had his own opinions. … He didn't take part in any political things, but he knew a man named A. Harry Moore socially, and A. Harry Moore was one of the people that Hague would run for governor every once in a while. I think he won the governorship a couple of times. In those days the governor could not succeed himself, so A. Harry Moore would run and then maybe a Republican and then A. Harry Moore would come

back again, but that was as close as my father got involved. It wasn't a great big thing in our house.

SSH: It takes quite a bit to have a lively political discussion. To go back, then, as the semesters changed … to quarters for most of the people here on campus, what else do you remember as a big change? Your class had been one of the biggest to come in '40.

RW: When we came in 1940, there were 500 plus [students] and we were the biggest up to that time, which sounds funny now, with the thousands and thousands. I forget, when my son entered Rutgers in 1966, how many there were, but there were an awful lot. There really wasn't that much change until people started to leave to go into the service, and that was kind of a personal thing if you knew people who went. … It was almost throughout the school and by 1943, when the freshman came in for these quarterly courses, why, there were lots more freshmen than there were upperclassmen.

SSH: Really? There were that many?

RW: Yes, and … they knew that they probably weren't going to last for four years. They were going to maybe get in a year or two and go into the service and come back after the war. … They seemed so young at that age. … Everything was reflected by the war, [like] the different activities that we had. We did have a football team, but we played Lehigh and Lafayette and that was about it. … I made the squad for football but I didn't get in a game the whole season which is too bad. … When we went to Lehigh and Lafayette, taxis took us to Bound Brook where we got on a train and went up to Easton and Bethlehem for the football game. I guess that's how Lafayette and Lehigh came down for that matter. They wanted to keep some things going. Well, as an example, they decided that they'd shut down the *Targum* after the spring of 1943; the previous editor left in the normal turnover and I became the editor for a short time before they shut it down. Then when I came back down again in July, they decided that maybe we should have a *Targum*, so it picked up again although we had a very small staff. We were hard pressed to put out any kind of a paper, so I remember rerunning some of the better columns that were written by a man named Tom Jackson. His pen name was "Jack the Bear" and he was very witty. He'd written the columns, you know, in the '42-43 year. So, I went back and picked them up and ran them over again. That's … just because we needed things in the paper.

SSH: Did you have any trouble getting any supplies or anything?

RW: No, I don't think so. I don't remember we ever had any problems.

SSH: Now were you still reporting for Philadelphia and New York papers too?

RW: Oh, yes. If I hadn't been on the football squad I would have been up in the press box sending stories of the football games to the papers. Western Union is what they did in those days. I had the impression that the University just wanted to have some student program that the students could go to.

SSH: What are some of your favorite stories about Dean Metzger and others?

RW: Well, he was a very kindly man, … he could be strict, but he was always fair with me, and I admired him. I don't know how old he was but he seemed like he was quite an older man, he always had white hair and so forth. I don't know how long he stayed with the University, but he was good. Dr. Clothier was, of course, the president and he had a heck of a job, you know, changing this two-semester college with young boys, growing up into … an organization where the Army system came first. The ASTP came first, and there were older guys whose college careers had been upset. … So, he had his hands full, but he seemed to handle it very well.

SSH: Who was your favorite professor?

RW: My favorite professor was a man named Donald McGinn, who taught English and, I guess composition and literature and the people [who] were important. He got us interested in writing and knowing about literature. As a journalism student I was obliged to take a science. I had been fairly good in arithmetic and I figured there must be numbers in physics so maybe that's better then chemistry or whatever. So, I took physics and I managed to [get] a C. The professor was a peppery man named Winchester and he would tell you what things were supposed to be and if you paid attention and you got it, that's fine. But if you didn't pay attention, well, he didn't care. He just expected you to work at it, you know. One day he said, "I'm going to tell you something now that you'll remember the rest of your life. You may not think it's important, but you'll remember it, I guarantee it," and he said, "What I'm going to tell you is 'a pint's a pound, the world around.'" He's right, I've remembered it ever since, and I keep telling people about it. I'm trying to think of the man who was the history … prof [professor].

SSH: I know George is a name that comes up.

RW: Yeah, … John J. George or whatever his name was. Yeah, he taught political science, and he was very popular with the students because he'd poke fun at some of the people in public life and the students said, "Oh, that's great." … One of his favorite things was … [on] the first day you go in there he'd say, "Who's your congressmen? Who's your senators?" Most of the fellows didn't know, so he got us to at least know who they were. Now that I'm editing this, I remember that the history prof. I thought was very good was Dr. Ellis. He was not as colorful like Professor George, but he taught you things and you wanted to work for him.

SSH: What was the foreign language that you studied?

RW: Spanish. The brother of one of my brother's girlfriends had told , "You know Ripley, if I were you, I'd take Spanish in college because in the future, if you can speak Spanish, why you'll do very well in business dealings with the Latin American countries." I was going to take business administration, so I took Spanish for two years, the first year was with Ray Pane. He was a nice man and a good teacher. He got you interested in it too. I liked him, and I worked hard. The second year man was more the disciplinarian and he didn't care whether you worked at it or not. He was just telling you what the Spanish thing should be and that was it, but I don't remember.

SSH: Were you involved in the administration of your fraternity?

RW: No, I wasn't. I would have been, I guess, if we continued on. Ken McDonald was one of the major people. He was the president his senior year. He was the center of the football team and he was a leader, you know, and that's why he became the head of the fraternity.

SSH: As editor of the Targum, how much responsibility did you have for what went into the Targum?

RW: Well, my responsibility was more on the editorial page, but we worked together deciding on what stories we would run and so forth. Almost everything was about the things that were going on and what clubs were meeting and what issues were present. A fellow named Mel Grayson put out a story one time that drew a lot of attention. Some authority on education had said that the American college students didn't know enough about history. ... Mel made up a story about some very ridiculous subject that "Nobody really was expected to know," and it was funny. He made it up, you know, a fictional thing, and it got some attention in the New York papers as I remember. … He was a managing editor in our junior year, then he went in the service too. …

SSH: Now, with the rest of the school being on the quarters, you are still doing the semesters because of your major, when did you graduate? Did you walk during the regular time?

RW: Well, no. ... The fall semester ended at the end of January. Well, back up a little bit. After the first of July I took some quarterly courses here. Then, when the journalism courses started in September, I went into them. Then the quarter from October through December I would go over to NJC. After the first of January I didn't have to finish any more quarterly group of courses. I just did the journalism for the rest of the month, but I couldn't graduate until the next quarterly graduation, which was on April 5, 1944. So, by that time, I had started working for the Associated Press, Newark Bureau. … That was another effect of the war. … Until the war came they never hired anybody right out of college. You had to get experience in the local papers and so forth, and then they would hire you. I was hired by the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, to start in a couple of weeks but, I got a call from the bureau chief in the AP in Newark who said, "an opening's come up, are you interested?" So I thought , I'll go right to the AP. Anyhow, I'd been working there a couple of weeks … and I told the bureau chief "I'm supposed to graduate from college next Wednesday, is it all right if I go?" He said, "Well, yeah, come in the morning and then, leave when you have to get a train to get down in time and so forth." So after graduation I had a half a day off from work. Later on he was also very generous … when my wife and I set a date for our wedding. I had Thursday and Friday off, the way the AP schedules are, but he said, "I'll give you the day off on Saturday for, your wedding, and then you can have vacation, after that" so that was nice.

SSH: Well, where did you meet your wife?

RW: I met her in, in the Methodist church, in Maplewood that I had grown up in. After the war … the minister felt that it would be good if they had a young adults group, then, as now, people in churches want to get young people in, not just the gray heads in the back. They started a young adults group, some friends of mine and I went. My wife, Barbara, had grown up in West Orange and moved to Maplewood after she graduated from high school in 1941. Her mother knew another lady who had a daughter who was from Columbia High School, and wanted to get involved in this young adults group. Somehow or other, she brought my wife Barbara to this young adult group. Every once in a while, when we remember this girl, we toast to her because she brought us together. My wife was very beautiful, and still is, but that's how I met her, February 3 1946. We married in July of '47.

SSH: When you first left the university to go to work for the AP, what kind of hours did you have to work? Did you live at home and commute?

RW: Well, I lived with my parents in Maplewood. The bus down to Newark took about a half hour to three quarters of an hour and it only cost ten cents. When I first started, I worked days because you have to get some experience and they don't want you working nights by yourself ... That lasted about four or five months, then I started working four thirty p.m. to one a.m. editing, and with somebody else with writing and developing stories. … After about a year, I got to be the overnight man, which meant that you went in at midnight, and worked to eight thirty, five days a week, with Saturday and Sunday off. What the overnight man did was take the stories that had been sent out for morning papers and try to update them a little. Instead of saying, "Man was arrested," you'd say, "a man's going to be arraigned today because he was arrested yesterday," or whatever, trying to get a fresher approach. At that time there were maybe three morning papers and a dozen, or fifteen or so, afternoon papers, including the *Newark Evening News*, which was the dominant paper in the whole state. I didn't really care for working nights that much, but, you had to do it, and then I decided maybe I could try to get into the sports department. … What the AP did was use Newark as a training ground and also a place where they would park somebody until they had an opening coming up in sports, but there was no opening at the time. There was a guy who came over from the sports department whom they didn't have room for but wanted to keep, so they sent him to Newark for six months, or a year, and then he got over to the sports department. About that time I decided that's what I wanted to do. … I had covered Princeton and Rutgers football games and other sporting events in New Jersey. This fellow was helping me, he said, "You ought to do an interview with so and so, you know, or something like that." It worked out. I got in the sports department in 1951, and I liked it. I was an inside man. I didn't go to the World Series or write the stories or go outside and write stories. … In the wire service you had people who were in charge of deciding what stories [were] going to move next, and that's what I did. We'd run the story from the New York Yankees, or the New York Giants, or whatever, and it was fun but it got to be a no win situation. ... If you didn't take in the story soon enough … then the UPI story would get in the papers, and they'd say, "How come you didn't take that story?" At that time my kids were starting to go to school. When they were little it was okay that I had these weird hours for the sports department. For a long time I was working Sunday and Monday night, nine-thirty p.m., to six a.m., with the rest of Tuesday off; Thursday and Friday I worked one thirty p.m. to ten p.m.. … Saturday I worked days in the summer, one-thirty p.m. to ten p.m. on the football desk, and five-thirty p.m. to three a.m., in the winter

months for the winter sports. … I decided I wanted to get into something that wouldn't interfere with my family life and I wasn't getting outside assignments. Anyhow, I got my hours changed in June 1956 to one-thirty p.m. to ten p.m., with Thursday and Friday off. I put in my request to transfer to business news (where everybody worked days) on a Wednesday. When I went in on Saturday the assistant sports editor said, "Hey, you'll be interested in this," and he showed me a piece of copy. The man who wrote the Wall Street stories for the business news department had dropped dead of a heart attack putting his boat in the water. He was one of the wealthier AP guys, I guess. Anyhow, an opening was created and I had handed this in, a couple of days before, so my name was on the top of the pile. … I was interviewed by the business news editor and, so, I transferred to business news. The last week I was in the sports department I worked Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday one-thirty p.m. to ten p.m.. They needed somebody. in business news on Thursday and Friday, so I went home Wednesday night, came in early Thursday morning and worked Friday. I made a day and a half extra pay and I was off on Saturday and Sunday. It was early July and I worked Monday and Tuesday and the Fourth, was a holiday, so I had that day off. Then I worked Thursday and Friday, had another weekend off, and thought I died and gone to heaven.

SSH: Where did your family live at that point when you were?

RW: By that time we were living in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, which was another one of those suburban towns that we would move to. For a number of years, when we were first married, we lived with Barbara's mother and dad, because right after the war it was very difficult to get an apartment. Finally, we got an apartment and then they bought a duplex house, a two-family house, so they were on one side and they rented the other side to us, which was very nice. Then we decided after a while that we wanted to have our own house, so, we moved to Glen Ridge. … [My] son, young Rip, … [went through] a few months of kindergarten in Maplewood with the same teacher that I'd had.

SSH: Oh, wow!

RW: Yeah, and my brother before me, seven years older, had had her too. She's a nice lady, but she'd been there a very long while. Anyhow, he finished out the school year in Glen Ridge, and the kids went through the whole school system there. It was smaller than Maplewood, but it was a very nice place.

SSH: How long did you work for the AP?

RW: Well, altogether nineteen years, seven years in Newark, and five in sports, and seven in business news. By that time the kids were getting on toward college age. The AP was a great place to work, and a real challenge and all, but it didn't pay very well, so I followed what a lot of people in the business had done; I went into public relations. I worked for an agency on a specific account and I enjoyed the work. I tried to write things that people on the papers would think worthwhile and use them which was a real challenge. Then I became an account executive and I didn't like that, because [of] all the time counseling with the client. With anything important they didn't want to talk to me they wanted to talk to the president of the company, who

had been the original account executive on the account. I was in public relations for seven years, and by that time the kids were pretty much finished college. Rip graduated and Joann was part way through, so I said, "I don't want to keep on doing this." … I was able to get a job with a publication called the *Bond Buyer*, which is the Bible of the municipal bond business. Sometime late in the nineteenth century or early in the twentieth century the Bond Buyers convinced almost every legislature in every state in the country that any public entity, any school system, or town or state, or whatever who wanted to sell municipal bonds, had to sell them through competition. They had to advertise a sale coming up in the local paper and they had to advertise it in the *Bond Buyer*, because the *Bond Buyer* was the authority. The daily *Bond Buyer* would come out five days a week, twenty, twenty-four pages, or something like that. All but five or six pages were advertisements. "The City of New Brunswick is going to build a new a Sewerage Plant," and so this would be a big ad. [Other examples would be] that Maplewood was going to have a new school system, or the state of New Jersey was going to sell bonds to do one thing or another. That was a good place to work … and I enjoyed it. I was assigned to the corporate bonds, and the idea was that the people who were in the bond business, in addition to municipal bonds, should know something about corporate bonds, too. I got all my information from the people in Salomon Brothers, First Boston, Morgan Stanley, and other names that you hear about; Smith Barney and those people. … I enjoyed writing about the bond market, but they decided that they couldn't afford me anymore, not that I was making that much money, but that's what they decided. The man who had been my boss had left because it was family owned and there was a shakeup in the family. He was at the *Journal of Commerce*, which is another financial newspaper with its main coverage in the shipping business, ocean shipping, transportation, and banking, and the things that affected commerce. … I was able to go over there and tryout. I wrote something they liked. This fellow obviously helped me, you know, and so I went to work there. Then I worked there until I retired at sixty-five, and I was what they called an industrial editor, most of the time. We had a chemical department that covered prices for chemicals, and chemicals issues, and I did a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Somebody that knows a little bit about a lot of things, but not much about anything. … They decided to have a financial section, the stocks and bonds and so forth, so for a while I worked on that. I enjoyed that much more because then you're talking to these guys about the bond market again and what was coming, … whether interest rates were going to go up or down, … and why, and so forth. Then I retired.

SSH: When did you move to Yarmouth, Massachusetts?

RW: After I retired.

SSH: Did you?

RW: Yes, we decided that we wanted to move to Cape Cod, so we bought a house two years before I retired and rented it out. Then we moved up to the Cape, and it's a nice place.

SSH: Now did your family live around that area now?

RW: No, no. … My son and his family are in Baltimore. He went to work for the *Journal of Commerce*, too. Now he's got a different job, but he covers transportation. … My daughter and

her husband are in Philadelphia. He's an attorney and she works for the Juvenile Law Center, which really has nothing to do with her husband being an attorney, but they provide legal services for children who need it. Children from broken homes, or children with criminal problems having to do with their parents and their family, and so forth. So, they're spread out, so that's really why I came down to talk to you today and then we'll go to the football game tomorrow, go to Baltimore on Sunday and to Philadelphia on Monday.

SSH: Big trip. Looking back over the course of your life and all the different things that you've been involved in, the war years particularly, what is your most vivid memory you have?

RW: Of college?

SSH: Either that or the war and the stories you covered.

RW: Yeah. Well, there was no really vivid memory having to do with the war. It was spread out because it was a gradual process of people leaving and the fraternity getting smaller. … We tried to interest fellows to join, and we managed to get a few and scrape through. The one thing that was interesting was when the fellows who had been in the advanced ROTC and went to camps in the South came back. I guess while the Army was deciding what to do with them. They had finished half of the advanced ROTC, went to Officer's Candidate Schools and then came back. They had gotten their commissions, but they didn't know where they were going to go next. … I found out they were coming and so we got a photographer [to] go down and take a picture of these fellows when they came in on the train from the South. That to me was interesting because I knew so many of them well because they were all in our class. We didn't really mix too much with them, they kind of stuck together because they'd been through OCS, and [that was] no picnic, … They were different than before.

SSH: Did you ever have anyone give you a hard time because you weren't in the military? Did you have to explain why?

RW: Oh, once in a while a couple of times but, it wasn't really any problem. An interesting thing happened in the steel mill. There were a lot of men at that time who [because of] families or whatever they didn't want to go into in the service, so they got defense jobs. I was tall and skinny and had thick heavy glasses, and they could see that I wasn't really the blue-collar type. They thought I had been a shoe salesman or something. I was trying to stay out of the draft. Anyhow, after I'd been there three months, one of the union people came over and said, "Hey, Slim, how long you been here?" I said, "Well, it was three months yesterday as a matter of fact." He said, "Okay. I'll give you a union card you can sign it and join." I said, "Well, I'll sign the card and join if you want, but I'm not going to be here long." He said, "What do you mean you're not going to be here long?" I said, "Well, I'm going back to college in the fall. I'm just here for a job in the summer. "Oh," he said, "Well, okay, forget about it, don't bother." So from that day on I could see the difference in the way the other guys in the mill, who had tough jobs, and after … they found out that I was a college student going to Rutgers. Why, they'd stop me, when I was going through the mill and they got to know my name and say, "Hey, Rip. I have a cousin, my wife's cousin, and his son is going to go to Rutgers. Is it a good place?" I said,

"Yeah, it's a great place," … and they thought it was pretty good that a college boy would come and work there during the summer. Before that they were not contemptuous exactly but, you knew that they wondered who was this guy. … It was a complete change that was interesting to me.

SSH: Any other memorable stories or memories that you'd like to share with us?

RW: No, I don't think so. The one other thing that I remember the most, was when I was tapped for Cap and Skull. I didn't really expect that I would be one of the fellows –Dou White came around and tapped me on the shoulder and so I went into it.

SSH: Were there any stories that you remember particularly working in the newspaper business that were memorable to you or?

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE B----------
Well, one of the funniest things happened when I was in the sports department. As I told you I was in charge of the wire and what story would go next. During the fifties they had a lot of heavy-weight championship bouts on television until somebody discovered they could make a heck of lot more money by having pay TV. This was one particular night in the summer during the baseball season and we had a TV in the sports office so we could keep up to what was going on, and we had a staff fellow out there covering the fight. One man writing, as it went along, and another fellow wrapping it up for the morning papers. I wanted Chicago to go ahead with their box score, and the teletype operator gave Chicago the signal. … They got started, and then they had maybe four or five guys in the box score and bang. One of the fighters was knocked down, and everybody in the office, our staff and other offices, the cable and the general news and everything would be over there peeking at the fight and so forth. A big uproar, you know, "hey isn't that terrific", and I'm standing in front of the TV saying, "Get up you so and so! Don't lie there, get up," because I knew that any second now the fellow would be counted out and our man in Chicago or wherever the fight was would start his story on the fight and I'd be halfway through the box score and that's no good. I'd have to, you know, start the box score all over again and take up more time. So the boxer got up fortunately and I was able to get the box score completed. That's just one of the silly things.

SSH: When you were writing during the war years, … maybe the two years as the war came to the end, did you notice any censorship or any stories that the government wanted you print? Were you ever privy to any of that or?

RW: Well, I started the AP in March of '44 and the war ended in Europe in May of '45. Anything that was involved with censorship would have gone to the general desk in New York where the headquarters were or the Washington Bureau. The AP had rules, you know, the way you were supposed to operate and so forth, but, I wasn't affected by any censorship.

SSH: When FDR died, were there any stories that you remember?

RW: I was working … overnight in April of '45, so I was asleep when he died. My older sister came in and woke me up and said, "FDR died." [I said], "Oh, gee whiz, oh, that's too bad and so forth and so on." … When I went in at midnight that night we were trying to put together stories on what was happening in New Jersey because of the President's death but, really there wasn't much actually going on in New Jersey that was related to his death. When he came through on the train going up to Hyde Park, … you know, that was something. The train station in Newark was jammed with people waving handkerchiefs and flags.

SSH: Did you report what was going on in New Jersey for V-E Day and then …

RW: Oh, yeah, the ceremonies in different places, and so forth.

SSH: When the bombs were dropped in Japan, were there any reactions that you reported?

RW: No, not really. You know, now people know all about it, but at that time … all we knew was that the bomb was as much as twenty thousand tons of dynamite or something like that. There really was no particular thing in New Jersey that had anything to do with it as far as I know. A big munitions ship exploded in South Amboy when I was still in Newark, but, … that was after the war. Someone got the idea that we should invite editors of the papers around the state to come meet the people that ran the AP Bureau in Newark and see how we operated. It was a very slow day and nothing happened at all. That night the ship blew up and all kinds of things happened, but that was just, a coincidence. In fact, New Jersey was famous, for a lot of big explosions going back to World War I. … There were a lot of chemical companies, and you mix the wrong chemicals together and bang. … You know, they ran to a pattern.

SSH: Well, one of the last questions I'd like to ask you was about your involvement with Rutgers now. Have you always been the Class of '44 correspondent?

RW: Well, it seems that way, but no. When I was in the sports department, I wasn't able to come to reunions and somebody else was made correspondent. Then ... I guess, I somehow got a Saturday off for the '54 reunion, and … I came and they decided that I would be the correspondent again. A couple of years later, I got into business news and I could come to all of the reunions. Every reunion they say, "You're the correspondent," so that's fine with me. I like to do it, particularly now since I'm retired, it's the only real writing I do and I try to make it as interesting as possible. … Our class is pretty good about supplying information, and we had a big drive for our fiftieth for scholarship contributions, and we became the first million-dollar class. That came about because they had a meeting of eight or nine fellows who had been active in the class and invited us to a football game against Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech was good then too, but Rutgers pulled the game out in the last play. I'm trying to remember the quarterback, Brian somebody or other who was good. We had the ball on our 32-yard line or something like that with fifteen or twenty seconds to go. We completed a couple of passes and on the last play the clock had run out with the ball was in the air and it was caught for the touchdown. Rutgers won 50 to 49, so we were all excited. That was terrific, never seen a game like that, so when we got together at dinner in Winants we were all very enthusiastic; that's when we started this drive. Dick Hale was really the person that really got it going, and others too, but he was the main one.

… Now we're glad to see the Class of '98 come out with another million dollars, and I think they raised a little more than we did. … Now '49 is doing the same thing. In our fifty-fifth, we had another big drive, but, this time we only got five-hundred and seventy-six thousand or something like that.

SSH: Well, I thank you very much for taking time to come in.

RW: Well, I thank you. I hope I've given a picture of what it was like when the guys were gone from the campus during World War II.

SSH: I think so, and I think that when you get your transcript back if there are other stories that you'd like to add we would appreciate that too. Thank you.

RW: Okay. Fine.

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

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