

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FLORA CAMPBELL JESPERSEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

HANNE ALA-RAMI

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Hanne Ala-Rami: This begins the interview with Flora Campbell Jespersen on February 23, 2007, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania with Hanne Ala-Rami and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

HA: I'd like first of all to thank you so much for having us over at your beautiful house today, and, just for the record, could you tell us when and where you were born?

Flora Campbell Jespersen: I was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey in January 10, 1924.

HA: All right and to begin the questioning we would like to begin by talking about your family. Can you tell us your father's name?

FJ: William Thornton Campbell.

HA: Where was your father from?

FJ: He was from Boston, Massachusetts and he came to the area, Camp Raritan it was, or Raritan Arsenal, and that's when he met my mother who was from New Brunswick.

HS: What did he do for a living?

FJ: He was in the State Actuarial Department and I remember going on field trips when he would check out the people who were counting the number of cars going over a bridge, or their usage in various places.

HA: Okay

SH: Was that why he was at the Raritan Arsenal?

FJ: No, he was at the Arsenal because it was World War I, and he was a soldier, then he just stayed in the area.

HA: Do you know where he went to school?

FJ: No, I don't. I know he grew up in the Boston area and, I think, he went down to Rhode Island to school but I am not sure. He died when I was just eleven, and I didn't go into his education.

HA: You mentioned that your father served in World War I, what branch of the military was he in?

FJ: Just the regular Army, I believe.

HA: Did he serve overseas?

FJ: No.

HA: Can you say anything about his experiences in World War I?

FJ: No, I really can't.

HA: Do you know if he was just not comfortable discussing his experiences?

FJ: It just didn't enter into our family life. We have a very close family and we were really more in tune with my mother's family because it was local and his was up in Massachusetts.

HA: Do you know how his attitude towards World War I affected your views on World War II?

FJ: No. Actually he entered later than just at eighteen, so it was a duty to his country.

HA: Okay and now shifting over to your mother, what was your mother's name?

FJ: She was Margaret Mansfield Daly and then married Bill Campbell, and she was local in New Brunswick and was the only daughter of a lawyer in town. I won't say she was a spoiled daughter, but Judge Daly really went up the ranks and he ended up as a Supreme Court Judge in New Jersey. Her mother died when she was about fifteen or seventeen and then my mother was the hostess for her father. [laughter]

HA: Did she work outside the home when you were younger?

FJ: Did my mother? No.

HA: Do you know how your parents came to meet?

FJ: Well, they met, I think, she was active out at the Arsenal. She was also active in politics and community affairs in New Brunswick, so that's how they met.

HA: How did you like growing up with three siblings?

FJ: Oh, it was fun.

SH: Where did you fit in the order?

FJ: I was the second, my sister, myself, and then the two boys were after us.

HA: Was your family very close sibling wise?

FJ: Very. Well, do you mean age wise? Right my sister is two years older than I. I was born January 10, 1924, a brother was born January 2 of the following year, [laughter] and then my youngest brother was born in the end of '26 so we were really close in age.

HA: What activities and hobbies did you have while growing up?

FJ: Hobbies. I read a lot and we played outdoor games, not seriously, but just fun games and you just occupied yourself. We also had shows in our basement and we invited all the kids to come and pay five cents to see us make fools of ourselves. [laughter] And it was lots of fun we always gave the money to some local charity. But it worked out because we had new porch steps put in and the old ones were taken and put in the basement so we had a gallery for everybody.

HA: Oh, wow, that's great. [laughter]

FJ: And we were in a neighborhood in Highland Park where there were a lot of kids, so that they could come.

SH: What area of Highland Park?

FJ: We were on Grant Avenue, which they sometimes used to call the Manor. Harrison, Grant, maybe Cleveland, and there's another street in there. [laughter]

SH: Did the Raritan River play any part in your childhood? Were you allowed down by the river?

FJ: ... We were pretty far from the river because we were up in the 300 block. I do remember my brothers building a kayak in the backyard and then taking it down the river, I think, once. [laughter]

SH: Maybe it wasn't water proof. [laughter]

HA: What was it like growing up during the Depression?

FJ: It was interesting and we keep remembering it today because I don't think the children today have any idea of saving money or of not wasting things. I can remember men knocking on the backdoor for food, or just a job to earn some money. You just learned to make do with what you had.

HA: Did your family face any hardships?

FJ: That's hard to say, in that my grandfather died in '32 and my mother even though she was a spoiled darling, was a community leader and she would not have his name besmirched in any way. So when his second wife was going to declare him bankrupt, rather. Mother said "no", so she paid off all those debts and as a consequence might have sold some jewelry because with four children she had to. We also had a great uncle, my grandmother's brother and my grandfather's sister who lived with us. We were a close-knit family, but there wasn't a lot of money to spread around. We also got hand-me-down clothes, and there was no disgrace in wearing those, though they sometimes looked terrible. [laughter] Money wasn't all over the place, but we had a house and we had food.

SH: Your father's job continued?

FJ: It continued but, he died three years afterwards. He had cancer of the throat and Mother used to have to take him into New York for treatment. He was claimed cured and then he had a hemorrhage and died. So that was difficult. Mother had to hustle after that and she sold ready to wear clothes from a catalogue. She also sold some intercom systems which were just coming out. She did all of those and then also worked for General Johnson. When the war came on and even before that, General Johnson had her as the chairman of various fund drives and he paid her. She did the work, all the organizing stuff. [laughter]

SH: Did you meet General Johnson?

FJ: ... I probably did but at that age it didn't matter. [laughter]

SH: You weren't called upon to do any hostessing duties or anything as a young teenager?

FJ: Oh, yes. [laughter] We worked on every campaign. I have pictures of myself in a Bundles for Britain costume, and, then for Rush Aid to Russia. We were always involved, and one interesting thing Mother also wrote part-time for the *Daily Home News*. The *Daily Home News* was much more of a local paper at that time, and, they would run series on families who were vacationing at the beach, or local customs or organizations. She interviewed new-comers. We were in the paper a lot and, in fact, they had a good photo of the four of us sitting in the window seat. That's the sort of thing we were exposed to all the time. We had moved to Highland Park in '26, I think, and had a wonderful house and we were active members of the community. One story I remember when there was a night watchman who used to make his living by just walking the streets and once a week he would stop at the back door or the front door and Mother, as well as the neighbors would all give him something. It was that kind of a neighborhood. We could walk around anytime of night or day and not worry. We could go to Raritan Avenue and pickup the night paper for my great uncle, we had a little crosswalk we all knew the police in the city. There wasn't that big a force but if they saw me walking and hitting that crosswalk, he would stay with the car shining a light through that crosswalk until I got two streets over, and then by the time I got to my house, that car was riding up the street to make sure I got home safely. [laughter] That's the kind of place Highland Park was, it really was great. You knew everybody and everything. Then, what else about growing up? We had a lot of kids in the neighborhood and my father and my uncle used to have all the fireworks and they'd start them early in the morning. They'd fire off the parachutes and then you'd go around the neighborhood trying to locate them. Then at night, they had displays and Mother used to set up the first aid station for any troubles, or burns, that was just a neighborhood thing. [laughter] I want to go back to our policeman. My father died in 1935 and at that time you had the viewing, or funeral, at your own home. That was on a Saturday afternoon there were lots of cars and flowers and everything else. The following Saturday, Old John [night watchman] came walking by and he didn't even know that my father had died [laughter]; that's how good he was at protecting the neighborhood [laughter].

HA: Did you have a job when you were younger?

FJ: How much younger?

HA: During high school?

FJ: Yes, I worked on George Street, there was a Woolworth's there. I worked there during the summer. I'm not sure certainly at Christmas-time, and I babysat for the neighborhood people and also friends of my mother. They would come pick me up and then one interesting thing, my sister, to make money, baked cookies and sold them in boxes. We still laugh about that, I have that recipe, and she made quite a bit of money. [laughter]

HA: Now, why did you choose NJC to further your education?

FJ: Because that was the nearest place, and I could get in, and as I mentioned before, I was a commuter, because I couldn't have afforded staying on campus, and it was just as good.

HA: Did you consider any other schools at all, or just automatically knew you were going there?

FJ: ... I think I applied to St. Elizabeth's but that was just a gesture.

SH: Had you been very involved in the church as a young girl and your brothers?

FJ: Well, I went to Catholic school for the first eight grades.

SH: Oh you did.

FJ: The boys didn't. They went to the public school but I went there and then, for ninth grade I went to the Anabel School, which is now defunct. It was a school that my mother had gone to and then it had been quiet or not in existence and then a young group of people decided they wanted a private girls' school and so they approached me. They offered me a scholarship and so Mother said, "why not", and so I went over there for the four years and we had a big class of ten students and the next class had two.

HA: Oh, wow.

SH: Two questions then. Where did you go to Catholic school?

FJ: ... St. Paul's in Highland Park and we walked to school everyday and walked home for lunch.

SH: Did you?

FJ: Yup.

SH: Now the Anabel School, where was that?

FJ: That was on Bayard Street in New Brunswick, right beyond, ... the post office. ... It isn't there [today] but right [next to] the Court House square, just down from that. ... It was an old house that was made into ... a school.

SH: It covered all four grades?

FJ: Twelve grades.

SH: Oh, did it?

FJ: Yes. From first grade on up, and it was a lovely little private school. We had to shake hands with the headmistress in the morning and we were out by one o'clock and shook hands again. It was an old-fashioned girls' school.

SH: Were there any boarding students?

FJ: No, we all were local.

SH: Do you know who was behind setting up the school and reinstituting it then?

FJ: ... I knew the names, and they were all local people that you probably wouldn't run into now. The Misses Williamson who were around the corner from you, off College Avenue, and the Middlesworths, just a group of people who started the school.

SH: So you had no religious affiliation or anything?

FJ: ... No.

SH: Sponsorship, or anything like that?

FJ: No.

SH: Was there anyone in that environment then that would have encouraged you to go to NJC because it, too, was an all women's school?

FJ: No. As I said there were ten of us in the class and I think it was four of us who went to NJC because it was local and we just wanted to further our education. Some of the other girls went elsewhere; one went to Duke, one went to Connecticut, one went to a finishing school. We sort of spread out, but nothing pressured us to go to NJC whether it was feminine or not.

SH: So education was very important for even the women in your family.

FJ: Oh, absolutely.

SH: You said your mother had gone to the same school.

FJ: She went to Miss Anabel School in the old days; she was one of the forces in it. Then she went to another school, then to Rutgers Prep for a while, then to the Pratt Institute in New York and then she took classes at Rutgers.

SH: Did she take journalism classes by chance at Rutgers, do you know?

FJ: My mother, no.

SH: No, I was thinking because she worked for the...

FJ: Oh, no. No, actually, it was through the Boyd family because we knew them.

SH: Now, what did she study at the Pratt Institute?

FJ: I'm not sure. ... It certainly wasn't design or anything like that. It was just ... a regular education, not finishing school type, no I don't know.

SH: I just wondered if she had a career in mind and then went the other way.

FJ: ... I don't know. She was always involved in community service and organizations.

HA: Did you receive any financial aid for NJC?

FJ: Yes, I got a half tuition and, since I was a commuter, I didn't need room and board, or anything like that.

HA: How did you like commuting to school?

FJ: ... It didn't bother me one way or the other. It was a good life and I also had my own life in Highland Park. I was active in Girl Scouts. I was on the Girl Scouts committee and indignant when the personnel director for vocations at NJC saw that and said "Oh you should be a Girl Scout leader," and I said, "The one thing I won't do is be a professional Girl Scout." I was thinking of doing bigger and better things. [laughter]

HA: Were you interested in history and political science in high school?

FJ: In high school, yes. In high school you just thought of your different subjects. I just knew the ones I didn't like, which were the sciences, and I just took what came. [laughter]

HA: Did you develop any particular close friendships while at school?

FJ: ... At NJC?

HA: Yes.

FJ: I did and I didn't. Being a commuter, you didn't really ... have too much contact with the residents. I mean, they were friendly and all that. I was friends with ... a girl who went through Anabel School with me and then other local girls from New Brunswick and the area. We had a clique and we met in The Beehive, which was the commuter's place, and we could have lunch there and often played cards or something when we had free time.

HA: Did you feel involved at NJC even though you were a commuter?

FJ: Yes and no. We had to show up at chapel and other times. We did not have to attend night meetings, when it would be hard to get there. Yeah, I felt connected with NJC.

SH: Were you initiated? Did you go through the initiation?

FJ: Oh, yes. You had to wear the dink and the costume. Each year had different costumes that you had to wear for the first month, or was it six weeks? Everybody had to do that.

SH: Can you tell me what they were?

FJ: Well, I'm just trying to think. I think I had, I just gave it away two years ago, a little sash with ... a green bag hanging down. ... That's where we're supposed to [store an item], and if the juniors or seniors asked us for something, we're supposed to have it ... in that bag and I forget what we were supposed to have. But and some of them would be very mean about it. ... At that time there was also ... a little store right across ... George Street and I forget the name of it even, ... but you could run in there and get goodies and stuff and ... it ... [had] a tea room upstairs and we sometimes sat in there instead of going to the cafeteria for lunch. [laughter]

SH: What about the other initiations, I understand freshmen weren't allowed to walk in certain places?

FJ: ... That's very hazy now because it didn't affect us as much being ... [commuters] because ... we came in near the classrooms and so we didn't have to walk on our Sacred Path.

SH: That's what it was called, the Sacred Path?

FJ: That's right, and so it was ... okay with us but not a big deal. ... But we were involved in the ceremony, when we could first walk on that. ... We all had ... post office boxes at school so we had to go into that building, but you didn't walk on [the Sacred Path].

SH: Did you walk to campus from Highland Park or did you take the bus?

FJ: Yes, I did. As I told Hanne before, ... I ... walked that bridge and up Neilson Street, rapidly sometimes. [laughter] ... I think I ... walked everyday. Sometimes I would take the bus back down George Street if I was tired or something, but, no, I walked.

HA: How did you like the campus itself?

FJ: Oh, it was fine. ... Yeah, it was okay.

SH: Tell us some of the activities that revolved around this mandatory chapel?

FJ: ... Well, we had to go twice a week and ... as freshman you just ... sat anywhere. As upperclassmen, you had to wear your gowns and ... it was okay, and the Friday one was more ... interesting, ... it was shorter and it was after classes. ... Actually ... the ... Tuesday chapel ... was in between the classes so that you ... couldn't get out of it. [laughter] But, I mean, the Friday you might be ... finished for the day and you could leave. ... Now this is interesting, I do remember we had Eleanor Roosevelt speak and I don't know whether it was at the Friday chapel or ... an extra meeting, but I can remember her standing there holding the lectern with jeweled hands, that's it. [laughter]

SH: Were you involved in any of the clubs, or extracurricular activities?

FJ: Yes. ... I should get my yearbook out to ... remind me. I did belong to the history club and ... I was involved in the Bees, or the commuter club. ... Then ... we had certain charity drives. ... One thing during the war, which is the whole time, ... J&J ... was having a hard time putting out their ... quotas of bandages, and stuff like that, so ... they called NJC to see if there were any of the girls that could come down and give a couple of hours. That was most fun and we got paid for it. ... We bothered the regular ladies who were doing it because we were fast. We [wanted] ... to get everything done and ... the people who were regular employees were not as happy having us down there. [laughter] Also, we found out that we could ... get more hours than ... the ones we just pledged from NJC and ... we're going hellbent [on] production, making lots of money, and having fun, and we got called in because we were part of the honor system and had said we'd only work so many hours and here we were working more and that was not allowed. [laughter]

SH: To back up just a little bit, you started at the Anabel School if my math is correct in 1937?

FJ: Right.

SH: What did you know of what was going on? In high school did you know what was going on in Europe, were you cognizant of it, was this something that was part of your discussions in class or were they part of your discussions at home?

FJ: ... More at home. ... It wasn't too obvious. We were just involved in everyday life. ... Now my mother would ... know the outside world and I'm trying to think when the ... big fund drives were. Obviously, Rush Aid to ... Russia and ... Bundles for Britain were ... from '38 on. ... That was ... through my mother ... rather than the school. The school was isolated or insulated, I think that's a better word.

HA: Now did you know what kind of career you would like to pursue after graduating?

FJ: ... No, I'll tell you, I ... went to the vocation director and I really had thought that banking would be sort of my sundae; maybe I could live in New York City and ... have an apartment

there. ... I did have a ... job interview or two ... outside my field. As I said, she wanted me to go into Girl Scouting professionally and I said "No," and then ... in my senior year, one of my favorite teachers Miss Campbell, no relation, ... called me aside and she said "What are you going to do?" and I said "Well, I don't know." She said "Well let me tell you, they are just starting a new program through the Rutgers library and ... they want some students who will work there part time and then go back up to the library school at NJC." So I went down, got interviewed and there was another girl whom I still know, ... the two of us started out that way and we went through. ... They were nice, they fixed our ... schedules down at the library to ... coordinate with our classes up at NJC.

SH: So did this become a master's program for you or was it part of your bachelor's?

FJ: ... No, it was a bachelor's because at that time they didn't give out the master's at [the] Rutgers library. So I have ... a BA and a BLS. ... That's one thing that when we enrolled again, ... I won't mention her name, she called us in and wanted us to sign up for chapel and gym ... as required courses. Well, we hotfooted it back to ... Donald Cameron the librarian and he picked up the phone and ... discussed it with her and we did not have to do that. [laughter]

SH: I can almost guess who that person was. [laughter] To ask questions then, before we talk about your career choices and stuff I would like to talk about the war years.

FJ: Okay.

SH: Are your younger brothers at Rutgers at that point?

FJ: No, they went directly from school into the Navy because ... in '41 is when I graduated from high school and the war had started ...

SH: The war starts that next December.

FJ: That's right ... and ... before that we were a little bit involved because of Camp Kilmer.

SH: Tell us about that.

FJ: ... Troops were coming in and out and I did get a job in the PX at Camp Kilmer and that was an easy, fun job. ... For a couple of summers before that, I went and was a waitress at a summer camp for adults and they had a band ... [of] college kids and, lo and behold, in the PX, here come two of those band members. ...

SH: They were in the military now. [laughter]

FJ: ... Before they were sent over

SH: Do you remember their names?

FJ: ... Not right now, ... no, I can't.

SH: Tell me, where was the camp that you were a waitress at?

FJ: ... That was up [at] ... Camp Karamac. ... Right ... on the ... Delaware River, near ... the big falls?

SH: Bushkill Falls?

FJ: Is it Bushkill Falls? ... We used to be able to go over to Stroudsburg, ... for the big town and it was ... right outside of Belvidere(?) ... because we went over there I ... was there ... just one summer, and then the rest of the summers I spent at Camp... Kilmer.

SH: So the summer that you were out in Pennsylvania was ...

FJ: It was in New Jersey.

SH: Oh, it's on the Jersey side?

FJ: Right.

SH: Worthington State Forest or Park, or something?

FJ: That wasn't it.

SH: We'll have to research that. You were in high school?

FJ: It's between high school and college that I worked there. I'm pretty sure, or maybe it was my first ... I have to look back in my memory books.

SH: Before Pearl Harbor happens, there are young men going off into the draft. Did you know of anyone who was drafted?

FJ: ... See, yes, I did and what was interesting, as I said Camp Kilmer was in existence before that and so on Pearl Harbor day, I was out ... [on] a walk with a soldier from Camp Kilmer and his friends. We were just walking around ... Johnson Park and we came in, that's when we heard about it and so the two boys had to hotfoot it back ...

SH: What was the reaction? What did you think when you heard the news?

FJ: But you know ... I was young and innocent and "Oh that's terrible." It didn't really penetrate, I don't think on our age. ... You know, life was still [carefree]... and we... met a lot of the soldiers. They had USO dances on certain nights of the week and we'd go over there. We did the bandages, we did our bit for the war, but it really wasn't until some of them were writing back, like the ones that I met through the PX, that it began to ... really come to the fore. Also, when you'd ... meet somebody and they were on their way ... from town, or if a ... notice came

of somebody being killed, that's what brought it back. But until then, it was happening over there, I don't think. We did have blackouts ...

SH: Tell us about that. How strict were they?

FJ: Oh, they were strict, but it was more of a fun and [games] ... those people are playing. [laughter] ... They were the older people in the neighborhood and ... we had to have the curtains over the windows. ... We had a sleeping porch and it bothered me to have to have curtains over those windows ... [because] you could never see out. ... But it didn't, only if ... we thought about Camp Kilmer and the boys going in and out ... did it hit home. ... But, as a war effort, it was more annoying than ... worrisome. ... We had one summer we girls rented ... a place at the shore and we had to get, beg for, ... points to go get canned goods to take down and have our own food down there. Or ... that you couldn't get the butter that you wanted, or ... as I say, you lived with it, but you didn't. ... It didn't affect your daily life that much.

SH: With your mother having two sons in the military, did she have the flag in the window, with the blue stripes?

FJ: Oh, I think so, yeah. Oh, yes ... if mother didn't do it, ... she did do it, but ... my great uncle would have insisted. [laughter]

SH: Had he been in the military in World War I?

FJ: No ... never. ... He was a retired shoe man from New Brunswick. ... He had a good life. He was a bachelor all his life ... but we couldn't have made it without him. After my father died, we could go to Uncle Bill and, say, it was Mother's Day, could we have ... a dollar or two to go and get flowers for her. [laughter] ... Mother even ... did many things to make money and she rented out rooms and ... I can remember different military people coming when they were just being assigned for a short time. ... That way we knew there was a war on but it didn't really [impact us].

SH: Your brothers were gone at this point

FJ: Yeah ...

SH: Were you writing to them?

FJ: Oh, yes ... and I was a rotten sister. They would send me a letter and I'd send it back with the spelling corrected. That got to be a standing joke. [laughter] ... We had a good life together and one time ... when my brother ... Peter came home from ... the service, it was just at Easter time, and he ... decided," Flora, I'm going to take you out and buy you an Easter outfit," and that's what he did. You know, he had some money in his pocket and ... that's what he wanted to spend it on. [laughter]

SH: Was your sister in nursing school?

FJ: Yeah, she was in nursing school in ... New York City and ... she left, I guess, in, she graduated in '40, so she was there ... for three years, and, then in '44 she was engaged to be married. ... Jim was in the Marines and ... he was out on the West Coast and he just called up and said, "Molly, you have to come out here, I want to get married before I go overseas." [laughter] So her father-in-law to be and mother ... arranged [it] and got her on a train out to ... San Diego. ... She had quite an adventure getting out there, but she went out in '44 and they were married and then she came back and ... that's another interesting story. In '45 when ... we already had V-E Day, and that was a great occasion, but then V-J Day, we were at our place in Manasquan that we rented. ... Molly was visiting us and she went downtown to buy something, which was ... maybe a mile away and she had her radio with her for some reason and she kept saying, "Oh let me go back to be with somebody else when they ... [signed] the truce," or something like that. I'll never forget that. So we were all there. ...

SH: What kind of celebration did you have with V-E Day and V-J Day?

FJ: Well, I can't remember. ... I think, in New Brunswick we had fireworks ... and stuff like that but nothing ... else. ... Also for V-J Day it was more of an everybody was doing it, it wasn't individuals. ... Then another thing, when Jim did come home ... Mother ... had a luncheon for him so friends and family could all get together. ... She was very proud that she found some fruit cocktail to open and Jim took one of his, [and asked], "What do you think we had been eating all this time?" Best time. [laughter]

SH: Great story. After you were walking in the park in Johnson Park with the two guys that you had met at the PX, were they from the area ...

FJ: ... Actually I wasn't, maybe I was working at the PX then. ... But Red, ... one of the fellows, I ... corresponded with him for years and years and years ... when he was overseas and ...

SH: What I wanted to ask about was, that seeing as this happened on a Sunday afternoon, when you went back to NJC on Monday, you're in your freshman year, what was the discussion? What was the reaction? What were the women and the teachers saying?

FJ: You know, I really can't remember. ... We didn't have a special ... chapel that day; it was the next day, ... on Tuesday. ... My subjects ... were not world history or anything like that ... I don't think that they really [discussed it].

SH: Did you all listen to Roosevelt's speech on the radio?

FJ: Absolute, you mean, at school? ... Yes, I think we ... [heard] it in the commuters [club], Bees thing. ... Now that I think of it, maybe a lot of the resident students didn't ... [go] home and then they went home for the weekend and they maybe didn't get back right on time.

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SH: I was asking a question about not so much displaced persons because that happened after the war, but, while you were in school, did you notice any students coming to NJC whose family had either escaped Europe or the conditions there, or had been perhaps sent out by family members?

FJ: No, I really didn't. As I said we were isolated in being ... commuter[s]. ... If there was a girl brought on campus for a safe lodging ... I wouldn't have run into her. Except you knew there were a couple of kids and we might have poked or nudged somebody else as they walked by or in the class. My subjects were in history and poli sci and they wouldn't have been what those girls would have been into right away. They would have to go more the elementary route. ... That's another thing on education. [When] I ... [first started] ... out, I was going to be a teacher. I took one course of education and decided that it was not for me. I couldn't stand it. ... I wanted them to tell me how to react to the kids ... and that's what I thought education [was], but the history of education was not for me. So that's why I didn't know until senior year what I was going to do. [laughter]

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

FJ: ... Well, there's a difference ... Dr. Anna Campbell was a ... good friend and a nice professor.

SH: Any relation because of the name Campbell?

FJ: No. They were from Virginia. Then one of my favorites would be ... Dr. Whitman, he was poli sci and he was a good professor. ... The other one that wasn't a favorite, but Emily Hickman was a professor whose classes [you wanted to take] because she was great.

SH: How did she challenge you?

FJ: She didn't. ... She just gave you the facts. It's what happened and this is the way it was, and you just better learn that or you didn't pass her course.

SH: Wasn't she an activist?

FJ: ... Yes, I'm trying to think. We were scared of her. She was a short, little lady and she hustled in the classroom and hustled out but she was really ... a good educator. [laughter] ... Dr. [George P.] Schmidt ... whom I felt I knew on the outside. ... And then there was a math professor, I passed his house everyday when I walked to school. ... I'm trying to think ... those are the outstanding ones. The fact that Anna Campbell knew about this job is her sister worked at the library and then I got the job and we were very good friends and often at their house. ... But she was always my professor ... she didn't [give me special treatment]...

SH: In Highland Park were there lots of professors' children that were your age?

FJ: No, they would have been younger. I dated a couple of the professors after I got into the library and they were around. ... It was a ... great life. [laughter] The academic, of course ... no

sense telling you that the academic life is so different from ... industry or ... anything like that. ... Going from college to academic, in the library, I didn't have to face the real world. It was just a nice way to go. Also, it was ideal going to [the] Rutgers library because I was of the age which was the same as the patrons ... or just a little bit younger than all the returning veterans and so ... they were looking around ... and it was interesting.

SH: You're bringing us to the next question. Talk about that change, from your graduation in '45 when the war has ended in Europe. When you graduate, and that summer then the war ends in the Pacific, what happened to Rutgers then? You are right there, watching it all.

FJ: But, you know, ... it was a ... placid little island where, as I say, the academic life is so different. ... When these [men returned] ... it wasn't right away. It was more, six months or almost a year before the veterans really came back to school, and it did change in that we had more people in the library. We had more people who were studying, and we had more people who really wanted to be there, and it was a different atmosphere. When I first met my husband it wasn't a pleasant meeting because I had sent out the request for overdue books and he came storming in and said "This is not mine," and so, "Okay, don't drop dead, we all make mistakes" or something. But ... that was the difference. ... Before, if we sent out a notice, they came in and very apologetically ... and ... "Yes, yes, ma'am, yes." [laughter] But that would be the main difference, that there was a change in the atmosphere in that ... they were there not just to ... do something else besides going out to work. ... Fraternities weren't as important ... afterwards. ... The campus life that they had beforehand changed ... the ones that were there and then went off to service and came back to a more serious life. It was probably more of an adjustment for them because ... everything was coming up roses first and then when they came back ... there was a purpose. ... You've probably done Tony Antonelli?

SH: No.

FJ: No? He's up in Connecticut or Massachusetts now and he writes for the alumni monthly and he would be a ... good one to get opinions ... if you can. I don't [know if he was in the service] I'd have to think. Now Ralph Vorhees was right on our street, ... actually, he was my younger brother's friend, so there was that age difference, and then he turned out to be in the same class as my husband, Jeff, so we go to the reunions and he'd be there. ... Ralph took everything face value and he was just, everybody was his friend ... and so he was always going to go to Rutgers, no matter whether he was in the service. ... All the boys in ... Highland Park that went, that was the only place they had ever considered going whereas, boys from North Jersey, or South, ... they had to go on the train and ... sort of completely go away from home. ... They were glad to come into a sheltered community after being away in the service and they just slipped right in and that was home, but they were there as I said, for a purpose. They were not just coming down and going to classes and having fun and going to football games. It was a different way of life.

SH: Had you ever gone to any of the parties at the fraternity houses?

FJ: ... Before or after? [laughter] ... More before ... because ... some of our friends were in the fraternity houses and, also, ... I knew ... Mrs. Law who was the house mother at ... Delta Phi and ... so I ... went there. ... Now it's getting fuzzy in my old age whether it was before or after,

or it was ... both, and I remember ... one time when we were staying over, and it's a long time ago. They opened up a dormitory in the fraternity house and we were up there chatting away and all of a sudden there was a man's voice and he says, "Turn that light off, girls". ... He had been, I won't say hiding in the house, but he'd been in the house. He was trying to go down from the third floor to the, and go on out. ... We were shocked there was a man. That was not allowed during the fraternity parties. [laughter] But ... the fraternity parties were ... more serious. Before that they were ... boy meets girl and let's see who you know. Get all the NJC girls up and ... have a good time. But afterwards the fraternities were not as important, mostly as a place to hang their hat.

SH: There was a curfew at NJC for the women who lived on campus. Did that ever affect you at all?

FJ: Only in that ... a couple of times I double-dated with a friend, ... a girl who was on campus, and we had to get her home and then, ... they could get me home. Now, I won't say ... any time was okay because my mother was pretty strict and my great uncle was even stricter, and when we were at home... he went to bed at eleven o'clock every night and even when Mother and Daddy had parties, he would get up, turn down the heat. "Time to go to bed, folks," and then he'd go on up to bed. ... A couple of times when I was out and a friend had brought me home and we'd sit in the car and talk, he might come out and walk up and down the street and check us out. [laughter] We were pretty well-regulated. Any other questions?

HA: What did you and your family think of FDR and the New Deal?

FJ: ... My mother was a confirmed Democrat, thought he was walking on water. ... I can remember having a discussion with ... the Voorhees family and their best friend and they were all for, Hoover and we were, I can remember stamping my foot, "You know you don't know what you're talking about," and so we did ... discuss among the kids. [laughter]

HA: Were you politically active?

FJ: ... Not really. My mother was a committee woman and worked with the voting. I don't know if I worked on the polls there, I work on the polls now, and I was always a Democrat, just because the family had been but I admit when I moved to Pennsylvania, I didn't like the Democrats in Pennsylvania so I became a Republican. [laughter]

HA: How was your family involved in the street patrols in Highland Park?

FJ: ... I'm not sure that they were. ... No, I think it was just the neighbor.

HA: Was your family involved in any other parts of the war effort?

FJ: ... Well, my mother ... went back and worked at the Raritan Arsenal and, I was at the PXs in Camp Kilmer and the boys were in the service and my sister was a nurse in New York City.

HA: Were you involved with the Red Cross at all?

FJ: ... Yeah, I was and I'm trying to think of how. ... I can't remember.

SH: You talked about the USO dances, you did go to those parties?

FJ: ... Yes, that would be once a week they had them, and, it would be shifting personnel. I mean, the ... boys would ship out and a new group would be coming in. ... One interesting thing, a good friend of mine passed through Camp Kilmer and he couldn't say over the phone where he was but he said, "You know can you come meet me at the corner of Such and So," and I did, and he says "I'm at Camp Kilmer" and he couldn't even tell his family. ... He was from Connecticut, but ... I ... saw him off and I wrote to him for years and years.

SH: Now, you had met him at Rutgers.

FJ: ... No, I met him at a friend's home when he came to visit before the war, in Highland Park. During the war people came and went. That was the strange way they were very secret and I said "I work out there," he says "I can't say anything," so we met in town.

HA: You felt a lot of people benefited financially from the war. Did your family find this?

FJ: ... No. Just that that was a place I worked and got money, you know, and ...

HA: Did you look forward to graduating?

FJ: Yeah. I really didn't know. ... It wasn't as big a step for me because I was [not] going, [I was] staying right in New Brunswick, but it ... was, you know nice to graduate and it ... wasn't. I just knew all of New Brunswick and Highland Park. It wasn't like the other girls from NJC who were leaving that area and never to return.

HA: How did you end up in Pennsylvania? You mentioned that you met your husband through the library systems so when did you guys move out here?

FJ: ... Not until [later]. ... We got married ... in '49, but ... we moved up to New York ... State, Schenectady, and he worked for a company, GE. Yes, then he changed jobs, we went back to New Jersey and then onto Pennsylvania.

SH: Let's just back up just a minute before we go on. The last mention of your husband was it was not his book you had called in. Could we talk a little more about that?

FJ: Well, ... I'm trying to think, we had this little theater, Europa Theater in ... New Brunswick that showed foreign films. ... Another friend and I went, actually, a fellow from ... the library ... and ... we went (he was engaged) and it was just friends, we both wanted to see this French film. So we went and, lo and behold, ... there were some of his fraternity brothers behind us and of course, we didn't hear the movie at all, because they kept hooting and hollering. "Hey, DC what are you doing?" And ... so then the next day, why DC came in. He says "Flora, I have to tell you there is this fellow that wants to meet you. He says he met you before." We ... arranged ... a

bridge date and they came over to the house and this other girl, who worked in the library came too ... Jeff and I and DC and Gloria, and that's how it started. Okay. [laughter]

SH: You continued to date after that?

FJ: Yes, and this was right near ... the ... end of the year and I couldn't ...

SH: This would have been '48?

FJ: Yes, in '48. ... Maybe it was in March or April, April I think.

SH: How long did it take him to propose?

FJ: Not too long. ... We went to ... the Senior Ball and ... I stayed at his family's house because the Ball at that time was in ... Newark, in a great big hall there. I think, he had to go ... to summer school that year. Most of them did to have, to get their credits. That's right, and so it was before he graduated, ... that he proposed and then he went up to {New York} ... got a job at GE and he went up there, but commuted down, and we were supposed to be married in ... June. We had put a bid on a house that was being built, and we had just enough down payment, because his father gave us a wedding present. Then they called up and said the house was going to be ready in January, instead of June, so we pushed up the wedding date. [laughter]

HA: He was a Norwegian?

FJ: Danish.

HA: Danish, okay, did you learn to speak Danish at all?

FJ: No, I can just say a couple of phrases but I know what they're talking about. His brothers and a sister ... spoke Danish, because ... they did speak Danish in their home, when they didn't want anybody else to know what they were talking [about]. Also, his mother and father in fact, Jeff didn't know English when he first went to school.

HA: Oh, really?

FJ: Yes.

HA: Have you ever traveled back to Denmark with him?

FJ: Yes, we've been to Denmark a couple of times and have seen relatives and it's nice place.

HA: You had seven kids, did they speak Danish?

FJ: ... No. ... They say grace and ... they have to say [Danish phrase] getting up from the table and ... little things like that, but not really. [laughter]

HA: How was it raising seven children?

FJ: ... It wasn't ... too hard. I never worked, so I was at home and, it just happened, ... since I was at home that I didn't have ... to do too much juggling. ... I was just talking to one of the kids the other day and I said, "Did I have to spend time amusing you?" He said "No, there were all of us around and so we could, take care of each other and [be entertained]. ... I managed to be home ... from my social activities when they came in from school ... and that didn't do too much good, because they'd be [in] the house, changed the clothes and be outside playing, and I wouldn't see them until mealtime. But we did [spend time together]. ... I think it was a really happy house that they were in and ... at that time ... there weren't as many activities, certainly not for girls, as there are for the kids today. You know, we tried music lessons and so but it wasn't as constant ... lessons, or activities or something. They went to a Catholic school in ... Allentown and ... actually in ... Schenectady too, they started up there ... but they ... walked to school and it was just ... a normal childhood.

HA: Okay, your sons were involved in the military, how did you feel about this with your experiences?

FJ: ... Fine. ... The oldest son went to [the Army]. ... He enlisted because ... he had an early draft number and he didn't want to be sent to Korea and so he enlisted and was sent over to Germany and did his stint there. ... Interestingly enough he was ... a sophomore in ... college and ... they offered him to go to OCS and he said, "No", because then he knew as soon as he went there, why then he would be sent over. ... Actually it was interesting at that time, Mr. Jespersen, or Jeff, was ... in ... Australia for about six months through the company and he didn't even see Peter when he first went off and, it all happened rapidly. The other ... son, who was in the service, he was in the Air Force. Now he graduated from college, the first one of our boys to go completely through without stopping and starting. ... He spent a year ... out of college having a sales job, or something, and then he just decided he would ... enlist and he went in ... to officer training class and ... he ... had a good life. ... He retired three years ago ... because ... he had gone not as far as he could, but for his next promotion they wanted him to go off on a year ... TD [temporary duty] without the family and he said "No". He wouldn't do that. So they have ... four children and ... now he's doing almost the same thing that he did in the Air Force. ... He's retired but I didn't have any qualms ... about it.

HA: Have you still remained active or involved at Rutgers or Douglass College?

FJ: No. Before I was married, I ... was in the Middlesex alumni group, but ... the distance is a little too far, I've gone to most of the reunions since then but that's all.

SH: How about the two girls? It was five brothers is that correct?

FJ: ... Interesting, the oldest is a girl and ... she was [smart]. ... The boys hated her ... just family [teasing], because she plugged and worked and ... was always a model child. ... The boys had fun ... still, some of them got good marks without even working and that made her [mad]. [laughter] But ... they were very good. ... The youngest [daughter] ... was the sixth one, ... there never were any problems that the boys kidded her and they had a good time and today

... they stick up for each other and are just a devoted family. ... The oldest one, ... now there's fourteen years between the oldest one and the youngest one, and ... she used to take him everywhere. ... She worked at the soda shop where she would take him down there when she went to get her pay. ... They really spoiled him. ... He's the one that was ... killed ... almost ten years ago and ... that brought the kids even closer together. ... They really almost talk of him in hollowed tones and terms though he wasn't an angel. He was just as naughty and bad as they were, but it was easy. [laughter]

SH: That's a great story to have. One question I wanted to ask is in my office there sits a lovely tea set, a teapot and a sugar bowl...

FJ: No, a cream pitcher I think

SH: Cream pitcher, no sugar bowl, and a nice little platter or tray for them.

FJ: That's ... from the Rutgers Exposition ... for the Ceramic Society and I'm not sure how I got it. I think I got it [from] ... my mother, [she] was great [at] going to auctions and I think that's where she found it, or else a neighbor down the street.

SH: I believe it's 1934-35.

FJ: Yes, and ... I think ... a neighbor who ... would run in and out of the house, she gave it to me and, it was before I was married, when I was working at Rutgers. ... Funny thing, I used the tray as ... a jewelry tray on ... my bureau. ... I loved the cream and pitcher ... [but there was] ... no sugar bowl, so it never, really suited my [style]. ... I like to have the matching things ... when I'm thinking about downsizing, or things I didn't need, and none of the kids went Rutgers so they wouldn't be interested in that, and a good friend of mine, who was a ceramics major, up and died before I could give it to him. So that's why I thought it would be good to give it back to Rutgers. [laughter]

SH: I thank you for that and it is a lovely piece and it is something that I can show my students. Our office is now in 18 Bishop House, it's the Bevier House, and there is a nice little built-in curio cabinet with a glass front and it sits right there on the shelf, so I want you to know that it's being seen and appreciated.

FJ: Well, ... you know, I'm glad because ... I did like it and the fact that it was ... Rutgers and I spent so much time in the city and ... then, ... the library. ... At that time the library was right next door to the ceramics building, so that those boys never came over, but I knew ... enough of them, and that ... at least three of them in our group from ... Highland Park were ceramics majors, so it was fun to have.

SH: I thank you. If there are any stories that we didn't ask about, please do put them on record for us if you could.

FJ: ... I'm trying to think ...

SH: Maybe about Rutgers or family...

FJ: ... We used to [get together], a group of us, used to go [to] the football games at least once a year. That would be our reunion and ... it would be alumni. ... The men would drag their wives and I, well, I don't have to drag Jeff because he was Rutgers, and this other couple were both Rutgers ... and that used to be a highlight. We ... would go out to, when the parking was right ... there and ... we'd have our ... tailgating and ... continue on. We'd always have supper at the Rutgers Club in [the] Alumni building on College Avenue. ... That's the sort of thing that ... I miss now, because most of those have died or else they moved so far away that they don't come back. ... We still, in our family, when we get together with my brother's family and ... [ours] we always sing *On The Banks*. Actually, we stand up and some of them can't understand why. [laughter] ... We are very proud of the Rutgers football team but can I say this, I am shocked at [the] amount of money that they're paying the football coach, terribly shocked. I don't think ... it's proper. I don't think any sport should get that much, pardon me. [laughter]

SH: Well I thank you so much for taking time to talk with us today. It's been wonderful and you are a delightful woman and I thank you so much.

FJ: Well, thank you, it's been fun. More fun than I thought it was going to be, if I may say that, and I think you've both been very patient and it was a pleasure. [laughter]

SH: Well, thank you

HA: Thank you.

FJ: That's all.

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

Reviewed by Hanne Ala-Rami 9/18/2007

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 9/25/2007

Reviewed by Flora Campbell Jespersen 11/13/07