

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FREDERICK R. LAPIDES

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

JESSICA DING

and

CHARLES EDMONDS

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Charles Edmonds: This begins an interview with Dr. Frederick Robert Lapidés on September 30, 2006, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Charles Edmonds ...

Jessica Ding: ... Jessica Ding ...

Shaun Illingworth: ... and Shaun Illingworth. Thank you, all of you, very much for coming all this way this morning to sit with us. To begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

FL: I was born in Layton, Connecticut, in 1929, August 18.

SI: Can you tell us your parents' names?

FL: Michael, my father's name, and Bessie was my mother's name.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about your father's background? Where was he from?

FL: He was born in New Haven, and he was a blue-collar worker, got laid off during the Depression, went to work for relatives who owned a big aluminum factory in New Haven. ... He ran into an interesting problem: the union would not take him in because he had the last name of management; management wouldn't take him in because he was a blue-collar worker. So, he was "Mr. In-Between" and got crapped on by both sides. He never completed high school. My mother, by contrast, did complete high school and, interestingly, she worked at a time when most women were not working. She was a bookkeeper. She was born in the Lower Eastside on Hester Street in New York, descended from Jewish immigrants who came over during that great period of time during the Ellis Island days. So, they relocated, or she relocated. They got married and she relocated to New Haven and I was one of three boys in the family.

SI: What were your brothers' names?

FL: Sam, who was older, and Benjamin, who was younger.

SI: How did your father's family get to the New Haven area? Do you know that?

FL: I'm really not sure. I'm looking into that now. New Haven had two large clans named Lapidés. One was a large group that were fairly athletic, and clearly not my clan, and many of them went off to Brown University, for some reason or other. I don't know why they chose that, but they went there and settled down in that area, and the others were all in New Haven, were all ... pretty much well involved with this United Smelting Aluminum factory, which is still in existence, by the way. By the way, speaking of the guy who owned it, his son later took over. He's now dead, but the son was the youngest lieutenant commander in the United States Navy during World War II.

SI: Do you remember his name?

FL: Robert Lapidés, yes.

SI: What about your mother's family, that emigrated from Europe? Do you know where they immigrated from?

FL: We decided it was Lithuania, ... Latvia, yes, which ... then became a part of Russia, but the one thing all of these little peripheral countries had in common is, for their spare time, they didn't have TVs, [to] go Jew hunting. So, it was a cool thing to get out of there and that's when you had the great Ellis Island influx into this country, waves of different immigrants. It's a fascinating place, by the way, Ellis Island. If you get a chance, you should visit it. Waves of Germans came over, waves of Italians, waves of Jews. Now, the great entry into the United States is on the West Coast.

SI: Was that your grandparents' generation or farther back that came over?

FL: No, no, it was my grandparents.

SI: Did you know them at all?

FL: I know my grandmother. That's the only one I really knew. For a while, she lived with us, until we bundled her up, threw her out, and she went to an old age home, but she did live with us, could only speak two or three words in English, spoke Yiddish. ... I knew enough Yiddish to know that whenever she used it, she was badmouthing me.

SI: Were there any stories passed down from your grandparents about life in Latvia or the old country?

FL: No. The only thing I remember about my grandmother was saying that [it was] too bad they didn't have birth control before I was born, but, no, not really. [There was] stuff that I read about later, and I got interested in, but nothing [then]. It was a place they didn't want to remember, even now. It's interesting, because, later on, I met and became friendly with my next-door neighbor in Bridgeport, [Connecticut], and he was from Lithuania. He had roots in Lithuania, and, you know, I was his fellow Lithuanian. I said, "What are you talking about? If you were a Jew in those countries, you didn't identify with that country, the way you do. You just wanted to get out of there, to stay alive." So, there was no [tradition of] that kind of romantic, looking back in the past kind of thing, stories that ended up at Ellis Island.

SI: Would you say that your parents' generation was also into the Americanization process?

FL: Yes. I would say this is probably true of a lot of immigrant groups. That is, the males tended to drift away from the religion much more so than the women, ... and for Jews, Jewish immigrants, primarily, they were torn between wanting to retain an old tradition, Orthodox tradition, [from] the small towns in Russia and so forth, and then, of course, being thrust into New York City, where it was not so easy to do. So, you had that, but another great pull for Jews was Socialism, the whole idea of [equality]. One, Jews had always been attracted to Marx and so forth, the idea of universal rules that applied to everybody, because, that way, you don't single out a special group and say, "You're no good," but you say, "But everybody is the same," and so, that naturally attracted them to universal things that [were], for example, claimed by Socialism or

Communism, that [there will be] one big brotherhood, sisterhood, what you will, and so, for many, there was a pull between socialism and that kind of thing, or retaining the Old World values.

SI: How did that play out in your own family? Were you religious? Did you have a traditional Jewish family?

FL: Yes. My mother was very religious, because my grandmother was. My father was much less so, and typical. In a lot of homes, no matter what your group, the mothers would participate in the church or synagogue or what you will and the men tended not to. I'm not sure why. It has always been so in religion, at least for the religions I'm familiar with. Then, my brother got very, very sick and was institutionalized, and, at that time, [they administered] these electric shock treatments, not as sophisticated as now, and they pretty much burned away his brain. He never really left. He died about two years ago, but spent [his life in institutions]. He was halfway through ... his senior year of high school when he got ill. That's the time I was off in the Army and he never really left an institution. He was up in Middletown, Connecticut, for a while, and then, sort of halfway houses, but it had a major impact, obviously, on my mother and my father, because they would drive up every weekend to visit him. ... At that time, Freud was very big in American sensibility and the whole notion behind it was, "You are what you are because of the way you were brought up." Now, of course, everybody pooh-poohs Freud and says, "Hey, give him drugs, what the hell? and drug him up." That's the new approach, and so, the result was, my mother felt like, you know, "I brought this about, somehow. What did I do [wrong], with toilet training?" or what you will. So, she felt very guilty about it. Anyway, you can't be very religious and think about a nice benevolent God when your youngest son is locked away for life and getting his head burned away. So, she sort of gradually drifted away from religion altogether.

SI: How did both your parents, your father particularly, feel about the Socialist movements?

FL: No, my father was not interested in politics. Actually, neither one was really interested. They were Democrats.

SI: I was wondering, based on what you told us before about how he was trapped between management and union, if he was anti-union.

FL: Oh, no, no, no. No, he wasn't anti-union, not at all, but he wasn't a part of the union. He was a very quiet guy. He didn't say very much about anything, but, no, he wasn't anti-union, and, at that time, unions were fairly important in America, or fairly big in America. It's just that he didn't belong to one, and he was friendly with, you know, a lot of people that were in the union and everything.

SI: He was just stuck out in no-man's-land.

FL: Yes. It was a rather sad commentary on, which, I think, there's a leisure to say that, you know [what] Elie Wiesel, the famous writer, said about [how] he can understand the Nazis. He didn't accept what they did, he says, but they had a purpose and they had a plan and they knew

what they wanted. He said he could understand the people that stood up against them. They had a purpose; they knew what they wanted. What he couldn't understand was the silent majority, people who just stayed in the middle and didn't badmouth it or accept it. They just remained silent and let things happen. So, when you're in the middle, like my father was, you're not for this or for that, you're just sort of in the middle. I mean, he was obviously beholden to the family that gave him a job. He had been working at Sargent's, Sargent's in New Haven, which made locks and all that stuff, and then, he got laid off during the Depression, in many places. I, by the way, put in a very brief period of time at Winchester Repeating Arms, which I'm delighted to see is now closing down, the bastards. [laughter] Between going to school and waiting to get into school, I took a job there. Yes, so, he had a terrible job. When I say "terrible," I meant that his job was to keep the furnaces going, because it's always more important, when you have these huge blast furnaces, to keep them going than to shut it down and try to start them up again, which meant that during any holiday that came around where the place was going to be closed, for him, he had to be there. ... I think [it is important] for you guys, you people, to remember that, back then, the workday was six days a week, not the way it is now, not the way it is at Rutgers. No, it was six days a week, and, of course, they had the blue laws in Connecticut. I don't remember about New Jersey. It never got very blue here, but, back then, it meant that everything closed. It was like the Lord's Day, Sunday. Even if you were Jewish, Sunday was the Lord's Day. So, people pattered around the house. Now, of course, everything is open on Sunday, because that's when all the shopping takes place. So, it was a different kind of life.

SI: What kind of things do you remember about growing up during the Great Depression?

FL: Yes, I remember, I remember. Well, I had a job. I worked. We really didn't have much money in the family, and I had jobs. When we were very young, I had a newspaper route, delivered the *New Haven Register*. I remember, on Sundays, I used to deliver the *New York Times*, and you know how fat and heavy the *New York Times* is. So, I had my little red wagon tied to my bike and, one day, I was at the apartment house and, of course, if you lived in an apartment, you know that's where the *Times* were going to go, and some guy came up to me and he reached down and took a *New York Times*, like that, and I said, "You can't do that." He says, "Why not?" and I grabbed it. ... With that, he threw me into a *jujitsu* thing, over, and I landed on the concrete and I passed out for a second or two, and my head, you know, hit the concrete, which taught me a valuable lesson. For a frigging *New York Times*, you don't get your head cut open. "You want it, take it. You don't know how to read anyway, you dumb bastard, and there are no comic strips in it, by the way." So, I did that. Then, I worked in a pharmacy and I had a job, it didn't last very long, about two weeks. ... Back then, they had pharmacies, little drugstores, and you can go to a college and get a degree and become a pharmacist. Now, you get a degree and become a pharmacist and you work for CVS; that's it. Anyway, I had the job there. The guy wanted me to clean the windows. "I'll tell you how to clean the windows. You take this newspaper, you spray the stuff and you rub it, rub it, rub it." I did that, and then, he came up to me the next day, for some reason, and he said that, "You did a crappy job. You're fired," and I was liked incensed. I figured I'd fight back against the capitalistic system. So, I took a pin and I went to where they kept the rubbers. I poked random holes in all the rubbers. I thought, "That's really evening the score." I wonder, now, [about] the impact on the demography in New Haven as a result of that. Anyway, I had those jobs, and then, I had a number of friends who were smart in high school. ... In high school, they had; I don't know how it goes now, but New Haven had

different programs. You had the academic program, and then, you had the trade program, if you're going to go into one of the trades, like plumber, electrician. Then, you had the commercial or arts, [what] they called the business programs, my little brother went into. They taught you accounting or whatever, ... and then, they had something, like a dumping ground, they called the social arts. ... I said, "Well, what's the social arts for?" and the guidance counselor in junior high said, "That's for people that can't really do anything and aren't going to go to college." She said, "That's where you belong." They put me in the social arts. It made an impression on me that I'm a dummy, [laughter] and she was right. Anyway, so, I had these friends who were all going to go to college. ... You know the way kids get together and sort of make an understanding? ... I had about five or six [friends], we were all going to go into the Army when we graduate. Of course, that never came to pass. Two of us went into the Army. One was a guy named Charles (Stover?), who now owns a house down in Bermuda, his little vacation place, and the two of us went into the Army, two weeks right after our high school graduation in 1947. Now, when everyone thinks about World War II, they think about, "[We] bombed Hiroshima and the war ended," boom, boom, boom, 1945; not so. The fighting stopped in 1945, but the war was not officially declared over until 1947, when they signed all the paperwork. So, I went in the Army not even realizing that. ... I thought, "I'm going to go in, there's no fighting, what the hell?" and there wasn't, but I went in and, lo-and-behold, as a result of it, I got about a year-and-a-half of the GI Bill from World War II on my thing, which I later used. If I don't use it for school, it's just wasted; can't use it anymore. So, that's when I decided to go on to college, because I had that GI Bill.

SI: We want to go back and ask more questions, but, while we are on that topic, did you know that you could go into the Army and get these benefits? Was there any kind of campaign or anything?

FL: No. As a matter-of-fact, I didn't think I even knew about the GI Bill. What happened was, I saw my fate, that I was going to work in a factory in New Haven, the way my father had, for the rest of my life. That was it. My friends were going to go off to college, and so, I said, "Well, I might as well go out and take a little time off before I start this wonderful life ahead and maybe travel a little or something. Go see Hartford or other exotic places, do some traveling." So, that's what I decided. My first thought was, I was going to go into the Coast Guard, because, that way, I'd be in New London. I'd be close to my mommy and that would be nice. She'd like that, but the Coast Guard, at that time, was known as the "Jewish Navy." You know that, don't you?

SI: No, I have not heard that.

FL: It's not for real sailors, just kind of go out and interdict icebergs, even the score for the *Titanic*. [laughter] ... Now, they get drugs; that's part of the fringe benefits, but, anyway, I couldn't get in there. So, now, I was walking [in] downtown New Haven on night and reading this and right in the post office there, there was a big sign, "Become a jet;" oh, that came later on. So, then, I said, "I'll go into the Navy." Now, the Navy had upped the years, minimum years, to, I think it was four years. You could not go in for less than four years. I'm just going to fool around here for a while. I don't want to commit myself to four years, but the Army, at that time, had an eighteen-year enlistment thing. So, that's why I went into the Army.

Madlyn Lapidés: Eighteen-month?

FL: Eighteen months. So, it would be like a year-and-a-half. So, that sounded much more reasonable. So, that's why I ended up in the Army. Well, my first choice would have been to follow Lenny Bruce and go into the Navy. It did well for him.

SI: It is shocking, given that you became a career professor, that this person said, "You belong in the social arts. That is ironic.

FL: Yes. I also; let me slip in here. When I was in high school, I couldn't read and they couldn't figure out why, but I was unable to read, I mean, you know, little words. ... My mother, bless her, knew this lady, her name was Mrs. (Jalatin?), who lived down the street from us in New Haven, (Mean?) Street in New Haven, and Mrs. (Jalitin?) was a retired schoolteacher. So, every day, after school, I got sent to Mrs. (Jalitin's?) house and she taught me to read and she did the job, and then, as she aged, she went down, as so many people do, ... to Florida with her husband, for retirement. ... When I got my PhD, the very first thing I did was to send her a letter, "Thanks to you, this is what I did, because of you. I owe it all to you," and I think, maybe, going on to the PhD was like, "I'll even the score with those bastards, for what they said to me."

SI: I do not want to get too personal, but was it because you did not have a very good education or was it a learning disability?

FL: No, I don't understand it. I mean, I didn't have dyslexia or anything. I don't really know why. I mean, when I was in high school, my grades were probably an average, solid "C" student, but, for some reason, I had trouble reading. I couldn't read very fast, and then, suddenly, now, I read a lot.

CE: When you were growing up, maybe in middle school, did you experience any anti-Semitism yourself?

FL: Yes. I think, you know, if you go back to those days, the way life was organized was a lot different than the way things are today. For example, people of any different group tended to live together. There was the Italian group, there was the German group, Jewish group. There was, like, a whole self-protective thing. Like, I have a son, I have a couple of sons, but his best friend was from Taiwan and he's been to the University of Massachusetts and he said, "Well, Davey," the kid's name, "just joined an Asian fraternity." I said, "Oh, I thought he was going to school in America." He said, "Oh, no, [at] the University of Massachusetts," and I said, "Why the hell does he want to do [that]?" He said, "Because all of his friends are Asian." I said, "Then, what the hell are you? I thought you were a white Jew." He said, "Well, most of them." So, I said, "You know, people do that." I said, "When I went to UConn [University of Connecticut], they had, like, two Jewish fraternities and people tended, no matter what, to [segregate themselves]. Here we go, diversity, diversity, diversity; the first thing you do is, there was a black students' union, Asian this and that," and I said, "People need this tribal bullshit that goes way, way back, to pre-historic times almost, togetherness. You feel safer with your own kind." I said, "How long that's going to last, I don't know, because there's ... so much intermarriage, so much intermingling going on." I'll give you a good example. My oldest son is

married to a woman who is Afro-American and Indian, an American Indian. She's got mixed blood. My second eldest son is married to a girl from Korea. So, well, you're not married, are you, Miranda, [his daughter]? [laughter] You know, there's all that mixing that's taking place in America now. So, things have changed. When I was in my last year of high school, ... what we would call today a "race riot" broke out, big fight, and it was the blacks and the Jews, united, fighting the Italians; go figure it out. My father, by the way, could speak a lot of Italian. He learned that from the job and a lot of Italians that he worked with in there. At first, I wasn't sure if he was Jewish or Italian.

SI: Do you remember what caused the race riot?

FL: No. Just to keep in shape, they had these things, but, anyway, so, I remember, because, in my neighborhood, we had a kid who was pretty bright and he got accepted to Yale. ... The first thing was, he met their quota and their quota was ten percent and the Ivy League schools had quotas. ... Whatever nonsense you hear about the Ivy League schools today, that they've all changed, read some of the books that have just come out, that they're still, like, picking and choosing who's getting in. ... One of the things, if you go to any of these things you can buy in the bookstores, [college admissions guides], they always give the percentage of this, that or the other at the school. I say, "Well, why are they giving you that, that three percent of the students are from Uzbekistan? Oh, good, I feel at home there with my kid from Uzbekistan." They say, "Well, you know you're in America; there's diversity." Why are they telling me what percentage are Roman Catholic, ... to carry on that tradition? Now, ten percent they say, well, today, that's not so bad. At that time, you have to remember, like, one of the most distinguished writers in literature, for years and years, was a guy named Lionel Trilling at Columbia. ... When he came up for tenure, they said that, "There are three reasons we're not going to give you tenure. You're a Freudian, you're a Marxist and you're Jewish." ... He ended up getting tenured. So, that was the thing, that, eventually, a lot of teachers; it was okay. You could become a teacher if you were Jewish, and then, many of them became presidents, and the same thing happened for Italians. Like, Yale had [A. Bartlett] Giamatti, or whatever his name was, who then left and became the head of the baseball [commission]. He was the baseball commissioner. His son is a wonderful actor. Have you seen *Sideways*?

SI: Oh, Giamatti.

FL: Yes.

SI: Paul Giamatti.

FL: Yes, that was his father.

SI: The father had the same name?

FL: His father died two years ago, but he was former president of Yale. So, now, you can get Italians, you get Jews and you [can] even have a woman, if you want, if you're crazy. So, all things are allowed now, but that's changed a lot in America now, perhaps too much so, to the point where everyone is walking on eggshells and are afraid to do anything without offending

somebody or other. In any case, yes, there was that kind of discrimination. I hate to be cynical about it, but I think they're saying, "Well, given all the immigrants or the illegals coming here, and all the Asians coming here, what the hell? He's a dirty Jew, but what the hell? He's white." Who knows? but it's much less so.

SI: Was your neighborhood pretty ethnically and religiously divided?

FL: Yes, my neighborhood was. I remember Halloween. ... Halloween didn't count. ... Terrible thing in America, it was the day before, Mischief Night, was, like, the biggie. Halloween was for suckers, playing dress-up. Mischief Night was, like, the [big event], and I remember going up to a lady's porch and taking, she'd put a garbage can on the porch, an Italian lady, and dumping it all over her porch. ... I remember, she ran up the block and she caught me and made me pick it all up. Ever since then, I learned to run, so that Italian ladies couldn't catch me, but, yes, you know, you hung out. ... Jesus Christ, this is the nice thing about America, that back then, if you were in the Boy Scouts, I was, until I found out I couldn't meet girls that way, you went to a Jewish community center, because that's where the troop met for your Boy Scouts. So, all the Boy Scouts were Jewish Boy Scouts, and then, if you were a Catholic Boy Scout, you went to the church. That's where all the Catholics went. So, even then, I know when people got buried, there is the burial place for Catholics, there is a burial place for Protestants, there's a burial place for [Jews]. Even in death, you've got to keep those barriers up. It's weird, right? ... One of the interesting side things in this was that if you were an alcoholic; there's a word on the street, like, Jews never want to believe there's such a thing as an alcoholic Jew, because, [by] tradition, Jews didn't drink at home. They just didn't do that, ... maybe a ceremonial drink or something, and they didn't hang out at bars. So, Jews never became alcoholics, but, obviously, there were Jewish alcoholics, but you can't go to AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] meetings, because they're held in churches, and you go to these [meetings] and say, "I've got problems, but look at all those crosses and Jesus weeping there, and I can't go there. Better I stay with my drinking problem than to go to church." So, that became a problem. "What do we do with Jewish AA people?" "We'll deny we have them. Maybe, with luck, they'll [go] on drugs instead." Anyway, so, yes, we had all these weird things that went on, ethnically, and, of course, the country clubs. Even years later, there was a place in Florida. I remember writing to them. Even today, they said they don't allow Jews to have weddings there or anything like that.

SI: Today, as in 2006?

FL: Yes. I don't know, a couple of years ago, I sent them a postcard and said, "I'm Jewish. I have a lot of money. I want my daughter to be married down there." I said, "Can you break your rule for once? It would be very important for us to be the first to break your stupid barrier." Of course, I never signed my real name, [laughter] but that went on, you know, and there were gentlemen's agreements on this as much as buying houses for blacks or for anyone. You look at the name and, well, whatever. You don't say you can't do it; you just say, "Oops." In real estate, you know, it's the same thing.

SI: Going back to the Great Depression, you talked about the jobs that you had when you were a child. Do you remember any of the strategies you had to employ to survive in that time?

FL: Yes, it was called stealing. [laughter] No, I was born in 1929 and that's basically when the Great Depression started, so, I don't remember those early years, but, yes, I mean, things were bad in America. When you call it the "Great Depression," they don't make them the way they used to, and the interesting thing about it, [when] you talk about the Depression, you probably have images of people on street corners selling apples, candy apples. You know what that was all about? They weren't really selling apples. What they were saying was, "I don't want to beg. I need help, but I can't just say, 'Give me money.' Help me out and I'll sell you this apple." It's just their way of saying, "Give me five dollars for my family, or what you can, and this is [your apple]." You're buying an apple from him, which is the polite way of begging. I mean, everyone selling apples; so, I don't really remember that, but I guess it was confirmed by what I've read and what I know is pretty tough all around.

SI: Do you remember if you could only turn on the electricity at certain times of the day or if you had to scrounge for coal or chop up wood?

FL: At that time, coal was delivered. My consciousness of being a child was, the Depression was already over and my father had this job at the factory. ... It's the time; I was reading an article the other day about, sort of mocking the fact that they didn't have turn signals on cars. Well, I remember, the turn signal on a car was optional equipment, and the reason for that was, back then, people didn't drive at night. There was nowhere to go. There was no need to go anywhere, so, you didn't need a light to show that you're making a left-hand turn. You use your hand to the car coming by. ... People started working nights, and so on, and so forth. Then, that became optional and, quickly, it became just an automatic part of the car. Now, everyone has it, and no one uses them. So, we've come full cycle, but, back then, in small towns, smaller towns, even in New Haven, they didn't have lights on street corners at night. They were maybe flashing red, because people weren't driving around at night. Decent people stayed home. Now, of course, we're like twenty-four hours, in a place like New York. So, yes, but, you know, money was much scarcer back then. They didn't have the credit cards or anything like that, ... and my family didn't have much money, even then. ... One place, we got thrown out of, because they decided, we were three boys there, too much havoc, and they didn't want us there. ... Finally, my father was able to buy a house, and I think it's important here to recognize that, not that many years ago, the only thing you ever borrowed money for was a house. That was, like, your real big expense. If you bought a car, you didn't buy it unless you could afford to pay for it. Maybe you borrowed a little money for a funeral or something like that, but a house was the only thing. You had the mortgage. That's why it's called real estate, because, in this country, ... way back, if you got the vote, it's because you had real estate. You owned. You were a property owner. That's real estate. So, after having rented for any number of times, we finally bought a house.

SI: Do you remember what year that was?

FL: Well, yes, I'd say probably about 1943, or somewhere back then. I know we lived on (Mean?) Street. Then, we moved to Scranton Street, New Haven, then, moved to Sherman Avenue.

SI: Do you know if the war kind of helped your father out, in terms of increased employment or wages, maybe helped him get the money to make that purchase?

FL: Well, if you're a ... conservative, right-winger Republican, the one view, or cynical view, maybe realistic view, is that the war bailed this country out. "We were heading for trouble again. The war created a great deal of work, jobs. It geared the whole country up." That may have been true, clearly, but there was a lot of rationing, and then, there was the cheating in the rationing. I remember, distinctly, on the cars, we used to have a sticker [that indicated] how much gas you would be allowed to buy. I remember, when I was a kid, going over to the house of one of my non-Jewish friends. We were allowed to have one or two; we met the quota. ... I was playing at his house around the corner and his mother sent him down to the basement to get some sugar, and it was like Stop and Shop, like a supermarket, in the basement. I said, "What are you doing with all this stuff here?" "Well, we're stacking up on it before the hoarders get it," the idea that hoarding is a terrible thing and people shouldn't be doing that. "So, we've got to get it before they get it, the hoarders get it," and he later went on to West Point, as I recall. [laughter] Yes, so, there was shortages, but unlike, say, the Vietnam War and so forth, you didn't get many people running away or deserting, etc., etc., you know. You got people cheating there. I often wondered, as I hormonally developed, all those guys that are away for, like, so many years, off fighting, whatever, their wives are sitting around here, they didn't have, like, sophisticated vibrators, what were these women doing, you know? Was there a lot of cheating going on, that kind of thing? and, of course, the guys over there, whatever. So, it must have been a tough time, because some of these guys were away from home for three, four, five years during World War II. ... Then, of course, one thing the Jews never were proud of was, I know people put up, "My son died," not mine, but ... they would put up a gold star in the window, like to announce it proudly. "We're a Gold Star family, or a Gold Star Mother." Jews never did that. They weren't proud of the fact that their son got killed and they're going to boast to the world, "We lost a son." They didn't believe in that, for some reason, or, if you were a real Jew, you put up three or four and make believe, because you didn't have any children, just put it up so [that] people cry as they pass your house. No, they didn't do that. Yes, that was a tough time, but, as I say, I was waltzing through, when I was in high school, wondering why the girls all hated me. ... When the war broke out, I was in junior high school at the time. I mean, you knew about it. You weren't that caught up with it, at that age, but you know your friend's brother has just been drafted, that kind of thing, and I had some relatives that went off.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor, had you known anything about the war or anything about what was happening in the world, with Nazism or Fascism?

FL: No, not really.

SI: Did you have a radio in your home?

FL: Oh, yes. ... I remember, television was first coming in and my brother, for some fool reason or other, [was] one of the first people ever in New Haven to be on TV, because they were doing an experiment or showing it off at some store downtown and they had him on TV. Now, they'd have him on TV for being under arrest or something, but, yes, there he was, and, of course, there were only two things you could see on TV when it came out. One was that transvestite; what was his name?

SI: Milton Berle?

FL: Milton Berle. He was always dressing up as a girl, and America didn't notice it. "Isn't he cute? He dresses up like a girl," before they realized that became the in-thing. They're doing it in Congress now. That and wrestling; that was the one big cultural thing that happened in America, was [that] they used to have these fat, schlubby guys in wrestling, "Eeehhh," like that, and, now, they all go to the gyms and they use steroids. Now, they're all muscular, but, back then, they were, "Who are these people?" My father used to watch it. My father, ... at one time, was a fighter, a boxer, Golden Gloves kind of stuff, and he used to love to watch the wrestling. I said, "Dad, Dad, it's a fake," and he would say, "So is my marriage, but, you know, I'm here, what the hell?" [laughter] ... He loved it, because, you know, you come home and you put in a hard, hard day at work, at the factory and everything, and he falls asleep, smoke a pipe and turns his head, in three seconds, snoring. He had a remarkable ability; the pipe would hang down, it would never fall, it would never go out. It would just hang down and I'd say, "Mom, shall we wake him up?" "Shh, he may be dead. Count your blessings," [laughter] every night, like clockwork, but that's what they did. I mean, they had black and white TV then.

SI: Do you remember if, during World War II, he had to work more? Did they add an extra shift? I know a lot of production was accelerated.

FL: Well, my father put in a very long day anyway. I don't know if they put in extra time.

SI: At that point, was he still feeding the furnaces or did he move on to something else?

FL: He never moved on to another job. You get someone who can do that kind of work, you don't let him go.

CE: You said your parents were Democrats. What did they think of Franklin Roosevelt?

FL: Oh, the Jews all loved Franklin Roosevelt. I don't know why, but they all did.

CE: Did they have any views on any of his particular New Deal programs?

FL: Oh, yes. I mean, you know, they thought he had rescued the country and this, that and the other. Yes, he created wonderful programs. Of course, they've now been done away with, pretty much, but it was a major turning point in American history. I think [there is] something that you should know, as a historian; you rave and rave about Abraham Lincoln, what a wonderful guy he was and everything, but ole Abe, whatever he was, he was a remarkable man, but he didn't have any economic sense. ... It was under Abraham Lincoln that Big Business began to get its claws into American society. ... So, his party, the Republican Party, quickly became the party of Big Business and it started under him, because his concern was keeping the Union together and ending slavery, if that was necessary to do it, and so on, and so forth. A terrific guy, I'm not [disputing that], you know, but he wasn't that concerned with economic matters. He did set the tone, by the way, for your contemporary President, [George W. Bush], "Hey, let's do away with habeas corpus. What the hell?"

SI: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked, when you heard that news?

FL: I remember it happening, but I can't remember exactly where I was. I remember when Jack Kennedy got; Jack, it sounds like I'm his roommate, when JFK got killed. I was in a bookstore at Douglass College, and then, I got so crazy, I stole books then. No, I didn't, but I was in junior high school and I don't remember that image of Franklin Delano Roosevelt giving that speech, "A day that will live in infamy," and everything. I don't remember where I was at the time, probably playing soccer in [the] Barnard Junior High School yard.

SI: Do you remember any changes that happened in your neighborhood or local areas as a result of the war, like blackout restrictions, that sort of thing?

FL: Oh, yes, yes. We got into that thing about pulling down the shades, you know, "Go outside, take a look and see if there's a crack of light, because the Nazi planes are over [head]." I mean, it was madness. Then, of course, the rationing; there was a lot of rationing going on, what you could get and not get and everything, and then, of course, there were a lot of families that their sons were being drafted. One of the weird things about growing up in New Haven was that we had a lot of my family all in that one area and fairly close together. ... Right down the corner from me, you had a guy who went into the Army and I always remember that image of him. Now, he's a babbling vegetable. ... He's still alive, but he had a picture I had of him from the Pacific, where he was holding a human skull in his hand, and here's this huge guy, he was a big one, and holding this human skull. ... I said, "Oh, wow, when I grow up, I hope I can hold a human skull in my hands, too," I remember. There were a lot of family [members in the service]. You always knew somebody whose son had been drafted or gone off to war.

CE: You said your cousin served in World War II? Did you hear any stories about it?

FL: No. He became a vegetable. We didn't talk to him. He's been vegetable, really, (Bobby Cummins?). No, I never really talked to him about it.

SI: Did you correspond with him during the war?

FL: No. I was too young, didn't even know how to write at that point. I was waiting for my computer. [laughter]

SI: The story is interesting, about him holding the skull like that. In some ways, that was the mindset at the time, pretty brutal, particularly towards the Japanese, but also toward the Germans. Can you talk more about that mindset for you, as a child, what you thought of the service and these things, what you were seeing in the movies and propaganda?

FL: The one image that sticks in my mind is the Japanese pilot coming down on an American fighter plane and saying over his; I don't know how they talk to each other like that, but saying, "You thought I couldn't speak English, but I had gone to school at Berkeley," and then, the American swooping around, coming behind him and shooting him down. "That will teach you, Nip. Ka-pow." I don't know where that came from, but they had that image of, here was a

Japanese, because the Japanese, don't forget, at that time, Japan was known for taking all kinds of crap-o-la and scrap and making, like, ten-cent little pieces of garbage and selling them. They made junk and sold junk all over the world. That was before Mr. Honda came along and said, "Hey, let's make a nice car." So, they were known for, like, just doing imitation, cheap crap. Later, of course, they're known for high-tech stuff and everything, but that was their reputation, that, you know, they would buy up American scrap, and little did we know they were going to be making it into battleships, and so on, and so forth; how un-nice of them.

SI: Was this memory of yours from a movie?

FL: It was just a lot of it. I mean, you can find this stuff on the web now, all the stereotypes of the images of the evil Japanese, and, always, they pick the buck tooth, for some reason. My kid wears braces. They go to the orthodontist. I don't think they even had braces at that time, except for the kids with polio, but they always depicted the Japanese as leering with buck teeth, but you tend to do this with any [enemy]. When you're at war, you demonize the other.

SI: Within your own family, or maybe in the wider Jewish community, was there any awareness of what was happening to the Jews of Europe?

FL: You know, I was thinking about that; no. As a matter-of-fact, ... I think maybe in the *New York Times*, today, there's a letter from some woman who teaches somewhere, Northeastern, but lives in Hartford, and her last name was Leff, L-E-F-F, and she wrote a book about the *Times*, referring to the *New York Times*, in which I guess she said that, at one time, the journalists used to try to be even-handed. So, it wasn't enough to say, "The Jews are being slaughtered." "Well, that's an American perspective. We've got to be sympathetic and get the other view, from the German side. It should be balanced," and she's, like, you know, saying that that's the *New York Times* who are doing this, instead of saying, "What a horrible thing," [they were saying], "Well, that's one perspective, that it's a bad thing. On the other hand, there's another view. Let's be even-handed." She said, "What kind of nonsense [is this]?" So, no, actually, I'm interested in the topic, because I had done a lot of, well, not a lot, but I did some work with the Holocaust studies, academically and so forth, and I got to meet a lot of people who were big in that field, like the Holocaust studies, and, yes, I don't think America knew very much about it. There was always the issue of what might have been done, what could have been done, what wasn't done, what was ignored, and so on, and so forth. ... As far as my family suffered, there was never [anyone], although I did have an uncle who worked for the post office, but he was an artist, his background. At one time, I guess he went to art school at Yale and got a master's and he went off to Germany, just before all of this started, and, I remember, he came back and was telling the family that, "Those people don't know what the hell is going on there. ... You can smell it in the air, that all hell is going to break loose there, and, yet, ... there was [this feeling], 'It's my home. I'm not leaving it. There's nothing that can go wrong. Things are bad now, but they'll straighten out.'"

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

SI: You were telling us about your uncle, who had gone to Germany.

FL: Yes, Uncle (Rudy?), yes, he worked for the post office and we'd say, "Shut up and deliver the mail," [laughter] but he spent a year there. ... I suppose it's a typical thing, that the outsider could always get a better perspective on what's going on. You get so accustomed to a thing.

SI: We have interviewed people from New York and New Jersey who talked about refugees coming into their communities. Do you remember any of that in the New Haven area? Were there any new arrivals?

FL: No. I think of the intellectuals who fled, and, of course, they started the New School in New York, [which was] started up to give them a place to teach and everything, was the New School, still a very fine place. ... No, I'm sure it happened, but I had no awareness of it. I'm sure there were some families that took in this one or that one.

CE: Could you start talking about your first entrance into the military?

FL: Okay, well, all right. ... As I said, two weeks after high school, I went to [enlist], with Charlie, and we went down to Fort Dix, New Jersey. ... I guess the biggest thing that happened down there, for me, for all of us, was that; I suppose that basic training is supposed to be, like, a period of twelve weeks or thirteen weeks, whatever, and, for some curious reason, it just went on and on and on. We never were allowed to leave the base and it got so bad that, I don't know who, but some people started protesting, something was off, and the government did send an inspector general to find out what was going on there. ... I don't know, do you know about inspector generals?

SI: Yes. You can lodge complaints with them.

FL: Well, yes, but he's the guy that he walks in and you could be the commanding general and you can't tell him what to do. [With] his job, he supersedes anything, and he looked into it and, sure enough, something was off. Shortly thereafter, we were allowed to go on leave, come home. I wasn't much of a soldier and, I remember, ... one of those guys struck me. He was like a kid. He was like that big. Everybody, at that time, was from the South; well, the real Army guys, the professional soldiers. They would make a career [in the Army] and they were all Southerners, for the simple reason that they didn't have factories to go to work [in], like we had in New Haven. So, this was [okay], you know, you got your food, your clothing, and they made up the regular Army, mostly. ... This guy was a former paratrooper and I remember him challenging our whole group. He said, "I'll do more push-ups with one arm than anyone here with two arms," and you know what? he could. No one could take him on. They didn't quite know what to do with my name there. I'd be called, "Hey, Frenchie. Hey, Greek," all those different names. So, anyway, I put in my time there, got the basic training, and all that really sticks out was that I wanted to learn about the rifle. You were given a rifle, but no live ammunition, it's like playing soldier, except if you went out to the rifle range, down in the Trenton area. Then, for some reason, they gave you real ammunition. "Wait a minute, why are you giving me real ammunition?" because they had all these wild dogs out there, but, you know, you're naïve. Here I am, seventeen years old; I had to get my parents to sign a note to allow me in the Army, because I was underage. They had it made out in advance. Anyway, I went down there and they would fool around, the guys that were more sophisticated. So, I'd go, "Halt, who

goes there?" "Santa Claus." "Advance, Santa Claus," but, wait a minute; [laughter] "Halt, who goes there?" "Adolph Hitler." I mean, they would pull all that kind of crap, and be out there in the middle of the night. [Editor's Note: Dr. Lapidus imitates a howling noise the pranksters would make.] Anyway, so, that was my fond memory of Fort Dix in Trenton.

SI: You were seventeen years old. Was this your first time away from home?

FL: Yes, yes. It was scary. "I'll go back now." Yes, it was my first time away. I remember, once, when we did get leave to get out of there, I had no money to get home, I was hitchhiking. "Oh, why am I doing this?" and I was going around that Pulaski Skyway then. ... Someone left me out in the middle of that thing, hitching, and, at the corner, three black guys stopped. They picked me up. I thought, "Shit." So, I hopped in the car and they're going on the Merritt Parkway and they go, "Where do you live?" I go, "Sherman Avenue." They drove me out. They let me out right in front of my house. Right in front of my house, they let me off. Anyway, so, I finished up there, and then, ... for some reason, they decided I had clerical abilities, knew how to read. So, from there, I went to Fort Lee, Virginia. That was a base that opened and closed periodically. They had recently reopened it, and so, I went there for [training], and the Army, ... as dopey as they were, had this rather unique way of teaching typing. They'd have, like, a big board and they would light bulbs behind letters and you're not allowed to look at the keys, but you follow the light bulbs as they lit, and then, afterwards, they would speed up the light changing. It was very good, because I became a very good typist, the only thing I ever became good at. ... So, that was a short time there at Fort Lee, and then, I think Fort Lee was located between two towns that were big if you're a Civil War buff, but meaningless if you're not. Around an Army post, there is always the dopey little towns, with prostitutes, porn shops and things, Petersburg, which is very big, ... and, you know, you'd go off camp and you'd be in Petersburg or some other small place. Anyway, I want to remember, once, I stumbled into Richmond. I went up to Richmond. Actually, I remember this memory, I was with this guy [who] was from Brooklyn and he says, "Look, you're young, you're from the sticks," if you're not from New York, you're from the sticks, "I'll teach you the ropes. I'll show you what to do. We'll go get us some girls." I said, "Okay, cool, I'm with a really sophisticated guy." He goes to some dinky hotel. He goes up to the clerk, "Hey, how are you fixed for some hot-and-cold-running girls?" The guy says, "Get the fuck out of here." He threw him out. I said, "This guy's, you know, really got some good lines; 'How are you fixed for some hot-and-cold-running girls?'" Anyway, I remember going to a dance in Richmond, because it was a dry place. They had, like, state liquor stores and we go to this dance. Like, we had liquor, but we weren't supposed to [drink it], and I remember dancing with a woman named Pearl, ... Opal, or something like that. I said, "What's your name?" She said, "Opal," and I broke out in laughter and she was pissed. She stormed out. [laughter] Then, on my last night there, I remember that I was in a movie theater and they were playing a short and they played it for some reason. It was *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* and I remember saying it, in too loud a voice, "That's the only fucking way to get me back in this state," and three guys got up and wanted to kick the shit out of me. "Look, I'm not even a Muslim. Don't." Anyway, so, that was my fond memory of Richmond. Now, they cut my orders and my orders say, "Two Rock Ranch Station." So, now, I go to all the regular guys and I said, "Two Rock Ranch Station?" "Where is that and what is that?" I said, "Well, you're regular Army guys; what do you mean you don't know?" "Never heard of it. Never heard of it. Don't know anything about it." No matter who I asked, "Don't know anything about it. Never

heard of it;" ASA. Know ASA? Army Security Agency, absorbed years later into something called NSA. Know NSA? It was a listening station, electronics eavesdropping station, out in the West Coast. Now, I didn't go to any security school, so, my job, being sent out there, was clerical, was not anything to do with what they were doing out there. In fact, I was there for something like a year and I never knew what they were doing out there. This is, like, really bizarre; I moved to Trumbull, Connecticut, which is, [if] you know anything about Connecticut, like, the sleepest little town in America, and my next-door neighbor was at Two Rock Ranch Station. How can that be? one-in-a-million shot. There's a book by a guy named [James] Bamford that you ought to read. He's got three books out now, two books out on NSA, that's his specialty, and I started reading his book by chance. The son-of-a-bitch; there's Two Rock Ranch Station mentioned half a dozen times. If you do a search on the web, you'll find, any group has reunions, [an] ASA reunion, remembering the good old days. ... Now, this was the time when there was no computers. So, they were doing electronic stuff; not computers, but everything else. ... Whatever you hear now about, "The President wants to do this, the President wants to that," they were doing it all back then, and there's a lot of crap that you hear on TV that ... doesn't make sense at all. For example, someone says, "Well, during World War II, we had the OSS, and then, we had Indian signals, smoke signals, code, and then, we developed, years later, ... the NSA." Well, nonsense; that's nonsense. They had the ASA. That stuff was in existence well before NSA came to the world, and well after the code, the Indian code, which is just a World War II thing, but they were already doing electronic snooping well before then. ... That's what they were doing out there. My first day out there, when I got off, I went to a small [town], now, it's a booming town, nice town, Petaluma, California, which, at that time, was called, "The egg basket of the world," because all the eggs used to be sent all over the country from there. ... I get off and I was told, "Well, you go to such-and-such a place and you'll be picked up." I got my little stuff. I get in the back of this truck, little soldiers. I go into a bar, not to drink, because I didn't drink, but I went into a bar, because that's where I was supposed to [go], and I said to the guy, "Well, what goes on out there?" and everyone picked up and they walk away from me. They don't say a word; they just leave. So, I get in the back of this truck. We get out. We get to the main gate. We get stopped by the MP and the guy comes through, and everyone's got a little plastic tag on them with their picture and things. I don't have one. The first stop is the MP post, where I was told, "Get off there and ... check in, get your bedding." I walk in and I've got a camera over my shoulder, and the guy said, "Where's your tag?" I said, "I don't have [one]." "Is that a camera?" I said, "Yes." I spent the night locked up, ... until I got my clearance and I was cool, and so, that's where I worked. I spent a year out there. It was a cute place, in the sense that, because it was relatively small, it had, like, fraternity [rooms] or dorms, where you would room with another guy. I happened to fall into luck. I roomed with a guy from Texas who was the chef for the place. So, at breakfast, I mean, you told him what kind of eggs you wanted and you had fresh eggs, unlike the regular Army, where they give you powdered scrambled eggs and everything. ... They didn't know what to do with me when I first got there. I don't know why they sent me there if they didn't know what to do with me, but my first job out there was to go around in a jeep with some other guys and round up dead sheep. They were leasing the territory to farmers who raised sheep and the big sheep raisers out there, by the way, were Basques. You know the Basques?

SI: From Spain, yes.

FL: Yes, and France. They're the Basque. During the Spanish Civil War, ... the Basques were fighting the Fascists, were cornered in the Pyrenees, and the Fascists had machine guns lined up and the Basques were trying to get across into France and they slaughtered them. Five thousand Basques were killed, and it gave us that saying, "Don't put all your Basques in one exit." [laughter] In any case, my job was to pick up the dead sheep, put them in the jeep. You know how you locate dead sheep, by the way? You watch this, prey birds, that they come in. Where they are, that's where the dead sheep are, and then, we'd pick them up and bring them to the soap factory, and you have to drive up there. I remember, it's horrible, and they would dump them off and they would melt them down, or whatever they do. Anyway, from there, ... then, they gave me a job. I was assigned to the post switchboard, phone switchboard; ... you know, you remember this from the old movies, with plugs. Now, the terrible thing about that job [was], which was a soft job, but they had what they called a rolling shift. That is, if you worked eight hours for X number of days, then, you worked eight hours, but at a different time, three days, then, you worked eight hours, but at a still different time. Anyway, constantly tired; you never got enough sleep. Fortunately, at the same building, there was a guy there that ran the pharmacy and he said, "No problem. Take these little pills. They'll help you out." I took a few and, son-of-a-bitch, I felt like a football player running and no one can stop me, I mean, handfuls of Benzedrine, Benzedrine, as many as I wanted. ... Once, he was worried that I might get addicted to it, so, he gave me a placebo and I fell asleep, and I almost got court-martialed because of it. ... I fucked up a phone call to a general from the general. It goes to Washington. The guy was, like, so cool. ... [He] said, "Don't worry about it, soldier. That stuff happens. Don't you worry about it." He was, like, really nice, man, and so, that's what I did out there, was listening to phone calls from officers who were screwing around with other officers' wives, listen in, sometimes make remarks. [laughter] It was fun, and we had a guy out there who hung himself, I remember that.

SI: Why?

FL: Why not? [laughter] From what I recall, he had very advanced syphilis. His girlfriend had broken his engagement and, through gambling, he owed thousands of dollars and, because of his disease, they wouldn't let him off the base. So, here he was, like, on the base, month after month, his girlfriend kissed him off, he had this terrible disease and he's broke. So, he hung himself. So, quickly, the soldiers, in a very sympathetic way, started saying, "From now on, we're going to be issued bow ties, so [that] we can't hang ourselves," and they didn't give a shit, man. I remember, one time, my roommate; I love Texans. Man, they're great. We're going to double date. He's going to fix me up. We're going to go out together. He said, "I'm going to go out with this woman, she's the mother, and you're going to go out with the daughter. I have to tell you, the daughter is pregnant." I said, "You know what? I'll go out with the mother; you go out with the daughter. I'm not going. Forget it. I'm not looking for that, you know," because I was still young. Anyway, so, that's how I spent my time, for a year, out there, at an ASA base. I did manage, by the way, to catch a couple of spies, in the sense that, yes, they really exist, and I thought it was, like, make-believe. Democrats make up this shit. I'd get phone calls, "Hi, I need a little information about the base. How big is it? How many people?" blah, blah, blah, and I'd keep them busy and the MPs would go track the phone call. Now, they go snag the guy, yes, constantly. That happened a number of times, people trying to find out what was going on out there. So, anyway, that was an ASA base. ... It's since been absorbed into the NSA and they

were handling that whole Pacific operation. So, anyway, I got out of there. Now, I had the GI Bill and a couple of my friends were going to go up to UConn, and this is an interesting part. I only wised up to it later. I went up to Waterbury, Connecticut, to take an exam to get in and, I swear to God, the minute I walked in the door, he said, "Hey, you did okay. You're accepted." I said, "Wait a minute, I haven't taken it." "It turned out that you had the GI Bill." By the way, it's a questionable thing; what's the GI Bill for?

SI: I guess you can look at it two ways. One, it was meant to give educational benefits to veterans; two, it was to keep all these guys someplace where they could readjust to society.

FL: But, basically, it's a reward for [after] you served in the military. Shouldn't they say, "Well, you know, it's your duty to serve your country; why should we give you a reward because you served?" but, in any case, they gave that, which is the greatest thing that happened to America, by the way, because we socialized education, [the] government paying for education, and at a time when America really needed it, because the whole world was breaking open in America then. ... So, I went up and I said, "What the hell?" You know, the GI Bill, the educational part of it, if you don't you use it, you lose it. So, I said, "I'll give it a shot." I didn't realize, at the time, that I think the University of Connecticut, I can't say for other state schools, they were charging the veterans as out-of-state students, on the grounds that [the] money was coming from out of state. So, that was their way of socking it to the government. Now, everyone is playing the same game. So, they were very glad to have veterans in there. I went to what they called; whatever it was in New London. They opened up a branch to accommodate the veterans. I think it was just a way of keeping them away from the main campus, and these guys spent their time, when they weren't studying ...

JD: Fort Trumbull?

FL: Yes, Fort Trumbull. When they weren't studying, the ROTC would be out there. These guys would go out and make a mockery of them, and make-believe marches and go off and just laugh at the ROTC and everything. Anyway, I went there and I started and the one smart thing I did, I said, "You know what? I didn't do that well in high school. I'm now going to start college. I'm going to try as hard as I can to do well. So, if I flunk, I will say, 'Well, it wasn't for me. College wasn't for me.' I don't ever want to say, 'Well, I might have stayed on, if I tried a little harder, but I didn't. I was too busy running around or whatever.'" So, I really poured myself into it, and then, I suddenly realized, "Hey, I like this shit," and it was at that point I got called back in the service. [laughter] You ready for that phase?

SI: I am just curious; Fort Trumbull, was that a nickname for this place?

FL: No, it had been a [fort]. You know, you have, like, the Coast Guard Academy and West Point; this was for training people to go into the US Maritime Service. By the way, I don't know if you know anything about the Maritime Service. These are guys that served on cargo ships and everything and often got torpedoed and were treated like dirt. They were not considered as the regular military.

SI: No veteran status.

FL: (Griffin?) was a Maritime [veteran]. They still are very resentful of this. ... By the way, Woody Guthrie went into the Maritime Service, to escape the draft. You know Woody Guthrie, he didn't go to Rutgers, but he's all right nonetheless, and his song, [*The Sinking of the*] *Reuben James*, about the ship that sank? You know that song? Okay, anyway, they had abandoned her, given it up, and then, moved somewhere in New York. So, they bought or leased this place on the outskirts of New London, and it was no women. It was all GIs, former GIs, and it was, like, crazy, because, like, on [the] Fourth of July, people set off cherry bombs and these guys would start clawing the floor, trying to go to the foxhole. They were wild. I mean, there were a lot of teachers that were much younger than the GIs that are coming back, and a pretty raucous crew. So, you put in your two years there, and then, you went up to the campus. That's where I was ...

SI: When you were called back?

FL: No. When I was called back, I was up at the campus.

SI: You were up at the main campus.

FL: But, I put in my time at Fort Trumbull. I liked it. I got caught up with learning. I said, "Hey, you know, this is a pretty cool thing," but I only had a year-and-a-half with the GI Bill, because, when I went in; ... I don't know, I've looked into this, maybe six months ago, what the current status of the GI Bill is now. Do you know anything about that?

SI: Not particularly. It is not as comprehensive as the World War II version.

FL: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, during that period of time, they had to revise it, because they found, for example, at Fort Trumbull, a guy would sign up with no real intention of going to college and say, "Okay, I'll sign up. I'm going down to Florida now. When my check comes in, send it to me. Tell a friend," and, every month, like clockwork, a check would come in. He'd put in one week at campus and he was gone. So, for a year, he would collect checks, free. They finally clamped down on that and decided that you have to show up in person and sign for it every month to get it, and so forth, and there had to be a report that you were taking classes, so-and-so, and they modified it still further. [Under] the original GI Bill, no matter where you were, they'll pay the full cost of that tuition. After a while, they changed it to, "Up to a certain point." If you decided to go to a very expensive school, part of that was going to be on your own. One result of that was, a lot of make-believe schools opened up. Not Rutgers; they were already in business as a make-believe school, but they say, "Hey, we got the GI Bill. We'll open up some photography whatever, whatever, and let these dumb kids come here and we'll take their GI Bill money and we'll teach them how to develop films or whatever," you know. So, a lot of those commercial kind of schools opened up at that point, [to] get the GI Bill. The government finally wised up, unusual, and modified it, so that it wasn't so easy to run off with their money, which kept a lot of the sluggards away from using it. ... It was a great boom, because my family could not have afforded it. I would never have gone to college. I never thought I was college material, number one. If I decided I wanted to go, they would have said, "Lots of luck to you, because we don't have any money." So, now, I got this GI Bill. They paid for everything, room, tuition, books, meals, the whole thing.

SI: When you first got in, were you just taking general classes and finding out what you liked?

FL: Yes. It's typical, you know, what still goes on today; in your first year or two, you're taking a broad range of courses. You tend to gravitate toward the things that you know you're decent at, whether you know it or not. I found myself. For example, I had lunch the other day with a former chairman, ... a guy I've know for a thousand years, of the Political Science Department, University of Connecticut, and he brought in this thing from 1950 ... I had published while I was at this Fort Trumbull, two short stories, and I looked at him and I wept. I said, "These stories should be major movies." So, you know, you just gravitated. They had some interesting people there. The one guy, I have to say, and his name came up while I was having lunch, (Art?), dropped out of college. I don't think he finished. He finished one semester, and he was probably the best thing that ever happened to me, because I was reading something [and] I said, "What is this? ... This literature," I said, "bullshit, I can't understand it," and he said, "Your problem is, you're reading all this stuff in the past and it's tough. Take this book. Read this book and you'll like it," and he gave me a couple of novels that were contemporary. "You start with something that's part of your own time, then, work back to something," and, you know, he was right. I can't think of the author's name. It's a World War II book about the GIs after the war in Italy, and I read the book and I said, "Wow, I really loved this thing." I went on and read a couple of other books, contemporary novels. Then, I was able to work my way back, instead of, "Start with the earliest and work your way up." He dropped out and he went into his father's business, which was roofing, in New Haven. Then, they had one guy, oh, this poor guy, you [his wife] know his daughter, this guy was a navigator in World War II and he's, like, so frigging bright. He could speak, like, four languages before he even started college. So, he was going to become an engineer, but he likes philosophy, so, he's going to major in philosophy, too, and he was going to do this and he's going to do that. Everything he touched, he got a straight "A." He ended up; at one time, I had to go to the dentist in Bridgeport and I saw his name. I said, "I'm going to go see him. He's going to know more about teeth than anybody in the whole world," and I went. I said, "I can't believe this. This guy doesn't even have a receptionist." I say, "It's the dirtiest, dumbest office I've ever seen," and, ... you remember, his daughter went to Brown, the background was that he had gassed one of his patients and screwed her while she was out and he lost his old business and everything. So, I used to send him letters. I said, "My daughter needs some dental work, but I ain't going to use you, pal." I remember, I used to love to do this, send out postcards to people, anonymous or with make-believe names. ... I remember, one said that, "The University of Connecticut: Our records show that you borrowed a book by Montaigne, in French, fifteen years ago. It's overdue. You can pay us ten thousand dollars for overdue fees or you can reimburse us for the price of the book, eight thousand dollars. Take your choice. We're sending the police." Anyway, so, they had all these strange people up there that were taking courses and I enjoyed it, you know, and a lot of my friends, they turned out, were playing cards all the time. They played poker. They'd stay up all night and play poker. They all became lawyers, by the way. [laughter] They did; all my friends became lawyers, except for Charlie. ... Remember, I told you I went to the Army with this guy? I have to give you a little of his background, because it's pertinent. You'll see how it ties into the Army. Charlie grew up maybe three blocks away from where I lived at the time, down Sherman Avenue in New Haven, and Charlie's father was, like, fifty percent deaf and Charlie's mother had died when he was very, very young. ... Charlie had a sister who was married to this guy and they're all living together, the sister, Charlie, the

deaf father and this sister's husband, and they had a gas station on Whalley Avenue in New Haven. So, Charlie naturally gravitated to my house and my mother took in all the waste of the world. Everyone came there on Sundays to eat. Charlie would come there; he's like a brother, like a son. So, Charlie and I went to elementary school together, went to junior high together, went to high school together and went into the Army together. We got out of the Army, we started UConn together. We graduated, we lived in Greenwich Village. He rented an apartment with me. We got called back in the service together. We both got sent to Korea together. I went, rifle cocked, and went to rendezvous with Charlie. We rendezvoused in Korea. We got out and, again, we went to New York, so, very strong, you know, very strong, connection. So, there was Charlie and all these people that I became very friendly with, Charlie, I knew, at Trumbull, and it was a close group, because they had a lot in common. They came from [the] New Haven area or they're all GIs and so forth, swapping crap stories and stuff like that, and it was a close-knit group. As a matter-of-fact, the University of Connecticut, they're trying to now dedicate it, make it into some kind of a memorial, that place, for whatever reasons. So, anyway, there was Fort Trumbull and the Army. Then, I got out and, as I said, the GI Bill is, like, a magnificent [thing], and it helped a lot of people. It was a big boom in this country. Now, if you look at the GI Bill today, from what I've been able to find out, if you were to go into the Army next week, they'll say, "Would you like the GI Bill?" You said, "Well, I don't know anything about it?" "You pay one hundred dollars a month and they kick in matching money," or something, and the thing is, "Well, I'm just starting out and the pay is not that good. I can't afford that crap, so, forget it," but, then, they got this clause in there, that if you don't sign up for it within X number of months, you cannot get it, ever. So, a lot of guys don't get the GI Bill, even though they served, today, whereas back then, it was, "If you serve, you automatically got it." One of the great things, by the way, of serving in the military, at the time, [was] GI insurance, which I didn't get enough of, but the GI insurance. I had to sell mine, because I needed money for a divorce or whatever. If you had GI insurance, like, that was one of the best insurance things you could ever get. It was good insurance coverage, very little pay, little cost of your part, and the advice was always, I found out too late, "Take as much as you can and carry it over," because you can carry it over into civilian life. Those things are like [rare opportunities]. They don't talk about them, because, maybe, it cost too much money to the government. So, a lot of guys don't take advantage of it today.

SI: Did you use any other benefits, like the 52/20 club?

FL: Oh, yes. Yes, I remember my cousin, the skull holder. They had a baseball team, right down the corner, and there was a park. ... My former high school moved there now, and the team, name of the softball team, was "The 52/20 Club." You know about the 52/20 club?

SI: Yes.

FL: Tell them.

SI: World War II veterans could get up to fifty-two weeks of unemployment insurance, which was twenty dollars a week.

FL: Twenty dollars a week. Can you imagine living at twenty dollars [a week]? With your dope habit, you couldn't get by one day at twenty dollars a week; no, really, twenty dollars a week, wow. You don't go too far on that, but they got it for a year, and, like unemployment, "Hey, no rush." So, they used to go down and, I remember, they had these black T-shirts with "52/20" on it. That's where my cousin, Barbara, got hit in the head with a softball and [was] knocked out. Too bad it wasn't harder, but, yes, I had a little piece of that, but not much. Now, one of the things [was], when I got out of the Army, I had to wait to start, once I got accepted to UConn, but the semester had started. As you know, you have to wait until the new cycle. So, I took a job at Winchester Repeating Arms in New Haven, terrible job. I mean, this is the kind of work I thought I was going to be doing for the rest of my life, and they worked on a piece rate basis. You get paid for what you produced. ... Like, I had to run four lathes and, at any given time, two of them weren't working right, so, you weren't ever going to make piece rate basis, never, no way. So, you get paid crap pay and, during lunch breaks, people sat out in front of the place, eating their peanut butter sandwiches, talking about organizing a union, and guess what? The minute lunch break happened, music would go blaring out, so [that] no one could give speeches that could be heard. They weren't going to organize a union at that place. Anyway, so, I put in a couple of months there, and then, that's when I started college, and the same thing happened when I got out the second time. I had to kill a couple of months to get into that cycle again. So, I actually lost probably about a year, just waiting to get cycled.

SI: What about student life at UConn, particularly on this Fort Trumbull campus? I saw on your survey that you became a Phi Ep.

FL: That was up in there ...

SI: That was later on.

FL: Yes. As I say, my friends would play cards. I would stay up with them, because I didn't play cards. I played cards once, on a ship coming back from Korea, and I won all the money, but that's the only time I ever won, so, I gave it up. It wasn't my thing, you know, just hang out with them, because they were all great big guys and a lot of fun, a lot of fun. We'd go in to New London. It was a funny story. My oldest son's married, I told you, to this woman who was, like, part-African-American, part-Indian, and we went to New London, somewhere along the river up there, and we went to the wedding. The wedding was at Mystic, and then, we went to the reception. I can't remember the name of the hotel, but, anyway, the reception, and they were playing jazz at the reception. I'm sitting down with the father, [the] father of the one who got married, and [I said], "Gee, I remember, years ago, when I went to school there in New London, they used to go this black jazz place downtown and there used to be a big, fat woman, the biggest breasts I've ever seen, and she had this big, plastic rose and she would come up and she'd jam the rose in your face and she'd be singing *Honeysuckle Rose*," and the guy looked at me and said, "That was my mother." [laughter] So, yes, you know, there were good times. The teacher up there was, like, a physics teacher. He was, like, virtually blind. He played the trumpet. He played down there. He was on a couple of nights a week. In this jazz place, he'd play, and then, we had a young teacher there, a woman, taught basic psychology, and just talking about the connection between physiology and mental things and how they connect, and she had a harelip and she would say, "This lip causes a speech impediment." That killed the class right there.

Then, we had a teacher who ran off with another teacher, two young women, Filipino or something. In the middle of the semester, they just picked up and ran off.

SI: What was it like to be in the classroom with all these veterans, maybe a mixture of veterans and people just out of high school?

FL: Well, it's weird. I had an English class. Intuitive; I used my intuition on it. When I thought about things, it didn't work. When I used my gut, it worked, and I had an English composition [class]. I had this guy who was, like, a former Marine, young guy, ... and he was going to be a writer. He'd just won an award, *Saturday Evening Post*. He won some money. You had to write some paper on jobs, "Jobs we want," or something like that, and my paper, I said, "I want to be a paper grader for you, because I know you put in so many hours, you work so hard, and, this way, I can free you up, so [that] you could do your writing, which is more important than [grading]. You owe this to the world." "When do you start?" he said to me. "When do you want to start?" So, we had a young guy; some of the teachers were veterans themselves, ... but they were wild. I mean, Volkswagen had just come out. I remember, a batch of us got a hold of a Volkswagen, carried it up a wide flight of stairs and put it up on the second floor of some building, plopped the goddamn thing down there. They were crazy. I mean, these guys were off the wall, some of them. One kid up there slept with a gun under his pillow, you know, dealing with some odd types. ... For me, it was like, you know, a different world, because a lot of them were quite bright and anxious to learn. I mean, they fool around a lot, but, you know, these guys were hot-to-trot. They wanted to make up for lost time. We used to go over to Connecticut College for women. At that time, it was strictly a women's school. I remember going over there once and sitting there in the library, not that I wanted to read books, and pretending to sketch a girl in an armchair and trying to give her best side, pretend, ignoring me and everything, but sketching that girl; couldn't draw worth a crap. This one [his daughter] can. We used to walk along the railroad tracks. It was fun. We enjoyed it. As I said, most of the guys that went there were older and, if you started college when you were seventeen, eighteen, you know, you're still just beginning to sniff the world, but some of these guys, you know, they had been through shit, you know, ... whatever. These were not your basic seventeen-year-old, first time out of his house. So, it was a different experience, and it stood me in good stead, by the way, when I went up to UConn, the second time I got out of the Army. I couldn't adjust to the noise of the dorm. Thank God, they said, "Well, you're an older guy." They let me live in the graduate dorm and, because I was living with guys who were serious about what they were doing, you know, that meant a lot to me and, I think, probably, helped push me toward going out for graduate work.

SI: I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about the ASA base, Two Rock Ranch. You mentioned that it was one of these jobs where you did not understand ...

FL: I think it's a Coast Guard station now, right now.

SI: It was one of these jobs where you did your job, but you did not know what you were doing, because of the security.

FL: No. They had a special type for getting up to the secure post.

SI: Were you able to get a better idea of what was going on?

FL: I had no idea whatsoever, and I knew enough not to ask. One thing I knew you don't do is ask questions at that place.

SI: The things that you overheard on the phone, they were all strictly personal.

FL: Yes. I wasn't listening all the time. Every so often, I'd make a connection and go, "Woo-hoo." I mean, I'll have to tell you, the guys out there knew enough that you don't say things on the phone, because they knew that whatever got said, even as today, gets listened to. This is not something that your President invented. This has been going on for a long time. I mean, what a lot of people in this country don't seem to know is, like, he wants permission to listen to terrorists. "Are you a terrorist? You've got to use a certain number." They listen to everything, you know. Basically, what he wants us to do is to monitor internal stuff in this country, whereas, initially, NSA was set up to monitor anything that left the country or that came into the country. Basically, what he wants is anything within the country, and that's a big difference, and all has been passed off as, "Oh, we've got to monitor the terrorists." No, they want to monitor calls within the nation. That was originally against the law.

SI: The spies that you mentioned, that you played a hand in capturing ...

FL: Like I said, "Hey..." Well, I remember, one time, the guy said, "Keep him on the phone."

SI: Yes. I was wondering if you were trained at all to deal with that situation.

FL: I wasn't trained to do anything, but, you know, yes. Well, one thing, I was able to get a hold of someone on the other [line], said, "Hey, someone's there asking questions here." "Try to keep them on the phone." After that, who knows? I did hear they did pick up one or two people. Now, they might have been innocent, but why do you call up a place and start asking questions like that?

SI: You would not find out the end of the story, if they were working for somebody.

FL: No.

JD: After you left the base, were you debriefed at all, about anything?

FL: When I left the first time?

JD: Yes.

FL: Oh, no, no, no. They just said, "You're done. Go home. Good-bye," I mean, because there was nothing. I mean, I didn't know what they were doing there until years later. I had no idea what they were doing. I didn't ask. I just knew there was some stuff going on that I wasn't a part of, and it wasn't my business to be a part of it, and that was that; only later did I find out.

JD: How did you find out?

FL: Well, I read this book by Bamford, who is like a specialist on the NSA, and he explained what that operation was all about. He later wrote a second book, because you have to remember that what was going on then was electronic eavesdropping. That is, all over the world, but I assume that part of the world, the Pacific end of the world, anything that got sent through the air, they were able to pick up, but that was before computers. Now, with the advent of computers, a whole new world opened up. Guess what? The biggest, best computers in the world are now owned by the NSA. They have acres and acres of computers, very sophisticated and a lot of money. The curious thing about the NSA, by the way, is that everyone knows the CIA, everyone knows the FBI, Treasury, Secret Service, and the biggest organization of them all is the NSA and very few people know [about it]. Until this whole Bush thing came about, no one ever heard of them or knew anything about them, and, as Bamford likes to say, "If you want to know what they do, just read their mission statement, except you can't read their mission statement, because its top secret." ... They do have a mission statement, you just can't read it.

SI: At that time, were they indoctrinating soldiers at all? Were they telling you that Communism is the new threat? Was there any of that?

FL: No, no. Well, they didn't indoctrinate me, so, I can't say it was going on, but, at that time, that World War II now was ended, ... we had this golden period of time between wars, so-to-speak. So, yes, the Cold War was starting up, the Cold War was there, and Communism. I mean, it was in the air. You didn't have to get indoctrinated. Everything you picked up was, "They're the bad guys. We're the good guys. It's us against them. If we don't stop them, they're going to take over the world." Little did we know at the time, we're the ones that are taking over the world, a political aside. No, the whole notion then [was] that, you know, [during] that whole period, the world is divided in two and, actually, it was a neat arrangement. We had our sphere of influence, they had their sphere of influence, and it was like, almost, an agreement that, "You don't mess with our sphere, we don't mess with your sphere." Then, they developed the whole notion of ... the "Domino Theory," one thing falls; I don't even know how to play dominos, but there was that notion that if one country falls, then, everything follows thereafter.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Before we broke, we were talking about ...

FL: I went in; I put in a year-and-a-half. I got out, came back from California, and, by the way, when I went out there, when I came back, both times, I went on a train and it never occurred to me [that] you could sleep on a train, and so, I always went by coach. ... I remember one of the nice things, when I was going out there, it was, like, around New Year's Eve, and we stopped somewhere in Chicago and I decided, "New Year's Eve, I'll have something to drink, because I'm a soldier and I'm a man now. I should have something to drink," and I couldn't go into the liquor store, because I was underage. So, some little colored kid was sitting out in front and he says, "I'll get it for you, Mister," and he went in. He got it, and I had to tip him. In the middle of nowhere, the train stopped, because they had to put off half the crew. They were bombed and they had to put them off in some "dink water" stop and continue on the way.

SI: This continues an interview with Frederick Lapidés.

FL: I'm on the train and there were a lot of GIs on there. They're all wearing their uniform. At that time, you didn't have to wear a uniform if you were off the base, but a lot of us did, and, as a kid turned to his mother, right behind me, he said, "There are more soldiers on the train than people." In wartime, you don't say things like that. In peacetime, you do, because in peacetime, soldiers are looked at with contempt. A real person doesn't serve in the military. In wartime, everyone; you know, it's different, but, anyway, so, both times, I rode across country on the choo-choo train, coach style. ... I do remember being out on the West Coast celebrating another New Year's Eve and I went into a bar and the bartender says, "What do you want to drink?" I know nothing about drinking. All I can remember is ads in *Life Magazine*. I said, "Let me have a gin." He said, "Gin and what?" I figure, like, my manhood is being challenged here. "Just plain gin." "Just plain gin?" I said, "Well, you let me have some water on the side." It must have taken me, like, two hours to get this little, tiny thing down, but, then, again, I remember going to an ice cream store, like a dairy store, and I said, "Let me have a ... chocolate ice cream soda," and the waiter says, "What the hell? We don't make that." I said, "What do you mean, 'You don't make that?'" "No, I never heard of it." He said, "I can give you a chocolate soda." I said, "I don't want a [chocolate soda]; I want a chocolate ice cream soda." "We don't make that." I'll tell you what I said, "Can you take chocolate and put it in a glass?" "Yes." "Can you put a little milk in it?" "Yes." "Can you put some seltzer in it?" "Yes." "Then, a scoop or two of vanilla ice cream?" "No, we don't make that." [laughter] I sort of realized [something]. That's where my first awareness that there are cultural differences and geographical differences in this country [came from], that something you take for granted in New York, they'll think you're deranged out here in Petaluma, California. When I lived out there, by the way, the time I was in the Army, I didn't get off the base much, because, as I say, you know, there wasn't much to do. I did get down to San Francisco once or twice. ... I remember going to a little dopey bar that decided they had to make some money, so, they had, I thought the guy was, like, must be 130 years old, Lionel Hampton, the jazz musician [who] played the xylophone. ... So, now, they're putting out a lot of money to get this guy and they don't want you sitting around just listening. So, I walked in to get a drink. You sit down, then, they instantly come over and they served you. The minute you put your fork down, "Okay, what do you want?" I said, "I don't want anything now." "Well, you can't just sit around. You've got to buy stuff. You can't just sit around, listen to the music," and he's constantly hustling. I remember, once, going to; you don't know Stan Kenton. Stan Kenton had this full band of jazz [musicians] and what he was known for was [that] it was loud. He had, like, a row of trombone players and it was extraordinarily loud. I had a front row seat and, wow, all these trombones almost hitting you in the face, and I remember going to [see] some young woman out there. I said to the taxi driver, "I want a girl. I want to get laid," and the guy took me to some hotel and there's this girl and her name was Bobbie, I remember. Want to see a picture? and it was curious, because she was, like, nice and she had a job. She was a secretary. She said, "I'm a secretary, but I have a little family and I do this on the side, because I don't make enough money," and we had a nice chat and everything. San Francisco, I left my heart in San Francisco, but, you know, years later, years later, I went to school in Berkeley, I don't know if I said that in my paper, [pre-interview survey], that I put in a

year out there, and would go take walks in the Presidio, which was the Army hospital out there. It was very sad, because, when I came back from Korea, I saw a guy I knew from the first time I was in the Army, just totally off his mind from the Korean War, but he knew me. We chatted for a few minutes, and that's one of the weird things about my second time in the Army. I did meet up with people I knew from the first time I was in the Army, just circumstances, you know, sort of weird.

SI: When you were recalled for Korea, how far along had you been?

FL: So, I put in my two years at Fort Trumbull, the branch of UConn, then, I went up to the main campus. Now, during the summer, the war broke out. ... Oh, I should have told you this; I was in ... what they called at that time the Inactive Reserve Corps. First of all, they asked me if I wanted to be in the Reserve Corps and I said, "No, I'm all right." "Well, you know, if you join the Inactive Reserve Corps..." I don't know why they talked me into that, because there were no benefits. I mean, you didn't meet, you didn't train, you didn't do anything, just had your name on a list. I said, "Oh, what the hell, so long as I don't have to do anything, okay?" Again, it seems to me, historically, it gets underplayed; when the Korean War broke out, they activated the Inactive Reserves Corps. They did not call up the Reserve Corps that went out and trained all the time. They were paid to train. They did not call up the National Guards that were paid to train. They called up the Inactive Reserve, and the result was, they had a lot of guys from World War II who should never have been anywhere near the military. These guys are, like, out of shape, old, whatever. In any case, I got called up for my physical in the summer. Again, I was young. I was naïve, still. So, when I got up to the main campus at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, I said, "Well, I'm waiting to hear from them. I'd better not buy my books." So, I didn't, for a while. Then, after a while, classes started. I said, "I can't do this very much. I'd better buy my books." Sure enough, the day after I bought my books, I got called up. Now, my mistake, I think, I don't know, [as] I look back on it, was that I never challenged that, and I did. I said, "Well, I'm in school. You can't take me. I'm in college," and they said, "Well, you're in college, true," he said, "but we date it from the time you took your physical, which was in the summer, when you weren't in college." Instead of saying, "Wait a minute, buster, I'm getting a lawyer. I might not have been in school, but school wasn't in session in the summer. I'm in school now. I'm a college student," [I should have said that] instead of saying, "Yes, okay." He said, "We date it from when you took the physical." Now, for the physical, first time I went in the Army, we had to go downtown [in Manhattan]. Down in the Wall Street area is where they induct everybody, and they put us in this crazy [hotel], the Dixie Hotel or something, in Manhattan. It was like a horrible place, cockroaches, everything, terrible thing. I'm used to it now, because we have it at home, but, I remember, we had to get up and walk the streets at night, just out in Manhattan, because you couldn't sleep there. We spent the whole night up, just walking around. Anyway, so, I had all these books. Fortunately, I was able to return many of them, get at least some of the money back, but they pulled me right out of college. It made me most unhappy.

CE: Going back, when you said that they called up the Inactive Reserve, as opposed to the Active Reserve, do you think there was a reason for that?

FL: You know, I never figured it out. I think there might have been political pressure. I know they don't like calling up the National Guard, if possible, of course, they're using them now [in Iraq], because they all represent a geographical area. ... When you have a draft, for example, it's spread nationwide, but, when you call a Reserve outfit, you're geographically pulling up a group, and I think they feared about hitting Connecticut, let's say, or New Jersey, and calling up all those kids from one area. Don't forget, they never called the Korean War a war.

CE: It was a UN ...

FL: No, they called it a "police action." When my car gets ticketed, that's a police action, but it was not declared a war, and so, for whatever reason, they called up the Inactive Reserve. Now, remember, you know, when I got called up, they rushed everything. I don't know where the hell I even went, but I ended up quickly in Texas, Fort Hood, Texas, and they were giving us, like, a quick, "Let's get these bastards back in shape in forty-eight hours," kind of thing. ... I knew they're taking us out on these night missions, night patrols, and I'm beginning to smoke cigarettes then, but you can't smoke. It's dark. You'll give away your position. I said, "Well, I'm in Fort Hood, Texas. That was my position." So, I started chewing tobacco. If you ever tried chewing tobacco; ... have you ever tried chewing tobacco? Here it is, dark, and we're walking along; you spit, it sounds like shells going off, because you're spitting this stuff out and it's tough stuff, until you get used to it. ... Then, the guy would say, "Okay, we're going to climb this cliff," and some asshole will be holding down his rifle. He'd say, "Hang on to this and pull yourself up." I said, "I can't do that." So, I was there, like, two weeks and there was one guy on the rifle range and they herd you down there and you're crawling under barbed wire with your rifle and there's a certain way to do it. ... You do it the right way, and I didn't do it the right way, and you get to the end and I'm, like, happy, "Hey, I did it, I did it," and I stand up and I'm beaming. ... Here comes the sergeant. "Hey, asshole," he says, "you got your barrel filled with soil." He said, "Try shooting it; it will blow up in your face," and there was one guy there that was so out of shape, because there were World War II leftovers, and he had a heart attack and died on the rifle range. Another guy jumped up, because there's a rattlesnake, you're in Texas, and machine guns cut him in half, and they were using real bullets. Anyway, I was there. Now, in the Korean War, the war started in 1950, I think it was June 30th, and, basically, what happened was, the North Koreans crossed the 38th Parallel, you know all this, with the permission of China. Americans had some advisers there. We always have advisers in countries, and we had some advisers there, ... with the whole domino thing, "If we don't stop them..." Well, I have to tell you, the [South] Korean government was probably as bad as the North Korean government, if not worse. I mean, the bastard who was in charge, a Fascist shithead. In any case, we decided we were going to get involved, send more people over. The people that were the most resentful, by the way, about being sent over, were the guys that were in Japan, our soldiers. "I've got this girlfriend, I've got this great life here, and you want me to go fight? I didn't join the Army for this." So, they were all pissed. [laughter] Anyway, they were sorting out ... guys who had radio experience. Thank God I didn't have it, because what they were doing with them was flying them over and dropping them behind enemy lines, because all these ... little pockets of Americans were cut off and the idea was to get contact back with the American forces. This was the time known as the Pusan Perimeter; you know about that, right? and that's when my ship arrived. Now, I always end up with these weird jobs. I get on this troopship. ... There's a couple of guys [who] jumped off the ship, by the way, in the harbor out [in] Oakland or someplace, and the one thing they had in

common, like, three guys jumped off, these poor guys, they served in Korea before. They knew, they knew, better to drown than go back. Guess what? They put them in the brig and they took them back, and then, some asshole, this is a technical term, because that ship is going to Korea, ... later, I met this guy coming back, ... he said, "I'm going back to Korea." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because I have every medal you can win, except the Congressional Medal of Honor." I said, "The only people that usually get that get killed." He says, "I don't care. I want that medal." "I don't think I want to talk to this guy anymore." Anyway, I didn't get flown in, thank God, but we got on the ship and the whole idea of the ship was, you can't trust our citizens, because they'll go AWOL. So, the whole point is, don't go anywhere near land. So, if there's an island there, there's Hawaii, [Dr. Lapidus makes a noise to indicate that they just passed it by], wherever they went, [he repeats the noise], and I don't know how long I was on that frigging ship. It was, like, endless and they were stacking them up with all these little [stops] and, sometimes, you hit bad weather. People will go, "Bleh," and I was told, and I took the advice, "If you get nauseous, you go up on the deck. ... You have to get the fresh air," and I did, except guys on both sides of me were heaving their guts, but I managed, somehow. As you can already tell, I'm, number one, not too good of a soldier, and, number two, not too strong as a person. So, now, the ship comes and I said, "Okay, we're disembarking, and what are you doing about it? We're out here in the middle of the water." He said, "We can't go any farther," because [of] something [that] had to do with the tides. In Korea, you can't bring the ship in. "So, what do you mean by that? Where are we going?" He says, "We're going to climb down the nets and we're going to go on landing boats." Today, I'd say, "That's Steven Spielberg shit; I don't do that." ... Anyway, so, now, I've got this rifle that I don't know how to fire and I've got all this heavyweight shit, like a backpack with all this crap on it, that I didn't know how to use and I'm climbing down this frigging net into this little boat and, in the meantime, all in the back, I'm hearing, "Boom, boom, boom." I said, "What's that, thunder?" "No, no, it's artillery. They've driven us down here." Now, I was a lucky dude, because I had this background of clerical skills and they desperately needed some people for that. Everybody else was right to the frontline, as fast as they can get them. They picked out three or four of us. They said, "You have two things going for you. Number one, you have clerical skills and, number two, you're only a private." I said, "What has that got to do with anything?" He said, "Because we want the lowest ranking guys here," for some reason. Other guys were getting promoted. Battlefield promotions, you ever heard of them? "And we're going to keep you, because you're a low-rank private and because you have clerical skills." So, that saved me. When I say "saved me," I don't know, but I didn't go into [the] frontlines. I didn't have to do [any] fighting.

SI: Before that, had you thought that you would be sent right to the frontlines?

FL: Oh, yes. I didn't know what town I would be sent to, but they give you a rifle, they give you ammunition and you hear firing. They were sending everybody as fast as they could, to try to save it from being pushed into the water. So, I got assigned [to], I didn't even know it at the time, but Eighth Army Headquarters. When I say "headquarters," I tend to think of some prestigious building, but it wasn't. It looks like a rag-tag [outfit]. What I got assigned to was some kind of a; the Army has some kind of a table where they tell you, "Everything belongs here, there and the other," and you see where you fit in. Everything is mapped out. I belonged to an outfit that did not appear on paper. It was, like, a thing put together for their needs, and, again, it turns out it was doing, like, sort of semi-intelligence work, but not like electronic

snooping. Basically, because they didn't have the computers and all that kind of stuff, coded stuff would be coming in, it would be decoded, and then, we would have to make copies of it and dispatch it to where it was supposed to go within the headquarters operation. I knew I was in the wrong place. We're not too bright guys when, two days after I was there, I got a top secret thing and the other guy has got a top secret thing. I got the original, he's got the typed copy and we're proofreading and a lieutenant grabs them. He says, "What the hell do you think you're doing?" I said, "Well, proofreading it. You told me to do this." He said, "You didn't clear for top secret. You take the copy, not the original." "Okay," and I have a lieutenant who was given to fits, epileptic type fits, and one of my jobs was to pull his tongue out of his mouth when he had one of these, to make sure he didn't choke on it. I didn't learn about this while I was in high school. You had these weird people there, you know. Anyway, that's what we were doing, and I helped deliver the messages, so, they gave me a .45. I said, "Why are you giving me that?" That's the one thing I never shot in practice. Like a bazooka, a .45 is heavy, heavy. He said, "Well, just keep your arms free, in case you're attacked and you have to use it. You can't carry a rifle and top secret shit. You've got to be able to draw it out with [your free hand]." I, fortunately, never had to do that, but, anyway, so, my job was, then, part of it was, like, doing the clerical work. Sometimes, it was delivering stuff, and I was there ... with this headquarters thing for quite a while. I don't remember very much of it, but I remember being fascinated by the fact that a lot of the stuff that was coming in were giving troop movements in Russia, this division, that division. We're in Korea and, "Wow." A lot of it was ... the people that handle court cases. ... There were a lot of soldiers who were being charged with this, that and the other, killing prisoners, and there was a lot of that. ... The idea seemed to me that, "Hell, I'm up here fighting and we've taken thirty prisoners. I ain't going to spend my time taking these bastards back to a prison camp. Hey, shoot the suckers right there." A lot of that went on. I remember, one vision always stayed with me, because, years later, I read a novel about it, ... this endless line of surly faced people; they were all Chinese prisoners of war. ... When we were halfway across the Pacific; ... my job, by the way, on the ship, I got to be the disc jockey, playing music on this loudspeaker, and so close to Christmastime. I started playing songs that make the guys upset. I played *I'll Be Home for Christmas*, (*You Can Count on It?*), you know, songs like that, to make them all cry. [laughter] That was the mean streak I had. ... Halfway across, we get this announcement that three hundred thousand or two hundred-and-fifty thousand Chinese have just crossed the Yalu River. Everyone on that ship thought, "Hey, you know, this is a breeze. You go over there, you shoot a few shots and, 'Bam, bam,' that's the end of that, because you don't know the American Army. Those people bit off more than they can chew," but, then, when they said, "Two hundred-and-fifty thousand Chinese have just crossed the Yalu River," uh-oh, everybody got a little somber. So, I even stopped playing those records, *I'll Be Home for Christmas*. I remember, I did play, over and over, *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*. I don't know why that song sticks in my mind. [laughter] Anyway, so, there I was, anyway, there we are, and, while I was there, ... you know, I didn't do any fighting.

SI: You started that story by talking about this image of the long line of prisoners.

FL: Yes. A novel came out. There's a Chinese novelist, who, now, I think, teaches at Boston University, and I never really realized this, but he was talking about that exact thing. There was an island or two off Korea that they were using to house the prisoners of war and he talks about this period of time. ... When I read it, everything jumped to my mind. It came through, and I

even started doing some research and found out about it, you know, on the Internet. ... In these prison camps, they had a real problem, because half the prisoners wanted to get the hell out of China and go to Taiwan and be free and the other half were Marxists or Communists and wanted to get back to China and be free and they were really antagonistic. In the United States, by the way, when they had German prisoners of war, they had some, like, real party types, Nazi Party types. They were trying to bulldoze the non-party types who were simply prisoners of war. They had a real problem, you know, rooting those out and keeping those guys [separate], but, here, they had a real political problem between those who want to go to Taiwan [and] those who thought they were traitors, who wanted to go back and become Marxists and Communists, and this guy deals with ... that issue all over the place in his novel. [I] can't think of his name, but a good writer, and he's now up at Boston, still writing novels. Anyway, I saw these guys, surly, and they were being all marched off. So, I'm reminded now of how people used to say, because I did a lot of Holocaust [studies], people would say, "These prisoners, won't they act up? Won't they fight back and everything?" I said, "You know, son-of-a-bitch, I remember, as far as the eye could see, prisoners, and here would be a soldier with a machine gun, there would be another one with a machine gun; nobody tried to break away. Where were they going to go? They're wearing these pajama-like outfits, so, where were they going to go? Nobody fought back, and these were military guys, these weren't civilians, picked up and put in concentration camps. They didn't fight back. How the hell do you expect some seventy-five-year-old guy from some little village to fight back when these professional soldiers didn't do diddly shit?" By the way, my friend, Charlie, when he left Korea; he left before I did. He had what they call a burp gun. Know what a burp gun is? That's the gun they used in China, that the Chinese had, and they called it a burp gun because it's like an automatic, single-round barrel, and, when you shot it, it was, like, so fast that it tended to jump up, "Brrrrup," like that, "Brrrrup," like that. It sounded like a burp. So, he gave me one to bring back to him, went to the United States. I'm such a dummy that I hid the whole thing. I disassembled it. I hid the whole thing, like, sneaked it back into the country, and I gave it to him here. "Charlie, you owe me big time." Any case, there I was, over there, and I wasn't doing any fighting. ... I remember part of the building I was in at one time, because I was in a number of different buildings. I was basically in three different places. I can't even remember [all of them]. I was in Pusan for a while, Taegu, and I was in some other place, and I remember, one guy in one place, his job, what he ran, was to take care of the dead bodies, not the bodies, but reports back to the families and all that, to keep a record, and he, like, went off the wall with this stuff. ... He took out a gun and shot himself in the foot, just so he could get shipped home. That's the kind of stuff that happened a lot in World War I, by the way. He died just to get out of there. I remember, one night, after I put in whatever time I put in there, I got put on an airplane with a couple of other people and they're going up to; I don't know if this was the time, but there was an airplane and, in the Army, in the airplanes, they don't take off the way commercial planes do, whoop, like that. ... I remember being on the plane in very bad weather and the pilot announcing that we're turning back, because of the weather. I remember some guy getting up, and [on] his shoulders, all these stars were shining and glowing, and he went up to the cabin with the pilot. Then, the pilot got back on, "We've changed plans. We're going to proceed ahead." In other words, the guy said, "No, we're not going back." I got sent up, actually, I don't know why, but there were, like, very few of us who were just plain enlisted men, up to where they were setting up the initial peace conference. It's not where it is now, but it's at some other place, initially, and it was a weird set-up, because it was filled with officers and it was, like, very casual. Nobody bothered to salute. I remember, one time, some

guy was newly arrived, an officer, and I walk by and I waved to the guy and he said, "Soldier, stop. You didn't salute me." I said, "Yes. No, I didn't," and then, he said some dumb thing, like, "Remember, you're not saluting the man, you're saluting the uniform." I said, "[If] I'm saluting clothing, I'm not saluting." I said, "I'm sorry, it won't happen again." It was, like, so casual. I went about it, and then, ... after a while, I learned a number of words in Korean, and they were all bad words. ... I remember, once, I was walking with someone and there was bushes and these Korean guys were walking on the other side, and I sort of came around with some friend of mine, shouting out all these profanities in Korean, and I heard babbling back. ... Only later, when they sort of emerged, I realized they were all top-ranking Korean Army officers. I remember, once, being on a train; I don't know where the hell I was going and some officer gave me a job. He said, "Get your bayonet." At that time, the Army had bayonets. They don't use them anymore. I think they give you a Swiss Army knife, made in Taiwan. Anyway, I had the bayonet. He says, "The Korean soldiers," the regular army of the Republic of Korea, they called them ROKs, and he says, "When we get to such-and-such a station, make sure they all got off. A lot of them won't want to. Get that bayonet. Make sure they get off." We come to this place. I have to propel these bastards, and then, the officer goes, he says, "Did you get them all off?" I said, "Yes, sir, I got my ROKs off." [laughter] You had to be there. Anyway, so, ... it was weird. ... Actually, a couple of times, I was supposed to be court-martialed for minor infractions, but I also got moved around enough so that they never caught up with me. One time, I had this job I told you about ... and I was with this group of people, four or five, all day long. It was, like, a long day, like, eight, nine, ten hours a day, working with them, and you go crazy with the same people. So, whenever I had free time, I would go to whorehouses, and everything was off limits, everything was off limits, practically, and I would just hang out there. It wasn't that I was, like, a sex maniac. It was just to hang out, for, you know, just to get away, and, one time, ... a jeep comes by with two MPs and they spot me and I hear, "Soldier," and they pulled me out there and they threw me into the jeep. ... In the Army, a rifle is never called a rifle. You know what it's called? a piece. The MPs [asked], "Soldier, where is your weapon?" I said, "I left my piece in there, looking at the girls." "Don't get it." They were going to put me on court-martial, but, then, I got sent home before ... that ever came to fruition. When I was at the peace conference, there was a guy who was a professional boxer of some kind and [he] uses me as a sparring partner. It was great, man, and I had some deranged colonel who got pissed off, because he tried to sleep and we were making so much noise it kept him awake. So, he filed charges against me, but I got shipped home before that came to fruition. Then, one time, I go down and I'm walking along this ridge, a narrow ridge, and there was the whole commander of the whole shebang, Mathew Ridgeway, the Supreme Commander. ... In the background, you hear rifle shots going on, "Boom, boom," and I can't knock this guy out of the way, and so, I'm walking at a right angle on this little ridge and carrying my little bundle of whatever and he looks up and he says, "Soldier, a lot of small arms fire tonight." I'm thinking, "There's a guy that really knows shit. Thank God he's in charge. He knows stuff. None of us would have known that." I remember one; I had this guy, I became friendly with him. I think he must have taught at a community college. He's out in the West. He's [from] what is know in America as one of the "flyover states," places that you never want to go to, you just want to fly over. ... Before there were born-again Christians, he was one. He was, like, the most moral guy you'll ever meet. He's got a fiancée. I'm proud to say I got him laid, and he felt guilty and he wanted to take his life. "Hey, you know, your choice." I lured him into the place, but, anyway, in return, he gave me [John] Dryden to read. Dryden, if you know anything about literature, this is like reading *The Odyssey* in Greek, if you've ever

studied Greek. Anyway, I started reading because of this guy. They had books available and he started telling me about the beauties of literature. So, even while I was away, I said, "Well, I haven't studied this stuff at UConn yet, but, you know, it's good to get back to this." So, I began reading, even over there. I began reading so much stuff. So, as I say, I met Charlie. I went over to see him one time. I brought a jeep. People were firing guns and shit like that, and I met a lot of Koreans, you know. It was a weird place. Now, oddly enough, my son, not the one that just started college, my other son, left the country and went over to Korea to teach English, and I don't know if you know this, but, to teach English in a foreign country, there are one or two countries that you don't have to have any background to get into. South Korea is one of them, Thailand, possibly, not right now, but choice places, like Italy, Japan, you have to have, you know, a good background, certification, and so forth. So, he went over there and he taught five or six years and, you know, he would tell me a lot of what's going on. He married a Korean woman. They're back in the States now, and, of course, it's totally different now and it's all built up and one thing, you read a lot of stuff out of magazines against American imperialism, Howard Zinn and all that kind of stuff, and they list all the wars the "American Empire" is having. Don't let them knock you on Korea, even the right-wing Republicans. "Oh, we cut and ran in Korea;" no, we didn't. General MacArthur wanted to bomb the shit out of China. Harry Truman said, "No, you can't," and he said, "I'm in charge, not you," and he got rid of MacArthur. He was a big hero and they gave him a big parade in Manhattan, but he said, "You don't rise above the political, and I'm the President," and you can say, "Well, we didn't win that war," but we broke even. That's the best we've done in quite a while; we broke even. The war is still on, as you know. There's no peace. There's an agreement not to shoot at each other, but nothing has changed, though a lot of South Koreans really want to reunite and bring it into one country again, much as East and West Berlin, Germany, came together, but our being there, number one, they invaded. They crossed the 38th Parallel. We reacted; we didn't invade them. They didn't have oil or anything like that. Number two, it was a Fascist-led, it was a totally bad country, South Korea. Now, it's a democracy and it's got a very viable economy. It's got the Kia, it's got the Hyundai, etc., etc. They're doing quite well now. So, we changed that country around. Now, we may not have won the war, but compare that with what's going on in North Korea. If you want to get anything to eat in North Korea, you'd better join the military. They all look fit, right, but people [who] aren't in the military are [not]. So, yes, that was a decent war, as wars go.

SI: You were there when MacArthur was fired and sent home.

FL: I'm trying to remember; maybe not. Let's see ...

SI: You were there from October 15th ...

FL: No, no. I was there, I think, around December. The war started the 30th of June, 1950. Pusan, when I got there, was toward the end of December, just before Christmas, and there was a Pusan Perimeter. He wanted to bomb the shit [out of China], I think, before that, but I think they might have already pulled him out, because, then, Mathew Ridgeway took over, when I was there. So, I think MacArthur was already out. I was there a couple of months after the war started. Now, when I left and came back, again, I ... stopped off at the Presidio and I did meet, on the ship, people I had served with the first time. Some of them were killed, people I knew from the first time in service. ... When I was living in San Francisco, at the Presidio, I met this

guy who had been in the Army with [me] and he had been sent to Korea and he was, like, off the wall, but [he] recognized me. Yes, it was a weird situation. Again, I got another year-and-a-half of the GI Bill. So, [in] four years of college, there was only one semester not covered by the GI Bill, and I worked summers. I worked at a summer resort and I made enough money to [cover my expenses]. So, my parents never paid a penny for my college, had the GI Bill, and, of course, it was a state university, so, it was relatively inexpensive anyway. So, I got my college degree because of those two times in the service. Now, given the fact that I didn't get shot, given the fact that I didn't get traumatized and given the fact that I didn't get VD, I made out okay. Had it not been for those two terms, I would not have a college degree.

SI: I wondered if there any kind of reaction among the troops when MacArthur was fired?

FL: No, not that I know of. One thing that always bugged, I think, people who served in Korea [was] that cultural commentators always talked about "The Placid '50s." Nothing happened in the '50s. "What are you talking about? I was in Korea, being shot at. What do you mean, 'Nothing happened?'" ... For some reason, oh, the '60s were very exciting and, [in] the '40s, there was a world war; nothing in the '50s. Everything was laid-back in the '50s. There was the Korean War, and, basically, what happened was, they didn't have a draft for most of that time, so, people were not being affected, unless you're in the Reserve, Inactive Reserves, or National Guard. ... Then, eventually, they did impose the draft, which is why I got out after a year, because you see what's going on now. They just keep [saying], "You're going to stay on, you're going to stay on, you're going to stay on," in Iraq, but, then, they started bringing enough people in that I could get [out] after a year of service. "I can get out," get out of there, and, again, it was the same deal, that I missed the term at UConn, University of Connecticut, so, I'd have to wait to get in line with that beginning semester again. ... Again, you know, it's compensation. I did have the GI Bill and, being older, as I said, they did give me those breaks when I went to the university, not having to stay in the regular dorm, and that was helpful.

SI: When you first joined the Eighth Army Headquarters in Pusan, it was still under siege.

FL: Oh, yes.

SI: Did you have any close calls? What was working in that environment like?

FL: Well, I just remembered this; at one point, I lived in, we were living in, what had been a university. It was in Seoul, I guess it was, and it was, like, cold and the cold was incredible, could never, never keep warm. ... I used to sleep, we used to sleep in, they may have been dormitories, I don't know, with two pair of socks on, with all the clothes [on], with the winter underwear, every night. I could never get warm, and the result was that when I came back to this country, I was never cold. No matter how cold it was, I never felt cold after that, and then, I had what they called the "honey pots." In Korea, they fertilize everything with human dung. I mean, they would empty out cisterns, or whatever, and they would put it on the [crops]. Their vegetables were three times the size of whatever grows in this country. Like, tomatoes would be like watermelons, but wherever you are, the guys who collected this stuff ... had these pots, that's why they called them honey pots, and they would fill them up. They go from shack-to-shack and collect this stuff, and the smell is in the air. I mean, you couldn't get away from the smell, and I

remember ending up having a cold when I left Korea and I couldn't get rid of it. I was in this country for, like, it must have been two years, before I could get it out of my system. It just stayed in there for some reason. So, I remember the honey pots very distinctly. Everyone who's there remembers it. I remember, also, ... going once into a house of ill repute, and you had the same thing in Korea as you have in this country, ... they had the Korean women who were just interested in making money and they didn't give a shit who brought it in. So, now, ... these couple of black guys were in there and they figured that, "It's a way to make a buck," but, if they see a white GI come around, he doesn't want to see black guys. So, they were, like, trying to handle this racial thing and still make a lot of money. Anyway, one black guy, like, [was] drunk out of his skull, and I'm walking in and he walks out, and he puts a rifle to my head. [I said], "Hey, can I buy you a drink?" It was, like, a very fearful moment, put your life out, but, anyway, as you can tell, nothing bad happened, but that was, like, a little nervous and jerky at the time.

SI: How did you get out of it?

FL: I don't remember, probably talked him out of it or something, but it was a nervous thing. A lot of stuff, we did. The incredible nonsense of any bureaucracy; I remember some, like, real hush-hush, top secret stuff and I said to one of the guys I worked with, "This is really top secret and don't say a word about it, but, if you want to find out more about it, here's the Army newspaper. It's on the front page, the exact same thing," that kind of crap, and I remember, once, going out and there was the garbage we were throwing away. ... I said, "Here's some of the top secret stuff that is in the garbage can," you know, crap like that. One of the great moments, though, a long time ago, I had this thing. It was, like, above top secret, above urgent, as fast as can be possible, highly-coded message, going to Tokyo, "Penny. Six o'clock. Dinner." I said, "Fuck, this is, like, even in translation, it's super-coded." You know what it turned out to be? Mathew Ridgeway sending a telegram to his wife, Penny, that he'd be flying back to Tokyo for dinner at six, and I said, "Oh, yes, this is a real code, shit, man." [laughter] Well, you know, you don't want to have the enemy know where your top commander is. Anyway, so, I used to do that. ... I remember, once, walking around and here's old Mathew Ridgeway. He's playing football [with a younger officer]. He's, like, a top star from West Point, one of the great football players. His assignment was just to throw the ball back and forth, and I said, "Son-of-a-bitch, even I can't qualify for that." ... Then, I remember, once, I had to take a piss, that's a technical term in the military, and there was this tent and there was this soldier guarding [it], an MP, and I said, "What's this?" "It's General Ridgeway's latrine, private latrine." I said, "Really?" "Go ahead." So, I went in. I come out and I said, "Thanks. By the way, tell the General, 'Don't think your shit don't stink.'" It's just all these weird things, nothing really bad, but [I] remember the peace conference, like, very hectic. Everything is all over. There's going to be peace. Nothing ever came of it, of course.

SI: Were your duties there similar?

FL: Yes, mainly clerical, but, as I say, I was lucky. It was a very select group, because most of [the] people up there were officers. In other words, [I was], like, supporting them and everything, and it was incredibly hot. We were living and sleeping in tents, in the summertime. It was just [awful], you know. You couldn't sleep, because the tents just absorbed that heat and it was incredible, and we were working at night, so, in the daytime, you're supposed to be in the

tent, sleeping. Forget it, plus, it was, like, an out of the way area. [I] could have just hung out in warehouses. Yes, so, I put in a year doing that, and then, I came back, and then, I was lucky enough [to resume my civilian life]. I remember going into a bar in downtown New Haven, still there, the Anchor, the Anchor Bar, and I remember, they asked me for my draft card. I turned to the guy. I said, "You want to see my draft card?" I said, "I've been in the Army twice now." I took out a match. I said, "Here's my draft card," and I burned it right in front of him. "I don't need it, because I ain't going back, no matter what," and then, I remember slugging down some shots of liquor. I said, "Son-of-a-bitch, I've come a long way. I can really handle this stuff." Only later, when I went to another bar, did I realize that I was being handed watered-down stuff. I'm knocking down six of them, "Hey," you know, [laughter] but, yes, I'm burning my draft card, before the age of burning draft cards came around.

SI: When you were over in Korea, was there a lot of drinking? Were there enlisted men's clubs set up or would soldiers just make liquor themselves?

FL: No. They were shipping beer there. The whole trick was to try to make it cold and what we did [was], what I did, anyway, a couple of us did, you take a couple of cans of beer and you put it in your helmet on a rope and you lower it down to a well, and the water, because it's really far down, [is] ice cold. Within minutes, it would chill the beer. You pull it up; it was nice. I didn't drink that much then, anyway, and the reason we did drink, by the way, drink beer, now and then, [was] because the water was so heavily chlorinated. You didn't swallow the water, [you] gargled with it, because, you know, you needed a little, but even gargling, I mean, it was just, like, terrible. So, you were sort of forced to drink anything that you could get that was canned or bottled, because you couldn't drink the water, really, heavily [chlorinated]. It was like going to the YMCA pool and drinking right out of the pool, terrible.

SI: What about the food? What were the other, standard creature comforts like?

FL: I don't really remember that much. I remember that they did make, they still do; the Army always tries to make a thing about holidays, like Thanksgiving or Christmas, and, you know, they ship in stuff and it's a nice thing, or try to make it a little special, but whatever it was, it was adequate. I didn't starve to death. ... You know, one thing I never ate was the Korean [dish], still, to this day, I can't, I see it in the grocery store now, *kimchi*, and my son, who lived in Korea, loves that stuff. He said, his notion of [fun], "Hey, let's go to Queens," a place they call Koreatown, "and we'll go there for dinner." "I don't want to fucking go there. I can kill a dog here and eat it." [laughter] ... "What happened to my German shepherd?" "Oh, here, Dad, have some food." I did eat some Korean food, but I would never eat *kimchi*. For some reason, I don't like it, too garlicky or something.

SI: It has a very strong smell, does it not?

FL: I did eat Korean food there. I became friends with any number of Koreans when I was there, young kids. I was showing them the Sears catalog and their eyeballs would roll, you know, like, "Wow, land of opportunity, golden [streets]." Little did they know that it's all gone now, it's been globalized, [laughter] but, you know, they saw things and, everything, they couldn't believe this stuff was available.

SI: Were they just kids that you happened to run into?

FL: They were kids. Like, some of these kids worked where you were stationed. They were given little jobs and this and that and, you know, you felt sorry for them, you know, sort of semi-adopted them, you know, [give them a] candy bar, now and then, and things like that. Yes, [I] became friends with, you know, a number of women there, you know. One thing, at that time, early on, the women were becoming somewhat westernized, to appeal to the GIs, for business purposes, but the old-timers, they're conservative and they didn't like this crap, you know. You were, like, a traitor if you were hanging out with an American, "whitey," if you will, much as in Japan, after the occupation. Originally, the idea of westernization was anathema to them, for the old-timers. They want to hold on to the traditional way.

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

SI: Please, continue. You were talking about how the women were more westernized

FL: Well, yes, professionally, they have to be, and, of course, you know, what happened was, as you know, in the Orient, [when] you go into a little house, no matter what, you were barefoot. So, now, you've got the GIs and they have their Army boots. Now, they're going to go in to mess around with some woman in one of these little places; they had to take off their boots. So, the MPs know this and they wanted to snag these guys. If they did, they would simply go out and grab the boots, and you ain't going anywhere, because they got your boots. So, that American ingenuity and know-how; it soon became apparent that what you did was, you had a zipper sewed into your boot, so [that] you had it tied up, they were tied up permanently, but you had a zipper [and] you can take them on or off in a hurry. I spent a lot of time in these places, just hanging out, bullshitting. I had a girlfriend. I'd call my girl, you know, just to pass the time, because you could not spend all of your time in a small, confined area, working with the same faces over and over and over and over. You just didn't want to do it, and long hours, ... every day of the week. ... It wasn't, "The weekends, you don't have to work;" I remember, it was like a seven-day thing, eight to ten hours or more a day, with the same faces, and when you work, doing the actual work, you're with the same guys doing the non-work. So, you look for a diversion. You leave and wander off, do stuff like that.

SI: Were there any other recreational things set up, like USO type things?

FL: I don't know. I don't recall anything. Well, the Army always had that learning program, where you could get books and things like that to study, but, you know, [when] you're in a situation, that kind of a situation, the last thing you want to do is read a five-volume history of the Roman Empire, you know. ... You didn't have TV, you didn't have porno on the Internet, you know, you didn't have much of anything, and this is the better part of life. I'm not talking about the guys that are getting shot at. It was not a fun thing. I considered myself very, very fortunate that I ended up, you know, with that clerical thing, which, by the way, later served me quite well, because the Army taught me to type. I became an incredibly fast typist. ... At one point, when I moved to New York City, after I graduated, I got a job typing piece rate, because, at that time, before they had computers, addressing envelopes, I could really zip along there on the

typewriter. Now, of course, that's another job going by the wayside because of technology. Yes, it really helped. I became a very skilled typist at that point, because of that training in Richmond, down in Virginia. So, all in all, my two terms in the military were not really bad at all. ... The positive side of it was that I ended up getting a college education ... through the government and it was a good thing. I mean, for me, it changed my life, certainly, because I'd never even considered college. It never entered my mind to go to college. I ended up not only going to college, but going on for more degrees. I remember, I got my BA and I went to work in New York. I worked in New York for maybe two years, very unhappy, with a whole ... variety of jobs. I just happened to write to a guy at the University of Connecticut, at that time, [who] was an English teacher I got along with. I really liked him, he liked me, but he had now moved up to become a this-and-that chairman, and I'll show [you] how times have changed. He wrote back and said, "I spoke to the chairman of the English Department and, if you wanted a job, an assistantship, graduate assistantship, you can have it, but I have to know in twenty-four hours." Today, can you think of any chairman, or anyone, who will say, "I can get you a job. If you want [it], let me know?" He'll be sued ... for discrimination or whatever else, just acting on his own, but, at that time, I said, "Hey, okay. I can't pay my rent in New York. I'll go. I'll do it," and so, I ended up, you know, as a graduate assistant. Then, I got my MA at the University of Connecticut, and I went to the same guy and said, "What am I going to do with an MA? You can't do anything with it." He says, "You can get a job teaching at a community college." Now, you can't do that with an MA. He says, "Or, you can go out for a PhD," and I said, "I don't think I'm smart enough for a PhD." He said, "It has nothing to do with being smart. It has to do with persistence. You just have to be persistent. Don't worry about the smarts, just be persistent." So, I said, "Okay, I'll do that." So, then, I went ... out to Berkeley and I couldn't stand it. It was, like, too crazy and too hectic, and then, my wife missed her family, they were in New York, and missed the East Coast and missed the kind of work she was doing and everything. So, I applied to Rutgers and I came to Rutgers. I put in, I guess, about five or six years here, and then, finally, when I was working on my dissertation, I went over to Douglass College and [was] teaching there and I got that full-time job there. I taught for a year, and then, I graduated. 1966 was an anniversary for Rutgers, 350 years, and they had just went into that red robe thing for the gown, instead of a black, traditional thing, and so, we got that, and they had it at the [stadium]. WPA, remember the WPA, you know the WPA? Works Progress Administration, under Roosevelt. They built that stadium out there for Rutgers, and that's where the ceremony was held. ... They got to the thing and, for some reason, I forgot part of it, the hood or the thing around my neck, and I had to go through crazy traffic all the way back to get that and come back. So, I graduated and I went off to my first full-time academic job. That's it.

CE: To jump back a little bit, once you returned from Korea, what was your feeling about McCarthyism? Did you experience a lot of it?

FL: Yes. I was basically left of center, so, I didn't like it. Now, I remember, at the University of Connecticut, there was a guy who was summoned up before the McCarthy group and he refused to testify and the school put him on leave, and then, his name was vindicated and the school said, "Okay, you have your job back," and he said, "Take the job and stick it. You didn't stand behind me; I don't want to work for you anymore. I was never a member of the Communist Party, but I reserve the right not to have to say that," and he says, "They showed that I was not a member of the Communist Party. I don't want your job anymore." I think he went off to Israel or someplace

and got a job there. There's all that craziness going on, and, [during] the Vietnam War, I was at Rutgers. I remember, I used to get into arguments with the guys. One guy was, like, constantly defending the Vietnam War and I was constantly arguing with him, because I used to spend a lot of time at the library, doing my thing. I remember, one guy came up, this is, like, nothing, but one guy, I remember, came up to me and he said, his name was Ira, and Ira said to me, "I took this course with you over at Douglass College. ... On an exam, you gave me a 'B+.' I think I deserved an 'A.'" "I think you deserved a 'B+,' but, if you want me to change your grade, I'll change it." He said, "Well, I want you to change the grade, but only if you think I deserved an 'A.'" I said, "Well, I don't think you deserved an 'A,' but I'll change your grade." "I want to know that;" this went on, back and forth, and I said, "I'm perfectly willing to change your grade, but you didn't deserve an 'A.'" This shit went on, back and forth, it must have been, like, two hours. Ira went on, got a PhD in English at Cornell. He's up somewhere in Canada now. He's got a radio show. He writes for two or three magazines, long on tradition in the field, and, in fact, he has a book out on, who was that ... Canadian song guy? It's Leonard ...

ML: Cohen?

FL: Cohen. He's got a book out on Leonard Cohen. He met Leonard Cohen. He writes about Leonard. He's got another book that just came out. ... Then, there's another guy, I used to call him "Red Shoes." The movie, *The Red Shoes*; you don't remember that. His name was S-C-H-E-W-S, Schews, and he was a Marxist, a leftist, a this and that. He went down to Mexico, and we used to argue politics all the time. He was an undergraduate. He ended up becoming a very good novelist, wrote about Jewish grandmothers and experiences, and seems to have drifted away from the leftist stuff. ... He's down in Washington, DC, now. He's taught at a couple of distinguished universities and he's a Rutgers graduate, another Marxist who sort of drifted back towards the center. I used to argue with him all the time. I wasn't that active in the Vietnam thing, but I did go to a couple of teach-ins down here.

CE: What were some of the decisive things that happened with the Vietnam War that got Rutgers really against it?

FL: Well, nothing about the University. The University was never against it. The people, some of the people, were against it.

CE: I meant the students, yes.

FL: They had a couple of very good teachers here who were adamantly opposed to it and who spoke up at these teach-ins, and then, they had one guy who was, like, a very; he's now dead. I remember him. He used to drive an old, battered Cadillac, but he was a poet, (John Chiari?). He taught here and he was bright, but he was all for it. He would argue [for] it and he practically got booed. I went to an arts and humanities award thing in New York, very distinguished. I got invited by the guy that I had [done] some work with and (Chiari?) got up to give a speech. They practically booed him off the stage, because it was a defense of Vietnam. He was a good guy, but people have these weird things, because, as much as he was for the war and [showed his] support and so forth, when the school said to him, "You're not taking attendance in your classes," [he replied], "I didn't get paid to be clerical help here." He said, "I teach classes. That has

nothing to do with what I'm here for." They had a guy named (Francis Ferguson?), who went off to; he was a physicist. He got a Fulbright or something, went to Europe with his wife and he got interested in theater. He came [back] and wrote two or three, like, outstanding books on theater and he was teaching here and I remember sitting in his seminar. "How many of you want an 'A'? Okay, write your name down here and you all got an 'A.' Now, you've got your grade. Let's go down and get serious about our work." That was the end of that, and I remember, once, he asked me to pick up [someone] at the railroad station. "Pick up Red for me, will you?" Red is Robert [Penn] Warren. He was teaching at Yale and he was the author of *All the King's Men*, soon to come out with Sean Penn's remake of the film, but Red wanted the guy that wrote the book and I was supposed to pick him up at the railroad station. He was going to give a talk here. He was down at Princeton or something. So, yes, they had a good faculty and I had a lot of fun here. That's how the country was divided about Vietnam, and you're not divided now, about Iraq. Well, they are, I mean, but it's not the same thing. You know why? There's no draft. Turn around and say, "We're going to [have a] draft and your son may go," and you'll see a lot of people say, "I've got to decide, one way or the other, how I feel about it and go on record." Now, it's, "Hey, get out, don't get out, that's not my problem." Well, all they do is take the National Guard and they say, "Well, yes, he's on for his fifth tour, but what the hell? He wanted to make the money, so, now, we'll let him pay it back," but, if you have the draft, that changes everything. So, Vietnam was very active here, very active here, and, well, when I went on my first job, the same thing when I went to the University of Bridgeport, I was very vocal and active there, too. [I] remember being locked in. I was in some kind of a university meeting and the students seized the building, locked us in or some shit. I remember trying to encourage them; I said, "Burn the library, burn the library." [laughter]

SI: Who was your mentor at Rutgers? Who did you study under? Did you study under anyone?

FL: Fred (Manns?), good guy. This will be useful for you. When I was at the University of Connecticut, I used to write these brilliant papers that nobody could understand. ... Over and over, I was told, "You know, you've got to do something. Your writing sucks," but, having said that, they gave me an "A" and [had me] move on, and the same thing happened at Rutgers. "It's good stuff, good stuff; you're writing sucks." So, constantly, I'd be getting these, in graduate school, I mean, you know, like "Bs." In grad school, grades are, like, ... code. A "B" is their way of saying, "You're doing 'D' or 'F' work." I mean, at one time, they wanted to throw me out, get me out of the program, and there was one guy; I can't even remember his name. (Hamilton?), his name was, and I had a course with him, contemporary literature or something, and he got up and he defended me and they kept me on, because of him. Fred (Manns?) was the guy that came along [and helped me]. He was my PhD adviser. Every sentence that I wrote, every paragraph that I wrote, every chapter I wrote, he went over it with pencil, "Why did you say that? Why did you say it that way? What does that mean? Change this, make it better," and he finally forced me [to learn to write]. Everybody else said, "You should do something about it. Next." He said, "You will do something about it, or it's not going to be accepted." ... I started teaching full-time and I fell behind and I was getting nowhere, and he called me up one day and he said, "You're not handing in anything?" I said, "Well..." He said, "You know what? Pick it up, write a sentence or two. You've got to keep on top of it. ... You've got to stay with it. Even if you don't do much with it, you've got to have it in front of you." So, I started doing that. Finally, I would go to him and he'd say, "Why did you do this? Why did you do that?" and, after a while, I

started arguing, "Because, because, because," and, one day, he looked at me and says, "Okay, you know what? You're ready. You can hand it in now." I said, "How do you know?" He said, "Because you stand up and you argue with me and you can defend yourself and you're always right. I can't challenge you anymore, because you know what you're doing," and, now, I took this exam, after you hand in the dissertation, and they ask you a lot of questions. I remember, this guy came up to me, and it was Paul Fussell, he wrote that book, and he said to me, he says, "You know, I've sat in on a lot of PhD exams at Harvard. This is as good as any exam I've ever sat in on before," and it made me very happy. So, that's it. So, I write this dissertation and forget it. It's done with, piece of nonsense, of no importance, and then, years later, ... someplace called Garland Press, academic publishers, they got in touch with me. "We'll publish your dissertation, if you cut it down somewhat, about fifty pages shorter," and I said, "Okay, I'll do that." They gave me a dollar-and-a-half and I did it and that was the end of that. It got published, did an academic thing, sold through the libraries. The other day, I'm on the Internet and I'm on Metafilter. You know Metafilter, on the Internet? People post news items or whatever and other people comment on it, and it's, like, heavily hit. Something like over a million people go to that thing every day. It's incredible. Some guy posted on something called "Shakespeare's apocrypha," meaning stuff that's attributed to Shakespeare, but they're not sure and it's questionable. So, he gives a long list of Shakespeare apocrypha and the guy said, "You know, this is not my field, I don't know anything about it, but I've always been fascinated by it." So, I write back and I said, "Well, here's an article from Wikipedia and one play that you have here, I happen to have published on it." Now, my online name was "Postroad" and it's one of the apocrypha things, and so, I wrote my dissertation on [it] and some guy writes back and puts a comment, "Oh, Postroad, you're Fred Lapedes. I used your book for my MA process." I said, "Oh, my God, my readers; one person." So, one person used it. So, there you go, [that] justifies all of those years spent there.

SI: How did you get interested in that topic?

FL: This is interesting. He called me aside. He said, "You know, you're ready for it." He says, "I've got five or six projects that are worth doing." The first one was on Edgar Allan Poe, and then, ... I had to see this guy, who was a Columbia professor, who was writing the definitive edition of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry. I went to see him three or four times, the guy, like, was a chain smoker, except he smoked two at a time, at his apartment. When I get all done, this guy's telling me all those great stories and [kept saying], "Look at this. Look at that." The one thing he didn't tell me was, he's coming out, exactly, with what he told me I should write on in about three months. He's got a publisher for it. So, what the hell? Why am I going to waste my time doing this and he's publishing a book on it? So, I dropped that. So, Fred (Manns?) said, "Well, here." There were two or three of us. One guy was a guy named Charlie, married to a Portuguese girl named Maria, and he went and taught down at University of Richmond, became the department chairman. They despised him at Rutgers, because Charlie was a former Merchant Marine guy, and as bad as he was, he struck them as being more blue-collar than Ivy League-ish and they didn't like the tone. Again, Fred (Manns?), he gave him a topic to write on, Elizabethan Period. There were two or three of us [who] wrote on that and the nice thing about it was, like, it was a limited project. It's all shaped out, "Here, go do it," as opposed to some dissertation topics that are just amorphous. You're never quite sure what it is you're doing. [With] this, you could say, "I do this, I do this, I do this," then, it's done, [like] in the sciences. One-third was on this

liberal arts dissertation. You pick out a very specialized thing, you write on it, it's done. A guy at Rutgers at that time, named Warren something or other ...

SI: Warren Sussman?

FL: Yes. You know Warren Sussman?

SI: Yes. There is a graduate conference named after him. He was the father of cultural history.

FL: Warren Sussman was such a brilliant teacher. There was faculty [members] at this school that would cancel their classes so [that] they could go and hear him give a lecture. They would sit in on his classes, the faculty. He never left much in the way of publication, very little, but he was, like, known nationwide and people, faculty, full-time, tenured faculty, would cancel their classes to go sit in on his classes.

SI: Do you remember the Genovese controversy?

FL: Yes, Genovese, yes. Basically, slavery was his field. He's still well-known in the field. What I could never figure out [is], there's another Genovese, Elizabeth something, that also writes, and I wonder if that's his wife.

SI: I am not sure.

FL: He did do two or three books, like, landmarks in the field on slavery, like, a big issue, still, in America, and what it was all about. What little I've looked into it, the whole economics behind it, the South, which was a slave economy, agriculture economy, cotton economy, when you have slaves and you mix slave with slave and you have slave children now, you have too many slaves. When you have slaves, unless you're like the Nazis and you're killing off people, you have [to provide] housing, clothing, food. No matter how inadequate they are, they still cost [money]. Now, as the economy began to go down, because of Egyptian cotton and so forth as competition, suddenly, a lot of these slave owners found themselves with something they didn't need, mouths to feed, clothing. They didn't need as many slaves as they had. Now, if you have an excess of property, slaves, what do you do with it?

SI: Sell them.

FL: You sell them off, but, if you're in the South and your neighbor has the same problem and his neighbor has the same problem, what do you do with it?

SI: Normally, you would try to export.

FL: No, the territories. You have slavery in the territories, and that's what the whole thing came down to, "Will there or won't there be slavery allowed in the territories?" The South wanted it, of course. The North was opposed to slavery. It wasn't going to do anything about slavery, but they said, "Slavery is immoral, and though we're not going to do anything about it, we don't want it happening in the territories." So, that's where the confrontation really took place, because of

selling off excess slaves in the territories. ... One thing that's ... almost never known about in this country is that the North supported slavery in a way, even though they, theoretically, were opposed to it, which is to say that for a lot of Southern slave owners, when they needed money, they had to borrow money and the money that you borrow was always from New York banks. ... "What are you going to put up for collateral?" "I'll put up my slaves for collateral." "Okay, we'll lend you money, based on your slaves as collateral." So, they were supporting slavery by saying, "We're accepting your collateral, human beings, slaves." So, in a way, they did. Did you know, also, that if you were fighting in the Civil War, you don't have to go to war, even though you're a Southerner, because you have slaves to care for? So, you're going to be exempt, because you're needed at home to take care of your slaves. That's why you got that expression, "A rich man's war and a poor man's fight," because the slave owners didn't go to war. They let the poor guys without slaves defend their right to have slaves. Why am I ranting and raving about slavery?

SI: I brought up Genovese.

FL: He was a big name in the field.

SI: Were you here when he made the comment that he wanted the Viet Cong to win the war? It was controversial.

FL: I don't think I recall that. Did I tell you about the time I played football with Paul Robeson?

SI: No. Actually, I do have a question about Paul Robeson. In the 1950s, he was basically disowned by Rutgers.

FL: Oh, yes. He was disowned.

SI: Yes, because of his political beliefs. In the 1960s and 1970s, they tried to mend the relationship with his family. Do you recall any of that being discussed around campus then?

FL: No. ... I have to say this; one of the weird things about being a graduate student at the PhD level [is], you blank out the world. I mean, you don't give a shit about the rest of the world. You're so caught up with what you're doing that, for example, I was out at Berkeley when there was Lenny Bruce and ... the Grateful Dead. Everything was taking place. I knew nothing about it, only years later. "You mean all this was taking place? I didn't know about that," because I was too busy reading Homer or whatever, or Milton. So, I didn't know that Genovese had made that statement, but, if he did, he was wrong. As far as Robeson is concerned, a lot of universities disown, and then, try to take back when the person gets, of course, rehabilitated. I remember, we had one guy, a student of mine, ... he was pretty hip and he took a Shakespeare class with me, brilliant, I mean, very gifted actor, very gifted. He played Falstaff in class once. It was great. He went on and he said he couldn't graduate. He was one course shy of graduating, because they said, "Well, you have to get the language requirement." "Okay, I'll do Spanish." "Well, you can't take Spanish, because you already know Spanish. That's your native language." He says, "Okay, I'll use English." "But you can't use English, because you already know English." So, he dropped out of school. Then, he goes on and he gets into Yale for their MA program in theater, because they're not so uptight about it. Now, he goes to New York and he puts on a one-man

show on Lenny Bruce. So, then, the school gets in touch with me and said, "Hey, you know this guy. We want to bring him back and give him an honorary degree." I said, "You know what?" I said, "I'm not going to recommend him. I'm not going to get in touch with him, because, when you pissed on him, that was okay, but, now that he's got a name and you think you can use him, suddenly, he's a golden boy. Forget it." That was the end of that. So, schools do. Robeson, yes, he became a Communist. He went to Russia. After a while, like so many others, he saw through the thing. He came back to this country. You know about the Peekskill Riots? You don't know. Okay, that's all right. [laughter] I'd bust your chops if you were ever in my class. You know where Peekskill, New York, is, right?

SI: Yes.

FL: He came back to Peekskill and, to welcome him back, they're going to have a big concert thing in his honor and everything, and they had a lot of worthies up there, including Pete Seeger and a couple of lefties that you would know, names you would know, the whole bastion. Anyway, the Peekskill Riots started because the Peekskill newspaper, inflammatory-like, urged them on. They didn't like the fact that a lot of Jewish people went up there for summertime vacations. They didn't like the idea that the lefties were going to use that, now, for Paul Robeson. They inflamed the general public and they had three days of rioting up there and these people were caught up there. ... When they tried to leave, there were state police ... standing there. It was bullshit. They weren't doing anything. People started throwing rocks and everything like that. It was, like, a real mess. It was a disgrace, and they liked to forget about that, but guess what? You can't stamp out the past and, if you look on the Internet, you'll find out that, every year or so, there are reminders and gatherers, when people go up to Peekskill to remember this time when the Peekskill three-day riot took place, and to memorialize that day. Anyway, Paul Robeson was there and that's what ticked it off. They were going to even the score with Robeson, who came back to the United States, having renounced Communism. When his name was [zip], you couldn't even buy his records in this country, you know that? You could not buy his records. Now, you can. Now, he's rehabilitated. There's a place in New Jersey called Robeson Village, named in his honor. His son was, I think, a lawyer in Philadelphia, just came out with a book, his second book, as a matter-of-fact. He was on TV recently and, now, suddenly, he's a great American. As a matter-of-fact, they put up, I think this past month, a statue for him in London, I believe. You know, he got the shit kicked out of him as a football player for Rutgers. ... Of course, he was black, and every time they tackle him, boy, they stepped all over his hands and stuff like that. They really were mean to him. He was ... one of the first black football players in America. Rutgers, by the way, had a lottery before [the Revolution]. You know the school used to be financed by lotteries? Yes, the whole lottery system; we said, "Well, there shouldn't be a lottery. That's gambling." That's how they raised money for the school. They said, "We can't raise the tuition for the students. We'll have a lottery instead." Now, they say, "Screw the lottery, man. Let's smack it to the students." They had lotteries to raise money for the school.

SI: You are talking about the Colonial period.

FL: Yes, yes. I don't mean last year. No, now, the state comes in, says, "That's our racket. Nobody else can do it."

SI: Yes.

FL: You guys really got hurt with your budget cut this year, didn't you?

SI: Yes, yes.

FL: They said, "Well, we'll give you the football team, screw you, and you'll get no money instead," right?

CE: I know you said that you were really involved with your graduate studies, but do you remember the Civil Rights activities going on then? Was there much of that?

FL: Where? That's how I got my first full-time job. I was saying earlier that the guy that was teaching at Douglass College went down to Mississippi, got arrested, refused to pay his fine. They put him in jail. [Rutgers] says, "Well, you're teaching part-time, would you like to teach full-time?" I said, "Okay," and then, my class said, "You scab. He's rotting in jail and you're taking his class?" They disliked that. Later on, they didn't mind, because they found out I was an easy grader. So, they said, "Hey, you're okay," but, then, he came back and, ultimately, they fired him, because he was doing weird things with some of the girl students, which, at that time, I thought was okay. ... I mean, he wasn't married, they weren't married, but Douglass College, I don't know what it's like now, but, at that time, it had once been a private school, private girls' college, so, the notion was that we'd keep that image. ... Like, a lot of the old biddies who ran the school, the administrators, tried to keep that little image of, "We're not like that animal farm over across town. We're a nice, little girls' college," and they were really weird about it, and they had the honor system and all that shit. One of the saddest moments of my life was that honor system. I had this nice, young girl who was in my class and she was accused, somewhere along the line, of having cheated or something and they brought her in. ... Oh, big, like an inquisition, and she was swearing up and down. ... Her father was a nice guy. He said, "If my daughter says she didn't cheat, then, she didn't cheat, because I know my daughter. I believe in my daughter. My daughter is an honorable person." Anyway, it turned out, yes, she did cheat. "I gave her the answers," [she admitted], and the father looked at the daughter and he took her hand and said, "Let's go," because the guy was devastated. He had made a big tirade about, "I believe in her. She's honest," blah, blah, blah, "and she told me. ... She wouldn't lie," and then, he just looked at her and walked away. That shit happens.

CE: You edited *Afro-American Literature: An Introduction*.

FL: Yes.

CE: You did that with Robert Hayden.

FL: Yes, Robert Hayden. He is terrific. He was a Baha'i. You know what a Baha'i is? Baha'i is a religion, and one thing they have, they're, like, universal. "There's one God for everybody," as opposed to most other religions. "There's one God and we have him and you guys got the wrong god," and they're very peace-loving, which means they got the shit kicked out of them wherever

they live, and they're in, I think, ... Iran. I think there's a batch of them there. I have a cousin who became a Baha'i. I said, "Chris, you can't even spell it," but they tend to be vegetarians. Robert Hayden is an interesting guy. He's dead now, but I hate to say this, forgive me, but he writes what I have to call masculine poetry, strong, hard, pounding, rough, as opposed to soft, sweet, and, yet, he's the most gentle person I ever met in my life. He's a vegetarian, just, like, this real sweetie pie, and, yet, he'd write this strong, strong, masculine poetry. ... So, I did that. I did it with two other guys. Basically, I went to Harcourt Press and we're going to do the thing. So, I put the whole anthology together and I'm supposed to meet the editor, or the vice-president or something, at the Yale Club. I get off the train at Grand Central. The Yale Club is right across the street; never been there, no reason to be there. I walked in, it's pouring rain, and I see this tall, distinguished guy, like eight feet tall, ... round, like that. I suddenly realized this guy is looking for me. So, I walked up and he says, "If you're looking for a black guy," he says, "I'm the guy you're looking for." ... So, we sit down. He says, "I hate to tell you this, but we're in the heart of all these black things," and he says, "but people feel that we're going to have trouble marketing a book on black literature edited by two white guys." So, I said, "Yes, okay. I don't give a shit." So, he brought in Robert Hayden, who was going to be a part of the thing, and, of course, that was a great thing that happened to me, because meeting this guy was a real pleasure and he wrote this beautiful introduction to the thing and we worked together. It had some of his poems in it. He was just a really nice guy. Yes, there's that whole black thing, at that time. It hit me when I had my job at the University of Bridgeport. I had one kid in the class who ... stood up in class and said, "You're teaching a course in black lit. We don't need no white guy telling us about black literature," blah, blah, blah, and he came up to me and said, "I have to tell you, I didn't mean any of that shit I said in class. I have to say it for my people," he said. "I'm the head of the Black Students," whatever, "and I love you, you're a wonderful guy. You're my favorite teacher. I had to say that, for political reasons. Don't be offended." [laughter] So, they brought in some guy. You know, I don't give a shit. So, they brought in some black guy who was a graduate of the school to teach the course, and he's at some community college and he became an administrator. You always know, when somebody becomes administrator, there's a problem, and it turned out that, [when] he was at Norwalk Community College, they fired him. He gave all the students, just gave them all, straight "As." I said, "Why are you doing that?" He said, "Well, I don't like to look at papers." Anyway, so, he taught the course because he was black. I don't care. I don't own the course. I don't care about it one way or the other, but, anyway, it was a pleasure working with Hayden, who was a terrific guy. You know, I was doing a lot. ... I was going to do an anthology on the military-industrial complex. You know about that? Of course you know about that. Who made that term?

SI: Eisenhower.

FL: Eisenhower's final farewell speech, and I meet with this guy. He's Canadian. He's at some bar in New York, down on 14th Street, somewhere around there, and he says, "I have to tell you this." He says, "We have to cancel the book." I said, "Why?" He said, "The economy is tanking and people don't want to hear [us] badmouthing the industrial complex, military complex. They're all for it, because it makes money and creates jobs. So, we can't have a book that badmouths this." So, that was the end of that book, but I did a number of these books, now, this maybe curious, maybe not, with a guy named David Burrows. David Burrows taught at Douglass College. David Burrows was a kid with a Jewish background who went to Israel

before there was an Israel, went with, like, twenty rabbis to the Holy Land. He was the only non-rabbi there. ... David Burrows married some banker's daughter out in the "flyover states," somewhere out in the Middle West, and it was, like, a real elitist, dyed-in-the-wool WASP wife, and Burroughs, we became friendly with him, which is, like, weird, because, when he came to my house, he was all relaxed and easy-going. When he was with his wife, he was a different person. Now, David Burrows got involved in all these things. He was involved with the women's movement. He was involved with [the] Civil Rights movement. He was involved with Vietnam. He was involved with all these movements, and then, one day, he got a Fulbright and went to Sweden. He went to Sweden and he came back. He's wearing these wooden fringing clogs and a beard down to his knees and he looked like he was anorexic, and I said, "Dave." He said, "That's not my name." I said, "What are you talking about?" He had some long, moshie, moshie, moshie. He'd become a guru of some kind. So, he now gives up his tenured position and, by the way, he was, like, a very gifted teacher. All the students loved him. He was a great teacher. He gives up the job and, ... first thing, he opens up a camera store, camera studio, down in Princeton. He lives in the outskirts of Princeton and has two or three kids. Then, he leaves his wife and kids and, now, he's down in Central America somewhere, on some maharajah, mushie-bushie thing and he's never gone back. He's become a vegetarian whatever, and he's down there and he's living. He's, like, cut off his roots. He is in touch with his kids every so often and a friend of ours died and he did ... come up for the funeral and, once, he even got in touch with me and said, "I'm going to come up and visit you. Give me your number." That was all bullshit, just to get rid of me. He never did. About once a year, I hear about him, because they send a royalty statement or something and his name is on the list, but he's got a different name and, if you want to get in touch with him, you have to get in touch through the publisher. Now, some guy at Rutgers, teaching at Rutgers, he gets in touch with me, he said, "I'm doing a book about how the '60s affected people, and I want to find out more about David Burrows, because he'll be a classic example I want to look into. So, come down from Jersey and meet me or I'll come there and meet you, whatever." I don't want to meet this guy. I don't want to come to New Jersey, but I don't want him coming to my house. I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll write you a long, long letter all about him," and I ended up saying what I thought was a fairly perceptive remark, which was, "Dave liked everybody, because he couldn't like anybody. He liked big movements because he couldn't get involved in a one-to-one thing. He just wanted to involved. So, that's why he got involved in the women's movement, with this movement, that movement, and that's why [he is doing] what he's doing now. He just can't handle a one-on-one thing." So, I thought the guy was, like, [honest]. He was a Rutgers guy. Rutgers, they never lie. It turns out the guy was not writing this thing. He's a bullshit artist. He wrote a novel, [in] which Dave was, like, the central character in his novel, and thought it was ... a funny thing. So, all he wanted was background information, so [that] he could develop Dave as a character in his novel, but he suggested he was writing a non-fictional study of the '60s, which was not the case. I haven't read his piece of crap, but, thank God, I didn't come to New Jersey. I came here for you guys. That's it. I have nothing further to say.

SI: Any further questions?

FL: You don't want to hear about the time I killed the sergeant?

SI: In your teaching career, what did you like the most, teaching students or doing research?

FL: I hated both. I liked the check. I loved teaching. I haven't taught now for, what, ten years? I love teaching. You know why? Because I found out that young kids have easy access to drugs. [laughter] No, I like teaching a lot. I didn't like research that much, anyway. I like teaching. What Dave [discovered], what he discovered when he went to Sweden, they have a system that, alas, they don't have in this country, which was you had a two-track system. You could be a teacher. If you elected to be a teacher, they would make teaching assistants available. They'd go out of their way to make everything available, so [that] you could be a teacher. You would be judged and promoted on the basis of your teaching. If, on the other hand, you decided you wanted to do research and you elected that, they would make money available, they would make research assistants available, and you would be judged on the way you did your research. You chose one or the other and you will be judged on that. In America, by contrast, they tell you you'll be judged here, but that's not really the way they judge you, and, if they don't want to judge you that way, they'll use the other [as] an excuse for badmouthing you. The only problem, I think, from what Dave told me, about that system in Sweden was, once you elected the one track, rather than the other, you couldn't switch back and forth. You were stuck with it.

SI: Is there anything that we skipped over that you think we should go into?

FL: Well, the only thing that comes to mind is, if you look at the *New York Times'* Book Section for tomorrow, you'll see a beautiful review of a book, two books, about Abraham Lincoln. ... If you read the review, you'll see that what is suggested, Lincoln is known for this, that and the other, but, if you look at any number of the speeches that he gave, smaller speeches, not the big ones, he was against [an] American empire, didn't use the word then, but expansionism, "Manifest Destiny," an issue that, you know, clearly is with us today. So, getting back to my background experience, ... how many people do we have in Korea right now?

SI: A few tens of thousands.

CE: We have a base there that, actually, they want to expand.

FL: We've got something like thirty thousand troops stationed just in Korea. How many troops do we have in Japan? more than that. So, you have to ask yourself, what would happen if we brought all these people home? I'll tell you what would happen. They'd be taking the jobs that illegal migrants, Mexicans, are now taking, because there wouldn't be any work for them. That's what would happen. It's only recently that some of these countries where we've stationed troops are beginning to pick up part of the tab, part of it, not all of it, part of the tab, up until now. So, you get a country, say, Japan, and you marvel at their economy. Don't forget, they haven't put in diddly squat for their military, because we said, "We'll take care of that for you. You just worry about making nice cars that we can sell to the American market and dive down the American market, and we'll take care of your military needs." Imagine if America now said, "We don't have to worry about a military. All we have to do now is focus on domestic needs. Some other country will take care of our military needs." That's what's happened. We've got troops all over Europe, for what? Who's the enemy? What the hell is NATO all about? Russia is going to attack Europe? no. We've got troops all over Europe, we've got [them in] Japan, we've got them

in countries you don't even know about. [I am] saying you never heard of it. You couldn't begin to even name the number, the grand total, of countries, military bases, we have. ...

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

FL: ... Places we otherwise couldn't get to. There's only one little problem; they had a population there. So, we got rid of the population there. We said, "Here, you're out, we're in," and we now have a huge Air Force base there and, if you Google over it, some of it gets dense. You can't even photograph it. We did with Japan. ... Japan said, "Look, we're a little touchy. You won't believe this, but we're very sensitive to nuclear stuff in our country. So, please get it off our territory," and the United States said, "Sure, we'll take it. We'll put it on our ship that's, like, a half a mile offshore. See, it's not in your territory anymore. You're cool." I don't want to badmouth my country, but, you know, we do this stuff all over the world, and, as I say, we have bases you don't know about. We've got, like, a zillion bases and we have become, alas, an empire, and, now, people that want to defend America, as I certainly want to do, ... say, "Yes, but we're not like the Ottoman Empire, the Byzantine or the Roman Empire. We're not interested in territory. We're just interested in protecting democracy." Okay, I'll buy that. [If] you buy that, I'll buy that, but we are there, all over the world. That's why I'm getting a little upset when (Chavez) of Venezuela said, "We've got a new doctrine to replace the Monroe Doctrine. You're not running South America anymore." What famous American, probably our best-known military victor ever, historically, was against the Mexican War? Ulysses Grant. He said, "We shouldn't be there, in this Mexican War. That is territorial expansion. We have no right being there," but he drank too much, so, what the hell? What does he know? No, he was against it. We do have that rather odd record. ... Most Americans do not take a critical look at our own history. When I see kids today, for example, picking up the paper and badmouthing our Congress, "Look, they're," blah, blah, boo. I said, "You know what? Go to the earliest days of Congress. It's even worse than it is today. Do you think this is something new? It was worse back then, when they would have sword fights, punch the hell out of each other on the floor of the Senate. This is, like, something you're worried about? This is nothing new. That's the nature of capitalism. Embrace it."

SI: It sounds like, from your graduate days of blocking everything out, politically, so that you could study, you have become more political minded.

FL: It wasn't that I blocked it out. When you're developing a career, or something like that, you get so caught up, you can't [be] distracted with other things, and so, you don't get involved that much. I mean, I was involved with Vietnam, but [just to] mouth off here and there. It's not the same thing as, "I'm going to Chicago, to the protest. I've got work that's due." [If] someone asks you about it, you say something about it, but you didn't get involved personally. Well, some did, but you're too caught up, and then, when you get done, especially, you know, at my age, when you get retired, you become, perhaps, more vocal. The interesting thing about someone like me, at my age, is that a lot of people, academics, tend to be very conservative when they begin their career, there's certain values we have to uphold, and, as they get older, they get a little more "liberal" about it, I don't like that word, you know, and they loosen up a little. Whereas I would say, traditionally, young people tend to be very liberal, far out left, and so forth, and, as they get older and get more money in the bank, they ... tend to become more conservative. I mean,

someone asked me the other day, one of my favorite left-wingers, writers, John Dos Passos, "Why did he suddenly become conservative and almost right-wing?" So, I said, "Morty, Edmund Wilson said it; he said, 'He inherited.' Dos Passos inherited his father's vast real estate. That's why. That explains it all. You have too much to lose. You don't want to disperse it to the needy masses. You know, Jesus said, 'Give everything to the poor,' ba-ba-ba-ba. How many people are going to do that? They say, 'Fuck the poor. They only use it for drugs or [to] have more babies. Well, I won't give it to them. Save it. Send your kids to an elite school.'" Yes, I think, now that I'm retired, I don't have to work, I can afford the leisure of being liberal. I've got a house, I've got a kid in college, he's got a girlfriend, I've got a wife. You can afford to, you know, be what you want, and I see, I look back and I say, "You know, I'm a lucky guy. I was able to hit the market, the job market, at the time when ... even a relative incompetent like me could get a job. There were openings. I got into college, even though I was, like, a 'C' student. I had the GI Bill. I had a way of paying for it. I had some nice teachers. I got my dissertation. I met some nice people. I count my blessings," and my poor father didn't know where the next meal was coming from, you know. America was, like, really golden at that point. What it's going to be, like, in the future, I don't know. You know, I don't know, and I'm fearful about it. So, now, I'm going to mouth off about it, because I still have young kids, and I can't say, "Well, who cares? I've got mine, Jack." No, I can't dismiss it that readily, because I've got a kid in college. I have to worry about what his future is going to be. I've got a girl here who's not even in high school yet. I've got to worry about her future, let alone, you know, grandchildren, you know, that kind of thing. So, yes, I do have a stake in the future. I worry about people like you, shiftless, lazy bastards who sit around listening to old people recounting their days in the military. I have to tell you, the only time I owned clothes that fit me was while I was in the Army.

SI: Thank you very much for being here. Thank you.

FL: Soon to be a major movie.

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Reviewed by Elaine Blatt 8/1/2007

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/13/07

Reviewed by Frederick R. Lapidus 8/30/07