

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD & DORIS OSTROFF

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Bernard and Doris Ostroff ...

Bernard Ostroff: Bob.

SI: ... On December 18, 2006, in Green Brook, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you both very much for having us here and for the wonderful zucchini bread.

SI: Yes, thank you very much.

SH: We will be doing a team interview today. To start the interview, could you both tell us where and when you were born?

BO: I was born in South Philadelphia in 1930.

Doris Ostroff: And I was born in Newark, New Jersey, 1931.

SH: Let us start with Mr. Ostroff; we would like to talk a little bit about your family background, if you could tell us about your father first.

BO: I really am unable to. My father died when I was six months old. I was one of four and my mother immediately went to work. ... Because he was a suicide, it was impossible for my mother to come to terms with this, and so, there was never a mention of him or pictures or anything. So, I could not tell you about my father at all. He's the great mystery.

SH: Tell us about your mother.

BO: My mother was a Russian émigré who came to the United States, I believe when she was about five or six, from Odessa, Russia. She was a dynamo, a very beautiful woman. She had four kids, three girls and a boy. She had a very hard life, very hard life. She immediately went to work as a sewing machine operator when my father died, and my grandmother, her mother, came to live with us. While she worked, my grandmother took care of us. Although I was very young, I had a sister two years older than me, but the other two were seven and nine years older than me.

SH: All right. You talked about your grandmother coming to live with you.

BO: Yes.

SH: Were there other family members that had immigrated as well?

BO: Oh, and this was an area--my mother came from a family of seven or eight. ... They all lived within walking distance and, if I came home from school and my mother or grandmother was not there, there were a lot of places for me to go. It was a very caring family.

SH: Had your mother's parents come to America at the same time?

BO: No, no. My mother's father came over to provide for bringing over the rest of the family and he was never heard from again. He may have died on the ship, or we don't really know, [laughter] although there are legends that he went to Paris and he married a ballerina and opened a publishing house, but, you know, all that's a cock-and-bull story. [laughter] ... I think two of my mother's brothers came and provided, by working, for the passage of the others, and that's how they came over.

SH: Wonderful story. What did they do? Did they come to America knowing a trade?

BO: No. The oldest uncle was a real revolutionary in Russia, and I think he had to flee the country and he went to work for Westinghouse, in Philadelphia. ... He employed many of the other brothers. They started very small businesses, cigar stores, newspaper stands. Nobody was rich, nobody was rich.

SH: Very hard-working men.

BO: Very hard-working, very caring about my mother, especially. ... My grandmother, who lived with us, had a visit every Sunday from her children and their families, so that we really got to know our aunts and uncles and cousins.

SH: Did your older sisters look out for you?

BO: They were very good. My oldest sister, Florence, unfortunately, found my father in the basement. So, her life was a little screwed up, but she was a beautiful woman and married, had two children and was very productive, but, unfortunately, was in and out of institutions quite a bit.

SH: It must have been so devastating.

BO: Yes, it was devastating for her, yes. We, ... my sister and I, the youngest sister of mine, were just adored, and we had no concept of anything and we had no curiosity, strangely enough, about what happened until we got older. Who was the man that nobody ever knew about or talked about?

SH: Did your mother ever remarry?

BO: My mother remarried when I was thirteen. My two older sisters were working, one of them was married, and my mother broke her leg and she figured that maybe she wouldn't be able to work anymore. ... So, she married a brother of her brother-in-law. So, two sisters married two brothers, and we moved then to Camden, New Jersey. Was it a happy marriage? I have no idea. It was a marriage of convenience for my mother and that was basically what it was.

SH: Then, your schooling would have been interrupted.

BO: ... My senior year of junior high school, I don't know, in ninth grade, and then, high school in Camden, New Jersey, in the secondary high school, a very small high school, called Woodrow Wilson High School.

SH: On the pre-interview survey, you said that your father had been in World War I.

BO: Yes.

SH: Was this something that you found out after you had grown up?

BO: I had a penknife of his that was given to me by a brother-in-law of his, but ... I was told that my mother became a citizen because the dependents of people who had served in World War I who were not citizens immediately became citizens. ... Then, much later, after my mother had died and after ... his sister died, I was given a photograph of him and it's in a uniform, from World War I, yes. That was the first photograph I had ever seen.

SH: Did his family keep in contact with you?

BO: He had only one sister.

SI: Did your mother ever tell you anything about her work?

BO: In the factory?

SI: Yes.

BO: Yes. She was, as I said, a very beautiful woman and it was the [Great] Depression and she became very active in the union because she was sexually harassed, constantly. It was done by bundles. In other words, ... the foreman would give you bundles, for which you would be paid only if you were nice to him. ... I think my mother was outraged all the time at work, but, then, the Second World War came and, in 1940, well, at the end of 1941, or maybe during '41, they started making Army uniforms and there was lots and lots of work. ... So, she was [doing better economically]. I can remember, we finally went out to dinner, [laughter] the five of us, and my two older sisters ... were then working, one of them in the Philadelphia Navy Yard and the other as a secretary. ... We suddenly had some money, [laughter] and it was amazing. The war was a very important economic change for us, yes, but it was a sweatshop kind of thing that she did.

SI: When you said she was involved with the union, what kind of activities was she involved in?

BO: Oh, I think she was an organizer for the garment ladies, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. ... I mean, she was outraged, constantly, by this kind of behavior.

SH: Were there meetings in your home?

BO: No, no. That was something totally separate in my mother's life.

SH: Was your family observant?

BO: Not at all. ... I think we considered ourselves cultural Jews and we were in a neighborhood which was fifty percent Irish--not Irish, but Italian--and South Philadelphia remains the same today. I took my grandchildren to our old neighborhood, where I had grown up, and it was nicer than I remember it. I mean, everything was kept beautifully, but it's now a hundred percent Italian. There were Jewish families, fifty percent Jewish, fifty percent Italian, and it was [a place where] a lot of languages were spoken. I remember, in school, when I was a kid, that this was the time when people were leaving Germany and you would find, sitting next to you, in your second grade class, somebody who was almost a fully-grown adolescent. ... They were there for a month, until they learned enough English, and they would move them into the fourth grade and the fifth grade and the sixth grade, and this was rather common in South Philadelphia, which was a working-class neighborhood.

SH: This would be from the mid-1930s into the 1940s.

BO: Yes, yes.

SH: Did your family discuss what was going on politically in the world?

BO: I was awfully young and totally involved with self. No, I don't think so, although they were very, very [aware], and my sisters, my two older sisters, were very involved in an organization called *Ha-Shomer ha-Za'ir*, which was to prepare young people to go to live as settlers in Palestine, at the time. ... They were red-hot Trotskyites, very anti-Stalin, yes, that, politically, yes, we were very [aware], hearing constantly about what was going on in the world.

SH: Okay, that is what I was wondering. What did you focus on as a child?

BO: Yes. This was a time when things were very hard and I lived ... in four different houses in the same street. At that time, I think they gave a free month's rent and they repapered and repainted, and so, you moved down the street to a very well-painted new house, and my uncles would come and move our furniture down the street. [laughter] It was a very sheltered--for Shirley and I--very sheltered life. We were "in cotton wool," really. We had no concept of anything bad and everyone in our neighborhood was in the same economic status. I don't think more than two people on the entire street had an automobile. I had an uncle who had one and we would all go over there and polish his car. He would give us a little ride on a Sunday. I mean, that was it, but they were absolute adorers of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. ... The political part was worship of Roosevelt.

SH: How difficult was it for you to then move, at thirteen, to Camden?

BO: It was difficult. It was very difficult, but ... necessity says that you find new friends in a new school. ... My sister, however, who was fifteen, continued to commute to her Philadelphia school until she graduated high school. She resisted, totally, living in Camden.

SH: Did you commute?

BO: I tried it for a half a year and the commute was too terrible, and so, I decided to go to school in Camden.

SH: What did a young man do in Camden after school?

BO: I worked in my stepfather's store. He had a small grocery/meat market in a black neighborhood and I worked in the store, after hours, but people in school and I were friends and we went out and bowled and went on dates. It was the same kind of thing as today, I mean, group activities. You didn't date a girl alone. The boys and the girls got together and went to dances or went bowling or went to a movie. It was not solitary at all. Was I happy as a teenager? I think so, yes. I accepted this.

SH: Do you remember when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

BO: Very definitely. It was in '41 and it was a Sunday, [December 7th], and my mother was downstairs ironing. She ironed--she had three daughters who needed ironing constantly. [laughter] She was ironing and I was at a table, drawing, and my mother started to cry. ... I had no idea why she was crying and she said, "This is terrible," and then, told me what had happened. ... It's a very vivid memory, yes.

SH: Do you remember how the neighborhood began to change?

BO: Yes. It was a definite change; relatives went into the Army.

SH: Did they?

BO: ... Yes. I have a lot of older cousins. My mother was the next to the youngest of the seven or eight brothers and sisters and a lot of them were much older and went into the Army and this whole business about the war effort involved all of us. We learned about spotting planes. We all tried to scratch out a little piece of land to make a garden. We collected tinfoil from cigarettes. ... I think there were stamps that were sold in school to make a book, and then, you got a bond. Everything was for the, quote-unquote, "war effort," and it was the best propagandized war that ever was, I'm sure. We all thought we were serving God. ... It was a remarkable experience, because, from eleven until thirteen, I was very much aware of the war, and it was true also when I was thirteen until the war ended in '45.

SH: Did you communicate with your cousins that went off to war? Did people send things?

BO: No, no, but my sisters ... would write--V-mail, was it?

SH: Yes.

BO: Yes, V-mail. ... My oldest sister went to a dance in Fort Dix, [New Jersey]. ... She had already been engaged to somebody who was overseas, and she danced with a man who was leaving immediately for the war. ... She said he was the best dancer she had ever danced with

and he told her he was going to marry her ... when he came back, and the fact is, he did, yes. [laughter] ... I remember her writing to him and him writing to her. It turned out that the guy that she was engaged to ... came back from the war very different, very different, and so, Irving was a wonderful choice for her, but she met him at an Army [dance]. I think the Navy yard sent these girls to Fort Dix pretty regularly.

SH: As part of the USO effort.

BO: Yes, yes.

SH: Did you then also notice how the neighborhood changed after the war was over and the soldiers returned?

BO: I was living, at that time, in Camden and the Camden shipbuilding [industry], ... it was a very busy place, filled with factories. There was Campbell's Soup, there was RCA, it was [an industrial area]. The kids that I went to high school with--we went to the secondary high school in the town--all went immediately from school to the factories, but, then, they started to close after the war. ... I was aware of that, that there were fewer jobs in Camden and things got a little worse.

SH: How far from the shop did you and your family live?

BO: We lived above the shop. This was the old days, when ... people lived above their own business.

SH: Before we talk about high school and the choice of Rutgers, do you have any questions?

SI: Do you want to continue with Mr. Ostroff or switch off?

SH: Let us go through Rutgers, since that was where they met.

BO: Oh, yes.

SH: Okay, let us take you to that stage.

BO: Yes.

SH: Could you tell us about your high school? What do you remember? Was there a mentor? How did you come to choose Rutgers?

BO: I came to Rutgers because my sister was dating a young man whose father was an attorney and he was pretty politically potent in Camden, and he suggested that I should apply for a State Scholarship. ... I was an extraordinarily good high school student and I received the State Scholarship and went to Rutgers. I took not a penny from home, ever. My mother would send me [to college] against my stepfather's wishes, because he had four children, none of them went to college, and he was sure that it was the greatest waste of time. ... My mother absolutely

insisted that if we could, we should, and so, my oldest sister to Penn, and then, to Bryn Mawr, [a women's college in Pennsylvania], and I went to Rutgers. ... The State Scholarship was very important. My mother would send an envelope stuffed with maybe a five-dollar bill once a month, but I worked while I was at Rutgers ... all the time, [laughter] as a waiter or a pot-washer or whatever I did, but my summers were spent as a counselor at camp, because I really didn't want to go home and because I had worked all through the year.

SH: Where were you a counselor?

BO: It was called Camp Saginaw and it was in Oxford, Delaware, [Pennsylvania], and it attracted Washingtonians and Baltimore people and some Philadelphia people. ... I was an arts-and-crafts counselor and I was very happy and I did it for four years.

SH: Was there another college or university that you looked at besides Rutgers?

BO: No. My sister got a scholarship to Penn and I got a scholarship. My mother paid not a penny--well, not my mother, not my stepfather, who did not believe in college. ... So, we went where scholarships were available and we both worked full-time while we did it, and both of us became Phi Beta Kappas. I mean, it was very important for us to succeed and go to graduate school on fellowships, and we did.

SH: You were coming into Rutgers at a time when it was being glutted with returning veterans.

BO: Yes.

SH: Can you talk about being an eighteen-year-old, just out of high school, at that time?

BO: Oh, yes. In those days, they put all of the freshmen in barracks, old prisoner of war barracks, out in what was called Kilmer. [Editor's Note: Rutgers utilized former prisoner-of-war barracks at nearby Raritan Arsenal (known colloquially as the Raritan Campus) to house students during the GI Bill era of the late 1940s, when housing was in short supply, as well as barracks at Camp Kilmer.] It was a most marvelous experience, although we didn't realize it at the time, but everyone, from students of agriculture to philosophers, were all living together in prisoner of war barracks. I mean, we would go up in the top and find knives and files. There was a common john [bathroom]. There was a wood-burning fireplace in--fireplace, what do you call those? Franklin stove--in the middle of the beds, in the place where we slept. We bussed back and forth and, if you were at the library too late and you missed the bus, you were in trouble, but it was a wonderful experience to meet a lot of different kinds of guys. It was all men. Howie Crosby, [RC '41, later Rutgers Dean of Men], was the counselor for the group and he was wonderful. What else? I had a wonderful experience at Rutgers.

SH: Are there any stories that stand out about life in the barracks?

BO: Yes. We, all of us, were forced to go to ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. ... So, every week, we would have to go out into Buccleuch Park and we would march and do all kinds of things, but all of us hated it and we resisted putting on the uniform until the last second, yes.

SH: The returning veterans did not have to do ROTC, did they?

BO: Everyone. Oh, I don't know about ROTC. I think everyone in the freshman class, there were two things you had to do: one was, you had to attend chapel once a week, and the other is, you had to go and work at ROTC.

SH: What do you remember about mandatory chapel?

BO: That it was okay, because I just tuned out to whatever religious thing [was said]. Somebody named Rev. [Bradford S.] Abernathy is the one who gave the lectures and he was not terribly stressed out. He was very nice. In fact, I took a religion course with him, I liked him so much. ... Also, speakers would come to chapel and I remember [American poet] Robert Frost came and spoke and there were several other really important people who came to chapel to speak. It was not a terrible hardship and it was for us Jewish kids, you know, [we] just thought this was an experience. We had never been in a churchy place like that before. [laughter]

SH: It held you, no problem, right.

BO: Yes, it was fine. Listen, I hadn't been in temples or synagogues very much in my life, so, this was a real experience. [laughter]

SH: We have heard all sorts of stories related to that. Was the seating alphabetical?

BO: I don't remember, I don't remember. Maybe it was. You sat with your buddies. I mean, I don't remember about alphabetically at all, but it's possible.

SH: This may have been earlier, too, or a more rowdy crew.

BO: Yes, yes.

SI: In that era, since traditions had been broken up a little bit by the influx of GI Bill students, did they still have, say, freshman initiations?

BO: I think we wore beanies the first year. I think eighty-five percent of us didn't even bother to wear it. ... There were no honor guards or anything like that to make sure that you wore your beanies. I was totally uninterested in a fraternity. I needed to work and, when I finished work, I had to study. ...

SH: What jobs were you picking up on campus?

BO: My first job was in a supermarket called Davidson's, I think, where I sliced cheese. [laughter] So, I can remember that, but, then, I graduated and I became a waiter in a greasy spoon, and I did that for several years. I finally joined a fraternity in my senior year, because they had room and board for me, and I became a pot-washer in the fraternity house and it was a good deal for me.

SH: Which fraternity?

BO: I don't think it exists anymore--it was called Phi Sigma Delta. I think they joined with Sammy or something, Sigma Alpha Mu, I think, is what they joined with, and it disappeared. ... The location was--where the library [Alexander Library] is now was the dormitories for Rutgers Prep and, when Rutgers Prep moved out of those dormitories, those houses became available for use and several of them became fraternity houses.

SH: Did you belong to any clubs or organizations?

BO: Yes. I was an English major and I joined the Philosophian Society and was its president. There was an art club that I was active in. I worked for WRSU for a very short time. ... It was too difficult to study, come back from work at five-thirty, six o'clock, and then, go out and do something else, but, yes, if I pulled out my yearbook, there were lots of clubs that I was involved in, but marginally. I don't think any of them were that important to me. Studying was very important. I needed to get a fellowship.

SH: Your second year, where were you housed?

BO: Ford Hall--no, second year, ... with one of the guys that I met in the barracks and we lived off campus--the next year in Ford Hall, and then, the fourth year in a fraternity house.

SH: When you were in the ROTC, did you consider going for Advanced ROTC?

BO: Not at all, not at all.

SH: It was only mandatory for one year.

BO: One year, I believe one year, it was mandatory. It may have been for two, but I blocked that out. [laughter]

SH: What was the interaction with the New Jersey College for Women like and how quickly did that begin?

BO: It was a very short walk from Rutgers to "The Coop," which was Cooper Hall, was the dining hall. ... We didn't refer to it as NJC, you went to "The Coop," yes, and women were very interesting and, yes, we dated a lot.

SH: Were there any mixers?

BO: Yes. I met Doris at a mixer. It was a Halloween dance or something, that your [dormitory], Jameson [Hall], had.

DO: Some kind of a dance.

BO: And our fraternity guys all went, and we danced and decided, within a week, that we wanted to spend the rest of our life together. It was called "terminal lust"--you either married or died. [laughter] There was no living together and that kind of thing, and so, all of us--well, I think we were the only couple that we knew who were married. ... We lived in an attic ... across from Middlesex Hospital at that time. ... We would be in bed and we would listen to NJC's curfew bell and we said, "Okay, now, let's make love." [laughter]

SH: Not until. [laughter]

BO: Yes. I mean, it was a violation of everything that Doris was supposed to do.

SH: Were you in grad school at this point?

BO: No. I was--you were?

DO: I was a senior.

BO: You were a senior, and I had already graduated and was in grad school, yes, but it was a year from the time we had met that we had married. We met on October 31st. We were married December 21st.

SH: Your anniversary is coming up.

BO: Yes.

SH: This is a good reminder

BO: [laughter] Yes, and we got married on that date because it was Christmas vacation, and so, we could take whatever cash came in from our wedding and we went on a honeymoon.

DO: Wasn't much. [laughter]

BO: It wasn't much. [laughter] We were very, very poor. She'll tell you more about our experiences as poor married folk.

SH: You talked about going down and working in Delaware [Pennsylvania] at the camp down there as a counselor.

BO: Yes.

SH: As you approach graduation for your undergraduate degree, what were your thoughts and choices in 1950-1951?

BO: I had a mentor in the Art Department named Helmut von Erffa, who wanted me to be a curator at a museum, and I had a mentor in the English Department, who was Al Kellogg, who

wanted me to continue, and I decided ... I wanted to be in English, study for my English PhD. ... So, that's how I wound up continuing at Rutgers, and it was a fellowship.

SH: What did you do after graduation?

BO: I went immediately into graduate school.

SH: You did not go to camp at that point.

BO: No, no. ... We were married at that time, weren't we?

SH: Not yet.

BO: No. ...

DO: You worked up in the "Borscht Belt."

BO: That's right, yes. I worked as a waiter--or busboy, not even a waiter--in a sleazy hotel in the "Borscht Belt," in the Catskills, to save up enough money so that we could get married. I don't think I saved more than 125, 120 dollars in all that time. [laughter] It was a very hard, stupid move. We should not have [done that]. ...

SH: Someone told you that you could make a lot of cash in a hurry.

BO: Yes, yes.

SI: I want to ask one question before we switch over.

BO: Sure.

SI: How did you get involved in English and the arts, studying those subjects?

BO: My two older sisters were very much involved in the arts. ... We came from a family with a lot of good artists. One of them became very famous, one of my cousins, and the other one demi-famous, but everybody painted, everybody sculpted. ... There was an amazing strike in Philadelphia ... during the war. *The Bulletin* went out on strike and my sister was working at that time in *The Bulletin*, and the theater was very favorable toward the strike, and so, gave free tickets. [Editor's Note: The original *Philadelphia Bulletin* served the Greater Philadelphia area from 1847 to 1982.] ... Philadelphia was a tryout time, in that time, and we got free tickets to concerts and theater and we went all the time. ... My sisters were museum-goers, and so, I had a very good art experience. Read, there were lots of books at home. Yes, it was through osmosis [that] I would have been interested in the arts.

SH: Was English just something that came naturally to you?

BO: No. I started out just going in as a freshman, and my freshman year, there was a guy, whose name I do not remember, who so turned me on to English, I can't begin to tell you. His philosophy was that poetry and novels did not just come out of thin air, that they were part of the culture of the times, and so, if we were talking about a German poet, we would hear 1920s and '30s Berlin music. He would bring in paintings. We would talk about these things, because of the mixture. Gee, I'm so sorry--he didn't stay at Rutgers more than that one year--but I was very lucky to have him. ... I decided, at that point, that was the most interesting thing that had ever happened to me.

SH: That is the way to teach history.

BO: That's the way to teach everything, and it was a marvelous experience and I was also very interested in history. President McCormick's father was one of my teachers in my freshman year. [Editor's Note: Dr. Richard L. McCormick, President of Rutgers University since 2002, is the son of long-time Rutgers Professor of History, the late Dr. Richard P. McCormick.] It just was a great mix. There were wonderful people at Rutgers, and because the returning vets were older and smarter, the competition in classes was very much more intense than it would have been otherwise. These people brought an enormous amount of maturity into the classroom, talking about things that had happened to them or where they were from, which was very different, I think, than today. It was a tremendous experience to be with these older guys at a time when you were a sponge.

SH: Did the professors favor the veterans, or not, in class?

BO: Oh, yes, yes. I don't know if they favored them, but I don't think I ever was aware that the teachers were annoyed by [them], or I can't imagine they would be. These guys brought magic into the class.

SH: Were they still wearing the fatigues?

BO: No, no, they were in civvies. I think they wanted their Army experience to go.

SI: Sitting next to them in class, did you feel, not intimidated, but perhaps less likely to raise your hand?

BO: No, that's not me. I would raise my hand in class. [laughter]

DO: Still do.

BO: Still do, yes, yes. ... I'm not a shy violet at all, no. By the way, when I was getting my fellowship, I was teaching and there were a series of Quonset huts along the river, with, again, a Franklin stove, and my classes, even in 1952, were filled with returning vets. ... So, when I was teaching English, it was to guys who were much older than I was, like, two or three or four or five years, and they were fabulous to work with.

DO: I just wanted to interject--you forgot to mention the combination of English and art in your Henry Rutgers.

BO: Oh, yes.

SH: That was my next question. I understand you wrote a Henry Rutgers Thesis. [Editor's Note: The Henry Rutgers Scholar Program allows undergraduates to receive credits for completing a graduate-style dissertation and oral defense.]

BO: I wrote a Henry Rutgers project [that] was on the poetry and painting of William Blake. This was something that I had worked out with Dr. [Joseph M.] French, who was, at that time, the head of the English Department, but von Erffa was very important to me. ... So, I figured this was a good thing, because this was not only a great poet, but a great artist, and so, that's what I did.

SH: Was this one of the first Henry Rutgers Scholars classes?

BO: This was the second class. The first class was her brother's class and he was a Henry Rutgers Scholar in the first session, and you were a Henry Rutgers Scholar?

SI: Yes.

BO: And you were, too?

SH: Yes.

BO: Yes. It was an amazing experience. We would get together once a month and each of us would tell about the progress of what we had had and one of the guys was ... a young man named Wellington Rounds, who was doing the theory of probability. ... He would come in and lecture us by flipping coins and telling us [about it], but everybody, everybody--there may have been twenty of us, I think, total, at that time--each of us had an opportunity to tell where you were and where you were going and what you wanted [to accomplish].

SH: I think it is a fabulous way to go clear across the spectrum of what is offered at Rutgers and see what is available.

DO: Yes.

SH: Let us talk now about your family, Mrs. Ostroff. You told us when and where you were born, in Newark. Talk to us, please, about your growing up, your family, starting with your father.

DO: All right. My dad came here as a small child from Russia. He had what ... we suspect was now called osteomyelitis, [a bone infection that causes inflammation], and, as a result, he was lame. ... As he tells it, told it, when they came here, they came to Castle Garden, not to Ellis Island, ... his mother held him, as you would an infant, because, if he had been examined ...

BO: He would have been sent back. [Editor's Note: Castle Garden, used from 1855 to 1890, was the first immigrant processing station for New York City.]

DO: He would have been sent back, and he turned out to be probably the most amazing man that I have ever known. [laughter] He overcame this disability, because he had four brothers, three or four brothers, and one sister and he idolized them and they cared about him, ... and he was exceedingly bright. They lived in tenements. His father ... made ovens, some kind of a mason, you know.

BO: For bakeries.

DO: And they lived in the tenements, but they all cared [for him], you know, and took care of him. He had--again, this is all as we were told--he had the first-known attempt at a knee transplant, which didn't succeed, but, nevertheless, and it was, I think, at Mount Sinai [Hospital in the Upper Eastside], or something of that sort. ... His family lived down in the ...

BO: The Lower Eastside.

DO: Lower Eastside. You know, for them to go and visit him on a fairly regular basis was very difficult.

BO: Couldn't afford the fare to get there. So, his mother walked from the Lower Eastside to Mount Sinai.

DO: You know, I think it was a nickel. I think it was a nickel or something, or whatever it was. His oldest two brothers had left Russia and come to the United States earlier than the family left. As we understand it, his mother had been a very successful seamstress and took the children, the other two or three--I think one was born in the United States, yes--took the other two and left at night, leaving everything as it was, lights on, so on, and so forth, so that she wouldn't call attention to the fact that they had left. Apparently, someone knew. They came from a town called Slonim. That's all I know about it. There are no records anymore, anywhere, of anything, and came to this country and, as I said, the grandfather, ... he wasn't my grandfather, he was my--yes, maybe. [laughter] At any rate, he ... did this, built these ovens, and so on. My dad went as far as the seventh grade in school. That's as far as he was able to do, but he had two brothers who encouraged him so [much] that he studied on his own and took the exams to get into Cooper Union and passed them both, one for engineering and one for chemistry, and went on, having studied on his own, and attended Cooper Union only for two years, because, again, there came a point where he had to go and work. ... Ultimately, he ended up in the ... chemical business.

BO: Making dyes.

DO: ... You know, that was his specialty, was dyes. He and a partner, I believe, formed a small company called Adco, which was ultimately bought out by Calco, which became American Cyanamid.

BO: American Cyanamid

DO: And his specialty was in aniline blue dyes.

BO: ... His dye was what was used in World War II.

DO: Yes, he was the developer of a shark repellent. ... He did develop this shark repellent, which was used during the war, you know. ...

BO: I think every life raft had this thing.

DO: From what we understand. ... His disability--he was lame, as I said--never, for one second, stopped him. It was amazing. I mean, he would get up on the roof and put a new roof on the house and do everything else, and, yet, he wore ... a brace that was--it was a whole [piece], came up halfway up his leg and it formed a shoe, you know. ... So, he was really walking on his toes, ... but nobody [suspected], because of the personality. He sparkled, really did, and was very, very bright, and because of that personality, nobody really was aware of the fact that he was lame. In fact, one man, with whom he had worked probably twenty years, one day, said, "Bill, is there something the matter? I see you're limping." I mean, this is someone who saw him on a daily basis, you know, [laughter] and so, I mean, that was the kind of personality. He worked there ... until he retired, at which point he went and worked with my brother, who is also a chemist, and had a very active, full life. ... During the war, he was an air raid warden, you know, for the neighborhood things, you know, go out with his light and what-have-you, and we all peeked through the windows to see.

BO: But, because he worked on dye, a particular dye ...

DO: Well, that was one of the things, yes.

BO: ... Everyone in the company who worked in this lab all died of the same cancer. What was it?

SH: Pancreatic?

DO: No.

SI: Stomach?

BO: It was amazing. They kept records at American Cyanamid. Everyone in that lab died of the same particular cancer, due to the dye.

DO: But, I can't remember what, at this point. [Editor's Note: According to Doris Ostroff, it was bladder cancer]

BO: Well, it's called denial.

DO: True, true. [laughter]

SH: What about your mother?

DO: My mother was born in the United States, in Harlem, which, at that time, was fine. Her father was a ladies tailor, who, ultimately, after my grandmother died, came and lived with us. She was a secretary. She'd graduated high school, became a secretary. ... She had a brother and a sister. During her teenage years, she had a group of friends. They were very close, these girls. So, they formed a club, which they called Phi Omega Pi, which, to them, meant "Full of Pep." [laughter] ... They would go to tea dances for the soldiers in World War I, yes, that's right, and they remained friends. This group remained friends until they finally all died, you know, after whatever age, ... sixty years. ...

BO: Yes. Once every other month, they would have a meeting.

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

SI: Please, continue.

DO: Okay. They kept minutes of their meetings, which had to do with going and wrapping bandages or going to these things, and noting, you know, that, "Someone had their hair bobbed today," which, I mean, was the popular thing. It was interesting, because one of the people who--of course, these people all became my, quote, "aunts and uncles," as they got married, and so on. One of them, her very dearest friend, I have a picture of them in, you know, the floppy hats and the high button shoes and all the other things, as little children, even, ended up having a son and daughter who live relatively near here.

BO: In Somerville.

DO: But, the others were ... all from New York and stayed in the city. One became--you won't believe this--her name was Delphine Binger and she became "The Wishbone Queen of America." ... She was in *Life* Magazine and what she would do is to go to the butchers and she would get the wishbones from chickens or turkeys or what-have-you and, somehow, she would dry them and cure them.

BO: And she could write the Bible [on them]. [laughter]

DO: And, to this day, she could write the whole Bible on a wishbone, and she would decorate them as a corsage, give it to you as a wedding gift or for your birthday or something of that sort. ... There, *Life* Magazine had a full-page thing on the Wishbone ...

BO: Queen.

DO: ... Queen of America, or Lady of America. [laughter] ... [At] any rate, my mom worked for a chemical company. ... I think it was called Albert David, why it comes to me, ... and, as it happened, my father was working for the same company, in Chicago Heights, where he had

[worked]. I don't know what he was doing out there, but, for some reason, that's where he was. ... His closest friend was ...

BO: Broder

DO: A man, Doc Broder, whose son is David Broder.

BO: If you're a history major, David Broder, was a very famous author and columnist.

DO: From *The Washington Post*, political columnist, at any rate--and he [her father], at one point, came to New York and was at the office and met her, and so on, and so forth, and one thing led to another. ... I think my grandmother was concerned, because my mother didn't get married until she was twenty-seven, which, in those days, was, you know, already old. [laughter] ... I don't know that my grandfather ever accepted him, because ...

DO: My mother was an attractive woman.

BO: Yes.

DO: No question, and, ultimately, you know, my brother was born, and then, I came along, three, a little over three, years later and they moved. We lived in Irvington. They were living there when I was born.

BO: You're doing what I do. [laughter]

DO: Oh, we lived in Irvington, in a duplex. The people who lived downstairs, the Devanes, became very friendly and, to this day, I just sent a Christmas card out to their son, because we maintained, they maintained, a nice friendship for all those years. ... When I was about four or so, we moved to Plainfield and I grew up in Plainfield and stayed there until beyond, I guess. [laughter]

BO: Until we moved here.

DO: Until we moved here, we lived in Plainfield.

SH: What interested you as a young woman growing up in Plainfield? What were your interests? You have an older brother.

DO: ... Yes, but my brother--you know, I knew my brother's friends, and so on--but he was three-and-a-half years older than I, and so, as a result, you know, we didn't have much interaction as brother and sister, other than the fact that that's what we were. He did his thing and I did mine.

BO: Which is the opposite of mine. There was a lot of interaction.

DO: Yes. I was very interested [in activities]. I was involved in Girl Scouts. I went on, became, you know, a what do they call them? ... I think they were called Gold Bar, or something or other, you know, the highest thing. [Editor's Note: From 1940 to 1962, the highest award in Girl Scouting was the Curved Bar, now called the Gold Award.] I did interpretive dancing at the Jewish community center. I became involved, as a teenager, in the National Council of Jewish Women's young people's group, called Counselettes, and traveled with a nice group of kids--very active in high school and on the newspaper and in the chorus and being in plays, whatever. ...

SH: Was your family observant then?

DO: Not observant, but always, always, a member of a Reform congregation in Plainfield, but observant in the sense that--you know, no.

BO: Not a *kosher* home. ...

DO: Nothing of that sort. ... Sure, we lit the candles for Hanukkah and we did those things. I mean, I certainly was aware of the fact that I was Jewish, there's no question about that. [laughter] I mean, we were very involved. My father became president of the congregation, my mother became president of the sisterhood, you know, that sort of thing. I went to Sunday school, forever. ...

SH: Did you have a relationship with your mother and father's families?

DO: ... My mother had a sister who lived in New York, married, but no children. ... She had a brother who also lived in the city and they had a set of twins, twin girls. My father's family, we were never close. My grandmother lived in, I think, Brooklyn and I can remember being so uncomfortable. We lived in a house. They considered, everybody considered, "This is the country," when they would come here. They couldn't stand it, because they'd come here ...

BO: ... You would have to light a fire in the fireplace and the noise of the crickets would drive them crazy. [laughter] It was an amazing difference.

DO: Coming from the city.

BO: Plainfield was country.

DO: I remember they were poor yet they all became very [successful]. ... It's amazing, because that family became doctors and psychiatrists and what-have-you. [laughter] So, I guess it didn't hurt them, particularly. ... So, there, my dad, as I said, had a number of brothers and sisters, none of whom we were ever really close to.

BO: Not me. I didn't even know them. Well, I knew Aunt Ethel. That's it.

DO: That's it, yes.

SH: It was your mother's father who came to live in your house.

DO: Correct, and he was a ladies tailor in New York. He had a little shop on the Grand Concourse, with the apartment connected to it, and we used to love to go there, absolutely, as little children. His shop was in the front of the apartment. ... He taught me, "See a pin, pick it up, all the day, you'll have good luck." [laughter] So, of course, I became his little slave, picking up dropped pins, you know, and my grandmother, you know, in the back. You know, there was a living room and, of course, bedrooms, so on, and so forth.

BO: Making German crepes.

DO: Making German pancakes, these thin things. Oh, God, my brother and I, we just loved to go and have that. She would make them for us all the time. She came to live with us for a short period of time, or not so short, but she had diabetes and had to have her leg amputated. ... They came to Plainfield and she stayed with us and recuperated. ... She was a wonderful, wonderful lady, really lovely, and then, after my grandmother died, my grandfather came to live with my mother and father. ... He was a ladies tailor. ... Well, he became a tailor for a cleaning firm in Plainfield.

BO: But, you never had anything bought in a store.

DO: That's true. All my coats, all my suits, my bathrobes, you name it, until I ... was getting married and I needed a going-away suit, because, of course, one didn't go on her honeymoon without, you know, something wonderful. That was the first thing I had ever purchased of that nature. I mean, dresses, of course, yes, but ...

BO: But, then, you had it tailored by him.

DO: Yes. My grandfather looked at it, you know, and he was big for big shoulder pads. [laughter]

BO: He was into "Joan Crawford" kind of shoulder pads. [laughter]

DO: And he took the thing and I looked at it afterwards and it was awful. ... I remember, my mother and I got together and decided I would sneak it out of the house in a box when he wasn't watching. I took it to New Brunswick, because I was [at NJC], to a tailor there who redid it, brought it back, and he never knew the difference. [laughter] So, it looked fine.

SH: He wanted to have his hand in everything.

DO: Yes, everything, but he lived with that smoke in his room. He smoked ...

BO: Between the Acts.

DO: Between the Acts.

BO: Which were little cigars.

DO: Cigarillos, or something like that.

BO: And he was very Germanic, authoritarian. I did not particularly [like him], was not fond of [him].

DO: At any rate. [laughter]

BO: When he wanted more coffee, he would go [Mr. Ostroff bangs the table twice] at the table and that's the way he would have--he was a real German person. [laughter] ... Her mother was the softest, sweetest lady, I mean, in quotes, "lady," and I always wondered, "What the hell is the relationship between the two of them?"

DO: He was her father, you know, but at any rate. ...

SH: You talked about being involved in so many activities within your school and the community. Did you ever have a little job? Was that allowed for women in that day?

DO: Oh, sure. I worked as a counselor at Camp Noam, it was called, ... at the Jewish community center, during the summer. I worked for Tepper's Department Store. Let's see, I worked in the jewelry department, in the wrapping desk, ... in hosiery, all kinds of places. I remember, once, a woman came in and she had a piece of string and she said, "You know, what size is this?" and I said [that] she would take a thirteen. "Oh, no, that's an unlucky number," you know. [laughter] ... I remember a man coming in one time, and, in those days, that was something, and the woman who was manager of the jewelry department said to me, "You're not to wait on him," because the man came in to try on earrings. ... He would stand, you know, shielding his ear with his hand and look in the mirror to see what he looked like, but they were for himself.

BO: He was a cross-dresser, yes. [laughter]

DO: You know, I was ...

SH: Too young to be exposed to that.

DO: In those days, right, right. You know, I can remember doing things, like, with my first paycheck, buying a pair of black, black high heels. I mean, ... in those days, young people, young, you know, teenagers, didn't wear black. I mean, it was sort of looked down upon. So, I got my mother's okay, you know, to go ahead and do it. ... During that time, on weekends, we would go to the movies. I know Bob talks about where they gave away things. I don't remember that in Plainfield, ... any giveaways, but we would walk everywhere, downtown to the Y, to Sunday school, to wherever it was, everything. It was safe to walk anywhere. There were busses, but, you know, we walked [laughter] and we traveled in groups and we did date. We did date, but within our group, again, you know.

BO: No, but people from Somerville or Bound Brook--it wasn't just Plainfield guys.

DO: Well, those would come to the Jewish community center, but the ones that I was friendly with were all local.

SH: Was there a specific subject that you were interested in during high school?

BO: Boys.

DO: No, no, that's not true, that's not true. Specific subject, no, I don't think so. I just loved, you know, being involved in the newspaper, and this and [that], you know, with the, quote, "more intellectual" group, I guess, than, you know, not sports.

SH: Why did you pick New Jersey College for Women?

DO: I applied to various schools, and I can remember the ones that I applied to. It was NJC, it was Antioch, Beaver, Trenton State, and I guess that's pretty much it. ... You know, some of them, I would go and they would give you a test of reading words or what-have-you and tell you, "You're admitted." It was that kind of thing. [laughter] I did not apply for a scholarship, because my parents had said that they could afford to send me to school, and I thought that. I was so naïve, I guess, in some ways, and I thought, "Well, you know, how could I ask for something when there were people who really needed it?" and my parents had put aside, however it was, three hundred dollars a year, or something or other, whatever. It was very small. ... [laughter] The one interview that I [recall]--again, my naivety, I think, comes through--when I went for the interview for Antioch, which ... I thought would be a wonderful school. They had a work-study program and I thought that was just a wonderful idea, and the interview was in New York. ... I was told, you know, things looked good, and I was accepted. ... I had decided at that point, for some reason, not to go to [Antioch], but I had a friend who wanted to and was not admitted. I said to them, "You know, well, why don't you just take her instead of me?" didn't know how it worked until I got to work at Rutgers. It's not quite the same, and so, I don't know why I chose NJC, but I also decided that I would ... go into teaching, because it was sort of an insurance policy, in a sense, you know. If nothing else, you could always get a job teaching and it was a pretty steady kind of thing. ... I believe I had discussed that with my parents and we came to that general understanding. The other thing was the feeling that if you went to some school relatively near home, although I didn't want to live at home, that you could make friends that would be there ...

BO: After.

DO: ... Afterwards, and it was true, you know. ... I'm not sorry I went.

SH: When you came to NJC, was there an orientation for freshmen women?

BO: You had a big sister policy, didn't you?

DO: Yes, thank you. Yes, everybody had a junior sister and they assigned us to a place to live. ... My freshman year, I lived all the way over on Gibbons Campus and there was no bus system that drove us around. We walked across that big field, you know, ... windy and cold in the winter. It was unbelievable, but it was a wonderful house, because it was small houses, so [that] you really made close friends there. ... You know, you were assigned a roommate, from whom I learned an awful lot, and I don't mean intellectually. [laughter]

SH: Do you remember who your junior sister was?

DO: Yes, Shifra Wise, yes. Was that her maiden name or married name? I can't remember now. Yes, she was wonderful.

SH: Shaffer?

DO: Shifra ...

SH: Oh, Shifra.

BO: ... Was her first name.

DO: Yes. Anyway, it was a wonderful system, having that, and I think anybody you'd ask who graduated at that time, or who was in those classes, would remember that whole experience of having [a mentor].

BO: That was the honor system, and there were curfew systems. It was very restrictive.

DO: All right, seven PM was curfew.

SH: Seven PM?

DO: Seven PM, and, on weekends, eleven PM. ... You had to sign in and sign out, and, you know, I mean, you could go to the library and stay out later, although I don't remember how late the library was open. We had the same Sacred Path ceremony. [Editor's Note: A Douglass tradition, the Sacred Path was a shortcut across campus that was forbidden to freshmen until a formal ceremony during sophomore year where the entire class walked the path in their class dress.] You came in, you were not permitted, for the first year, to wear red. As freshmen, you had to be in by seven PM. That was the [rule]. I probably hadn't been in my house, stuck in the house, at seven PM since I was, you know, eight years old or something or other. So, that was sort of, [for] everyone, something you had to get used to. It was a great experience. It really was. We had to ... go to chapel. We had to take gym class, and I remember playing something called speedball and breaking my finger, because I poked it into somebody's jaw. I don't remember whether swimming was required or not.

BO: It was at Rutgers. You had to be able to dive off the board and swim across the pool or you could not graduate.

DO: But, I was a good swimmer. I had gotten my Red Cross lifesaving certification, so, I was a good swimmer. ... I think, for one very short period, I was involved with the Nereids, ... which was the synchronized-swimming group. My problem was, I couldn't do whatever kind of a dive that is when you're in the water and you flip over. So, when they would do something very dramatic, I would just sort of sink in the center of it, you know, and then, pop up wherever I was supposed to be. I was involved with one of the--it think it was the a cappella, maybe it wasn't a cappella, I don't remember--one of the choruses. I don't think I worked on *Targum* [Rutgers University's newspaper], but I worked while I was at school, too, at a place called--a little greasy spoon, on the corner of Commercial and George Street, next to the corner--called the BM.

BO: The BM.

DO: Which stood for Black Market. In those days, that's what it was, ... because, you know, tied in with the war and everything. Black market was the [name]. ...

SH: Was there a mixing of freshmen between the schools, with all the returning veterans?

DO: I don't remember.

BO: There was no interaction at all between classes. ...

DO: I did take, in my maybe junior year, or something or other, I think, I took one course over at Rutgers. At that time, if it was not offered on my campus, we were allowed to go over, but, other than that, no.

BO: No WAVES, WACs or any of the others that she ever remembered or knew about. Maybe there were, but ...

DO: What?

BO: Were there WAVES or WACs who'd come from the service? [Editor's Note: The US Army's Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the US Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) were organizations established during World War II to allow women to serve in noncombatant military roles.]

SH: No, I meant since there was an older element at the schools and there were eighteen-year-old freshmen, was there any fraternization?

DO: I don't recall any.

SH: Was anyone saying, "Be careful?"

DO: No. I don't remember that at all, no, and we used to walk back and forth from Rutgers to Douglass, or vice versa.

BO: Socially, not for courses, not for courses.

DO: Not for courses, no, socially.

SH: How often were there these mixers?

DO: Well, I lived--after my freshman year, you know, we had a lottery system and what-have-you. ... I had become friendly with other people and chose to move in with another [student], ... get a roommate, with whom I'm still very, very close. ...

BO: She went to Jameson.

DO: We picked from a hat. We ended up moving to Jameson Campus, and along with other friends, you know. Everybody pretty much decided on which house they wanted to be in, and the house would hold dances, and so on. ... It was at one of those dances that I met this guy who was a terrific dancer, like an acrobat, you know, on the floor. ... We went on from there, but we both were in something that you failed to mention, Bob. Do you remember, we both were in *Les Mis*?

BO: Yes.

DO: They used to put on musicals every year, Rutgers, Douglass, together, and one of the Rutgers guys, by the name of Skip (Steiner?), had written this Western-style musical, of which there is a record somewhere around here. ...

BO: I was a dancer and she was in the chorus, ... and the choreographers were girls who were in the Dance Department at ... NJC, who taught the guys how to do these dances. ... We knew each other at that point, although I was dating somebody else.

DO: But, at one point, ... I met him. I went to a movie one afternoon with my roommate and seated in front of us, or maybe behind, I think in front ...

BO: I had missed the train.

DO: He had missed the train. We found out later [it] was this guy that I had met at the dance. ... It was getting to be near Christmastime and NJC had a Christmas dance, and so, I decided I was going to invite him. ... I was dating all kinds of other people at that time, and one very seriously, who had been in World War II as a bombardier, you know, and he was older. ... I decided to ask this guy that I had met, but I was afraid my roommates would disapprove, since I had never dated him and I was going to be doing the asking. So, I went to another dorm, so [that] they wouldn't know that I used the telephone to do this. I called him and asked him and he told me that he'd have to let me know. It turns out, later, he was waiting for an invitation from somebody else he was dating, whom I knew, and I ... happened to mention to her that I had invited him. So, she said, "Good, I won't ask him then," [laughter] and then, he called me back and said, "Yes," he would go. ...

BO: That was right after Christmas. We went to New York together.

DO: Yes, right after. That was just before Christmas break, and I went to visit my aunt in the Bronx. ... Bob said he was going to be in New York and we decided we would meet someplace. ... It was on Christmas Day, and we were walking down the street. We went past, I think it was probably [W. & J.] Sloane's, I'm not sure, department/furniture store, and we stood looking at the window and talked about what we will have in our house. I mean, it was ...

BO: It was amazing.

DO: It was. It happened, [laughter] go figure, and we did. The following Christmas, we were married. ...

SH: Was there an engagement announcement within the community?

DO: Oh, in the local newspapers, yes.

SH: Were there any type of community rituals?

BO: ... The fear was that you would get a ring and they would say, the other girls would say, "Oh, isn't that sweet?" Of course, that meant that the diamond was not large enough, but we solved all that. I never had a dime, so, she never had a ring, [laughter] but Doris came back from her honeymoon and she had to give a talk. ... Instead of talking about the organism, she kept speaking about the orgasm, and the class was going crazy with laughter.

DO: True.

SH: I would assume then, after having curfew at seven, four years later, they did not allow married women to cohabit.

DO: On campus, you could not.

SH: However, they did let you continue your education.

BO: That's correct.

DO: ... Right. ... There was housing for married students.

BO: It's now Busch [Campus].

DO: It was called the Heights. It was called the Heights, which is now Busch Campus.

BO: Busch Campus.

DO: And they were Quonset huts--not Quonset huts, no, they were small ...

BO: No, trailers.

DO: Small trailers. They were trailers. To the best of my knowledge, there was ...

BO: No plumbing.

DO: No indoor plumbing, and we considered it for, like, a half a second.

BO: That was very cheap. This is where all the GIs who had returned would have [lived].

DO: I don't know why, but twenty-eight dollars a month sticks in my head. It was some ridiculous [figure].

BO: Very, very low and very tempting.

DO: But, not that tempting.

BO: Not for her, but there was also a neighborhood where NJC girls were not permitted to go in New Brunswick.

DO: Called Burnet Street.

BO: Burnet Street.

DO: That was off-limits.

BO: It was off-limits to girls from NJC at all, but we didn't know that at the time, and so ...

DO: We were a block away from that.

BO: We were a block away from that, ... but we were married. We took an apartment.

DO: No, it was before we got married. We found an apartment on Burnet Street, but not on Burnet Street, one block in from Burnet Street, which made it okay. ... It was in an apartment building that had ... maybe a foot between the wall of the building, and the next one. ... The floors were slightly tilted and it had no sink in the bathroom, but it had a bedroom, a living room, kitchen, big empty thing. We took this place because it was what we could afford and we went out and bought paint--the landlord said it was okay if we painted it--and beautiful, it wasn't. It was furnished, but we were going to make [it] just great. My dad came to pick us up one day.

BO: We had no car at this time.

DO: Yes, and he picked us up because Bob and I had jobs teaching Sunday school at the temple in Plainfield, the Reform temple in Plainfield. So, every weekend, we would come to my parents, go and teach Sunday school while my mother did our laundry for us.

BO: We had a marvelous meal. [laughter]

DO: Great dinner, and then, back we would go. So, my dad picked us up. ... As we're told later, my mother asked him about the apartment, because she had not seen it. ... He described it to her and he said, "But, when they invite you there, you must promise me that you will not say anything." Anyway, so, we invited my mother to come and see the apartment. ... At any rate, she came in and she walked around the apartment with her arms very closely folded, you know, by her side, and looked around and sat gingerly at the edge of the sofa that was there, which was awful. It had tin ceilings and, you know, frieze, rough furniture, and I said to her, "Mom, what do you think?" you know, with so much enthusiasm. She looked at my father and she said, "Bill, they asked me." She's not breaking her word--she said, "It's a barn." She said, "I don't care if you lose your deposit or whatever, but don't live here." [laughter] So, we were very crestfallen, to say the least, but, the next day, I went out and I searched around in New Brunswick and I found a ... realtor. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

DO: At any rate, I went up to a real estate agent. They told me about an apartment that was on Somerset Street, across the street from the Middlesex Hospital Nursing School, and it was above a doctor's office, Dr. Feher, and took a look at it and it was just wonderful. They said that ...

BO: It had a Murphy bed. [laughter]

DO: And so, we rented the apartment. ...

BO: It was an attic. What do you mean "apartment?" It was an attic.

DO: It was an apartment, had a living room with a Murphy bed in it, and it had a ...

BO: Big kitchen.

DO: Big, huge kitchen, with a table and a desk, and so on, and so forth.

BO: And a studio couch, where everybody came and flopped to get away from school.

DO: You know, at any rate, it was great, and we stayed there until you went into the service, at which time I moved back home with my parents. I was teaching by then. I had done my student teaching the semester after we got married, in my senior year, and I commuted to Dunellen where I did my student teaching, and then, Bob went into the service. I ... moved back with my parents and, no, you didn't go to the service then.

BO: Yes, I did.

DO: No, for one year. ...

BO: I went in in June.

DO: That year, '53? no, no. We lived there for a year. We lived in that place for a year, and then, you went into the service.

SH: Bob finished his master's degree in ...

BO: I finished my master's in '54.

DO: Yes. So, it was a year, because we were married in '52. So, it was a year-and-a-half after we were married.

SH: Would you take the train up to Dunellen?

DO: No. I knew somebody who was a painter who had a truck and he would pick me up in the morning and drop me off near the school. ... That worked out just fine and, some days, I would take the bus, depending on, you know, what the arrangement was.

BO: But, we had a big income. ... My stipend was nine hundred dollars a year, but I had to teach three classes to do this, and we taught Sunday school.

DO: And we taught Sunday school. That was our other thing. ... I took a job down at one of the [shops]. It was a department store in ...

BO: New Brunswick.

DO: New Brunswick, the name of which, on Church Street, ... I can't remember the name of it off the top of my head.

BO: But, this was the days when we would go to--it was still Davidson's Supermarket, on Albany Street, was it?

DO: No, George Street.

BO: George Street, and we would go and we would buy a package of frozen spinach, which we would then cut in half, and that half was for the two of us. ... I had a good friend on the faculty and Doris was taking a course with him. His name was Irving Suss and we invited him to dinner in our attic apartment.

DO: And I bought a standing rib roast, which I want you to know was, you know, an extravagance. ... I figured it pretty carefully, about how large ...

BO: How many meals we could get out of it.

DO: We could get three meals out of it, I figured, and he loved it and he had seconds, but, when he asked for thirds, you know--and I remember, when he left, I sat down and cried, "What are we going to do for the rest of the week?" [laughter]

BO: "What are we going to have for the rest of the week?" one potato, divided in half. We were thin and healthy, but there was no money at all, no. Her father and mother agreed that, when we were married and she was still in school, that the money he would have paid to the University, Cooper, I guess, for meals for you, they would give us cash in lieu of that. ... That was also very important. So, we managed. ...

SH: As a student-teacher, are you paid at all?

DO: No, no, nothing. You're on your own.

SH: What were you teaching?

DO: Social studies, maybe English, also. You know, it's sort of vague in my mind. It was seventh grade, seventh or eighth grade, in Plainfield, ... not one of the finest schools in the world.

BO: Jefferson School, wasn't it?

DO: Jefferson School, yes. I mean, I can remember, one day, the police coming up to ask me if there was such-and-such a student in the class, because he was being arrested for something or other. ... I subsequently, many years later, saw his name in the paper, in which prison he was in or something.

BO: His name was Othello, I remember that.

SH: Were there a lot of other married women that graduated NJC with you?

DO: No. I think there may have been--I only remember, I think, I think, Barbara Murray Gordon was.

BO: Was the only other married student.

DO: Was married; I don't remember. I don't recall any other. Frankly, we were very wrapped up in my own life.

BO: The NJC alumni magazine photographer took a picture of us. Doris had a cape, which she then reassembled, and they took a picture, but a broom was right next [to her]. We had what we called--what is it called?--an apartment kitchen. In other words, there was a Venetian blind, which you raised or lowered ...

DO: I think it's a Murphy.

BO: A Murphy kitchen, maybe, and the broom was [out] and, when my mother-in-law saw the photograph of the broom not put away in a closet, you were in deep trouble. I won't tell any more of that, but thank God for Murphy beds. [laughter]

SH: When you graduated, did you have a contract to teach?

DO: When I graduated, yes, and I think I was making more than any of my friends. I made thirty-one hundred dollars. That's when I worked at Jefferson School. I practice taught in Dunellen, but my job, my actual job, was at Jefferson School.

SH: Did you take the summer off after graduation, before you went to work in the fall?

BO: I don't remember.

DO: I don't recall. I assume I did. Oh, I must have worked somewhere.

BO: I don't recall at all.

DO: I'm trying to think which summer--I used to, you know, be a waterfront counselor at camps.

BO: Not when we were married.

DO: I know. That was just before we got married. I don't remember. I don't recall.

SH: Talk a little bit about how you came to be in the military, Mr. Ostroff.

BO: There was a draft at that time and I knew that I was going to be called, and so, I wanted to make it as convenient as [possible], after I got out of college, after I got my degree. So, I volunteered for the draft--we were permitted to do that at the time--and they sent me to Fort Dix for basic training. Doris went to live with her mother and father. Then, when I finished basic training, I went to radio school, also at Fort Dix, for thirteen weeks. ... She would pick me up on weekends and we would come home again. I hated every minute of radio school. It was [Mr. Ostroff imitates Morse code], "Dit-dit-dat-dit." When she would pick me up on the way back from Fort Dix, I would look at all the signs and go, "Dit-dit-dat-dit." It was maddening. I mean, for twelve hours a day, you were learning Morse code intensively, and the fear is, if you dropped out, then, you would immediately go to Korea as an infantryman. So, everyone wanted to succeed in radio school, for thirteen weeks of agonizing [training].

DO: And, if I may interject, every weekend, he could get a pass, but, prior to getting the pass, he had to take a test.

BO: Pass a test.

DO: So, I would drive all the way down to Fort Dix not knowing whether or not he was going to be given that pass for the weekend. ...

SH: Pressure.

BO: Yes, it was a lot of pressure.

SH: The Korean War had already started by this point.

BO: Korea had already been started. It was '48, '49. It started when, '49?

SI: The Korean War started in June of 1950.

BO: I was still an undergraduate at the time.

SH: Was there any chance that you could have been drafted while you were still in school?

BO: No, no, you were deferred if you were in school.

SH: Did graduate school give you a deferment as well?

BO: Yes, but, immediately after that, I knew I would be drafted and I would be going to Korea.

SH: We talked to some people who were pulled from school.

BO: Maybe if they're vets who were recalled, if they were in the Reserve, that was a different story, but I don't think that they pulled off undergraduates for the draft. It was like all American wars, in which ... there was a class system. If you were a blue-color worker, you were subject to the draft immediately, but, if you have enough money to go to college, you were able to be deferred.

SH: Okay.

BO: But, I did pass and I went on a troopship from [the West Coast]. They flew us to someplace, Grand Island, Nebraska, and then, out to Tacoma, where we boarded a troopship, and, for some reason ...

DO: Seattle.

BO: It was Seattle or Tacoma, I don't remember. Are they next to each other? yes, that close, and it was a troopship. ... We were on our way to Japan. I guess that was a stop.

SH: Where were you assigned at that point?

BO: I was a radio operator and all of us in our class were on the same boat. ... For some reason, I had gotten a haircut onboard the ship and I put on freshly ironed fatigues and I was very slim, and a group of Marines came on when we got to Tokyo and they lined up the troops. ... I had a haircut and freshly [pressed clothes], and I must have polished my boots for some reason. I guess I was so bored, and they went, "You, you, you and you," and pulled us out. We had no idea for what, and it turned out that these Marines were soliciting a group for the honor guard for the United Nations Headquarters. ... I was one of the lucky guys, and I think two months later, Doris came over.

SH: Was it common for dependents to follow deployed troops?

BO: No, not at all.

SH: How did you manage to get her to come along?

BO: She was able to pay her own way. We sold the car and you were able to come over.

DO: We had some money saved up.

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

SI: This continues an interview with Bob and Doris Ostroff on December 18, 2006, in Green Brook, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

SH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

BO: At United Nations Headquarters, they were interested in a project, that they would provide Japanese businessmen with English language training--and they picked me, I guess, because I had had a degree and I taught English--at Daiwa Ginko, which was a huge bank. It was to teach the clerks and the other people at the bank basic English, and it was wonderful, because we got to meet real Japanese people, which very few GIs were able to, but they also treated us regally, and Doris especially. The president of the bank was a man named Mr. Takigawa, and he and his wife would invite us to their house, only to the western room of their house, and Doris would have them in our little "GI palace." [laughter] ... Doris'll fill you in on some of that, because it was a wonderful experience for us. ... They would send a car for me and bring me back and it was a wonderful opportunity for me to find out about Japanese culture.

SH: Especially since the war had only been over for less than ten years.

BS: Yes. ...

SH: To back up, your selection was just totally random.

BO: It was random.

SH: There was no security check or records check, to see what degree you had.

BO: They just said, "You, you, you and you."

DO: But, that was ... initially for just the honor guard.

BO: For honor guard, right, and it was run by the Marines, by the way. They had ... a small group of Air Force, a small group of Army and a small group of Navy, and we were all under the Marines. ... They ran it.

SH: Was it made up of other UN forces?

BO: No. This was strictly United States. It was held in Pershing Heights in Tokyo, which was the headquarters for United Nations Headquarters. I think General [John E.] Hull, [Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Forces from 1953 to 1955], was the original guy who was there. [Douglas] MacArthur had started this, and then, [Lyman] Lemnitzer and Hull and a whole bunch of other four-star generals came to run this, and we were supposedly checking the people who came into the building. We were also required to lead the cleaning people, so that they didn't take any sensitive material. Underneath the ground, deep underneath, was FECTAC, which was--I don't even know what it was supposed to be--but it was the place which was like Churchill's place in England, [the War Room]. If everything went wrong, this was the place where the military would have all of their communications and we would have to go down there. We walked around all the time with Geiger counters, ... but, more than anything, it was for ceremonial purposes. We were all in very heavily tailored uniforms, which were very different than the regular. You were zippered into shirts. As a matter-of-fact, the first time Doris came to visit the United Nations Headquarters, I said, "I need your pass, please."

DO: "Ma'am."

BO: "Ma'am." She didn't know who I was. She could not recognize me. I mean, the helmet--we had a group of Japanese young men who did all the polishing and the cleaning and we did nothing like that. Everything was just glossy and very, very, very heavily tailored. On your pants, the bottom of your pants, you had copper things, which have still scarred the bottom of my legs, my shins. You wore acetate covered--underneath the blue scarf was acetate, which also hurts your neck, but, then, Doris came over and started to cook and I eventually could not fit in the uniform anymore, [laughter] but we were there for parades. I think the longest national anthem I could ever remember was, at that time, the Thailand National Anthem, [for] which we had to stand at attention. We did Queen Anne's Drill, but it was lovely duty. You worked twenty-four hours and you were off twenty-four hours, twenty-four hours on, twenty-four hours off, so that we had a lot of time off together.

SH: Initially, were you housed as a unit?

BO: Yes, until Doris came over. We were stationed above the PX in downtown Tokyo, but, then, they moved all of us to Pershing Heights, and then, when Doris came over, I was permitted to have off-base housing.

SH: What kind of training did they give you?

BO: None at all.

SH: Coming from all the different services, there was no training. The Marines just took you.

BO: Well, we learned Queen Anne's Drill, but, other than that, there was nothing that we did except, you know, walk around.

SH: Was there a musical component?

BO: No, no. There was a regular Army band, but the Marines ran the honor guard, which, as I said, was largely ceremonial. You were in parades, you greeted visiting people, but ... each office was a different country. It was Ethiopians, there were British, there were Australians, there were Swedish, and each of them had a small group of people with them.

SH: You talked about the Geiger counters and the passes. The security, even though it was ceremonial, must have been intense.

BO: The Geiger counters were [due to] this terrible fear, which was [that] the atomic bomb was going to be set off in the United Nations Headquarters, very unlikely, but still and all, we used Geiger counters constantly. We'd, you know, walk around the halls and make sure that--I don't know what in hell they were expecting, but it was fine.

SH: At any point, did you consider Officer Candidate School?

BO: Never. I wanted in and out as fast as we could possibly get it, and ... that meant that you would be serving either one or two extra years if you went to OCS.

SH: This was something that had come across your radar.

BO: I never got above corporal.

SH: However, it was offered, but you chose not to accept.

BO: Oh, yes, yes.

DO: He said when he went in the service, he switched off.

BO: Yes, I just turned off. The idea was, "Two years, do it. It's all happening to somebody else and that's fine. You've done your duty."

SI: I want to ask a couple of questions about the relationship, both for you personally and the Americans in general, between the Americans and the Japanese.

BO: The first house that we had was the house owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Katadi who were Japanese, and they had their house and this very small house, which we shared with another couple. They were wonderful neighbors. They took us many places. They were very good to us. As a matter-of-fact, one day, there was, on May 1st, a celebration of--what's the word?

DO: May Day.

BO: May Day, and we were told to bring our pistols home with us if we were living off base, because it was dangerous. ... True enough, right in front of the Katadi's house and our house, there was an enormous number of Japanese, waving red flags.

DO: Well, because we lived right next-door to the shrine to the Japanese war dead, called Yasukuni Jinja. ... [Editor's Note: The Yasukuni Jinja or Shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to Japanese servicemen who died in all of Japan's wars. The facility includes the Yūshūkan, a war museum that has been criticized for its nationalist, revisionist view of World War II.]

BO: Oh, yes, Yasukuni Jinja, which is very sacred still.

DO: And so, that was ... the gathering place for this May Day parade, or whatever it was, or rally, whatever it was. ...

BO: But, Mr. and Mrs. Katadi stood outside of our house ...

DO: So that people would not know that there were Americans there.

BO: ... In her kimono and he in his *yukata*, to make sure that they knew that there were no Americans in that house, and they were very protective of us.

SH: Was the other couple Japanese or American?

BO: No, they were Americans who I had known in radio school. Mark Karadenis asked--that's a complicated story. He married and he wanted to bring his wife over, but he did not want to touch his teacher's pension, and so, Doris agreed to lend them money enough to get overseas and they would pay us back, but we lived together for a very short time, about maybe six months, and shared a house. It was not a good experience, and she'll explain why, yes. [laughter]

SH: At the celebration, did you just peer out?

BO: Yes. We were, truthfully, [at] small openings, but ... both of us had brought our pistols with us and they looked extremely rowdy. I thought they were very drunk. I had no idea ... how drunk they were, but there was something terribly frightening about a lot of Japanese raising red flags and waving them and chanting, which got us pretty scared. I don't think we ever had a negative experience with the Japanese other than that one time.

SH: Was this discussed at all back at the base?

BO: No, no, but they did know where we were living and strongly advised us to bring our pistols home. ... That's the extent of it.

SH: Okay. I wondered if they advised you to stay on base.

BO: No, no.

SI: Much of the literature coming out about the occupation in Japan shows that the fear of Communism creeping in was a strong, driving force up into the mid-1950s.

BO: Well, in the mid-'50s, it may have been ... waning a little bit, but that May Day was really very, very scary.

DO: You would get on the subways and there were always Japanese war veterans on the trains, maimed, wearing white. ...

BO: Yes, always wearing white.

DO: You know, with a headband or something. There was something menacing, in a sense, about being an American in a car with these people who were [war veterans].

BO: Yes. There were not many Americans who were living [there].

DO: You know, and so, that was uncomfortable. No one ever did anything. ...

BO: Our experiences with the Americans who lived with dependents [were] largely officer class, never left their compound. Their kids went to school in the compound. The movies were in the compound. They came to the PX [post exchange] to buy food, or to the commissary, but there was absolute zero interaction between the Americans and Japanese.

DO: However, among the people that we befriended, that's totally different.

BO: Everybody lived off base, in Japanese quarters.

DO: Wonderful people.

BO: Wonderful people, everybody who was [in our circle] were all enlisted men, non-officers. All of us had the same furniture, the same bedding, the same dishes, the same glassware. You could go from house to house and they were all identical, despite the fact that we were living in different places. So, it was very nice.

DO: Because we had to live off base, because on base was only for officers ...

BO: Right.

DO: ... and their dependents, but, if you came over there as a dependent, non-commissioned, then, you had to find your own place to live.

SH: Were the non-commissioned officers or the enlisted men all part of this honor guard?

BO: No. There were people who were radio announcers, they were people who were working for *Stars and Stripes*. There were many other places where dependents of enlisted men could come and work. Bess never worked. The one we shared the house with never took a job. Doris, two days after she arrived, [said], "I've got to get a job," and you tell them.

SH: Tell us about that.

DO: Yes. ... Prior to my coming there, Bob had written to me and told me that I would have no trouble getting a job as a secretary or working in an office, and so, I brushed up, I thought, on my typing. I even cut my nails, so that, you know, [laughter] I'd be able to do it. ... I went to whatever the personnel thing was for the Army or the services and they gave me a typing test and suggested, when I finished, that I go back and practice some more. [laughter]

BO: She was very bad. [laughter]

DO: I guess it was pretty bad, but I pursued it and found that there were other jobs available to me. I was offered one, since I had a teaching certification, to teach in an Army school for children of dependents. I chose not to do that because you don't have the controls, since these kids are coming and going. They'll come in in the middle of the year, and I was still a relatively new teacher and didn't [feel] confident about it. ...

BO: There was also a slogan, "If there's dust on the suitcase, it's time to move," and this was the mentality of the officers and their families about being in Japan. It was temporary. It was, "Don't get involved too much in Japanese life or Japanese culture, because you're going to be moving very shortly."

DO: Yes. My concern with teaching was the fact that there's no continuity, because kids would be coming [and going].

SH: Prior to going, were you able to do that in the States or was it only after you got to Japan?

DO: I'm sorry, no, it was when I got to Japan--no, nothing prior to that. Then, I was offered a job to work. They had an R&R place, similar to a USO kind of thing, and I could go and play Ping-Pong with most of the guys coming down from Korea, you know, what-have-you. ...

BO: This was an R&R place.

DO: Which seemed a little nuts to me, and it was in the evenings, and so on, and so forth. So, I ventured out on my own, and I don't remember exactly how I did it. I know I must have contacted [someone]. Somehow, there was an English-language newspaper. I think it was called *Asahi*, or something like that.

BO: *Asahi Shimbun*.

DO: ... Somehow or other, I found out about *Stars and Stripes* and contacted them. I went there and took a test to be a proofreader and the test consisted of reading certain things and there was a style sheet, and I wasn't exactly dumb. So, I mean, that wasn't too difficult, you know, as far as I was concerned, to read it, spot errors, put it in the form that they wanted, and so on, and so forth. ... The next thing I knew, I had a job at *Stars and Stripes*, and that job ...

BO: You were not paid in money. You were paid in scrip, the same way I was. We had no American dollars.

DO: ... I don't recall, but ... the pay was okay.

BO: Yes.

DO: There's no question about it, and the people who were proofreaders, ... there were a couple who were in the service, and then, there were civilians.

BO: Largely Japanese wives of Americans, American guys?

DO: No. Only Carol was the only Japanese wife that I remember. This particular woman, ... she was *Nisei*, [a second-generation Japanese man or woman born outside of Japan]. She was married to a GI. About ten years ago, I guess, or so, in *People Magazine*, I happened to see her name and her husband's. ...

BO: He came in '46, at the time when Japanese who had anything and needed money were selling wonderful things, art. ... He bought everything he could possibly get his hands on.

DO: And they lived very meanly, in a small apartment, but he had trunks ...

BO: Footlockers.

DO: Footlockers filled with Japanese art, which, subsequently, he gave and sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

BO: ... Which is the basis of their real ...

DO: Their major ...

BO: ... Japanese collection.

DO: ... Yes, and she was a proofreader. Carol was, you know, with me.

SH: Was she born ...

DO: In the United States.

SH: In the United States.

BO: But, she ... spoke Japanese perfectly.

SH: She was married.

DO: Yes. She was also a dependent.

SH: Interesting.

DO: But, through that, we met other people--a couple by the name of Bill and Betty Gray. ... They had both been newspaper people here in the United States, ... but he was in the service and went to work there. Shel Silverstein, who became the cartoonist for the paper, the Bernsteins, Alan and Paula Bernstein, ... we remained very close.

BO: She was a reporter.

DO: She was a reporter, and he had been with ...

BO: And he worked for the Army radio station, magnificent speaking voice. He eventually went to CBS and just retired recently. ... His voice was--he was from Memphis, Tennessee--there was not a trace of a Southern accent. He had this kind of mid-United States, no accent.

DO: Not she. She had a good one.

BO: Oh, she had a strong Southern accent.

DO: But, she was a writer and she would travel to Korea.

BO: A lot.

DO: You know, and do stories from there, and so on, and so forth, and this was the nucleus--oh, and another couple, two other couples, both of whom had been ...

BO: Peg and Max O'Dell.

DO: ... Peg and Max, who, in private life, both had been undertakers, [laughter] but that's another couple.

BO: Well, he was training to be an undertaker and Peg was the one who went to work for the housing department of the Army. ... So, she knew when the bills for gas and electric would come and she would tell us, "Go now and pay your bill," because the Japanese lady who got the bills did not read English, and so, you would hunt through and you'd pick the cheapest bill.

DO: She would have a paper bag, a brown paper bag, and she'd have all the bills in there and you'd go through them and you'd pick the cheapest one. If you got there first, you paid the cheapest one. [laughter]

BO: The cheapest one, ... and "Mama-san" was happy to do this.

DO: And we couldn't read Japanese, either.

BO: ... They were wonderful, crazy friends. They were really wonderful. ... We had a good group, but we all got terribly homesick for big holidays. ... I remember, Thanksgiving, we all

got so homesick and we decided we're going to have a Thanksgiving dinner and they did it at our little place.

DO: Apartment. At that point, we no longer lived in the house.

BO: Right, we had moved to [an apartment]. ...

DO: Because, when we first came, we had moved to a house and shared with a couple. Then, subsequently, we moved. We had a falling out with this couple--never lend money. [laughter] At any rate, we moved to, I guess you would call it a duplex. It was a side-by-side apartment in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo, which doesn't look anything like Shinjuku now, and we got some sawhorses and made tables for that and we purchased a turkey. We didn't have an oven in that apartment.

BO: There was no oven in the apartment.

DO: So, we purchased a turkey at the PX and Bob's ...

BO: Boss.

DO: Boss was an officer, who ...

BO: ... Had an apartment with an oven, and so, we took a taxi from our place in Shinjuku, drove over [in] a taxi with a turkey, and then, when the turkey was done, we took a taxi and brought the turkey back. [laughter] We had a two-burner hotplate. ... Doris got this terrible feeling, "I've got to bake a cake," and so, she--you describe this.

DO: ... Well, because it's an aside--it has nothing to do with it--the way you turned on the gas, there was, you know, a spigot. You know, you turned it on with a match and the thing [lit]. Because the hot water heater was in there, what I didn't know was that there was a little opening behind the hot water heater and, one day, I was standing in the kitchen and I see a hand reach through the wall.

BO: From the other apartment.

DO: ... Because they also had to light it.

BO: She let out a scream. It was like a bad horror movie. [laughter]

DO: Anyway, we had this wonderful, nostalgic Thanksgiving. It was just a wonderful kind of thing. [laughter]

SH: How did you bake the cake?

DO: Oh, the cake, ... I had a heavy pot, heavy cast-iron pot, and I made a batter and greased the thing and put it on top of this burner and looked to see what appeared to me to be a 350-degree

flame. [laughter] ... It rose as high as any cake I've ever had. Of course, because it wasn't in an oven, it didn't brown, but it was all baked through, and I iced it and it was ...

BO: It was delicious.

DO: Because the Japanese ...

BO: They don't make cake.

DO: Deserts are not; ugh.

BO: The bean paste, and really terrible. [laughter]

DO: And, you know, this was very exciting for us.

BO: I always felt like it was human flesh you were eating, if you ever went to eat a Japanese desert. It was just awful. [laughter]

DO: At any rate, so, I worked at *Stars and Stripes* and it was an extraordinary, wonderful thing, in the sense that we met wonderful people through that. ... The work itself was tedious ...

BO: Stock market reports.

DO: Except that you knew what was going on. ... They had a style sheet and you had to make sure that, despite the fact that the picture would show, you know, Mrs. Jones and Ambassador So-and-So, you know, greeting, you know, in that order, it had to be listed in such a way that the person who had the highest rank would be mentioned first. ... [The] only thing that was tedious, really tedious, was baseball scores, which, of course, were very important to the guys in the service, or any sports scores, and reading off that. ... The classified ads had to be done once a week and the stock market stuff had to be checked, because this was all hand set. Nothing was done [by machine].

SH: It is literally printed there as well.

DO: Printed there, everything, yes, and most of the people who--not most, all the people--who were reporters were Americans. All the managers ... had had backgrounds or had worked for US newspapers and were recruited to come over there, because it was a good opportunity for them pay-wise, the experience of being in another country, and so on, and so forth. So, people really wanted to be there, working for *Stars and Stripes*.

BO: You ought to mention that, when we went to play bridge down at the beach, the guy we were playing with ...

DO: Oh, God, yes. Just this past summer, we were playing bridge down in Manahawkin, and I don't know how we sat down [to play]. It was duplicate. We sat down at a table and they got to talking about, you know, "Where are you from?" and, "What was your background?" and so on,

and so forth. ... It turned out that the guy we were playing with was on *Stars and Stripes* at [the] same time I was, but he was on the sports desk, which, of course, wouldn't hold any interest for me whatsoever. So, I didn't know [him], but we knew the same people. That was just a "small world" kind of thing again.

BO: And they're meeting now in Philadelphia.

DO: ... No, they had the meeting. They had the *Stars and Stripes* reunion, but we didn't go. [laughter]

SH: In your position, you might not know this, but you said there were people who did go to Korea and come back.

DO: Yes, sure.

SH: Was there any discussion about how it was there as compared to Japan?

DO: Certainly more difficult, ... in the sense that ...

BO: I think the war was almost over, or was ended, at that time, and they were there as just posted as peacekeepers or whatever, ... yes, but they were constantly coming over for R&R in Tokyo. ... So, you met a lot of people who were there.

SH: Did you?

BO: As a matter-of-fact, we went to ... Jewish High Holidays once at--it was a Japanese, what would you call it?

DO: Community center.

BO: Jewish community center in Tokyo. Apparently, Japan accepted a lot of German people in the '30s who came and stayed there, and they opened this very small place. ... While we were there, sitting in our seat, we found [that] sitting next to us was a guy from Plainfield that I had gone to Rutgers with, who was an officer stationed in Northern Japan.

DO: In Hokkaido.

BO: In Hokkaido. So, you got [folks like that]. It was just a very interesting, small world, but lots and lots of R&R people coming over from Korea for a week and Tokyo was the clear [destination]. I don't think anybody ever went anyplace else, and they would go to the spas, Japanese spas, for a couple of days, which were open to GIs. They had a very interesting time, very short, but very intense. There were lots and lots of prostitutes. It was a fascinating time to be there. [laughter]

DO: Oh, God. I mean, we're walking hand-in-hand and he's being solicited. [laughter]

BO: Yes, yes. We're walking in Yokohama and they ignored her and started to solicit me. I said, "This is my [wife]." ... "Oh, no, no, you love me," [laughter] but we spoke some Japanese.

DO: We spoke the kind of Japanese, "You Tarzan, me Jane," that variety, where we could make our wants known, you know, I mean, to tell a cab driver or the green grocer or what-have-you what we wanted. ... One experience I had, because we lived off campus--off campus, [laughter] off base--because he was not an officer, we could get furnished [quarters]. I mean, we could find a furnished place. However, we could only get a non-working refrigerator. ...

BO: You had to be a sergeant or better, or an officer--no, a sergeant. Officers came automatically. You could get a working refrigerator if you were the high NCO.

DO: But, I was ...

BO: We had an icebox.

DO: Before that. We had an icebox in the first place, where the iceman would come, he and his wife, with their high rubber boots on, and it was a small space. I hadn't had an icebox, I mean, ever, that I remember, you know.

BO: I had.

DO: At any rate, and he would come. We would tell him we wanted the ice and she would carry it into the house, not he.

BO: He would open the door for her. ...

DO: Right, and he would collect the money, but she lugged the ice and put it into the icebox.

BO: And took off these high boots before he came into our house.

DO: Oh, yes, because you can't walk into your house wearing the boots.

BO: We had tatami floors.

DO: You know, so, the mats. I mean, ... that whole experience was incredible.

BO: But, you were talking about non-working refrigerators.

DO: But, I was sent to a warehouse where there was literally maybe fifty or sixty non-working refrigerators. Now, you have to find the one that's least non-working. [laughter] How? I don't know. You look at it and you hope for the best, and then, somehow, I don't still remember how I had the guts to do it, make arrangements to get a truck from the Army to take this thing to our place. Now, they'd take it there, but they wouldn't do anything more than bring it. Now, I have to find somebody to lug it into the house and I went down to the green grocer and, somehow,

because I was an American, ... I managed to get a couple of guys to come and bring it into the apartment. ... Then came the interesting part--now, how do we get it to work? ...

BO: I asked Sachi, ... who was our Japanese secretary, who worked for United Nations, and she called somebody that she knew. ... A man came to the house in a navy blue business suit, carrying a little briefcase. He then stood in our living room, took off his suit, changed into work clothes, down to his underwear ...

DO: Down to his long johns.

BO: And then, he would put on his work clothes. He would fix the refrigerator, and I think, at that time, we were very smart--we made him an American breakfast and he charged us very little. We needed him to come back several months later and he was not going to be cheap that time. Given breakfast or not, he already figured out that we were wealthy Americans, [laughter] but, before the refrigerator, you had to empty the [chamber] underneath the icebox. ... We always forgot, and so, it would spill over on to the tatami, which was the straw matting, which became moldy and you had to change it. [laughter] We were very happy to have a refrigerator. It was wonderful.

DO: My non-working refrigerator.

BO: But, Doris became pregnant while we were there and her experience with Army doctors was horrific. It was just awful.

SH: At least tell us briefly.

DO: Very briefly. [laughter]

BO: This is how they treated dependents.

DO: Well, how you [got] treatment, you went--and they could have been Japanese or American, because there were plenty of GIs ... who had married Japanese women--and you would go into a large room where everybody ... was given the same appointment. ... You would sit there--and knowing full well that you had to give them a urine sample--you would sit there for the hour, you know, dying, because you had to go. ... They weighed you. That was the first thing they did, and I am very serious about this, if you had gained more than three pounds, or whatever was the number that they had come up with, you didn't go home and lose the weight for the next time or whatever it was, they immediately put you into the hospital, right from there into the hospital, until you lost the weight. That was the way they operated.

BO: You never saw the same doctor.

DO: Unfortunately, you didn't see the same doctor twice. So, I had no idea that I was ...

BO: They never took X-rays. When we finally did give birth, when she finally gave birth ...

DO: At home.

BO: At home.

DO: ... I mean, I didn't know I was having twins until they were delivered.

BO: Until they were delivered.

SH: Where did you give birth?

DO: ... Here, in the United States.

BO: They had dumped us.

DO: They had sent us back by then, and, that way--I went over paying for my own airfare because of that--but, coming back, I came back on a troopship with him, but not with him. He was with the GIs.

BO: Underneath, you know, in the [hold].

DO: You know, and I was with three other pregnant women, [laughter] with bunks, and I was seven months pregnant. You know, so, needless to say, they were nice enough to give me a bottom bunk.

SH: I was just going to say, did you pull rank, so-to-speak?

DO: ... Yes. Of course, I was the last one on, but ... somebody else was very kind and gave me the bottom bunk.

BO: But, ... they were not willing to deliver heavy women to have babies. They wanted it ...

DO: And they also--because one of our friends did have a child there--they also put them into; the maternity ward was here at one end and the nursery ... was at a different location, and the women had to walk through the regular wards in order to get their babies, and in the middle of the night, ... according to Peg ...

BO: According to Peg.

DO: ... You grabbed the first child you came to and you didn't care which one you breastfed.

BO: That's correct. You didn't give a damn whether it was your baby or not. You just wanted to get back to bed. [laughter]

DO: At any rate.

BO: No, it was pretty awful. I don't think I was sick a day over there ...

DO: Fortunately.

BO: So, I never had an experience with a doctor there.

SH: Did you shop at the commissary? You talked about the green grocer.

DO: The commissary as much as possible, yes, because things were very, very reasonable, not that they were expensive, but, for fresh vegetables and things of that nature, I shopped locally.

BO: Fish, we bought locally.

SH: Were you ever given any instructions on where you should not go or what you should not do?

BO: No.

DO: No.

SH: Any etiquette that you, as a American citizen, should follow?

BO: No. They gave us a phrasebook, which was marvelous, and I remember that the Kitadi's took us out once to some park ...

DO: Okura?

BO: ... And I needed to go badly to the bathroom and I looked in the phrasebook and I said, "*(Banjo dokodeska?)*?" which means, "Where is the men's room?" and I had used the expression, the GI expression, which translates as, "Where is the shithouse?" ... She was horrified, because that is not what polite Japanese would use.

DO: That's exactly--as you're putting your hands up in front of your face--that's what she did, because, of course, they never laughed

BO: They never laughed, or everything was behind the hand, but that was the Japanese phrasebook. ... I'm sure there were many, many expressions that were used that way--not in polite society did you use those words.

DO: But, we weren't restricted in any way, to the best of my knowledge.

BO: No way. We went everywhere.

DO: I mean, common sense tells you, you know, as I would do now, there are places you probably don't want to go, but we used local transportation. We traveled.

SH: That was my next question.

BO: Oh, sure.

DO: Yes, we would go away for a weekend someplace and to see as much as we could. What an opportunity--it wasn't like I could get on the phone and call home and say, you know, "Mom, what should I do about this, that and the other thing?" ...

BO: We never received a single phone call from the States and this whole experience was about being totally independent. You don't ask questions, you don't ask permission. As a matter-of-fact, you have to explain, when you became pregnant ...

DO: Oh, that's--never mind.

BO: ... We wrote a letter home, asking for a particular kind of bra or whatever it was, and, two days later, by ESP, we received a package from this mail which hadn't even been received at home yet, and it was a maternity bra.

DO: ... I don't think so. It had to be different. It can't be; at any rate. [laughter]

BO: ... We were totally on our own and it was, for young married people--I mean wouldn't it be nice if ... your wife never even talked to her mother for a year? [laughter]

SI: I am not going to put that on tape. [laughter]

DO: Don't go there, [laughter] but it was an extraordinary experience in that we had initially had a wonderful landlord ... who took us places. Bob's involvement teaching allowed us to go to *Kabuki*, to different things. They took us places that most people would not have gone or had the opportunity to do.

BO: They took us a lot of places that most GIs would've never, ever gone to. Now, you asked about the commissary. The thing that was in shortest supply for Japanese was coffee and they loved coffee, and so, our gift always to them were cans, which we bought from the commissary and gave to the Takigawas.

DO: And they, in turn, would give us ...

BO: Give us lavish gifts.

DO: It's a "presento" culture and, [if] they give you a gift, you, in turn, give them just one that's slightly better, and then, the next one back, goes up another notch, and so on, and so forth. ... You know, I would start out, I made Jell-O, because they adored it. So, of course, I would bring Jell-O. They, in turn, would give me a painting, perhaps, or something of that sort, but, when we finally left, the people who were connected with the bank, she gave me a kimono, one of hers, ... which I still have. ... His brother was the chairman of the Department of Art at Kyoto University and they gave us one of his pastel pieces, which was a beautiful thing, and they gave us a pastel piece, which we adore

BO: That is something that we did a lot of in Japan. We spent money on art.

DO: ... The next, our landlord, first landlady, had a son ...

BO: ... Son-in-law.

DO: ... Who was an artist, and so, we were fortunate enough to meet him, some of his friends, and see the art. ... Bob and I, ... Bob is an artist, and so, as a result, we would go to various galleries. The galleries were in the department stores, and still are.

BO: Yes. The top floor of every department store still has wonderful art exhibits.

DO: And, in fact, in the living room, there's, I think, the first thing that we ever bought together there.

BO: Yes, come and see it. It's wonderful. Well, you can stop for a minute.

DO: You don't have to. They can see it, at any rate, but we would see things there and some of them, unfortunately, were more money than we could afford. ...

BO: We bought cheap, but we bought things we really still love.

DO: But, we bought wonderful things while we were there, and I wish we had done thirty times that, but we couldn't, we couldn't.

BO: No.

SH: In regard to the demonstrations that May Day, were there other veiled references, or more open, about the war?

BO: The house that we had lived in, which was next to Yasukuni Jinja, when we went back again to Japan, we, of course, wanted to see where that place was. It is now a museum, but not to World War II. It's to the name that the Japanese now give to World War II, which was the Great, Greater Asian something or other, [Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere], and this was a museum on that site, which was all about their version of World War II. We had that experience, too, when we went back. We went to Hiroshima and we went to the museum there and it was, again, about World War II, why we went, why we bombed Hiroshima, and the Japanese guides that we had were two young women who Doris was able to get through a particular organization for tourists in Japan. ... They did not want to go with us through this museum. They had obviously been there many, many times, but they also did not want to see our reaction to this very different version of World War II, from the Japanese point of view. ... When we went to Hawaii, we went to see the *Arizona* and the place was filled with Japanese tourists. [Editor's Note: The USS *Arizona* (BB-39), sunk in the attack on Pearl Harbor with a loss of 1,102 men, and the Memorial facility erected above the remains, now serves as a monument to those killed in the attack.] ... We were horrified to find that they were looking at

the names of the people who had been killed and drowned on that ship and they were photographing it and giggling, and we were so upset. We had nothing like that when we lived in Japan.

DO: Except that I wonder, still, to this day, whether or not our going to Yasukuni Jinja, you know, to the Shrine of the Japanese War Dead, whether they, seeing us Americans there ...

BO: I'm sure.

DO: ... Felt as we did when we saw the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. ... I don't know, perhaps.

BO: They are very ...

SH: There was no reference to it. Did you go to Nagasaki or Hiroshima when you were there the first time?

DO: No.

BO: No, no.

SH: However, no one said you could not.

BO: Well, we went to places like Kyoto. ... We went to wherever there were spas. There were [at] Atami and many other places. We went to Lake Chuzenji. These were the places where you went for our form of R&R, like staying at a Japanese *ryokan* [a traditional Japanese hotel] and, you know, being treated like you were some special god who had descended for the night, but, no, we would not have gone [then], but we did go to Hiroshima when we visited. We've been back several times since then. Yes, we've been back, what? three times.

DO: Three times.

BO: Three times. We adored Japan and have wonderful memories--I mean, why would we not?

SH: It is such a wonderful story. I am so thankful that you were able to share that with us, being a dependent, your reactions.

BO: ... I'll tell you, being a dependent and not being paid in *yen* or dollars caused us some problems. ...

SH: Where could you spend the scrip? That is what I wanted to ask.

BO: You could only spend scrip at the PX or commissary.

DO: But, you could bank it.

BO: You could bank it, which we did.

DO: Which, then, of course, becomes [American dollars].

BO: And then, ... we lived on [the economy]. You traded some of that for *yen* at the American banks that were GI banks exclusively, ... either in Pershing Heights or Hardy Barracks, but we decided we wanted to go to this restaurant, which everybody loved. It was a German restaurant and it was near Hardy Barracks, which is where she worked. ... The bread was superb and we asked for more of the pumpernickel and, when the bill came, they had charged us for the second helping of bread and we did not have enough money ...

DO: No *yen*. [laughter]

BO: ... No *yen* to get back home. So, we had to walk many, many, many miles along the trolley tracks, because we could not get on Japanese transportation without *yen* and all we had was scrip. So, there was a disadvantage if you were really living in the country. Being paid in scrip was really very difficult.

SH: There was not a black market that would allow you to use it.

BO: If it was, it was so forbidden that you wouldn't have dared. I mean, nobody I knew or you knew ever got involved in a black market with American money. We were kids. We were really very young.

SH: You talked about the community of GIs and those working on the paper. Were there other entities there, other than the newspaper and the military? Were there others living on the economy?

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

BO: ... Fairly well, but we had no interaction with them at all.

SH: At the UN Headquarters, of course, as you say, they were from the militaries of all the different UN countries.

BO: Yes.

SH: Did they too have enlisted men living off the base?

BO: No, no, they were all officers. They were really in an office environment and they may have had staff, but we never saw them at all.

SH: Okay. In other words, when you were out shopping, you did not run into the French version of yourself.

BO: No, no. I would assume that ... all their office help was Japanese.

SH: Okay.

BO: I assume--I wouldn't know. The only time I really got to walk the building and see these offices was to accompany the Japanese cleanup groups. So, I don't think I ever saw them at all.

SH: Okay. There were no ceremonies where you would have any interaction.

BO: No.

SH: Was there ever a chance that the honor guard itself would go anywhere else, other than right there at the UN?

BO: No, except to the airport. That's about all. We would greet, you know, the parade and do things for the visitors, or maybe not even to the airport. There was one little airport, Haneda.

DO: I don't recall.

BO: I don't recall ever going outside, no. We were in there.

DO: Then, they kicked him out of ... that unit anyway, when he gained [weight].

BO: Oh, yes. ... When I had gained enough weight that I could no longer zip up these shirts, they moved me to the supply room. [laughter]

SH: Really?

BO: The Army corps supply room, where I would be hidden and wouldn't embarrass the Marines.

DO: Besides which, he never learned his left from his right. [laughter] ...

BO: I was very bad. [laughter]

DO: ... The Queen Anne's Drill. [laughter]

SH: You talked about the art galleries. What about music? Were you exposed to any of the ...

BO: ... Japanese music.

DO: We went to the music hall. ...

BO: Oh, yes. The Grays were really ...

DO: Friends.

BO: Friends, but they were bohemians. I mean, they were interested in everything, and so, we would go to burlesque shows, but burlesque shows were not girlie shows in Tokyo, at that time. They were, like, very sad plays, but people would sit in the audience and they ate tentacles of dried squid or octopus. ... Instead of popcorn, it would be this kind of things, or on-the-street food was octopus balls, which were really some kind of a dough with pieces of octopus in it and they were little, round, bullet-y kind of things. Because of the Grays, especially, we got to do a lot of really nutsy things, but ... music was very important, but not Japanese music. There were coffeehouses scattered everywhere in Tokyo and the coffeehouses had programs, that you could go to hear Beethoven at this place, Mozart at this one. They were mad for American, not American, classical music, and these places were gorgeous, I mean, with red, plush ...

DO: Small, small places

BO: Small, but, you know, with red velvet walls and they were plush and upholstered. It was really very beautiful, and you could stay there for long periods, for a whole symphony, if you wanted to, on a cup of coffee.

DO: Well, Starbucks is on the same order. [laughter]

BO: Yes, same order, but ... there were a lot of Japanese kids there soaking in classical music.

DO: I think one of our favorite things is when they would put up a neon sign, and because the Japanese have such difficulty with the ...

BO: "R's" and "L's."

DO: Letter "L" and "R," the sign would be written, "Napery Crub," instead of Napoli Club. [laughter]

BO: Yes, or the "Gondara Crub," "crub," C-R-U-B, so that you knew, you know, that these neon signs had never been proofread. It was hysterical.

DO: I don't know if they were neon or not, but they were ...

BO: I would have loved to take pictures. They were neon.

SH: That was the new way to advertise.

BO: Oh, the new thing. When we went back to Japan most recently, we could not believe what Tokyo looked like. It was neon lights everywhere.

DO: Makes Times Square look like ...

BO: Did you see *Lost in Translation* [a 2003 film]?

SI: Yes.

BO: The movie? That's where [we were]. That's Shinjuku, and that is absolutely unbelievable. There's an electricity in Tokyo that is like nowhere else, [laughter] seriously, nowhere else.

DO: Yes, very exciting.

SH: Would you like to talk a little bit about your coming back? Are you still in the military? You actually came home on the same ship.

BO: We came back on the *General Anderson*.

DO: No, USS *Anderson*. [laughter]

BO: USS *Anderson*, [USS *General A. E. Anderson* (AP-111)] and it was thirteen days of hell, because she was pregnant and very sick. ... They would permit me to come up on her deck for the day, but I'd have to go back for meals and for sleeping. As long as she was outside, she was able to survive, but an amazing thing happened. Apparently, there may have been four or five Jewish people on this boat, whether they were staff or dependents, and they had--it was *seder* night. Passover fell and they had a little *seder* for us onboard this boat, but, immediately, when we got back to San Francisco, which is where the boat landed, we were there for, what? maybe three days. ... On my birthday, they got me out of the Army.

SH: [laughter] In San Francisco?

BO: In San Francisco.

DO: Yes, he was discharged there.

BO: I was discharged there.

DO: They didn't have to pay [for] our trip home. [laughter]

BO: And we had to pay for our trip home.

DO: I am not sure. I don't think so.

BO: I don't remember if that's true, but, two weeks later, Doris, very early, delivered at seven-and-a-half months.

DO: The end of my seventh month.

BO: End of her seventh month. I was looking for a job. I had no insurance, no job, I had just gotten out of the service and we had medical bills for premature twins that were astronomical and ate up every cent that we had. So, they were not thinking of us when they booted us out of Tokyo early. Yes, it was not the kindest thing they did to us.

SH: Did you come back to your parents' home?

DO: Yes, yes, since we had no choice.

SH: Did you come back by train from San Francisco?

DO: No, no, I think we flew back.

BO: I think we flew.

SH: They allowed you to fly.

DO: I suspect so. Well, *they* weren't involved anymore. [laughter]

SH: No, I meant the airline itself.

DO: I guess.

BO: I think so, yes, probably.

DO: Must have. You know, things are wiped out of your memory.

SH: Right.

DO: So, yes, we must have.

BO: I was at an interview when, for some reason, I called home. She hadn't felt well that morning, and my mother-in-law said to me, on the phone, "Are you sitting down?" I said, "Why?" She says, "Doris delivered today and they're twins, a boy and a girl, and they may not survive. So, come home right away," and I did and they not only survived, but they thrived. It was amazing. ... They were in the hospital for, what? until they gained up to five pounds, which I think took two months.

DO: A long time, because they weighed in at three pounds.

BO: And then, lost a little weight. Yes, so, when they were five pounds, they were allowed to leave the incubators and come home.

SH: That is amazing, in the 1950s, two or three pounds.

BO: And then, we moved to an apartment.

SH: Was the job interview successful?

BO: Not only successful, but I went to tell the interviewer that I had to rush home, because my wife was [giving birth], and she says, "I'm a twin." She called me the next day and said, "You've

got the job and the salary that I had quoted is not high enough, and so, I'll pay you more." This was at Bloomingdale's, for the executive training squad.

DO: ... And where did they put him for his first assignment? The infants' department.
[laughter]

BO: They put me in the baby department, where they let me have all the samples. [laughter] Everything that had been sent as a sample was sent home to the kids. They were wonderful to us, really.

SH: What a wonderful, fortuitous set of circumstances. [laughter]

DO: Yes, it really was. It was amazing.

BO: Yes, but the idea is that we had no idea that she was going to deliver or that she [was having twins]. We just thought she carried big. [laughter]

SH: This is great. When did you return to work?

DO: I stayed home with the children until they started school. Then, I went back as a substitute and I subbed for some time. I got a long-term subbing job, and then, that was over. [laughter]

BO: And you used to work for Douglass.

DO: And then, I went to work at Douglas College and I started working there in 1969. ...

BO: The kids would have been ...

DO: Full-time.

BO: [Born in] '56--thirteen?

DO: Judy was ten, nine or ten, and Dave and Lisa were thirteen.

SH: You had another child after that.

DO: Yes, yes.

BO: We had one three years afterwards.

DO: I started initially at Douglass College as executive secretary to the something council--the Faculty Council, I think it was called. That's just what I think it was called at the time. Subsequently, because of committees I had served on, I got to know most everybody in the faculty at Douglass and I knew that they were starting ... a school of the arts. ... So, I spoke with Jack Bettenbender, who was the founding dean and founder of that school, and told him he needed somebody like me. [laughter] He said, "Write up a job description," which I did, and I

made one stupid mistake--I put in everything but the kitchen sink about what I could do for them, and so on, and so forth, and, subsequently, was the one who was selected for the job. [It] became very difficult, later, getting a raise, because I was doing everything, [laughter] you know, and I'd have to show new things that hadn't been done before, but I ended up with Mason Gross [School of the Arts] and staying there until I retired.

BO: Twenty-seven years.

SH: You saw a tremendous change.

DO: Oh, God. I mean, our first graduating class, ... I think we had seven people graduating, you know, and there was a time when I can remember that they said the school would not have more than three hundred-and-some people. Well, that's long since gone, but it was a wonderful experience and working with Jack was an amazing thing.

SH: Was he primarily who you worked with, because he stayed there for quite some time?

DO: Until he died, and then ...

BO: And then, Paul Trilling's wife took over.

DO: No, no, she didn't.

BO: Who was that?

DO: Jim Scott took over after that. After Jim Scott, Marilyn came in, Marilyn Somerville came in. I believe, I think, that's the order it was, but we moved from a little office ... near the Little Theater to downtown, where Foot Prints is--it was P. J. Young's--over to what had been another department store, or something or other, around the corner on Livingston, and then, over to the Douglass Campus while they built something else, and then, downtown to where they are now. Yes, it was marvelous. I loved doing that, yes. So, I ended up being, you know, Assistant Dean for Academic Services and Dean of Students for Mason Gross. So, it was a wonderful, wonderful career, really.

SH: I know we had promised to conclude soon.

DO: Oh, I don't have to leave until quarter [after], twelve-fifteen.

SH: Okay.

DO: I'm okay.

BO: If you have any other questions?

DO: I'm okay until then. He could be here--he's around all day. [laughter]

BO: No, I'm not, as a matter-of-fact.

SH: Can you talk a little bit about what you did afterwards?

BO: Oh, I worked for Bloomingdale's and, eventually, was in the furniture department, and then, transferred to Bamberger's, where I was the furniture buyer for many years. ... Then, I was solicited to be a manufacturer's rep for one of the companies from whom I bought and did that until ... 1977, when I realized, in that business, I was already gray-haired and an old man and it was time to get the hell out of that business. ... So, I looked around for something I could do as an older man and it was real estate, and I worked as a real estate guy for fifteen years, and then, I retired.

SH: A really booming time for New Jersey, if my math is correct.

BO: Yes, yes, and it was in this area, which was high-priced houses even then. So, it was a very nice ending to a career, and then, I taught for ten years. ... There was an organization called Counter Point, which is language specialists, and the company that they worked for was ...

DO: They have contracts with other [companies].

BO: They cut contracts with pharmaceutical houses, who would be bringing people from Europe or the Asia [market], largely Asia, and these people needed to speak English, but, more importantly, it was cross-cultural training. "What is life like in the United States? What do Americans think?" and it was the best job I ever had. It was absolutely fascinating. These were the smart people, with some ability to communicate, but they were people you could become very dear friends of, and we had friends.

SH: Did you teach them in a classroom setting?

BO: No, it was one-on-one, two hours at a time, and you saw them maybe once, twice, three times a week, and it was very [intense].

SH: At their home or their business?

BO: No, no, ... you would go to their office or they would come to Counter Point's offices. I don't think I ever really ... went to somebody's [home]--yes, maybe.

DO: Oh, sure you did.

BO: Yes, I went to people's homes, too.

DO: Sure you did.

BO: Wives of the pharmaceutical executives, still correspond with several of them, and, when we went back to Japan recently, we met two of my students.

SH: Really?

BO: Again, who treated us like royalty in Japan and took us to great, crazy places in Tokyo, which American tourists would never have ever been. [laughter]

DO: We were literally--I mean, when I say I don't think there's been an American in these places ever ... [laughter]

BO: Ever, ever.

SH: Oh, my.

BO: So, we had wonderful experiences from that job. I had a lot of Japanese, but everything was conducted in English. I mean, the Germans, the Russians, every nationality, ... everything was conducted in English, but it was nice to know some [Japanese].

SH: Was the State Department involved with this or just private businesses?

BO: It was private business, largely with the pharmaceutical company which is now called Sanofi, but was originally American Hoechst.

DO: And then, became Aventis.

BO: Which was a German [firm], then, became Aventis, and, now, it was bought by a French company, and I stopped working because the French company wanted people, Americans, trained in [French] to go to France. ... So, my French is okay, but not nearly good enough to do that. Our son was in the State Department, for many, many years, and he's a perfect French speaker and he lives in Paris, even now.

SH: Does he?

BO: Yes.

SH: That would help you make that cultural transition. What about the other children, your two daughters?

BO: His twin ... sister died five year ago, of breast cancer.

SH: I am so sorry.

BO: And the youngest one, Judy, is now an art teacher, married, with three little girls. One of them ...

DO: Little?

BO: Little girls; [laughter] one is a sophomore at Rutgers and one, we're hoping, will be at Rutgers next year, although she's not sure she wants to go there, and the little one is thirteen. So, I mean, we don't have any babies anymore.

SH: That is wonderful.

SI: I was wondering about the fact that, before you went into the military, you had been on a clear path to become an English professor or an academic.

BO: I decided it was absolutely something I would not even go near with a ten-foot pole. I'm not a political person and it was a lot of politics in there.

SH: You loved just teaching.

BO: I loved the teaching and hated the whole business of publish-or-perish. So, I decided that was not a career path for me. That was not a hard decision to make. I had seen it very close up and it was just not me.

SH: Mrs. Ostroff said that you were an artist. Did you continue?

BO: Do I paint still?

SH: Do you paint? Do you write?

BO: I do both. Right there is one of my paintings.

DO: ... Oh, that goes back a hundred years. [laughter] What he had been painting mostly, in the last ten years, I guess, are ...

BO: Decorative screens.

DO: Decorative folios.

BO: Large-scale.

SH: The one in here?

DO: Not that one.

BO: No, not that one

DO: This one is interesting.

BO: But, if you're curious, I'll show you, which is downstairs.

DO: Go show them the pictures.

BO: Yes, I'll show you what we bought as kids, literally, while we lived in Japan. ...

SH: We will put it on pause and reserve the right to come back and ask more questions.

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

Reviewed by Hanne Ala-Rami 5/5/09

Reviewed by Christopher Doukas 5/6/09

Reviewed by Benjamin Asch 3/5/11

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 9/1/11

Reviewed by Doris Ostroff 6/19/13