

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HERBERT H. HERSH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Herbert H. Hersh on October 12, 2007, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Hersh, thank you very much for coming in today.

Herbert H. Hersh: It's my pleasure, Shaun, to be here with you.

SI: You have been a longtime supporter of the Rutgers Oral History Archives program. It is good to finally interview you.

HH: Thank you.

SI: To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

HH: I was born February 21, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York.

SI: I would like to ask a few questions about your parents, beginning with their names.

HH: Sure. My mother's name was Ceil Hersh and my father was Joseph Hersh. Our name originally was Hershkowitz and we changed it when I came to Rutgers in the early 1950s.

SI: Okay, quite a while after your family was in the United States.

HH: Yes.

SI: Where were your parents born?

HH: My parents were both born in a town called Yash in Romania, but they met here in the United States and they got married here--in New York, I should say.

SI: Do you know, roughly, how old they were when they both came to the United States?

HH: My father was about twelve and my mother was an infant of about eighteen months.

SI: Do you have any idea why the family came to the United States?

HH: Just to better themselves. They had relatives here and they told them how good life was in the United States. So, they decided to come, make the trek to the New World.

SI: They came over in the ...

HH: Early 1900s, yes, early 1900s. In fact, my father served in the First World War for the United States. He was in the cavalry and he was stationed in the South. We still have some very vivid pictures of him in his Army uniform, with the leg wrappings and the knickers and all, how it looks, very pretty picture.

SI: The leggings and all, yes.

HH: Yes.

SI: Did you ever hear any stories from your parents, particularly your father, about what life was like in Romania for them?

HH: No, that, we didn't hear, no.

SI: Were your grandparents still alive when you were young? Did you get a chance to talk with them about it?

HH: It's funny you mentioned that, but it wasn't a topic of conversation, really. We spoke of what we had here in the United States.

SI: Do you think there was a deliberate effort within the family to Americanize?

HH: No, not really. It was just--it's funny that you asked that. That's a good question. Now, as we look back, we should see something like that, why we didn't know that.

SI: Were there any "Old World" traditions that were kept up in the family?

HH: Yes. My folks spoke Yiddish at home, but they did speak English with us around. I'm sorry that I never did learn [Yiddish], picked up a few words in Yiddish, but we still spoke mostly English at home.

SI: What about holidays or other traditions?

HH: My folks were Orthodox Jews and I was brought up in the Orthodox "country," "world." My folks were active in a synagogue in New Brunswick. They were big benefactors of the synagogue.

SI: Which synagogue?

HH: It was called Ahavas Achim, in New Brunswick, which was on Richmond Street, and then, moved to Highland Park, but it's funny--my father was a hat manufacturer. He was in the ladies hat business. He had three factories. He did quite well in the United States. Came the Depression, he lost everything. In fact, he was known as "The King of the Panama Hat," if you know what Panama hats were, and, when the Depression came, [he lost that business]. I was a Depression baby. My folks did quite well. We were living in Brooklyn, New York, at the time and he had paid for a shipload of Panama bodies, hat bodies, and the boat sank--not sank, the bank sank [laughter]--and he lost everything like that. Then, he moved to New Brunswick, where we had some relatives, and he opened his first store on George Street and, in the back, he had a factory and, in the front, he sold hats, and he was quite successful.

SI: Do you know how your father got into the hat manufacturing business?

HH: When he came over here, he'd always look for a job and he got his first job as what they called blockers. Ladies hats were quite big at the time and he became, [for] a job, as a laborer, a blocker. My mother was a homemaker and that was it, but, when he came to New Brunswick, she did work in the store with my dad.

SI: It is interesting that both your parents were from the same town. Was it a case where everybody from the same town started settling in the same neighborhood in Brooklyn?

HH: Probably, but, [when] they did meet, they were living in Lower Manhattan at the time, the Lower East Side. My mother lived on a street called Eldridge Street and I don't know where my father lived. It's funny, my father's family, when they came over, they split up. He had about four, five brothers and some came to New York and some went up to Montreal, Canada. So, the family was split. Why that happened, I don't know. So, I have, still have, a lot of relatives in Canada.

SI: Did they ever tell you the story of how they were introduced or how they met?

HH: No, no. Somewhere back there, I'll find out. My sister, she's the historian of the family, but we should find out how they did meet. I think they were introduced by another cousin. I do remember that. That's coming back to me.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: Okay, go ahead.

SI: We were just talking about your family living in the Lower East Side. Then, they moved to Brooklyn.

HH: Right, they lived in Brooklyn, right.

SI: Did your father have a store in Brooklyn?

HH: Yes, no, he was a hat manufacturer. He became a blocker. He started his own business. He started one factory, then, he had two factories, here in New Jersey, in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

SI: While he was still in New York?

HH: New York. He had a factory on 36th Street in New York and two in New Jersey.

SI: The Depression was quite devastating to the business.

HH: Yes, it was, it was. He was very successful and, when you lose everything, you lose everything, but he survived well.

SI: Many people I have interviewed whose families lost businesses in the Depression say that they never quite recovered. However, it seems like he recovered fairly well.

HH: He did. He did well, and he started one store, then, he bought another store, and then, I eventually came into the business.

SI: Did he ever talk about his time in the service?

HH: He did. He talked [about it]. He was in, as I said, the cavalry. He wasn't a horseman, but he was in the cavalry, and he was stationed down in Georgia. He was telling us how it was hot and the hikes they went on and all that and what they went through, and some of the abuses that they took. My father spoke with an accent, you know, European accent, and he heard about it, but he survived it, and he survived the war. So, that was good. He got out, I think, in 1917 or 1918, after the war.

SI: When you say abuse, was it anti-Semitism?

HH: Probably anti-Semitism. He didn't go into it that much, but he said it was on the rough side. Here's a boy from New York, with an accent, coming down South. So, I guess you hear about it.

SI: Yes. You mentioned that he was in the cavalry, but not a horseman.

HH: Right.

SI: Do you know exactly what he did?

HH: No, I don't know, no. That, I don't know; [laughter] just have nice pictures of him in a nice uniform.

SI: Did your mother ever tell you what she did during that time?

HH: No, no. She was a homemaker. She stayed home.

SI: They were married before he went in the service.

HH: No, he was single at the time. In fact, I'm trying to think when they did get married, but he was single when he was in the service. They got married after he came out. I'm trying to think when they did get married. That, I can't remember.

SI: You have two sisters.

HH: Two sisters--one's living and one passed away.

SI: What were their names?

HH: My sister Diana, her name is Diana, she was sixty-six when she died, ten years ago, and I have a sister, her name is Muriel, and she's living near me in Concordia, Monroe [Township, New Jersey], and she's eighty-two, now, eighty-three.

SI: Are you the youngest in the family?

HH: I'm the baby. I'm the youngest in the family, yes.

SI: You were born in Brooklyn and you lived there for about five years.

HH: Right.

SI: Do you have any memories of your life in Brooklyn?

HH: Oh, yes, it was fun. We lived on a street called East Eighth Street, in a section called Flatbush. I went to the kindergarten the first year there and it was very pleasant. It was good, it was safe, sound, and a lot of fun. I had a lot of friends. We had a nice home, a nice brick home--went back to see it a few years ago and they tell me it's worth a lot of money today. So, it was good, but it was a good area. I enjoyed kindergarten. There was a movies right near us. I remember my mother taking me to [the movies]. I was a little boy, maybe four or five, my mother taking [me]--she liked Bobby Breen. I don't know if you know the name Bobby Breen. He was a singer [and actor], and going into the movies there. We had a small synagogue that we went to, an Orthodox synagogue, where the men sat downstairs and the women upstairs. I remember, we had a cousin of mine was *bar mitzvah*-ed there. During the *bar mitzvah*, when a boy turns thirteen, he's confirmed, I remember them throwing candy. They throw candy as a ritual, you know, little bags of raisins and nuts and all that. I remember, it's funny, picking them up and eating them--the bags, not those that were on the floor--but it was good, happy times.

SI: Do you remember seeing any of the effects of the Depression in that area?

HH: It was tough. I know my folks had it tough and we did go to the movies on occasion. We did have an ice cream cone for a nickel, at the time. There was a sweet shop on the corner. We used to eat "Charlotte russes," little pastries, a little pastry with dough, with whip cream on it. It was good. They were the little treats that we had, and we were very family-oriented. We had a lot of family around. There was always a lot of family gatherings. An uncle lived across the street, he had three boys, and we had a lot of friends, a lot of cousins. I remember, my mother had a big family and we were always busy traveling to see the family. We used to go on trolley rides to see them. They were happy days. They were good days. It was gloomy outside, but it was good, very festive to be with your family. We were very family-orientated.

SI: You mentioned that much of the family had come over to the United States. Was there anybody left in Romania?

HH: Not really, no. My father's entire family came. His father went to Montreal. His mother and father were divorced and his mother was living here. Even in those days, it was funny, but his parents were divorced. So, we would travel to Montreal to see his father, and liked that. My

mother's family, also, were over here. In fact, my mother's father died just before I was born. In the Jewish tradition, I was named after my mother's father, who'd just died about a month or so before I was born.

SI: Just around the time that you moved to Highland Park, things were happening in Europe. The war broke out there. Do you remember that being discussed in the family?

HH: Yes, they were discussing it. I remember seeing the headlines in the papers, the headlines. They had papers like *The Daily News* and *The Daily Mirror* and *The [Herald] Tribune*--I remember these papers--and the big headlines, you know, "Hitler does this," and, "Hitler does that." No, I was, what? five, six, but I still remember. What's vivid in your mind are the block letters, what's happening, you know, "War Declared."

SI: Did you have a radio?

HH: Yes, we had little radios, I remember that, and I remember when Pearl Harbor broke out vividly. You know, there's some things that are indelible in your mind, like when [President John F.] Kennedy was shot or when 9/11 [the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks] occurred, but I remember December 7, 1941. It was a gloomy Sunday, a gray Sunday, and I had gone to the movies with my sister in New Brunswick. We went to the State Theater, saw a movie. We came home and I remember sitting on a little chair in our living room and hearing what had happened, what was going on. I even remember hearing President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt, his famous speech--talking about, what was I? like eight years old, but it was vivid. I was sitting on a chair.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: Go ahead.

SI: We were talking about how you heard about Pearl Harbor.

HH: Pearl Harbor, right.

SI: You mentioned that you were listening to the radio on a couch.

HH: Radio, yes, and we had a big Emerson radio, I think it was Emerson, big, big radio, with dials, and we were just listening there. We all shuddered about it and, you know, "What's happening to the world?" and all that kind of stuff. So, it was quite traumatic, let's put it that way, even at that young age. So, I was only in grammar school at the time. So, that was there.

SI: As an eight-year-old child, what did you think war meant?

HH: War. War was people getting killed. I remember, I was hoping that my father didn't have to go to war, to fight and all that. You know, What's going to happen to us here? How far is it going to go? who this man Hitler was and how bad he was, and about the Japanese. Who were the Japanese? Who had ever heard of Japan beforehand, you know? I didn't know what was going on with Japan. I didn't know what our [President]--President Roosevelt was in power at

the time--what he could do, and we thought he was a great savior, but we find out other things otherwise.

SI: You were aware of Roosevelt before that.

HH: We knew he was the President. We thought he was so good. He was going to get us out of the Depression, he's going to give people jobs and people were going to have money and good housing and education and all that.

SI: Your parents were pro-Roosevelt.

HH: Yes. I came from a Democratic family.

SI: Being a businessman, did your father ever take advantage of any of the New Deal programs for business?

HH: No, not really, no, but my father, during the war, he volunteered. They had the State Guard. So, they gave him a uniform. He was a volunteer State Guard and he used to go out. I remember, one of his functions was to guard the Raritan River Bridge on Route 1 [in New Brunswick] at the time. In fact, he ended up getting pneumonia, going to the hospital. He went to St. Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick, getting sick. That was his contribution to the war effort, but he enjoyed it. [Editor's Note: After the New Jersey National Guard was called to active duty for World War II, the State Guard was established to take on some of its in-state duties.]

SI: How often would he be off doing that?

HH: He would do that on weekends, on weekends, regular weekends, yes.

SI: Was that throughout the war or just in the early part?

HH: Through a good part of the war. The State Guard, that's what they called it, the State Guard. He used to go to meetings and I used to go to meetings with him once in a while. I remember, that was good. We met at different restaurants. He had a great group of friends and I remember that he had the store in New Brunswick on George Street and I used to go to the store when I was a little kid and meet a lot of his friends from the State Guard, a nice, very fine group of men. My father belonged to either the American Legion or the--he belonged to a veterans' group. I don't remember what it was. I don't know, but he was active in it. He used to go to the meetings. He enjoyed that, and my mother stayed in the store. My contribution to the war effort was, when I was in grammar school, at Livingston School in New Brunswick, I led the war bond drive. We used to collect stamps, you know, savings stamps. They used to be a quarter and [you would] fill up a book. You used to get a book and eighteen [dollars and] seventy-five [cents] used to buy a bond. We did that. I headed that at Livingston School in New Brunswick, and then, I did the same thing in Roosevelt Junior High. In Roosevelt Junior High School, I led a group down to Trenton, McGuire Air Force Base, because we bought an ambulance or a plane.

I'll bring you in that picture, to show you. A whole group of people went down to there. So, that was very interesting.

SI: You must have raised a lot of funds.

HH: We did, we did.

SI: What was involved in these drives? Would you just go around and ask people to buy stamps?

HH: Well, we did. We set up posters, we set up little tables, you know, to get people [interested], making people aware. We would go to the classes, you know, and a quarter, for a kid, at that time, was a lot of money, you know that, but we did. We raised a lot of money. We were very successful with that. It was just a fundraising drive, what we're trying to do right now, to get money. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Mr. Hersh is a member of the Rutgers Living History Society Operations Committee, which raises funds to support the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

SI: You are still very involved in that.

HH: Yes.

SI: Were the posters something the kids made or were they propaganda posters?

HH: We got [some where] they're propaganda, but we had a lot of posters that we made ourselves. We did have little drives, little candy sales, like they do today, lemonade sales, to raise money. We did quite well.

SI: Were you involved in scrap or material drives?

HH: No, we didn't do that, but I do remember [that] we had car rationing. We had a car we couldn't drive too much, because we had to get gas stamps. Butter was rationed. That, I remember also, rationing--there was a lot of butter [rationing], the car, the rubber tires, you couldn't get. There's all that. So, that was that. I had a friend whose father headed the office of the--what was it called? I forgot what it was called, the office, the rationing board in New Brunswick.

SI: The Office of Price Administration?

HH: Something like that, yes. That was that. His name was--the man who ran it was Joe Hertz and his son was Keith Hertz--and he lived around the corner from us. So, he helped us out a bit.

SI: Was your father's business impacted by the rationing program at all?

HH: Yes, business was tough. At that time, we were in the hat business, ladies hat business, and people wore a lot of hats then. So, he did [continue on], and he manufactured the hats, so, he was able to get the bodies and he was able to sell it. He survived the war effort like that.

SI: I was not sure if that was considered a luxury good that could be put aside until the end of the war.

HH: We sold to people who went to church, church hats, and the people wore a lot of hats in those days, so, they found it more of a necessity. They'd rather buy a hat than a dress or something else, you know, to look good.

SI: He did not have to switch materials or struggle with buyers.

HH: No, I don't think so, no. He didn't have that.

SI: What about general cultural changes during the war? Do you remember seeing a lot of what we might call today propaganda, in the movies or magazines?

HH: Well, first of all, living [then], you know, I remember we had the air raid drills and we had to darken the shades at night. That was the effect on us, personal living. Then, we got scares of that there were submarines out in the Atlantic, you know, to be careful of that, like that, and, of course, there was a lot of propaganda. You heard about the German *Bund*. [Editor's Note: The German-American *Bund*, a pro-Nazi group based on the earlier group Friends of New Germany, operated from 1936 until December 1941, when it was outlawed. One of the largest *Bund* followings developed in New Jersey, based in Camp Nordland in Sussex County.] There was a *Bund* in--in fact, I have a store in Irvington. They said, which was a big German town, "Be careful of Irvington. They had a German *Bund*." On East 86th Street, there was a German *Bund*. There's a place that we used to go to, when we were at Rutgers, called the Schwaebische Alb, in Warren, New Jersey. They said, "Oh, that's where the *Bund* was," you know. You had to be careful of the Germans and this, [and] so on, and then, we used to hear about the internment of the Japanese in California. "How could they do that to these people? They're citizens, take these people from California, put them into so-called camps like that." [Editor's Note: Executive Order 9066 ordered the relocation of Japanese-Americans living in the Continental United States to internment camps.]

SI: Was that during or after the war?

HH: Yes, during the war, during World War II.

SI: You knew about that.

HH: Oh, yes, we were cognizant. We read these things and we kept abreast. I remember, every day in school, we used to have current events day and current events was, well, what's happening in the war? the Russian Front and the Japanese, what was doing on Guadalcanal, New Guinea, and all that. We all had friends who had older brothers going into the Army. I remember some

of them getting killed, you know, young boys whose older brothers were killed in the war. So, those ... impacted us.

SI: Did you have anybody close to you, a cousin, perhaps, that went into the service?

HH: Oh, I had all my relatives in there, a lot of relatives in there, a lot of them. I had a cousin who was in the armored division down in Kentucky and he used to send me his patches and all that type of stuff, and it was good. Oh, we used to go to--Camp Kilmer was here, was an embarkation point, and I remember going out there with my family and friends and bringing stuff to the soldiers. New Brunswick was a war town at the time. So, it was really a bustling town. Here, we had the store right in the center of New Brunswick and the soldiers used to come in, in their uniforms, and they were good, you know. You could see that they were lonely and looking to talk to people. There's Monument Square. I remember sitting on Monument Square one day and, as a little boy, these soldiers would come by, just to talk to people, you know, and they'd want to take you to the movies or something--not doing nothing bad or anything like that, just to be [friendly], to talk to somebody. I had a neighbor whose husband was stationed at Camp Kilmer. I remember going with her to visit him in the barracks out in Camp Kilmer, and the barracks are still there. [laughter] It still looks the same. Then, we had Raritan Arsenal, where Rutgers later had some campus activities. [Editor's Note: Rutgers utilized former prisoner-of-war barracks at nearby Raritan Arsenal to house students during the GI Bill era of the late 1940s, when housing was in short supply.] New Brunswick was quite involved in the war, one way or the other.

SI: Would people have GIs over to their homes for dinner, that sort of thing?

HH: Sure. We did. We entertained them in our house. In fact, we lived in a two-family house and the people upstairs from us had somebody in the service, used to come visit them. So, we used to talk to them and be with them, and they would ship out from here. What happened to them, I don't know.

SI: Okay, you did not ...

HH: No follow-up.

SI: ... Write to anyone.

HH: I did communicate with one fellow for a while, I remember that, but, going on, my daughter, when she was in [school], she went to J.P. Stevens [High School], she communicated with [a soldier]. She had a pen pal in the Army. I remember, he was over in Japan--I mean, this is either the Vietnamese War or later--and he sent her a gorgeous horse from Japan, or something like that. So, my family keeps up the tradition.

SI: One thing that is interesting for historians is the connections made between people from all over the country as the war moved so many people around. Do you remember meeting people from different parts of the country, where you had never met anyone like that before?

HH: No, not really, no, I didn't. I wish I did, but I didn't. [laughter] After I leave, it'll come to my mind.

SI: Nobody from the South or the Midwest.

HH: No. Well, we met--a lot of boys from all over the country were up here, a lot of Southerners. It's funny, a lot of Southerners, young boys from the South, were there and we were intrigued by their Southern accents, you know, and all that, slow, all that, but just meeting these boys left an impression. There was a swimming pool up on Livingston Avenue, and I lived on Livingston Avenue, in New Brunswick and it was called an auditorium, in the summertime, going there and seeing a lot of the soldiers cooling off, coming there to do something. You used to see them in the movies. New Brunswick was a real Army town. In fact, my brother-in-law--there's a bus company called Suburban Transit--my brother-in-law was one of the principals in there and his uncle started the company and they made their livelihood [that way]. He was ready to go bust, but, when Camp Kilmer opened up, he expanded his route to Camp Kilmer, to New Brunswick, and then, to Princeton, and Suburban Transit became a major force in the bus industry. In fact, they were Rutgers' largest carrier of students before Academy took over, but we had other people doing things. My father-in-law was an air raid warden. I was asking my wife, I told her what I was going to do today, I said, "What did you do in the war?" She says, "Well, my father," her father, "was an air raid warden in Passaic, New Jersey." Her mother was an ambulance driver and she did dressings for the war effort, and I said, "Well, what did you do?" She said she wrapped tinfoil. They used to wrap tinfoil, to give for the war effort. So, we all tried to get involved. It was quite a unifying concept. Everybody wanted to get involved in helping the war, one way or the other.

SI: Do you recall if there was any stigma on those who did not go into the service, such as men who were 4-F [ineligible for military service]?

HH: No, we didn't. I'm sure it was, but I had a lot of cousins, male cousins, in the war effort and none of them were hurt or anything like that, were wounded, thank God. That was very fortunate like that, but it was traumatic. We knew about it. Even at a very tender, young age, we were cognizant of what was going on. The papers didn't let you forget it. Of course, we didn't have the television then, but we had the radios, listening to Elmer Davis and some of these other people on the radio talking about it, [H.V.] Kaltenborn--just telling you some names that came to my mind. They made you know what's going on, and listening to President Roosevelt's "fireside chats," what he had to say.

SI: It must have really brought it home when somebody in the neighborhood was lost or wounded.

HH: Yes. One of my little classmates lost a brother, Johnny Abode, lived on Ward Street in New Brunswick. He lost a brother in the war, and, you know, how does it impact you? What does a little kid say to somebody else, that you lost your brother, something like that?

SI: Would they have services for these men? Do you remember going to any memorials?

HH: No, just going to the house and seeing him. I lost a classmate in the Korean War, a high school classmate. He wanted to go. He was one of the first, Joe (Stribby?), or something to that effect, nice-looking, nice boy. We felt that, too. I remember, if we go forward in the Korean War, I'll never forget, when I was at Rutgers, I went to visit some friends up in Millburn, New Jersey, and we went to a bar. My friend's friend was a lieutenant in the armored division in the Korean War. Nice guy, talking--he's coming back, telling us [stories], giving us some war stories, and the next thing I heard, he goes back to Korea and he never made it back alive. So, that hurt, seeing a friend of yours--not a friend of mine, but someone you knew--and, here, he's here today, and then, losing his life in the Korean War.

SI: When you moved to New Brunswick, you were on Livingston Avenue. Can you describe your neighborhood there?

HH: Yes. It was good, white-collar, blue-collar, white neighborhood. I went to Livingston School and we were very close. We went to Roosevelt Junior High School, and then, went to New Brunswick Senior High School, and then, I came to Rutgers. I was very active in both schools. I had been class president all throughout my years. Then, when I came to Rutgers, I joined a fraternity. Rutgers was good. I was a commuter. We were called "townies" and we had a good band, but I also joined a fraternity. It was a good life. We had a lot of fun. I worked while I went to Rutgers and made some money. That was it, but Rutgers life was good.

SI: What was your family's attitude towards education? Did they want you to go for higher education or did they want you to go into the family business?

HH: They wanted me, of course, to go to college and have an education like that. I was a political science major and I thought I was going to go to law school. I met my wife and I thought I would go to [law school], and I was accepted to Rutgers Law School. I was going to go, but, then, I went to ROTC. I had a commission and I had to go into the service. So, that delayed that, but I was only in the service for a short while, because I got hurt. I fell off a truck and I dislocated my shoulder. So, after serving six months, I left, but, still, we had a good band of [friends]. I still maintain a lot of friends that we met in ROTC, Judge [Richard F.] Plechner, George Triplehorn. We still see each other. We have a good band of friends from our days in the [ROTC], from ROTC summer camp. ROTC summer camps were good experiences. We went down to Fort Benning for our [training], there, but I'm trying to think of some of the other camps we went to--Fort Meade, down at Petersburg, Virginia, [Fort Lee] and all that--but they were good times. We did well. We went there. One of our good experiences was, we met this Colonel, now Captain, [John Paul] Vann. He was the PMS&T [professor of military science and tactics] at Rutgers at the time, and he's the one who [was] the feature of *A Bright, Shining Lie*. [Editor's Note: *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (1988), written by *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan, covers Vann's experiences in the Vietnam War and his criticism of how the war was being waged by the United States.] He was quite a guy and we were very close. Judge Plechner and I were very close with him. I was the editor--we had an ROTC newspaper called *Cadet Call*--and I was the editor of it. So, Captain Vann and I worked closely [on it] and he was a great guy, used to tell us great war stories, and he became the highest-ranking civilian [in Vietnam]. [Editor's Note: Vann retired from the US Army as a lieutenant colonel in 1963, but soon returned to Vietnam as a civilian advisor. In the early

1970s, he became the commander of II Corps (usually a major general's position) and the first civilian to lead US regular forces in combat operations. He was killed in a helicopter crash in 1972 while serving in this capacity.] So, he was quite a guy. We enjoyed that, him, very much. We learned a lot from him. He gave us a lot of war stories.

SI: Going back to when you were younger, during World War II, do you remember the end of the war, V-E Day and V-J Day?

HH: Oh, yes, that's explicitly [in my mind], too, also. We were up at a family vacation in the Catskill Mountains and, I remember, they had a loudspeaker system and telling [us], "It's over, it's over," V-E Day, and then, we saw all what's going [on], how happy everybody was, "How great, thank God," and [I] remember the signing on the USS *Missouri*, when they signed the peace papers with Japan. We heard when Hitler was demised and all that. I also remember Mussolini getting hung in Italy, like that, but they impress you, as a youngster. What was I then? I was, in '45, twelve, thirteen years old. You still remember. You're getting more cognizant of these things.

SI: Do you remember if the war had any impact on your school, in terms of, say, not being able to do things?

HH: No, school was kept normal. It was a normal life. Everything was good, just, as I said, the only way we learned about [things] in school was through the current events every day. They kept us abreast of it, but it didn't impact [the school]. We still had pencils and papers and we had our books, and the teachers were very helpful of our learning.

SI: What would you say were your main interests before college?

HH: I liked sports, of course. We all liked sports. We had teams. We played a lot of basketball, we had a lot of football. We played out in the streets, we played in the playgrounds. I used to play in Codwise Park in New Brunswick. We played behind New Brunswick High School, on Livingston Avenue, and then, I started working in my senior year in high school. ...

SI: Were you working for your father?

HH: No, no. I worked in a store called Cheap John's, which is now John's, [in] New Brunswick, and then, after I got out [of high school], while I was going to Rutgers, I worked in the Rutgers Alumni Office. That's what got me interested in alumni affairs.

SI: When you were younger, before you worked at Cheap John's, did you work in your father's store at all?

HH: No, I used to go down there on the Saturdays, always as a family. My mother was there. What I did [was], I used to make boxes, clean up, sweep up and all that. That was the way of my mother and father keeping an eye on me. Yes, I did go on a Saturday to do that, and did other things like [that] around there.

SI: Did your mother or older sisters do anything during the war?

HH: My sister worked at the WPA [OPA, Office of Price Administration?] for this Mr. Hertz, also, with rationing, like that, and my sister, other sister, no. My mother was just a homemaker and she tried to do her best in her war effort to conserve. Everything was conserved, everything. You had less to do with a lot of things, you know, less food--the food wasn't as ample on the table as it was [previously], you know. Meat was rationed. So, everything was rationed. It was a hardship, but we survived it.

SI: Did you guys have a Victory garden?

HH: We did, good, yes, very good, we did. That was fun. We did that on the side of our house. We had a little Victory garden. Even I tried to plant some stuff. [laughter] I tried--I don't know how successful I was.

SI: Did you do a lot of canning and preserving at home?

HH: No, but I know my mother-in-law did. I remember my wife telling me she was very good at that. She loved the canning, but that, we didn't have that. We had to watch what we ate, did that, was all conservation.

SI: In terms of rationing, families with young kids were particularly affected, because, for example, kids grow out of their shoes all the time. Do you remember that being a problem in your family?

HH: Shoe rationing, that's right. You only had so many pair of shoes. That's good--thank you for reminding me of that, Shaun. I remember going out once with my sister. She needed a pair of shoes, and I don't know how, [if] she needed them and we didn't have the facilities, or if we needed stamps, or how we were supposed to get them, I don't remember, but I remember there was a hardship, going to a particular shoe store on George Street in New Brunswick, with my sister. I was a little boy, being dragged along, trying to get my sister a pair of shoes. I don't know if we needed stamps for it or rationing [coupons] for it or what, but it was something involved with that.

SI: Do you remember having to go with your older sisters or your mother to do any strategic shopping, going to certain places to buy certain things?

HH: No, I didn't do that. I played sports. I was a Cub Scout and a Boy Scout, I did all the others. We had a good troop. We met at Troop 10 in Temple Anshe Emeth. That was our Boy Scout days.

SI: Back then, were the Boy Scouts segregated by religion?

HH: No, not really, but, when I was a Cub Scout, we met in a church, and that was the church on Livingston Avenue, and it was just where we were able to meet. That was it, but we had non-

Jews in both. So, it wasn't segregated, but Boy Scouts days were good. We had a great group of guys and it taught us teamwork, camaraderie, and all the other stuff. So, it was good.

SI: Would you go to a camp?

HH: They had a camp, but I didn't go to the camp. They had a Boy Scout camp, but they slept in tents. I remember going up there once to visit, see if I'd like it, and it was a rainy day and muddy, and so, I said, "That's not for me." [laughter]

SI: Did the Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts do anything during the war?

HH: Oh, they were very active. We had a lot of parades. We always used to march in parades and all that, but, if there was a scrap drive, we used to do scrap and get [things], paper drives. We used to do that.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit more about the time that you went to McGuire?

HH: Yes, McGuire Air Force Base.

SI: What was that like?

HH: Well, we had a group. We raised so many funds, and I think we bought a plane, to tell you the truth, a Billy Mitchell B-25 plane. We raised a lot of money and we got a whole group of the student leaders from Roosevelt Junior High School--I could still picture the group there--and they took us by bus down there and we were all dressed in our best. I'll bring you the picture, Shaun. It was a cute picture--I'll try to find it--and we're all lined up in front of the picture and showed what we did, [that] the Roosevelt Junior High School class gave so much money for the plane. We had lunch down there. It was a big thrill to take a bus ride down to McGuire. We thought that was so far away, which is far when taking a two-lane highway down to that area, and they fed us and we had a good time. They showed us around the base. To see these planes, be up so close to a plane and sit in the cockpit, was very thrilling for little, young teenagers like that.

SI: Did the general or some officers come out?

HH: Yes, they had some officers, yes, and a few enlisted men. They showed us around very nicely.

SI: Did Rutgers play any role in your life before you actually came here? Would you go to the games?

HH: I used to go to games. I remember seeing Rutgers [play]. I saw the Rutgers-Princeton game in 19--, when they had the large estate in Rutgers, when they put bleachers on where the track is and all that, and we had a kids section. [Editor's Note: Mr. Hersh is referring to Neilson Field on College Avenue in New Brunswick, where the Rutgers football team played until 1938, when Rutgers Stadium opened across the Raritan River in Piscataway, New Jersey.] I

remember, we used to go in for nothing. They allowed us in for nothing, to sit there. So, we saw a lot of Rutgers games, and I remember Art Gottlieb, who was just inducted into the Hall of Fame. He was my gym teacher in New Brunswick High School, saw him play. There's a lot of other players. When I was even in high school, I remember seeing Frankie Burns play there, those games, Herm Hering. We all used to go to the basketball games, when they played in the old gym, but, you know, when you live in New Brunswick, you know, Rutgers is part of your life. Rutgers was so small at the time. It was only two thousand people. In my Class of 1954--I came to Rutgers in 1950--we only had about 450 kids, students, and we knew all our students. Oh, I remember, when also living in New Brunswick, we used to come over to Seminary Place and play basketball and used to sneak into the gym. There was a gym there. We used to sneak in on a Saturday, go in through the window and play basketball there, get a group of guys to play. It was a thrill to play indoors, on a hardwood floor, in those days.

SI: Is that where the Zimmerli Art Museum is now?

HH: No, on Seminary Place, where the Theological Seminary is.

SI: Okay. You had a lot of familiarity with Rutgers.

HH: Oh, yes. Rutgers was New Brunswick, New Brunswick was Rutgers. ... It was all contained. We didn't have the Busch Campus, we didn't have anything else, or Livingston Campus. We had Douglass, which was NJC [New Jersey College for Women], and New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Campus. So, you knew who people were, what it was, and they became involved with us and vice versa.

SI: Did you ever consider going anywhere else?

HH: Yes, I had a scholarship to a few schools down in the South, small schools, Davidson [College, Charlotte, North Carolina], I forgot, another school in West Virginia. I had gotten scholarships to there, but, you know, being New Brunswick and being close to your family, we were family-orientated, and financial scholarships weren't that much. So, Rutgers was very affordable in those days and it was still getting tough, in the '50s, to do it. So, that's where we came.

SI: Did your father always keep the business on George Street? Did he move around at all?

HH: No, it was on George Street. He had a store in New Brunswick. He opened a store in Irvington, too. He had two stores at the time and, when I got out of Rutgers, I went to work--I went in the Army, came back out--I was in the Sears training program. I went to work for them, and then, I went to work for [Sears] out in Chicago. I had just gotten married and I was the youngest guy to be out in Chicago, to have a buying job, a merchandizing job, but it meant, having just married, my wife was a schoolteacher in North Brunswick, traveling around a lot, and that wasn't for us. So, I opened a store in Summit, New Jersey. Then, I opened a group of stores.

SI: What do you remember about your first days at Rutgers?

HH: Yes. Oh, you've got to remember, we used to wear "dinks" [skullcaps]. We had dinks and all that, and we were hazed. You know, we couldn't do some of these certain things. [If] you're walking along the path and an upperclassman comes, you have to come walk around them. I remember walking by Willie the Silent. [Editor's Note: Mr. Hersh is referring to the statue of the Dutch national hero William the Silent (1533-1584), Count of Nassau, Prince of Orange, which stands at one end of the Voorhees Mall in the Rutgers-New Brunswick Campus.] I was in the band at Rutgers. I remember going on [trips] in the marching band, going to football games, thrilled to go out to Penn State, and we didn't travel, we didn't have the fancy uniforms they have today. We had just blazers. It was good to be [in], a small band, but it was fun. Mr. [Martin] Sherman was our band director. We had some friends in the band.

SI: When did you first start playing an instrument?

HH: When I was in about the eighth grade. I was in the junior high school band, New Brunswick High School band.

SI: Which instrument?

HH: I played the clarinet. I sat somewhere--Dave Crabiell sat next to me. He was a freeholder, director, in New Brunswick. He sat next to me in the clarinet section. We had a lot of good people there.

SI: When did you become involved in political science? What drew you towards that major?

HH: Well, I thought I wanted to be a lawyer at the time. Anyway, I figured I'd be [a lawyer] and that was a good entrée into it. At first--I changed my major about three times while at Rutgers. I don't know how many times you changed yours, [laughter] but I first thought I wanted to be a journalist major, then, eco [economics] major, and I liked the Poli. Sci. Department here at Rutgers. So, that went with it, and I enjoyed history, too. Probably one of my favorite, most favorite, courses at Rutgers was American history, taught by Charles Anderson, who was good, and I had Dr. [Richard P.] McCormick. He was one of my teachers. He was good, and we liked him so much, in fact, we inducted him as an honorary member of the Class of '54, many years later, about our twenty-fifth anniversary--President [Richard L.] McCormick's father, that is.

SI: What about your political science professors? Do any of them stand out in your memory?

HH: Yes, there was a Dr. [Norman L.] Stamps, who was good. He was good. Professor [John J.] George was good. He was probably one of the more famous professors in our days here. I remember going down to Princeton with him, hearing talks, political talks, down there with him. He was very active. He was a Southerner with a big accent, and very mind-driven, very broad to think. He was good, [as was] Stamps. Professor Burke taught a course in political history, from English political history, but they had a good department, a good, strong department. The classes were small and you got involved--not what, I understand, we have today, but, you know, you got involved with the classes, the teachers got involved with the students, and it made learning interesting. I remember talking some Voltaire. I remember, I took a Spanish course and

I had Professor Stevens, well-known professor, from Highland Park, I remember, very dapper guy, and everybody wore ties in those days, and jackets, the teachers did. I don't know what they dress [like] today, but they dressed [well], and I remember [him] casually standing on his lectern, smoking a cigarette, teaching us, every class. We had about maybe ten, twelve, eighteen people in the class, the maximum. So, classes were good. We had Saturday classes. We had eight o'clock classes, but the History Department was strong, the Poli. Sci. Department was good. We had good teachers and we learned.

SI: Academically, was it a big jump to go from New Brunswick High School to Rutgers?

HH: It was. The first year, it's tough, you know. You're learning how to study, really study, and how to hit the books and all that. You know, the first year, I think my average was about a "2.7," but, then, I ended up with a "3.4." So, I came on strong at the end. After my freshman year, after learning the ropes and what to do, I made dean's list all through that, after the first year. It's just a transition. It was a little difficult, but we survived it.

SI: When did you become involved with Phi Epsilon?

HH: My sophomore year, I was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi. It was a social [fraternity]. We enjoyed that very much, but, being a "townie," as we were called, a commuter, there were a small group of us who were commuters, [we] weren't involved as much as the people who lived in the house. We had a house at 4 Mine Street. It was a good house and I still see [and] hear from some of my fraternity brothers--not as close as some of the other guys are, but we still have it. Phi Ep was off campus a few years ago. Now, we're now part of ZBT, Zeta Beta Tau fraternity, and we hear from Zeta Beta Tau. Phi Epsilon is no longer a national fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau is, and we still get involved with them, still hear from them, some of the fraternity brothers.

SI: Was it an all-Jewish fraternity?

HH: It was a Jewish fraternity, yes. We had one Afro-American and we had a couple of non-Jews in it, too, but my best days were, as I said, Shaun, working at the Alumni Association. The director was a guy by the name of Bob Collett and the department he had, it was amazing. To tell you how it was, we were in Winants [Hall], we had an office, two rooms upstairs, we had Bob, he had a secretary, and then, there was a fellow by the name of Tom Wright, who did something, and Elizabeth--what was Betty's last name?--Durham. That was the whole Alumni [Association], that was a fundraising [group]--they were doing everything for the University at that time. This was in 1951, and working with them was good. Tom Wright put out the magazine, *The Rutgers RAM*. It was called the *RAM* in those days, *Rutgers Alumni Magazine*, and it was good, good paper we had there. I remember coming across some of the guys, even then. It's amazing. Floyd Bragg, in those days, he was active. He was, what? the Class of '36, and Dilatush ...

SI: Carleton.

HH: Carleton Dilatush, [Class of 1940], and I still see him. Carl, we still embrace one another when we see each other there, like that. I remember hearing about Paul Robeson in those days. I remember handling reunion. The reunion, I was a main cog in reunion in those days, as a student. I got paid--I don't know what I got paid, but it was good. I remember cleaning out the files, throwing out stuff that I shouldn't have thrown out. [laughter]

SI: It is pretty remarkable for only a four-person office.

HH: Yes, right.

SI: Now, I think three different units handle all that.

HH: Exactly, right. Well, look how it was, from two thousand [students] to how many? fifty thousand, whatever it is today. So, it's grown quite a bit, but it was good. It was a good, family-orientated [school]. Everybody knew everybody. I keep going back to that, but that's the way it was.

SI: How much time would you devote in an average week to that job?

HH: Maybe about ten, twelve hours a week, a couple days a week, a few hours, when Bob ever called me. It was funny--I got very friendly with his nephew, a fellow by the name of Dick Collett, who was a classmate of mine, and we were in ROTC together. We went to summer camp together. He lived in Pennsylvania, and he went on to flight school and he was killed down there, in flight school, in Fort McClellan, down in Alabama. That hit, hurt very much, because we were pretty close and, I remember, he lived in a place, town, called Dallas, Pennsylvania, and I remember going out to visit his parents there and to tell them, you know, how sorry I was, to tell them about Dick and how good he was, how much fun he was. I just remember--things are indelible in your mind, Shaun--and I remember seeing his father sitting, in a small house, sitting in a rocking chair, just, "I lost him, I lost him, I lost him," and I get chills just thinking about it now, as it's coming back to me now. It was sad, one of those things.

SI: A training accident?

HH: Yes, he came in too low. He was in a light aircraft and he hit a wire and it went down, but he was a good guy. Bob also had another nephew who came to Rutgers, Tom Prisk. I don't know if you have come across Tom Prisk, but he was there.

SI: I have seen a lot of these names, but I have never met most of them.

HH: They were a Rutgers family. I remember Bill Bauer, [a member of the Class of 1942 and Rutgers Professor of Ceramic Engineering], meeting Bill Bauer through the alumni office, years ago, and some of these other fellows like that.

SI: It seems like these men, who I only know as older folks, very early on, got involved in alumni affairs.

HH: That's what happens. That's why I'm still involved. My wife said, "Why are you still involved?" You know, you get a certain feeling for it, you know, and I have to trace it to Bob Collett. Still, Lois is around. We're friendly with his wife for a while, and then, I stayed on with the [Rutgers Alumni Association], was very friendly with Vince Kramer, [a member of the Class of 1941 and former Executive Secretary of the Rutgers Alumni Association]. Dick Plechner and I went to Vince's retirement dinner. We gave him a saber, you know, and we used to see Vince afterwards. I don't know if you ever knew Vince, but ...

SI: I met him a few times.

HH: He was quite a guy. He ran the Alumni Association very well. He was a good man. In fact, they named a highway after him. Vince became a highway.

SI: Yes, over on Interstate 287. [Editor's Note: The Route 78/Route 287 Interchange in Somerset County, New Jersey, was renamed for Colonel Kramer in 1999 in recognition of his distinguished career in the US Marine Corps from World War II through the early Vietnam era.]

HH: Yes, and we used to go out with Vince, Dick and I and Vince, just go drinking, and we heard a lot of war stories from him and all that. He was in a big involvement with me at Rutgers, too, Vince.

SI: Today, many alums I interview who are active alumni say it was their fortieth or fiftieth reunion that got them involved. However, it sounds like many of the men you were involved with had always been involved as alumni. Do you think there was a reason why they got involved so early?

HH: Well, we had a core. I've been president of the class for about twenty-five, thirty years. I've been class president of '54 for many years and we had a [core]--it's Dick Plechner, I keep going back to, George Triplehorn. There were about five of us who were the core of our class, and we started our reunions. I remember Dick and I starting the fifth reunion, the tenth, the fifteenth, the twenty-fifth, but it was the fiftieth--and, as we get along, we got to get more involved with them. We had a good committee for our fiftieth. We raised a lot of money. We raised almost a million dollars for Rutgers. I had a fellow by the name of Charles Cooper, who'd never been involved, and, now, I made him part reunion chairman, because I knew he was a go-getter, and he raised a good portion of that money. He said he's sorry he never got involved before. So, the fiftieth, it's how you get people involved. It's tough today--you know that.

SI: When you were working in the office as a student, what were the reunion and alumni events like back then?

HH: Well, the big thing was reunion. I remember getting the flags out, you know, the class banners, getting them out, signing them in. We had a coffee hour. The parade was big. The Old Guard was always a big event, even back then, to bring people back. I remember meeting people from [other eras]. I had a fraternity brother who was one of the partners and principles of the Club 21. I remember going to meetings there; a lot of them still go. He was a Rutgers man.

SI: Was it Kriendler?

HH: Bob Kriendler, yes. He was a good guy. He was a high school fraternity brother of mine--I was in a high fraternity--and he was also a Phi Ep. So, we used to [see him]. He was a big Rutgers man, a good giver. Sonny Werblin was a Phi Ep. So, we had some good classmates like that, but, in-between, I don't remember that we had that many events, like we do today, involved, but the big thing was reunion. The communication was the *RAM* and one man did all the fundraising. That was Tom Wright. He ran the Rutgers Fund in those days.

SI: That was before the Rutgers Foundation.

HH: Yes, before the Foundation. [laughter] Maybe they made more money, I don't know.

SI: You mentioned Paul Robeson earlier.

HH: Yes.

SI: Rutgers had an "on again/off again" relationship with him, particularly in the 1950s, during the McCarthy Era.

HH: Right.

SI: When you were here, how was he viewed?

HH: Well, he was still an icon. He was an icon here. He was an All-American, a great baritone. I remember him singing Othello, and he was looked on quite favorably in those days. That was before he was thought of to be a Communist and all that, and that probably had a bearing on him here. I think it came in when they thought he was a Communist. Maybe he was, maybe he wasn't, but his political views were his, but I think that had a bearing on his being [viewed favorably later], but he was still an icon. I remember, going back to the alumni, Ozzie Nelson was an alumnus, Class of '27. We were [in] contact with him. He was good, a good alumnus to be [in touch with], who we knew.

SI: Did you get to meet him?

HH: Ozzie Nelson, no. No, I remember correspondence with him, but, in his day, he was *The Ozzie and Harriet Show*. That was known to me. Mason Gross was [here]. We knew him. He was good. He was a very fine gentleman.

SI: He was on television then.

HH: Yes, and he was a provost at the time, then, President. He was very active, good. [Editor's Note: Dr. Mason Gross served as University Provost prior to serving as President of Rutgers University from 1959 to 1970. He appeared on the television game shows *Think Fast* and *Two for the Money* in the late 1940s and early 1950s as an expert and/or judge.]

SI: This was during the McCarthy Era, the "Red Scare."

HH: Yes.

SI: Do you remember the impact that had on Rutgers?

HH: Yes. We had a few professors here that were blackballed, before and after that era, too, like that, but there were a few professors who were off. I can't recall who they were, but they were condemned, one way or the other. You know, people are very narrow-minded in some areas. [Editor's Note: In 1952, when called to testify before a US Senate subcommittee regarding their alleged ties to the Communist Party, Rutgers professors Moses I. Finley and Simon W. Heimlich invoked their Fifth Amendment rights and refused to testify, leading to their dismissal by then Rutgers University President Lewis Webster Jones.]

SI: Was that well-publicized among the students?

HH: We had the *Targum* then and it was known. It was known, but we're not [as] politically activated, motivated, as we ought to be. There was no proactive movements at the time, that I remember.

SI: The student body was less political back then.

HH: Right, yes.

SI: Would you say most people were more conservative?

HH: Rutgers was a conservative school at the time, yes. We were, from our top, from our President, [Robert C.] Clothier, on the way down to Howard Crosby and Dean--who was the Dean, began with a "B?" [Cornelius Boocock]--but they were pretty conservative, yes.

SI: Back then, Rutgers was more involved with its students, took more of a paternal approach to student management.

HH: They did, they did, yes.

SI: How did that impact the life of the students?

HH: Well, we had a few problems in the dorms. I remember, you know, card playing and all that type of thing. That was a big thing--no drinking problem, like we have today, no clubs of lesbians and homosexuality. That wasn't involved. It was more good, clean living. You knew what was going on and everybody--I keep going back [to this]--knew everybody. We worked together. We were more family-orientated. I keep going back to the family. We helped one another.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were just talking about student life in general, that it was much more conservative. Were there any issues that motivated the students? I see in the University Archives a lot of activity about bond referendums and trying to expand the school.

HH: That, I don't remember. I remember, the state also, then, didn't have the money that they said that they [should], same as they do today, but that, I don't remember, Shaun.

SI: What about your involvement with the fraternity? What kind of things would you do with the fraternity?

HH: Well, the pledge life was fun. In fact, we just went down to Princeton, my family, last Sunday. We live, as you know, not too far from Princeton, and we went to look at the new dorm, this Whitman College, which is beautiful. I remember telling them, when I [was] pledging, I had to go down to Princeton to steal a Princeton banner, which I did, brought back to the fraternity house, but it was social ... and very athletic. We had a lot of good sports teams at Rutgers, you know. Club, you know, intramural, sports were very big and it was very social. We had fraternity parties, of course, and we drank beer, and there was a lot of competition amongst the fraternities. The football players had their fraternity. There are a couple of Jewish fraternities on campus, a lot of Gentile fraternities, but we all got along well together, was no animosity. It was good, clean living at the time. It was a lot of fun. It was good.

SI: Aside from being a Jewish fraternity, was Phi Ep known for something, like being associated with one aspect of the school, a sports team, perhaps?

HH: No, no, we were just a social fraternity, that's all, nothing more so. The sports thing was the Dekes [Delta Kappa Epsilon] on College Avenue, over there. DU was, Delta Upsilon was, an athletic/scholarship [fraternity], Phi Gam was another fraternity that was [there], and then, there were a few multicultural fraternities that were just starting up. Before that, they weren't too big on campus. There was a fraternity called Phi Gamma Delta, which started bringing in Afro-Americans, which wasn't too up-to-date in those days.

SI: What do you mean by that?

HH: You know, Afro-Americans, number one, Rutgers didn't have that many Afro-Americans on campus, but they started going to fraternities during the '50s, when we were there. We used to have some great athletes here--not to the extent that we have today, but we had a few then--like Hank Pryor, [William] "Bucky" Hatchett, were good.

SI: Do you remember if there was any anti-Semitism on campus?

HH: No, I didn't feel any anti-Semitism. I'm sure it was there, but I didn't feel it. I didn't feel it at all. There was no animosity, again, no hostility amongst us. We were surviving in the '50s. The '50s was coming out of the war, then, the Korean War came, but, I remember, oh, when we were going to Rutgers, I remember having a lot of veterans in our classes. We had a lot. I remember Ernie Reock. Do you know Ernie Reock?

SI: No.

HH: He's head of a department. He's still around. He was one of the class, and, here, we had young guys and here were some of these older fellows coming into class under the GI Bill, was interesting. It added a semblance of maturity to us, to see this. I remember, I had an economics class with a couple of older fellows who came out of the war in there, coming under the GI Bill, and, here, "Gee, these lucky guys. They didn't have to pay for their education," and all that, but, as I said, they added some semblance of maturity to us.

SI: Yes. In conducting these interviews with the GI Bill veterans, I get the sense that they were more active, in terms of that they would talk back--not talk back, but challenge what the professor would say, be more vocal in class. Did you find that to be the case?

HH: That was the case, right. I remember this guy. We had one fellow, in an economics class, I don't remember his name, but always, as you said, would challenge and was a little different than the others, and thought maybe he should get more than anything, but it was good; had it in the geology class, also. We used to go on these geology field trips and we had an older [student], a veteran, so-called, in the class. I remember walking along the rocks, you know, looking, talking to the fellows and [him] telling us how it was, but--it was funny--they didn't talk about their war experiences. They'd talk about coming back and talk about their education today, not what had happened, you know. You'd [have] thought we would've been more interested [in], "What did you do during the war?" They didn't want to talk about it. They didn't talk about it. It's the same as--we were talking about Lloyd Kalugin--never talked about his war experiences until it happened. [Editor's Note: Dr. Lloyd Kalugin, another Rutgers Oral History Archives participant, served as an infantryman in Europe during World War II and helped to liberate a concentration camp.]

SI: Did many of the veterans live in the Hillside trailers?

HH: Yes, they lived in the trailers. Yes, that was another thing I remember. They had trailers along the banks [of the Raritan River], where the dorms are, and we used to have eight o'clock classes in those barracks. It was cold as hell and, at eight o'clock in the morning, coming to it, sometimes, we didn't even have any heat, you know. You didn't have to get up for eight o'clock classes, did you? [laughter]

SI: I had a few.

HH: We had Friday--we even had Saturday--classes. It was good. You know, you had Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday classes, or Monday, Wednesday and Friday classes. So, you maybe had to come in just for one class. We had a group of guys, going back to school, I remember having a group of townies, we had a group of guys, who we used to commute together with, which bonded us, fellows who lived up on Livingston Avenue. There was a fellow by the name of Gerry Gorelick and Tony Davis and George Delanoy. We all commuted together to Rutgers and we banded together. We studied together; a fellow by the name of Stanley Kravit. These are just guys. We all lived together, you know. We socialized together. So, I was fairly fortunate. I had, on one hand, my fraternity brothers and my Rutgers guys I had, and our

commuters, you know. It's amazing, here, Dick Plechner and I are friendly for over fifty-some-odd years, fifty-five years, just getting together, and he's been an asset to oral history. [Editor's Note: Judge Plechner also serves on the Rutgers Living History Society's Operations Committee and shared his oral history with the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

SI: Yes, he has, certainly. It is interesting that you got involved with several different groups. Focusing on your home, did you notice changes in your neighborhood in the postwar period? Was it becoming more built-up?

HH: No, it was still the same. I still lived in the same area up in New Brunswick, like that, but, then, I got married. I moved out to Edison. I started working and, like that, I had a couple stores that I [had] started. I had about three stores and I grew up to about ten stores. I still stayed involved with Rutgers. I got on the board of Middlesex County College, as I said. I was on their board for a while and I got involved in banking. I started a couple of banks with some men. So, I went into banking in the '70s, in Woodbridge, and just did fairly well.

SI: I want to go back to when you were in the ROTC.

HH: Yes.

SI: For example, it is very interesting that you had that paper. I had never heard of that before. What was the training like?

HH: ROTC training, we had classes a couple of days a week. We had a PMS&T. The office was down there in the old Barn [College Avenue Gym]. They had their offices down there. We had a sergeant who taught some classes, a lieutenant, we had this Captain Vann, who was the head of it. I was in the infantry. We had the infantry, the ordnance, and then, the Air Force, and the infantry was [the largest?]. We had some courses. We had drill every Tuesday afternoon. We used to go out to Buccleuch Park and drill, and it was interesting. Tuesday, we were there. We had a lot of good courses. We learned different things, like that. The paper was good. *The Cadet Call*, look it up, it was a cute, little paper. I don't know how often we came out with it, but we gave information about what we did in the ROTC and the Army and all that.

SI: It just went out to the ROTC.

HH: ROTC, right, yes.

SH: Did you start it or had it been going earlier?

HH: I don't really remember. [laughter] I just remember I was the editor, maybe because I was a journalism major, I don't know, at one time, but it was good. I worked it with Captain Vann, and I think it was a mimeographed sheet, paper, but it was informative, at the time. We told what was going on, activities, when we had lectures or different other things like that. Then, we had some good people there. Fred Gruninger, who was the former Athletic Director, was our battalion commander. Art Kamin, who I told you was the editor of the *Red Bank Register*, lives

in Fair Haven, he was a commander. I was a company commander and all that. We had ranks and all that type of stuff. So, it was different.

SI: Why did you choose Army over Air Force?

HH: I didn't know, really. As a matter-[of-fact], you know, you came in there, who knew about ROTC when you came in? The first two years were mandatory, and then, I decided to stay with it. You got paid. I think we got twenty-one dollars a month. So, it helped supplement my income at the school, but I didn't know one from the other. The Air Force was closed at the time, so, they said, "Take the Army." So, I took the Army. That's just a matter of not knowing one or the other.

SI: For your first three years, the Korean War was going on.

HH: Right.

SI: Was that on your mind at all?

HH: We all were thinking about going to the Korean War. We knew what was going on in Korea, as I told you about the fellow who I knew [that] got lost there, and we knew a lot of people who went to Korea. I remember going to parties for people going over to Korea.

SI: Rutgers people or neighborhood people?

HH: Neighborhood people, more so than that. I had orders to go to Korea--to go to Fort Lewis, Washington. That's when I got hurt and I couldn't make it. Some of my classmates, George Triplehorn, went over to Korea, and a lot of other fellows. Mike Gural went over--just mentioning names that you could know. A lot of classmates did go over and [could] speak to that. You should speak to George Triplehorn. I know he was over there.

SI: We have probably sent him a survey, but we will follow up with him. Was there anything filtering back to the classroom from what was going on in Korea?

HH: No. We just were cognizant of what was going on, that there was a war going on, it wasn't going well, and what should we do? The political ramifications, from MacArthur and Truman, that we knew about, and we knew, when MacArthur was fired, what would happen and that Truman was the big gun at the time. [Editor's Note: President Harry S. Truman relieved US Army General Douglas MacArthur of his duties as United Nations Commander in Korea in April 1951.] I remember when Eisenhower came back. I was in Washington. I remember seeing him when he [had] just come back from overseas, before he went to Columbia University. I remember seeing him in his limousine, driving down by Arlington Park. I think I have a picture of him doing that, too. [Editor's Note: Dwight D. Eisenhower served as President of Columbia University from 1948 to 1953, when he took office as President of the United States. During his Presidential campaign, he promised to go to Korea to assess the situation, which he did in November 1952.]

SI: When was this?

HH: In the '50s, in 1952, or something like that, when he came back from overseas, before he became President. When was he President, 1952?

SI: Yes, I think he won the election in 1952 and took office in 1953.

HH: Yes, when he was going to Columbia, before he went to Columbia, [something] like that. Funny, seeing famous people--I remember being in England, seeing Queen Elizabeth. I was so close to Queen Elizabeth, and how you remember Queen Elizabeth, I remember her having the whitest of skin, standing close to her, but that's besides; go ahead.

SI: Was that in the 1950s also?

HH: Yes, sometime.

SI: Or later on?

HH: No, sometime when I was over in London with my wife. That was just saying different things that you remember.

SI: Why were you in Washington?

HH: Just visiting. [With] friends from New Brunswick, I think, we went down to Washington to see the capital, but I remember going to Washington [when] we were stationed at Fort--the one in Baltimore, Fort Meade. We used to go to Washington. We were in summer camp, so, we used to spend our weekends in Washington. I don't know if that was one of them, that week we saw him.

SI: How many summer camps did you go to for ROTC?

HH: We went to two. You know, we went between our junior and senior [year]. We went to two of them, and that was mandatory when you went to Advanced ROTC.

SI: Okay, one was Fort Meade.

HH: And the other was down in where it was hot, and down in ...

SI: Benning?

HH: Yes, we went down to [Fort] Benning, [Georgia], yes. Then, I went to Fort Benning for my BIOC [basic infantry officers' course], bachelor officers' training.

SI: Being an ROTC cadet in these camps, I have heard various stories from people about how they were tougher on college boys. Do you remember how it was?

HH: No, I didn't feel it was any tougher. They were fair with us. They were good. They gave us good training. They didn't take anything [away] because we were college or anything else like that. Basic officers' infantry training was tough. That was sixteen weeks down at Fort Benning, and we survived it and it worked out well.

SI: In terms of the impact of the Korean War, how did most people view the war? Did they see it as necessary or unnecessary?

HH: Oh, they didn't like it at all, same as the Vietnam War, "It was wasted. Why are we there? What are we doing there? Why are we involved? The impact to us--why do we have to lose lives over there?" I don't think it affected our economy, but it was just a matter of moral gratification.

SI: Did Captain Vann ever make any comments about how we were fighting the war?

HH: No. He felt strongly that we should be in there and wipe them out. He was a military man. That, [you would] have to discuss that with Judge Plechner. I don't remember that. I'll have to talk to him about that.

SI: Was there anything that he brought into the classroom from his own personal experiences, that you remember?

HH: No. He was a rough, tough soldier. He went by the book. He was a wiry guy, little guy, had a waist like a thirty-two-inch waist, thirty-inch waist, and wiry. ... He was tough as nails and he just told us to keep training and training and training.

SI: The ceasefire was declared in 1953.

HH: '53, right, '53.

SI: What did you think your future held after that?

HH: "Well, if it's peaceful, then, why should we have to go over there, you know? Why, even as my classmates [did], why do we have to go over there now, to keep the peace over there? What's the reasoning behind it?" Who was the President then, in 1953?

SI: Eisenhower.

HH: Eisenhower, right, yes. So, it was just, "Why are we there? Why are we going, you know? Why don't we stay home? Why don't we do what we have to do here in this country?"

SI: Did they talk about the Soviet Union as a threat?

HH: Yes, the Cold War was coming on, and everything was, "Communism, Communism, Communism," the fear of Communism. Like the fear of terrorism today, [it] was the fear of

Communism in those days, you know. Cold War was prevalent. We knew about what was going on there. They told us to be afraid of the Russians and all that type of stuff.

SI: Were there other activities that you were involved in at Rutgers that we have not gone over, any clubs?

HH: Well, I belonged to the International Relations Club, the Spanish Club. They had a lot of clubs. They were active. Geography Club, they even had a geography club, or Geology Club, I don't remember, but clubs were big then. They kept us [busy]. They had a Journalism Club. *Targum* was big on campus. They had a good magazine called *Argosy* [*Antho?*]; go back to that question again.

SI: I was just asking what clubs you were involved in. How involved would you be in these clubs?

HH: Yes, we went to them. We loved Rutgers. We felt for Rutgers at the time.

SI: These little clubs, Geology, Spanish, how active would they be? Would you go to meetings often?

HH: Yes. No, they had meetings on occasion, maybe once a month. The Geology Club, we used to go on field trips, on ourselves, you know, just go to Hunterdon County, see the terminal moraine, or go look at rocks up in the Watchung Mountains, like that. The Spanish Club would bring in speakers, like that, to enhance your Romance languages. Journalism Club would work on different things. WRSU was active. [Editor's Note: WRSU is the Rutgers University radio station.] In high school, I had a radio program called *High School Hits and Highlights*, which was a good program. There were a lot of Rutgers people involved with WCTC. [Editor's Note: WCTC AM is a Central New Jersey radio station based in New Brunswick.] This program was very successful.

SI: Where did you broadcast from?

HH: Out of--WCTC had a little studio on George Street on top of the People's Bank Building, every Saturday morning, had an hour, like that. So, I did that. That was a good program. I should have stayed in radio, but there were a lot of Rutgers people, involved with Rutgers, who went on to bigger and better things. There was a guy by the name of Joe Dembo, who became a station manager at WCBS. Nat Shoehalter, he was active. A guy by the name of Bob Bell--a lot of Rutgers people were involved with it. Being local to Rutgers, it helped both.

SI: What was the show about?

HH: Our *High School Hits and Highlights*? It was good. We had entertainment. We had people come in and sing. We gave news, we gave interviews and all that.

SI: It was focused on high school life.

HH: High school, Brunswick High School, yes--very good ratings. [laughter] I don't know what they were, but it was fun to do.

SI: How much preparation would go into the show?

HH: Oh, a lot. We had an advisor. We had a singer come on quite a bit, a piano player, Ernie Scott, came on quite a bit. We did that and it was good.

SI: Was it just you in charge or was it a bunch of your classmates?

HH: A couple of us had it, but I was the [leader], and I got it through--I inherited it. My sister went to New Brunswick High School before. She had a friend, Harvey Fireside, who started the show. That was in New Brunswick, about 1948, and then, he knew my sister and he got me involved with it. So, then, I took over the show in about 1948, 1949. Yes, I had it for about two years. It was good, a nice show.

SI: Did you do any radio at Rutgers?

HH: No, I didn't. I was too involved with other things. I liked the Alumni Association and they [WRSU] wanted me to go out and sell ads and I didn't feel like going out and selling ads at the time, even though I would have done it today.

SI: At the time of your graduation, did you have to go right into active duty?

HH: No. I went to this job with Sears. I worked down in Trenton, and then, I went in the Army, in March of 1955.

SI: Okay. You were married at that time.

HH: I got married. No, I got married in '57. So, I worked for a year beforehand. Then, I went in the Army and, after I got out of the Army, that's when I got married. Then, I went back to Sears for a while. I was with them for a while, supposed to go out to Chicago. Then, I went into business with my father.

SI: How did you meet your wife?

HH: I met her [when I] went up to Nantucket with a fraternity brother, and he met his wife up there. My wife's from Passaic and my fraternity brother, Erwin Hack, is from Passaic. He met his wife and I met my wife. He knew my wife from before. In fact, he had wanted to take her out, but he gave her to me. So, we got married. We had a courtship and got married. My wife went to Barnard in New York. So, she was still a junior at college and we had a courtship.

SI: Before we leave Rutgers entirely, were you involved in Hillel?

HH: Yes, I used to go to Hillel, yes. Hillel was up on Church Street. We used to walk up the steps. They had a lot of dances at Hillel. Rabbi Funk was the leader then. In fact, when he

passed away, a few years ago, they asked me to make a few comments about him and he was dynamic. His wife was a good customer of my store, so, that worked out well. She was a nice lady. [Editor's Note: Rabbi Julius Funk founded the Rutgers Hillel in 1943 and passed away in June of 2006.]

SI: Was it more of a religious or social group then?

HH: It was a combination of both. They had services, but it's not to the extent it is. All it was was Rabbi Funk. He was it. Today, you ought to see what they have at Hillel today. They didn't do any of the fundraising that they have today or anything like to that effect.

SI: It was focused on the one man.

HH: Yes, right. They had a lot of good students who left. I'm trying to think who did it then. I think there's Paul Berman who did it. I'm trying to think who [did it], some of the students that were active in it, but it was a small organization, not what it is today.

SI: Was there mandatory chapel when you were at Rutgers?

HH: Yes, that's good. Yes, we had chapel on--I don't remember what day it was, but we did have chapel. We had physical education, which was mandatory. We had to have gym. We had to have swimming. We had to pass the swimming test. Those were things. We had to climb ropes. We had to do things like that, yes, but it was important to have that. Bob Sterling, I remember, was our gym teacher at the time. He was also our freshman coach in those days.

SI: You were never involved in any athletics at Rutgers.

HH: No, I just played club sports. I played, you know, the basketball and the tag football. We had tag football at the time, you know, Phi Ep against DU and all that kind of stuff, but nothing to that extent of what it is today. We used to play behind "The Barn," you know, on College Avenue. That's where we played our athletics.

SI: Once you graduated from Rutgers, you went to Trenton to work for Sears.

HH: Sears, yes, and then, I went to Chicago, and then, I went in the Army, and then, I got home and got married.

SI: What was getting into the Army like? How did that come about?

HH: Okay, I got my orders to go in March. We had different classes. I went down to Fort Benning. I was stationed [there], went down to Fort Benning. We had certain classes. We had sixteen weeks of training, and it was tough. Then, we had our choice to go into the Rangers or the paratroopers or air, light aircraft, or, maybe, if your commanders commended you, they were looking for people to go in the CIA [military intelligence?] and all that, but, as I said, I got hurt and I dislocated my shoulder. I'm still bothered by it and that did it.

SI: Which branch would you have gone into?

HH: I probably would have gone into the CIA, if I wanted to, yes, but that was a three-year commitment, but I thought it was worth it. They tried to entice different people. So, that was good.

SI: Did you have the idea in mind that you wanted to get your commitment over as quickly as possible?

HH: Well, I would have gone in and I would have stayed in the Reserves, you know. I thought the Army was good. I enjoyed [it]. I wish I didn't get hurt--I would have stayed in.

SI: You were disappointed when you had to be discharged.

HH: Yes, yes, was mixed feelings. I said, [for] one thing, [it was] good to get out and go back to civilian life, but I don't think there was anything wrong with the Army life.

SI: Tell me a little more about your basic officer training, the sixteen weeks.

HH: Well, we had; cut that off for a second.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: Shaun, just seeing this book, [Rick Atkinson's] *An Army at Dawn*, just reminds me--when I was in grammar school and what came back--I remember reading all about, or, at school, hearing all about, Rommel and the wars, you know. We became very interested in what's going on in North Africa, what was going on between Rommel and Montgomery, and then, the invasion of Italy, and we used to follow it. We had maps in our classroom, showing how far the Allied forces were going, where they were stopped and getting weather reports, what was happening in Italy, going back to North Africa, what was going [on] with the "Desert Fox" and all that. That, we knew about. They let us know about it. If it was the truth, we don't know, but we were very impressed with Rommel and he was really made a hero, what he was accomplishing. We also remember knowing about the competition between Montgomery and who else was it, Bradley? I don't remember.

SI: Patton?

HH: Patton, oh, Patton. Everybody knew about Patton. He had the best PR around. Everybody knew what was going on with Patton, like that, but who was the other American commander in the African Campaign?

SI: Eisenhower?

HH: No, Eisenhower was Supreme Commander.

SI: Bradley was there, Patton.

HH: We'll find out, okay, but that was it, okay. So, where were we now?

SI: We were talking a little bit about Fort Benning.

HH: Fort Benning was good. I was an officer. It was nice. I had officer plates. Wherever we went, they saluted us. That was good, went to the officers' club. Training was rigorous. I remember, I learned how to sleep anywhere, you know. You get used to getting up at four, five o'clock in the morning for drills, and I learned how to sleep on cement. We had some rough training in the swamps, getting bitten up. Now, today, I'm still allergic to poison ivy from my Army days, because I got a bad case of poison ivy, you know, lying in the grasses like that. We had some good teachers, good instructors. A lot of Southern instructors were down there, Army men were down there, and we used to travel to Atlanta quite a bit. I had a friend, Harry Mervish, a fraternity brother, who was in the Air Force, who was stationed down in Macon, Georgia. I remember going down to visit him. We used to go into Montgomery, Alabama, Mobile, Alabama, traveling the area, met some nice fellows from Michigan. We had a couple of buddies. We went fishing out in the Gulf of Mexico, going to Panama City. It was good, worldly--opened my eyes to a lot of things. First time I ever ate catfish was when I was in the Army.

SI: Had you ever been to the South before?

HH: Oh, yes. We used to go to Florida, used to go down there, but never to Georgia, like that. I drove down. I had a car down there, so, I took a fellow by the name of Bob Hart, a classmate of mine, a fellow from New York, Abby Mann, who went to CCNY [City College of New York], who I had known. We drove down together. I was one of the few guys who had a car down there, and I remember Bob Hart's fiancée came down. Every time I see them at reunions, he tells me how I lent him my car for the weekend, so [that] he could take his future wife around. He reminds me about that. Dick Plechner got married down at Fort Benning. I went to his wedding down there. Bob Hart got married. I think I was an usher at his wedding in the Army. So, it brings team-ship, camaraderie, again, if I say it right.

SI: Had those guys gone in the year before, right after college?

HH: No, we all went in together. We were on the same BIOC class. They had different classes. I think we were Class 16 at the time, and that we were, our class. There's myself, Plechner, a guy by the name of Fisher--we were all together in the same class. So, we stayed together, but we were in the same hut. They put you in the cabins. Oh, no, no, that was summer camp, no. We had private quarters for that. [In] BIOC, we had private rooms. We had maid service. No, they treated us well. We got paid nicely and it was good. We went into Columbus, Georgia, to get our uniforms. They had nice dress uniforms, which we never wore. So, we had to do these things.

SI: Were there a lot of social parties?

HH: Yes, they had an [officers' club]. We used to go to the officers' club, which was quite nice. Drinks were cheap. They had Big Bands. I remember, Woody Herman came down once, and I met some nice young ladies from the area that came down. It was good.

SI: Do you remember seeing signs of segregation in the South?

HH: Not actually seeing [them]. We knew about it, but I personally didn't see it. We knew it was there. We knew Columbus, Georgia, had it. I remember seeing, as he's reminding me right now, driving down, "Blacks Only" restrooms and all that type of stuff, but I tried to avoid that type of stuff.

SI: This is six years after Truman integrated the Armed Forces. [Editor's Note: In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, ending segregation in the US Armed Forces.]

HH: Yes.

SI: How integrated were the units that you saw?

HH: I remember, we had some nice fellows from Wilberforce [University] and Howard University. I was friendly with a couple of those guys, really nice gentlemen, fine guys. Now, we befriended them. We didn't socialize, but we're still friendly. There's no anti-Semitism, I didn't come across [any], no anti-blackness. We were all together. I think we were. Hopefully, we were too intelligent for any of that and anything else.

SI: After the sixteen weeks, was it at the end of that that you were injured?

HH: Yes, at the last [moment]. I graduated it and, as we're riding on the truck, at the back of a truck, I fell off the truck and I dislocated my shoulder. It was out. So, I went to the hospital. They reset it and all that kind of stuff, and then, I dislocated it again, because it was a recurrent dislocation. They called me in one day. They say, "Lieutenant Hersh, we don't need you anymore." I enjoyed the Army. I liked it. I thought I could serve my country and do [something], not that I was that patriotic, but I thought it was a good experience, taught me leadership, taught me understanding. They said you had to go home, so, I went home. Tell you one last story, Shaun--I remember, there's a classmate, a friend of mine from New Brunswick High School, who was in the Army. He went to Rider University, a fellow by the name of Stan Bruskin, and he was in Fort Benning as an enlisted man. We were friendly and, one time, I took him to the officers' club and I got yelled at, because you can't take enlisted men to the [officers' club], but I used to give him my car, also. He enjoyed driving it around, because, here he was, he was in civilian clothes, and people used to salute him, [laughter] because it had officer plates on it. I had an "O" with a blue plate, and the funny thing [was], he was in for two years. He and I got discharged the same day and we drove back to New Brunswick together, in August of whatever it was, '55, '56, but that was it.

SI: One final question, because I know you have to go.

HH: Yes.

SI: You did not take a traditional business course at Rutgers, but you run a successful business.

HH: Right.

SI: How do you think your education at Rutgers and your military experience impacted your career and your life afterwards?

HH: Matured me a lot. First of all, I got my job through Rutgers, because I was solicited. Sears came down to the Rutgers campus and they had, what? it wasn't a career day at the time, but they came down. A lot of other companies came down. I was impressed with Sears. They did a great presentation and they hired me. That was because of Rutgers. [If] I didn't go to Rutgers, maybe I wouldn't have gone to Sears. Sears had a great training program, prepared me for [business]. I think I have examples of leadership, being president of the class and starting banks and being in my own business, through the Army training, but Rutgers had developed a lot in me to, I think, make me fairly successful, one way or the other. So, I'm thankful for Rutgers. That's why I'm active still in it, and I encounter great people, like Bart Klion and Bert Manhoff, [who] came here. [Editor's Note: Bart Klion and Bert Manhoff, both members of the Class of 1948, were leaders in the Rutgers Living History Society's Operations Committee and its predecessor organizations. Klion and Tom Kindre, Class of 1942, both served as President of the Society.] The Alumni Association has done a lot for us and I do a lot for the University and that's why I enjoy oral history, because [of] the people that are involved with it, you know, Carl and Bart and Tom [Kindre], great guys. So, it's good, meeting people like Paul Kuznekoff [of the Rutgers Foundation]. That's why I help raise money for Rutgers and I give some money back to Rutgers.

SI: Many alumni say they feel a little strained from the University with everything that has changed over the years. How do you feel?

HH: Well, there are a lot of things that we don't like about the University, but we still try and help one way or the other, you know. Is the new composition of the University, one university, good? [Editor's Note: In the Fall of 2007, Rutgers University-New Brunswick integrated its five undergraduate colleges into one undergraduate school, the School for Arts and Sciences.] It's good, it's good, so, we work for it. What's going to happen to the Alumni Association is another thing, because I've been so active with the RAA [Rutgers Alumni Association]. I've been on their board for about thirty years. I've been on the Federation Board. I started the regional clubs idea for the RAA, with Jane Parker. I was instrumental behind that. It's grown to be a big force like that. So, I do believe in the University. Rutgers isn't the most conducive, the administration, between you and me, to help relations with alumni. They antagonize them a bit, in different ways, that they don't know how, but they don't do it, but we still believe in it and we still work for it and we still try to do our little bit to help them.

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

HH: No. You're a good interviewer and very pleasant, happy to meet with you and meet with Sandra, and I think whatever we can do--I think our events that we had, you know, [like the one]

that you had with Tom Brokaw was great and Steven Spielberg was good. I think the one with Rick Atkinson's going to be a great event. So, we look forward to that. I think your interview with Studs Terkel was great, and I always asked you for that disc, to see it. I'd like to show it to people. [Editor's Note: The notables Mr. Hersh mentioned above were all honored as recipients of the Stephen E. Ambrose Oral History Award, conferred at the Rutgers Living History Society's Annual Meeting each May on the Rutgers-New Brunswick Campus.]

SI: We can talk about that afterwards. We certainly appreciate your involvement over the years and your helping us with various things, like the RAA Gifts and Grants Committee. As I said in all the interviews we did as a result, the RAA helped us do those interviews and you certainly helped us with that.

HH: Yes.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: Go ahead.

SI: You stayed in the hat business throughout your career.

HH: Right.

SI: What is the name of your stores?

HH: My store, Keen Hats is my name. My stores are called Nobby Shops, but I've had stores throughout Jersey. I had different names, Nobby Shops. I had a store in Passaic called the Vogue; a store in Somerville, New Jersey, called Fashion Millinery. I had a store in Englewood and Bergenfield. I had stores up in West New York. I don't even remember the names today, but it's been good. I enjoyed my banking. As I said before, I had started a couple banks with some fellows. I was on the Regional Board of Summit Bank. I started the bank in Woodbridge, New Jersey, with four other men. We sold out to Chase and, a few years ago, I was involved with the bank in Edison, New Jersey, an ethnic bank, which was all right. So, these are things that I'm involved with.

SI: You still have some stores.

HH: I still have two stores left, to keep me occupied. I don't want to retire completely, keep my mind going, and keep Rutgers going, keeps me active. Otherwise, I'd probably get into trouble. [laughter]

SI: Thank you very much.

HH: Okay, I hope I helped you. I hope it means something.

SI: No, it was very interesting. These anecdotes will be very important for the record.

HH: Okay, super, good job.

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

Reviewed by Ben-Zion Jaffe 2/1/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/11/11