

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEAN ESCHENFELDER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Jessica Thomson Illingworth: This begins an interview with Jean Carlough Eschenfelder. Today is Monday, August 20, 2007, and we are in Saratoga, California. My name is Jessica Thomson Illingworth. This interview was made possible in part by a grant from the Rutgers Alumni Association. First, I would like to thank you for having us today. We really appreciate it.

Jean Eschenfelder: Well, it's really kind of exciting for us. I mean, we don't have too much contact with Rutgers anymore, so it's very neat for us. ...

JJ: First, can you tell me when and where you were born?

JE: Well, I was born in 1928, on a farm in Northern New Jersey, and we had animals, plenty of pigs and chickens and horses and cows, but my father grew vegetables for selling, and it was a wonderful place to live. ... During the war, as a matter-of-fact, my mother was able to invite people to come, like for Sunday dinner, because we had chickens, we had pigs--we had food that we didn't have to have. What did you call those things?

JJ: Rations?

JE: Rations, and so we did quite a bit of entertaining and just getting to know people by asking them to come to dinner. ... That was one of the things my mom did during the war.

JJ: Tell me about your parents. Were they from New Jersey?

JE: Yes, my father, I think, was really born in Pompton Lakes, which is still there, I am sure, and my mother was born in Fair Lawn and I don't know how they met. ... It never came up. ... It was a long trip in those days. They were married in 1922 or '23--'23 I think--and to go any distance in a vehicle was pretty tough. So, I don't know how they got together, but they did. ...

JJ: Do you know anything about your parents' education?

JE: My father was a student through high school and he didn't go to college. My mother was--well, I don't know whether this is college, now, it might be called a business college, a business school. ... She always called it normal school. So, it's after high school.

JJ: Okay.

JE: It's sort of, like, maybe, junior college, ... but that was a different terminology than they use now so I don't know.

JJ: She did secretarial work.

JE: She did, ... kind of like office work in general, but ... I don't think she liked it very much, because she didn't really work very long before she met my dad, and then, she went to live on the farm with him and had ... no dreams of going back to work. ... She was kind of a city gal, he was a country boy, but it worked out really well. [laughter]

JJ: Did you have brothers and sisters?

JE: I had one brother. He died in 1989, I think it was. He died of lung cancer and my dad died in May of 1952, and he died of pancreatic cancer. So, I lost ... my sibling and my dad early. ... Then, my mom, ... we moved out here in 1967 and she used to visit us once a year. When it was wintertime back there, she'd come out here, but then we got to the point where she needed to be in a care facility. So, I moved her out here and ... we had a very nice care facility here, and she was very happy there, or it seemed so. So, she was here for three years I guess it was--her last three years. ... Except for one lady, who finally decided she didn't want to live anymore, she was ninety-seven, ... but I'm the oldest so far of the relatives that I know. I'm seventy-eight and ... I don't know of any others ahead of me that survived any longer than I. So, it was kind of weird. ...

JJ: It is good.

JE: Well, I'm glad it's me. [laughter]

JJ: Can you tell me about your childhood growing up? Was your brother older or younger?

JE: He was older.

JJ: What was his name?

JE: ... His name was Harry but I called him "Bud," because I was younger and they would say, "This is your brother," and I never got brother, I got Bud. ... That got to be his name, too, Bud, he called himself. Harry is not a first name anymore. I mean, it's not used too often, but, when I was little, there are some things I remember, like going to Sunday school with a particular teacher and that sort of thing. ... My mother and her sister and I were the ones who packed tomatoes and strawberries and things. Well, I picked the strawberries out of the field, and so, this was, you know, it was supposed to be fun for me, and it was, but, after a while, you know, it's sort of like, "My back is tired." ... I grew up on a farm and had a horse and I used to ride my horse almost every day. ...

JJ: Can you tell me about your school?

JE: Well, we lived in ... an area of small centers. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

JJ: I was asking about your elementary school.

JE: ... Oh, I was saying we lived in that area of lots of small centers, and so I lived in the lower section of Maywood Township. So, we had an elementary school. It had started being a one-room school, and then, it was a two-room school when I was there, first four grades in one room, one teacher, second four grades in another room, one teacher, and it was wonderful, but it was kind of different. ... When we went to high school, then we went to a regional high school, and

that was in Ramsey. You may know of Ramsey. ... I guess that school is still there. It was the last time we were there. ... There were like, I don't know, five or six school districts that made up the high school. ... All my elementary years, I was with the same three kids and there only were four, ever, you know, all elementary school, and my brother was one of three kids. So, you know, it's sort of like a weird situation. ... We didn't have a kindergarten, for instance, and the kids now start so early and they're in kindergarten and they're much more advanced than we were, I think, but anyway.

JJ: Was it a big difference going from a very small elementary school to a much larger high school?

JE: It was at first. The first year was kind of difficult, but I played the piano then, and so, I started playing the piano for different organizations, like the choir and the orchestra and stuff. ... That made a difference and I was very happy. I knew people and people knew me and it was kind of neat, but, otherwise, I think it's scary for a kid going into a big school like that, and I can't even tell you how many students there would be in the high school at the time. ... When we went with the other students, the other schools, for our eighth grade graduation, our class was four, other classes might have been six or eight. So, this whole school district, there might have been twenty-five or thirty graduates, and that's all, you know, when you consider ... each school had such few people per grade, ... but it was a good experience, I think. I liked it anyway, [laughter] and the fact that I was with the same kids.

JJ: That must have been nice.

JE: Yes, I used to see them year after year after year.

JJ: Your brother was two years ahead of you.

JE: Yes. ... Well, this was during World War II, he was in. ... I can't remember the terminology, but farm people were--not exempt. What's the word?

JJ: Classified?

JE: Yes, so, he didn't go to them.

JJ: He was not drafted.

JE: He wasn't drafted. He wasn't available ... for anybody to take. He could have volunteered, but he was my father's only son and he was needed on the farm. ... He ended up with a farm himself after my dad died. ...

JJ: You spoke earlier, before we began the interview, about Sunday dinners on the farm.

JE: Yes, very often, it would be chicken, because chickens are easy to raise, chickens are good, wonderful meals, and ... she was kind of noted for her fricassee chicken dinners. ... Nobody eats the fricassee chicken anymore, but that's with dumplings and a nice gravy that goes on the

dumplings and so forth. ... We would have two or three families perhaps on a Sunday, but that was our day off, you know, when I was little. ... It was like we had open houses. ...

JJ: How old were you when you started helping out on the farm?

JE: Oh, I remember just being there all the time, ... but I was in grade school, because I had a neighbor younger than I and she would come and play, and then, when I had to work, ... then she would go home. ... I would help my mother sort tomatoes and things like that and it was just a way of life. You know, it wasn't that ... I was working, it was [that] I was helping with the family, you know. It makes a difference, I think.

JJ: They grew tomatoes. What else did they grow?

JE: Tomatoes--well, in the summer months, tomatoes, green beans, lima beans, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplants, green peppers that turned to red peppers, ... all of those things. ... My father would decide how much of which vegetable he would take to the market, but some things he would take more of, like his tomatoes, he would always sell those tomatoes, and his corn, he would always sell his corn, and that was in an ... era where he drove a truck. ... During the day, they picked and packed the vegetables, loaded the truck, and went down. He had an early dinner, maybe he'd leave at five o'clock ... in the evening to go to Paterson, New Jersey where there was a farmer's market. ... There were several long ramps with roofs over in case it rained, and the trucks could back up to this long ramp and unload and all the produce people, ... they would come buy their groceries for their stores that they're going to sell, or for their restaurant. ... That was the way he sold his "veggies," and he more often than not was sold out. If he didn't sell out, ... the market was open from like, maybe something like six o'clock, or maybe seven, till midnight. ... A lot of these people who ... came in to buy, they were having ... the business of their own which they had to finish, close, come to my father to buy some more vegetables for the next day, that kind of thing. ... It was a group of friends. My dad and a lot of the other farmers, he got along well and this was a way of combining and helping each other out. ... When I was in high school, my father started selling to the A&P warehouse which was in, I think it might have been Haledon, I'm not sure, but they would call in the morning and order a certain amount of what they would want, and then he would deliver it to them in the late afternoon. ... Then he never had to stay over because he didn't sell everything. He knew what he had to sell, he knew what his order was, he knew what he had, and he would just ... go and sell that.

JJ: Did he like that a lot better?

JE: He did, because it was, well, it was just more, not convenient, more, I can't think of a good word, but he ... knew how much he had to sell. If they said on the phone they wanted him to bring fifty baskets of tomatoes, if he could, he would, if he didn't have them, he would say, "I can do forty or something like that." But that was a big step up in a way for him. He had a lot more sleep in those later years because he wouldn't be home till midnight and he'd be up at five in the morning. For an old man, that's a rough life. But the other thing about my dad, he will always sit down for a nap after lunch. He'd sleep for ten minutes, it would revive him. ... I mean this was like five hours to me ... but he would take a ten minute nap. ...

JJ: You mentioned that your mother grew up in more of a city or suburban environment. What do you think she thought life on the farm was like? Did she ever talk about that?

JE: Well, there were times when she would say it was harder than she ever thought it would be ... because it was, there was always something to do, nothing like a business office where you would go in at eight to five or whatever, but she adjusted very well. She had no problems with that. I think it was wonderful that she ended up being from a city girl ... but she loved my dad so that was the reason she was there.

JJ: How old were you when Pearl Harbor happened? Do you remember where you were?

JE: Yes, well I was thirteen and we sat around the radio. It was unbelievable what was happening. It was a tough couple of years.

JJ: Did your parents ever talk about politics or the war in Europe or anything like that?

JE: Not that I'm aware of. They would with their friends. ...

JJ: But not with children.

JE: Yes, because if we were all at the table for dinner or whatever, I don't really remember politics too often except we had an uncle who lived with us and he was, he was my father's half-uncle, you know, vaguely related to us but he could say such awful things about President Roosevelt. ... That was the only ... politics that I was aware of happening and they would talk about. But I think that I was sheltered personally because I was the only girl and my brother was the only boy and he was older so I was this little kid.

JJ: You mentioned that your brother was not drafted. Were a lot of people that you knew or friends of his drafted or volunteered to go into the service?

JE: Well, quite a few did and I don't really remember being, just overwhelmed with the number of deaths, but I'm sure there were many, many guys who never made it home. I had an uncle who was drafted at age, I think he was like thirty-eight. ... If the top was forty, he was thirty-eight and he was drafted and he came home and it was wonderful. The young kids that went on the frontlines, I didn't know too many, ... but I know some and ... it seems like I don't remember going to a funeral, that kind of thing, and yet I must have because there were a lot of boys in my high school, but I'm kind of vague on that. Maybe I was sheltered growing up.

JJ: You mentioned your high school was a co-ed public school. What was your education like?

JE: Well, it was good in that when I got to NJC I had no problems. ... In high school we had English teachers and math teachers and so forth, we didn't have like in the eighth grade, I had one teacher she taught us math and everything that she could to get us ready for high school but then high school I think was the way that shaped up my education because there were more teachers. ... They could do the specialized, in fact I had a French teacher that was so difficult for me to understand for a while because she was a real French woman, you know. So, this was

really kind of a special thing.

JJ: You said you had an uncle who went into the service. Did any other relatives or close friends go in as well?

JE: ... I had a couple of friends but the ones that I'm thinking of are the ones that came back. ... That's why I said, I just don't remember losing ... friends but of course we were in a small area, small town. I probably, if I had a list I would say that I know maybe everybody that went to the war from our town I would have known them, but ... at the time it didn't penetrate.

JJ: Did you date at all during high school?

JE: Yes, well I started out as I said, since I played the piano I was able to get involved in the orchestra and glee club and so forth, and so I had a boyfriend of sorts who was a trumpet player who wanted to have his ... band and I was a piano player and he played the trumpet and there were a couple of guys and a drummer. ... I had that kind of thing and some of them thought they were my boyfriend but they weren't, but I just think some of these kids they're really very nice guys. So I did date, but then when I was sixteen, I started dating a guy who was twenty-four, which my parents didn't like at all. He was a friend, his parents were friends of my father, my parents, so I think my senior year in high school I dated him exclusively and when I went to college, I was kind of glad to be away ... so I could end the friendship but he wasn't too glad and every time I came home he was right there at my mother's door. ... Yes, I started dating mid-teens, I guess.

JJ: What was a typical date like then? Would you go to the movies or for a walk?

JE: Well, the dates that I remember were the ones where the guys had a car, so we could go to the movies, we could go to ... Meadowbrook. Have you ever heard of Meadowbrook?

JJ: No.

JE: ... It's a night club. Frank Sinatra sang there, the Andrews Sisters. ... That was a place we would go, it was kind of special. ... We would go there and we could even have a dinner and then see the show or just go to the show and have a drink and he and I would drink a soda pop, but that kind of thing. ... We had a lake in Pompton Lakes and we rented canoes and so we could go canoeing and things like that. ... I had a horse and I started dating a boy that owned a couple of horses so we used to go riding together. It was not much in the way of movies. We also had a small group that would get together on Sunday nights from our church and that was like, it was like a daytime date.

JJ: You mentioned that you played the piano. How did that start? Did you have a piano at home?

JE: Yes, my mother knew a woman who was a very good piano player and a good teacher so she was the one who started me and I started when I think I was six or seven years old. ... When I got to high school, no, it was before I got to high school, I was in maybe sixth, seventh grade, I

got a piano teacher who was really very, very good and so he got me into really classical music and in high school I was exposed to all this sort of stuff. So, I ended up being music major in college. ... Well, I don't know why I didn't have a career in that, you know, you can teach piano lessons ... and I could do that but when I had children I didn't. ... I ended up mostly being an organist and a choir director. ...

JJ: Was the church a big part of your life growing up?

JE: Oh, yes, because that was the one organization where you did do stuff with other kids like every Sunday ... went to church, ... youth fellowship, and so that was a big part of my life, and we had sometimes like picnics, but summertime I was not used to much socializing during the day. ... There certainly was in the evening because that was the only thing, you know, you could go out and have a soda together. ... I have limited memories of all the people I knew then because it was like when I went away in college it was such a division of people and their interests and my interests. ... That was just a change, so there were only a couple people that I kept in touch with all the rest of our lives, and my oldest friend who I started in kindergarten, ... we didn't have a kindergarten, we went to pre-school that her mother did. I went all through high school with her. She didn't go to college, she went to a business school and she just, she probably died maybe eight years now. But it was my longest oldest friend, you know. It's kind of like, I didn't know many people that well and for that long a time. ... Then we moved out here in 1967, we sort of lost some of the contacts. ...

JJ: What was the name of your church growing up?

JE: ... Franklin Lakes Methodist Episcopal Church. Later, I can get this for you. I have a plate in the cabinet in the other room it has, it's the centennial I think, or bicentennial anyway, picture of the church, and it's really a nice plate.

JJ: Did the war change your life very much? Or were you so sheltered that you did not see a change in your day to day life?

JE: I think we were just very sheltered because, well, like I said before, I didn't really know a whole lot of people that were drafted or went to, or volunteered, ... and I know there are people who have said that there wasn't a guy in town. Well, that wasn't true in my case because my brother was an example of a farmer who was deferred to work on the farm, so we had certain people who were, should have been in the service if they have to go, but they had the deferments. So, it's sort of like it didn't have as much impact on my life ... as many people had.

JJ: Did your brother ever think about volunteering for the service?

JE: Not that I know of. I don't think he ever felt that he was put upon by having to stay home. The only thing was that he started dating a girl which he ended up marrying but my mother initially didn't approve and if he got in the service he probably wouldn't have married her but then my mother wouldn't have had four nice grandchildren. So, you know it was one of those things. ...

JJ: Do you remember why she did not approve of her?

JE: Well she, her name was Joyce, and she was determined to marry my brother, and so she was the pursuer and they got married and I think that my mom thought that maybe he would have been different had he not married her because she didn't even finish high school. She was younger than my brother, so she was a junior I think. When they got married, she didn't even finish high school and that was not in my mother's book, that was not the way you do things, you get your education and she didn't. I mean Joyce was wonderful, she really was, but they never had a friendship that you would hope you would have for the daughter-in-law. ... Joyce's mother was a very outspoken, sort of opinionated, rather rude, she didn't care for her, and she didn't care for her mom. ... They never were friends, could not be good friends, and that was part of the problem and Joyce wanted to get away from her mom too because her mom was a problem. So there you were, either you accepted her or you don't. ...

JJ: Was your mother a guiding force in you going to college?

JE: Yes, very much so. We had friends whose, they had three children, their youngest child was a girl and she was a year older than I. She started at NJC before I did and she was our contact. ... Charlotte's mother and my mom would talk all the time about, "Shouldn't Jean do this and that so she'd get ready to go to college?" ... It was through Charlotte that she got an application, ... the whole bit.

JJ: Did you look at other colleges beside NJC?

JE: No. I think my father had something do with that. ... I was the first one in my family to go to a four-year college and to go away to school and he didn't want me to go any farther away than he needed, but I was happy there. ... Right from the very beginning it was like this is terrific. I wanted to go, and they had, well they had a music teacher and a music building, ... is it still there? ... That was a wonderful, wonderful thing, they had all these practice rooms and the teachers, and studios where they taught, and it was a wonderful experience for me. ... I wouldn't have had that if I had not gone there I don't think because that was the point of my going was to continue with the music.

JJ: Were there entrance exams at NJC? Do you remember what the application process was like?

JE: Not really clearly. I took two exams, I think both of them were in Ridgewood. ... I took two entrance exams of one kind or another, I mean I don't know whether this was anything different than they do now. ... It was two exams and fill out the stuff, go down for an interview, and I visited my friend Charlotte, which was kind of nice because she could show us around and everything I saw was really nice. ... It was a really good choice and I've never had any other school interest me enough to even investigate. ... I might have gone to regional colleges but I'm not even sure. ... That was the other thing, I thought that I was ready to go away and live in a dorm.

JJ: What dorm did you live in your first year?

JE: Jameson. Do you know Jameson?

JJ: I do.

JE: And it's still there isn't it?

JJ: It's still there.

JE: I was in Jameson, I want to say one but it may have been two. You know there was a quad, there's a pool on this side, and then there is an activity building maybe next to it or connected to the pool, and then around this way I remember, ... the first one was a dorm, second one was a building--they were connected by hallways--and the second one was an infirmary and then the third. ... The second building was the infirmary but it wasn't called ... Jamison two, was next, and three and four. So one year I lived in Jamison one, ... I lived on Douglass for a year, and then I lived in Jamison, it must have been three, ... the last year I was in four. ... I loved it.

JJ: Did you have the same roommate the whole time?

JE: No, I had, well we were assigned roommates our freshman year. My sophomore year I roomed with my friend Charlotte, and my junior year I lived with, ... she was just a friend and ... Charlotte was her friend and she was a senior and I was a junior. My senior year I lived with Pepper. ... We lived across the hall from each other our first year, we were roommates our last year, ... and that was a nice friendship.

JJ: You mentioned earlier that high school prepared you well for NJC. Were you able to keep up academically?

JE: Yes, I didn't have a scholarship, ... an earned scholarship, but I did alright, and when I got there I think I got a little better in my studies but I don't remember. I applied for a scholarship, and I can't remember what ... it was called. ... Everybody who applies for it would at least get this particular scholarship if not more, and I didn't even get that. Which tells me that my education wasn't as good as some of the others, but on the other hand I think it was quite amazing to have a country school and so forth and end up being able to be in a college. ... Not all that many people that I knew went to college from ... a farm life.

JJ: Do you know how your parents paid for college? Did you get financial aid?

JE: Well, what my dad did was he had a loan from the bank and I think we had something, not a scholarship per say, but something and I wouldn't know why I wouldn't know about it but I think there was some other funding outside the family. My dad was not one to, you know, he'd want to do it his way and ... he did but it was tough for him, and I wished that I could have gotten some help there by getting scholarships from Douglass. ... It wasn't in the books for me.

JJ: What was your day to day life like at NJC?

JE: Living in Jamison, it was very easy to walk to breakfast so I always went to every meal. ... I don't know now whether they have microwaves and so forth in the rooms but they probably do. My grandchildren have that. ...

JJ: There is a little microwave and a little fridge in each room.

JE: Yes. Well, those were not things even thought of yet probably. ... I mean, we would have cookies and stuff, ... not really food they would need a refrigerator for. ... Three out of my four years I lived on the same floor with a gal who loved chocolate and every Easter I'd get a chocolate bunny and she would get more of my chocolate bunny than I did. I never saw her in my room, but she did. But anyway, we would have food like that, but not anything needing refrigeration.

JJ: Did you have strict rules about being in your dorm at a specific time?

JE: You had to be in upstairs, I think it was probably seven, and then Friday and Saturday and Sunday were different I think, it might have been like eleven. ... See, these are things that I just don't remember. ... It's sort of like maybe eleven o'clock or maybe twelve o'clock on Saturday night. ... I think Sunday night might have been a little different too but the rest of the week it was in the dorm by six or seven, and maybe I'm wrong, maybe after sophomore year you did have more freedom in the hours, I'm not too sure about that. ... When I started dating Andy, I'd have him come over and we would study together in one of the social rooms--social rooms I guess they called them--or in our dorm room, so we did socialize that way.

JJ: You studied music. Did you have to have a minor?

JE: No. I didn't have one but I think maybe if I did have one it might have been organ, ... being just a supplementary. ...

JJ: What kind of classes did you take?

JE: Well, I had to take two years of math, one year because I didn't pass the second half so I had to take that again. English, as I remember English ... like literature and stuff like that and language, and I had French, and I had one year of German, so I guess my academic classes were just kind of general because all of the other things, harmony and those sort of things. ... I had to have other requirements, ... but I did pretty well. I didn't get to Phi Beta Kappa like Andy but he knew that at the beginning. ...

JJ: Did you date a lot during college or not really until you met your husband?

JE: Well, I dated a lot in that year I was a freshman. At least I think it was when I was a freshman. ... They had the, I want to say V-12, but I don't know if that's right, but boys that were going to, and they were in the service, they wore uniforms, but they were in regular dorms and regular sublets and, not ROTC particularly, but I'm not too sure.

JJ: What year did you enter NJC?

JE: '45.

JJ: 1945, near the end of the war.

JE: Yes, and I think these were guys that were, some of them I knew never went overseas, and there are some that I had gotten to know, did go overseas.

JJ: And came back.

JE: Yes.

JJ: Were there still USO dances?

JE: No, ... I don't remember that. ...

JJ: Were there men on the NJC campus?

JE: There were no full-time students. It was a women's campus as it is still, I guess, but I'm not too sure about that because I haven't been back. ... The female students on NJC campus would go to Rutgers campus, well, for journalism, because they didn't have journalism classes at NJC. ... They couldn't do that but I think they had to give in to the fact pretty soon they were going to need to accept females at Rutgers, but because NJC was a "girl's school," you didn't have any full-time students that were men.

JJ: How did you meet boyfriends and things like that?

JE: Well, we had dances and ... freshman year I don't remember how it was arranged, but that was the year I got to meet these boys that were in the military but in college, then they would be at arranged dances and you could just go and tell somebody you wanted to see him another time. You can go make another date but that was a way of getting acquainted and I think then the guys thought the same thing, it was wonderful to be able to go over to the girls' school and be invited to go over there and see if there was somebody you wanted to date. It was limited, limiting in a way. ... I didn't find it a problem for me. I guess I was not interested in the kinds of studies that other women wanted. They wanted to get onto the women's campus but we had a music department that was wonderful, so I didn't need that, and I don't think that it makes any difference whether you have guys in your class or not. ... I think in my German class, there might have been one or two guys, but that's the most. ...

JJ: Did you go to school with a particular career in mind or was it more for broadening your education?

JE: Well, I think it was with a career in mind in that my major was a performing artist. ... I was in training to be an organist ... and a piano teacher. ... I don't remember ever being offered any kind of education courses where you would be guided. ...

JJ: Did you work at all when you were in school?

JE: I did. I played the piano for dance classes ... and I played the piano for the glee club and then when I graduated, ... got married, for several years of our marriage I was a church organist and a choir member and choir director and so forth. ... That was fun, but that was after we had our first child which was five years after we were married. ... I wanted to stay home to take care of him. ... My husband never liked ... sitting alone in church on Sunday and that's what you do when ... you are up there. ... I had a small church in Hackensack, which was very near Poughkeepsie, and that was a wonderful feeling because they liked me so much that they had me there as a substitute for a piano or the organ, I was a substitute, and then the organist was so happy, ... the same true with the choir director, and so that ... I never really had a church of my own, should have learned how to do those things. ... One of our nephews out here, he's been here for two years I think now, moved here from Massachusetts and ... he moved here to become a church organist. ... You wouldn't think that that would work but this church, they put an ad, something ... on the computer, and he applied and, of course, he wouldn't have it if it wasn't that we were here, and both of our kids live in this area too. ... This is like family and the rest of his family, they're kind of split up now, but they were from Massachusetts initially. ... His mom still lives in Massachusetts, so when he goes back he's going to Massachusetts in the summer, but he likes California a lot better. ... It's so pretty and the weather is so nice to be able to just do what you want to do. I mean the only time we have any problems is the rain, and that's only in the wintertime, so. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

JE: ... I had friends who were waitresses, that was one of their ways of earning some help, and so it was fun if you were at a table with the waitress that you knew, so that was kind of neat but then the other thing is that you could sit, for some meals you could sit ... at any table, but I think it was mostly the dinners, sat with your own tablemates and it's a way of getting to know each other really well. I found ... that was a neat part of it, and the food was good, I mean, for a farmer's girl, I mean I was a farmer's daughter, I was delighted with all the food except they had this, I think they called it Mongolian Soup and it was orange and I didn't like it, but there wasn't much I didn't like, you know, it was new and different for me, so we had these three times a day that we would have a meal, relax and so forth. ... I think that was a fun part, and then we had, well, I can't even really think of any activities that we had other than my piano hours that I needed to practice and so forth. ...

JJ: Would you practice at the studio or was there a piano in your dorm?

JE: No, there was [space] in the music building. It's probably very different now but if you went in the main entrance, this was like the main floor, and if you go downstairs, they were all practice rooms, single little-ish rooms for the piano, so that's where you got to practice. ... There were some others ... but not as many as the ones downstairs and the pianos were pretty good all things considered because, you know, there might have been ... fifty or a hundred pianos down there, imagine keeping them in tune. I had to practice a certain number of hours a day and that took up like most of the afternoons. ... Being a music major is an easy major in that you have things you love to do, which is play the piano, you know, but then you have a goal to achieve,

you know, doing the best you could possibly do with each number, each assignment that you get from the teacher. ... What was down at the other end of this ... hall and it was the end of the music room building that was on the first floor. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

JJ: Could you tell me how you met your husband?

JE: Well, he mentioned it before, ... he was rooming with a man at Rutgers who was going out with the girl that I was rooming with and they decided that they should introduce us and this was our sophomore year. ... We met in our sophomore year which is a long time to continue going to school and not getting married because that was one of my parents' ... strong desire, move away from him if you have to, not that they had anything against him because they loved him, but they wanted me to finish my schooling, and so we ended up, we dated for two and a half years and we were engaged a year and a half before we graduated, and then we did the same thing to my parents that Stephanie did to her parents. ... She and her now husband had met when they were sophomores also, so they waited until after the graduation from college but ... like the next week was the wedding. I did the same thing. ...

JJ: Did you want to wait until you graduated until you got married? What did your husband think?

JE: No, it was sort of like that's the way it had to be, kind of thing. Now, Andy was in the service so he was three years behind. ... He was in Class of '47, no two years, and then he graduated in Class of '49. So, he lost those three years in the South Pacific.

JJ: Did you have to hide the fact that you were engaged at NJC or were you allowed to be engaged?

JE: Oh, that was no problem. ... I always think that it wouldn't be any right of the school to say you can't be engaged ... wouldn't you think?

JJ: We have heard a couple of stories of that occurring.

JE: Oh, really? No, it's not the best thing in the world, I guess, but if you want to continue with the education.

JJ: You had to do it.

JE: Yes. ... We both graduated in 1949 and then Andy got a teaching, not scholarship, he was on the staff in the physics department.

JJ: At Rutgers?

JE: Yes, and he was able to do it and get enough of a salary, too. We lived in, it was faculty housing where we were but only because he was a teaching assistant. I don't know whether you

know the campus, do you know the campus? ... Beyond the stadium, there were many fields, open fields, ... but then there were one of two big classrooms and then a lot of students in faculty housing would be using barracks. ... You know that area? ... It was wonderful in a way because we knew people, you know, in the same situation that we were so it wasn't that we didn't have friends, we did have friends, ... but it was, you know New Jersey in the winter. We had a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms and then one bathroom and a space heater that just was heating all those. ... If it snowed, we always had to have a window open someplace. If it snowed during the night, the snow didn't melt, I mean here we had to shovel it out the window. ... We didn't have any windows open very far in the wintertime, but that's what we did for two years.

JJ: Did you work while you were living there?

JE: I worked at the library and I worked at the gym at NJC.

JJ: What did you do?

JE: Played the piano for dancing and that was fun. ... I don't remember how much I was paid and I wasn't paid very much, but it was something to bring home the groceries or whatever.

JJ: What did you do at the library?

JE: I was an assistant to the research director. ... He was such a nice man. His name was Gil, ... I suspect he's long gone. ... I worked four mornings I think it was, four mornings a week and that's it, or maybe it was afternoons. Maybe it was afternoons because ... I couldn't go home and so I could do the morning classes if they needed me for playing, you know, for a ... folk dance. ... I was employed at both campuses and I'm making a "bundle" of money but it was a nice way to be involved with, you know, bringing the lion's share of the income, and to live together but then it also gave me an opportunity to be back in the college scene, which was, because Andy was, you know, I could have been like this ... lonely woman. ... We had a neighbor who had, they were married when they were I think they were juniors or she at least was a junior and they had two little girls and she was one of the loneliest gals, she loved her husband, and she loved the little girls, but there was no way she could get a baby sitter for them so she didn't work, she didn't really want to work, ... she didn't want that. ... Her husband had been a physical education major. ...

JJ: We interviewed a woman a couple of days ago who said she wanted to stay at home but she could only clean two rooms and it would take an hour.

JE: ... Yes, there really wasn't much to do, and I had mentioned ... the second room, that was like Andy's den but it also would be where I had my sewing machine so I could sew, you know, but gee, that would have been kind of lonely. ... We graduated '49, and in '52 Andy got his degree, and that's when we moved to Poughkeepsie because he went to work for IBM. ... There was another plant, office building, further down, then we moved to Mount Kisco and Chappaqua ... until 1967 when we moved out here.

JJ: Was it hard moving around so much?

JE: Well, actually no because we didn't move around as much as we could have. ... The three years that Andy was getting his Ph.D., in the summertime he needed a job. Once, we went to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, and that was kind of neat. We could leave our house, our place. ... I don't think I ever did have the feeling that we moved around a lot because when Andy started for IBM, ... just had three locations anyway, but he was working on research and that was not the same thing like some people are in sales or whatever, ... all over the map. We didn't have that situation, and we came out here, the second or third offer he had gotten, he really didn't want to leave back there, because he knew and I knew that we would not see much of our family because they weren't going to be coming here all the time, we wouldn't be able to if we lived here to go back there, so it was a big decision, and the first couple of times, we just said no, it doesn't sound good enough, it would have to be something really good ... to encourage you to move to ... the other side of the country and so when we came out here we decided that this was, it sounds like the best ... we could have and it has worked out very, very well.

JJ: You had two children when you moved out here?

JE: Yes, they were born in Poughkeepsie, Vassar Brothers hospital in Poughkeepsie. ...

JJ: What was the move across country like? Were you in a car?

JE: I have a feeling, we had one car that came across in the moving van and then the other car I think it was just shipped somehow because we just flew here. ... We have driven more lately than we used to be, we've never taken long car trips. ... I like going places. ... We started doing some more driving as we got older and Andy retired and so forth. ... We have friends who have children living ... in Phoenix, and so they had been going to spring training, baseball spring training, so for several years we would drive there and stay there for a week or so and see four or five games. ... You could go to a game a day, so we did that for several years, that was kind of fun. That was the extent of our extensive driving.

JJ: Did your kids grow up mostly in Poughkeepsie?

JE: ... Tom was in eighth grade when we moved here. ... Sue was, it must have been fifth grade. ...

JJ: Was it hard for them to move across the country?

JE: No, they seemed to adjust to it. I don't know that we ever asked them, no, we didn't, it was in a way of this is what we are going to do now. ... It's interesting and ... fun but they have been very content. ... They both live in San Jose.

JJ: They both end up settling in California.

JE: Yes, yes. It's surprising because chances are, of course, if we had an invitation to go back there, we knew that we would lose our kids, ... because the one invitation that was the most

appealing I guess, Sue was in West Valley and Tom was in Santa Barbara. ... She had been going out with a guy that didn't want her to leave, ... but then she finished her last two years at Santa Clara University. ... We still had them as college kids, this was still home, and I really think that that makes a big difference too because if you lose them at an earlier time as far as other activities, ... I think you lose some of the closeness. ...

JJ: Were you active in your church here in Saratoga?

JE: Yes, the first Sunday that we were here, we went to a church that we had heard about and visiting we had heard about Saratoga Federated Church, and we went there and the minister, we didn't know what time the service was so we were half an hour early for the service. So the minister came down in the aisle because we were these people just sitting. ... They used to have two services then, now they have three so, but anyway he came down the aisle to introduce himself to us, and that's the church we ended up going to. We never shopped for another church. ...

JJ: Are you involved in any committees or anything in your church?

JE: Well, not now. ... I had been. I spent thirty-two years on Monday mornings counting the offering for the financial secretaries. And I stopped that the end of last year because I had problems, and one of my problems is my handwriting is very small, and it was getting to be kind of, you know, hard to ... have other people read what I write, so and other health things too, and so I haven't been active since the first of the year. But we have a women's auxiliary which meets once a month ... in a small group and in a large group also once a month, so for eight months of the year we have that activity, and I'm not on any official committees anymore. ... Andy still gets asks all the important questions because he's been chairman of the board and all this other stuff in finance and stuff, and he's been very much involved on everything, and we've gone through several ministers since we've been here. ... We have had many, ... and one man was just a marvelous man, and he and Andy were best friends. ... The man who followed him wasn't as good. ... It's been a wonderful experience for us.

JJ: Were there a lot of corporate social events organized by IBM?

JE: Not really, even when we were living back East, ... Andy started playing golf again and he could play golf on the IBM course in Poughkeepsie. Well, now, come to think of it, there was a series of visiting lecturers or whatever in Poughkeepsie and we met Richard Nixon, wonderful smile. ... This is long before he dreamed of becoming President. ... There have been different things like that. ... Basically our friendships with IBM people were just friendships with people that he was working with, not big social things.

JJ: How many grandchildren do you have?

JE: I have four. ...

JJ: What are their names?

JE: Well, our son is our older child, his name is Tom, he has two girls, Cindy and Lini, Melinda, Cynthia and Melinda, and then our daughter is Susan, and she has a girl named Stephanie and she's the married one, and a boy named Drew. He is the only boy. ... We have three girl grandchildren and one boy grandchild.

JJ: I suppose that none of your children went to Rutgers or NJC.

JE: No. Well, it's funny, they didn't really, they didn't even seem to be interested in it. I think they probably, it makes a difference if you're here and it's ... on the other side of the country, it makes a big difference. ... They might not have been averse to going if we were living there. ... Out of state students are more expensive. ... That makes a big difference, too.

JJ: Have you gone back to NJC since you graduated or since you moved out here?

JE: Well, since we moved out here, no. We had several years we would stop, kind of drive through and see what it was like and so forth and when we would be going on vacation, but we have not since we've moved out here. ... Maybe that's not so unusual.

JJ: No, no.

JE: ... My daughter went to the University of Santa Clara ... and she didn't go back either and that's only in the next town. ... She was very happy, ... that was a good move for her. ... She went to West Valley for two years, I mentioned the boy that she had been going with didn't want her to leave town. ... Then he got out of her life and then he came back into her life about when she was ready to go to whatever the third-year college would be, so she was back with him. She met his sister, and the sister is a neat gal, and so they kept the friendship going. We were so glad she didn't marry the boy. ...

JJ: Is there anything you would like to add to the record? Is there anything that we may have missed or skipped over?

JE: I don't know. I guess I don't know because I don't feel I'm connected with Rutgers anymore. It makes a difference. ... I loved it as a college and I didn't mind the restrictions. I can imagine it's a lot different now.

JJ: The campus is about half male and half female now and there are many more students.

JE: But there are that many students now?

JJ: Yes. There are buses that go to multiple campuses now.

JE: Are there a lot of academic buildings over there?

JJ: Yes.

JE: ... The residential campuses are still in New Brunswick? ...

JJ: Still, New Brunswick, still Douglass, still Cook. They have new dorms at the other campuses, Livingston and Busch.

JE: Oh, really?

JJ: They are further away from College Avenue so that deters some people from wanting to live there.

JE: Is that right? I mean it was out in left field when we were there. It still has that feeling?

JJ: There is more there now. They have a student center now.

JE: ... It is kind of hard to establish another main campus and that's what they have to do. I've seen some pictures of the stadium, ... so different when we were there.

JJ: Did you go to football games there?

JE: ... Yes, and I can't remember, I don't seem to think we went on the bus necessarily, I think with somebody or a girl or another had a car, so we could get over there in a car. ... But I thought that was wonderful fun.

JJ: Did you drive while you were at NJC?

JE: Yes.

JJ: When did you learn to drive?

JE: Oh, at home. ... I drove before I had a license because I drove a truck, ... a small truck, it was just running around stuff, and I didn't drive tractors too often because tractors are men's work in that you have equipment. ... I never did that but I did drive ... all the other kinds of vehicles and then I got my license when I was a senior in high school but I started driving when I was like twelve, and that was only if I needed to. ... They never said, "Go to the store and do this, I drove on the farm." It was easy to learn how to drive because, I mean even the road in front of our house, on our property, there were hardly any cars on that road, so it wasn't very challenging or it wasn't very scary, ... but my mom didn't mind. ...

JJ: Did you ever have your own car?

JE: No, I often wished that I did. ... My father's position was that I didn't need to because he had a car that Mom used and I used, and a couple of pick-up trucks that could be used for errands. ... He didn't see the need for it. ... I mean, I can't imagine myself taking a car on my own to go down to NJC. ...

JJ: When you went to NJC, did you feel there was a big difference between girls who were from the city and girls who were from more sheltered areas?

JE: Well, to a certain extent. There were some girls that I would never have any contact. ... I didn't mind the feeling of difference. It was more of a feeling of difference between the kids that I went to school with in elementary school and then went to high school with all the other kids from our district. ... They were nudged, ... because they hadn't had to work as I did on the farm I guess and maybe that makes a difference but no, I did enjoy the friendships, ... difference of interests maybe.

JJ: How long did your parents keep their farm for?

JE: They sold it, I want to say ... like '64, '65. ... My brother had used it, he was a resident farmer then. ... I'll tell you one thing that was so weird. We've always gone back at least just driving by whenever we were on the East Coast and the change of the property over the years, but the final change was that we drove up the road, and the house was gone, and that was a shocker because ... I just didn't anticipate it because we had a house across the street for the first part of my life. ... I was in the seventh grade I guess when we moved to the other side of the street and that house is the one that was destroyed, and I can't tell you what a terrible feeling that was. I mean there's nothing there, in fact, I walked around just to see if I could dig out something but there was nothing, just nothing there, and I don't know why they destroyed. My brother had sold it to a farmer who had horses running. ... He needed housing for his people and I don't know what happened, but all of a sudden there was nobody in there, around that area that I can ask why did he sell the house but he did--didn't have anything to do with me anymore.

JJ: Is it still a farm?

JE: Well the last time we were there was probably ... ten or fifteen years now, but it was slowly being encroached by housing, but when we last saw it, there was this big riding ring still there. There was some pasture land for horses and so that sort of like a farm to a certain extent. ... In fact some of the barns were still there too, but I think that by now that's probably all gone. It's probably all housing.

JJ: A new housing development or something.

JE: Yes. All it needed to have was somebody say, "Okay I'll take this and do this," and it's gone. ... When my dad died, my brother had already built a house next to, I'll say this border of the property and then he sold that and moved to New York State for a while. ... He no longer wanted any of that. It was like that's the end of that era. ... The last time we were there, my sister-in-law was with us and she didn't want to even talk to the man who was living in the house. ... That's the past. ... You can't stand in the way of progress. ... It was a wonderful part of the country when we were there. ... Now, it's, I don't know, I don't even know where people go to work. There are a lot of houses around, and I don't really, am not aware of seeing any factories or any big businesses, ... although IBM does have a location there or it did, I don't know. ... They just have to commute, but it's a different feeling entirely for me. I'm not ready to accept that, but I'm not going to go back there. ... That's okay. The last relative we had in that area died. He was my great uncle and he died about three years ago, and he used to write and tell me who he saw in church and stuff like that. ... He's gone now, he was married to my mother's

sister, and then he had one child. ... I can't remember where he went to college but he studied history and he's one of the whatever you call it people that are in charge of a President's home, a curator. ... He is one of those in charge of the Roosevelt home in Hyde Park, and he just loves his field, history, ... but that's the only relative we have in that area anymore, so it's been a while.

Jl: Did either you or your husband ever get involved in politics or anything either in California or in New Jersey?

JE: No. I don't know why, necessarily. ... Do you find that to be interesting? ...

Jl: Sometimes we meet people who were elected to local office or involved in local politics.

JE: ... I have never really known people in politics, but maybe that's why we're not in it, because we don't know anybody. ... It's one of those things. Outside of IBM we've been more involved with our own church, and the different activities there, and Andy has always spent a lot of time reading and studying. So, that makes a difference too. ... We've never really been involved in politics.

Jl: Is there anything else you would like to add to the record?

JE: No, not really.

Jl: This concludes the interview with Jean Carlough Eschenfelder.

JE: You're very good. ...

Jl: Thank you very much for your time.

JE: You're welcome.

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

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 6/6/13

Reviewed by Andrew Eschenfelder 7/23/13