

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAM L. AGRON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

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MONTVILLE, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins part three of our interview with Dr. Sam L. Agron on November 18, 2005, in Montville, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Todd Schaeffer: Todd Schaeffer.

SI: Dr. Agron, thank you once again for having us here.

TS: Thank you.

SI: We concluded the last interview with your activities towards the end of the war in the Pacific and V-J Day. Could you tell us about the process of being discharged from the Navy? Can you tell us about how you got on this destroyer escort that took you back to the States?

SA: Yes. I qualified for return to the States, having put in so many months of service and duty overseas. ... My ship flashed blinker messages to other ships at anchor in Buckner Bay, Okinawa, to see if any would be leaving soon for the States. ... One destroyer ... replied they were pulling up anchor and would leave in about an hour and, if I could get over there before then, fine, they could take me. ... I quickly packed ... my gear, including my typed orders to return, and the motor whaleboat carried me over ... to the ... departing ship and off I went with them. The only space available for me, as ... there were other Navy personnel returning to the States as passengers, in addition to the crew, the only place they could accommodate me was in a passageway, where they set up a folding cot for me. ... I spent about two weeks ... on that crossing. ... We stopped at Pearl Harbor, and then, on to San Diego. ... I was released to inactive duty, from active status. ... I'll have to change that; I was not immediately put on inactive duty, but ... was granted accrued leave that I had not previously been able to take. So, I had several months ... leave. I visited ... family that I hadn't seen in years, in San Diego. ... Then, I took the train to Chicago, ... a three-day trip, where I visited with my parents, siblings and relatives ... and then, on to Philadelphia, where my grieving wife and her mother and sister ... lived. ... Her father had died the previous summer and they still hadn't recovered; ... things were rather sad there. ... I needed some rest and recuperation, having gone down to about 127 pounds in weight; ... this was ... just before Christmas in '46. So, after a week or two, in early January, we ... four went to Orlando, Florida, where we ... tried to recoup our health, and ... spirits. We spent some time there, and then ... went on to the Miami area of Florida. ... It was quite a delight to be back again in a civilian, peaceful, family environment. ... We enjoyed ... sightseeing in ... central and south Florida. ... Returning then to Philadelphia ... about the beginning of spring in '46, I began to think about my plans for graduate work. ... I considered several schools and decided to study at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. They had a very good faculty and I liked the location at that time. ... It was quite suitable. I ... had to get myself back into the subject matter and the academic state of mind. ... I'd been out of school since '41, so, some five-plus years had passed since I did academic work. I enrolled in a six-week geology field course, a field camp, which was run by the Colorado School of Mines, in ... White Horse Park, south of Pueblo, Colorado. ... We lived in ... individual tents, each with a canvas cot ... on a cement slab. ... We did geologic fieldwork and mapping, and, also ... some underground mapping in an old silver mine that belonged to the School of Mines. This was all invaluable experience and I really enjoyed ... coming back to my field of interest. Then, in, I guess, ... August, my wife and I ... went ... to Baltimore to find living quarters and we went to a place

that had been advertised that was in a brownstone row house on St. Paul Street, ... just a couple of streets from the campus. ... We thought that would be very convenient. ... The lady, owner of the three-family row house, showed us the apartment and everything seemed to be all right. We agreed on the ... rent, and so on, ... and then, she asked us, incidentally, our religion, [laughter] it comes up again, and, of course, I told her we were Jewish. ... Oh, she ... couldn't rent to Jewish people ... which was rather a shock to my wife. ... It was very unpleasant. She kind of burst into tears, didn't expect that kind of treatment. ... I said, "You know, ma'am, I've just recently come back from the war, where for several years we fought Nazism," and so on, "and, now, you're displaying the same kind of ... bigotry," in that tone of voice. ... She began to feel a little guilty ... and said, "Well, you know, it's not me. ... I'm just afraid at what the neighbors may say. Let me call my daughter." ... The landlady was an older woman; she said, "I have to really consult with her," and she made her phone call, and then, came back and said [that] it would be all right. Well ... we stayed there ... three years and she was just delighted with my wife and they got along very well, so, maybe it was an educational experience for her. Such was the state of affairs [laughter] at that time.

SI: Can I interrupt you for a moment? A number of Jewish veterans have noted that admission quotas affected their decisions to apply to certain schools. Do you think that had any influence on you when you were applying to grad school?

SA: I don't think it was a factor at Johns Hopkins. No, I don't think so at all, but I know a ... friend, who is retired; he was a member of the ... Chicago Board of Trade. ... He told me, when he was a young man, ... several years after my time there, he applied to Northwestern and his dad accompanied him for the interview ... and they told him that their Jewish quota was already filled. They couldn't consider him. So, this was commonplace. That was the kind of world we lived in ... then. Unfortunately, it may still go on for many people. Now, I liked Johns Hopkins very much. It was an excellent school, excellent faculty, a great tradition. It started, ... well, in, what? 1870 or so, as a graduate school. ...

Lawrence Agron: 1876.

SA: 1876, as a graduate school, and was patterned after the ... universities in Germany ... where the only degree ... offered, your first degree, was the PhD. You enrolled and it was your responsibility to come to class or not to. ... You could attend any lectures you wanted, and then, when you were ready for the degree, you ... scheduled your comprehensive examination and defense of your dissertation. ... This is basically a research degree and if you passed, you got the degree; ... if you didn't, you flunked out, but could try again. You could spend any number of years at the university. ... Hopkins was a graduate school from the beginning. It is named ... for a merchant in town whose mother's maiden name was Johns, and the family name [was] Hopkins, and that was his name. ... After a while, they found that American students weren't quite mature enough. ... They would go through the process and ... flunk out, or not make it, and they ... asked, "Well, why didn't you tell me sooner that I was deficient in this or that?" ... So, they started to give a preliminary exam ... the year before you came up. ... Soon, the students wanted more of that kind of guidance and they started to give final exams ... at the end of courses. ... Gradually, it became like any other American graduate school, and ... later, they introduced their undergraduate school. Of course, the medical [degree] is a graduate degree. ...

That's the early history of Johns Hopkins. Today, it's like any other university, but I really felt that it was a great place to study. ... I completed all my coursework in two years, while ... also working on ... my dissertation. ... In the third year, I continued and completed the fieldwork, ... the laboratory research, and ... the writing of the ... dissertation. I was fortunate ... to have ... the third year free of coursework, so that I could devote my time fully to the dissertation. ... Having been away for five years, I felt I had to make up ... lost time and so ... kept my nose to the grindstone. Now, again, the same ... ugly motif keeps popping up! In my second year ... two grad students from the University of Chicago transferred to Johns Hopkins. They didn't like the department at Chicago. They said the professors were not accessible and so on. After a few weeks, one of these ... appeared in ... the doorway of my office, ... came in, and we chatted. ... I asked him how he liked it here. He said, "Oh, very much, very much, much better than ... at Chicago ... but there's one thing here that ... I don't like." I ... asked, "What is that?" He said, "Too many Jews." [laughter] We had four Jewish grad students among thirty and that was too much for him. [laughter] It disturbed him. Well, I let him have it, gave him hell, and I said, "You know, I have no patience with this kind of crap." Again, after we had been through World War II ... so recently, this bucktoothed fool from "Hicksville," Ohio ... gives me this crap and I ... thought, "I want everybody to know about this," and I told my thesis advisor, I told my fellow students. I ... asked, "Is this the kind of crap we have here?" Well, he didn't last long. ... At the end of the year he dropped out, evidently ... there was something the matter with him. ...

SI: Could I interrupt you again?

SA: Of course, of course.

SI: In the earlier interviews, this came up again and again, how you had to fight against this kind of attitude your entire life. Do you feel as though the wartime experience energized you, made you even more vocal about speaking out against this, or was it just the same reaction?

SA: No, I don't know that it energized me, but I think the country ... had grown up some during the war years and we, ... I mean, intelligent people, thinking people, saw where this kind of hatred leads, you know. ... I was ... out there fighting a war while this punk was, what? in high school here, or something like that. ... I think some people, maybe, learned a lesson from it, but ... there's a new generation coming along every twenty years, twenty-five years, whatever it is. ... Everybody's understanding and knowledge starts at ground zero [laughter] and family traditions, culture, inculcate certain attitudes. So, we have to keep at it, keep educating people, and, as I think ... about the other minorities here ... well, I knew Catholics who, even at Northwestern and so on, ... were aware of anti-Catholic feeling ... and, of course, blacks, wow! So, I hope we're becoming a better people and listening more to what religion is supposed to teach us. Well, in doing my thesis I worked in the field two summers, ... often seven days a week ... almost ten hours a day, climbing, walking, measuring, taking samples and mapping, and so on, accumulating my data. ... During the year, I ... studied the microscope-thin sections prepared from the field samples and did all my drafting, maps and ... preparation of illustrations, studying and reading and writing. That's the life of a grad student. The first summer, one ... afternoon will forever be in my mind, I was doing field mapping in ... Lancaster, no, it was York County, Pennsylvania, near the Mason-Dixon Line, just above the Maryland border. ... Now, this would have been ... the summer of '47. Evidently, this ... area was long ... deserted. There

were some almost collapsing farm buildings, overgrown weeds everywhere, no traffic around. ... I found myself near a ... small, fenced off family burial ... site, such as you'll find in rural areas ... with briars and weeds everywhere. ... I had a rather eerie feeling, kind of creepy, being there alone, nobody around for a considerable distance, and I moved on, across the area. Later, when I returned to where we were staying, in a place called Delta, PA, (my wife and I rented ... attic quarters in the house of the local justice of the peace) ... the phone rang. ... It was from my family in Chicago and they said that, several hours ago, my youngest brother had been killed in a car accident. ... It had been about the time I was in that cemetery ... experiencing an eerie feeling. ... So, we had to drop everything and rush to Chicago for the funeral. ... He was a great boy with wonderful promise, a pre-med student, he was in the Naval Reserve and a lifeguard. ... Well, then, a stupid accident, that he wasn't even responsible for, took his life. The following season was mostly spent in fieldwork in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, because the Peach Bottom slate and the surrounding rocks occurred in a belt that crossed the Susquehanna River ... in southeast Pennsylvania, from York County into Lancaster County. The work was completed and I defended the thesis successfully and ... was awarded the PhD degree in June of '49. ... The defense is kind of scary, because you stand there in an amphitheater with professors from all the sciences, every science, at that time, that's how it was, not only yours. ... They can ask you any question ... in any of the sciences, and, of course, you ... must also defend the research work that you've done. ... Your own department faculty are there to question you on that. ... I remember, the year before ... there was a very good graduate student, did a fine ... dissertation, but he was terribly nervous at the defense. ... He walked over to the first row, where the chairman of the department of geology was sitting, and ... said, ... "I don't think I can go through with this." ... The chairman replied, "You've got to. Stand up there. You've got to." ... They asked the first question and he fainted. [laughter] So, they revived him, stood him up. The question was repeated; he fainted again. [laughter] So, they failed him and he had to come back the following year and ... he passed the second time. So, they told us that story ... to get our confidence up.

SI: Was this an actual person or was this just a story that they made up?

SA: No, I knew the guy.

SI: You knew him.

SA: Yes, yes, and he became the state geologist of one of the important mining states in the West. He was a very good man; just, you know, you mustn't let your nerves falter. Well, in the spring of '49, there was a position for an instructor in geology at Lafayette College, in Easton, Pennsylvania. ... I applied to the chairman of the department ... and ... sent him ... all my credentials from Baltimore. ... It would have been ... before ... graduation, because they ... try to line up ... new faculty before the end of the year. ... He invited me to come up for an interview. ... They had a very nice geology building ... given to the college by, I think, an alumnus who made ... a fortune in coal mining years ago. ... The interview lasted a couple of hours or so in the morning and went ... very well. ... I was asked to [present] my own ideas about what I could contribute to the department, how I would do this ... and other curricular matters. ... He was a really fine professor, a gentleman. He said, "Well, I wish to offer you the position," and I said, "All right, I'll accept," and we shook hands on it. ... Then, he said, "Oh,

there's just one detail. Whenever a new professor, faculty member, is hired, we take him to meet the president." So, he picked up the phone and asked the president, "Can we come over and meet you?" "Yes." So, we walked over to his office. ... He was the Reverend [Ralph Cooper] Hutchison, a Presbyterian minister, ... and we were introduced. ... His first question, "What church do you belong to?" There it is again. ... I said, "I'm Jewish." He said, "Oh, no, no, I'm sorry, we can't hire a Jewish person." ... Well, this was not new to me. [laughter] I had experienced this kind of stuff for, you know, years. But a minister; I had a little more respect for somebody of the cloth, you know, [laughter] and this was a liberal arts college! ... I really felt bad for the geology professor, the chairman of the department. He felt so humiliated and ashamed of his president. ... Later, he said, "It never even occurred to me that they would be interested in a person's religion," and so on, and he apologized profusely; ... but, you see, they didn't hurt me. I lost that job, but I was hired by Brown University, which was much better than Lafayette College. [laughter] ... The world has improved since then and I understand Lafayette has had a Jewish president since. So ... we're learning.

SI: Before we move on, could we ask you one or two more questions about Johns Hopkins?

SA: Sure.

SI: How many people in your class, roughly, would you say were veterans and how many were people who had just come out of undergraduate colleges, people who were probably in high school during the war?

SA: No, high school people wouldn't go to grad school in 1946, so, they all had to be through college. ... Most colleges, I think, had their programs disrupted; geology programs ... mostly involved men. ... Even their faculty were largely in military or science research for the government. ... Most of the students were veterans. Those who were not may have been excused for medical reasons or whatever, but we were almost all veterans at that time. ... When I went ... into teaching, for ... a few years ... a fair number of the undergraduates ... were returning veterans. ... Some ... waited a number of years to take advantage of the GI Bill and they were in their thirties, thirty-five or so, when they entered ... college. It was an excellent program, the G.I. Bill. ...

SI: Do you think that influenced the character of the classes?

SA: Yes. I think they were more mature, much more ... serious, and you could see it, because, in the undergraduate colleges, there was a mix. You had ... students straight out of high school and you had veterans and the veterans, of course, ... were not childish, as some of the kids were.

TS: Did you notice any animosity between the veterans and those who came just out of high school?

SA: No, no.

TS: Was there respect for the veterans?

SA: ... I don't think there was a significant difference in attitude towards them. I wasn't aware of that. I mean, they were everywhere, so, you just accepted it. Now, you know, you say veterans and "veterans." There are some veterans who spent six months in the service and ... others never left boot camp. ... Not every veteran was overseas or faced the enemy or ... risked his life. A lot of them spent the war in Washington, working at a desk. Many had connections and got jobs like that; you know that.

SI: Which specialty, within geology, did you focus on at Johns Hopkins? What was your thesis on?

SA: Well, my thesis was on the structural petrology and environment, the geologic environment, of the Peach Bottom slate. That may not be its exact title, but that's the general subject matter. ... My thesis advisor kind of advised me and gave me several choices. ... He said, "This has to be worked on. It's a very significant problem, an interesting problem ... the slate belt." It was one of the best types of slate in the world, a very hard type, and it had an interesting history. It'd been mined since Colonial days, and then, in the nineteenth century, middle nineteenth or so, a lot of Welshmen came over and they were quarrymen from the old country and they worked it. ... It was a very superior slate, because it didn't contain calcium carbonate, as the northeast Pennsylvania slates did. ... Those slates ... became porous after years of exposure to rainwater ... carrying carbon dioxide ... which dissolved the calcium carbonate and ... the slate would begin to leak. ... The Peach Bottom slate was very dense ... and would last, without fading or leaking. It could last indefinitely, thousands of years for that matter. ... It was somewhat limited in extent, and ... there were different kinds of rocks that had been altered below it, surrounding it, adjacent to it. It was kind of in an in-folded ... syncline. ... We didn't know much about ... its structure ... and make-up, composition, and how the whole ... metamorphic environment was related. So, I ... went in there and mapped it ... in very great detail, literally tens of thousands of measurements and readings, and ... plotted them on many kinds of maps, and stereographic projections, and then made microscope-thin sections of the slate and ... the surrounding quartz rocks and so on, and studied ... them on a universal stage. ... This tilts and orients the thin section ... around three axes. ... You can orient the sample in any position and look down [the] different crystal directions of the different minerals and ... relate that to the surface of the Earth, the geography, the position in the rocks, and find out how pressures from different directions may have changed the minerals and altered them, lined them up, as they are and, oh, ... on and on. There are many aspects of it. It involved a lot of laboratory work, great patience, literally tens of thousands of microscopic readings and field data and petrographic analysis. ... I enjoyed it. It was challenging work and ... others may have used ... it. ... I was consulted ... when they built a nuclear [plant], I think ... the first nuclear power plant down in Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania. ... They ... located it in the area where I worked and ... they used some of my ... data to prepare the final geologic map that the Atomic Energy Commission, I believe, put out for that area. Well ... those are some of the aspects of it.

SI: You accepted a position at Brown. Can you tell us a little more about how that came about?

SA: Yes. Brown wanted to hire an instructor and I think I was directed there, again, by my professor at Hopkins, who had been contacted by the chairman at Brown, and so, he called me. I was then in Baltimore.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Could you tell us a little bit about starting your family in Baltimore?

SA: Yes. My two children were born during the time that I was there, my daughter ... in 1947, and my son, Larry ... in 1949, just ... after I received my degree. He was born at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. ... When ... the position at Brown came up, I was ... invited for an interview ... by Dr. Alonzo [W.] Quinn, who was the chairman. ... Everything went off well. ... I was hired and classes were to begin in September of ... 1949. ... It was a task to move out of Baltimore with the family, find a place to live in the Providence area and just get a running start, right into class work and lectures, etc., [laughter] all at the beginning of the semester. ... It was accomplished. ... We rented a nice, new Cape Cod house ... between Narragansett Bay and the river to the east. ... It was a short commute to the university. At Brown, my rank was instructor, at the salary of three thousand dollars a year, which was an average salary for a beginning instructor in 1949. ... I had a two-year contract and they told me, if things worked out and I performed well, there would be a promotion to assistant professor at the end of the two years. I taught several undergraduate courses and one graduate course and enjoyed the campus, enjoyed the people there. ... Professor Quinn and his wife were ... delightful people and they were very fond of my wife and it was a pleasant place. In ... the second year, we built a house ... in an area west of Providence that was more congenial ... in the cold winter. It was a little easier on my wife's health. ... I have some memories of students that were interesting, that I might mention. Now, Brown was a lovely campus, fairly compact. It was a men's college at that time and it was associated with Pembroke College, which was the women's college. The student body was fairly privileged. There were a number of people who, [you] might say, were "born with a silver spoon in their mouths." [laughter] I remember, one of these chaps wasn't terribly attentive in the course he took with me. ... Then, one day, I thought there was a transformation. He stared at me as I lectured and feverishly wrote a few notes, and then ... looked up with rapt attention, feverishly wrote some more notes, and I thought to myself, "Oh, there's a change for the better in this man. Now, he's become a serious student." ... When the bell rang, he dashed out of the classroom so fast that he had forgotten his papers and his books on the table. ... I thought, "I should pick them up and ... keep them for him, or else they might be lost." So, I took them to my office and I noticed [that] the sheet of paper that he was writing on was a wine list for the party at his fraternity Saturday night. He was the social chairman and he was making it up; so many cases of beer, so much wine, so much gin, ... the whole list and that's what he ... had been thinking about, with great earnestness. [laughter] Well, needless to say, he failed the course. He was a geology major, or at least he thought so. A day or two after the grades were posted, I sat at my desk and looked to the side and there, in the doorway, stood this student, with a ... big smile on his face. ... I said to him; I won't use his name, because it happens to be the name of one of the most famous geologists. [laughter] So, I thought there might be hope for this guy, but there wasn't. So, I said, ... "I'm very ... sorry that I had to give you a failing grade, but I had no ... choice. You simply did not give me anything to work with. He said, "Oh, don't be sorry. ... I'm here to thank you for failing me." I said, "What?" He ... said, "Yes, ... you see, if you had given me a 'D,' I'd be kicked out." He said, "If you get ten 'Ds,' you're kicked out. I have nine already, but, by giving me a failing grade I can stay on next year." ... This shows the ridiculousness of some of the rules ... they have. [laughter] Well, okay, he was grateful, he was

happy. ... I don't know what became of him. I suppose he had a good ... position waiting for him after graduation. There were, as I said, a number of war veterans among our students and some of them were excellent and ... went on ... as did other geology graduates, [to] further education. ... Some got their PhDs and held excellent positions in academia and government and industry. Now ... as the second year was winding up, ... this would have been, now, 1951, we were in the Korean War. ... The president of Brown declared that since this is a men's school and we had just recently been through World War II, when the student enrollment went down considerably, now, the Korean ...

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

SI: Please, continue.

SA: So, we're now in 1951, in the early spring, and the president of Brown, Henry [Merritt] Wriston, declared that all promotions would be frozen, and ... they couldn't offer me a promotion, but they would give me an increase in salary. ... I said, "Well, that is not the understanding I had when I accepted this ... position. I thought that if things would work out well, I would be offered a promotion. ... I'll have to look elsewhere." Well, ... the chairman's wife, a great lady, pleaded with my wife to influence me to stay, and Beatrice said, "It's his decision to make. I can't influence him in that." So, I began to look elsewhere and ... soon considered several possibilities. ... One was at Rutgers University in Newark and the Dean of the College, Herbert P. Woodward, contacted me. He ... may have heard ... from Johns Hopkins people, oh, there's a network, that I might be leaving my position, and he invited me to come for an interview on Monday. ... On the weekend, I drove in from Providence ... Dean Woodward showed me the facilities and explained the structure of the University and what the mission was and told me about himself, and so on, and so forth. ... I found here an institution ... formerly the University of Newark, that had, after World War II, been consolidated into Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey by act of the Legislature, and there were plans for expansion. Herbert Woodward was himself a geologist and a very good one. His field was Appalachian geology. He had a PhD from Columbia University and ... had been teaching geology ... as the sole instructor until World War II. ... He went into the Army and ... served in Army intelligence, and ... towards the end of the war was in Bulgaria, becoming a specialist on that country. When the war ended, he returned to the college as dean and ... hired Robert L. Bates to replace him, another excellent man. Bates stayed ... two years as a one-man department and then went to Ohio State University, where he did excellent work, and so, this opening appeared. ... I was offered ... an assistant professorship at a salary of four thousand [dollars]. ... I looked around and saw the less-than-good facilities, and the urban setting, and ... region that the ... college was serving and I felt, "What a challenge this would be. What a contribution I could make, having been privileged to study at places like Northwestern and Hopkins and to work at Brown. I could really bring something to this ... college and the students who come here." So, I accepted and ... had, now, to move the family again. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: ... In the beginning, I was ... a one-man department, with a part-time lab assistant. ... I taught all the courses for the major: the one-year general geology course, which ... was a semester of physical and a semester of historical geology, with laboratory, mineralogy,

petrology, paleontology, stratigraphy, and structural geology. ... I ... worked to build the department up ... and the collections. Woodward had made a start, but there was much to be done to build up the mineral, ... rock, and ... fossil collections, maps, equipment. There ... wasn't ... even a petrographic microscope for several years after I arrived. ... It gave me great satisfaction to know that I could do much for the students, and some of them ... did go on to achieve a great deal. After a couple of years, I was able to hire an instructor, a PhD. ... We grew as time went on. ... I started with forty students in the general course, ... a few carryover students, and ... five majors, and each year, we ... increased. So, as the years went by, I hired Dr. Charles Hamilton, Mr. Robert Ramsdell, Dr. [George] Theokritoff, Dr. William Wiles, Dr. [Warren] Manspeizer, Dr. [John] Puffer, Dr. [Andreas] Vassiliou, Dr. Phil Garner, and others. ... When I retired, in ... 1984, we were a faculty of, I think, nine full-time professors and about seven or so lab instructors. We had several part-time faculty. ... We also had a graduate program by that time, with about thirty graduate students and quite a few majors. ... It gave me great satisfaction to have had the privilege of starting ... almost from scratch and ... growing in the University and community ... what had not been there before I came. ... We also developed elective courses for non-majors. We wanted to serve [students] other than the majors as well. ... We felt, "There's a lot we can do," and there was unmet demand for ... these courses. For instance, I gave a course in mineral resources ... open to majors and non-majors. ... It dealt with all of the metallic minerals, starting with iron, how it's mined, how to make steel, ... its uses, where it's produced, ... world trade in it; copper, aluminum, ... lead, zinc, ... and other metals ... and how they are mined; the non-metals: building stone, marble and slate, limestone, crushed stone, quarries; gypsum and various chemical salts that are mined; the fuels, coal, petroleum, natural gas, uranium; precious metals, gold, silver, platinum; ... diamonds and other gem stones. ... We covered not just the geology of these [minerals], where they're found, how they ... occur, how they form in nature, but ... also their uses, international trade in them, economic aspects, metallurgical processes and so on. ... I arranged ... a trip each semester, to the Bethlehem Steel plant in Bethlehem, PA. We would take some forty people by bus and spent the day there. They took us through ... the ... mills and ... shops with their metallurgical engineers serving as tour guides. ... This course was of great value to economics students, ... chemistry students, people studying history, people who went on into the business school, as well as geology students. ... One can see, today, how important all of these things are in understanding how the world functions and its problems. ... You can understand history better if you understand these resources. So, I took great satisfaction in ... giving this course. ... I introduced a course ... in astronomy, ... as I felt there was a need for it. ... The Physics Department said ... they had nobody there who could teach it. I ... had been interested in astronomy since I was a ... teenager and ... in junior high school, was the president of the astronomy club. ... Early on ... I saw the connection between the Earth and the universe at large; that the Earth is simply one planet in the solar system, around a star, one of countless stars in the galaxy, one of countless galaxies, and so on. ... In geology, [we] zeroed in on this one planet. Now, of course, there is the field of astrogeology. We ... study the planets in the solar system and their moons and we learn ... things we can apply to the Earth, and things on Earth we ... apply to understanding the planets. ... All of knowledge is really one. I don't see sharp boundaries ... there, but not all people at that time ... saw things as broadly. ... Also, I saw a need for a ... more detailed ... course in fuels and energy. ... The nuclear program ... had become more ... important and ... also was more of a problem, ... especially some aspects of it. ... People were ... increasingly concerned with our energy shortage. We were beginning to see the "end of days" for petroleum as a fuel and so on.

... Again, this also interests people working in ... fields ... other than geology. ... There ... were sufficient ... students for us to give this course ... on a yearly basis. ... There were several other examples where the department was able to inaugurate courses such as environmental geology that were of interest to students across the board in the college. ... This, of course, helped our enrollment figures which, ultimately, affected the number of staff we could hire [laughter]. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You mentioned that the students at Rutgers-Newark were a bit different from the other school you had been associated with. How would you characterize them? Were they older students? Obviously, the campus was very different since students did not live there. It was a commuter school.

SA: It was. ... Today, they have residents, you see. How would I characterize them, as they were? ...

SI: When you first got there, those first few years.

SA: Well, you know, I spent two years at Brooklyn College, my first two years of college. ... Then, when my family moved to Chicago in '39, I finished my last two years at Northwestern, ... where I took all ... the courses for my major, ... plus, a few ... non-geology electives. So, I had ... been with students in a large, urban college. Brooklyn College, which, at that time, was in a newly completed campus of beautiful, uniformly red brick, Colonial-style buildings, ... set in a nice quadrangle. ... The students came from mostly working-class people, first-generation college people, who were willing to work very hard to accomplish something. ... It was a competitive school. You had to excel to get in ... and I think, perhaps, the students ... may have been better than the faculty. It was a good faculty, but the students were even better. ... At Northwestern, the faculty was better, the students probably not, (academically). ... They were from wealthier families and ... some had been privileged ... for several generations, and they looked at the world differently; the same thing at Brown. Now, [what about] Rutgers in Newark? Of course, I didn't know the students when I accepted the position, I just saw the environs. ... The students were every bit as good as students in ... other schools, every bit. When they began to relax admission standard in later years, in order to ... admit more minorities or whatever, many unprepared students arrived. ...

SI: There is Affirmative Action.

SA: Open admissions, they called it, okay, open admissions. Then, of course, standards began to be relaxed ... in the university. ... Larry applied, from Rutgers College, to the law school ... in Newark and was turned down. ... When he was an undergraduate ... some of his classmates, maybe even a roommate, ... took ... a cram course before ... taking the exams to get into law school, ... but he ... chose not ... to take it. ... I asked him, "Why?" He ... replied, "Well, ... although you can afford to pay for it, I don't want to have an unfair advantage over poor kids applying who can't afford to pay for that cram course." Well, it was idealistic, but, maybe if he had taken the course, he might have gotten in, maybe not. I don't think he regrets, now, not

being a lawyer. ... We have a very good friend ... a partner in ... a top law firm, ... whom we asked about these ... scores that ... Larry got on the LSATs. ... "What do ... they mean, scores like this?" He ... replied, "It means either he doesn't have an aptitude for law or he might become a very ... good lawyer." [laughter] So, that's what the tests mean! ... But, at the same time ... the Rutgers Law School turned down applicants like Larry, they ... accepted people who needed two years of remedial work, couldn't write English well. ... All right, they were doing a good thing, helping people, but ... many did drop out. ...

LA: But, they didn't have the options [that] I did, the other options, and I did well in the Graduate Record Exams.

SA: Yes, that's all right, Larry. ...

LA: It worked out fine.

SA: ... So ... with open ... admission, the quality of the students may have diminished, but on the other hand, ... a great social service ... was performed for the country, for society, for other people. There's a letter here [that] I came across in my files; ... it would ... almost break your heart to read it. ... It was from Gary, a minority student, who had taken my astronomy course and went on to become the director of the planetarium at the Newark Museum. ... He also ran science ... programs for high school kids, and so on. ... He asked ... if I would intercede and write ... to the admissions officer at the college on behalf of one of his students, ... a high school senior, a girl, had been turned down for admission. ... She ... had done a fine research project with him ... and won a prize in ... the high school science fair, ... first prize or some such distinction. ... [She was] from a very poor family, ... struggling, and very interested in science. ... I think she had a grant ... for this project; ... funding from the NASA, even. I have the name of the project and Gary was involved in supervising it. ... Now, she wasn't admitted to our college. So, Gary asked me if I [would help], and I have a copy of the letter that I wrote to the [admissions] committee. ... I came across it the other day when I was [going through my papers]. I had ... forgotten this event, but there it was. ... When she wrote ... she didn't know that I would be asked to write on her behalf. ... It breaks your heart to see what this ... rejection did to this poor girl. It just destroyed her. She was crushed and ... humiliated in front of her friends ... and thought ... she should give up ever trying ... again, [that there was] nobody to help or guide ... her. So, there were people like that and ... we helped to show them the way. ... They had nobody to advise them at home or among ... family. Yet, some achieved splendidly and ... reached ... high positions. ... Many of my students ... went on to get Masters and PhD degrees, do government work, and [go] into private industry. ... They're certainly as good as students anywhere else, but ... many hadn't had an opportunity. ... I was ... fortunate to have been exposed ... to schools other than those in a crowded city environment ... and I felt ... an obligation to ... do something ... to help others achieve. ...

SI: As you built up your department, was your primary focus on undergraduate and graduate education or were you also working on building up a research reputation for your department?

SA: Well, if you start at the beginning and ... assess the situation, the facilities, the job that needed to be done, that could be done, when you don't even have a microscope to work with, are

you going to talk about doing high-powered research or roll up your sleeves and ... get your shop in order? You ... must build the facilities, do good teaching ... advise students and direct them into careers. ... We did these things diligently. When we got into the new buildings, new campus, these other things began to open up ... more possibilities and feasibilities, and we tried to do them as much as we could. Of course, they ... require that you do research in order to advance. You have to have publications, but you ... should have a balanced mind about this. ... I've seen a lot of unrealistic egos involved in this and I think, if you ... accept a position, you know what the circumstances are, you know what your responsibilities are, you have to fulfill your commitments. ... Some people ... neglect their teaching responsibilities. They're lazy. They'd rather be doing something else. The students may get second, third consideration. Well, I think that's wrong. You know, there are research institutions and there are teaching institutions, but most should be somewhere in the middle and balanced. ... Before you can do research ... you have to have the facilities for it. ... I did a certain amount of fieldwork, and ... got a number of papers out as I went along, but I wasn't being hired by a research institution and ... was dedicated to ... those I chose to serve. ...

TS: Was there much interplay between the Geology Departments of Rutgers-Newark and, say, Rutgers-New Brunswick?

SA: There was some. You see ... in the University, or at least the years when I was there, we had sections. Each discipline, each subject matter, had a section. So, we had the Geology Section, which ... included the tenured professors of Geology on the different campuses. ... So, we had the New Brunswick, ... the Newark ... and the Camden ... geologists convening at the Section meetings on matters of promotion tenure and so on. I don't know what the situation is there now. They were, I think, generally helpful. We hired a number of their graduate students over the years to ... serve as TAs, so [that] they had their TA assistantships. That was a help. I supervised one of their PhD students for a while. I'm sure they called on some of our staff for some of their problems. We hired ... Warren Manspeizer, a PhD from Rutgers. ... Some ... like Helgi Johnson, [who] was chairman for many years, was a very cooperative, very helpful man. ... Their mineralogy professor ... took me to some old storage facilities in ... a decrepit building on campus with cabinets of minerals and rocks [that] they probably couldn't find a place for or didn't need, and he let me ... select what might be of use to my department. I appreciated that. I came down there and gave ... a lecture on the geology of the moon, lunar geology, which they appreciated. Some of their staff was less ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: What did I say last? I'm sorry.

SI: We were just talking about staffing, building up your department.

SA: Yes. So, I said that the Department of Geology in New Brunswick was helpful to us and they provided us with specimens of rocks, minerals, fossils that could be of help in some of our coursework. Now, the President of Rutgers, at the time, was Robert Clothier, for whom a dormitory is named, I believe.

SI: Yes.

LA: I lived there for two years, Clothier Hall.

SA: Every month, a limo would take him from New Brunswick to Newark, where he attended a meeting of the board of directors of the Prudential Insurance Company, and he did this for several years. The meetings were held, oh, about half-a-mile from the college, Rutgers, in Newark. In all of those years, he never set foot once in any of the buildings of Rutgers College in Newark. This is the President of the University! So, you can see how much interest he took in it. This was resented by us.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Could you explain how the "Red Scare" of the late 1940s and the early 1950s, personified by Senator Joseph McCarthy, impacted the college campus? Did it affect hiring? Were there "witch hunts," even within the campus?

SA: Oh, I'm sure it had an effect. A campus would have had to be dead not to have been affected, but it affected individuals differently and, also, affected certain disciplines more than others. Certainly, political sciences would be affected more than natural sciences. I had a good friend ... Benjamin Sonnenblick, who was a geneticist and he was a professor in our Biology Department. He did very, very important work on the genetics of fruit flies. Now, he was several years older than I, ... received a PhD from NYU, and then, ... served several years in the Army in World War II. He was hired at Rutgers in Newark soon after the war, several years before I was. ... He told me that, shortly after he was hired, he got a call from a colleague at NYU, a senior professor in the department there, where he got his degree. ... The colleague said that he had received a call from a Dr. Greenfield, who was an assistant professor, ... a botanist in the ... Natural Science Division, ... in our college in Newark, ... asking this professor at NYU if he knew Dr. Sonnenblick. ... He said, "Yes." ... Greenfield continued, "Well, he's been hired here in this college. Can you tell me if he ever was a Communist?" Now, he did this on his own initiative. ... This NYU professor called Dr. Sonnenblick and asked, "Who is this Dr. Greenfield in your department?" He [Sonnenblick] ... replied, "Oh, one of the assistant professors." ... He said, "Why do you ask?" ... and was told, "Well, he called to inquire if you ever were a Communist." Well, Sonnenblick was irate; ... he told me that when Greenfield came into the office ... he ... wanted to throttle the man and push him out ... the second-story window. How dare he stir up trouble for an honorable man, honorable man, who had no such connections? ... Here you had a devilish mind at work. As soon as Dr. Sonnenblick, somebody with excellent credentials, was hired ... he was perceived as a threat, and the ... evil mind ... went to work to destroy him. ... This was the first instance of ... this business we had there. Now, I remember, there were ... two professors at Rutgers, ... one maybe at the law school, one maybe at my college, in Newark, ... my memory is a little vague now, and they were called ... to testify at the McCarthy hearings in Washington, and ... these two professors took the Fifth Amendment and refused to answer. ... Now, the Fifth Amendment is ... in the Constitution. It's legal. Pressure was put on ... the University and the men were fired. I don't know if one or both of them was tenured; but the tenure was broken. ... The University ... felt it could not stand up to the committee. Well, it was then a state university, ... the politicians ... could make a field day of it

and so on. So, maybe they thought that was the easiest way to handle it. ... I forget the details about one ... of the fired professors, but the other went, (maybe both did) ... to England. ... I regret I don't have the man's name in front of me. ... He was hired then at, I think, Cambridge, possibly Oxford, and became one of their outstanding historians, took British citizenship, was knighted by the Queen, became Sir So-and-So, and, years later, years later, he was invited to Rutgers to give some kind of honorific ... address. I forget what the occasion was, and I guess they felt sorry ... that they had lost this great scholar. [Editor's Note: Dr. Agron is referring to the case of Dr. Moses I. Finley and Dr. Simon W. Heimlich. Dr. Moses later joined the faculty at Cambridge University in England and received an apology from Rutgers in 1972 when he returned to campus to deliver a lecture.] ... Those things come to mind. I don't know ... of any other things to say except that this same Greenfield ... kept notes and dossiers on ... other faculty members, any gossip he heard was recorded right away. ... Some students and faculty members ... would come ... to ... his office and he would debrief them as to what went on in other professors' classes. So, we had some sick minds among us.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: [I remember] fondly Mason Gross. Now, unlike a previous president, Robert Clothier, he used to visit the Newark colleges. He would spend one day a week in Newark and got to know exactly what was going on, what we were doing, what we needed. ... I can still ... see him walking down the second floor, out of the dean's office there and on his way to the different classrooms, labs, ... offices. ... I had a little story to tell him once, when I bumped into him in the hallway. I had just come back from ... a weekend geology field trip ... with several car loads of students ... to New England. ... We visited the Boston area ... among other places, including the ... Squantum "Tillite." It's a bedrock exposure ... that juts out into the bay and ... was famous in geology because ... it indicated that there were glaciers there ... in the Permian, perhaps 250 million years ago. ... I used to visit there with students when I was at Brown University. ... Now, I hoped to take our Rutgers students up ... to see it. When we ... arrived we saw ... a chain link fence ... around the perimeter and a guard station ... to prevent entry. ... A sign said ... it was a Nike base. Now, Nikes were ... missiles that we had around important cities ... to shoot down ... intercontinental ballistic missiles. ... The uniformed guard said it was closed to the public; ... I told him ... who our group was, [that] we were all so disappointed. "This was one of the highlights of the trip. I've got Rutgers students here. We've been traveling a couple of days now and we were so looking forward to seeing the rocks that indicate that glaciation," and so on. ... Then he ... asked, "You say you're from Rutgers?" I said, "Yes." He ... asked, "Well, do you know Mason Gross?" ... I said, "Yes, I just saw him about a week ago." He ... asked, "You did?" His eyes opened wide, because Mason Gross was then ... on a TV quiz show ... [with] Herb Shriner. ... Mason Gross asked the questions ... and was seen by a nationwide audience. ... The guard, a jolly, Irish fellow, ... asked, "Do you know him?" "Yes, sure, I saw him last week." "Oh, I think it's all right then for you guys to go in," and he opened the door [laughter] and let us all through; just because I mentioned that I knew Mason Gross, whom he admired on TV. Well, a week or two later, when ... I saw Dr. Gross in the hallway and told him this story, ... he roared with laughter. He was so taken with the incident. So, that's a fond memory I have of Mason Gross.

SI: Do you think your college's fortunes improved after he took an interest? Did that impact its development at all?

SA: Oh, I'm sure, I'm sure. He followed through on things. Very often, people listen to you, and they may even promise, but they don't follow through. They just ignore what you say. Some don't even listen. ... We all felt he was very sincere and interested. ... Oh, well, you know, ... how much detail can I get into? ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We have just been looking at a series of letters concerning grading and examination policy. It is a good example of how students can try to attack professors, to put it bluntly. Would you mind telling us a little bit about that?

SA: Well, I have here a copy of a letter written in November 1962 and it was sent to, I guess, the Dean of Students at Rutgers-Newark, and a copy was sent to President Mason Gross, and this student, in the letter, is complaining about an hour exam and saw fit to send the complaint to the President of the University. He said, "I've been appointed as a representative of Dr. Agron's mineral resources class and, therefore, the opinions represented in this letter represent those of the majority of the class. We think you should be informed of the unfair testing procedure used by Dr. Agron. The difficulty of the test is not a problem for us to judge, but we believe ... and hope you will, too, that the amount of questions given on the first hourly in this ...

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

SI: This is tape two of our interview with Dr. Sam L. Agron on November 18, 2005. Please, continue.

SA: "By numerous, we mean six long essay questions, which were almost impossible to fully discuss in the short time allotted. The ... cumulative average," he gives of the members of the class, and so on, "and the class average was a mere fifty on the test, and that these low grades resulted mainly because the hourly is much too long for this time allotted and because of the stringent marking habits of Dr. Agron. We realize that neither of you gentlemen," (this is the President of the University and the Dean of Students) "has the power to do anything about these past marks, but we would be most appreciative if you would find it convenient to see that fairer and more reasonable practices are followed in the future. We hope you will take an interest and aid us in our problem. For rather obvious reasons ... I am not able to sign my name, but I think this will suffice. Very truly yours, a group of students who feels that the administration of this great university is concerned enough about this student body to see that unjust examining practices will be prevented. Thank you very much." Well, I responded to Dean (Durand?), and, also, a copy to President Gross, saying, "I have seen a copy of this anonymous letter sent to you, and a copy to President Gross, by a group of students from my mineral resources class in which charges were made regarding the fairness of the first hour exam. I was surprised that recourse to this procedure was taken, in as much as the students have been told I'm always available to discuss problems with them and several have been in to see me from time to time. In this note, I will not attempt to defend my position, except to say that I think the exam was an excellent one

and I would eagerly welcome an investigation or inquiry into this matter and perhaps the entire problem of the standards we should maintain in our coursework. I should, however, point out several incorrect statements made in the anonymous letter. The exam did not contain six long essay questions as charged. Of six, two were essay questions, and the class average was not fifty, but sixty. Sincerely," and a copy of the exam is provided, and [here is] a letter from President Gross, "Dear Professor Agron, thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Dean Durand. I sent the note on to Dean Woodward," (he was the Dean of the College) "purely and simply for his information. I am sure that you realize that we all have the highest confidence in you. Furthermore, I'm reasonably convinced that the writer of the letter doesn't represent any considerable body of students and possibly only himself. I would therefore pay very little attention to it. Yours very sincerely, Mason Gross." So, you get these experiences, also. [laughter] A student does not come to you, ... and it's a poorly written letter. It's good to feel that the President has confidence in you. ... I have a letter here, incidentally, from President Gross, appointing me to the University Research Council.

SI: What did you do on the Research Council?

SA: Just what that says, what our duties were. We met several times to discuss those policies.

SI: Was this kind of interdisciplinary approach new? You were trying to get all of the disciplines to collaborate, if I read this correctly.

SA: It was new to my knowledge, but I don't know what the history might have been before my service on it.

SI: In your experience, though, it had not really been attempted.

SA: Not that I was aware of, not that I was aware of.

SI: How did that work out?

SA: Well, I suppose the Council gave some suggestions to the President that were of use to him. I was once appointed by; let's see, that was one of the later presidents. ...

SI: Bloustein?

SA: Bloustein, to a, oh, there must have been about an eight-member council from the different colleges of the University to meet with him in his home and discuss ... what we think the university's sports policy should be, whether they should try for, you know, big-time football, and so on. It was discussed for several hours, and then, it shed some light on it for him. He appreciated the input, the insights that we might have offered. Some of us were very enthusiastic about the role of sports and budgetary commitments to it. Others didn't think sports deserve that kind of priority, and this was discussed for several hours. So, chances like that to be of some help came along from time to time.

SI: Were you involved in any other committees or boards at the University during your career?

SA: Yes. I served on, the earliest one I can remember, when we were in the old campus, the Safety Committee. In fact, I organized it. ... It consisted of several faculty people and the head of the Buildings and Grounds and the Physical Plant. ... Having been in ship construction myself and having been in the Navy, where I had to make frequent inspections of safety conditions, fire hazards and egress and ... movement about and so on, I thought we should have that awareness in our facility, ... a five-story building, and several others; the pharmacy building ... the law school building and the College of Business Administration and so on. So, I organized that committee and chaired it for several years. We ... made monthly inspections, getting around to the different buildings ... over several months and we noted ... safety hazards, fire hazards, traffic difficulties. ... Copies of our report were sent to the administration and they would follow up and make repairs. Some rooms on a high floor, for example, had only a single door, like a lecture hall, just one, single egress, and, in case of fire, the stairway would be incapable of ... emptying the room in ... sufficient time. [The] central stairway was like a chimney that could conduct hot gas and smoke right up to the classrooms and labs above. In a secretary's office, in ... perhaps the law school, we found that, in a side drawer of her desk, she kept an electric coffee mug that she ... used to prepare her coffee at lunch and ... there were papers and ... other combustibles in the drawer. ... The problem was the thing, the coffee mug, was plugged into the ... electric socket all the time. Now, if ... there had been a short circuit ... it ... could start a fire. ... These are ... some examples of the things we were asked to concern ourselves with and, I think, it served a good purpose; to making the place [safer]. They even ... put in some fire escapes, because we pointed out the [problem]. They got the city fire department to come in and, sure enough, they said, "This is awful." So, that was one useful committee. I also served on the Admissions Committee, worked together with Admissions Office people, helped set policy and make various decisions, recommendations. I served on the Curriculum Committee, which has a lot of input. ... All new courses that are proposed, have to come up before this committee and be presented by the sponsoring department or professor and justified and all things have to be in balance with ... the program in general. The requirements for different majors have to go through this committee. I sat on the Appointments and Promotions Committee, where you would consider every person put up by his chairman for tenure, promotion, ... reappointment or new hires, and we'd have to read everything they supplied us with and discuss it and interview the chairperson, and then, render decisions. Sometimes, it was difficult and I was very troubled. ... One such decision I had to make ... involved an older woman, a single woman, who was retiring after a career in the college and she was going to move to Virginia, I think. ... She was retiring as an associate professor. Her chairman put her up for promotion to full professor in her last year, so that she would retire at a higher salary or higher pension. Well, that's laudable, but ... the only thing that she submitted as to her publications was ... a soft-cover manual, lab manual ... that she had written. ... I had nothing ... against helping a devoted and good teacher at the end of her career, but, when we are presented with a quota as to how many full professors would be permitted to be appointed the next year, and there were some who had produced so much more, it would not be fair, just to make it more convenient for her or better for her, if it meant depriving ... more worthy people of what they had justly earned. ... It would be almost arbitrarily depriving them. So, I remember, I opposed it. Although I was fond of her as a person, I respected her; ... but in fairness, I felt it shouldn't be done. Well, of course, word gets out and she was very disappointed in me, but I had to do what I felt was right. ... It was painful to me, but I had to do it. So, that's the

Appointments and Promotions Committee. Then, [I was] on the Review Committee, where all kinds of disputes come up for settlement, appeals of various kinds, and we even had a very drawn-out series of meetings that were very difficult for us, where the Dean of the College was brought up on charges, and it was not the one that I referred to before, another one. ... I won't ... go into them, they were ... bad, and he was ... removed from the deanship. ... Sometimes, you have to deal with cases that may be perceived as having been unjustly decided ... yet we have to do what's right. Once, there was a salary merit bonus declared; some years, or over a stretch of years ... the University's ... budget ... may not permit faculty salary increases. ... One year, the best the administration could do was to offer each college a certain sum of money and the college was to distribute that to the most worthy faculty members. ... It would end up so that each department would ... have several thousand dollars ... to be given to one member that the department nominated. ... They decided ... in my college ... that the merit awards would be made by a committee ... of four faculty, two elected by the faculty and two appointed by the Dean. ... The two were elected, and then, the Dean appointed me as one of the other two. ... I told him, "I don't choose to serve." ... He asked, "Why?" I replied, "Well, I don't think this can be decided fairly; if you just chose one in each department, there'll be a lot of injustice done." He said, "That's why I want you to serve on the committee." [laughter] So, he was a pretty good man. I think that was (Henry Blumenthal?). I did my service on it. There were four members of the committee. ... Three were department chairmen; two ... nominated themselves for the bonus. When we sat down, I said, "Let's make some ground rules here, that none of us ... be considered for the bonus, no member of the committee." They wouldn't go along with that. So, what do you do? [laughter] I didn't ... nominate myself for my department. It wouldn't be right. ... I was also on the University Science Council, which was a University-wide committee for several years, and I was a member of the Geology Section, which is University-wide. ... Mostly, they're concerned with personnel problems, promotions, appointments and things of that sort. ... I mentioned the advisory committee to President Bloustein. [There are] probably a few other, minor ones that I haven't thought of. ... Some of these committees take an awful lot of time. ... The Committee on Review ... even had to ... meet during the summer, sometimes for the better part of a day, and several meetings during the week. ... There was a lot going on outside of the classroom that students weren't aware of. ... One of your responsibilities as a college faculty ... member was to give occasional lectures outside of your class work, outside of your classroom. ... The college and the University considers this a public service that is probably good for the reputation of the University, to get out into the community. Among the projects I ... set up was a lecture series ... called the Herbert P. Woodward Lecture series. It was named after he was deceased.

SI: Which year was this?

SA: You know, it was probably in the ... mid-'70s. ... I was really pleased ... to put together such a fine ... series and have it ... open to the public. ... The series was on the environment, on energy, on mineral and water resources, things that today are increasingly appreciated ... for their importance. I ... invited ... speakers from the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory, ... from the University of Newcastle in England, the City University of New York. I had an environmental journalist from ... the daily paper in Newark, and others from the petroleum and other industries. ... In my second year ... here, ... in the fall of '52, the Dean got a ... request from the Montclair Adult School ... for one of his faculty ... to give a course ... consisting of ten

weekly, one-hour lectures ... on the geology of New Jersey. I was rather new to New Jersey and, now, I had to prepare ... ten lectures ... on the geology of the state, at short notice. ... Well, ... the lectures were in the evening; ... they began about eight PM. So, by the time I was out of there, it ... was about nine-thirty, because they ... kept me with questions and so on. ... I got the princely sum of ten dollars per lecture, but that wasn't the ... reason why I had gone there. [laughter] I remember, one night, it had been snowing very heavily and I had to drive back to Millburn, in the South Mountain area, and the car kept skidding off the road. ... People don't realize that, sometimes, the speaker has to ... make quite an effort to produce something. ... At the end of the course, they asked ... if I would give a second semester. [laughter] ... But I really couldn't. ... I had so much to do in the department, a one-man department. ... The Dean said, "This is good PR ... for the college and I appreciate ... your doing it." The Old Guard of Millburn, ... a group of retired gentlemen ... that meets at a monthly ... luncheon, ... invited me to speak, give an address. ... Again, it's PR. They enjoyed it very much. ... I remember, the Phi Beta Kappa Society invited me to be their speaker at the installation luncheon ... they have every year for new members. ... It was given in the new campus here, very fine facilities, and the inductees and their parents ... attended. ... I thought, "... It's a bit odd, ironic perhaps, that I should be invited to give this lecture ... when at Johns Hopkins, I ... had not ... been nominated into Phi Beta Kappa." The system ... was that each department, graduate department, was allowed to nominate two. ... You would think they would nominate the two ... students with the highest grade averages. It so happened I had the second highest, but they jumped over me and gave it to the first highest and the ... third one, because, they said, the first and I both were in similar fields, what they called hard rock geology, whereas the third person ... was in soft rock geology. It deals with softer sediments and fossils and things of that sort. So, that would represent the different branches of geology, but, that might have been a rationalization or something, you know. Anyway, now I ... was invited to address the group. ... It's somewhat of an honor. ... I spoke to them on "the real world," ... what is the real world? We use that expression ... frequently. I pointed out ... that the real world is different to different people. "The real world to a college student is different from the real world of a soldier or a sailor in the military, it's different from the real world of a farmer or a fisherman out on the sea or a person working in a factory or a homemaker. The world ... they cope with is the real world to them. What is the real world then?" I tried to get down to the basis that underlies all of this. "Well, I guess the real world is the world we depend on for sustenance, what we live on, and without which we couldn't exist. It is what we ... grow from the Earth and what we ... extract from the Earth, its ... resources ... including fuels and ... the textiles ... made from petroleum, and the medicines." ... It was a pretty good ... occasion, evidently appreciated. ... They had never ... thought of "the real world" in quite that way before. So, that was worthwhile. ... In 1969, the Geological Society of America ... held its annual meeting ... in Atlantic City. They meet in a different city each year, all over the country, and the geology departments of the ... local universities ... and colleges organize the meetings. ... Committees ... are set up to host and arrange everything for the ... three-day convention. ... Rutgers participated (New Brunswick as well as ... Newark) and Princeton University and University of Pennsylvania and ... Columbia University ... and others including people from industry and government agencies. ... We put this thing together and ... people were asked to serve on ... committees. ... I was ... the chairman of the Program Committee. ... We held the convention in two large hotels. ... I had to arrange for all of the meeting rooms for ... the sessions. ... Half a dozen or more sessions could be going on at the same time. ... I had to see that ... each session ... had the necessary

equipment, slide projectors, screens, pointers, ... flashlights, ... microphones. ... I had to recruit graduate students or geology majors from the different colleges ... to be available ... as runners to convey messages, ... operate the projectors ... or serve at desks ... or at other miscellaneous duties that had to be done over a period of ... three days, with morning, afternoon and some evening sessions. ... There was a lot going on ... with all kinds of work schedules and routines. ... I not only had to recruit these people ... individually ... but also had to ... arrange for their housing, ... their meal chits, and so on. ... It took a lot of time. Now, the most outstanding ... event was... to be the guest speaker at the annual dinner ... on the first evening of the convention. He was Neil Armstrong, who had ... some two weeks earlier, returned from the moon, and this was his first public engagement. ... He was to be driven in a government limo from Washington to Atlantic City. ... There were ... many hush-hush government people, NASA people, around and my instructions were, "A room at the hotel was being reserved for him. ... When his party arrives, he is to be taken immediately to ... his room ... to rest ... and get ready for the evening's presentation." ... I ... had to schedule two students to room-sit there until he would arrive. ... They ... were not to answer the phone ... or let anybody in ... until the party arrived, and, as soon as ... Neil Armstrong's party is identified and comes in, they are to leave, say good-bye and leave. ... Well, this was an unusual and confidential event. So, I assigned two of my senior geology majors, two girls. I thought this would be a good assignment for them; [to] room-sit for a couple of hours ... waiting for Armstrong to arrive and ... when he arrives, just say "Hello" and "Good-bye." ... "Don't breathe a word of this to anybody. Nobody must know this," ... I said, "Someday ... you will tell your grandchildren about this event that you are to participate in." [laughter] Now, they've probably already been in that position. [laughter] Neil Armstrong and his party arrived and ... they didn't want anybody disturbing him. He had to get his rest after driving up from Washington, and get ready for the speech. Later, before ... the party went into ... the banquet hall, behind the scene, the organizing committee stood in ... a reception line ... to meet the honored guest. Armstrong, with his attendants, walked along and we had the honor of shaking his hand as each of us ... was introduced. But I got a little jump on them. At that time, the government had issued a postcard ... with the stamp ... showing Neil Armstrong stepping off the ladder onto the moon's surface. Do you remember, he said, "One [small] step for man..." So, as we were introduced, I pulled ... out the postcard and ... asked, "Mr. Armstrong, would you be good enough to ... autograph this for me?" ... He said, "Sure," he did and I have it. ... I'm really delighted with it. It may ... have been the only time I asked for an autograph. ... That committee assignment required a lot of work, almost a year of preparation went into it, and even afterwards ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Can you repeat the name of the meeting?

SA: Yes... It was the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1969. Yes. ... I will now give another example of the extracurricular activities that we participated in. ... Our Geology Department was invited to host the Fifty-Second Annual Meeting of the New York State Geological Association, and this was to be the first time that the association met outside of New York State. So, it was something we were rather pleased about. ... Many academic geologists ... as well as from industry and engineers, attended our meetings. ... We met ... over a weekend and there were field trips during the day. ... I was

asked to prepare and lead one of these trips. They ... are all ... published in a volume for the meeting. ... My trip was "The Environmental Geology of the Hackensack Meadowlands." ... I had to go ... through the area several times and read everything I could put my hands on. The Meadowlands were beginning to be developed then and they were building the sports arena and other structures, housing, other uses of the land and so on. ... I went to the major construction companies, spoke to their engineers ... and ... to the engineers onsite. ... They were very cooperative. They gave me drill, boring data and blueprints and a lot of subsurface geological information. ... Then, I put together the field trip and we had a bus load of geologists and engineers ... who found ... it very worthwhile, very informative. So, this was a contribution to the academic and engineering communities that our department made.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: We ran, for several years, an in-service institute (sponsored by the National Science Foundation) ... in earth sciences and I think it was run at least three years. ... Here is the booklet of all the institutes in the United States that the National Science Foundation sponsors and, on page seventeen ... you have the one at Rutgers-Newark. ... It was a year's course (two semesters) ... for mostly high school teachers; occasionally, we'd get a junior college teacher, maybe even a higher level science teacher from the eighth grade. ... They would take what is essentially our general geology course, the introductory course, physical geology the first semester, historical the second. Many of these teachers were teaching earth science ... yet they'd never studied it themselves. ... Some of them had a very weak background and wanted to be updated and so on. So, the National Science Foundation felt ... such programs ... helped ... upgrade teaching in the United States. ... Each teacher was awarded a scholarship ... and we had forty of them. ... Quite a few applied, but we could only ... accept forty. ... They were paid a stipend ... for their transportation, ... books were supplied, and tuition was paid for, [and] so on. Some of them came from as far away as Long Island and even Pennsylvania, and many places here in New Jersey, nearer New York. One evening a week, for three hours, they had lecture, the other evening [during that] week ... they did laboratory ... work, and it was greatly appreciated. ... We felt that what we did for them then trickled down to the students, and so, earth sciences taught in the high schools would benefit. ... Several of ... our faculty people participated ... and I was the director of the program for ... several years. ... When ... they completed the course ... they were awarded a certificate. ... Some of these students were able to use the college credit they got for this course as graduate credit in a program that they took for a master's degree in education elsewhere. ... All together, it was worthwhile. ... I have a few little anecdotes, may or may not be humorous. These things may stay in one's mind for years. In a class I taught in historical geology ... on the final exam, I had a question on evolution. There were several essay questions in this three-hour exam, and there was one on evolution. ... One student in the class ... sat ... with a deadpan face the entire semester in the middle of the room. I can still picture him ... staring ahead, never any expression on his face, never, hardly a blink of an eye. ... Well, I almost felt it was painful for him to ... listen to this stuff that I was teaching. ... On the final exam ... there was a question on evolution. He wrote the correct answer and I gave him credit for it. ... In his final paragraph he said, "I have written the answer that you expect on evolution; however, I don't believe a word of it." He said, "I belong to the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and my church teaches that evolution is wrong and I don't accept it." Well, what do you do? Do you give him credit, do you flunk him for that, or what? I decided, "I

am not there to test his religious beliefs. That's none of my business. He gave me the answer to the question, and so, I will give him full credit," which I did. A couple of years later, the geology faculties from surrounding area colleges ... had an annual meeting at Franklin & Marshall College and we discussed just this problem. "How do you teach evolution in your historical geology class and what if the student refuses to accept what you teach?" Some people said, "Well, you know, that's his concern, it's not your concern. You just teach it." I remember this chap, ... Larry Withcomb, from Lehigh University, he's passed on since, a very respected guy, he said, "I would flunk him," and I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, I am teaching a science course. In science, we learn to examine evidence critically. We learn to test the evidence if we can and ... if a certain theory is supported by the evidence, then, I must accept it, if I am a scientist. If I still refuse, if I have a closed mind, I haven't learned a thing from science. I have failed. So, I think that ... a student, who would not accept this after having been given the evidence, has failed the science course." Well ... there's an honest difference of opinion, but, you know, I didn't see that as being ... of sufficient importance in the student's life, to be dogmatic, harsh about it. ... Another memorable experience was in the spring term ... at the end of the year. This was a historical geology class, again, and a black woman came into my office and I think she had already taken her final exam and she was quite distraught. I was her lecture instructor, also the department chairman. ... She was a working mother, ... had two daughters ... in high school, and she was majoring in sociology. ... Her plan was to be a social worker and she had a job lined up in Newark already, and goodness knows there was a need for that kind of help in Newark. ...

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

SA: I was going to give her a 'D.' ... I couldn't do better than that. ... She would have been glad with that, but she said her ... laboratory instructor told her she was going to fail her lab work. ... Lecture counted for ... two-thirds of the grade, lab one-third; you had to pass both parts, and she said that she was only failing lab by about one point. ... She said, "That means I won't graduate. I won't have my degree. I won't have the job ... and I have all this responsibility at home. Can you please help me?" I spoke to the chap, who was one of those difficult people that I alluded to, explained the situation and ... asked, "Can you see your way to raising her grade by one point, just for the lab work ... then, she would pass?" Well, he was angry with me for daring to interfere with his grading. I tried to get him to see what this means in human terms, and he reluctantly raised it one point. You can't ... grade ... some exams to within a point. Any reasonable person knows that, but some people are so rigid, so inflexible. Although he did it, ... he never really forgave me for interfering. As chairman, I thought I ... was right to request that and [especially] since I was also her lecture instructor. A year later, she came to the office and visited me and was so happy. She had been doing social work for a year now. Her daughter was graduating high school and had applied for college. She was now supporting her family and, next fall ... was going to enroll in the graduate school for ... a master's degree in social work. Now, here's where you see [that] you can do something for people that will better their lives, to help them, yet some people are so darned hidebound that they feel it's more important ... to stick to almost arbitrary, stupid rules than to help a person. ... My son once visited me and while in the office ... [there was] a knock on the door and an attractive student came in. ... This was in early January. The semester didn't end until about ten days into January, at that time. ... There were a few days of classes, and then, the final exams after the Christmas break. ... The young

lady was in my class. ... She had spent the Christmas vacation in Florida and she said, "I have something for you that I bought." ... I said, ... "But I cannot accept it." "Please, open it, open it," she urged. Meanwhile, Larry was smart enough to retreat to the rear part, behind bookcases, [laughter] so [that] he was out of sight. ... [I] opened the ribbon-tied ... box and in it was ... a carved elephant, ... white tusks and ... carved of black, ebony wood. ... She said, "I bought that for you." So, I said, "I don't accept any gifts," ... explaining, "Look, you've got a final exam coming up in two weeks. I have to grade you. I don't want any influences outside of what you produce on the exams to affect your grade." "Oh," she ... pleaded, "please," and ... acted as if she was heartbroken. What do you do? You've got to think fast. [laughter] I said, "Tell you what," (I didn't want to upset her further) ... "Take this back, do the best you can on your final exam, and, a year from now, if you still want to give it to me, come visit me and I'll consider taking it a year from now." ... She accepted that and walked out. Of course, she never did come back a year ... later. So, you've got to be careful about little bribes or ... such. I'm glad I didn't accept that one. There was an episode in class when we ... had been having difficulties with ... riots in Newark, ... sit-ins and the takeover of buildings and so on, and I might refer to that further, but, ... this ... incident occurred in a lecture class ... when I ... returned the graded exams. ... My procedure was ... to return the exam and go over it in class, particularly the essay type questions, so ... they could see what ... their answers lacked. ... They ... were given ... an opportunity to raise questions, so that everything was understood and they could learn from it. ... One student in the class, ... the president of the BOS [Black Organization of Students] on campus, [was] a handsome guy, but a little bit of a smart aleck, and he would raise his hand and ask a silly question. ... I tried to answer the first one and ... he'd ask another ... and I said, "I don't think that relates to the question." ... He tried a third time and, again, it was completely irrelevant. So, I said, "You know, I don't think your question is of interest to the class, so, if you'd like to see me in my office, I'll be glad to go over your exam with you, question by question." ... He replied, in a very sassy way, "Well, I don't want to see you in your office," just like that. [laughter] ... Some [students] were feeling their oats at that time and ... others gasped. ... What do you say? ... I leaned forward on the lectern and ... replied, "Well, I don't want to see you, either, but, if you show up, I'll talk to you," [laughter] and resumed. ... I suppose that's the best way to handle it. Similarly, ... other situations may require you to think and respond fast. After twenty years as chairman, I thought, "It's time for somebody else to take over; ... they're big boys now ... and can handle it themselves." So, I ... announced that I would not be the chairman the following year ... at the next departmental meeting, held in our conference room at a long table with chairs [on] either side and at the ends. ... Conducting departmental meetings, I ... would sit at the end of the table and [had the] staff along the sides. Well, as this was the last meeting that I was going to conduct as chairman ... I thought I should ... acclimatize myself. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: At this last meeting that I was conducting as chairman, I thought it would be nice if I didn't sit at the ... end of the table ... so I took ... the first seat on the side. ... When we sat down, this former dean, [William] Gilleland, ... looked at me and said, sarcastically, "Oh, why aren't you sitting at the head of the table?" ... Sometimes, if you don't think about the response, you do better; I said, "Wherever I sit, that is the head of the table." [laughter] His jaw dropped. So, that was a nice way to go out. [laughter] There was an occasion when one person who ... after being

hired years earlier turned sour about a lot of things, ... yet came up for promotion to full professor. ... I wrote ... to his ... references. ... One of them was ... the candidate's friend and worked in the same field. ... I asked ... if he would write ... a letter of reference. ... Our candidate ... assumed that his friend ... would write ... a very strong letter, of course. Well, he wrote ... back, "You may wish to make him a full professor in your department, but he wouldn't make it in our department." [laughter] Well, what a letter of recommendation; I could never tell this chap that his ... good friend wrote that kind of letter for him. ... He was promoted, but he was unappreciative of ... efforts ... made in his behalf and thought that his promotion should have come sooner, resented that. Well, you have ... such things to contend with. I had a man that I wanted promoted very much, because I thought he was excellent, and he ... eventually did get the promotion, ... but every obstacle was put in his path by two people in my department, and they got the section to go along with them. Before ... going to New Brunswick for the section meeting where this was going to be discussed, I went to my dean and ... said, "Since I have to go to the section ... and ... deal with the opposition that I'll expect there, it would help me to know where you stand on this. Are you behind me on this? Do you support him or not?" ... He said, "Well, I want to keep all of this very confidential, and so, I would feel that it's better if you went down there not knowing my position, so [that] you wouldn't make your presentation slanted one way or the other, but I wish you the greatest success in your effort," and shook my hand vigorously, ... big smile on his face. ... At the section meeting they circulated my dean's letter, which they shouldn't have, ... stating his opposition to ... my candidate, but ... he ... didn't have the decency to be honest with me, when I had the formidable responsibility to go down there and handle all of this. So, he deceived me. ... These were among the things you've got to deal with frequently. ... I ... speak because I was so irritated with this experience ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: This chap had gotten his PhD in New Brunswick. He tackled a thesis problem in ... an area of the Appalachian Mountains that was very difficult to work out and Dean Woodward himself, who was a specialist in that ... area of geology, said, "You know, if you gave me that problem to do research in and gave me as much time as I wanted, ... I wouldn't do it. It's so difficult." ... Yet, this man succeeded and he did a fine piece of work ... which was published, and so on. ... When we got down to the section, this Gilleland, again said that, ... "His dissertation was so bad, it ... probably wasn't even refereed." So, I ... asked, "Do you know that for a fact?" He ... said, "No, I don't know it for a fact." So, I said, "You say it was so bad ... what was the title of the dissertation?" He didn't know. I ... asked, "Where was the work done, in what area?" He didn't know. But, you see the phoniness, and you've got to hold their feet to the fire, and then, the other one would say many bad things about the candidate. He said, "Now, if these things are true, and I'm not saying they are, then, he is completely unfit." [laughter] "If they are true and I'm not saying they are." ... How ... can serious men listen to that kind of argument? It's so disingenuous, you see, and so unfair, and this is the kind of deliberations that take place, or took place, at least in my experience, at times. ... Gilleland said, "He can never complete a paper, but, when he does complete a paper and submits it for publication, it's turned down." So, I asked, "Cite one instance in which he submitted a paper for publication and it was turned down." He couldn't. You see, it's McCarthyism. You make your big lie, you hit, and then, you run from it and [you are] hoping that something sticks. He said, "He's a terrible teacher. In all the years, we've never heard one good thing said about his teaching, but we've heard many bad comments

from the students." Come on, you know, and this is what you've got to work with. ... People felt very strongly about this and they were able to convince the section ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SA: Kind of a chuckle here; Dean Woodward called me into his office and I was up for promotion ... to full professor. ... He said [that] he wished to read me the letter of reference he had received from Dr. Ernst Cloos, who ... had been my thesis advisor at Johns Hopkins. He was chairman of the department. He was State Geologist of Maryland, past president of the Geological Society of America, member [of the] National Academy of Science, ... quite a figure. ... Woodward said, "I've never done this before, but I want to read you a sentence from Dr. Cloos' letter of recommendation. He says, 'Dr. Agron is a lovable person, [laughter] among other things.'" He ... concluded, "I've never seen that in a letter of reference from anybody." I didn't know whether to be embarrassed or what, but ... you feel it's quite an honor to have some people make remarks like that about you. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You were going to tell us about constructing the new building.

SA: Yes. Perhaps I should give you just a little, brief background, some repetitious [information] here, about the Newark colleges. The main building, at that time, was at 40 Rector Street, which is now about one block [from] or practically adjacent to, the new cultural arts center and theater and concert hall that they have in Newark, and that whole area is being beautifully redeveloped. ... That building, ... before World War I, was a brewery, a five-story brick, red brick building, and it was converted then, I guess in the '30s. It had about fifty thousand square feet. There was also a School of Business building on Washington Park. They had the law school on Washington Park. There was a College of Pharmacy in Newark; ... it was later moved to New Brunswick. ... In the 1920s or so, there was Dana College, ... Dana Library is named after him, in Newark. ... He founded the Newark Public Library, incidentally. ... There was the [Mercer] Beasley School of Law and they all merged to form the University of Newark, I think in the 1930s. Now, after World War II, I'd say in the late '40s, they became part of Rutgers University, and Camden came along later, of course. ... I arrived in 1951 and we proceeded to build and grow the department and the college. My early years there were very challenging. ... Dean Herbert Woodward, when he hired me ... said, "It's up to you as to whether you can build the department and make something of it. That's entirely in your hands," and I welcomed the challenge. The early years ... involved a lot of hard work. We had to build collections of minerals and rocks and fossils and maps and equipment. We had small collections and Woodward did his best to build them over the years and a few other people contributed a little bit, but not ... as much as we would like to have in a geology department. ... In those days ... we didn't even have a petrographic microscope. ... Then, in the early '60s, I would say, we began to discuss a new campus for the Newark colleges and I think a state bond issue was floated and a small amount, ... five million dollars or something like that, was given to Newark, ... seed money, you might say. There was a debate as to where to locate this school. Some people said, "Put it out in the suburbs, have a nice campus, or maybe in the northwest part of Essex County," but Herb Woodward and others felt that Newark is an urban center, located in the most densely

populated part of the state, and it should serve this population and that it is ... a hub of transportation. You can get into Newark easily from all directions ... and also from New York, so [that] you can attract people. ... So, he favored ... staying in the city. The land was acquired and they began to clear it of the old structures that were there and I can still remember, after they had removed the buildings, we had kind of a ground breaking ceremony ... and were standing in this big excavation, with the power shovels ... and officials, including the Mayor of Newark. ... [Hugh] Addonizio, the [then] mayor, made a little speech. ... Well, a few years later ... he was elected to Congress and ... later, he went to jail. [laughter] So, these are the politicians you've got to work with. ... I was responsible for working with the architects to plan the Geology Department facilities. We were to have a science building, a humanities building ... and a library and, later, a law school building. ... Over time, more buildings ... were erected. Ours was the first science building; four stories. ... Biology [occupied] ... two [floors], ... chemistry one, and then, geology was on the fourth floor. ... I had to tell the architects exactly what our needs were, ... plan the blueprints with them, ... help design ... the lecture rooms, ... classrooms, ... labs, ... offices, ... storage and work rooms for the collections of minerals and fossils, rocks, maps, the dark room, and display areas. ... On the roof, I planned to have an observatory and a planetarium, as we ... had been giving the astronomy course for a number of years by then. ... On clear nights, we held astronomical observations ... from the roof of the old building on Rector Street. ... We did as well as we could in the city area. Now, a certain sum of travel money was set aside for the several department chairmen who had to do the planning for their facilities. ... We needed to see ... how new construction had been done at other universities and benefit from their experience ... rather than make mistakes of our own. ... Dr. John Keosian, who was ... the director of our natural science division ... (like a super-department ... embracing geology, physics, chemistry, and biology) ... told me how much I ... would have ... for travel. ... I visited three campuses where I knew ... they had ... recently completed new ... construction. I first went to Franklin & Marshall, then on to Indiana University and ... Northwestern University. ... I traveled by bus to economize and ... keep my costs down. ... I got very valuable information, the people were most helpful ... and I adapted what I had seen to our own needs. ... At Indiana, they had just built a five-story geology building with the State Geological Survey in it, and so on. Well, I was never reimbursed. ... Keosian used the money. ... He ... went to look into ... biology facilities construction ... in San Diego and stayed there quite a while. ... There was no money left to pay anybody else. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Can you tell us where you were and how you reacted to the Newark riots in 1967?

SA: I suppose I was at my job. [laughter] The riots shocked everybody. It disrupted classes for a while and I had to change my commutation route from my home in Millburn to avoid driving down Springfield Avenue. Some people probably were inclined to grant the rioters most of their requests or wishes. Others were very hostile and resentful and they didn't feel that they personally bore responsibility for the problems. Some of us were outraged when ... some students ... stormed into the provost's ... office and their leader stood ... on the desk of the provost and made ... demands of the university. ... This ... got a lot of press. I think the provost, Malcom Talbot, handled everything pretty calmly and, in the long run, I suppose his actions were for the best. ... I can talk about more desperate protests that I have been aware of.

... As a ... freshman or sophomore at Brooklyn College (about 1938) ... I saw rallies supporting the legal government of Spain. ... The fascist Franco fought ... and destroyed them, with the aid of Hitler and Mussolini. ... There were demonstrations on campuses then and I ... remember ... poignantly ... an American, young man ... in his twenties ... on the podium, speaking to the students in the quadrangle. ... He had come back from fighting in the Lincoln Brigade in Spain, ... blinded in the war there. ... I felt very sorry for the poor guy. ... I also remember plenty of unrest during the days of the Bonus Marchers in Washington. These ... World War I veterans were desperate. ... During the Great Depression they were starving, ... homeless, and they came down there. They wanted the bonuses that were promised to them, but they ... needed them ... sooner. I suppose ... they had no other means to survive and [General] MacArthur had the troops fire on them. This was disgraceful. So, those are things, I remember very well. The hard times of the Depression, a great struggle, that people today don't ... understand. There ... was no welfare system, no safety net, nothing to catch you if you fell. ... [If] you couldn't pay your rent, you were put out on the street with ... your possessions. ... You had to figure out how you were going to extricate yourself from that. So ... I think ... the riots in Newark were a tragic event that should not have happened, but will go down in history as a minor tragedy of the twentieth century.

SI: Is there any other aspect of your career at Rutgers that you would like to discuss?

SA: ... [My academic career began at Brown University in 1949, as the first half of the twentieth century was coming to a close. Then, I taught at Rutgers for thirty-three years, until retiring as a professor *emeritus* of geology in 1984. Now, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, our perspective on problems facing the world has changed. Of primary concern are sources of energy and minerals, the environment, climate change, the space program. In addition to having taught the traditional courses of the geology curriculum, I have, over the years, introduced courses in astronomy, mineral resources, fuels and energy, and environmental geology.] I feel very fulfilled. I feel that I gave it all I had, really, even to the extent at times, of neglecting my family; ... even summers, working, working, working, complete dedication. ... I feel an inner sense of great satisfaction and reward in knowing that I've done something to help many people improve their lot, and the little contribution that I've made to science, well, that's good; ... I have about ... twelve publications, but I think I made a difference for a lot of people.

SI: Do you still keep in contact with some of your students?

SA: Occasionally, yes, occasionally, yes. I haven't really been back more than a couple of times to the department in Newark. ... There's no big gap in my life. ... [laughter] ... I mean, I did my share, I made my contribution. If I can, I hope to do some more, from time to time. ... In the military and elsewhere I also did my share for society before I came to Rutgers and before I started teaching. So, I feel, in many ways, fulfilled. ... Teaching is the noblest profession, if done honestly and right, because, without it, where would we be and, if it's done badly, where are we? [laughter] ...

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

SA: ... You know, the wheels have slowed down during this long day and I'm afraid I'm not as productive as I might have been three or four hours ago, as far as recollecting things and so on.

SI: If there is anything else, you can add it to the transcripts.

SA: I hope this is worthwhile, and worthwhile for the Archives, and I'll try to be of assistance along the way here, shortly, yes.

SI: We appreciate it. Thank you very much for having us here for these three sessions.

TS: Thank you very much.

SA: ... It was my pleasure. I wish the University well, its students, its faculty and the whole State of New Jersey. I'm grateful for the opportunity that I was given in my life to do what I have done. I'm really pleased and fulfilled.

SI: Okay. That is a great note to end on.

SA: Thank you, thank you.

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Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/22/06  
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