

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK
AN INTERVIEW WITH SEYMOUR SCHENKEL
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Seymour Schenkel on March 12, 1998 with Kurt Piehler ...

Rebecca Karcher: Rebecca Karcher

KP: At Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I would like to begin by asking you a little bit about your parents, beginning with your father, who was a native of Newark.

Seymour Schenkel: That's true, yes, but, unfortunately, he died at the age of thirty-one. I was nine years old. He had an attack of appendicitis, which they didn't diagnose, and it was too late. In those days, they didn't have penicillin or sulfa drugs, so he passed away. I was raised by my mother, who was also from Newark, New Jersey.

KP: What did your father do?

SS: My father was a coal dealer. Rebecca won't know [about] it, you wouldn't know anything about this. In those days, all the furnaces were fired by coal. And he owned a Mack truck and an American La France truck. I remember the names, four-ton trucks. He had men who delivered coal by the ton and the business was very good. It was just about the time that oil was coming in, and he would have switched to oil. He was quite a go-getter, a good entrepreneur. He was building up a very nice business and then he passed away. And then my mother took over the business. She raised my brother and myself.

KP: How did your mother do in the business?

SS: Well, for a while, she kept her head above water. But after a while, of course, it went downhill. My father died in 1930, and now, we went into the depth of the Depression. And, although I must say, we were poor, but I didn't know it. And, anyway, she remarried about six years or so, seven years, after my father passed away. And that saved her, I guess.

KP: How tough was the Depression on your family?

SS: No, no, thinking back, no. I never went without. Of course I had grandparents who were American. And, actually, it was my great-grandfather who came here in 1877. In fact, my grandfather told me about the blizzard of '88. So I had my grandparents and they weren't rich, but they were pretty comfortable. Although we didn't have any spare money, there was never a question of food or clothing or anything. I spent my summers in Bradley Beach, where my grandparents lived. So, I guess I wasn't poor. But, we didn't have any money. Nobody had any money in those days. You didn't see many rich people. Everybody was in the same boat. But it wasn't anything like the program I've just seen on television, which I recommend to you, on the History Channel, on the Depression. It was narrated by Mario Cuomo. Nobody was selling apples in my family.

KP: So you had a very supportive extended family?

SS: Yes, I had a lot of uncles who paid attention to me. So I had a lot of male influences. And we were family, we were a pretty big family, and that took away the sting, I guess, of being poor.

RK: Where you the oldest in your family?

SS: Yes, I have a younger brother who's six years younger. He was three when my father died. And he went to Rutgers in Newark, as a matter-of-fact.

KP: Your father and your mother, do you know how they met?

SS: Their fathers were members of the same organization, a self-help organization which the immigrants formed for loaning money, for burials, and that's how they met. They were very young when they got married. My mother was nineteen and my father was twenty. My grandmother told me that she had to sign for him. You couldn't get married unless you were twenty-one, in those days. Maybe it's the same today, I don't know.

KP: So your family had very strong connections?

SS: Yes. Well, you know, in those days, the Jews all lived in pretty much one area, in the Third Ward in Newark. And they knew each other. So, that's how the boys met the girls, and they got married and here I am.

KP: How active were your parents in the Jewish community? You mentioned that your grandparents were involved in a self-help group. What else did your family participate in?

SS: Well, my mother was very involved in the Order of the Golden Chain. It's a Masonic group. My father was a Mason. In those days, you know, you didn't have the entertainment that you have today, and it was entertainment that you made and the organizations were very strong. They were all located in the middle of Newark and it was a way of getting out at night, going to meetings, and that's what they did. They were very active in these organizations.

KP: What about in the synagogue? Where your parents active at all?

SS: No. I started Hebrew school when I was quite young. And after my father passed away, we became members of B'Nai Abraham in Newark, New Jersey, which was one of the old synagogues. And I was bar-mitzvahed there and so was my brother. But we weren't active, by today's standards, in the synagogue.

KP: How observant was your family growing up?

SS: Well, until my father died, we had a kosher home. And that went by the boards. My grandmother kept a kosher home, but that was the end of it. I'm not very observant. Although, I want to tell you, though, [that] I've belonged to the same synagogue for forty-five years and I still belong and I still support it.

KP: Which is in ...

SS: Agudath Israel in Caldwell, New Jersey, a very active synagogue. You got a question for me, Rebecca?

RK: Oh, yes. You lived on Clinton Avenue before or after you went to Rutgers?

SS: Yes, I lived on Clinton Avenue in Newark before, no, when I went to Rutgers, my mother lived there. And I lived at the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity house on 78 Easton Avenue, which I think is gone. I lived there for four years.

KP: Do you know how your mother met her second husband?

SS: No, no, I don't. He was much older than she, about twenty years older, and it wasn't a great marriage.

KP: Oh, it didn't work out?

SS: Well, they were married for about twenty years and then he passed away.

KP: What did he do for a living?

SS: He had a food market in Newark on Frelinghuysen Avenue, or South Broad Street, rather.

KP: Newark had a very large Jewish community, and it was also a very vibrant city.

SS: Oh, yes.

KP: What are some of your memories of it?

SS: Don't start me off on Newark, because I'm very unhappy [with] the way it is. When I lived in Newark, there were 440,000 people, and now, I think there's half that. And it was a very, very vibrant city and, despite the fact that we are only a ten or fifteen minute tube ride from New York City, we had our own Bamberger's. And, as I recall, Broad and Market Street in Newark was the second busiest corner in the world. Right next to Times Square, more people crossed that street, in the daytime, than any other place. Second, rather. We had theaters and we had traveling theater groups. And I went to the best high school in the State of New Jersey, really. It was Weequahic High School in the City of Newark, which I'm sure you heard of.

KP: A number of people have told me that ...

SS: Oh, yes. And it really was the finest high school in the state of New Jersey. I think I got a real good education there.

KP: When did you decide you were going to college, or did your parents expect you to go?

SS: I never knew anything else. I mean, you graduated from elementary school, then you graduated from high school, then you went to college. I never knew anything else. Although, my mother and father were not college graduates.

KP: But the assumption was that you would go?

SS: Yes, it never occurred to me that I would do anything else. And my brother, either.

KP: Weequahic High School ...

SS: When you go to Weequahic High School, that's what you think. That's how you thought.

KP: That you would go to college?

SS: Yes, everybody went. You know, everybody went to college.

KP: What type of activities did you take part in at Weequahic?

SS: Let's see, I was manager of the cross-country team and the track team, and I was on the newspaper and, but I also, I worked from the time I was fifteen years old.

KP: What type of job?

SS: I worked for a company called Larkey. I know you wouldn't [know it]. It was a clothing store. Since [then], it has gone out of business. They had about five stores, too. I got the job when I was fifteen and a half years old. And I worked at that store every Saturday and all summers, until I graduated from college. I used to, on Saturday, after, we had Saturday classes, I don't know if you still have them. But at twelve o'clock, I used to get out on the highway, hitchhike home, get to the store at two o'clock, work 'till ten o'clock at night. So, a lot of my activities were limited because of that. I used to go to one football game a year, unfortunately, because I worked on Saturday.

RK: What made you choose Rutgers? Did you look at other schools before?

SS: You know, I said that we were, we didn't have any other thoughts except going to college. But we weren't so knowledgeable about different colleges. I did look into the University of North Carolina and Michigan and, don't ask me why, I don't know. But I had, actually, it was my stepfather's relative who was a freshmen at Rutgers, member of Sigma Alpha Mu. And he influenced me. I came down here on "Prep School Weekend," it was called. It was in April or May, and we were invited by fraternity houses. And I was invited by Sigma Alpha Mu and I was pre-pledged, which is a terrible idea. And I moved into the fraternity when I came to school. I guess, I should admit that my girlfriend went to NJC, my high school sweetheart, so that probably had an influence on me, too.

KP: Your girlfriend was coming here or was she already here?

SS: No, no, we graduated grammar school and high school together. Actually, she came ...

KP: So this was a long-standing girlfriend?

SS: Yes. It was a long-standing girlfriend.

KP: How many people from Weequahic came to Rutgers? Do you remember?

SS: About half a dozen.

KP: Do you remember any of them?

SS: Well there was Benji Reichman, and, I'm trying to think of who the others were, (Victor Brown?), I think, no, I'm not sure. Now, you've got to remember, we are going back a lot of years.

KP: No, I realize that.

SS: Although, I must admit to you [that] I am sometimes better at remembering fifty years ago than I am yesterday, which, I guess, is typical. Benji Reichman, I remember very well, because I'm friendly with his family. Who the others were? Well, my girlfriend, of course, was there, and, yes, Tepper, what the hell's her first name? I can't think of her first name, another girl. Who the other guys were, I can't think of off-hand. I'll probably think about it as we go along.

KP: Before leaving for Rutgers, one of the questions I have about Newark in the 1930s concerns the political climate. How did your family feel about Roosevelt?

SS: Oh, we were all Democrats. Roosevelt was a hero. In Newark, the mayor, I remember, was Meyer Ellenstein. He was the first Jewish mayor and he was very popular. He was a dentist and then he became a lawyer. I don't think he ended up too well. But, of the, but all my family were Democrats, as far as I know. Except for one uncle, who was staunch Republican until the day he died. And he lived to about eighty-eight. I also have a son now, [who] is a staunch Republican. One of my children. The rest of us are independents.

KP: You also had two uncles who served in World War I.

SS: Yes, I had an uncle who served in the Navy, who didn't get out of Hoboken, and then I had another uncle who served in the infantry and was, actually, he ran away and enlisted when he was sixteen and he served in the Mexican Incident, whatever you want to call it. And then he was shipped over to France and he was gassed. He was very prominent in the Jewish War Veterans. He became the state commander. And my other uncle who was in the Navy was also state commander of the Jewish War Veterans.

KP: Did they join the American Legion or ...

SS: No, only the Jewish War Veterans. But I belong to the American Legion.

KP: No, I ask because your envelope had the American Legion symbol on it ...

SS: Yes.

KP: ... and I wondered if it was a family tradition.

SS: No, no. I belong to the American Legion because I think they do good for the veterans and I make that contribution. I don't belong to a post, I belong to the national organization.

KP: Since you had a girlfriend, I assume that you went on a lot of dates?

SS: Yes, I was up at NJC a lot. We called it "The Coop."

KP: But even back in Newark, where would you go for dates?

SS: The movies. Movies were a big, big thing.

KP: There were a lot of great movie theaters in Newark, at this time.

SS: And I could walk to the movies and the double features and three, four hour shows. And then, there were dances and things like that. Home parties, a lot of this hanging out together. They call it "hanging out," now, but we didn't hang out at the mall. We hung out in each other's homes. And the boys and girls got together.

KP: What did you do when you spent your summers at Bradley Beach?

SS: All my summers, until I was fifteen. Yes.

KP: What was that like? It sounds very idyllic.

SS: Well, it wasn't, it got to be a little boring. What I used to do, very simple. I used to get up in the morning, I used to go down to the beach at ten o'clock, I used to go into the water, I used to get out of the water at twelve o'clock, I'd go run home and have lunch. I'd be back by one-thirty, I'd go into the water, I'd get out of the water at four o'clock, and I'd come back home. I was black. I could have passed for, not quite African, but Caribbean. I'd get very, very tan. I have that kind of skin and, being in the water for ...

KP: For that length of time.

SS: But it got to be boring.

KP: The day must have felt very long.

SS: When I got older, I didn't care for it too much.

KP: Did your family listen to the radio very much?

SS: Oh, yes, that was it. We had an Atwater Kent, my grandparents did, they had a battery. And the radio was a major form of entertainment. We listened to all the serials. Monday, I spoke to a young lady named Cindy Armstrong and I said, "Ever hear of Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy?" Did you ever hear of Jack Armstrong the All-American Boy?

RK: No.

SS: Did you?

KP: I've heard of it, but it's very vague.

SS: That was one of the programs on the radio. Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy, then of course there was Buck Rogers.

RK: Roy Rogers?

SS: No, Buck Rogers.

RK: Right, Buck Rogers.

SS: Then, of course, the mystery programs and, I guess you had to use your imagination a little bit. But they were just as, maybe more entertaining, than the television programs are today. Young people can't imagine how wonderful the radio was. Then, of course, the Make-Believe Ballroom. In the fraternity house, it used to come on at five o'clock and every radio in the house was tuned to the Make-Believe Ballroom. We didn't have a television set.

KP: I lived in Newark for several years, in the early '90s, and it is still famous for two institutions that are still there. The public library and the Newark Museum.

SS: Yes, public library. They lose a lot of books, now, at the public library. I have not been to the Newark Museum in a long time. My, the most exciting thing about Newark today is New Jersey PAC. Performing Arts. It's just beautiful. I doubt that I'll ever go to Lincoln Center again. The programs have been great. The big theater in Newark was the Mosque.

KP: I've been there, too.

SS: My mother took me there to see *The Desert Song*, I remember. Then we used to have a lot of shows that came to the Schubert Theater, which was on Branford Place. My uncles took me to see, I was just a teenager, but he took me to see *Behind Red Lights*. I saw *Tobacco Road* there. I saw a lot of shows, some of them, I probably shouldn't have seen when I was that age, I tell you. It didn't do me any harm, though.

KP: Do you remember when the movie *All Quite on the Western Front* came out?

SS: Oh, sure I do. And I read the book, too. And it was very impressive. I want to tell you that I stood on this campus, I think it was on Queen's campus, and I took an oath, "never to fight, unless this country was invaded." Of course, it was a communist rally. I wasn't a communist, but I was on the fringe of, I was a freshmen. And that's how we felt.

KP: So this was back in '38?

SS: '38.

KP: So you took the Oxford pledge? I think it was the Oxford pledge.

SS: Is that ...

KP: It's Oxford or Cambridge, I forget which one.

SS: Never to fight unless the country was invaded. Of course, that was ridiculous. But, well ...

KP: But, at the time, you felt ...

SS: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

KP: I'd be curious ...

SS: But we didn't know how terrible Hitler was. We really didn't get the news as well as you get it today. It was quite different.

KP: Were you active at all in any political organizations before you came to Rutgers?

SS: No, I wasn't. I was pretty busy working, I'll tell you. You know, for a kid fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old, I used to put in a lot of hours. I used to, Easter time, Christmas time, I used to rush down there after school. And we worked to ten o'clock at night. Saturday was the big day then. I wasn't in many activities.

KP: When did you get a fuller sense of just how bad Hitler was?

SS: I want to tell you that I just never realized what he was doing until the end, toward the end of World War II, when I was in Europe. It just, we just heard that [there were] concentration camps, but nobody, I didn't think in terms of killing them indiscriminately. And, I feel sort of ashamed of myself that I was so blind to what was going on. I think the children, the young people today, are much more aware of what's going on in the world. We weren't. It was so much more difficult to get along. But, as I said, I sometimes feel ashamed of myself that I wasn't more aware of what was going on.

KP: Were you aware at all of the Bund activity, because New Jersey had a lot of Nazi supporters.

SS: Oh, yes, that I was aware of, because that was in Irvington, New Jersey. That was one of the centers. We were aware of that and I, when I was a kid, I used to contribute money to an organization, The Minutemen.

KP: Oh, yes.

SS: In Newark, and I [gave] a quarter or something. I was just a kid. They would ...

KP: They were very active.

SS: Oh, yes, they would give the Bund what for. They would beat them up. That was the only indication. I ever had. I lived, until I was thirteen years old, I lived in a very mixed neighborhood. But, then we moved to the Weequahic section and that was Jewish, and anti-Semitism didn't have any effect on me.

KP: Before moving to Weequahic, did you experience any anti-Semitism?

SS: No, no. Not that I felt. No.

KP: Not even in the playground, someone would call you a name?

SS: No, but my grandfather used to tell me, "You know, when I was growing up," he grew up in Newark, "Jew-Bastard was one word." Like Damn Yankees is one word.

RK: Did you face it at Rutgers?

SS: Anti-Semitism here? No. Except we knew there were Jewish fraternities and there were Gentile fraternities. And the Gentiles didn't take the Jews, but by the same token, we had no Gentiles in the three Jewish fraternities that were here. But I never had any feeling of being discriminated against or anything like that.

RK: Sigma Alpha Mu was a Jewish fraternity?

SS: Yes. It was Jewish and you had to be Jewish to be a member, in those days. I think, since, they had to change the by-laws, because it was illegal. It was Sigma Alpha Mu, Phi Epsilon Pi, and I can't think of the other one.

KP: I know, I know there were the three. I always think of Sammy's.

SS: Just the three, and Sammy was the easier [one] to say.

KP: I've interviewed the most Sammy's, too, so it's left a real impression. You also had that terrible fire.

SS: I was in the Army at the time. And I was in England and it was headlined in the *Stars and Stripes*. And of course, they all knew I was from Rutgers, that I had graduated from Rutgers, and they brought over the paper. I think that happened about 1945, I think. Right. But having girls in the house was, I didn't think it was any big deal. We always had girls in the house. Things weren't any different than they are now.

KP: Well ...

SS: I think they were a little bit more secretive, though.

KP: We'll, we have gotten conflicting stories on that account.

SS: No.

KP: I'd like to just follow up. When I ask them about World War II, a lot of people start talking about December 7th, which is a logical place to start, especially for Americans. But a lot of people have a hard time remembering '38, '39, '40, and '41. Now you, on the other hand, you have vivid memories of taking the pledge.

SS: Yes, I do.

KP: How widely supported was that pledge at Rutgers?

SS: I don't think it was widely supported. I don't think the Communist party was very strong on campus.

KP: Did you know that this was a communist-backed effort?

SS: Not at the time, no. Later on, I found it out. I was just standing on the fringes. I'm listening to these speakers and they come up with this pledge and I put my hand up.

KP: Really, so ...

SS: I was just a new freshman. I mean, it must have been in September or October of my freshman year. And it sure sounded right to me. I wasn't going to fight for anybody but Americans.

KP: Do you remember who the speakers were?

SS: No.

KP: Were they Rutgers people or were they from off-campus?

SS: No, they were students. They were students.

KP: One of the regular speakers at chapel as Norman Thomas. Do you remember him?

SS: I remember Norman Thomas. He'd [wouldn't] be radical today, he'd be a conservative. Like (Townsend?) from California. But, no, I never went to hear him and I feel sorry.

KP: Did you know anything about the Liberal Club at Rutgers?

SS: The Liberal, I don't know. The only, you know, as I said, I worked and I wasn't here [on] weekends. The only thing I belonged to was fraternity. I belonged to the German club, *Deutsche Verein*, and I really didn't do anything else on campus. I couldn't go out for anything. I wasn't here.

KP: How many hours a week would you work?

SS: Well, I only worked on Saturdays, but it cut into, you know, a lot happened on weekends.

KP: Yes.

SS: And I had to study during the week. But Christmas time and Easter time, I would work sixty hours a week.

KP: Because those were prime ...

SS: And I was just a kid. I didn't think anything of it. And, in those days, they didn't have unions. So it was Christmas time and my boss used to say, "Seymour, run out and get a sandwich." So I ran out and got a sandwich. I mean, but I came right back. It was very busy. And dinnertime, he'd say, "Seymour, run out and get some dinner." I would run out, get dinner and come right back. And then one day, he told me to go out for lunch, and I went out and came back ten minutes later and I got tapped on the shoulder by one of the other men. He said, "You can't come back. You've got to go out for another fifty minutes." I said, "What are you talking about?" He says, "That's the union rules. We are all union, now." And I want to tell you, I had the hardest time doing that in busy [times]. I wasn't brought up that way. So, that's what happened.

KP: You were very startled by this development?

SS: I was, I was. Not only was I startled by that, I was startled by the fact that they came to me and told me I had to pay union dues.

KP: What union was it?

SS: (Jacobson?). He was a very prominent labor leader, later on. It was the Retail Clerks Union. I don't know, they wanted fifty cents from me. I used to get three dollars for that Saturday. So, I went to the union office. Mr. (Jacobson?) was there. I said to him, "I don't think I should be paying this. I mean, I only work on Saturday. I only get three dollars." He said, "You know, a lot of our members are out of work." And I was smart enough to know that I should fold my tent and disappear. And I said, "Thank you for telling me. Goodbye." What he was telling me was [that] I only had that job because he let me have that job. So I paid my fifty cents. But unions were, I guess I was more attuned to the owner than I was to the worker. Which I still am.

KP: You mentioned that you had thought of attending other schools? What made you come to Rutgers?

SS: I didn't think of other schools, really. My mother made an afghan for every school that I, she made an afghan for the colors of North Carolina, then she made an afghan for the colors of Michigan. And finally, she made an afghan for Rutgers. I ended up at Rutgers. I really didn't, I didn't visit any other schools, anything like that. And I got in right away. I had very good marks.

KP: How much of it was money? Would you have gone somewhere else if you could have afforded it?

SS: I want to tell you, some of the stuff I talk about, I am a little ashamed about. I didn't even think about the money. I did have a scholarship, I had a partial scholarship. My mother paid for my college. I could have gone to Princeton for the same amount. It cost a 1,000 dollars a year to go here. It cost 420 dollars for tuition and I think I got a 100 dollar scholarship and I just I didn't think about the money. I look back now and I am startled by how thoughtless I was.

KP: Did you have a protective family?

SS: Yes, I did.

KP: In growing up ...

SS: Except for the work, and I did earn my own allowance and I paid for my clothing. And then, when I came to Rutgers, I paid for part of it from my earnings.

KP: When you started college, what type of career did you think you wanted?

SS: I was a good math student. The mathematics teacher in Weequahic High School told me I should be an engineer. That was a mistake. I registered as an engineer and I was accepted as an engineer and then I got my schedule. And I saw the courses that I had to take and I knew that it wasn't for me. And I had a bad experience. I went to the Dean of Men and, I can't think of his name.

KP: Dean Metzger?

SS: Not Dean Metzger. I think he was arts and sciences. I don't think it was Metzger, was it?

KP: He was a very austere figure.

SS: Then it was Metzger.

KP: He often referred to himself in the third person, as "the Dean."

SS: I had a pipe in my pocket. And I went into him and told him I wanted to change my courses to math and science. He wouldn't do it. And he said, "I want to tell you, son. Get that pipe out of your pocket, young man." So I did. I was seventeen years old, just seventeen years old. And he said, "You are not going to last in this school, I'm telling you. Now get out of here." That was one of my first experiences with Rutgers University. He was a very austere man. Then someone gave me a very good tip, they said, "Go see the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences," who was the nicest guy. I can't remember his name, Dean Martin. He was such a gentlemen.

KP: We have yearbook, so we don't have to ...

SS: I guess Metzger was the dean of Men.

KP: Let's see. These are some of the deans.

SS: I don't see him.

KP: That's the '39 yearbook, so ...

SS: I don't see him. Dean Metzger, the dean of Arts and Science. It should be here and it's not. This is he. What's his name?

KP: Dean Martin.

SS: Dean Martin, Marvin.

KP: Dean Walter T. Marvin

SS: Oh, he was such a fine gentlemen, and he sat me down and he changed my courses to math and science. Changed, gave me a new schedule. He made me feel a lot better. I, subsequently, I took chemistry in college and I had never taken it in high school. I don't know if you have ever taken chemistry?

KP: I've taken it in high school and it was pretty difficult.

SS: I took it in college, without having taken it in high school, and there were five in a class of about 250 who have done that. And I want to tell you, it was tough. Anyway, but I was a good math student. And I went to my math professor and I said, "I have to drop, I can't take math six days a week. I have to pay more attention to chemistry or I'm going to flunk it." He said, "Well, let me see what's going on." He comes back to me, "Don't you worry about chemistry. You stay in this. Don't you worry about it." And sure enough, I didn't have to worry about it. But subsequently, after my first year, I changed to business administration and I majored in statistical methods.

KP: So you combined your interest in math and ...

SS: Yes. Because of the math, that's why I was in the signal intelligence. I took math up through my junior year and then I found out that I don't have enough imagination to be a mathematician. It's not just, I was good mechanically, but when it came to imagination, I couldn't cut it. A lot of people don't realize [that].

KP: I don't have that much ability in math, so I have respect for people who are good at it.

SS: It takes a lot of imagination. People think it's mechanical ...

RK: Also, you got your MBA after the war?

SS: Yes. I graduated from Rutgers with a bachelor of science in business. After I was married, as a matter-of-fact, I went back to Rutgers in Newark and they had just started a program for MBA. Nobody knew what a MBA was in those days. I got a MBA in 1954, which didn't make any difference in my life ...

KP: Did you use the GI Bill to get your MBA?

SS: Yes. The GI Bill was probably the greatest thing that ever happened in this country. There was a big program on it, not too long ago, within the last year. I thought it was great, but I didn't realize how great it was.

KP: Going back to your undergraduate days, my students have been reading old issues of the *Targum*, and the *Caellian*, and the *Campus News*, and they've noticed ...

SS: Well, the editors of the *Targum* were members of my class, as a matter-of-fact. Leonard Goldblatt and Stanley Klion.

KP: Oh, Stan Klion.

SS: Stan Klion, yes. And Lenny Goldblatt. Stan passed away. Lenny, I think, is still around. And they were friends of mine.

KP: What do you remember about Stan Klion, because he died before I could interview him?

SS: I'm sorry about that. He was a very, very bright guy.

KP: What do you remember about him?

SS: He was a baby. When I say he was a baby, he was the youngest one in the fraternity. I was seventeen. I think he was fifteen. But he was a very, very bright guy. He was quite successful, I understand. I never saw him again after 1942.

KP: So you remember him?

SS: Oh, I remember him very well because we were friendly and we were both on a par, for a while, academically. He made Phi Beta Kappa and I didn't. I was eligible for it, but that's another story. So, I was, we were [in the same] peer group. But he, he had problems with [his] social life because he was ...

KP: ... So young?

SS: So young. He really was young.

KP: I've interviewed his brother Bart.

SS: I've never met his brother, but I know his brother was very prominent.

KP: And his brother was also very young.

SS: Yes. Very bright family.

KP: But not as young as his older brother.

SS: Very bright family. And Lenny Goldblatt, of course, was editor of the *Targum*. I think Stan was business manager of the *Targum*. George Foos, did you [interview] George Foos?

KP: No.

SS: He was the Class of '41. Business manager of the *Targum*. I was the social director of the fraternity house. I was also the steward. I worked, I got my meals for nothing, but I ran the kitchen. I hired the cook and planned the menus and I did all the purchasing. It was a pretty big job. I earned part of my way that way.

KP: Could you talk about some of your social activities?

SS: Actually, I used to hire the band. I did this for about two years. We used to have parties. There was a lot of drinking. It wasn't, in fact, I sometimes shudder, because I drank and drove. The idea, now, of what I did, it makes me shiver. But we never, nothing, we never had any accidents. Luckily. But a number of us took out girls from NJC and we had big dances. The Sammy dances were usually a big draw. We got a lot of people from all over the place coming to the parties. Then, of course, there were the three weekends a year, the Sophomore Hop, Junior Prom, and the Military Ball. Right?

KP: Yes.

RK: The Military Ball was pretty large, right? Over 600 people attended?

SS: Yes, well, they were all big. They were all big. And I said I was poor, but I had tails. We wore tails, we didn't wear tuxedos. Those were the weekends I didn't work. We went to the proms, and, I say, most of us wore tails. I don't have any pictures of them, unfortunately. Just had a good time, I guess.

KP: And you had some impressive bands. One of the bands was Duke Ellington?

SS: I don't think ...

KP: One of the years, he was. Maybe before your year.

SS: Maybe. It wasn't mine. We had Ozzie and Harriet Nelson. And we had Gene Krupa and we, those were the names that stick out. Oh, and we had the big bands. Oh, yes.

KP: One of the years, I think it was before your year, they had Duke Ellington.

SS: Maybe, I would have remembered Duke Ellington. But it was really, they were very big weekends. The prom was on Friday night and then Saturdays were the fraternity parties. The girls used to stay in the house [and] the boys had to get out. Well ...

KP: That always didn't work out ...

SS: That always didn't work that way.

KP: We don't have to go into that.

SS: It was very quiet, you know.

KP: It's interesting ...

SS: It wasn't flaunted.

KP: It's interesting, because we've heard the full range of stories. There are people who are just convinced that their day was much more innocent than today. There are other people who have said that there was no drinking in their fraternity house. Others have said, in fact, that there was some drinking.

SS: I think the big difference, I really don't believe that there were as many women [who were] sexually active in my youth as there are today. I think there was more thought of the value of virginity then, than there is now. That's not a value judgement, incidentally. That's what I think was the case. But, a lot of mushing going on, I'll tell you.

KP: Even though you were a business administration and statistics major, you listed an English professor as your favorite professor.

SS: Yes, I could have been an English major. Even today, I read a book a week. I always have. I'm pretty well-versed in literature. I was a peculiar kind of business major. I really didn't fit [in], because I had these other interests. And I, McGinn, I think I must have mentioned, Professor of Drama.

KP: Professor O'Neil

SS: O'Neil, O'Neil. I think I've read almost every play there is. That was my favorite course. Although I didn't take Shakespeare, I've read all of Shakespeare. We used to read it in high school. That was the difference in the education of that time and today, I had a good background.

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

KP: ... Teachers, before you even got to Rutgers. I have been told that the Weequahic faculty was stellar.

SS: I can't think of any names except the principal, Dr. Hertzberg, his name was. He was principal. He wasn't one of the boys, I want to tell you. He was up there. We dealt with the assistant principal, Mr. White. When you went into see the principal, it was like the Oval Office. The only time I had to see him, was [when] he had to write the recommendations [for us] for college. So he would interview us, talk to us and write the recommendations.

KP: It must have been an intimidating experience.

SS: Well, he was a presence, let me put it that way. As a matter-of-fact, I think that he had been an English teacher before. I think my mother had him for English. These people all came from Newark. You didn't see all the movement in those days, as you do today. You say you lived in Newark for a while, but you're not obviously from Newark.

KP: No, I lived there right after finishing my doctorate. And I was working in New York, so I lived, for three years, in the old *Newark News* building, which was converted into condos.

SS: Is that right? I didn't know that. I know where it is on Market Street, right near Penn Station.

KP: Yes, it's been converted into condos and I rented a one-bedroom apartment.

SS: That was a good spot.

KP: It's a great spot.

SS: As long as you don't have to go out at night.

KP: Well, it was interesting. I would actually go out at night quite a bit in the downtown area.

SS: It was all right?

KP: Yes, it was okay.

SS: Maybe we get the wrong idea.

KP: Yes, no, also, I taught at Rutgers Newark at night, so there's a lot I know about Newark. There's some continuity between the old and new Newark. I have very fond memories.

SS: I'm glad to hear that.

KP: So it's made me even more intrigued about the earlier history of Newark.

SS: New book was just published, called *Newark*. I got it at Barnes and Noble. It has a pretty good history of Newark.

KP: Did you attend mandatory chapel at Rutgers?

SS: Not I.

KP: How did you ...

SS: I worked.

KP: You didn't have to attend during the week?

SS: No, I don't remember going to chapel.

KP: You don't remember going to Kirkpatrick?

SS: I must have gone. You know, it's just not part of my memory. Of course, I was in the chapel. There must have been special chapels that I had to go to. But I didn't go on Sunday morning because ...

KP: You didn't go on Sunday morning.

SS: I worked, I wasn't here. I was excused. No, you know, I think we had to go [during] noon hour, once a week. Something like that, but it was for a very short time. We used to run there and then run back to the fraternity house. Because we ate all our meals in the fraternity house.

KP: What about ROTC? You mentioned that you were not as enthusiastic about it?

SS: Nobody liked ROTC, no. We had to take it.

KP: Yes.

SS: Mostly classroom and close-order drill, and I took two years of it. Stan Klion took four years and he graduated as an officer. Also a very prominent member of my class, Bob Haber. Did you ...

KP: I've heard the name.

SS: He was president of our fraternity. A football player who got hurt his freshman year and didn't play, but he was well-known on campus and he was a four-year ROTC. They were the two in our house. I took two years and that was plenty. I really don't like the restrictions of the Army and I really never liked officers. We'll get into that later. And I have a lot of company.

KP: But it sounds like that started early in your ROTC experience.

SS: It was not my cup of tea.

KP: You mentioned that you spent a lot of time at NJC.

SS: We just called it "The Coop." It wasn't a derogatory term.

KP: Yes.

SS: I don't even know where it came from. Was it because they were chickens? I mean, the girls were "chicks," or, I don't ...

KP: Actually, I've read that it came out of Cooper Hall.

SS: Oh, okay. I didn't know that.

KP: It's used a lot. People will often, when I say NJC, they'll go, "Oh, you mean 'The Coop.'"

SS: The Coop, yes. We just called it that and, as I say, it wasn't a bad word. And it didn't infer [any]thing about women. We weren't as careful in those days as we are today, to say anything that would be detrimental to women.

KP: Did you go to any of the NJC dances and other social events that they had?

SS: They didn't have the same kind of things that we had.

KP: Yes.

SS: It was more of hanging out, [but] we didn't use that term then. They had a place [where] they entertained boys and, of course, the big scandal was always that there was a toilet seat up on the second floor of one of the residences. That was a joke.

RK: It still is on Douglass.

SS: Is it still? A raised toilet seat indicates something. But the girls had to be in at eleven o'clock on weekdays and twelve o'clock on Saturdays and no kidding around. The only way they could get out, like on a weekend, they had to sign out. I think the freshmen had to have a parents' permission to do it. As I say, if there was any sneaking in, I didn't know about it. We obeyed the rules, whatever they were. I still see some of the women that I knew. They live in Caldwell.

KP: Women you knew from NJC?

SS: From NJC, same year, who were friends of my girlfriend.

KP: When did you sense that the country was getting into the war? What were your thoughts at this time?

SS: But, of course, there was the draft.

KP: The 1940 draft.

SS: Yes. I don't remember thinking about it at all. Of course, now I know it was a good thing and now I know, of course, when it came up for a vote again, it only won by one vote, which [was] a sad commentary on what we knew was going on. But, I really didn't think about it. I really didn't think about it.

KP: When you were in school, did you read the paper regularly?

SS: No, I don't think I did.

KP: You're not the first classmate to say that.

SS: I say that with shame because, I think as a parent, I am well up on what's going on in the world.

KP: But, at the time, when you were ...

SS: I think I was like a lot of other youth. I thought only about myself. Lived day to day and really didn't think about the rest of the world. As I say, I am a little ashamed to say it, but I guess it's true.

KP: One of the few issues that we noticed was the debate on campus about the draft in '40.

SS: I don't remember it at all.

KP: You don't remember that there was a ...

SS: I really didn't take much time, because, as I say, I had to study during the week and, having a girlfriend, probably took too much time. If I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't have had a girlfriend. I guess that's not nice to say. I really don't remember being aware of all these things going on. I knew I wasn't a communist.

KP: What were most students at Rutgers politically? How many of them were Republican or Democrat?

SS: I don't know, I just don't know. I thought everybody was like me, a Democrat. That's what you think, that's the way it was at Weequahic High School. The fraternity was probably like Weequahic High School. Remember, it was all Jewish and, but the ones who were more gung-ho were guys like Stan Klion and Bob Haber. They probably got that from ROTC, advanced ROTC. They seemed to know more about what was going on with Germany than I did. As far as Japan goes, [I] never thought about Japan. It never occurred to me that Japan was going to be a factor in our history.

KP: One final thing before we leave Rutgers and talk more about the war. You mentioned that because you worked at the clothing store on Saturdays, you missed a lot of social activities.

SS: I missed a lot.

KP: Particularly the football games, which seemed ...

SS: I went to one football game a year.

KP: Which ...

SS: I want to tell you what game I went to. I went to the game in 1938 when Rutgers beat Princeton for the first time in sixty-nine years. And we were ecstatic. We drove through town blowing our horns, and I tell you, it was exciting. It really was. And I was just a freshman, but I

had the spirit. I went to that game and I used to go to ...

KP: If you had to pick a game to go to, that was it.

SS: That was the game. It was the dedication of the new stadium and it really was a happy time. That, I remember particularly. We didn't have such great football teams. The guy I remember was Tranovich, The Train. He was a football star in my earlier days. He was in one of my classes, too. I don't think he had a voice because I never heard him talk.

KP: Any more questions about Rutgers?

RK: Were you hazed as a freshman?

SS: Yes. I was paddled, once, real hard. And that's wrong, but I remember they used to have quiz night, that was before we were initiated, which I missed. I wasn't there. But the sophomore class, the class after me, rebelled about that quiz night. And we didn't do it after that.

KP: What was ...

SS: Quiz night was, you get a lot of questions about the history of the fraternity and the history of Rutgers. If you didn't get the right answer, you got hit with a paddle. I never hit anyone with a paddle. I can't, I wouldn't hit anybody. But there were some who broke blood vessels in the behinds of the pledges. It wasn't the kind of hazing that you read about, where they poured whiskey down your throat or anything like that. The worst part was the paddling. Also, when you were a freshman, at ten o'clock at night, you had to take turns, you had to go around to all the upperclassmen and to see what they wanted from the drug store. There was a drug store where we got take-out. There was no ordering pizzas to be delivered, there was no deliveries. And the freshmen used to have to go out and get the drinks and the hamburgers and whatever they brought back. That was part of the "freshman orientation," shall I call it? I wasn't happy about being a freshman. And I think that is part of the business with the Army. I just didn't like taking orders. The rest of fraternity life, it was, it was a living group. We charged eight dollars a week for six days of meals. That's pretty good, eight dollars a week. It was pretty much as much as you wanted to eat, too. The meals were good, nutritious, you had as much breakfast as you wanted, and there were seconds. Eight dollars a week. Of course, the guys used to complain, because the menus, how much can you vary a menu? I know about the complaints because I used to get them. By and large, the food was wholesome food and it was cheaper to live in a fraternity house. I think it was cheaper than living in the dorms, if I'm not mistaken. You had friends. It was a nice way to go to college. The unfortunate part is, you shouldn't do it from your freshman year. You should have the experience of living in the dorms for a year.

KP: What do you think you missed by not living in the dorms?

SS: I missed having a wider variety of friends. That's what I missed, really. It was sort of inbreeding. I didn't make a lot of other friends on campus.

KP: The fraternities were really their own world.

SS: Yes, that's right, and I wasn't involved in activities, so I didn't get to know a lot of people. I must have known more girls than I knew boys.

KP: Do you remember where you were during Pearl Harbor?

SS: Do I? Yes, absolutely. My family, my uncle used to have a party every year at Christmas time. We all gathered and, in those days, you didn't have tape recorders like this. But you had recorders and we used to make records, which we played back at the party. And they were very funny, I guess. We used to think they were. It was something quite new. We were at one of my uncle's and aunt's houses, and we were making records for our annual Christmas party. The radio, somebody must have turned on the radio and they said, "Pearl Harbor was bombed," and, you have heard this over and over, everybody said, "Where's Pearl Harbor?" Nobody knew where Pearl Harbor [was]. Nobody in that room knew where Pearl Harbor was. That was on a Sunday, as I recall, and I came back to Rutgers that Sunday night. On Monday, a bunch of us went down to the Army recruiting office. Not to enlist, but to see what the story was. We were patriotic, we really were patriotic.

KP: Did you think you would enlist right away?

SS: I tried. Not in the Army. I tried to enlist in the Navy. They had a V-12 program. I think I got that right. And they accepted me. It was pretty good. I was going to become an ensign. And then I had to go for my physical. I passed the physical, except, they gave me a color test. Now, I knew I was color-weak, but I could see red, green, orange, primary colors. That test is, (Japanese?) test, and on it, you read numbers on a page. I could not read one single number, not one number. And they rejected me because they said I was color-blind. Well, today I know that I am color-weak, not color-blind. The next thing I enlisted in [was] the Army Quartermaster Corps. The way that enlistment [worked] depended upon me being accepted at Harvard Business School for an MBA. You go for a year, an extensive year, you get your MBA, and then you become a lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps, Army Quartermaster Corps. That sounded pretty damn good. So I applied to Harvard and I was accepted at Harvard. The Army ROTC had now [to] give me a physical. It never occurred to me that they were going to give me the same physical that the Navy gave me. And it came to that damn book with the numbers in it and, of course, I flunked. I was rejected by the ROTC, so that was the end of Harvard. There was no place for me to go from there. I figured, "Well, when they take me, they take me." I had a high draft number. But I got out of Rutgers, we graduated early, early graduation, May 10th. I met a guy on the street that I knew. He told me that he had enlisted in the Signal Corps. And the Signal Corps sent him to school for nine months to take a radio theory course. It was given by Rutgers University at Central High School in Newark. So I went down and I enlisted. I went for nine months, I went to school as a civilian, two, three nights a week, taking radio theory. That was in, started in December, I think it was, of 1942. And the course ended around the summer of '43 and I was called to active duty on September 10, 1943, into the Signal Corps.

KP: You actually were on the home front?

SS: I was here a long time.

KP: Do you have any memories of the air raid drills in Newark?

SS: No, I don't. I mean, I guess I just didn't pay attention to it. It didn't effect me.

KP: What about bond drives or scrap drives or any of those?

SS: No, it didn't effect me.

KP: What about the course you took? You were talking this course two nights a week.

SS: Well, yes, it was theory, so I was good at it. If it had to do with fixing radios, I would have flunked. It was theory. You would be good in the course. You've got to remember, also, radios changed tremendously. They had tubes in those days, super heterodynes. Now, you have ...

KP: Oh, yes. The technology is completely different.

SS: Completely different. And I never used the knowledge, never.

KP: Really, it was ...

SS: Never. I went into the Army, I went to Fort Dix and then I went to Camp Crowder for six week basic training, which included everything, including climbing poles. My wife can't picture me climbing poles. I can't picture me climbing polls, either, but I was up there. Then, right toward the end of the basic, oh, we took tests. One of the tests was in math and another test was in a foreign language. And I had taken German, Professor Holzman. Has his name ever come up?

KP: No.

SS: He was a nice guy. I started German here, took two years of German and ...

KP: It was one of the few clubs you joined.

SS: Well, I was an honor student in German so I had to join the club. I wasn't an honor student when I ended up, because I was better at the writing and the grammar than I was at the speaking. I don't have a facility for languages, but when it came to grammar, I knew grammar, because that was [what I learned at] Weequahic High School. Anyway, the fact that I knew German and the math, they picked me for specialist school. I became a PFC, everyone wanted to know how I could become a PFC. I didn't know, I didn't do anything right and I didn't do anything wrong. They sent a group of us by train to Vint Hill Farms Station, which probably no one ever heard of. Vint Hill Farms Station was a secret camp in Warrenton, Virginia. In that camp, they used to intercept diplomatic radio traffic. They had cryptography and decoding there. We were trained in cryptography and traffic analysis. Traffic analysis is radio traffic analysis, that's what it is. We became corporals right away, when we got there. From there, I went overseas. I was in this country a very short time.

KP: Did they do a background check on you?

SS: Did they ever. I had to be cleared.

KP: So the FBI asked around, snooping around your neighborhood.

SS: Oh, they went to every place. They went to where I lived, they went to where I worked. In fact, Mr. Larkey met my mother on the street one day and he said, "Mrs. Schenkel, they are going to make your son a general." "What do you mean?" "Well, the FBI was in to see me, and after I got through telling them what a great guy he was, I'm sure they are going to make him a general." Oh, they checked me out very thoroughly. Everybody that was in signal intelligence.

KP: Because the area you were in was highly classified.

SS: Yes, we were cleared for top secret. The average intelligence quotient for officers was 110, I think, or 115. The average, the minimum here, not the average, but the minimum, was 125. That's not that high, but that was the minimum. So it was really an elite group of men that were in it. Most of them were college graduates or college students, juniors and seniors.

KP: What do you remember about going to Fort Dix, because you said that you didn't really like the Army way?

SS: No, I didn't like the Army way.

KP: Even people who adjusted well to the Army had problems in Fort Dix.

SS: I didn't have any trouble in the Army. None at all. I did as I was told. But I do remember, we really weren't told what was expected, "I was going to get on that train, I was going to get off, take a bus to Fort Dix, they were going to give me a uniform and everything." So I went down dressed in a sport jacket. I want to tell you, I must have looked like "Joe College." They didn't give us a uniform for three days. I want to tell you, that's my memory of Fort Dix. It was the middle of September, it was cold out there at five in the morning. Of course, the first three days, there are a battery of tests and all that kind of stuff.

KP: But no KP or ...

SS: No, I only was on KP once or twice in the Army, when I was in basic training.

KP: In Camp Crowder.

SS: After that, never, I became a sergeant. After I graduated from Vint Hill, we became sergeants. I never had KP again.

KP: Had you traveled much growing up?

SS: Canada, once. I went to Canada.

KP: What's the farthest west you had gone before the war?

SS: Philadelphia. That's the beginning of the United States, they say. The World's Fair in 1939 in New York. No, I hadn't traveled in those days.

KP: What was the train ride like to Camp Crowder and what was that experience of basic training and being out in Missouri?

SS: I saw it on television the other day. There were three men to four seats. They filled one of the seats, with our duffel bags. There were three duffel bags, three men and those four seats. We had mess kits. There was a dining car, not a dining car, a mess car. For mealtime, we would have to go through all the cars, get our meals and take them back to our seat, eat them. Then they had two pails of water. One was soapy and one was clear. That's how we washed them out and it took, I think, two and a half days to get to Camp Crowder. There was no cleaning up. That didn't sit well with me. That was my experience, my first experience with Army travel. Coming from Crowder to Vint Hill was a different experience. We had a sleeping car.

KP: Which is very luxurious.

SS: Yes. And we ate in the dining car. There were only about twelve or fourteen of us that did that. Yes, that was a lot different.

RK: When you were at basic training, you were there for six weeks. What did you think of the drill sergeants?

SS: I don't want to use any four-letter words. I never, I sound like a prude, I never got used to four-letter words. I never used them, I don't use them now, my children don't use them, in front of me, anyway. But I sure heard a lot of them. I disliked the sergeant intensely. But everybody did. I mean, my experience is a common experience, I'm sure. You've heard it over and over again. But I didn't complain.

KP: What was the background of your sergeant? Was he a Southerner?

SS: A redneck. That tells it all. These were all regular army men. But it really wasn't that bad. Our basic training wasn't that tough. We learned to shoot, we crawled underneath machine gun fire. It really wasn't, I had no problem with it. I want to tell you something interesting. Before I entered the Army, I used to get stomach aches. The doctor told me I had a twisted appendix, probably something like my father, [that I] inherited. He says "Don't worry about it. If it bothers you in the Army, they'll take it out." Okay, but I used to get a lot of stomach aches. I never got one single stomach ache in the Army. I never complained about the Army food. I didn't think it was bad. I liked Spam. The only thing I didn't like were K rations. But the ten-in-one rations and the C rations, they weren't that bad. And I'm sort of a fussy eater, but I never complained about the food in the Army and I never got sick from any of it. I never had a stomach ache while I was in the Army.

KP: Interesting.

SS: Maybe it was stress that was giving me stomach aches, I don't know.

KP: What do you remember about the people in your basic training outfits?

SS: Yes, I remember something very, very distinctly. I used to come back at the end of the day and I was exhausted, absolutely exhausted. I'm just not used to all that physical exercise. There was a guy in the bunk next to me who was an older man. He was in his early thirties, and he had a wife and two children. He used to lie in that cot and he used to have his arms at the back of his head with a pleasant expression on his face. One day, it started to annoy me and I said, "What the hell are you smiling at?" And he said, "Sy, this is the first vacation I've ever had." I'll never forget that. There were a lot of married men in that unit and they didn't mind it as much as a lot of the other people. They had nobody telling them, no wives telling them what to do, no, what's the word I want, that's what happens [when] you forget a word. Responsibilities, that's the word. They had no responsibilities, and, here, all their lives, they had had these responsibilities. And there were a number of men like that. I remembered them. There was a lot of bitching in the Army, that type of thing. But, the stuff you heard is common throughout the Army. The non-coms were not nice people. Maybe that was their job, not to be nice. They were all Southern regular army men.

KP: What were the backgrounds of the people in your training camp unit? Were they from the Northeast or were they from all over the country?

SS: They were from all over. As a matter-of-fact, one of the men that I was in basic training with, I still see once in a while. I saw him after the Army, too. In high school, he was on the track team when I was manager of the track team. He and his wife owned a bridge studio where I played bridge. And they sold it, but I see him. He comes to play bridge once in a while. His wife plays regularly. We talk about Camp Crowder. But nobody else that I see. It was varied background, all different. You had a slice of America.

KP: Because you were going to get ...

SS: They were pretty literate though. Maybe it wasn't a slice of America, because it was the Signal Corps.

KP: So the people were literate?

SS: Yes.

KP: Because in other units, there were people who encountered people who didn't know how to read.

SS: No, no, nothing like that. To be in the Signal Corps, you had to know how to read. Want to see what it looked like?

KP: Oh, yes.

SS: There I was.

[Mr. Schenkel showed snapshots he took in Europe and what follows are the comments.]

KP: Oh, okay.

SS: These are, the only reason I brought it was to help remind me of what it was like. I took a lot of pictures in the Army. And we, they printed them up for me, too. These ...

KP: These are when you were in Europe?

SS: These were the men in my platoon. I saw some of them later on. Judges, one was a judge, a number of attorneys. I still see my commanding officer. He lives nearby. This was in Luxembourg. It looks like a pretty fun war, [doesn't it?] These are all the people, civilians. We lived with civilians part of the time. This was in Luxembourg. We lived in a private house. Here's a Rutgers man, Class of 1943, Arthur Tzeses. He was my fraternity brother and my best friend. I met him in Europe.

KP: This looks very comfortable.

SS: Well, the house was. We captured champagne. Oh, of course, this is the better part. Here I am as a German soldier.

KP: So you were in Regensburg at the end of the war?

SS: It was during the war.

KP: Yes, just as the war ...

SS: I had the grand tour. We followed George Patton. We were attached to Third Army, we were a part of Third Army from its inception in England.

KP: What did you think of Patton?

SS: I never had anything to do with him. His troops loved him, his armored troops. I guess he wasn't a very nice guy, but he was a great general.

KP: You made it to Austria with Patton?

SS: Yes, I ended up in a place called Zipf. I guess that's what I looked like later on in the Army.

KP: Is this Vienna?

SS: I wasn't in Vienna, I was in Salzburg.

KP: Oh, okay.

SS: I was at the first music festival in Salzburg that they had after the war. These are people that I stayed with in England. I went to school in England, at the end of the war. I went to a place called Shrivensham American University. I don't know if you ever heard of it. And I took

two courses, one was in the American novel and another one was in drama. I had already graduated from college, but you could get college, we got college credit, for those that didn't. That was a best time of my whole life.

KP: So you've been to a reunion with ...

SS: Yes, yes I have. Well, here's what I look like now. [Mr. Schenkel shows a picture of his Army company reunion.] This is the company. You know, it's an interesting thing, I tell you I didn't know many people outside of my fraternity. I didn't know many people in the company outside of my platoon. So maybe it's I that ...

KP: You gravitate to small groups, it sounds like.

SS: I guess so, I guess so. Yes. But here, this was a reunion about two years ago, and here I am. But I still see a number of these men. They live close by, including my commanding officer who is George Lieberberg. That was 1991, I only went to one reunion.

KP: You mentioned that you were transferred into this unit and that you immediately got to be corporal.

SS: Well, no, when it was over, the reason why I became corporal, was because, not corporal, PFC, was because I was going to specialist school. That's what it called for ...

KP: To be a PFC.

SS: To be a PFC, to go to ...

KP: Where you get slightly more pay.

SS: Yes, slightly more pay.

KP: And then you were no longer on the lowest rung ...

SS: That's true.

KP: Vint Hill was this elite place.

SS: Yes. Yes.

KP: Can you talk a little bit about the whole experience?

SS: I don't know if you would appreciate this, but when we would march to classes, there'd be guys marching with a box of Kleenex in their hand. Now, you think about that. Did you ever see an Army unit marching with a guy having a box of Kleenex in his hand? Well, that's typical of the way this place was. We went to classes all day. We went on a hike once a week, with a full field pack and that kind of stuff, before, we got our pass on Saturday, but we went out. I didn't live at camp. I lived off-campus, so-to-speak.

KP: Where did you live?

SS: In Warrenton, Virginia. I had a room in Warrenton. It was like having a job. I used to leave early in the morning. I used to take the bus in, sometimes I got a ride in, there were guys who lived in town who had cars. Five o'clock, I would leave, take a bus back to Warrenton, which was about twenty minutes away. Have dinner in restaurants. It wasn't a bad life.

KP: What did you learn at Vint Hill?

SS: We started with a little cryptography, but I wasn't in cryptography. I was in traffic analysis, radio traffic analysis, and we learned Morse code. We didn't have to use Morse code, we weren't radio operators. But we learned what the abbreviations were on Morse code and we learned about the German Army, the way the German Army was constructed. Very much like ours, you know, platoon, company, battalion, division, corps, army. We learned how to build a net, a network of, from the information that the radio operator, the intercept operators, gave us. And we learned some more German, the German that is used in the army.

KP: So you were being trained to actually do the analysis, or at least the preliminary step of the analysis?

SS: Yes, but then we were divided up. I wasn't in cryptography, I was in the traffic analysis. They were equal, as far as prestige goes.

KP: I know Dick Kleiner was also in signal intelligence.

SS: I knew Dick Kleiner well.

KP: He would intercept the stuff, but he would just put it down on paper. He had no clue, except when he intercepted [traffic] from the Philippines, American ...

SS: I didn't know, is that right? But he was in the Pacific.

KP: He was in the Pacific and he would intercept Japanese messages.

SS: That's what we had. We had a lot of those operators, intercept operators, and they would write down [intercepts].

KP: Yes, they would write it down, but ...

SS: Then they would pass it to our platoon, who then took it and did the rest of the work and prepared it for the G2 report. As we mentioned before, we all had to be cleared for secret documents. The interesting thing about this deciphering, as you found out, we had the German and the Japanese code. We didn't know that. We were not privileged to that information.

KP: When did you find out?

SS: We were trying to break the German cipher. We never succeeded. What we didn't know was that we already had it. So, part of [our job] was really to fool the German Army.

KP: To think that you didn't have their code.

SS: That's right, because that was very, very important. The fact that they didn't know that we had already broken their cipher.

KP: And you had no clue that we had?

SS: Absolutely none at all.

KP: When did you learn it?

SS: I don't know, maybe ten or fifteen years later, when it came out.

KP: When it came ...

SS: Twenty years later.

KP: Nobody came up to you after the war and said, "Oh, by the way, we've had the code all along."

SS: No.

KP: How did you learn it?

SS: Learned it the same time that everyone else learned it, [when] books started to go out.

KP: So people spent their time in the Army ...

SS: Yes.

KP: ... Trying to break that code.

SS: Yes. They worked hard on it, they really worked very hard. Of course, when it came to the code, that was cipher and it was a machine cipher. The code is a little bit different, you substitute one word for another. English is a code, language is a code. That, we could do something with. Our group, we broke some. They used to keep changing it all the time. And sometimes the German operator would send over the code.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Seymour Schenkel on March 12, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

RK: ... Rebecca Karcher.

KP: You were saying that the German operators would sometimes ...

SS: Send it in code and then send it in clear, because what happened was, the clear message was encoded and shouldn't have been put on the same paper, of course. But sometimes, they were. The operator is like a typist and just sent it over, which was wonderful, [because] we then would have the code for the day. We were able to break the code. At one instance, we were able to advise G2 that an attack was immediate and where it was going to be and we were prepared for it. We did something that got us a company citation, when we were in Nancy, outside of Nancy in France. Germans had a tremendous, in World War I, it was called "Big Bertha," a tremendous cannon on railroad [car], that was great for them 'cause they could keep moving it and we couldn't find it. Our company was able, by direction-finding and identification, the radio operators were able to locate it, pinpoint it, and we eliminated it. That Big Bertha, that cannon, was hitting Patton's headquarters. They were very appreciative that we were able to do that. Direction-finding was a very important part of our company, because we were able, from three points, to pinpoint where the signal was coming from. With the traffic analysis that we did, we were able to identify the German unit. We could tell G2 whom we were facing and where they were. And that was our job.

KP: A lot of the people I've interview, those who were platoon leaders or company leaders, in particular, often didn't know what was going on in their theater of operations. But since you were analyzing information, you knew exactly what was going on.

SS: A little bit, just [what was] in front of us. The Battle of the Bulge was a point, that was very disappointing thing. Because we were at Nancy, at the time, which [was] near Verdun, which is south of Luxembourg, not very far. We would report on the area. It's important to report radio traffic, but [it's] also important that you report [that there is] no radio traffic. And we kept reporting no radio traffic and it was very suspicious. They knew, they were taking a gamble, you know, that there was nobody there. There was a possibility that there were no troops there. Germans were very clever by not having any radio contact in that area, and they fooled us completely, I guess. Not completely, but almost. I guess it was Patton who saved the American army. We moved from Nancy, up to Luxembourg. Boy, that was fast.

KP: So you were part of that movement?

SS: Yes. We thought, we expected to go due west into Trier. We already had an advance group in Trier. And then came the Bulge, and he was able to move that whole army in couple days. And we were stationed outside of Luxembourg. And I believe we were up there for about three months.

KP: Just to back up a little bit ...

SS: Sorry, I got carried away.

KP: Some good stuff. Going back to Vint Hill, how hard were the classes?

SS: Not hard. With German phrases and stuff, it wasn't hard. I don't remember doing any

homework.

KP: But you mentioned that you did so well because of your experience at Rutgers.

SS: Well, yes. The math background was helpful, when I took cryptography study. And, of course, German, I wouldn't have been in the unit if I didn't have that background in German. And in our company also, in our platoon, we had interpreters, men who could spoke German fluently, which we needed. As I say, it was quite a platoon.

KP: How many people didn't make it to the training in Vint Hill? Do you remember anyone who washed out?

SS: No, no. One of the first things, I remember, as I said, this was a pretty good group that went there. Now, the first thing in your mind is, "We don't want to be GIs. We want to be officers." The day after you get there, you go to the day room, you go see the first sergeant about applying for Officer Candidate School. Right after I got there, they announced that the Officer Candidate School was closed to everybody from Vint Hill Farm station.

KP: Period.

SS: They froze us. And these were men who should have been officers. They froze us. Also, on the personnel chart, that we weren't to be put in a position where [we would be] subject to capture by the enemy. Well, that sounded good. Of course, during the Battle of the Bulge, nobody remembered that.

KP: It didn't mean much.

SS: We had men that landed on D-Day in signal intelligence. We had casualties. We landed, I don't mean to get ahead of you, in France about July 15. So it was D plus about thirty-five, something like that. "Arrive on shore Friday, July 14th. We were offshore and we landed on Saturday, July 15th at ten forty-five." No kidding. I don't remember that it was at night. A lot of different things.

KP: How many weeks were you in Vint Hill?

SS: Maybe two months.

KP: And then you were sent overseas from Vint Hill.

SS: Then we had a lucky break. We were sent to Camp Kilmer.

KP: Which is ...

SS: Right around the corner. I knew the area very well. We were at Camp Kilmer. We kept getting notices that we were going to leave the next week, and then the next week, and we were there for two months. We didn't leave until March the 1st.

KP: 1944?

SS: 1944. I was home. I was able to get home every other day, and that was nice. But by the time we left, it was a relief to leave. It was very upsetting. We'd be, they'd put us on alert, then they'd take us off alert, on alert, off alert. Even though we were home and I spent time in New Brunswick and in Newark, when the time came to leave, it was almost with a sense of relief that we left. We went over on *Queen Mary*, 15,000 of us on that one ship. All alone in the North Atlantic, but we were faster than any U-boat. The whole trip was a zigzag. They would change course, periodically, so that we would not be a standing target.

KP: When did you get promoted to sergeant?

SS: That was in England.

KP: You were still a corporal?

SS: I was a corporal and that was no part of the table of, what do they call it?

KP: Table of organization.

SS: Table of organization, that we'd become corporals. We didn't become sergeants until we were put in our unit. We weren't in a company. These were all specialized groups.

KP: You were not put in to a unit until you got to England?

SS: That's right. Well, we studied in England. Now, the British were going to teach us, because the British were way ahead of us. We went to school, we lived, if you know anything about London, right near Hyde Park, in flats.

KP: So you studied in the famous English center?

SS: Oh, yes, fourth basement of a (Sefferages?) department store. In the fourth basement, that's where our classrooms were, and they taught us. So we got an additional training for a month.

KP: So you were living in London and ...

SS: In flats. And that wasn't bad, that wasn't bad, because everyday at five o'clock, we were finished. We didn't need a pass or anything because we were living among the civilians. I had a good time in London.

KP: What else did you do in London?

SS: We went to the theater, we went to Indian restaurants. One restaurant, we had steak. Of course, it was horsemeat. Chinese restaurants, the movies, cinema was very active in London. Are we finished with the United States?

KP: I think so, as long there is nothing that we forgot to ask you.

SS: No, I don't think so.

KP: When you were in Camp Kilmer, did you get together with any of your friends who were here at Rutgers still?

SS: I will tell you something interesting. When I got to Vint Hill Farms, there were three fraternity brothers in that barrack, when I walked in to that barracks. One was George Foos from Class of 1941, another was Dave Elks from the Class of 1940, and another one was, I knew him so well, from Class of '43, [and] I can't think of his name. He stayed there and he used to take me back and forth from Warrenton. Those were the Rutgers men that I know. Now, in England, I walked into the Picadilly Red Cross, and there was Vinny Utz.

KP: He was a legendary figure.

SS: Yes. I didn't know that he knew me, I didn't realize that he knew me. We talked for a while.

KP: His name has come up most frequently from men in the class.

SS: He was really a pistol. He had a bad end, unfortunately. And, of course, I also saw Arthur Tzeses, from Class of 1943, who was also my fraternity brother. I guess, that's all the Rutgers [men] that I saw. But living in London wasn't bad at all. I'd go down to Hyde Park on Sunday mornings and listen to the speakers. We knew how to get around. The thing I remember the most about London was the underground, all the people in the underground who slept there. I have seen a lot television programs, since then, that showed it, and that bothered me. The interesting thing, the air raids didn't bother me. I can't explain why I was not scarred to death, 'cause I'm not particular brave. But I was there during, what they called "the little blitz." It was a firebomb raid on London. That was indiscriminate, at night. They just dropped firebombs, one after the other. They hit the house next door, right down through the cots. A good thing they got out of them. We used to sit in the hallway on the first floor. I don't know why [the air raids] didn't bother me. It was impersonal. And in the movies, I used to go to the movie, and they used to put sign on: "Air Raids." Half the theater used to leave to go to the shelters. I didn't leave. You know, when you are young, you don't think you ...

KP: You had come pretty close before.

SS: You become very foolish. I don't know why I wasn't scared to death. But I'm going to tell you when I was scared to death. The first night we were in France, on July 15th. We marched ten miles, not with our packs, just with our rifles, because the trucks brought up equipment. Then, we pitched tents, pup tents. Two men to a pup tent. The officers only had one man to a pup tent. In the middle of the night, a German plane came over and started strafing the area. And we all ran for the hedgerows. These hedgerows were terrible things. Where did they strafe? They strafed the hedgerows. We were poorly educated. That's where they strafed. And I want to tell you, when you have bullets going along side of you, that scared me to death. I was shaking like a leaf. I was never so scared in my life. The raid was over. They weren't after us. Two miles away was a ammunition dump, which they hit. They didn't have many German planes up there,

but this one was effective. I crawled back to my tent and sat in front of that tent, shaking. The guy in the tent next to me is out there digging. He was digging a slit-trench, which is what we all should have done. But after a ten mile hike, crossing the channel, we were so tired. I asked him, "What are you doing?" And he said, "Sy, I don't want anybody to ever say that I was too lazy to live". From that point, I'll never forget that, and I never failed to dig a slit trench after that.

KP: Your officer hadn't ordered you to dig the trench?

SS: No, no. We collapsed after the ten-mile march.

KP: But after that ...

SS: No, they never ordered us to do it. Listen, it was every man for himself. We didn't have the brains to do it. I'll never forget what he said. His name was (Lockland?). He died recently. "I don't want anybody to say I was too lazy to live." You remember that. The next time we were strafed, I had a slit trench, and there were guys lying up on top there, telling me, "Boy, I wish I had dug one."

KP: Did anyone get killed during these attacks?

SS: No, the only casualties we had in our units were really accidents. We had two men in a jeep [who] went off on the road [when] a bridge was out. A sign was gone and they went off into the river and drowned. Then we had somebody who was shot by one of our own guards, because [he] yelled "halt," and the generators, we had our own generators, we generated our own electricity, the guy didn't hear him and got shot. We also had a suicide.

KP: Could you tell me about them?

SS: That was particularly sad, because the man that I remember, had spoken to me that afternoon. A real nice, young man. He was sad and we just talked. That night, he went to a building and shot himself. That's something, I guess, I wasn't astute enough to realize the situation.

KP: It seems like it has left such an impression on you. Why was he so sad, do you remember?

SS: I want to tell you, I am telling you a lot of good things, you know. There was a quote, I cut it out, because it explains so much. It says, "The experience of most soldiers was boredom, discomfort, a hardy disdain for military discipline and regimentation, a dire fatalism and a foreboding that 'in war, no one ever wins.'" All except the last line, because I don't remember anybody thinking that. We were the good guys and we knew what we were fighting for. I never heard anybody question that. That part, I don't think was particularly true. But the rest was true. It was boring, absolutely boring. I spent two years trying to get comfortable. But as I told Rebecca, Hemingway once wrote that, "Every man should have his war." Maybe that's a terrible thing, because war is a terrible thing, but it's true. Every man should have his war, as long as he comes back whole. Because it was the greatest experience of my life.

KP: It's interesting that you say it was a two year struggle to get comfortable, because, compared

to infantrymen, you had some great living conditions.

SS: I've told you the good parts. From the time we landed in France, we were in tents until in the middle of October. I'll tell you, it was mighty cold out there. Two men to a tent. We had blankets, but we didn't have sleeping bags. They didn't have sleeping bags, they got them later on the war. They sent me giant safety pins and I made my own sleeping bag out of the blankets. Lying on the ground in the fall is a very unpleasant experience. Frequently, you had to clear away the cow dung. We were in all different places. The ground was hard. We put the blankets underneath us. We slept in two pair of pants, besides the winter underwear. It was cold.

KP: Had you been a Boy Scout or anything?

SS: No, camping was not my thing. I learned it in the Army. It was nobody's thing, by that time. This wasn't like camping out, this was ...

KP: I guess not, because you did this day after day.

SS: We couldn't bathe. We didn't have that much water to start with. We used to use our helmets, I'm sure you heard this, for bathing purposes. I was the second cleanest man in the United States Army. There was a guy name Peterfreund, who became a psychiatrist, who was out there every single day bathing, from head-to-toe. I bathed every other day, from head-to-toe. He was the cleanest man in the United States Army.

KP: What about the other people in your unit?

SS: They didn't bathe as much as that.

KP: It must have gotten a little unpleasant.

SS: It was cold. They had showers, which I never failed to go [to]. Now, you've got to picture this. Here's the shower units, hot showers, maybe twenty portable showers. Here we are, dressed in heavy clothing. Taking off the heavy clothing down to nothing, running into the shower, soaping and everything. It wasn't bad when we where in the shower. Coming out of the shower, drying off and getting dressed as fast as you could do it. With weather like this. We did it. Later, in the spring, we would swim in the river, for cleaning. You had to shave in the cold water, and, first you washed you face, then you brushed your teeth, then you used the water to shave. All the same the water. But what I'm telling is really nothing. The guys that had it bad were in the infantry. They didn't even have the water.

KP: Yes.

SS: I don't like to hear myself complain about it, but that's what it was like.

KP: How many hot meals did you get, on average?

SS: Everyday.

KP: So that part was ...

SS: I had no problems with the meals. I didn't like K rations, nobody liked K rations. The C rations weren't bad. But we had the cooks and the food wasn't bad. I have nothing to complain about the food. Once in a while, I [would] get fresh eggs and I would make myself an egg. What we used to do, we used to take a number-ten can, fill it with dirt, punch holes in it, then pour gasoline in it. Then we'd flip a match on it. We would cook, that would be our stove to cook with. One thing I learned about gasoline was, [one time], the fire went out, dead. So I took some more gasoline to pour on it. It came right up, all over me. I was lucky. Don't ever play with gasoline. It's very volatile. Things I learned in the Army. But the cooks were fine, we got plenty of food. Really no complaint on that score.

KP: After you did your training in England, you ended up joining a unit.

SS: That's right. We went to a place called Dartford Kent, which was between London and the coast. We joined a company, which had been formed two year before that, the 118th Signal Radio Intelligence. Here we came in, we were the elite group, college graduates, all got stripes, we joined this company that was in existence for two years. We became the intelligence platoon of that company, like the head. Everybody else is the body and we were the head.

KP: So the company basically existed to serve your unit?

SS: That right. And they didn't like us.

KP: I can image. They weren't Southerners?

SS: No, no, they were really very nice. One of the them went on to be a mayor of his town, school principal. Another one went on to be a lawyer. A lot of them were in the radio repair business later. I met a lot of them. They were really nice guys. But you wouldn't have been happy with us, either, if you were a member of that company and here we come in. We didn't do any KP. We didn't do any guard duty. We were all sergeants. We never really integrated into the company, even though I was with them for almost two years. As I said, I didn't get to know many of them either.

KP: Because your platoon was ...

SS: We got, I'll give you an idea of our platoon. We played bridge. Nobody else in that company played bridge. We had chess games going. When the pocket books used to come in, they used to bring them over to our platoon. We used to pick through them, take what we wanted, then the rest of the company got [the rest.] Well, we were the readers.

KP: What do you remember about the pocketbooks?

SS: Twenty-five cents. Twenty-five cents. Yes, I sure do remember them. They were wonderful. Playing cards, they used to send over to our platoon. I used to play bridge in the Army. You're not going to hear about that much.

KP: Most guys played poker, if they played cards.

SS: I played bridge. That was the difference. That would be good. The rest of the company played poker, we played bridge. And chess games. Nobody else played chess in that company.

KP: Maybe this is a good time to talk about your platoon. Who was your chief officer?

SS: One was a professor, an English professor, as a matter-of-fact. They were all, I disliked them, I must admit. I didn't like them, because I didn't like officers.

KP: So, even your lieutenant ...

SS: As a matter-of-fact, I felt, except for one of them, [that] the people in the platoon were smarter than they were. See, that was another problem that we had with officers. I don't mean to sound so élitist. It really was that way. The head of the company was a man by the name of George Lieberberg. He's from Westfield, New Jersey, not far away from Watchung. And I didn't like him, and he knew me and he didn't like me either. I met him after the war, about ten years ago, when I found out about the company having a reunion. We became friends. He is a great, great guy.

KP: But, at the time ...

SS: He is a great, I want to tell you, he is one of my favorite people. He's a great guy, great storyteller, and told me things about what happened in the company and with the officers and so forth. And we became friends.

KP: But, at the time ...

SS: No.

KP: Why did you not like him?

SS: I didn't like any officers.

KP: It was because they were officers?

SS: I didn't like any officers. And I didn't like him, in particular.

KP: You're not the first one to express resentment against officers. Was it because of the privilege?

SS: I guess so. I guess I was jealous. I wanted the privilege. I guess that hits it right on the head. I was just jealous of it. Envious, if you will.

KP: I have also been told that the Army doesn't always operate in the most logical way.

SS: It wasn't that bad with us, not really. It wasn't hatred, it was dislike and maybe jealously

and envy. [That] was a good part of it. They didn't really give us a hard time. The whole idea of the Army didn't sit well with me.

KP: You mentioned that the company served your platoon.

SS: Yes.

KP: And the company sort of took care of its needs. It had the cooks, it had the guards.

SS: Yes, we had drivers, our offices, you know, these semis, forty-foot semis, that were our offices, where we worked. We had desks built-in that folded over. We'd get into a unit, we'd set up in ten minutes and we'd be all ready. The intercept operators were in other trucks. They'd have three or four operators in a truck. We were completely mobile in that way. One of the terrible parts about the Army, terrible may not be the right word, it came with the boredom, though. Think about this. Here it is, September, let's say, and it gets dark at six o'clock. You're on the day shift. We had shifts, I was always on the day shift. We'd work from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon. Then we would have to go to our tent, or go someplace, it's cold, remember. We couldn't stay in the offices, in the trucks. There was no light, we couldn't read. Now, you get in your tent at six o'clock at night, we had dinner, and you had to stay there till six o'clock the next morning. That is what I am talking about boredom and that's what I'm talking about envying officers, because they didn't do that. They went to the trucks. Ostensibly to be working, of course, but they had the privilege of going into those trucks, even when they weren't on duty.

KP: And in the trucks, there were lights.

SS: Oh, there were lights.

KP: There was a desk.

SS: I don't ever remember it being cold. I really don't remember it being cold. Maybe there was heat, too.

KP: You had a ...

SS: That was, when I say it was terrible, it doesn't compare to the infantryman's [idea of] terrible. When we say it was boring, yes, it was boring. Later, when we got into the barracks, we used to get into German barracks, that wasn't bad. That became nice. I'm a walker. I pace. I am a pacer, not that kind of walker, I am a pacer. All the guys knew that, when we were in training. The first time, when we got into a German barracks, which was around spring of 1945, we all had bunks. I started pacing and they all applauded. I remember that.

KP: How many other close calls did you have?

SS: No, I wasn't in any danger, really. I never saw a dead body.

KP: Really? Never.

SS: I can't believe [it]. I am reading a book now, which I recommend to Rebecca, called *Citizen Solider*.

KP: By Steve Ambrose.

SS: If you haven't read it, you've got to read it. An excellent book, I'm in the middle of it. Talking about all the dead bodies, all these dead Germans. I can't image why I didn't see any. The only dead things I saw were some dead cows, when we went from Verdun, up to Luxembourg. In the field, there were dead cows, but I never saw a dead body. Those were the only dead animals that I ever saw. But the wreckage, of course, we saw. Incidentally, those people in Normandy weren't that happy to see us, you know. If anybody gets the idea that the French were all excited about our coming, they were excited in Normandy, but not in the right way. The Germans were very good to them, in Normandy, along the shore. And we came in and bombed the hell out of them. We could not expect them to stand there, waving, "Hi, friendly Americans." Something stands out in my mind. When we got to France, it was before the breakthrough at St. Lo. I remember looking at the map and thinking to myself, "I'm never going to get home." Incidentally, that's one of the things. We had maps all over the place, we could see what was going on. I stood out in the field and I counted, I actually counted, a thousand airplanes. Then I stopped counting. It was just before the breakthrough at St. Lo and they bombed the hell out of them. That was some sight, standing there, counting those planes.

KP: Were you close enough to see the bombs go off?

SS: No, I couldn't even see that. All I saw were the planes.

KP: So you just knew they were going somewhere.

SS: That's right. Never saw bombs. Well, I heard bombs. We were stationed some place in Trier, where they had an artillery company, and they kept us awake. That was our complaint. But I never saw downed airplanes. Prisoners, I saw a lot of prisoners. And we guarded a lot of prisoners. We had prisoners working for us, at the end, cleaning up, and, we even had, at the end of the war, we were in a camp, and we had a German band. It used to annoy the hell out of me because they used to play, (*By mer bist du schone?*), which, to my mind, was a Jewish song. To their mind, it was a German song. (*By mer bist du shone?*). Once the [Germans] surrender, that was it. Just like the Japanese, they were most orderly people. No problems. There was no guerrilla warfare or anything. Surrender, it's all over, that's the end. We were never in fear of anybody after the war was over.

KP: Did you ever go to religious services at all when you were in the military?

SS: Yes. I can't think of the town. Unfortunately, all the letters I wrote home are lost, so don't know where it was. It must have been September of 1944, and there was a town, they had a synagogue that was still standing, and it was very moving. It was the only time I went to services.

KP: It must have been for Rosh Hashanah.

SS: Yes, for Rosh Hashanah. That's when it was.

KP: Did you ever see chaplains where you were?

SS: No, no. I saw lot of displaced persons. One of the men in the platoon was involved in something in Boston, [with] one of the Jewish groups, and they sent us food for the displaced persons. I helped him to distribute it to some of the Jewish displaced persons. I saw a lot of displaced persons.

KP: You mentioned earlier some of the things that your units did, like finding the Big Bertha cannon. What other things did your unit do?

SS: There were just couple of things that we did that we knew about. You mentioned before, you know what you are doing in your unit, but you don't know what's going on in the rest of the world. That's true. I am learning more about World War II from this book *Citizen Solider* than I have ever, ever knew while I was there.

KP: What have you learned that you didn't know?

SS: He gets into the nitty-gritty in *Citizen Solider*. What different companies did and so forth, that kind of thing. The nitty-gritty of the war. We knew where the 3rd Armored Division, the 6th Armor Division was. We knew where our First army and Third Army [was]. We had that on the map.

KP: So you knew the big picture.

SS: Oh, yes, the big picture.

KP: You often knew because of the radio traffic. You knew what was ahead of you.

SS: Yes, we knew what units we were facing, what units Third Army was facing, anyway, because we were behind the lines, quite a bit behind the lines. We had other units that were attached to corps that were further up front. We were in depth, we were attached to [an] army, which was a better way of fighting the war.

KP: So you reported directly to the Army G2?

SS: That's right, Army G2. I can't think of the head of G2, he was a columnist, Pierson? I think it was Pierson. Colonel Drew Pierson was the head of the signal intelligence for G2.

KP: Did your unit ever screw up? Did you ever do something that headquarters didn't like?

SS: Not that I know of. No. Everything that we did was positive, you know.

KP: You mentioned that you did not pick up any radio traffic around the Bulge prior to the German attack.

SS: No.

KP: Were there any times, that you knew of, that you miscalculated or ...

SS: No. We didn't get feedback.

KP: You didn't get feedback or ...

SS: No, we didn't get feedback. All we did was give information. That's all we ever did.

KP: Why did you choose to work the day shift?

SS: You know, I don't remember, to tell you the truth. I think it was by assignment. There were a couple of guys who used to love to work the graveyard shift. They were the same guys all the time. We didn't need many on the graveyard shift. The day shift got in most of the traffic. They did some of the analysis. The second shift really wrote the reports. There wasn't much radio traffic coming in on the second shift, so they did the report writing. The graveyard shift did nothing, really.

KP: Except for occasional message that ...

SS: They used to sleep, I think. Nobody got up to look.

KP: So these trailers were a type of portable office?

SS: That's what it was.

KP: What would you do?

SS: The radio operators, the intercept operators, would write down what they received. Then we would have messengers who would bring what they wrote to our office and we would try to analyze it from there. Try to fill out the nets and say who was where and so on and so forth. That was about it. A lot of it, you know, you just sat there and do nothing, too. We used to study German vocabulary books and we used to read and that type of thing.

KP: What kinds of messages would you be looking at?

SS: We'd be looking at mostly Morse code. A word here or there. An operator's, an intercept operator's interpretation, he'd say, "This is the same guy I heard yesterday." They could identify radio operators by their fist. Some of them were very, very good at it, too. And we would be able to tell, because the intercept operator told us that it would be same unit. And sometimes these would be transferred, and we would know that. Of course, the messages, the coded stuff, we sent over to the cryptography section, [which was] in a same truck, of course.

KP : How much luck did the cryptography section have? Did they break the codes?

SS: The codes, but not the cipher.

KP: Not the cipher.

SS: The cipher was the machine cipher. They worked on that and ...

KP: When you were in France and Germany, you were working on the cipher?

SS: No, all I worked on was traffic analysis.

KP: Did other people in your unit work on it?

SS: Yes.

KP: Oh, so ...

SS: If the Germans ever captured us, they would have no idea that we had the cipher, because here we are working on it.

KP: So someone under interrogation would honestly say, "We are trying to break your machine cipher, but we don't have it."

SS: Oh, yes. We didn't know anything else. There was what they called "the E -Book," which gave all of the call letters. They would change their call letters. We had the book. We had captured the book. We knew pretty much the rotations and things like that. You have to remember [that] some of the stuff is very vague in my mind now.

KP: Oh no, it's surprising what you have remembered. You've remembered a lot.

SS: It was a long time ago.

RK: As a Jewish American, were you ever afraid of being captured by the Germans?

SS: No, it never occurred to me.

RK: It never occurred to you.

SS: It never occurred to me. I have had some friends who were prisoners of war, but they surrendered as a group. We had whole companies who would surrender at one time. A thousand men could surrender at one time. But, they weren't picked out because they were Jewish. No, that never occurred to me.

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

SS: They told the English girls [that] they were American Indians. The English did not have prejudices that the Americans had, but they soon got their prejudices, because the white soldiers passed their prejudices along to the English. That's what happened. On the Continent, I don't remember seeing any black soldiers. They were mostly involved in freight transport and motor

pools and that type of thing.

KP: Patton had a reputation. He once proclaimed, I think I am paraphrasing him, "If my men are going to die, they are going to die in ties". He was a stickler for military decor and dress. Did that penetrate to your unit at all?

SS: No, not really.

KP: How relaxed was your unit? Was there a lot of discipline?

SS: No, nothing like that, there was nothing like that. We weren't that close to him. Maybe in Army headquarters, it was that way. But not where we were.

KP: I know you don't like curse words, but did you have any "chicken shit" in your units or in your camp?

SS: No.

KP: Drills, inspections and that sort of thing?

SS: No, nothing like that. Come to think of it, we were a very relaxed group. I think the rest of the company was the same way as our platoon.

KP: Sounds like your platoon was fairly highly motivated.

SS: Oh, yes. I would say they were above average in intelligence, compared with the rest of the army. If the average intelligence of the rest of the Army was 105, these guys were 110 or 115, just picking numbers out of the air. It was a good company, too. It really was a good company. They spoke English well. As I say, some of them became lawyers and a high school principal and a mayor. They were a good group. The ones I met in the reunions, they were down to earth, Mid-West, middle America. That's what they seem to me. And of course, my commanding officer, the guy I became friendly with, George, has told me more about the rest of the company and told me that they were really good people.

KP: Did you ever get any passes when you were in Europe?

SS: Yes, I went to Paris once, for three days. That was all right. It's not so great being in Paris alone. And I didn't go with anybody from my platoon, either. I went with some other parts of the company. I enjoyed the sight-seeing and all, but I didn't enjoy Paris the way it should be enjoyed. I wasn't into paying for sex, so I didn't enjoy that part of it, either. Anyway, at the end of the war, we had problems of what to do with the men. We ended up in Austria. We ended up intercepting the radio traffic of the Russians. That's not that well-known. We didn't do it in a formalized style, but we did it.

KP: And you were ordered to do it.

SS: We did it. We didn't do anything with it. Some of us had the feeling [that] we were getting

ready to do something with it. And the one guy, whom I was very friendly with, speaks Slovak, and he was scared stiff that he was gonna be over there forever, because he could interpret the clear messages. But we never did anything with it.

KP: You didn't pass it up to G2 or ...

SS: No, the big problem was what to do with the men after the war. I mean, you couldn't have them doing close order drill. So, we, I don't know if you notice it here, we had a newspaper and a camp. We had a, this was our camp newspaper. "Sy Schenkel," they have an article about me. Anyway, they had ball teams organized and they had radio programs. They imitated quiz programs, things like that. They sent men off [to] different places. One of the things they did, I think I mentioned it, after the war was over, was set up universities. These universities were giving college credit, they were set up all over Europe, and men could apply to go there. I think it was a two or three-month course, and they would get college credit, and they brought over professors from the United States to teach these courses. I wasn't in the first group, but in the second group, I applied. The other guy that applied was my buddy, he was a lawyer from Passaic. This is an idea of the type of men [they had]. He was a little older than I, and we got into a place called Shrivensham American University, I told you about that. That was the best time of my life. Don't let my wife hear me say that, but we lived in officers' barracks and we attended two classes a day. We used to go to the sweat bath, we used to have afternoon tea, we owned bicycles. This was a great time. We went to London every weekend. If we didn't go to London, we went to Oxford, we went to Stratford. I saw "Joan of Arc" in Stratford. I saw a lot of plays in London. (Ivor Neuvello?). Did you ever hear of (Ivor Neuvello)? His name is in the crossword puzzles, once in a while. He was the musical genius of England. He appeared in and wrote more plays than anybody else in that period. From there, I came home. Instead of being sent back to Austria, my unit already left Austria to go home. I had sixty-seven points. I don't know [if you know the] point system? At the end of the war, they didn't know how to send the men home. What they really should have done was to send the men home who were the least useful. But that would not be fair, so they had a program, where you got, if you were married, you got a certain number of points. If you had children, you got points. If you were in the Army, you got points for the number of months you were in the Army. If you had a medal, you got points for that. You got points for battle stars. I ended up with sixty-seven points, which was very low, in my company. Because these guys had been in the Army years longer than I had. I figured they were gonna go home before me, but we all left. They sent us home from England, because there was no place to send us back to. So we came home on a battleship, we came home on the USS *Washington*, in one of the worst storms that the Atlantic had ever had. I swear, we were underwater for ten days. What scared the hell out of me, was that every compartment had an armed guard, because they weren't going to lose that ship. They would lose men before they would lose that ship. They could seal off the compartments. There were men that never got out of their bunk. If I didn't feed my buddy, if I didn't bring him food, he would have starved to death. I never got seasick.

KP: Really, even in the storm?

SS: I didn't miss a meal. We came home the day before Christmas, 1945.

KP: Had you thought about staying in the Army? It's a standard question that I ask.

SS: No, no, no, no, no. I was very happy to get out of the Army. I got to Newark Penn Station [on] Christmas Eve. Then I had to go back to Camp Kilmer the next morning. They sent us to [Fort] Dix. I was at [Fort] Dix for six or seven days. The pressure was off and those six or seven days didn't seem like something so terrible. They kept us busy with different things.

KP: Before we leave the service, by September you were mainly staying in the barracks?

SS: What happened is, we got out of the field towards the end of October. We went into a place called Houdemont which is few miles away from Nancy. It is a village, a French village. They put us up with the civilians. In other words, people gave up their living rooms. We filled mattress covers with straw. We used to sleep on mattress covers. The civilians were very nice to us. We lived in civilian homes. There were, [for] a room this size, there'd be four men. But it was luxurious compared to living in the field. It wasn't bad at all. Then, after that, we moved up to Luxembourg and we stayed [with] civilians again at a place called Strassen, which is a suburb of Luxembourg. There were three of us living in the living room of a Luxembourg family. From then on, we found barracks. Wherever we went, we found places to live in.

KP: Even with the big movement of Patton's army, you still found a place to stay?

SS: We found buildings. There were buildings or barracks. We never lived in pup-tents again.

KP: Because during the Bulge, a lot of people just remember the bitter cold weather.

SS: We had it easy, compared to that. As I told you, they really fought the war. For us, it was a relative joy ride.

KP: How often did you encounter infantrymen?

SS: Very seldom.

KP: Really? You were that far back?

SS: I met them in town. I remember, certain things you remember, meeting one, whenever we got to town, whenever there were baths, you know, there were public baths in all these towns in Europe. The first thing you do is head for a public bath, and I met men there. We always got to talking and I remember asking this one guy, infantryman, "What do you do with your prisoners?" He said, "We don't have any prisoners." "What do you mean?" He said, "Listen, these guys are shooting ..." He's not using the same kind of words I am now, "... These guys are shooting at my buddies and killing them. They run out of ammunition and they come up and they put up their hands. We don't take prisoners." That's when I realized what war is all about. The prisoners [that] we had were not really German Army. They were Poles and Slavs. Some of them are really young kids. They came in later. They weren't the real storm troopers.

KP: So you didn't really encounter that many German troops?

SS: No. Nothing like that.

KP: When you were in Germany, is that where you learned just how bad Hitler was? You mentioned encountering a lot of displaced people.

SS: Yes, displaced persons, but I never saw any of the people from Auschwitz. I did do something, I did go to a town where they had a list of all the survivors, of the death camps. My commanding officer met a girl who survived the war. She had a brother, she was separated from her brother. So he gave me, I thought he didn't like me, but he liked me enough, he gave me a jeep and a driver and he told me I could take a friend. And we went roaming around Germany to find where we could get a list of these people. I looked for him and I couldn't find his name. I'll make a nice end to the story. George had a party, a fiftieth wedding anniversary, which my wife and I attended. And at this party, (he subsequently married the woman,) at this party was her brother, who had escaped. And he did survive and he lives in California now.

KP: Your commanding officer met and married a woman who survived the war?

SS: Who passed for a Gentile. A nice, blond, Aryan looking [woman] and she survived the war. And he married her in Vienna.

KP: When you say she survived the war, did she disguise her identity?

SS: I don't know. I never asked her too many questions.

KP: You don't know the details. You mentioned that the civilians were very nice and cordial to you.

SS: Wherever I went, there was always, I sound immodest now, but I was a nice looking boy. There were always women who befriended me. Not necessarily sexually. There were always people, I never did any laundry. German women liked me, too. Anyway, I did become friendly with civilians. I did talk, I was able to talk to Germans, in my halting German.

KP: When you were in Germany, did the Army still have the non-fraternization rules?

SS: I didn't pay any attention [to them].

KP: That seems to be the most widely-broken order.

SS: Well, we, I didn't pay any attention. In fact, it was a German girl who told me about the atomic bomb.

KP: Really?

SS: I didn't know anything about the atomic bomb. She said to me, "Well, now that they dropped that bomb, the war is gonna be over." I said, "What bomb?" It wasn't until I read it in the *Stars and Stripes*. After all, where would we know about all these things? We didn't have the *Herald Tribune*. We didn't have radio broadcasts. I didn't hear any. Then I found out about the A-bomb. Of course, she was right.

KP: One thing that a number of people have said is that when they got to Germany, they couldn't find any Nazis. The Germans they talked to ...

SS: Hated them. Of course, you've got to understand, we didn't go north, we went south. So, the Nazis, and it's true, the Nazis in Bavaria were not popular. Even though Hitler was from Munich, the Bavarians were very suspicious of the Berliners. The *hochdeutsch*, and I believed them [when they said] that they were not thrilled with the Nazis. And anyway, the Nazis lost. Who likes a loser?

KP: Yes, I have often wonder about neo-Nazis. I don't get it, because the Nazis are losers, beside all the ethical and moral reasons. So you had the sense that they were the losers and ...

SS: Yes, and as I said, I don't think the Southern Bavarians liked the rest of Germany. Every country seems to be divided that way, North and South Korea, North and South United States, and one section doesn't like the other section. The Austrians, well, we were in a very small town in Austria. They were nice people, farmers. What did they have to do with the war? You know, I could hate the Germans, but I can't hate a German person. And I think all of us are that way.

KP: What about the destruction? You mentioned that you didn't see any dead bodies, but Germany and Austria had been pretty battered.

SS: Oh, yes. The things you remember, we went through Frankfurt, we drove through that downtown area. There wasn't a building standing, except one, F. W. Woolworth. And we got a big kick out of that. That was the only building that was intact. And we figured they had very specialized bombers. Went through Munich, Munich was leveled. All these towns, you mentioned Regensburg, that wasn't touched. We lived in a professor's house there. Some of the places we lived [in] were very nice. The first time I had sheets since leaving the United States.

KP: Was the professor there?

SS: No. I confiscated his shoes. We had all these, interesting, he had these German helmets. We all took pictures.

KP: So that's the picture of you and the German helmet.

SS: Yes.

KP: Was there any looting going on at this time?

SS: This was not looting, taking home a ...

KP: No art work or anything?

SS: No, we didn't. That was all taken, way before we arrived any place.

KP: By the time you got there, it was pretty cleaned out.

SS: It was all gone. I'll tell you something, I don't think anyone would have thought anything of it. Because, hey, we were the Army, we were warriors, we were the winners and we just took what we wanted. Not that we took bread out of anybody's mouth, nothing like that. I'm sure [that] some of the guys must have gone home with helmets and swords and stuff. I had a pair of shoes that were, low shoes that fit me, I'll tell you. All I had before that was boots, and I took them. But outside of that, no. One of the things I brought home, I brought home a bust of Adolf Hitler that I found in the ruin in Trier. And I had it put away since 1945. It suddenly occurred to me, I'm talking about within the last past couple of months, it suddenly occurred to me that I wouldn't want this to fall into anybody's hands, these Germans, these skinheads and stuff. So I smashed it and threw it in the garbage. Other things we captured, winter clothing, German Army winter clothing, which I brought home, and I wore for a number of years. [It was] very warm. It was ski clothing, it was camouflage uniforms, and that type of thing. We captured champagne, we captured a truckload of champagne and liquor. We passed it out. The officers were nice about it, gave it ...

KP: So you got some back.

SS: We got that, yes. We shared in that, but nothing worth any money.

KP: Did you ever encounter WAC or women in service?

SS: Only British.

KP: Only British.

SS: Yes.

KP: In England or ...

SS: In England, yes. But we had Red Cross women, Red Cross girls. That was the officer's territory. That was another thing that bothered me. We went over on the *Queen Mary*, there where 15,000 of us. I was on an upper deck and it was five or six high, like shelves. That was what we slept on. And in the ballroom, they had parties every night. The officers and Red Cross girls and the WACs that were there. We never even saw them, but we could hear their music. You see the reason for the envy and the jealousy.

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask you about Europe and your service?

SS: No, I can't think of anything.

KP: Have you been back to Germany since the war?

SS: Yes. Not particularly happily, either. I sort of avoided it. I have been to Cologne and Trier, I've been to East and West Berlin, but I hadn't been there during the war. I've been to Vienna, but I hadn't been there during the war. I was in Germany a month before the Wall came down, on a tour.

KP: Oh, what a good month to pick.

SS: We were in Budapest and Prague and Warsaw. I am not particularly fond of the Poles, for good reason. At least, I think [it's a] good reason. And I don't think anything has changed. When we were in Cologne, we had a very nice guide, who, I think, told it like it was. He spoke English very nicely. Of course, the cathedral was the main thing there. I asked him, I said, oh, they have a Jewish museum. And they bring the children in to teach them about Judaism. I said, "Have any of the Jewish population come back?" He said to me, "No." He says, "Why should they?" He says, "Here they were, where ten percent of the population was beating them up and ninety percent of the population just stood around and watched." He says, "Why should they come back?" And that pretty much tells the story. You know, I guess we are coming to the end. This is the most wonderful country in the world, the United States. You can come here, you can be an American. There's no other place in the world. You can't become an Englishman, you can't become a Frenchman, you can't become a Pole. In this country, you can become an American. And now I am going to end it with an editorial comment ...

KP: I have one or two other questions.

SS: I just want to tell you my editorial comment. I want to get it on the record. English has got to be the official language of this country, for the future of this country. Okay?

KP: Oh, no, you can say more on that, too.

SS: I'm absolutely, I feel certain in my own mind, I feel that is one of the things that binds us together. If you want to be an American, then you should speak English. That should be the language of the country. Tell me, professor, when was it when Congress almost enacted a law making German the second language of this country and they only lost by one vote?

KP: I think that was even during the American Revolution.

SS: Was it that far back?

KP: Yes.

SS: So, can you imagine? That meant that everything would be printed in English and in German.

KP: When you came back, did you think of going back to Harvard? Because you had been accepted for their MBA program. Had you thought of using the GI Bill immediately?

SS: No, I thought I should become a lawyer, but I thought that I was too old.

KP: Really, you didn't. It sounds like there is a tinge of regret there.

SS: Well, I really should have. They say, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" What I really should have been was a CPA and an attorney. I should have been a tax attorney. That's

what I should have been.

KP: But you ended up going into sales.

SS: Yes, I worked for myself. I never worked for anybody. It fits in, doesn't it?

KP: You made it.

SS: I did. I was very lucky, though. A lot of it was luck.

KP: Well, no, it's tough. Forty-seven years is a long time.

SS: It was a lot of luck.

KP: What was the luck?

SS: The luck? I'll tell you. I was a manufacturer's agent. I represented various companies in the sale of their products in a set area. They didn't have their own sales force. I had two people working for me. I started by myself and I built it up. You remember the movie *The Graduate*?

KP: Oh, yes.

SS: Do you remember when the man takes Dustin Hoffman around and gives him a secret and says "Plastic," and everyone in the theater laughed? My wife and I didn't laugh, because it was true. That is where I made all the money. I introduced foam cups. Before that time, there were only these terrible paper hot cups, right? I was the first person to have a good line of foam cups. And that sent my children to medical school, to dental school, an MBA, my daughter and her specialty, did all of that. I was also was one the first one in these plastic tumblers, that you see all over the place.

KP: Yes, oh, yes.

SS: An item you wouldn't think would be anything, plastic straws, they were always paper straws. You can't imagine how many straws are sold. So plastics really was the secret. That's why I say I was lucky. I was in the right place at the right time.

KP: You probably remember Russ Janoff?

SS: Sure, I remember Russ Janoff. He was the manufacturers rep in South Jersey.

KP: It took him several years to realize that that's how you made more money, when you were in business for yourself, as a manufacturer's rep.

SS: He and I represented the same line at one time. I knew him well in college but I never spoke to him after the war. He represented the plastic company.

KP: He told me about being a manufacturer's rep, that why ...

SS: I'd forgotten about that. That's right. And I built it up, it became a business.

KP: How big was the business?

SS: I had two people working for me. I was the first manufacturer's rep in the New York area who made it into a business. There were always guys who had a line and a couple of sidelines and they worked out of their car, out of their hat. I was the first one to set it up as business. I had an office, I had a girl working for me, I had a man out on the road. I wasn't big, I was only in New Jersey. The highest volume we got up to was five million dollars, but that's not bad, [since] we work on the percentage basis. I was the boss. I shouldn't say I was the boss, I was under the control of the manufacturers, when it came right down to it. I did have my own office and my own staff working for me.

KP: And you were in it until 1993.

SS: That was really the end. What happened, the type of customers that we called on [were] paper distributors. When I first started, there must have been about a hundred, when I ended up, there, maybe, was six or nine. The biggest one is right here in North Brunswick, called Bunzle, B-U-N-Z-L-E. Bunzle came in from England and bought out, the first company they bought out, I am telling you this because they are from here, Jersey Paper, which was right in New Brunswick. They bought Monmouth paper, which is right in New Brunswick, and they have become the largest paper distributor in the United States. They bought out companies all over the place. They bought out all the big ones in New Jersey. I would have ended up having one customer. I was able to sell out. And it was just the right time. I hate to tell you this, there's so much luck involved that everything else is almost superfluous.

KP: Where did you get the idea to be a manufacture's rep? Because a lot of people in your generation worked for a single company and worked their way up the corporate ladder.

SS: Well, I had a little problem. I remembered something that a professor at Rutgers told me. It was a professor I had for business administration, and he said, for a year he said it, "Gentlemen, the best place to start is selling. That's the best place to start." And he kept saying that for the whole nine months of the course. But I remembered it. So I went out and looked to sell something. But I only wanted, I wanted to sell it on a commission. And I found a line and another line. I didn't even know what a manufacturer's rep was. Someone once told me what a manufacturers rep was. I thought that was a real great idea. I got really lucky. Somebody knew of a line that was open and they called me up, and I went to see about it. The line was called Forster Manufacturing Company. I represented them for forty-three years. They make round toothpicks. That sounds like nothing, doesn't it? World's Fair round toothpicks, which I know, you have bought in the store. But they also made ice cream sticks, etc.

KP: Are they based in Maine?

SS: Yes.

KP: Yes, I've seen their toothpicks.

SS: That was only part of the line. Things like coffee stirrers and things. That brought me into the paper field. I knew ...

KP: So you really concentrated on selling papers and plastic ...

SS: That's right. I knew that's where I belonged. Before that, I introduced twenty-five cent ballpoint pens. When I say introduce, I was one of the first ones. It's called "Ballerina." You wouldn't remember when ballpoint pens, the first ball point pen was forty-nine dollars and fifty cents. It leaked like hell. And then they started making them cheaper and cheaper, one of the first ones to make, this was before Bic, and Bic put them, really put them out of business. But I sold the hell out of those twenty-five cent ballpoint pens. As I say, you have to be lucky.

KP: So you would go to supermarkets?

SS: The same thing Russ Janoff would tell you. I didn't sell supermarkets, per se. I sold to distributors.

KP: You were in the distributing ...

SS: I sold to people like Bunzle, and then they sold, in turn, to supermarkets and colleges and restaurants and hospitals and so forth. Can't believe how many foam cups are sold.

KP: Oh, I can believe it.

SS: A tremendous business, tremendous. That was a lucky break.

RK: You have four children?

SS: I have four children, I have three sons and a daughter. My oldest son is an electrical engineer by profession. I presume you are going to ask me what they do? An electrical engineer with an MBA. He works for a consulting firm, he's a consultant. An expert in, electrical engineering is computers, nothing to do with electricity. My second son is a physician. He's an allergist, went to Albert Einstein Medical School. His offices are in Easton. He's the president, I can do a little bragging now, he's the president of the Pennsylvania Society of Allergists. Half of his practice is involved in drug testing. I'll just tell you this, he has eighty chairs in his waiting room, all by himself, so he's a very successful physician. My third son is a dentist. He went to University of Pennsylvania and then NYU dental school. His practice, thank goodness, is in Caldwell, New Jersey. He only lives a couple of miles away from me. And my daughter, they all have two children each, the three boys, three, so I have five grandsons and a granddaughter. My daughter is married to CPA, lives outside of Philadelphia and she never knew what she wanted to do. She had a tough time because she was following three boys who were stars. They all went to the same schools. I've lived in the same house for forty-five years. She graduated from CW Post, Long Island University, an English major, still not knowing what she wanted to do. Then she went to the Katherine Gibbs executive program. Then she decided she wanted to be an electrologist, you know, removal of unwanted hair. She had some work done on herself and she wanted to be an electrologist. So I sent her to school in New York. It was very concentrated

program. I am very proud of her, because she's not [one of] the boys, but she has built up a tremendous business out of her home, where she lives in Lafayette Hill. And she keeps it to three days a week. She is involved with dermatologists down there and she has really become a very fine businesswoman. As I say, I am particularly proud of her because she didn't have the background that the three boys had. Well, that's my children. Sounds good, doesn't it?

KP: None of your children served in the military?

SS: No. And none of them have more than two children, either. I guess we didn't look too good, my wife and I. My wife is a graduate of University of Pennsylvania.

KP: How did you meet?

SS: We were introduced by family. She comes from quite a background. Her father was a Ph.D. in math and assistant superintendent of the Newark school system. [He] was a civil engineer, too. And her brother has a Ph.D. in physics, and professor of physics at the University of Arizona and one of the foremost in the prediction of weather, by using lasers. And her other brother is a world-known neurologist out of the University of Pennsylvania. He has never been in private practice. He is a doctor's doctor, that type of thing.

KP: How did you feel about the Vietnam War at the time?

SS: That's one of the things I am a little ashamed of. I was absolutely in favor of it. I felt that the domino theory, I believed in [it]. I thought that the communists, if you don't stop them, they're gonna take over one country after another and we are going to lose by default. I was completely fooled. One of the things that made me feel a little better, I just read the autobiography of Walter Cronkite and he was fooled, too, and he's a newspaperman. I'm sorry that I was in favor of it. Of course, towards the middle, I realized. I don't know about you guys. Did you favor the war?

KP: I was very young. I was thirteen when the war ended, so ...

SS: You're not qualified.

KP: I do remember, even though I was very young. I remember how divisive the war was.

SS: As I said, it is not one of the things that I am proud of.

KP: When did you realize that it was a mistake?

SS: You know, I listened to all the protesting. At first, I felt the protesters, they just didn't want to go. They were just running away from it and they weren't doing their duty. As time wore on, I began to realize that there was more to it than that. My solution was simple. I felt that we should say, "Well, we beat you," and leave. But I guess nobody else felt that way.

KP: When did you join the American Legion?

SS: Not that long ago, maybe ten, fifteen years ago. I just came to the conclusion that they do good work and I should support them financially.

KP: Because you had the two uncles who were active in the Jewish War Veterans. You never joined that one?

SS: No, I don't like organizations. I also had a problem. If you noticed, maybe you haven't looked in my ears, but I wear two hearing aids. I started losing my hearing when I was about thirty years old. They didn't have hearing aids like they do today. They had the kind [that] they hang on you. Every time that you moved, it rustled. I had hardening of the bone of the inner ear. I was operated on a half a dozen times, only one of them was successful. So it was difficult for me in meetings. Sales meetings, I had problems. I used to sit up in the front, but what I did, was avoid them. I'm okay, one-on-one.

KP: But meetings ...

SS: And I never did like organizations. I always felt that the organizations were for the officers and they needed a good turnout so that they'd have an audience. I wasn't like my mother and father.

KP: Because your mother and father were joiners?

SS: Yes. They were organization people. Especially, my mother was a big organization person. She helped found Hadassa in Miami and B'Nai Brith and she was in the auxiliaries of the Jewish War Veterans.

KP: Oh, she was really?

SS: She was matron of the Order of the Golden Chain. Eastern Star, that was what I was trying to think of. The Eastern Star. Then, the Jewish women dropped out and formed the Order of the Golden Chain, or Rainbow. She was very gregarious. She was quite a gal, my mother. She died a couple of years ago at the age of ninety-three and a half. She really was something else, quite a wonderful person. A square dancer, a real doer. I didn't inherit that part of her.

[Post Script: You didn't ask me anything about my wife and I would like to add things about her. At the time of the interview, we had been married almost fifty years. She didn't work outside the home. Taking care of a husband, four active children, a dog, and a large house was a job-and-a-half. She was very active in PTAs, elementary and high school. In fact, she was president of the junior high and senior high PTAs, and then, president of the Scholarship Fund. At the same time, she was a very active volunteer for the National Council of Jewish Women, working with retarded children, Head Start reading programs, and WISH, Women In Self-Help. We always operated as a team and it would be impossible to have anything written about me without including Joan.

I mentioned playing bridge in college and in the Army. I continued playing rubber bridge for the next fifty years. However, when I retired in 1993, I became an avid duplicate bridge player and achieved the rank of Life Master in the American Contract Bridge League.]

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

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