

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHELDON COHEN
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Sheldon Cohen, on May 18, 2023. I'm Kate Rizzi, and I'm located in Branchburg, New Jersey. Mr. Cohen, thank you so much for joining me today.

Sheldon Cohen: Call me Sheldon, please.

KR: Can you please state for the record where you are located?

SC: Vienna, Virginia. That is just outside of Washington.

KR: Where and when were you born?

SC: I was born in Newark, New Jersey, July 25, 1937.

KR: Where did you grow up?

SC: I grew up in Newark.

KR: We usually like to start off these interviews getting a sense of the family history of the person being interviewed. What would you like to share about your family history, starting on your mother's side first?

SC: My maternal grandparents immigrated to the United States, I'm not exactly sure, but around 1900. They came from the area of Belarus--it's the Pale of Settlement--which is part of Poland, Belarus and a little bit into Russia, but that's where the Ashkenazi Jews were settled by the Russians. [Editor's Note: The Pale of Settlement was a region in the Russian Empire designated for Jewish settlement according to restrictive statutes enacted in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The region included modern-day Belarus and Moldova, as well as parts of Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia and the Russian Federation.]

They came to this country somewhere about the turn of the 20th century. My mother was born, I believe, in 1911. She went to school in Newark. She attended Newark State Teachers College, which is now part of, I believe, Rutgers University. She got a two-year degree in teaching. She was a teacher in the Newark Public Schools until she married my father. [Editor's Note: Newark State Teachers College, founded as the Newark Normal School in 1855, is now Kean University.]

They got married. She raised a family of three girls and me. After we were all gone, she went back to teaching in Newark Public Schools, getting the remainder of her two-year requirement to become an accredited teacher, and retired somewhere around the 1960s or 1970s.

KR: What about your family history on your father's side of the family?

SC: The history is very similar. My father was born in 1895. His father, my grandfather, came to this country in 1900. He worked--a typical story, saved up money, sent for his family, and so my grandmother came with my father and three children in 1905. One of the children, when

they landed, this is a little fuzzy, either before they left or when she arrived, was diagnosed with some sort of eye problem, and she got sent back, lived for a year with a family in England and then came into the country a year later. My grandfather worked with his brother, my uncle, in a grocery store in Newark. My grandmother died very young, in her forties, and my grandfather died also. My father was left at age sixteen being the breadwinner for three younger sisters. His brother, my uncle, went to fight in the American Army in Europe in the trenches in the First World War, was gassed with mustard gas, came back an injured veteran.

My father ran a grocery and vegetable store until he retired around the mid-'70s, 1970-1980, also in Newark. After he retired, he decided to take up painting. He became a school crossing guard after he retired and closed the store. He was doing that for about five or six years, and then he needed an operation for something that took him off his post. He was a school crossing guard in Millburn, New Jersey, and so he was off his post. Then, when he came back, the police department offered him another post on the other side of town, which was inconvenient. He decided not to take it and applied for unemployment. He applied for unemployment as an eighty-six-year-old policeman. [laughter] But he was turned down. Then, he took up painting and was teaching painting to what he called the "old folks" in the retirement home. He lived in his own home until he died at the age of almost ninety-eight.

KR: Did your father ever share with you his recollections of the voyage over to America and of immigrating to America?

SC: No, he did not. But my older sister interviewed him at some point and recorded it on tape, and I have the tape.

KR: How did your parents meet?

SC: They were introduced by mutual friends.

KR: You said you have three sisters and you. What's the birth order?

SC: I have two older sisters, one of whom has now passed away, and one younger sister. I was number three in the order. My older sister is now ninety-one. My younger sister is eighty, and I am going to be eighty-six in two months. The middle sister who passed away, that was four or five years ago, from illness.

KR: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

SC: Well, they were poor. They didn't get any poorer; they didn't get any richer. My father had a grocery and produce store, so there was always food on the table, which he brought home. I know they got married in 1930, right after the depression [started]. I remember them telling me they were able to furnish their home very cheaply because nobody was selling anything, so they got their furnishings for the first home, they'd said, very nice stuff at very little cost.

KR: Which section of Newark did you grow up in, and was that the same area of Newark that your parents had each grown up in?

SC: My parents grew up, I think it was called the Vailsburg section. I don't know anything about it except what I'm told. When I was three years old, they moved to the Roseville section, I think it's called the Roseville section. That is North Newark. My grandmother was not alive at that time, but my grandfather, my mother's father, was still alive. But he was on disability--he wasn't on disability, he was disabled, but there was no such thing as disability, so he lived with my parents and they supported him.

We lived on a place called 13th Street, North 13th Street, in the Roseville section. On the street, across the street was a factory called White Laboratories. They still make, I think, laxatives. Down at the end of the block was a railroad yard. On one end of the block were three-story, six-family cold water tenements. We lived on the richer side of the block. We were on a series of row houses; that was the other end of the block. At the end of the street was another factory. That was the environment I grew up in.

KR: That area of the Roseville section, what was it like in terms of religion, ethnic groups, race? What was that area like in terms of demographics?

SC: In the particular area, the blocks around where I lived was Eastern European immigrants, Irish, from Europe. It was during the time of the early 1940s where anti-Semitism was very, very open and rife. There was a lot of anti-Semitism from the neighbors. The schools I went to, Garfield School and Barringer High School in Newark, were in a section of North Newark that was almost entirely Italian. My upbringing and the schools were amongst, I would say, ninety-eight percent Italian. In elementary school, I was subject to a great deal of anti-Semitism. When I got to high school, things got much better. I made friends and I was not a victim of such overt anti-Semitism as I was in elementary school.

In my last year of high school, my parents moved to Maplewood, New Jersey, a much nicer place, a much nicer neighborhood. They had bought a small house, a nice house. Compared to where we lived before, it was like paradise. But since I was in my last year of high school, I didn't want to switch. I could have gone to Columbia High School. So, I remained in my final year at Barringer High School. I would take three buses a day to get to school, three buses a day to come home.

KR: What are your memories of the World War II years?

SC: The war ended in 1945. I was eight years old. I remember very vividly V-E Day, Victory in Europe Day [May 8, 1945]. It was announced, it was early morning, like four or five in the morning, and the people were out in the streets banging pots and pans and celebrating. My first knowledge of the war, which struck me very intensely, was the pictures that were coming out of the concentration camps, the liberation of the concentration camps. I knew it was discussed. I remember we had ration stamps for all sorts of things. My father had a truck that he used for his business, so he got special extra stamps to buy gasoline. Anything that came by boat was very limited. He might get bananas in once every couple of months to sell to the customers.

I had two cousins who were in the war. One was in New Guinea. He was in the Seabees [C.B. or U.S. Navy Construction Battalion]. One was in Europe; he was a gunner on a B-24. They both served in the war. I have saved, to this day, my ration book. We were each issued a ration book, one for the family, so I have that. There were also little cardboard tokens, blue tokens or red tokens, and if you wanted to get certain things like gasoline or food, you needed not only your ration book, but some of these tokens. I still have them. My thought is that someday I'll donate them to the to the museum in Washington, but they're my memorabilia. [Editor's Note: The Consolidated B-24 Liberator was a heavy bomber used by American and British forces during World War II.]

What I do know is, I never heard my parents talking about the war and the killing of the Jews there, and maybe I was too young to know. Maybe they did discuss it; maybe they didn't. They certainly didn't discuss it with me. I was eight years old when the war ended. I asked my sister, my older sister, if they ever discussed it with her, and she had no recollection of them. What they knew or what they did is just a blank in my history.

KR: As you were growing up and getting older, was there ever any discussion of the Holocaust?

SC: The public awareness came about around 1959 and 1960, when people started to open up. By that time, I was a young adult, so that was my initial awareness of it. I certainly remembered the movie newsreels that were released when the camps were liberated. But there was no real discussion until then. Of course, since then, I've become very much aware of it, like everybody else.

KR: In Newark, did you have extended family that would get together as you were growing up?

SC: Yes. My two aunts lived a block away, so I would go over there and spend time in their apartment. My parents had a circle of friends that they got together with at each other's house for dinner, I think, once a month and played cards. My uncle lived not too far away, a couple miles away, and they would come over frequently. We had other relatives from Passaic and New Haven, and we'd see them from time to time. There were always friends and relatives coming and going.

KR: You said your grandfather lived with you for a time.

SC: Until I was five years old. He had a stroke and died at that time.

KR: I'm just curious, was Yiddish spoken in the household at all?

SC: Only when my parents didn't want the kids to know what they were talking about. [laughter] They spoke Yiddish to each other. I'm told--I don't remember--until I was five, I was pretty fluent in Yiddish because that's what my grandfather spoke to me with. But when he passed away, my parents didn't speak it around us, so I lost whatever knowledge I had.

KR: Tell me a little bit more about your father's business, the grocery and vegetable store. Was it in Roseville? Did you spend much time there?

SC: Earlier in his years, he had one down near Prince Street, which was a place where the Jewish immigrants settled in Newark. That was like the Lower East Side. But eventually he moved up to a location on Orange Street in Newark. Orange Street was one of the main trolley lines, and the trolley passed right by his store, it was the last stop. He figured it was a good place to open a store because people would be getting on and off the trolley; there'd be a lot of business.

I'll describe the neighborhood. He had a produce store with mostly produce. Across the street, there was a fish store. Next to that was a meat store. Next to that was a bakery. Next to that was a liquor store. There were two or three or four liquor stores there. So, it was everything that you see in a supermarket today was there, but each had its own store and each had its own proprietor. As a matter of fact, the supermarkets put them all out of business. Somewhere in the late 1940s, an A&P opened up, and that was the beginning of the end for individual stores. Probably within ten years, they were all gone.

KR: When you were growing up, would you work there with your father?

SC: From the time I was about ten or eleven, I would go in and help. When I was thirteen, my father and I didn't see eye to eye, and so I then, when I was fourteen, got a job as an office boy at Bamberger's Department Store. Bamberger's is no longer there. It was, I think, later part of the Macy's chain. During high school, after high school, a couple of days a week, I would take the bus down to Bamberger's. I was the office boy in the office where the accounting was done and so forth. Then, after that, I would take a bus and go home, which was a very strange occurrence, because the day that my parents moved, I took a bus from one place to my high school, and then took another bus at the end of the day to another house where I'd never lived before. It was kind of a shock. [laughter] [Editor's Note: The flagship Bamberger's Department Store was founded on Halsey Street in Newark in 1892. Bamberger's stores became Macy's stores in 1986, and the original Newark Bamberger's closed in 1992.]

KR: What are some recollections that you have of Newark as you were growing up in the 1940s and the 1950s?

SC: First of all, Newark was completely segregated. On one side of the town were where the Jews lived, another part of the town where all the Blacks lived, another part of the town where all the Italians lived, another part of the town where all the Polish and the Irish lived. It was definitely enclaves. Other than the anti-Semitism I experienced as a young child going to elementary school, Newark was a thriving town and had a busy downtown with department stores and theaters and things like that. I had no problems growing up. I thought it was a good place to live.

It was in 1968, as you may recall in history, where the riots occurred in Newark after the murder of Martin Luther King. It was pretty much burned down and stayed a desolate place for many years until the rebuilding started. But, by that time, I had long been gone from Newark, and my parents didn't live in Newark anymore, so we didn't have any connection with Newark after that. [Editor's Note: The Newark riots, also known as the Newark Rebellion, lasted from July 12 to

July 17, 1967. Unrest began after the police arrested an African American cab driver, and rumors spread that he had been killed in custody. The riots resulted in over two dozen deaths, more than seven hundred injuries, fifteen hundred arrests, and property damage exceeding ten million dollars. On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated by James Earl Ray as he stood on a hotel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee. In April and May 1968, riots erupted in 125 U.S. cities, including Chicago, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., sparked by the assassination of Dr. King.]

KR: Your mother, being a long-time teacher in Newark at the start of her career and then later on, do you know what schools she taught at?

SC: At the second part of her career, I did. She was on South 11th Street or something. She taught third grade in a very, very impoverished neighborhood. She would tell me that lunch was the only meal some of her kids would get and that they had no books in their homes, and she would bring stuff, food and other things, to her class. That was where she taught at the second part of her career.

KR: Let's talk about your schooling in Newark. For elementary school, you went to Garfield?

SC: Yes.

KR: Tell me about school. What was that like? What were your academic interests? What did you do extracurricularly?

SC: The schools had half-year semesters. When I was in the third grade, I was skipped a half year. When I was in the fifth grade, I was skipped another half year. So, I was already at least a year younger than everybody else in the class. I was, compared to them, probably in the top part of the academic range, so there was a lot of jealousy on top of a lot of anti-Semitism. My school years in elementary school, I would describe as miserable. It was awful. I was constantly being bullied. I was small, I was young, and I was smart, which are three bad things to be when you're in a school that has a lot of bullies. After graduation, I went to McKinley Junior High School, so that's the second school named after an assassinated president, first Garfield, then McKinley.

Junior high school was one year, and there, I was in an entirely different neighborhood, and school, I would have to say, from then on was pleasant for me. It was a good time. I had friends. I didn't experience any kind of bullying, and I was with other people who were smart. It was a good time. After one year, I went to Barringer High School. North Newark was pretty much, as I said, one or two families of Jews, and the rest were all Italians. But I had no trouble making friends. At Barringer, they didn't have clubs, they had gangs. I wasn't eligible to get in the gangs because I wasn't Italian, but one of the gangs, I think it was the Kings--they had the Kings and the Dukes--and so the Kings befriended me. So, nobody bothered me, because they knew if they bothered me, the Kings would stand up for me. I was friends with a lot of the guys in the Kings.

In high school, there was a long history going back to the early 20th century of fencing in high school, and I joined the fencing team. I fenced in high school. I was on the fencing team for three years.

KR: How about outside of school? Did you do any clubs, for example, Boy Scouts?

SC: I was in the Boy Scouts, yes. I was in the Boy Scouts probably about three years, towards the end of elementary school and the first year of high school, which was a very pleasant experience. I learned a lot. I had great respect for the leader, the Scoutmaster. We went camping. I learned enough things so when I went into the Army, the skills I learned in Boy Scouts were very helpful because things we had to do, nobody else knew how to do, but I knew how to set up a pup tent, to do various things living in the field, that I'd learned in Boy Scouts that I had to teach to the other guys in the Army. As far as other activities, as I told you, I was working after school at Bamberger's. I was fencing. I can't recall other things that were occupying my time. Those were taking plenty of my time.

KR: What role did religion play in your upbringing?

SC: Well, I would say my parents were typical people, immigrants, the second generation or the first generation in the 1930s that they wanted to be American. Certainly, being Jewish was a factor of my home. My mother kept kosher. They went to synagogue one day a year. They sent me to Hebrew school. That was three days a week, and I was bar mitzvahed. They were proud to be Jewish, but that's about where it went.

KR: What synagogue did your family go to?

SC: It's called Oheb Shalom Synagogue. It was on High Street in Newark. Then, like all of the synagogues in Newark, they moved to the suburbs in probably the early '50s, and it's still in South Orange, New Jersey. My sister is still a member there.

KR: Did your sisters have bat mitzvahs?

SC: There was no such thing at that time. They were confirmed, which was a recognition of growing up. But girls did not--and if you've interviewed other people with a Jewish background, you've probably heard all this before--girls did not start getting, or the institution of bat mitzvah didn't come into being until the late '50s and the early '60s. When my children reached thirteen, they were bat mitzvahed, but they were amongst the forefront. The Orthodox, of course, today still don't have it.

KR: When you were growing up, how did you get the news?

SC: I think we got a newspaper every day, got the *Newark Evening News*, and we had the radio. The first televisions came out in our area around 1947-1948. They had stores selling televisions, and I remember going and standing in front of the window in these stores and looking at the televisions that they were playing. My father didn't want to get one until it was perfected. [laughter] He was always waiting for it to get perfected. We got our first television, I think, in

1951, a black-and-white TV, and he was still waiting for it to get perfected. I remember we used to go over to the neighbor's house and look at their TV.

KR: Was politics something that was discussed at home?

SC: That's a hard question to answer, because I essentially left home when I just turned seventeen when I went to college. So, I didn't live there. I know my parents voted for [Franklin D.] Roosevelt. They were Democrats, I know they voted. I remember going to the voting place with my mother, and I was always fascinated, they had these big metal voting machines. They had a rod and you'd pull the curtain behind you, I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of these things, and then they had little metal levers that you pull down to cast your vote. So, I would go in there and watch her cast the vote by pulling the little levers down. But as far as discussion of politics, I don't have any specific recollection. I do know, though, that they would vote for Roosevelt.

KR: What historical events really stick out in your mind from the time when you were growing up?

SC: I remember V-E, Victory in Europe Day. I also remember V-J Day, Victory in Japan. It was a much less celebrated event because people had already been happy that the war was over, and it wasn't. They did their celebrations. I remember the announcement of the atomic bomb being dropped. I remember the day when Martin Luther King was assassinated.

I remember the day when Kennedy was assassinated. I was living in Washington. I was a young lawyer at that point--not quite, I was in law school. Where I worked was on 13th Street in Washington, which was about midway between the Capitol and the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. There was a restaurant I used to go to frequently for lunch, which was right across the street from the Justice Department. The Justice Department lawyers used to eat there too. I remember precisely, I was sitting there having lunch, and a couple of lawyers, people at the counter were whispering to each other, and they all got up en masse and left suddenly. I didn't know what was up. I walked back to the office, which was about ten minutes away from the restaurant. The news of the assassination was--I think we had a TV in the office. [Editor's Note: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on Friday, November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas.]

I had invited my college roommate, and it was a Thanksgiving weekend, as I recall, he and his wife were scheduled to come down to visit that weekend. We, like everybody else, spent the weekend watching television. [Editor's Note: Thanksgiving Day in 1963 occurred on November 28, the week after John F. Kennedy's assassination.]

I remember walking down and watching the cortège, the procession, going from the White House to the Capitol with the horses and the coffin. I remember walking up over the ridge to Arlington Cemetery. I remember standing on high ground and watching the casket being lowered into the ground, and the eternal light being lit. It was an indelible event in my mind, being right there and part of it. [Editor's Note: On November 25, 1963, John F. Kennedy's funeral procession began with a horse-drawn caisson carrying the casket from the Capitol

rotunda, where it had laid in state, to the White House. Then, the procession continued to the funeral service at St. Matthew's Cathedral. After the service, the caisson carried the president's remains to their final resting place in Arlington National Cemetery.]

What other events? I remember the weekend when Martin Luther King was assassinated. It was 1968. I was working then in the same building right on Pennsylvania Avenue. At about three o'clock in the afternoon, news came over of he was shot. It was about then, I looked out the window and I could see plumes of smoke rising throughout the city in all directions. We were on the 13th floor. I left the office, and everybody was streaming out of the city, fleeing the city, just to get away from the rioting. The rioting continued throughout the night. [Editor's Note: Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., riots erupted in Washington, D.C. that lasted from April 4 to April 8, 1968.]

By this time, I was a lawyer. I passed the bar in 1964, so I was a lawyer of four years' duration. I felt I had a duty to the courts. At about seven o'clock Saturday morning, I got in my car and drove down into Washington. The rioting was still going on. As I drove in, there were soldiers with Jeeps and machine guns on every corner. I had no trouble, they just waved me through. I spent the next two days in the court bailing people out who had been arrested during the riots and getting them prepared for their initial appearance in court. The next couple of weeks I spent representing these people, doing the initial appearances and, for some of them, going to trial. They were accused of looting and arson, all sorts of things.

One of these people was arrested breaking into a camera store window and stealing cameras. He was a college student from a well-to-do family. He had no need to steal cameras. He was a student at Howard University. He was one of the people that was assigned to me initially, and his parents had money; they got their own private lawyer. One was a young high school student who, on the Sunday after, was standing on the street playing basketball with a group of others, and the police came down the street and arrested everybody on the basketball court. One was a security guard in uniform. One was a pregnant woman. One was this high school kid, to whom I was assigned, and a couple of other people, four or five people, maybe six people. They just swept everybody up, because there was a warehouse across the street that had been looted the night before. All of the people got assigned lawyers. I was assigned to this high school kid, and I went to trial with him. The rest, some of them pleaded guilty. They got paid lawyers. I went to trial and got my guy acquitted.

Interesting thing about that--about four years later, I was walking down the street on lunch in Washington. I heard somebody call my [name], and I turned around and it was the same kid, he's now grown up. He'd graduated from college, gotten a degree, and moved on. I always thought, well, if he had been convicted, he never would have gone to college. He never would have moved on. That would have been the end of his life. So, that's that story.

KR: When you were growing up, was the law of interest to you? Was being a lawyer a potential future career path for you at that point in your mind?

SC: That was the furthest thing from my mind. I was very much interested in biology, and, as a matter of fact, somebody in the state government, in the state education structure, held

examinations in the various fields for high school students each year. I was selected by my high school to take the exam for biology. I came in fourth in the state, because I didn't study one question: the sex life of the moss and the fern. I said, "They will never ask questions on this." Well, there were ten questions about that, and I didn't know the answers to any of those ten questions. If I had just known anything about the sex life of mosses and ferns, I would have come in first, but I came in fourth. Anyhow, I got a state scholarship to Rutgers out of that.

Despite my interest in biology, I didn't want to be a doctor because I didn't really relish the sight of blood. So, I enrolled in engineering school. At no point during this time did I have any vision of becoming a lawyer. In my second year of engineering, I realized I didn't really want to be an engineer, but I didn't know what else to do, so I just completed the engineering degree. At the end of my last year, I'm still wondering what in the world to do.

I decided to take the LSATs, Law School Aptitude Test, and I did well in it. But that was my fourth year and I was, at that point, in a five-year engineering program. After I graduated, I went into the Army for two years, and getting out of the Army, I still had no idea what to do. I said, "Well, I'll try law, and if I like it, I'll do that, if I don't, I'll do something else." So, I went to law school, and I found it fascinating. That was my beginning and end of my choice of career.

KR: What were your parents' college expectations for you and for your sisters?

SC: It wasn't even discussed; it was just expected. Everybody was going to college. It's a natural thing, like you go to grammar school, you go to high school, you go to college. My eldest sister was somewhat of a renegade, and she went to Antioch. I don't know if you know anything about Antioch. It's a very progressive school. I went to Rutgers because I had a scholarship there. I was accepted at Columbia, but I didn't have the money to go to Columbia, so I went to Rutgers. The second sister, second older sister, also went to Rutgers. She went to Rutgers-Newark, and I went to New Brunswick. My younger sister, I don't know where she went. She may have gone to Rutgers-Newark. I'm not sure. But in school, she met her husband and they got married, and she dropped out of school. I think she completed a year or maybe two years. As far as expectations, it was just what you did.

KR: Before we go into talking about your Rutgers years, is there anything you'd like to add about your childhood? Is there anything that we skipped over?

SC: Well, I would like to add this. I paid for my entire education. My parents did not have the money. I didn't realize at that time what their real situation was. My tuition was covered by the scholarship. I worked in the fraternity house in the kitchen for the meals. I worked in the summers to pay for my other school expenses. I did odd jobs when I was in school. My education was paid for by myself.

KR: What were the years that you were at Rutgers?

SC: 1954 to 1959. I was there five years.

KR: What do you remember about your first days and weeks at Rutgers?

SC: I remember the rush week. I thought it was exciting, like everybody else, to go to the various houses. I had never been around Jewish students before, not in elementary, not in high school, so this was my first opportunity in my life to be around other Jewish students. That was the reason I joined Phi Ep [Phi Epsilon Pi], because it was a Jewish fraternity, and it was a new experience for me.

KR: There were a couple predominantly Jewish fraternities at Rutgers.

SC: Right. Three.

KR: What factored into your decision to join Phi Ep as opposed to, I think it was Sammies [Sigma Alpha Mu] was a Jewish fraternity.

SC: Yes, and ZBT [Zeta Beta Tau] was the other one, three of them. They seemed like a bunch of dignified guys, well dressed. I just liked the formality of it. Sammies were very informal, and ZBT, I don't know, I really never gave much thought to that because I was impressed by Phi Ep. One of your interviews, I read the interview of somebody that was on the oral history [website], and he said the Phi Eps were the scholars. The ZBT was, I forgot what he said, and the Sammies were more happy-go-lucky, something like that. Someone else said, I think one of your other interviewees, the Phi Eps as a house could have all made Phi Beta Kappa, because the grade average was "A-" for the house. So, I did listen to the oral histories. [Editor's Note: Commenting on Phi Epsilon academics, Samuel E. Blum stated in his Rutgers Oral History Archives interview: "At one time the grade point average of the Phi Ep house was Phi Beta Kappa average, 1.8... 1.8 was an A-, B+ average and these guys and the whole fraternity had that average. You know, they were smart cookies" (pg. 18).]

KR: Did you think that was a fair characterization? When you were living at the Phi Ep house, was the focus on academics?

SC: Oh, I think the academics was highly exaggerated. [laughter] I'll say this. There are a tremendous number of doctors and dentists and lawyers that came out of that house, and there are a lot of guys who were goof-offs too. We had a twenty-four-hour poker game going down in the basement. I myself, although I studied, I had a lot of other things going on too. I was having a great time until at the end of my second year, I was called into the dean's office, and he said, "If you don't straighten up, you're going to lose your scholarship. You're going to be out of here." That was a good warning for me. So, I started studying in my third year.

KR: Where did you live your first year?

SC: I lived in a dorm in the area called the Quad.

KR: In Bishop Quad?

SC: I don't remember the exact name of it. There were three, it really wasn't [a quad], quad implies there were four. This was a tri maybe. There were three buildings around this open area,

and I think it's still there. I lived in one of those buildings. [Editor's Note: Mr. Cohen could be referring to Wessels Hall, Leupp Hall and Pell Hall, a configuration of three residence halls located on Bishop Quad.]

KR: Okay. Yes, I think it's Bishop Quad you're describing. Tinsley and Clothier are the dorms there.

SC: Those names are long gone to me.

KR: Okay, sure. Did you live in the Phi Ep house then after your freshman year?

SC: I lived there the second year. The third year, I lived in a rooming house up the street and came down to the house for meals. The fourth and the fifth year, I lived there. My first and my third years, I did not live there.

KR: What were Rutgers College traditions that you remember?

SC: During the fall and during the football season, they had a homecoming parade where each fraternity would build a float and then it would go around the football field oval before the game. I don't know if they still do this; I have no idea what they do. I haven't been back for a long time for football. But they would build a float in front of the house. One year, it was displays in front of the fraternity houses. One year, they were moving floats that were pulled around the oval during the homecoming games.

There were weekend parties for I guess no reason other than to have a party. As for traditions, it's hard to say. I wasn't really into tradition at that point, but those are the events that stand out in my mind. The first year, all the freshmen had to attend chapel. I think they ended it after the first year there, after my first year, so it was no longer required.

KR: ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] would have also been mandatory.

SC: For two years, yes. Because it was a state land-grant school, as I'm sure you know, for two years, it was required, and then the second two years was voluntary. Well, there were two reasons why I took the second two years. The first reason is, at that time, there was universal military training. You had to go in either as an officer or enlisted man, unless you got an exemption. If you took ROTC, you went in as an officer. The second reason is you got thirty dollars a month stipend while you were there for the second two years. That was big money for me, because I really needed those thirty dollars a month. Yes, I completed four years of ROTC and went into the Army as a second lieutenant.

KR: Did you have to go away for summer training?

SC: Yes. In the third year, you went for a six-week summer training, and we went to--I don't know where they have it now--it was at Fort Bragg. I really enjoyed it, to tell you the truth. At that time, for a couple years before then and that year, the best job I could get was working as basically a laborer in the A&P bakery in Newark. I worked at night; it was for ten hours at night.

It was hot, it was dirty, it was taxing. I would work from Monday night to Friday night, putting in fifty hours in four days. When I went to summer camp, everybody was complaining about it, having to be there. To me, it was like being on vacation. I loved it. I got three meals a day. I was out in the sun. It was fresh air. I really enjoyed it. The other guys were all grumbling about it. To me, it was the best part of the summer. [laughter]

KR: I'm curious about something. When you started at Rutgers in 1954, it would have been just after the end of the Korean War. Were there Rutgers students that you were aware of who were Korean War veterans and were going to school on the GI Bill?

SC: I was not aware of that. Actually, the Korean War didn't end then, and it hasn't ended to this day, but it was winding down. I don't recall meeting any returning vets. The guys who were unfortunate enough to go to the Korean War were people who were not smart enough to get deferrals, like having a bone spur in their foot, like our dear president. If they did, they were probably upperclassmen, so I don't recall running into any of them during that time. [Editor's Note: Hostilities in the Korean War lasted from June 1950 until July 27, 1953, when an armistice agreed that North and South Korea would remain divided by a demilitarized zone along the 38th parallel. Former President Donald Trump received a medical exemption from service in the Vietnam War due to bone spurs.]

I do recall, though, that my time in the Army, my active duty was between 1959 and 1961, which was between the end of hostilities in Korea and the beginning of hostilities in Vietnam. I was in a golden period to be in the Army. Nothing was happening. I got assigned to a base in Georgia. It was like being overseas to me. It was overseas.

KR: What was student life like at Rutgers during the 1950s?

SC: Compared to the 1970s, that's the best way I can describe it, compared to the late '60s and '70s, it was like *Saturday Evening Post*, you know, Norman Rockwell was there painting us. We were just having a good time, drinking beer on Saturday night, and going to parties.

At the reunion this past couple of weeks, there were a group of guys who were in our last class of '72 and '73, and they were describing their life. They were wild, raucous, hip hop. When I was giving my presentation, I said, "If you came around to Phi Ep in 1955, we would've not accepted any of you." [laughter] It was just like a bunch of radicals, and we were very straight, mainline, no radicalization, no thought of civil rights. Civil rights wasn't an issue. Nothing was an issue. We were just there having a good time and studying, planning our careers. [Editor's Note: The Phi Epsilon Pi reunion being described above took place on May 6, 2023 in New Brunswick.]

KR: What was life like living in the Phi Ep house? Was there a house mother? Were dinners formal? Would you have to wear a jacket?

SC: The answer is yes, yes, yes. We had a house mother. She had been there, I don't know how many years. She was there when I got there; she had been there sometime before. Her last name was Brands. I don't know her first name. She was "Mom Brands." She had her own little apartment in the house.

We had two dinners, early dinner and late dinner. Late dinner, you wore a jacket and tie, white linen on the table, candlelight. The head table was presided over by the superior, who was the president, and the house mother. The other brothers took turns acting as waiters. When it was your turn to be a waiter, you wore a white jacket, like a waiter's jacket. Grace was said every night. Frequently, we would have a faculty member as a guest speaker. I remember one memorable night, we had Mason Gross as a guest at the house. It was very formal. I remember particularly the night we had Mason Gross there, the superior was so flustered--you may have heard the story before--he was so flustered, he turned to him and he said, "Dr. Grace, will you say Gross?" and Dr. Gross said, "No, you say Gross tonight." I had Mason Gross for a professor in philosophy. It was a great, great class and a great guy to listen to. [Editor's Note: Mason Welch Gross (1911-1977) served as the 16th president of Rutgers University from 1959 to 1971. He came to Rutgers in 1946 as a philosophy professor, and he became provost in 1949 and vice president in 1958.]

In answer to your question, things were quite formal. I mentioned the early dinner. The early dinner, you didn't have to dress for dinner. These were either the people that wanted to not bother dressing or were anxious to get on with their studies. I enjoyed the formality of it. I loved the formality of it. So, I was pleased.

KR: The Phi Ep house was located at 4 Mine Street. What was the house like?

SC: It was three stories, three stories and a basement. There was a bar in the basement where we had the parties, basically a big party room. The first floor had a living room, a dining room, kitchen, and an apartment for the house mother. The second floor and the third floor were bedrooms. It was originally built to hold, I think, around sixteen people, and the rooms were doubled up, so it now held thirty-two people.

It was originally built in suites, so a suite consisted of a bedroom and an outer room, where presumably it was to study. In the inner room, there were two students, and the outer room, there were two, your inner roommate and your outer roommate. When I visited a couple weeks ago, the University had closed off the doorways between the rooms and put doors in the inner room. Now, each room had its own private entrance. It's a sorority now, and the girls don't have to go walking through each other's rooms. Apparently, there's the same number of people living there, just the rooms are divided. The upperclassmen got the inner rooms and the lowerclassmen got the outer rooms, because as an upperclassman, you had the privilege of walking through someone else's room anytime you had to get to your own room. [Editor's Note: 4 Mine Street in New Brunswick is now occupied by the Gamma Phi Beta sorority.]

KR: What are some activities and dances that you would do as a member of Phi Ep fraternity?

SC: Well, on all of the big social weekends, homecoming weekend, and I don't know how many times--it seems like we did it a lot, and maybe it's more of my imagination than it really was--we would have a party. We'd have a keg of beer downstairs at the bar. Other things, once a month, we had a fraternity meeting, a formal meeting, to discuss the affairs of the fraternity. At the end of the meeting, there was a session we called "good and welfare," where each person got up to

say whatever they wanted. Sometimes, it was critical, whatever you wanted to say; it was an open floor. It was a very democratic society.

We elected our own officers. We elected the steward who ran the kitchen. We elected the house manager who was responsible for everything to do with keeping the house running. There was no discernible hostility, I would say. It was very, very friendly, warm, a brotherhood. Maybe I'm painting a rosy picture, but that's the way I remember it.

KR: Did you ever hold a leadership position in the fraternity while you were a student?

SC: Yes, I was the president, or we called it the superior. I was a superior in my fourth year.

KR: I looked at the '59 yearbook. It could have been the '58 *Scarlet Letter*. Ron Busch was secretary in '58.

SC: [Yes]. Well, that was another one of the elected offices, secretary. Ron was Class of '60. I was Class of '58 that went on to graduate in '59. I knew the classes personally from 1955, who were there when I started, to 1963, who were there in my last year. So, I probably more than anybody else knew the widest scope of people.

KR: Were there any Phi Ep alumni events where graduates would come back to campus and there would be some sort of an event?

SC: No. However, there were a lot of Phi Eps who lived in the New Brunswick area, and they would pop in from time to time. One notable guy was Alvin Rockoff. I don't know if that name means anything to you. He was a Phi Ep of the Class of 1949. He became very involved in Rutgers alumni affairs, was at the highest council of alumni affairs. He was honored by having a dormitory named after him, the Rockoff dormitory, after he retired. The building is still there, but sadly his name was taken off it. The college apparently sold the building to a private developer. They took his name off it, they took his picture out of the front of the building. So, it has a different name, and how easily we forget. The Rockoff dormitory, Alvin J. Rockoff dormitory, no longer exists in name or in memory, except in our memory. [Editor's Note: Alvin J. Rockoff (1927-2011) is remembered for his extensive involvement in the Rutgers and New Brunswick communities. Among many accomplishments, he helped establish the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life and chaired Rutgers' Board of Trustees and Board of Governors, as well as the Rutgers University Foundation Board of Overseers. An apartment building named Alvin Rockoff Hall was erected in downtown New Brunswick in 2005 and was sold to a private company in 2012, losing its affiliation with Rutgers University.]

KR: What would you do as president or superior of the fraternity?

SC: Well, it was my responsibility to see that people did what they were supposed to, I mean, the people who were elected to the other offices performed their duties. The one thing that I particularly recall doing was, I mentioned earlier this twenty-four-hour poker game going on in the basement. It started out innocently enough one night a week, and it got more and more involved. Then, guys just weren't going to classes anymore. I took it upon myself to shut it

down. I said, "It's off-bounds. I hereby declare it ended." I just closed it down, and that was the end of it. I took it upon my elected prerogative to shut down the poker game, so people would go back to studying.

KR: What was rushing like for you as a freshman? Then, what was it like when you were more senior in the fraternity as you were an upperclassman? What are your recollections of rushing?

SC: I remember this one particular thing that I found of great interest. Now, I, probably like most people, don't remember names. It's a very special skill to remember the names of people you meet occasionally and then you remember them. But I do remember, one year, I was rush chairman, and so I was responsible for everything that went on. For some reason, I was able to remember the names of literally dozens of people because I had to remember their names and it was like a gift. Then, when I no longer had to do it, I fell back into my old ways, I didn't remember names anymore. If you make an effort, you can do it. It's a good memory trick.

I remember the young freshmen coming in, and I was probably a junior at that point, and they looked so young and so amazed. Then, we had to sit down at night and pick out who we wanted and who we didn't want. It's really arbitrary, who we thought would fit in. For the most part, we did a pretty good job. Then, there was always a couple of guys that just didn't fit in. Later on, as fraternity members perhaps were more radical, looking back, I think the radicals were right; they were on the right track, and we were really a little stuffy and stiff-necked, but the radicals had the right idea. It was kind of an exciting week or two, when everybody's trying to decide who you're going to live with for the next four years, and for the freshmen, too.

KR: What were interactions like with other fraternities?

SC: Well, there were some fraternities there that were notoriously anti-Semitic. We as a group and as individuals didn't have anything to do with that group or those individuals. The interactions between the three or four Jewish fraternities were friendly, and I had lots of friends in those fraternities. One of my close friends from early childhood, who turned up in the same dormitory as freshmen, decided he wanted to join Sammy. He went, he joined one, which probably fit his personality better. I joined Phi Ep; it probably fit my personality better. But we remained dear friends then and until his death not too long ago. Within the two groups of fraternities, I think there was a lot of inclusion. Outside the two groups of fraternities, there was a lot of exclusion. It seems strange as we talk about it, that everything seemed to divide along religious lines, but that's the way it seemed to me.

KR: Did you experience anti-Semitism as a student at Rutgers?

SC: None at all. None at all. One of the things about Phi Ep was it seemed that there were always a couple of guys who weren't Jewish, who were friends with others in high school that joined, so we always had a minority, a small minority, of guys who were not Jewish. But that made us all feel even more proud that we had Catholics and Protestants.

KR: What happened to Phi Ep as time went on? I understand it's not a fraternity anymore.

SC: As college life changed in the late '60s, the student bodies as a whole became more radicalized and Rutgers became particularly more radicalized. While I was there, people didn't smoke pot, people didn't do drugs. The worst we did was get drunk on beer Saturday night. But then--and this is what I've heard, I did not witness it, I've heard this from others--towards the end, in the late '60s and early '70s, the whole tenor of the fraternity changed. They were musicians and they were just radical in every way, different from us. I heard--and I can't say from personal experience--that the students did some things that angered the administration to such a point where they were kicked off of campus and the fraternity was closed. The fraternity house itself was owned by the University. The fraternity had built it in the early '30s, and I guess during the Second World War, they could no longer pay the mortgage on it. The University acquired the property, and after that, the fraternity just rented it from the University. When we were disbanded, Rutgers turned it over to a sorority.

KR: The years you were at Rutgers, '54 to '59, some of the major things going on in society in the mid-'50s were the civil rights movement and then there was also, a little earlier than that, the McCarthy era, which did have an effect on Rutgers in terms of professors having to take loyalty oaths. There were a few professors who were actually affected by the hearings and such. Do you have any recollections of those major moments in history when you were at Rutgers? [Editor's Note: During the McCarthy era, Rutgers University professors Simon W. Heimlich, Moses I. Finley, and Abraham Glasser were censured regarding their possible past and present ties to communism. When they invoked the Fifth Amendment, they were each dismissed or forced to resign. A "Statement of Loyalty" was established in 1947 for New Jersey academics.]

SC: We were in the golden years. We were after McCarthy and before the civil rights movement took place, so it was, as I described earlier, sort of a Norman Rockwell society. There were no political movements, no social movements, just people studying and having fun. The Korean War was essentially finished at that point. Things hadn't started in Vietnam. Everybody was there having a good time, studying, and [it was] idyllic.

KR: What classes and professors are particularly memorable to you?

SC: Well, Mason Gross for sure. I remember his classes. I remember him. I was pleased to know him personally. I was in the school of ceramic engineering. There was no particular person or class that stands out for me. I remember being in class, there was the dean there whose name I've forgotten, was a very nice, jolly fellow. [Editor's Note: Elmer C. Easton served as the dean of the Rutgers College of Engineering from 1948 until his retirement in 1974. His oral history is a part of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

My last summer, between my fourth and fifth year, I got a job in the laboratory at the ceramics lab. The reason I took that was because I didn't have to worry about the following years' tuition. Everything was taken care of, so I didn't have to work in this horrible bakery anymore. Working in the lab was really like a vacation to me, again. I worked assisting a guy named William Shakespeare, an unforgettable name. He was developing nose cones for missiles made out of ceramics, and that was what he was working on. We were building these ceramic nose cones that were eight feet long and firing them and testing them. They had to be made out of ceramics because the radio waves, which were in these things from the radars, would pass through the

ceramics without being disrupted as with other materials, so that's why we were doing ceramics. This guy's name was William Shakespeare, who we called "Shakey," that was his nickname. He used to tell us he would go up to the Stratford-on-Avon Festivals and would always get free tickets, because his name was William Shakespeare. He, I remember. As for the other professors, they didn't make a strong impression on me. [Editor's Note: The Stratford Festival is a theatre festival that runs from April to October in the city of Stratford in Ontario, Canada. Productions include classics, contemporary dramas and musicals, with special emphasis on the plays of Shakespeare.]

KR: Did you do any sports, intramural sports, clubs?

SC: I was on the fencing team in college. I had been on the fencing team in high school. At that time, it was a varsity sport. It, like about five other sports, was done away with by Rutgers so they could get a big fancy salary to pay the football coach, who then didn't win any games. But, at that time, it was a varsity sport, and among my other activities, I was doing that.

KR: What was fencing like? Who was the coach? What schools would you play?

SC: We'd play Navy, NYU, which always had a strong team, Columbia, Johns Hopkins. Those are the ones that particularly stand out in my mind. We always liked playing Navy because when we were at Navy, we had our meals in the big hall where all the plebes had their meals and they served us first-class meals, steak and all these things, whereas at Rutgers, the football players, the basketball players had a special dining room, which the fencers were not privileged enough to get into. We didn't get anything. I mean, we got the teams and we got support, but we didn't have our own special dorms and dining rooms. When we went to Navy and we ate with the plebes, then suddenly we had good meals. But we shared the gym with the wrestlers, who were down at one end, and we were down at the other.

KR: Do you remember who the coach was at the time?

SC: I do. I can't remember his name. I can tell you who my high school coach was, but I can't tell you who my college coach was. [Editor's Note: Paul Primamore, RC '54, coached the Rutgers Fencing Team.]

KR: What was the coach like?

SC: He was a very nice guy. He, I think, could have been a little bit more strict, but he was a nice man, very encouraging, not a hard driver though.

KR: I interviewed someone who was on the fencing team and graduated later than you, in 1970, and he talked about he got a sweater.

SC: Yes.

KR: A fencing sweater. Was that a tradition when you were on the fencing team?

SC: Well, all varsity sports got a sweater. I had a sweater, and I wore it for years and years until I wore it out. And you got a varsity letter, and on the big "R," there were crossed swords. We got the same thing all the other varsity sports did. We had crossed swords. The football players had, I guess, a football; the basketball players had a basketball. We were just considered a varsity sport, as the others were. I may have the letter somewhere around, but the sweater's worn to shreds, gone.

I want to add one more thing here before I forget. There was a member of Phi Ep who was a fencer in 1950. His name was Alex Treves. He was the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] champion two years in a row, and went on to represent the United States in the Olympics of 1950. [Editor's Note: Alessandro "Alex/Al" Treves (1929-2020) was a member of the Rutgers Fencing Team, winning the NCAA championships in sabre in 1949 and 1950. He went on to compete on the U.S. Olympic Fencing Team in the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, earning fourth place with his team. He was inducted into the Rutgers Athletics Hall of Fame in 2000.]

KR: How much interaction did you have with students at Douglass College?

SC: Well, we would go over there. I don't know if they still call it "the Coop." I would go on Saturday night. I really was studying during the week. Some of my other fraternity brothers were over there every night. I tried to limit my time over there to one night a week. I dated some of the girls there, nothing serious. At the time, I was seriously involved with the woman who I later married, and she was at the University of Connecticut. I would try to go up there one weekend during the year and have her come down to Rutgers one weekend during the year. So, that occupied my romantic time.

KR: How did you meet her?

SC: We were in the same high school. She was the younger sister of one of the people in my class. She was two years younger than me. When I was a senior, she was a sophomore, and I didn't pay any attention to her because she was just a young kid. The summer after my junior year, by that time, she was just graduating, and so I asked her out. I knew the family. My sister went to school with her older brother. I said there were two Jewish families in the high school; that was one of them. [laughter] We were the other.

KR: How does it sound if for today we talk about your Army service, and then we can schedule a second session and talk about your law school years, your career, your family?

SC: That's great.

KR: What do you remember about your graduation?

SC: I remember vividly this. I had never had a car before, and on graduation day, I forget who it was, said you can get a car, buy it at the auction, it was somewhere in South Jersey, cheap. I went to the auction that morning, graduation day, and I bought a 1950 Ford for two hundred dollars. I drove it up back to New Brunswick. I got to New Brunswick probably about one

o'clock. Graduation was at two o'clock up at the Heights. I tried to drive up there, and of course, everything is blocked. The bridge across the Raritan Canal was blocked. So, from the New Brunswick side, I had to park the car. Then, it is now about one o'clock, it's blazing hot, about ninety degrees, and I'm in my cap and gown running up to the stadium, trying to get there in time. I almost collapsed from heat exhaustion, but I made it. I made it to get into the stands in time for when they called our class to go marching down the stadium across the field, I don't think we got our diplomas there, to get recognized. That was my graduation day, the first day I owned a car and almost missed graduation because of it. The car was junk, too. [laughter]

KR: How about your commissioning? What was your commissioning like?

SC: I don't remember the ceremony. I have no idea. But I was told, "You'll get orders." School ended. I was working, I don't know what I was doing, that summer; it might have been back in the bakery, who knows. Anyhow, I got orders report in August, and I reported to Aberdeen Proving Ground. I was assigned to the Ordnance Corps, and that was an ordnance training school and that's where I went. I was there for six months, and then I was assigned to my permanent station in Fort Stewart, Georgia. [Editor's Note: Aberdeen Proving Ground is located near Aberdeen in Harford County, Maryland.]

KR: Before we go into your military service, what else would you like to add about your Rutgers years?

SC: It was probably the most fun of my life during that period of time. I have no bad memories of my time at Rutgers. I have only fond memories.

KR: For your Army service, so you were commissioned, then you were at training at Aberdeen in ordnance. What was it like being for the first time fully immersed in the Army?

SC: Well, during the six-week summer camp, that was basically basic training for officers. The only difference between us and the privates was we didn't have to clean toilets, so they had other people cleaning toilets. Other than that, we were put through all the same things at basic training. When I got to Aberdeen, at that point, I had a degree in ceramic engineering. Actually, I had two degrees, but that was one of them. I found out that's where the laboratories were, the ordnance laboratories, and they needed a ceramics engineer. I said, "Well, here I am, take me." I had two years of active duty. They said, "Well, if you sign up for an extra year, for three years, then we'll assign you to be at that position, a ceramics engineer." I said, "No, two years is enough for me. Thank you." So, I got assigned to be a supply officer. Here I am, they need a ceramics engineer, I'm a ceramics engineer, but they make me a supply officer. My roommate at the time, who was studying business and accounting, was assigned to being a radio officer. He didn't know how to turn on a radio or anything about it. That was the Army at that time. But he got lucky. He was assigned to Fort Monmouth, and he loved the ocean, he loved to fish. To him, that was the greatest place in the world. I wasn't so crazy about Georgia. Then, I got assigned to Fort Stewart, Georgia.

KR: Your unit when you were at Aberdeen and then later at Fort Stewart, were the officers in your unit from all over the country? Were the enlisted people from all over the country? What was that like being exposed to people who were from all different parts of the U.S.?

SC: Well, when I was at Aberdeen, it was just for training. So, we weren't involved with enlisted people. We were training to learn how to be officers. I was assigned a garden apartment that I shared with one other lieutenant-in-training. When I got to Fort Stewart, it was quite a different story. There were officers there from the South who hadn't gotten over the Civil War yet. So, I was a damn Yankee and they were the rebels, and they were very serious about it. I didn't experience any kind of discrimination, but there was a clear demarcation between the North and the South.

KR: What were your impressions of Georgia at that time?

SC: Well, the base was right outside of Savannah. Savannah was very different than it is today. I went back to Savannah a couple years ago and I just couldn't imagine how it had changed. But, at that time, it was a very quiet southern town with Spanish moss hanging from the oak trees and the beautiful azalea gardens. It was a lovely, quiet southern town. Fort Stewart now houses the 81st Infantry Division. There's something like a couple hundred thousand troops down there. [Editor's Note: Since 1996, Fort Stewart has been home of the Third Infantry Division. Fort Stewart, located near Hinesville, Georgia, includes 280,000 acres. The 81st Readiness Division, originally called the 81st Infantry Division, is currently based at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Roughly 3,500 active duty personnel and twelve thousand family members currently live at Fort Jackson.]

When I was there, it was a backwater. It was a training ground for the National Guard and the Reserve during the summer. During the winter, there were two thousand troops here in this base. It was so small, the town of Hinesville that was there, it had one traffic light in the entire county, Liberty County. That one traffic light was at the intersection of the two streets in Hinesville. It was so backwater that the people used to come on the base for entertainment. The movie was only open during the summertime when the troops were there.

Basically, there was a tank battalion that was training, and I was in an ordnance company that kept the tank battalion vehicles going. The total group was about two thousand people during the year. It was just empty. It was desolate. The buildings there were leftovers from the Second World War. I don't think there was a brick building on the place.

I remember getting there and I go through this gate, and all you could see for as far as the eye could see was pine trees. I finally found somebody, I said, "Where is the main part of the camp?" He says, "Well, you're in it. This is it." I see this little wooden clapboard building. He points to it, and he says, "That's base headquarters." [laughter] I said, "Okay." I got down there on New Year's Day of 1960. That was the day I was assigned. I asked, "Where am I supposed to go?" There was only one officer on duty. Everybody else was off for the day. He pointed me to the BOQ, bachelor officers' quarters, a little building there, a World War II building.

The next morning, I was awakened by this explosion, and I looked out the window. I was overlooking the parade ground, and there was nobody there. It was vacant, empty. I couldn't imagine what that was. I was getting signed in that day and getting my duties and was still living in the BOQ. The following morning, I was again awakened by an explosion. This sounds ridiculous. I was overlooking the parade ground, but there was nobody there, no one in sight. I finally learned that every morning they shot off a cannon for reveille, and it was the cannon explosion, which was about thirty feet from my window, what was going on. By the time I got there, whoever was doing it was gone. That was my initiation to Fort Stewart. Then, at the end of my first year, I went back to New Jersey, and my wife and I got married. Then, we came back to serve my second year there together.

KR: Was there married housing on base, or did you live off base?

SC: No, there was housing for married couples. It was the one new thing that had ever been built there, so it was fairly nice housing. It was a little one story; we had two bedrooms and a kitchen and living room. It was nice quarters for the married officers.

KR: What are your memories of segregation at that time in Georgia?

SC: I remember as I was driving down from New Jersey, and [Interstate] 95, of course, had not been built yet, so you're taking Route 301 down to these various little towns. I remember going up to one gas station. There is a pipe coming out of the side of the gas station, a water pipe, and out this one pipe are two spigots, like a Y. One spigot was for white, and one spigot was for colored. We were sharing the same pipe, but we had to use different spigots. Of course, Georgia at that time was absolutely segregated.

At the entrance to the gate facing outward were two World War II artillery pieces. I was told that in the 1950s, there had been race riots on the base and in the town. They had set up machine guns at the gate pointing out towards the town to prevent these rioters from coming into the base. Well, this was some years before my time. On base, there was no segregation. I don't think there was much interaction after duty hours between the whites and the Blacks, but certainly during official time, there was no segregation. But all of this was before 1964.

KR: At that time that you were in Georgia, was that the farthest that you had traveled from home in New Jersey?

SC: It probably was. I think it was. Well, no, I did take a trip to visit my fiancée, my then to-be wife, she was at Ohio University, I forget the town, Ohio University. One weekend with my ROTC uniform, I went down to Fort Dix. I don't know if Fort Dix is still there or called something else. There was an air base, and I hitched a ride on an Army plane out to Akron. From there, I hitchhiked down to visit her at Ohio University. But since I was wearing my ROTC uniform, I kind of looked like a soldier, so I had no trouble hitching rides, and then hitchhiked all the way back from Ohio back to New Brunswick the rest of the weekend. Yes, and after that, I would say Georgia was the furthest I'd been away. [Editor's Note: Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, known as Fort Dix, is located near Trenton, New Jersey.]

KR: Tell me a little bit about the woman you married, what she studied in college and what she was doing when you were in the Army.

SC: She transferred then to the University of Connecticut. She was studying to be a pharmacist. Her father was a pharmacist, and so she just followed. She later on decided that was not for her. She became a photographer. We married, had three children, and divorced in 1976.

KR: When you were reaching the end of your two years in the Army, what were you thinking about for your next steps?

SC: Well, I knew I had done well on the LSATs, the law apps. I had no idea what to do. As I said earlier, I thought I would give it a try and see if I liked it or if I didn't. I applied to several law schools. I decided with my engineering background, patent law seemed to be a logical step. I went to Georgetown University in Washington, so I could be close to the Patent Office, which was not a good choice because I worked in the Patent Office for six months, and I said, "This is not for me." So, that was the end of my career as a fledgling patent lawyer, although my son-in-law is a patent lawyer, very successful. He loves it. I couldn't stand it.

KR: What were the other law schools you applied to besides Georgetown?

SC: I applied to the University of Pennsylvania. I was accepted. I think that was the only two [others]. I applied to two Ivy League schools and turned them both down, Columbia and University of Pennsylvania. You know the old saying, "I wouldn't join any club that would have me."

KR: I'll tell you a story later off the record.

SC: Okay.

KR: Did you go to law school on the GI Bill?

SC: No. The GI Bill covered a period before I was in Rutgers, and after I left Rutgers, it covered a period before I was in Georgetown and after I left Georgetown. The two periods that I was in college, the GI Bill was a gap. Later, retroactively, it covered those periods, but by that time, I'd completed my education. So, I never got any benefits from the GI Bill. I didn't buy a house under the GI Bill. The only benefit I got out of it is I am now covered with the VA [Veterans Affairs] for certain medical benefits.

KR: Overall, what did you think about your military service?

SC: I'd seriously considered staying in. I wanted to go in the Navy. I had applied for a commission in the Navy. I was turned down because I didn't have 20/20 vision. After I was completing my two years in the Army, I had still wanted to switch over to the Navy. The recruiting officer said, "Well, we'll just overlook your vision, but I can't guarantee you that you are going to get into the Navy." Since he couldn't guarantee it, if I had switched, then I would have gone in as an enlisted man. I didn't want to have to rely on some recruiter's offers; they'll

tell you anything to get you in. At that point, since I couldn't get into the Navy, I decided, well, I'd go on with civilian life. Overall, to answer your question about my military service, I enjoyed it.

KR: Did you have Rutgers classmates or fellow members of Phi Ep who did military service after Rutgers?

SC: In my era, a couple of them went in. Most of them went in as enlisted. They took the option of going in as enlisted. At that point, they were, again, this was before the [Vietnam] War really developed, there was an excess of draftees and the Army didn't know what to do with them. So, they served six months in some sinecure and then got out. I don't know of any who actually completed ROTC and went in.

Now, I've had reports of guys during the Vietnam War who served in combat positions. As I recollect, the doctors all got a deferment until they got out of medical school. There were a number of doctors in my class who got deferred and went in later on as doctors and did their military duty that way, which always rankled me a little bit because when they went in, they went in as captains or majors. I went in as the second lieutenant and they got all this extra money, and I got barely enough to live on.

KR: We'll talk about this more in your next interview, but instead of patent law, what area of the law did you go into?

SC: Ultimately, my practice was national security law. I represented government employees, civilian employees and companies that were having issues with classified information, national security. I represented CIA agents. I represented turncoats from other countries who felt that the CIA hadn't treated them properly. But that was ultimately.

I started out working for a firm that did lobbying. I was a junior lobbyist. It was a very small firm but with a bunch of notable people. A former Secretary of the Interior was one. The name of the firm is Chapman, DiSalle and Friedman. Chapman was the former Secretary of the Interior under Roosevelt and Truman. Friedman was the counsel to the White House during Truman's time. DiSalle was the Governor of Ohio, the Chairman of the OPA, Office of Price Administration. They were very high powered, and they could open any doors during the Democratic era. [Editor's Note: Oscar L. Chapman (1896-1978) served as an Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior from 1949 to 1953 during President Harry Truman's administration. Michael V. DiSalle (1908-1981) was an American attorney and politician from Ohio who served as the director of the Office of Price Stabilization from 1950 to 1952 and later as the 60th governor of Ohio from 1959 to 1963. Martin L. Friedman (1918-1977), who graduated from Rutgers in 1939, served as Special Assistant to President Truman from 1949 to 1953.]

Once the Republicans got elected, the doors slammed shut. The Democrats didn't have anything. Eventually, the firm folded, and I was there high and dry because I was there going into my seventh year with them. It was a Republican era. It was a depression, and it was very hard

finding a job as a lawyer. I went out on my own and did whatever young lawyers could do and whatever you could get. It was on-the-job training. I didn't know where the courthouse was. It was because I wasn't dealing with the law; I was dealing with lobbying. I didn't know how to file a lawsuit, I didn't know anything, so it was like being a novice, fresh out of law school.

Over time, I did various things that a general practitioner would do: family law, real estate, criminal law. Being in Washington, the main body of employees were government employees, so I was representing a lot of government employees in civil service matters. That eventually got distilled down to a subset of that, to classified information and national security law. That's where I spent the latter part of my career.

KR: When you were doing classified information and national security law, were you on your own? You had your own practice?

SC: Yes. I was an employee of a law firm for six years. For the rest of my fifty-five years, I was on my own as a sole practitioner.

KR: Let's wrap up for today, and then we can schedule a second session and we'll go into your time in law school and we'll go into your career. Does that sound good?

SC: Sure.

KR: What else would you like to add for today?

SC: I would only add this. I didn't realize until looking back on it that my parents didn't have much money. I just thought, you know, everybody lived like this. They didn't have the wherewithal to send me to college; I'd sent myself to college. I looked around, and as I looked back, I, as a guy with very little money, was living with people, guys, with a lot of money, but it made no difference. I mean, it was seamless. There was no distinction. It was a completely level society.

I'll tell you about one little experiment that I did. In my junior year, I, like the other students, would walk around with chinos and a t-shirt, just one of the people. I decided very consciously to run an experiment and see if it made any difference. I decided in my junior year, every day I would wear a tie and jacket and a white shirt with the chinos. Of course, I had only one jacket, so I wore the same jacket every day, but I did switch ties. Suddenly, I was treated with great respect. People came to me, they wanted to know answers to problems, and with such respect that in my senior year, I was elected president of the fraternity.

At the end of the senior year, I went back to just wearing my t-shirts and jeans, and when I went by, nobody noticed me anymore. So, it proved the point that clothes make the man, and if you look like you're somebody, then you suddenly become somebody. I think I was even smoking a pipe during that time, which added to it. I gave up the jacket, I gave up the pipe, and I became a nobody again. Interesting sociological experiment.

KR: Dress for success.

SC: Exactly, it worked. That's all I have to add.

KR: All right.

SC: You said you were going to tell me a story off the record, so I'll go off the record and you can tell it to me.

KR: Sure, I will. Sheldon, thank you so much for doing this interview with me today. We'll continue with a second session.

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

Reviewed by Angie Abbas 7/1/2023

Reviewed by Isabella Kolic 7/26/2023

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 8/23/2023

Reviewed by Sheldon Cohen 8/23/2023