

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT E. GAYNOR

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Judge Robert E. Gaynor on July 29, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. First of all, we would like to thank you for coming down on such a hot day to sit for this interview. To start, could you tell us when and where you were born, and then, a little bit about your father?

Robert Gaynor: Well, I was born on August 10, 1918, in Brooklyn, New York, and, according to my family, we lived there for about a year after that time, and then moved to Hackensack, New Jersey, where I grew up and, ultimately, entered Rutgers University from there. My father was John F. Gaynor. He was a telegrapher in Wall Street and, as such, he was an essential part of the stock brokerage operation, because, at that time, there were no computers and ... the conveyance of information from New York to Chicago and all other places in the country was done by telegraphy, Morse code. So, he worked there and, of course, went through the Depression, which hit Wall Street in 1929, and it was pretty hard for him and for us during that period of time, but, by being a telegrapher, a special occupation, he was able to obtain part-time jobs ... for different brokerage houses and, one time, we spent about six months in Florida because he ... got a job down there. So, it was a tough time, but there were a lot of other people who had worse periods of time than we did. He finally retired and moved south, but I still have, as a memento of his occupation, his little key, I guess you called it, that he used to transport the Morse code, dots and dashes.

SH: Did he ever tell you how he learned that skill?

RG: No. He never did say, although, you know, when he was growing up, why, Wall Street must have been ... quite an attraction for young men to get a job. ... My uncles were in Wall Street also, and so, I guess that was one place where they went to get a job. ...

SH: Had his father been involved with Wall Street at all?

RG: Not that I know of. Unfortunately, you know, when you look back at this time and think about, "Well, ... what kind of a family did we come from?" and so on, but we never did ask questions about that and he never did tell us about that. Now, we're trying to resurrect those things and it's impossible to do it and I don't remember that my mother ever mentioned about working any time or at any place.

SH: Where was she born and raised?

RG: In New York City. They were both born and raised in New York City. ... Her mother's maiden name was McLean, M-C-L-E-A-N, and my wife's mother's maiden name was MacLean, M-A-C-L-E-A-N, and I mention that because we've just come back from a trip to Scotland where we joined several hundred other people who were MacLeans in a gathering of the clan. It was something that my daughter learned from her surfing on the Internet a couple of years ago and she organized the whole trip and we were over there trying to resurrect where all our ancestors came from. ... Unfortunately, I don't know very much about my father and mother's family, other than their immediate sisters and brothers. ...

SH: Do you know if any of the family came from Scotland?

RG: No, no. I always assumed that we were Irish, [laughter] but ... getting into this genealogy and, with respect to the Clan MacLean, we found out that those people, the Scots people, immigrated all over the place. So, it's possible that we were originally Scottish.

SH: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

RG: Oh, yes. I had one brother and one sister.

SH: Older or younger?

RG: Brother was older and sister was one year younger. Unfortunately, they are both deceased. My brother, ... he didn't go to Rutgers; he went to Penn State and was an engineer and, during the war, was in the submarine service. ...

SH: Was he in the Pacific or the Atlantic?

RG: Well, I really don't know, but I think it was Pacific, because he was stationed, most of the time, out in California, so, he seemed to be [in] the Pacific.

SH: What was it like to grow up in Hackensack, New Jersey?

RG: How was it? Well, I seemed to have had a good time there. We went to parochial school for the elementary school, and then, to the public high school and, when I was about eight years old, or something around then, I was out playing and one of my playmates happened to throw a stick at me, which hit me in the eye, and, as a result of that, just by virtue of one of those high school or ... elementary school examinations, they discovered that I didn't have full sight in the right eye that was injured. So, we went to all kinds of doctors and experts in New York City and, at that time, they weren't doing much surgical work with retinas and other portions of the eye, so, it was just a conservative treatment and it didn't do any good. The result was that I had to wear glasses and my sight was impaired, and so, although I played a lot of sandlot football when I was growing up, going into high school I couldn't participate in those sports. So, I just became manager of the team, that's all. [laughter] ... You know, in those days, at least some high schools had social fraternities and I happened to ... join up with a group of students who weren't particularly interested in becoming one of those Greek fraternity brothers. So, we formed our own little group and we had a lot of fun doing athletic activities and having a few social events, but mainly being friendly with the other members of the group, about ten or fifteen of us. Even after high school, we had several reunions, but I've lost track of all of them by this time.

SH: Were you involved in other clubs or activities?

RG: Oh, yes. Well, I was active in a lot of the organizations in school. A result of that was, I became involved in so called politics in high school and, ultimately, was elected president of the

class. Also, I was in the orchestras. When I was growing up, there were attempts to introduce me to various instruments and I remember taking violin lessons and not being very happy about that, and then, my mother found out about a local musician who had a community band and provided instructions. So, I got involved in that with the saxophone and I played with that, and then, when I got to high school, I went into the orchestra and the band, playing the saxophone. I wasn't a very good saxophone player, but at least I tried it, to that extent, because I just, apparently, don't have an ear for music, you know. You need that when you're playing any kind of a musical instrument, but we struggled through, but I didn't ... follow that up when I came to Rutgers, though. [laughter]

SH: Were you involved in the Boy Scouts?

RG: ... My brother was older than I was and he was involved in Boy Scouts, very much involved in it and I tagged along with him for a while on different things, and then, he, because of his age, got older and dropped out of it and it didn't seem to have the same interest then for me as it did before. So, although I think I advanced a couple of levels in the Boy Scouts, I never ... followed it up to ... really take it as an active activity and become one of the leaders. It was an interesting experience, but I never did follow it up.

SH: Did you move to Florida after high school or before high school?

RG: It was before high school.

SH: How long were you in Florida?

RG: Oh, about six months or so. ...

SH: What do you remember about the Great Depression? Did you see soup kitchens or did hoboes come to your door asking for food?

RG: No. I never had that experience. ... I was aware of it, you know. As far as our family was concerned, why, up to that point, ... we had an automobile, we went to the Shore for our summer vacations, stayed at a hotel for a couple of weeks, that sort of thing. ... Wall Street was doing pretty good in those years. But, during the Depression, we didn't do those kind of things. We didn't have as much as we would like to have had.

SH: Did you work after school or during the summers?

RG: Well, I did a lot of things, small things. I had a paper route and I worked at the local grocery store, to cart bundles home for the customers, and, you know, went around shoveling snow, that sort of thing. But, after high school, there wasn't any money to go to college. The plan was that I would work for a year, save up whatever money I could, then use that to go to college. So, I went to work for a year after I graduated from high school, down in Wall Street, New York, [laughter] but it wasn't for a brokerage house. It was for a bank, the Citibank Farmer's Trust Company, and I worked there for a year, and then, left and went to college. I had saved up enough and, with the help of a scholarship, I was able to manage the tuition. After

entering Rutgers, I worked, during the summers, for the county mosquito extermination and, during the Christmas and Easter recesses, I obtained jobs as a mail carrier and a clerk in a floral store.

SH: When did you first realize that you wanted to go to college? Your brother had gone to Penn State. Was it expected of you?

RG: Oh, well, I guess that was just expected. I knew that I wanted to do that.

SH: Why Rutgers?

RG: Well, it was the cheapest one to go to, I think that's why. ... I had done pretty well in high school and my mother, being from New York, thought I should go to Columbia, but we couldn't afford to go there and we applied for scholarships, but were not able to obtain them. So, then, the next choice was Rutgers.

SH: When did you become aware of the State Scholarship?

RG: I'm not sure when, but I guess it was before I came down here, applied for them. The tuition, at that time, as I recall, was something like four hundred dollars, was it that much? and the State Scholarship covered half of it, as I recall.

SH: Did you have any friends from Hackensack that came to Rutgers?

RG: Yes, as a matter-of-fact, I did. Maybe that was one thing that helped. I had a friend who invited me down for one of the weekends that they have and I stayed with him at his fraternity house and it was very satisfying. ... He took me over to another fraternity house and that convinced me that Rutgers was the place to go to, [laughter] or it helped to convince me.

SH: You entered Rutgers in the fall of 1936.

RG: '36, yes, and I had graduated in '35, so, that was the year I had worked and I came to the college a little early and I ... had a room at Winants Hall. I arrived and there were a couple of other fellows sitting around there and they looked to me to be much older than I was. [laughter] So, I didn't get involved with them. Later, when I finally did talk to them, they thought I was older than they were. [laughter] ... Winants Hall was a nice place to live and we had a nice room, right in the front, on the third floor, and a nice group of boys living there.

SH: Do you remember who your roommates were?

RG: ... Oh, sure. Well, I only had one roommate, Ed Taylor. ... He was a musician, played the violin and sang in the choir and a grand fellow and, unfortunately, our association had to be broken up because the roof, the ceiling of our room, collapsed. [laughter]

SH: Were you in there at the time?

RG: No. We had to move out and I moved to one of the rooms in the dorm on Bishop Campus and he went elsewhere, but we kept in touch ... all during [college].

SH: Was there an initiation for freshmen across the campus or only in the fraternities?

RG: Oh, well, yes. I should have brought along my freshman handbook. I don't know, have you ever gotten one of those?

SH: No.

RG: Yes, you had a freshman handbook, about three-by-two or something like that, and it tells you all the things that you had to do. You had to wear the beanie hat all the time, until some football game was played, and I don't recall if one had to wear a tie, but it also contained the words of the songs, the cheers and other information. ... You had to go to chapel every week and there were several other meetings at the chapel for the students. Well, there was that degree of orientation.

SH: Did you know what you wanted to major in during your freshman year?

RG: Yes. I did, because I had planned to be a lawyer, I knew that you had to major in political science, history and English, and so, that's what I did.

SH: What attracted you to the law?

RG: I'm not sure what did, ... maybe having ... [been] involved in the high school politics and so forth, maybe that drew me into an area where you would be doing something before people. ... I had no mentor, so-to-speak, so, it must have been just a general feeling that that's what I wanted to do.

SH: Did you join a fraternity?

RG: I did. In my junior year, I joined the Beta Theta Pi fraternity. Now, that was a rather unusual thing, or the circumstances were unusual, because, when I was at Winants, it was with a group of people who were not members of a fraternity. Maybe there was one or two that belonged, but ... most of them did not and ... we were part of a group in the college that ... joined with the commuters and became a bloc themselves, you might say.

SH: Was that the Scarlet Barbs?

RG: I guess that's what [it was]; I was trying to think of the name. You've heard that before. Well, anyway, you know, the fraternities had all of the campus positions sewed up, because they were organized. They not only had the class officers arranged, but, also, they arranged to have their people go into the managerial positions in the athletics, if they wanted to. Of course, the ones who were athletes, they went in by themselves. So, when we had the school election, the class elections, the fraternity men, at least my first year, always won and the second year was the same way. So, the Scarlet Barbs got together and I was ... nominated for class president for our

junior year and was elected. Then, I joined [the] fraternity when I was a junior. [laughter] I didn't feel that I was deserting them at all, but I think some of them felt that I was a turncoat. I did that because I had met some likeable fellows that were in the fraternity. A couple of other fraternities were after me to join them, but I finally decided, "Well, I'll join the Beta Theta Pi." I was living at home at that time. My family had moved down here then. ... That was another incident that took place because of my father's vocation. It was 1938, maybe, something like that, '39, and, you know, things hadn't gotten back to full steam as far as Wall Street was concerned, so, he was doing odd jobs and one of his jobs brought him to Trenton. He was working in Trenton and living in Hackensack. I was here at Rutgers and my brother was up in Pennsylvania, so, they decided to move to this area, easy commuting for him and to be around [me]. So, they did and I lived at home.

SH: You lived at home in your sophomore year.

RG: No. ... That was the year that we had to move out of Winants Hall.

SH: You said that you had gone up to a dorm on the Bishop Campus. From there, you went home.

RG: Yes, right, that was it.

SH: Did you live in the Beta house?

RG: No, I didn't live there. I ate some meals there and had made some good friends there.

SH: What other organizations did you become involved with on campus?

RG: The debating group was one and we went on a couple of debating trips.

SH: Please tell us about them.

RG: ... The professor, Richard Reager, who was a speech professor, organized these debating teams from the Debating Club and arranged to have teams meet with other colleges and have debates. I went on two trips, one to Chicago and one up to New York State. We had debates with teams from colleges in the area, had a nice time meeting them, seeing the world, so-to-speak. [laughter]

SH: Which issues did you debate over?

RG: I'm sorry, I can't remember that, but I guess some of the popular topics at that time.

SH: Was there any discussion about the lend-lease program at that point?

RG: No, but there was some discussions about the peace movement at that time. ... Well, we were getting into World War II and there were movements on the campus by some groups ... not to become involved.

SH: America First?

RG: Yes, I guess so.

SH: Isolationists.

RG: "Peace at any price," that sort of thing, there were some meetings and discussions about that. ... At that time, some students were not only involved in the ROTC program, but were also getting instructions in flying. There was a local airport nearby and those who were interested were given instructions there. A fraternity brother of mine was interested, went through the program and, ultimately, became a flyer in the war. He survived, despite being knocked down and captured. ...

SH: Do you remember his name?

RG: George Richmond. He's since deceased, but we kept in touch all through the years and visited him in California. He came here for reunions. ... It was a good association.

SH: You were exempt from ROTC because of your eyesight.

RG: Yes, that's right. I didn't become involved in ROTC because of that. I had to take physical education. [laughter]

SH: Did you go to the football games?

RG: Oh, I forgot, I was a cheerleader at the football games. Yes, that's another activity I was engaged in. I decided, when I was a freshman, that I thought I should become a member of the student council, the student governing body, and, in order to do that, you had to acquire points to be elected or even to be nominated for it and, as I wasn't an athlete and I couldn't get points for that activity, I decided, "Well, the only thing to do, I have to pursue other activities." One of those was a freshman manager of track, out there in the field, chasing the discuses being thrown. ... I decided I needed more points, so, I became a cheerleader. There were only about three or four of us doing it at that time and I was a cheerleader when we opened the new stadium in 1938 and we won the football game with Princeton.

SH: Do you remember who some of your fellow cheerleaders were?

RG: Yes. I'm trying to think of their names now. Ed Patten was one.

SH: That is okay. We can come back to that later.

RG: Yes. Well, of course, I also worked all the time.

SH: What did you do?

RG: Well, I had an NYA job; that's youth something [National Youth Administration]. They paid you fifteen dollars a month for these jobs that they manufactured. One of the jobs was to clean out the pens over at the dairy barn. I did that in the afternoon, and then, I had a job as a busboy at one of the local restaurants. I got my meals there as compensation. Subsequently, I graduated to some other, [laughter] I don't know if they were more lucrative jobs, but they weren't so menial. I had the distribution post for the *Herald-Tribune* in the college and that went pretty well, but it didn't do as good as the *New York Times*, as I recall. At times, I worked in the college cafeteria, which was then in Winants Hall. ... One time, later on, when I had a car available, I was a magazine distributor. I had to distribute the magazines to the boys that went out and sold them, you know, ... house-to-house, that sort of thing.

SH: Did you use your car?

RG: Yes, I had a car. I had to deliver the magazines to them. ... I must have been a senior at that time and, finally, the last job I had, as I recall, was another one of the NYA jobs. I was a custodian at the Art House, which was just being there in case anybody wanted to come in. I had to spend a couple of hours a day [there].

SH: Was the Art House like an art museum?

RG: Yes, somewhat. ... Well, it was where the art classes were held; one of the houses on College Avenue, across from the old gymnasium. ... There was not much activity there, so, I had the time to study and I received my fifteen dollars a month.

SH: How did the students dress on campus?

RG: Oh, a lot better than they do now. Most of the time, you wore a sweater or a jacket and not necessarily a tie, sometimes a tie. ... You look back at those pictures, you see that that's the way it was, ... just a matter of custom, I guess, but, it seems to me, they did look better and I don't know, ... I always thought, and still think, that dressing halfway decently improves your deportment and your interests and so forth. ... Maybe I'm wrong on that. [laughter]

SH: How long did it take you to realize that NJC was just down the road?

RG: ... Well, they had the freshmen mixers with NJC and I participated in those and, actually, I met somebody whom I liked and I would go over and visit her. Then, oh, ... within the year, somehow I met my wife and that was the end of anybody else. [laughter]

SH: Was your wife a freshman, sophomore or junior?

RG: No, she was a year ahead of me. I went to a dance and met her. Fortunately, when I was in high school, my sister, being just a year younger, and I used to enjoy dances at the YMCA or YWCA in the afternoons and we got to be pretty good dancers. So, when I came to college, I was a pretty good dancer. That was one thing my wife noticed [laughter] and that was what started our courtship.

SH: What was your wife's major in college?

RG: Economics. ...

SH: What did your family think of Franklin Roosevelt and his policies?

RG: He was the devil, according to my family, [laughter] my father, particularly. You know, he was in Wall Street and Roosevelt wasn't popular there.

RG: Was your family involved in politics?

RG: Did he?

SH: Yes.

RG: No, he wasn't involved.

SH: Were they active in their party?

RG: No, no, no.

SH: Just discussions around the table?

RG: Yes, that's all it was. [laughter]

SH: Did you consider running for political office at all?

RG: Well, yes, I thought about it, but, when I finished law school and the Army, I came back and was thinking about it after starting the practice of law. We lived locally here and I became the township attorney and one had to be involved in politics somewhat to receive such an appointment. I was interested and went along with the group and was friendly with the officeholders. Finally, I thought, "Well, it would be interesting to be in politics and be an assemblyman," and so forth. I went to the county chairman of the Republican Party and explained to him that I was interested, as a young lawyer, and I wanted to become involved, as, at that time, there was an opening for the Assembly. He thought it was fine for me to be interested and so forth, but, he explained, in order to run the party, you had to have money and he received generous support from a group in a different area of the county and that group was already supporting a candidate. I said, "That's too bad for me," [laughter] but what can you do? So, I backed off and that fellow became the assemblyman and, subsequently, the senator from the county and, also, ran for governor. ...

SH: You had run for office in high school and at Rutgers.

RG: Yes, well, that was the end of that. ... I continued working as the attorney for the township, and, several years later, there was the opportunity to be interested in a judgeship in Somerset County. Again, I went to see the county chairman, who happened to be the same fellow when I

went to see him about fifteen years prior to that time, more than that, I guess, and he thought it was a good idea. ... He said, "You know, I remember back then. ... I couldn't do anything for you at that time, but I'll do it now for you." [laughter] I received the judgeship appointment.

SH: Who was your favorite professor at Rutgers?

RG: Oh, yes. One of my favorite professors was John George. He was the political science fellow. You may have heard of him before, but he was the type who would get the students thinking about issues. Many times, he took the other side of issues and created some argument. He was sort of a liberal person, a Democrat. He actually ran for Congress after he retired from college, or maybe it was while he was still here. He was very interesting and exciting. Of course, Richard Reager, the speech man, was a favorite and I enjoyed being with him. The history professor, Dr. [Irving S.] Kull, was very interesting. A language teacher, Charles Stevens, who taught Spanish, and of course, Professor [Edmond W.] Billetdoux, the Spanish and French teacher, were also favorites. I took a lot of Spanish, even though I wasn't very good at conversation. I almost flunked it the first year and was surprised at that, because I'd taken Spanish four years in high school. [laughter] That might have been one of the reasons that I did not make Phi Beta Kappa. But one of the most enjoyable classes were the sessions with Professor Billetdoux in the attic of Queens Campus [Olde Queens]. This was conversational Spanish and [we] always had to, "Speak loud, speak up. Use your voice, use your lips." He was a fine teacher. I can't say that I didn't like any of the professors or teachers that I had. Then, the professors were the teachers, we didn't have the, what do they call them, assistants, now? teacher assistants or professor assistants or something. You had direct contact with these men who had been doing it for a long time and were very good.

SH: Did you have any interaction the administration, Dean Metzger, perhaps?

RG: Oh, yes. I had interaction with them, because I was always looking for work and, if I can remember their names, they were always very helpful. Dean Metzger was one. The assistant dean, Ed Curtin was another one. Soup Campbell was another one. One of his associates, John Kirkwood, was there. They were all very helpful.

SH: Do you have any Dean Metzger stories?

RG: No, I didn't have that much contact with Dean Metzger. I didn't have any problems, really, that some of the students had, that he would be able to help them with. I read about students who were down-and-out and they would come to him and he would see that they got helped out, financially and with other things, but I was always able to take care of myself, money wise. It wasn't the best, but I had what I needed. So, I didn't have any real problems for him. ... Dean Martin was another fine person there. I may have had some contact with Dean Metzger when I had to apply for the scholarship, but that was it.

SH: What about President Clothier?

RG: Oh, yes. I had contact with him, because, being president of the class, I went to several functions with him and he was a fine man. He was what one considered to be *the* college

president and you don't see many of them; at least that was my impression at that time. ... He was a delightful person.

SH: When you traveled to Chicago with the debating team, did you travel by train or car?

RG: We went by car. ... They had to organize it on the basis of who had a car. ... Some of these debates were [at] various places before alumni groups and we enjoyed winning the debates.

SH: Were there debate team captains?

RG: One was the manager and, of the four that went on the trips, the other three were the speakers. ... We each had our assignments and did accordingly.

SH: Is there anything else that you would like to say about Rutgers, any stories?

RG: Well, there's one story about Winants Hall that you may have heard before, but it's so constructed that when you're on the third floor, at one of the stairways on either end, you can look right down to the bottom entryway and there used to be times when, for one reason or another, maybe somebody who wasn't liked very much was coming in and would suddenly find themselves doused with water. [laughter] They'd fill up balloons or something and drop them on him and there are times when they had some amiable water fights upstairs in the attic, too.

SH: Did that lead to your ceiling collapsing?

RG: That probably did, probably did, [laughter] and, also, ... because of my ability to dance, I guess, and having a girlfriend who liked to dance, too, why, we went to all of the proms. ...

SH: Do you remember some of the orchestras that came to campus or concerts?

RG: Oh, yes, we had big orchestras for the sophomore dance, the junior prom and the senior prom. They were the well-known orchestras. I don't think that Benny Goodman was here, but Tommy Dorsey was here. ... For one reason or another, I happened to have had a full dress suit when I came to college and I don't remember why I had that in high school. ... I have a recollection that it cost about fifteen dollars at the (Rogers?) Clothing Store at that time, but that was an entrée to all those functions. ... Usually, it was only the fellows who were in the Glee Club that had the full dress suit. Well, I was not one of them, but I had the suit anyway. We were very happy to dress up and go to the hops and the dances.

SH: Do you remember any of the speakers from chapel?

RG: Yes, we had Norman ...

SH: Norman Thomas?

RG: Norman Thomas, yes, he was one. Wendell Wilkie was here, just before he was running for president, or was just after. Living at home for the last couple of years, why, I didn't go to the chapel, so, I wasn't exposed to ... all of the speakers.

SH: Did you hold office in your fraternity?

RG: No, I was just the rushing chairman one time. The class that we introduced was the best class they ever had. [laughter]

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SH: What activities were you involved with as president of your class? You mentioned that you met with President Clothier.

RG: I just remember that one time we had a meeting ... that General Motors was setting up and he [Clothier] was there and Alfred Sloan from General Motors and some of the other fellows from campus and I really can't remember what the purpose of it was, but I do remember being there.

SH: Do you remember your graduation?

RG: Well, no, I don't remember it, because I wasn't there. [laughter] I became ill the day before graduation or ... a couple of days before and it was diagnosed as appendicitis. So, I was in the hospital having it taken care of the day of graduation. [laughter]

SH: Who gave your speech for you? The class president usually speaks.

RG: I was the class president in junior year, not senior year. So, I didn't have to make any speech.

SH: What were your plans for after graduation?

RG: Well, I decided to, again, go to law school, but, then, the matter of finances was also a problem. So, again, I followed the plan that I did four years before that. I returned to the Citibank Farmer's Trust Company in New York City and I worked there for a year, until I went into the Army, and, while there in New York City, I went to law school in the evening at Fordham. ... They were, at that time, located [in] downtown New York, in the Woolworth Building.

SH: You were here on campus when the war began in Europe. Were there any discussions about that? Did any of your classmates feel the need to enlist or help in any other way?

RG: Well, there were a lot of discussions and I guess everybody had the idea, or was aware of the fact, that, eventually, we would be involved in it and each of us would be involved, but I don't recall anybody leaving to enlist in Canada or England. As I mentioned before, there were

students who were learning how to fly at the local airport here, as a part of the ROTC. So, there was quite an awareness of what was going to happen.

SH: Did you have to register for the draft, even though you were exempt from ROTC?

RG: Oh, I think we all had to register.

SH: You had to.

RG: Yes.

SH: Do you remember where you were when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

RG: I was at my girlfriend's house. She'd lived in Highland Park, too, so, I was there. That's my recollection of it, being there when the news came over the radio.

SH: Did you wait to be drafted?

RG: Yes, well, ... see, I was limited service at the time, because of my lack of vision, and ... I was going to law school at the time. I was able to arrange to defer my induction until December of '42, when I had completed a good bit of the law school by that time.

SH: Where did you report to?

RG: Reported to Fort Dix in New Jersey and because of my associations with a couple of the fellows in the administration of Rutgers, Soup Campbell and the other fellow that I can't remember his name, they were then in the Army and located on Governor's Island. There was an Army corps there and one of my friends, who was in the Class of '38, Jack Anderson, ... somehow I was in touch with him, told me, "Get in touch with Soup Campbell; tell him you've been drafted." I did and, after being in Fort Dix for a couple of days, I was sent to Fort Totten by myself, you know, [laughter] took the train up to Fort Totten in New York. ... I was there for several months, and then, I went to the antiaircraft OCS, as a limited service soldier. I went to Camp Davis and went through that process and was commissioned a second lieutenant in November 1943.

SH: Where was Camp Davis?

RG: North Carolina.

SH: What was limited service OCS? Was it different from regular OCS?

RG: It wasn't any different, no, did everything like everybody else. ... I was looking at some of the papers in my 201 file here today and I noticed that, when I was transferred from OCS to Fort Eustis in Virginia, in the antiaircraft section there, ... they had put, "Limited service," after my name and that's the first time I ever saw it in any correspondence of any kind. Other than that, why, I did everything that everybody else did.

SH: Had you thought of enlisting in any of the other services?

RG: ... No, I hadn't, because I knew that my lack of vision wouldn't permit me to do anything like flying or duties like that. ... I don't even think they have limited service in the Navy. ... I just thought I would have to take it as it came, that's all.

SH: Where did they send you when you finished OCS?

RG: Well, they sent me to Fort Eustis. It was an antiaircraft training center and I was there as a troop movement officer. There was a lot of movement of troops coming in to the fort, being a replacement training center, from places like Fort Dix. Then, after training for six weeks or so, they moved out. So, there was constant movement of troops that had to be arranged with trains and other transportation. I was involved in managing that and, when the replacement training center was moved to ... Fort Stewart in Georgia, I was sent there to run the program at that fort. After several months, as the war had advanced pretty well and antiaircraft wasn't needed very much, the Army was then looking for people to staff the Military Intelligence Section of the War Department in Washington and I was recruited for the duty and sent to the Pentagon.

SH: What kind of training did you receive for that assignment?

RG: As a newcomer to the Military Intelligence Division, I was required to attend a two-week Far East Intelligence course conducted by personnel of the Division at the Pentagon. The lectures and study material reviewed important aspects regarding the Japanese Army, Navy, Air Corps, country, people, economics, language, government, etc. A wide range of information was presented. It was a helpful introduction to the subject of the research to which I was assigned. This training, however, continued beyond the two-week course, as, within a few weeks after completing the course, I was assigned to replace the officer who lectured on the Organization of the Japanese Army. It was a startling assignment, but I did it successfully for several sessions, as was expected. Nevertheless, lecturing to ribboned officers, although perhaps new to military intelligence, but not to the Army and maybe the Japanese, was a bit intimidating.

SH: They were educating you at the same time.

RG: That's right. [laughter] That was the orientation that you had to do and I did that for a couple of courses. That was the extent of the orientation.

SH: What did you do after that?

RG: I was assigned to the Japanese Team of the Pacific Order of Battle Intelligence Section to conduct research pertaining to the organization of the Japanese armies, i.e., the several army units that comprised each of the armies, their strength, location, names of their commanding officers and other distinguishing information. It involved the study and examination of documents gathered by field intelligence units, such as prisoner interrogations, intercepted messages, various military papers recovered from areas which had been occupied by Japanese Army units, etc. Reports based upon the information gleaned from these sources, together with

other available intelligence, resulted in identifying the units which composed the several Japanese armies and detailing pertinent information about them. My unit was a very small part of the Military Intelligence Division, just a nut in the spoke of the wheel which provided intelligence reports prepared for the Chiefs and, ultimately, President Roosevelt. In addition to performing activities involving such important aspects, it was interesting and invigorating to serve with officers from Canada, Australia and England and US officers who were professionals in their respective disciplines.

SH: What was the average work day?

RG: Nine to five, generally. ... I was living there by myself and, having free time in the evening, I decided to go to law school. I applied to George Washington Law School, there in the District, and had received credit for all the work that I had completed at Fordham. I took evening classes for about a year and graduated from George Washington. Now, I have to contribute to two law schools. [laughter]

SH: What was it like to be in Washington during the war?

RG: Well, it was an interesting place to be, although I wasn't in Washington very much, because I was in the Pentagon and roomed in Arlington. ... Then, after being finished at the Pentagon, I would take the bus to Washington and go to school. After school, I'd return by bus to Arlington. So, I wasn't involved in the Washington social life at all, but, ... you know, it was an interesting place to be, because everybody was doing the same thing that you were doing and they're all directed to the same end and it was a crowded place, lots of people.

SH: Did Mrs. Gaynor live with you?

RG: No. She stayed home. She was working at the time.

SH: Where did she work?

RG: She worked for a store in Newark, a department store, Bamberger's, which later became Macy's. She had a buyer's position there and, subsequently, an executive position. She was there until the war was over.

SH: Did you see each other often?

RG: Oh, yes. ... That was another thing, too. I wouldn't stay around Washington for the weekends, because I'd come home. She would come down occasionally and we'd spend a nice weekend in Washington.

SH: Were there certain social requirements for a young officer in Washington?

RG: No, I don't think so. I went out with some of the officers with whom I worked, had dinner with them, occasionally, during the week, when I wasn't going to law school.

SH: Are there any stories about your work that you would like to share?

RG: Well, I mentioned about being the instructor after having been instructed. [laughter] ...

SH: In the Pentagon, did you ever run into George C. Marshall or any of the brass?

RG: No, no. The Pentagon, as you know, is constructed in ... eight sections and, from the exterior to the interior, there are about three or four aisles, so, all those people, the generals, were on the outside [laughter] and all of us workers were on the inside. So, we didn't have much chance of [meeting].

SH: You mentioned that other Allied forces were also involved in the intelligence work. Was there competition between them or was there a good camaraderie?

RG: Oh, no, a good camaraderie. I made good friends with an Australian officer and one from Canada that I am still in contact with. ... Everybody was doing the same thing, or at least they ... had the same objective in mind, that's all, to do the best they could.

SH: Did you ever run into any Rutgers men during your military career?

RG: I'm trying to think; I don't recall. Oh, yes, I did. I ran into a fellow from Highland Park who went to Rutgers a couple of years before me, James Reilly. His father was the swimming coach and he was a good swimmer. As a matter-of-fact, he had some arrangements with one of the Navy places and had use of their pool. I went swimming with him one time. ... I don't recall running into anybody else.

SH: Since your family was in New Brunswick, did you ever visit the campus? Did you notice how the campus had changed since 1940? Did you see the ASTP on campus?

RG: I don't recall visiting campus ... in those years. I was just home on weekends, ... but, you know, being in the area, I noticed that there were things, like, the buildings that were being used and, of course, Camp Kilmer was right there. Actually, one of the houses we'd lived in, before I went into the Army, was part of what was Camp Kilmer. We had to move out because the Army was taking it over, and that's why ... the family moved into New Brunswick. I was aware of those things that were going on and others, like the use of the Raritan Arsenal for the students.

SH: Did you correspond with anyone in the service from your class?

RG: No.

SH: Were you in the Pentagon when V-E Day was announced? Was there any reaction?

RG: Well, everybody was exhilarated that the war had ended and ... I think I happened to be over in Washington, DC, at the time ... the announcement came through, walking back from law school. Crowds were out, but I don't have a recollection of there being a wild reaction in the city.

SH: What about when Roosevelt died?

RG: Well, ... it was a weekend, I think, it must have been, because I was home at that time and I was in New York City. We had planned to have dinner at one of the hotels where they had music, and then, the word came through; everything stopped, no music. We were fortunate to get a meal, really. ... We were in New York City when Kennedy died and had the same experience.

SH: Did you have confidence in Truman?

RG: Well, I think, like many other people, there was a feeling that nobody could take the place of Roosevelt, and Truman was thought to be just a haberdasher from out West someplace. I think most people, at that time, were unwilling to accept the fact that he was an appropriate substitute, but that feeling changed ... within the next couple of years, because he did a very good job. ... You'd become more convinced of that if you read his biography.

SH: How did those around you in the Pentagon feel?

RG: Well, I think, as I expressed it, ... everybody had some misgivings at the time, which turned out to be unwarranted.

SH: Were you confident in our ability to go forward with the invasion of Japan?

RG: Well, I think so. One of the things that we had to swear to when we were enlisted in the military intelligence was the knowledge that the code had been broken, the Japanese code had been broken, which enabled us to get information that was important and helped to win the war. But I don't think there was any doubt in anybody's mind that we had the means to overcome Japan if we invaded them.

SH: Your intelligence work would have definitely affected how the invasion was planned.

RG: Oh, no, I wasn't involved in that part of it.

SH: No, but that is where it would have ultimately gone.

RG: Oh, I suppose so.

SH: What were your thoughts on the dropping of the atomic bombs?

RG: I agreed with it.

SI: When you were in the service, did you ever see any USO shows?

RG: Oh, yes, I did. It was when I was an enlisted man, when I was at Fort Totten. I would go to New York City and visit USO places and get tickets for a show. ... I'm trying to think whether

we utilized their services when I was an officer. Yes, once we went to New York City for a weekend and stayed at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel at a reduced rate, thanks to the USO.

SH: Was there an officer's club in the Pentagon or in Washington for your use?

RG: No, there wasn't. I suppose there was one at nearby Fort Myers, but I never seemed to have time to do anything like that, which is unfortunate, maybe I should have, [laughter] because, when I was at, you know, Eustis and Camp Davis, why, they had officer's clubs there and ... I socialized there.

SH: How did your job change after the surrender?

RG: Well, it did change and I got into some administrative work ... of the section. ... That was '45. ... So, I was there for about another six or eight months, and then, I left, mid '46.

SH: Were you discharged in Washington, DC?

RG: Yes.

SH: What were your plans then?

RG: ... Well, I wasn't sure of my plans. I wanted to be a practicing lawyer. ... I had graduated from law school and ... there were several things I could do. One was to return to the Citibank Farmer's Trust Company and to work up to be a trust officer or I could go into a practice in New York, because New York didn't require ... any bar examinations for admission for a veteran, ... or I could come to New Jersey. First, I went to the Citibank Farmer's Trust Company and they offered me a position, of course, and ... the officer in charge even said, "Well, look, you can live in my house for a while, to establish residence, ... to get your license in New York." Well, that was very generous of him. I also knocked on some doors of law offices in New York City, even talking to a Rutgers alumnus, but I didn't get very far. [laughter] ... Then, I came to Newark and I knocked on a few doors and one of them was the best law firm in Newark, which said, "Okay, we'll hire you as a clerk." So, I got the job and worked there as a clerk in the office in Newark, took the bar examination, passed, was admitted, and then, started practice in New Brunswick with an older lawyer who had his office there.

SH: When did you start your family?

RG: Let's see, it must have been right away, I guess. [laughter] Our daughter was born in 1948 and our two sons within the next six years.

SH: Did any of your children come to Rutgers?

RG: One did, ... the oldest boy, ... and he graduated and was interested in philosophy and even ... started his graduate work here and did some teaching. Then, he went off to finish up the graduate work in California. Then, he got discouraged about it. ... Well, one thing, you have to publish in order to ... get a place and, another thing, you had to get started in the first place

and, as I recall him telling me, there was a position at one college for a young person in that field and they had a thousand applications. He decided that ... that wasn't for him and he became involved in the golf course business. ... He did that for a long time and, now, he's in his own business in ... distributing materials which are used for golf course maintenance. Unfortunately, he has not continued his association with Rutgers at all. He lives in New Mexico, but it might be different if he was nearby.

SH: Do you have any lawyers in the family?

RG: Yes, my youngest son is a lawyer. He graduated from Fordham University Law School. Did very well in law school and ... got a position with a firm in New York. He was doing very well, on his way to all kinds of things in the firm, but decided that that type of practice really wasn't lawyering for him. He wanted to do something more personal. ... Because his wife had a good job, he was able to do that and resigned from the law firm and, ultimately, got a position as a public defender in New Jersey. ... That's what he wanted to do and is doing very well.

SH: What was your field of expertise in law?

RG: Well, in a small office, you have to do a general practice, almost everything. I did mostly office work, real estate, estate and corporate work, ... which was all interesting work. I did some trial work and I found that to be interesting, too, but I wasn't in a position to develop that area. ... By the time I might have been doing more of that, I had an invitation to enter a judgeship.

SH: Are you on the bench? Is that what they call it?

RG: Yes, yes. Now, you mean? Well, no; oh, I'm still a judge, but, in New Jersey, you have to retire when you become seventy years of age and I became seventy years of age some time ago. ... At that time, I was on the Appellate Division. When I retired, the Appellate Division had a program of conferencing the appeals before being assigned to the court, to see if they could be resolved or settled. I undertook that service as a part-time position. It was a mitigation procedure, conferring with the attorneys and discussing the weaknesses or strengths of the appeal and suggesting that the best thing for their client might be to settle the case on the best terms available. It's an effective program. A large percentage, thirty-five to forty percent, of the cases that come through the program are resolved.

SH: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill at all?

RG: Oh, yes, I did, sure. When I started work as a clerk, there was a program in the GI Bill of job training, ... which meant that you were paid, I forget how much, twenty-five dollars a month or fifty dollars a month, during the time that you were in training. So, while I was a clerk, well, I got paid twenty-five dollars a month and the other twenty-five dollars came in handy as well. [laughter] I did take advantage to that extent. But there was ... a lot of aid available to returning veterans and many of them took advantage of it, going to school and graduate school.

SH: You said that your involvement with Rutgers began after you came back. Are you still involved with Rutgers?

RG: Oh, yes. Well, I'm involved with Rutgers to the extent of being active in our class association, the Rutgers Alumni Association, and Scarlet R and contributing to Rutgers. ... During the first several years after the war, I was involved quite a bit with the fraternity. ... It was funny, ... I was on one of the alumni trips to France a year or so ago, Provence, and, as we were going from one of the airports, one of the other members of the group called out to me and said, "Hi, I'm So-and-So." Well, I didn't recognize him, but, then, later on, I found out, in talking with him, that, yes, he was one of the students at the Beta house when I came over as a young lawyer, you know, to oversee the house. [laughter] He was much impressed with me. ... I was also active in the Alumni Association as a member of the Executive Committee, treasurer of the Association, president of the Alumni Council and recipient of the Loyal Sons of Rutgers Award.

SH: You have enjoyed your profession.

RG: Oh, yes, yes. ... I think it's been an interesting one and one in which you've been able to assist people in many ways, even as a lawyer. You try to work them out of their problems, ... not solve their problems, but assist them in resolving the problem, and, being a judge, why, you do the same thing in a little different way and you've been able to make some mark in the law as you go along. So, it's been an interesting and a challenging vocation, but, also, a satisfactory one.

SH: Are there specific areas where you really tried to change things for the better or correct inaccuracies?

RG: ... Nothing I can recall, not specifically.

SH: Thank you.

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Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/24/04  
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/5/04  
Reviewed by Robert E. Gaynor 8/3/04