

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT REDFIELD

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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EAST BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 27, 2015

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Molly Graham: This begins an interview with Robert Redfield on January 27, 2015. The interview is being conducted on 102 Ryder's Lane in East Brunswick, New Jersey and the interviewer is Molly Graham. Let's start with your father's family history.

Robert Redfield: My father died when he was thirty-two. He had gone to Cornell University. He graduated in 1912, I think. He had owned garages in New York and been in radio manufacturing himself. My grandfather was one of the officers of United Cigar Stores. That was, at that point in time, one of the largest type of stores of its kind. Those stores were all over. My father also was a manager and had one of those stores in Connecticut. Because of his early death I don't have much background on him personally, other than that I'm going to say he was very well liked.

MG: How did he die?

RR: Heart failure. Yes, yes. My mother had a lot of problems. My sister died when she was eight. My brother died when he was twenty seven. My sister had what's going around now, encephalitis, and there's still no cure for it. I think she started with measles. It went into encephalitis. We were living down at the shore at that time in Colts Neck. Have you been around here long enough to know that area? Yes, it's probably one of the most exclusive areas in the country. It's also one of the most expensive areas in property value and there are a lot of well-known big name horse racing stables and big owners in that particular area. It'd be worth your while to visit since you're that close. One day you should just go down Route 537 and take a look. It's an amazing area.

MG: Okay, I will.

RR: It really is worthwhile. I'm looking for some articles for you. Anyway, I went to Riverside Military Academy. I was the only one ever to go to a military school like that but, and not to be able to take part in the parades and the military exercises because I had polio.

MG: What is this you are showing me?

RR: That's a write up that Riverside did of some of the important people that have graduated, which is really one of the better military schools in the country. Many graduates end up going to West Point usually. It is one of the best prep schools. This is the house I grew up in Larchmont. If you know Westchester County, New York, that's where I grew up. My mother built that house in 1927 or 1928. She designed and had a top builder build it. The home was in an exclusive area in Westchester, in that particular part of Larchmont. It was a real high profile area. The home was in a special area, about a mile from town and the area was a privately sectioned. All the homes were really beautiful. We were friendly with Gloria Hatrick McLean, who eventually married Jimmy Stewart. She lived nearby in that same area known as Wood Acres.

MG: Your mother, Tess Redfield, was a high profile woman.

RR: She was in the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

MG: Can you say what the *Ziegfeld Follies* were? [Editor's Note: The *Ziegfeld Follies* were a series of Broadway revue shows that performed from 1907 to 1931. It was created and run by Florenz Ziegfeld.]

RR: It was probably considered one of the most important areas of entertainment, that will never be forgotten. In 1935, when I was around backstage a lot, Bob Hope made his first appearance in this country. Then, all your big stars like Will Rogers, who was a very famous western personality, and Fanny Brice, and W.C. Fields, all these big stars were backstage. It wasn't a written Broadway show, but it was more sketches and revues, general entertainment with different personalities. The Follies played for seven years. Actually, my mother was in, in 1919, right before she got married, probably 1919 to 1921. A number "A Pretty Girl is like a Melody" came out of mother's particular show. Ziegfeld was one of the great entrepreneurs of all time. Fanny Brice was one of the biggest stars of all time. This you'll realize because they recently made a picture called *Funny Girl* and that movie was Fanny Brice's life story. She performed as herself and also created a character called Baby Snooks in the Follies. She was one of the highest priced entertainers and one of the best known in America. Barbara Streisand played her part in *Funny Girl*. Fanny Brice is my godmother. We moved from Westchester when I was very young. I went to Paris and Germany three times when I was seven or eight years old. Now I don't travel because I got phobias, but that was a long ways from home. We were living in Larchmont when I got polio. It was during the epidemic period when polio was prevalent. The boy next door to us, his parents were stockbrokers, very wealthy people. His nurse had come over to see our gardener and visit our place next door, and she carried the virus over to me. At that point, Jackie and I were best friends at eight, nine, ten. He had polio from his throat down. He died in three days. My family would never tell me what had happened to me. I remember my stepfather was building a stone wall and I was helping him carry stones and that caused sickness. When I did get polio, they immediately put me into casts. That was the way they treated the disease at that time. The disease is very contagious during the first immunization two week period. After that, it's not contagious. [Interviewee's Note: A similar type disease with no cure is currently, in 2018, spreading throughout the United States.] I was treated at home for about a year or so. There was no cure at that time, but the doctors told my mother that the best area for me to live would be in a certain type of climate, where the soil dries out, and that's why we went to Colts Neck. She bought a farm in Colts Neck. My mother named the farm "*Sans Souci* Farm," which in French means "Without Worry." That was the name of the farm. The farms had different names. We sold our house in Larchmont and came to Colts Neck. That would have been around 1932 when I was ten years old. Those were real happy times, other than having had polio. I swam always. That was one of the main forms of exercise I had. I swam all summer, all winter long at Fort Monmouth Athletic Facility or casinos and other locations.

MG: I want to back up a little. I knew you were born in 1922. Where were you born?

RR: New York City.

MG: Did you live in New York City for a time?

RR: Yes. Well, until we moved to Westchester. So, we lived in New York from the time I was born until I was six or seven, and then my mother built that Larchmont house and were there about three years. Then, I got polio and we came to the Colts Neck area.

MG: When you say your mother built that house, do you mean she designed it?

RR: Yes. She designed what she wanted, and then it was constructed by a top builder in that area.

MG: How old were you when your father passed away?

RR: Three.

MG: Do you have any memories of him?

RR: No.

MG: You said that he was born in New York, but do you know where his family came from before that?

RR: I know that he was in charge of running United Cigar Stores, garages and more.

MG: I am curious about his heritage, where his ancestors are from.

RR: Well, I guess it goes back as far as Poland.

MG: What about your mother? Do you know where her family was from?

RR: My wife should be here to prompt me. My mother was born in New York in, I think, 1896. She was involved in so much, not just the *Follies*. She was instrumental in creating the Ziegfeld Alumni Association. She and I helped to bring racing to Jersey, horse racing. Racing had been in New Jersey in the 1800's and then it was banned. We helped bring it back in the early 1940's with Theresa Mahoney, a Jersey City politician, on a new bill about racing, which became a big deal in bringing racing back to New Jersey. I was involved a lot with horse racing.

MG: Before she got involved in entertainment, do you know what her growing up was like?

RR: She was involved in the *Follies* for so many years. She was in the *Follies* in about 1919 to 1921. In 1935 and 1936, my mother and I would visit Fanny Brice backstage. All the major stars would be there. They would sometimes be in the show for five or six months at a time.

MG: Can you describe your mother?

RR: She was rather charismatic and she happened to be very beautiful. That is her picture over there. The picture with the children, that was in the house in Larchmont before I got sick. That's my mother with my sister before she died.

MG: Are you the oldest sibling?

RR: The oldest. In the picture with a couple of children sitting on the couch, that's me and my sister.

MG: Do you know where your mother's family came from?

RR: Probably Poland, but I can't really go back much further than my mother.

MG: Would your mother sing and dance around the house?

RR: No, she wasn't that much of a dancer, but played the piano and sang for the Ziegfeld Follies. She was considered, at that time, a showgirl and she understudied a couple of wonderful leads. They mistakenly called her a dancer, but she wasn't really a dancer.

MG: Do you know how she met your father?

RR: I don't know. She's not going to tell me at this time.

MG: When did she meet your stepfather and remarry?

RR: I would have been maybe eight or nine years old.

MG: Tell me a little bit about him.

RR: He was a high powered salesman in the garment industry to wholesalers and department stores. Today, we have Sears, Macy's, Kohls, Target, etc. He was high powered salesman. He was from Ohio. They eventually got divorced and they had a lot of arguments while they were married. They were married for maybe fifteen, seventeen years. They were married in New York, before we moved to Westchester.

MG: Did they have more children?

RR: They had a son, my half-brother, who actually went to Rutgers for one year. From there, he went to Hillsdale in Michigan. He graduated from University of Miami law school and lived in Florida. He practiced law until he passed away at an early age.

MG: How old was he?

RR: Around twenty-seven.

MG: Can you tell me how he died?

RR: Yes, Hodgkin's disease, which he was first diagnosed with when he was in the Army.

MG: You mentioned you had a sister.

RR: Yes, my sister passed away when she was eight. There were the two of us.

MG: Then your mother and the stepfather had your brother.

RR: Yes.

MG: For the record, what were their names?

RR: My sister was Janet Betty. My brother, his last name was Lichtie. His first name was Harrison Spencer, but pretty much everybody called him Spencer.

MG: What was your mother's full name and your father's full name?

RR: My mother was Theresa F. Rubin and my father was Harry Rosenfeld. Rosenfeld is the derivative translation.

MG: When did you become a Redfield?

RR: Right before I went to Peddie School. That's in New Jersey, by the way. It's a preparatory school. It was right before I attended Peddie, which would have been around 1936, 1937. There were certain prejudices against Jewish people at different periods of time, so changing our name generally it made it easier to get along. That no longer seems to be so.

MG: Did you experience any discrimination?

RR: No, no. For some reason I thought it looked like I belonged in the United States. The way the US is going now I don't know what to say anymore, but it's going in different directions as society seems to be changing.

MG: How did life change when you contracted polio?

RR: It was very difficult for me to accept because I was around ten years old. I was very athletic and I played with the older kids. I played baseball with kids a couple years older than I was, and I was basically athletically inclined before that. So, I got hit that much harder when I got struck down with polio. I remained athletic until a couple years ago, but I've had a lot of major problems since then. I had a couple very bad falls that took me out of everything. Until two or three years ago, I swam a mile a day. That is what basically kept me in tremendous shape. I enjoyed it. I swam competitively when I went to school. It didn't matter where I was, I found a swimming pool. If I was out on business, if I was in Connecticut, I would find a pool before the end of the day. So, I always had my shorts and goggles in the car.

MG: Did it feel like that being "struck down" by polio?

RR: I had a lot of resentments on that end of it, but there was nothing I could do about it. Polio takes effect and impacts your nervous system. The end results depend on how badly you get it. I got it from my waist down and it affected my legs badly and other areas slightly and not noticeable to others, to where I had major operations to my legs and ankles, which was another tough thing that I had to go through. I did everything normal and daily up to a certain point. I never stopped driving. I drove all the time. I did a number of repairs to my house on the ceiling, the roof, myself. What happens later in life is you reach a certain point of building up neurons and then you get, what they call, post-polio symptoms, which are really worse than getting it originally, because the built up neurons get lost forever. When you start to lose neurons, you cannot get them back and generally lose muscles and strength for normal life. It's a complete deterioration from the time the neurons start to go. When I could, I still swam everyday anyway. It kept me really strong. One of the big deals is that everybody used to smoke. I mean, kids smoked. Out of ten people, nine and a half smoked all through the years. I didn't because I swam, and for some reason, you can't swim and smoke at the same time. [laughter] So fortunately, I never did smoke, but I was subject to it in many ways because being in the entertainment business, I was in a lot of lounges, clubs and restaurants. Before the drinking and driving laws changed, entertainment was a big thing, seven days a week, six days a week. I had lots of different acts out, especially lounge acts that played the different clubs, and the smoking

was heavy in some places. So, it was fortunate that it didn't take to me that way that second hand smoking took to a lot of people. I avoided that. I ended up being a nonsmoker and being in really good shape. I just stayed strong that way and weak in other physical ways.

MG: How did life change when you moved to Colts Neck in 1932?

RR: From that time on, we were always going into New York, maybe once a week. We would go to the two famous places in New York, one called Lindy's, which was basically a Broadway restaurant. A lot of people from out of town would go there, but it was an restaurant frequented by show people. Many other important people would also come in. We would go in, maybe once a week with Fanny Brice. We'd have lunch and whoever was in Lindy's--big stars and producers--she made sure she brought them over to meet me.

MG: How did your life change after you moved to Colts Neck.

RR: Oh, yes. From there, we went to New York once a week. That was a big part of my life. I was going to school and then the summers were spent at the shore and swimming. There were a couple of real nice clubs, such as the West End Casino, which was very well known, right on the shore, and the Colony Surf Club. We were members there. The winters were normal. I just went to school.

MG: How did your mother know Fanny Brice?

RR: Through the *Follies* and her knowing so many people connected with that show. I don't exactly know who introduced them. It would be through show business that they met. Mother knew a lot more people involved in show business as well.

MG: Was there anybody, in particular, that you were excited to meet or a big fan of?

RR: Well, I'm going to jump ahead. At the age of ten, I was backstage and I met Gypsy Rose Lee, who was a famous person at the time. She was a classy stripper and she was doing the *Follies* as a big name actor, as would Bob Hope, W.C. Fields, Will Rogers and so many others. I was too young--maybe ten, eleven, or thereabouts--to be any particular fan of anyone special.

MG: Was it exciting as a young boy to have these attractive, beautiful women coming over to the house or being able to see them at the show?

RR: Well, I don't know whether I became excited at that age with their coming over. Will Rogers was one of the most famous people I met. I looked up to him and Al Jolson, who everyone knew. Do you know that name?

MG: Yes.

RR: Yes, pretty famous, even to the point where he did a one man show on Broadway. He invited my mother, sister and myself to the show, and we sat in a box right over the stage. During the performance he walked over and handed us three boxes of candy as he could reach from the stage to there. These were gigantic names at the time. Recently, I saw they're having a rodeo in Madison Square Garden, this year I think. I think it is the only other rodeo ever to come into Madison Square Garden was the one Will Rogers did around that period of time, end of the

1930s. He invited mother and me to the rodeo and we sat halfway in Madison Square Garden, right off the arena. Then, he came over to say hello to us. No matter how young you were, you knew those names. They were major stars.

MG: What was your relationship with Fanny Brice like?

RR: She was really terrific. I started an autograph book that year. As I say, we would meet her and have lunch with her. She knew everybody and everybody knew her. The big stars, whether it be Jon Hall, Frances Langford, were in Lindy's together. She would bring them over and make sure that they met me and make sure I got the autograph. It was Jack Benny, Bob Hope, different people like that. She brought them to meet me and get their autograph.

MG: I am curious about the Freehold Military School that you went to.

RR: I went one year. I liked military school although I knew that I would never be able to get into it because of having had polio. Freehold Military School was, at that time, one of the oldest schools in the country. It was a hundred years old. It only had a few students, maybe a hundred students. We lived in Colt's Neck. Freehold was not far away from there. My mother spoke to Major Duncan, who was the owner of the school, and he accepted me and allowed me to come in. It was a good private school with good teaching. Again, I didn't participate in the actual drills, but I did everything else with what they called MS&T, which is military science and tactics. I learned things I could do, such as rifle practice and stuff like that. I wish I could show you because I'm proud of it. On the shooting range, I would take a target and I could put ten bullets right in the bullseye. I even kept some of the targets here to prove I did it.

MG: What are some other memories you have about going to that school, maybe the friends you made?

RR: One of the big memories was that we had the shooting range, which was maybe fifty yards. You would lie prone and shoot, and do your target practice. I was particularly good. So, they had me teach some other kids. I was teaching very young kids from seven to twelve years old. One kid, right next to me, had a .22 Rifle. He swung it around and he's got it pointed at me. He says, "Is this the right way to hold the gun?" He's lucky he didn't pull the trigger. I remembered that incident. Then, my brother went to school there a year after I started. At the school they had horses, so he would ride. I remember that in the back of the school, there was a good tract of land where you could ride horses. I probably rode, too, at that time. I went to school there for two years until I went to Peddie. The owner of the school was Major Duncan. He had a daughter and two sons. One son was an Army captain and he was also one of the teachers at the school. Major Duncan's daughter was one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen in my life. One of the Peddie graduates became the second Heisman Trophy winner, if you know what that is. His name was Larry Kelley. He also became the football coach at Peddie after he graduated from Yale University. Peddie is in Hightstown and is a very good private school, one of the country's best prep schools. As you know, up in New England there are a couple of good private schools up there, such as Phillips Exeter Academy. Major Duncan's daughter married Larry Kelley. She married him. She was unbelievably beautiful and Larry Kelly had been one of the top football players at Yale. He was the second Heisman Trophy winner. He went to Yale and then came back to Peddie to teach and coached football for several years.

MG: What grade were you in when you went to Peddie?

RR: It was 1939. I think ninth or tenth grade. It was two years before college. I went one year to Red Bank High School. I jumped around to a lot of schools, going one, two or three years at a time somewhere. I had one year at Peddie, one year at Red Bank High. So, I must have been around tenth or eleventh grade. I liked military school so much. Then, I went to Riverside, which had two different campuses, one in Gainesville, Georgia, which had a big campus and real good campus. It's still one of the best schools in the country right now. And a second campus in Hollywood, Florida, a second whole campus. You start school beginning of September in Gainesville, Georgia and at Christmas break, when we would come home from Christmas break, you would go to Hollywood, Florida and stay there until the last semester at which point everybody would be trained back to Georgia and finish up the year there.

MG: How come you were going to so many different schools?

RR: It's hard to really give that answer. I had gotten sick a couple of times, so I went to Tilton. I went to junior college there to complete high school and the first of college. They don't have a junior college now. It's just a prep school now. So, I went to junior college for one year. I went to Tilton to finish up the last year of high school at the junior college and get enough credits so I could go into NYU [New York University] the next year.

MG: Did you have any favorite teachers or subjects?

RR: Captain Schock at Freehold Military, the coach of the swimming team at Peddie and different teachers at Riverside. I had a French teacher at Tilton. They had my room in the main hall, right near the first classroom. I was up most of the night and I dragged myself into the French class and that was the teacher's greeting as I entered class. Because I'd been up most of the night, the teacher would say, "Here comes Mr. Redfield in his mental pajamas," because I was still a little bit sleepy coming into the first class. Then, in Peddie, I liked the swimming coach.

MG: Were they all boarding schools where you lived away from home?

RR: Yes. Even when I went to Freehold, which is only a half an hour from home, I stayed there too. I was happy to be away. Not because I did not like home. I loved the farm and my homes. I liked to go to school. I liked that type of life.

MG: You did not get homesick or anything?

RR: Well, I wasn't far away, so I could come home for weekends. I wanted to be more like everybody else if I could. So, I got into swimming. I loved this activity. Peddie also had a golf course and I played with one arm. I was quite good, by the way. I don't know if you know golf.

MG: A little bit.

RR: Well, I shot in the low eighties with one arm, using the old clubs of early years, which are wooden shafted, no bend. I had a putter that I used to use. My mother got me a Wilson set of those clubs when I was eight or nine years old. I used that putter all my life. When I got sick I

walked with crutches or canes, and to maintain my balance on the course, I had to use the one cane and be able to swing with the other arm. Then when I putted, I putted with one arm. Golf clubs were a lot less sophisticated than today with all the technology in making golf clubs. I played other sports. I played ping pong and I played really well, but I had to be stationary because I couldn't do the movements. I had to stay real close to the edge of the table to counter my balance. I was quite adept in using the one arm, but I could return real quick. So, I did ping pong, swam and played golf. That's what I did.

MG: Was being away from home and going to school tricky or trickier because you were dealing with polio?

RR: It was a lot more difficult. I could not run to make classes. I wasn't going to get there quite as quick. I also found ways to participate in sports. I became a state licensed tennis umpire. I got my umpire license from the United States Tennis Association and was a tennis umpire because I enjoyed being involved in sports and participated by umpiring.

MG: Do you remember the stock market crashed in 1929? [Editor's Note: The Stock Market Crash of 1929 refers to a period of extreme market volatility at the end of that October, peaking on "Black Tuesday," October 29th.]

RR: I was seven years when that happened. That's what hit our family financially quite hard.

MG: Tell me about that and what impact it had.

RR: Well, the fact is, when my mother built the home in Larchmont, that house cost over seventy thousand in 1926 or '27. You could imagine what it would be now. I think it's on the market today for two million, if you look it up on the internet. She was legally represented by the people that owned United Cigars Stores, which is the store my father had been involved in and my grandfather was one of the founders of. They took care of her finances and she became quite well off. Then the crash of 1929 happened. My stepfather knew the markets, but he invested her stocks to a point where she lost almost everything, financially. Fortunately, she bought the farm for just twelve or thirteen thousand. It was roughly seventy five acres. Now it's worth probably \$400,000 [dollars] an acre. That's unbelievable. The farm is only a thirty-five minute drive away from here. If you took Route 9, and you went down a half an hour, you'd come into Freehold and Colts Neck area, which would be [Route] 34. Have you been there yet?

MG: Yes.

RR: Okay. So, instead of turning right at the junction, you would turn left on Route 537 and head towards the shore. Now you're going to pass these beautiful farms. Many famous and important people live there. If you made a left, you'd be three miles from where my farm was and where those major horse farms are. If you go past the farm and you go a little bit further, you come to Fort Monmouth Park in Eatontown. If you go a little further east, you get to the ocean. You'll enjoy taking a ride down there. I may have a couple of pictures of the farm. As you go by, it looks like--if you remember a show or heard about it, called *Dallas*. That home now looks like a home on *Dallas*. This will bring you up to date. Our next door neighbor, who gave a lot of property to Dorbrook Park, his place abutted our place. He owned a company, a large shoe company called Miles Shoes. It was one of the biggest shoe store companies. He is

the founder of another company, now called CVS. That was our next door neighbor. He tried to buy a portion of the farm that I kept for us. I wouldn't sell it, but when we talk again, I'll tell you more about it. It's really a heck of a story of what really happened to the one acre I kept by Swimming River.

MG: Yes, I'm curious. How else did the Great Depression affect your family? Can you say how else life was different during the 1930s?

RR: Basically, I went to school, stayed in shape, did physical therapy and all the swimming I could to come up to as good a level as I could.

MG: Before we talk about school and graduation, is there anything about your childhood we are missing or things that you want to talk about?

RR: I remember a lot of my mother's friends. My mother's best friend was Mrs. Glemby. The Glemby's owned many cosmetics shops. Macy's had a string of them and Glemby was their biggest in house cosmetics shops. At that time, women wore hairnets and the Glemby's were the biggest supplier of hairnets in the world to Woolworth's, which is a very big company. I would play with the Glemby's daughter. My mother and Clara Glemby were good friends. We had an apartment in New York, on Riverside Drive, which is the main road that goes along the Upper West Side. Are you familiar with that at all? Riverside Drive goes right along the Hudson, from downtown New York where the piers are, all the way up the West Side. It was a real nice area and we had an apartment there on 79th Street, and they did too. The Glemby's had the penthouse. I remember going up there when I was around seven or eight years old. My mother was out with Mrs. Glemby, who I called Aunt Vi. Once, I come by and there are fire engines out in front of the apartment building. They were on their way to the penthouse where we kids set the place on fire, the awnings. Also, my sister died very young at the farm in Colts Neck. She was only five or six years old. I always got her in trouble. She was a beautiful child. I remember always getting her in trouble. Then, she contracted encephalitis. She had measles, which turned into encephalitis, which is still incurable today, and she died.

MG: Tell me about some of the trouble you would get her into.

RR: I can't think of anything specific, but normal young siblings antics. Nothing real bad.

MG: What impact did your sister's death have on your family?

RR: It was a tremendous impact. My whole family was gathered at the farm and praying for her. Everybody was there because of this traumatic thing. I can't remember that much because I was so young. If you can imagine what my mother dealt with. She had me with polio. My father dying before that at age thirty-three, and they were really in love. Then, my brother died at age twenty-eight.

MG: When you were in high school, what did you imagine doing when you got out of high school?

RR: I just wanted to get of high school. I don't know, other than the fact that I was around show business so much. Also, very early on, I became close to Max Baer. I don't know if you read

who he was, but he was heavyweight champion of the world. He lost it to a guy by the name of Jim Braddock. Max starred in movies with major people. He played Broadway after that and he was real close to us and also belonged to our swim club. He'd come back and visit the Redfields during the summer. Wait. I just thought of something.

MG: Okay.

RR: A little incident when I was onboard a ship going over to Europe in 1927 that involved Mary Pickford. She was onboard and so mother spent some time with her. I remember meeting her and she wanted to know if I'd like an autographed picture of her. I said, "Yes." She said, "Would you like a picture of me or one of my dogs?" So, I said, "The dogs." So, I have an autographed picture of her with the dogs someplace, yes.

MG: You started your autograph collection at a very young age.

RR: Yes. That's her with the dogs. That stood out in my mind that she asked me whether I wanted a picture with her or the dogs. There's a picture Fanny Brice, a formal picture. That's a picture of the White House with President [Lyndon B] Johnson with one of the groups that I managed.

MG: What group was that?

RR: I don't remember their name, but I managed them. It was the time of hootenanny.

Jo Redfield: Excuse me, Molly. Would you like a tea or a glass of soda, or something?

MG: I am okay, but thank you so much.

JR: Are you sure? Robert, do you want something? A drink of water?

RR: No thanks.

JR: Okay.

RR: Yes, but come on in, if you want.

MG: Yes, you are welcome to sit in.

JR: Oh, thank you.

RR: Because I may forget whose pictures are on the wall downstairs in my office.

MG: We are doing a little show and tell right now.

JR: I'm not good at remembering anymore either. [laughter]

RR: I just turned my head around here. I forgot all about showing Molly a couple of pictures that she might want to see. So, that's the Four Seasons. They were formally called the Four Lovers. I put them in clubs for five hundred dollars a week. Each guy walked out with eight dollars a night. [laughter]

JR: Good old times.

RR: Yes, that's one of the guys that played ball with the Yankees.

JR: That's your mother.

RR: That's the Gracie Mansion in New York where the mayor lived. That's my mother there with a group of people from the *Ziegfeld Follies*. She became one of the heads of the *Ziegfeld Follies* alumni club. That picture is in city hall over there.

JR: Sam DiFalco.

RR: Yes, Judge DiFalco was one of the big judges in New York.

JR: Down at the bottom, there's another picture of your mother with Joan Bennett. I forgot a lot of the names.

RR: Tom Jones is down here, who worked in Austin, Texas for me for a couple of shows.

JR: Do you have that rider to show Molly what he required?

RR: Molly, you may be forced to come back here.

MG: I would look forward to it. There's a lot to talk about.

JR: That's really nice Molly, thank you.

MG: Yes.

RR: I've taken Molly through the Lindbergh landing and Paris up until burning down the awnings in New York.

JR: Yes. [laughter]

RR: There's Frank Sinatra, who you know. That's an experience worth talking about. That's me on the right and that's my brother. And that's The Temptations. Those are some of the Presidents on the right. That's Elvis Presley on the left. This is the White House with one of the hootenanny groups that I had. There's Mookie Wilson, who was one of the great players with the New York Mets.

JR: There's Haywood Sullivan.

RR: Haywood Sullivan was a Red Sox catcher and also one of the owners of the Boston Red Sox. Then, that's his son, who was a catcher for the Boston Red Sox.

JR: Most of them came to the house at one time or another.

RR: This is one of the great entertainers of all time. His name is Jackie Wilson. This is Jimmy Durante, who used to visit us all the time. He was one of our best friends. There's so much I don't have up here. As I mentioned, I used to go to New York once a week. We'd have lunch with Fanny Brice and she would make sure everybody met me and she got autographs. I had a

year's worth of autographs. Then, a little kid, two years old, tore my autograph book up, and I never tried to get autographs after that, which would have been unbelievable today if I kept collecting them. Also, I used to swim at Rutgers. One of the lifeguards sent me a little note after I finished my laps. I swam at Rutgers because I usually always swam at the Sonny Werblin Recreation Center. You've been there long enough to know who he is. I used the pool.

JR: On Cook campus.

RR: On Cook, that's where I swam. Have you been there to swim?

MG: No.

RR: I swam there most every day. I was able to pull in by the door and park my car in a special place. If it was not open, the guy in charge of the pool made sure that they would move the car.

JR: The dean had to move his car when Robert came, which is really nice. The dean was really nice also. He retired.

RR: I swam every day. Everybody in and around there I knew. I was friendly with the lifeguards.

JR: One lifeguard she was lovely. She wrote that charming note. You should read it.

RR: One of the girl lifeguards, as I was doing laps, I would wave to her and then keep going. She came up to me after my laps--it was Valentine's Day or something--and gave me this note.

JR: That's charming. We're very fond of her.

RR: We stay in touch.

MG: That is very sweet.

JR: Isn't it lovely?

MG: Yes. Really thoughtful.

JR: It's a treasure.

MG: Good.

RR: I've known her for many years after. She even brought her mother to visit us. They'd drive all the way up from Long Island to see me. She just had a child about six months ago.

MG: What is it like to be surrounded of this evidence of your amazing career?

RR: I don't know. This is just a portion of it. The people that I was involved with--I did management so most of the people I actually managed. Then, like Tom Jones did special events. I didn't manage him. I did a lot of special shows. I had a stack of contracts like that. Let's say, a group called Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles, they worked for me a bunch of places for three hundred a night. Patti LaBelle became the famous Patti LaBelle, who is as good as it gets.

Almost every major act has worked for me or through me. There are so many different places that I did their shows. Also, who was very close and I can explain who they were--they're very close to our family--and was my mother's best friend, and I called her my aunt, were the Glemby's, who owned all of the Glemby cosmetic shops.

JR: Well, at first, they imported hairnets. Then, they went into salons and sold their products in hair salons. They did make-up too.

RR: Also, Mother and I was best friends with a man by the name of Morty Goldfarb.

JR: He was a florist.

RR: He was one of the best florists in New York and had the best clientele. Eventually, he opened all of the florists in Bamberger's. Bamberger's was a big store.

JR: He opened Arcadian Gardens in all the Bamberger's stores.

RR: Morty Goldfarb had one of the biggest nurseries in upstate New York, special growers of roses. I forgot to say a couple things. I remember famous people would come to visit us in Larchmont. My mother would have parties, like a New Year's Eve party. People would come over, like Harry Winston the jeweler and others. For these parties, they bought out a whole defunct liquor store. For atmosphere, they had refrigeration and all the taps in our basement. I showed Molly what the house looked like.

MG: Yes, it's beautiful.

JR: Tell the cute stories, Robert. Some of the fun times you had. That's more interesting. What you did, what your friends did. They lit the fire in your car going through the Holland Tunnel, which is funny.

RR: I would make a U-turn on the George Washington Bridge, stuff like that.

JR: Something to laugh at.

RR: Yes. There's different things to talk about, but I go off on tangents. I started telling her about the farm and so forth. I told you what that area looks like, like *Dallas*, if you went by now. I told her about the neighbor.

JR: Murray Rosenberg wanted to buy the other piece of land that Robert owned and give it to Dorbrook Park. Robert still owned the property he wanted to donate to Monmouth County on Swimming River.

RR: There's a certain part of that where I mentioned we bought it and I wouldn't tell her that story yet.

JR: You didn't tell her that?

RR: No, not now. It relates to the United States Navy refusing unconstitutionally to allow us access to our property and ultimately cost me over one million dollars. It's unbelievable what's

going on. I'll also tell you who Max was. There was a program on before your time called the *Beverley Hillbillies*. Did you ever read about it?

MG: A little.

RR: It was a show about the old oil fields. One of the principal characters, is a guy named Jethro and that's Max Baer's son, Max Baer Jr.

JR: You spoke to Max Baer Jr. about a year ago right when he said, "Redfield and Redfield."

RR: Oh, yes.

JR: He was happy to talk about his father Max Baer, the heavyweight boxing champion, who Robert managed in entertainment areas, not as a boxer.

RR: Max Baer was one of my original managed attractions. Redfield and Redfield is my mother and myself.

JR: Tell her about Max Baer, how he liked girls and he'd have all these photographs. I think you have some of those photographs, don't you?

RR: I have drawers full of boxes.

JR: Yes, and he was charming, handsome, broad shoulders. Fifty inch chest and thirty-two inch waist.

RR: Oh, yes. Fifty-two inch chest and a thirty-two inch waist. Unbelievable, yes. He passed away when he was fifty.

JR: In California.

RR: He was still active because I put him into major movies like, *The Harder They Fall*. I don't know if you ever heard of that film. And *Bride for Sale* with Claudette Colbert. These are ancient movie names, but a character like Max Baer is very well known even today.

JR: Robert played cards with Maxie Rosenbloom.

RR: Yes. Max Baer's one of the first people we managed in entertainment and he was a big name. He had finished boxing. He was colorful. Maxie Rosenbloom was a very big name in boxing, a special character. We put Baer and Rosenbloom together as an act. At that time, we played shows all around, at Paramount Theatre and many more theaters around New York. Shows like that don't exist anymore. Another story about a place where I worked with one of my groups--a young unknown singer would come in and spent the night there. He'd get up three or four times a night and sing with my group. Then, at the end of the night, we'd go back to the Montclair Supper Club in Queens, Long Island. We'd have spaghetti and meatballs that his mother would make. At the end of the night, the club owner gave this unknown singer ten dollars for the night of singing. That young unknown became Tony Bennett. Yes, it was just little things that happened along the way. I didn't know if you like stories like that.

MG: Well, I am curious about everything really.

RR: She knows names like Al Jolson that I mentioned.

JR: Yes.

RR: She knows names like Will Rogers, who I mentioned. I just brought that up. I told Jo, just a couple of weeks ago, that the rodeo is coming to New York and for probably the first time since '36 or '37.

JR: Is that right? I wasn't aware of that.

RR: Anyway, if you don't know the name you can look them up. I don't know if I told you, when we were talking, about my operations. When I was fourteen years old, they had to take me in to be operated on to correct certain things that the polio affected. Dr. Philip Wilson was attempting to get rid of the steel braces I wore from my waist down. I had both legs in steel braces. Polio affected the whole nervous system. That's what happens. I'll tell you about the operations, the doctor, how he did it and what he did for me. But at least I got rid of braces. It could not bring back the damage caused by polio, but I got rid of the braces. The doctor that operated on me was the top orthopedic doctor in the country actually. He became the head of Cornell Institute, the big orthopedic hospital in New York. He was the top man in the country. It was him, Dr. Philip Wilson. My mother took me to every place I had to go to see doctors that could help me. I got the best treatment you could ever get from any place. Dr. Wilson, the doctor who operated on me, studied carpentry and he brought my leg back into the right position. The knee would just give way, but he knew from carpentry the angle and he put my knee back just a fraction, so it would hold. Before the surgery, if I went forward it would give way, which it would a lot of different times and I fell. But that's how I was able to survive and walk, was with that operation. When I was fourteen I had those operations, but the operations were very painful and I needed to have three operations. I needed one on this leg and I needed two on this one. They said they were going to do one operation at a time at the Hospital for the Ruptured and Crippled [now Hospital for Special Surgery]. When Dr. Wilson operated, he did all three operations at one time because he knew I would never come back for the others because they were that painful. So, that got me into as good shape as I could get. From that point on, I got the most of what I could from exercise and from any sports I could do. That kept me in good shape. I overdid a lot of things. They say if you overdo, it's not good. When I started to get post-polio four or five years ago, I started to lose what I built up. There are neurons that you start to lose. It's called post-polio and you get weaker and weaker. Eventually, you're like I am getting now, which is worse off than you were when you first got polio. It's a real rough condition that I'm going through now. Gradually, each part of my body is going, including my back maybe eight or nine months ago. Before post polio, I used to get up and I would get on the floor. Every day, I'd get on the floor and exercise. I did floor exercises to stay in shape. Then I would go over to the pool at the YMCA in New Brunswick. That was before we moved up from the shore. When the YMCA closed, then I went into Highland Park. You're living there now. So, as you come into Highland Park, over the bridge from New Brunswick, right to your right was the old YMHA [Young Men's Hebrew Association]. They owned that whole piece of property. It was given to them many years ago by very wealthy manufacturers of furniture. It was a real great facility. Everybody went there. They had a pool and I went there every day. On days that they may not have been open, I would go in New Brunswick to the YMCA.

MG: You were talking about the operations you had when you were fourteen.

RR: Oh, yes. So, I used to do work on the ceilings and I'd be on the roof here. I built the sheds out there. Eventually, with post-polio, you start to lose what you built up, and that's pretty much where it's at now. I used to get a lot of ear infections from swimming because I was in the water all the time. I think that's why my ears recently have had a lot of problems. It's probably something you never heard of, but about a year, a year and a half ago, it started in my ear--I hear, if you put a spoon down, it would sound like thunder. The sound goes through you and I couldn't figure what was wrong. The doctors haven't been able to take care of it and it's called hyperacusis. Anyway, it affects the ears. Even the doctors, they don't know what causes it, but it could be a lot of different things. It isn't one thing that is affected. If you put a teaspoon down, a loud sound will go through my whole system so loudly. In turn, it's affected my hearing to some degree. There's no cure for that. They can't figure out what's causing that.

MG: I was going to ask you about the recovery from those operations when you were fourteen. How long did it take and what it was like?

RR: Well, to begin with, the operations eliminated the braces. The braces were real difficult to try to maneuver because I had steel braces all the way down my legs from my waist. If you go to sit down, you'd end up pinching your leg against the chair with the steel and all that. To get rid of the steel braces was really good, which the doctor did. Just incidentally, his name was Philip E. Wilson, the head of Ruptured and Cripple Hospital, which is the big orthopedic hospital in New York. Then, he went over and became the head of orthopedics at Cornell. That's the biggest hospital in New York. Cornell Medical is very big and not only in orthopedic, but also specialists in all health. He was the head of that for about twenty years. Then, his son took over where his father was also, for the next fifteen or twenty years, up until a year ago when he retired. He also became the head of Cornell Medical orthopedics. It's like Massachusetts General Hospital or Johns Hopkins in Maryland. So, that's who did the operation. I recuperated quickly to where it gave me a little more mobility. I could then get around. I could walk with crutches and would also walk with canes. No matter what I always swam. From the time I got sick, I swam because I was able to do that. I continuously did that and whatever sports I could do in school, in college. I could play ping pong. I played golf with one arm. I did those things on a continuous basis. I started to tell you that I would get out of bed at home and I'd get on the floor. I would exercise and do a whole program here. Then, I'd go over to the YMCA, where I'd swim. In the locker room, before I'd go in the pool, I go down on the floor and I'd exercise here at the YMCA again like home. I'd take a shower and then I'd be in the pool. I did about sixty, seventy laps. I was in really good shape. No matter where I was, if I was in New York or Connecticut, wherever I was on business, I'd never miss a day of swimming. That would be a daily routine. When I got finished working at night, doing what I do, going to five or six lounges or clubs nightly, which was in the entertainment industry--all through the early years that I was in business, I managed different groups that used to play lounges or they'd play restaurants, and that was a fairly big part of my work in general. People would come in the clubs and drink. That was that until around 1979 when drinking and driving laws became more strict. Clubs and lounges closed then because people couldn't go out and drink and drive because they'd get picked up by cops and lose their license. That contributed to putting lounges out of business. I

used to go to five, six clubs in a night and large lounges or different entertainment facilities, as opposed to a theater. A lounge is a little bit different. It seemed like overnight the drinking and driving laws killed the lounge business. Once drinking and driving hit, that was the end of their business. The groups broke up because they had no place to work and no place to break in. You were asking me about recuperating after my operations.

MG: Yes, how long did it take to recover?

RR: Well, I would say rapidly because it gave me more mobility to do different things. I did more of what I could do and got as far as I could get because I was very strong, shoulder-wise, arm-wise and stuff like that because I always exercised. Swimming was probably the greatest thing that could happen because I didn't smoke. I was competitive in swimming because when I went to Peddie I swam with the team. I didn't come in first all the time because to come in first you better take a pretty good dive off the board and I would be starting in the pool. I would do distance events because that would be best for me. I did swim all the time and I swam competitively. That was my way of life from that point on.

MG: It sounds like you were still able to do so much, but what things did you miss or what things couldn't you do anymore?

RR: Well, I could never walk or run normally, no be competitive or compete in sports at all, like soccer or football. I could only play the things I could, which would be ping pong, which I did as good as most could. I didn't have the mobility, but I would be stationary and I played well. I played golf, not competitively, but I could play with the best players. I could shoot in the low eighties, which meant you were generally competitive. I could never be professional at it.

MG: Were you treated differently by the other kids you were going to school with?

RR: I don't think so. I fit in, yes.

MG: Do you think this gave you an opportunity to exercise your mind more? Were you reading more? Did you become a better student?

RR: No, I don't think so because the normal course of the day would be the same normal course for me as anybody else. I wasn't happy that I couldn't be in sports competition because I had polio. I really resented getting polio, certainly to this day. It didn't benefit me at all. It just took away much of my life.

MG: How did you find Tilton School and how old were you when you went there?

RR: Twenty-one years old. Tilton was then a junior college and a regular prep school. I completed my last couple years of high school there. They only had junior college there for a couple years. Prep school ran right through high school and then into college. I went there after Riverside Military Academy because I got sick in Florida, enough that I lost some schooling and missed the last part of that year. I came from Riverside to Tilton, which gave me a chance to get extra credits, allow me to finish high school, and be able to get credits to go into college.

MG: Did you graduate high school at Tilton?

RR: Yes.

MG: And you went to junior college at Tilton.

RR: Yes, and Peddie High School before that. That's in Hightstown if you've heard of it. Peddie was ranked highly. What are the two or three top prep schools up in New England?

MG: Choate Rosemary Hall Preparatory School in Wallingford, Connecticut.

RR: Philips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire.

MG: Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, Massachusetts.

RR: Yes, and Exeter.

MG: Choate.

RR: Peddie is that range, at that level.

MG: Wow.

RR: Which is a pretty good level of private school, right?

MG: Yes. It looks like you have signatures from almost everybody in your class in this yearbook.

RR: Yes, I knew everyone. Have you heard of Lawrenceville? Peddie and Lawrenceville are both very good prep schools. They're in that range.

MG: What was the junior college curriculum?

RR: At Tilton, I completed my last year of high school and first year of college. It equated so much with the last year of high school. It was just a matter of passing those courses and getting credits for my first year of college.

MG: Did you go on to college?

RR: Yes, into NYU, New York University. They had an uptown branch of NYU that was magnificent--the property, the facilities and everything around there. I don't even think it's in operation now, but it's past the Bronx, which is way uptown and right on the Hudson. I lived in one of the fraternities because they had a good ping pong table and living facilities.

MG: What were your college years like? What did you study?

RR: I liked to have fun. I took my courses, whatever the courses were. This is a little bit interesting. I was given my first car when I was eighteen, the first year you could have your license. My mother gave me a Packard Clipper. It was just a great car. I was in Florida, going to Riverside, when I turned eighteen. She gave me the car down there, so I had it when I turned eighteen. When I went back, the first year of college, I had the car. That was up at the NYU facility uptown. I had my car there and kept it in a garage. The garage maintained the car, and

for twelve dollars a month they washed the car every day and delivered the car to me every day, so I could get around the campus. On weekends, I could do whatever I want. I drove around a lot.

MG: Was driving any different for you because of polio?

RR: Yes. The only thing I had was an automatic transmission, so that you can shift without using the clutch. When I drive, I kept my foot on the accelerator and I could work the accelerator from my hip. I kept my left foot on the brake, so I was probably ready to react quicker than anybody else because I could immediately control the car. I drove a lot of miles. I used to drive fifty, sixty thousand miles a year when doing entertainment.

MG: Where were you going?

RR: For work. Before that, I had a wholesale meat operation. I also worked for meat wholesalers and we served hospitals and camps. This was before I actually got into entertainment. The first job I ever had was when I came out of school was with the *Asbury Park Press* for one year in 1944. I worked right in the newsroom and I think I got eighteen dollars a week.

MG: Tell me more about the car you got when you were eighteen.

RR: Yes, it was probably one of the best cars. It was the first Packard Clipper that came out. My mother had it and then she gave that car to me, which would have been in '41. I think it was a '41d Packard Clipper. It was a great car.

MG: What color?

RR: It had to be blue, but I have a picture someplace. I'll show you. There are a couple of pictures of me in the car at the farm.

MG: Tell me about your first year at NYU, your classes, teachers, friends, and things like that.

RR: Oh, yes. That's when I had the car. As soon as you became eighteen you could have a car. Before that, a good friend of our family left his car at the farm. He went to military school in New York, and left the car at the farm. So, I'd get in the car and I would drive it around the farm before I had a license or learned how to drive.

MG: You had a little practice.

RR: Yes, yes.

MG: What stands out about your first year at NYU?

RR: Well, I used to know a lot of the showgirls in New York, the models. I would look forward to the night or the weekends when I was there at NYU and uptown.

MG: Were you going out on dates and things like that?

RR: Oh, yes. I dated one model. Her name was Choo Choo Johnson. She was very beautiful, one of the Conover models, one of the top models. She was going with a guy by the name of True Davies, a very wealthy guy on the west coast. She was staying at the Paramount, one of the main hotels in New York. I was visiting her and she didn't expect him, but he showed up in the lobby. He had his own plane. He ended up in town and called from downstairs. I had to figure out how to get out of that room some way or the other, before he came up. I haven't thought of these things in a long time. With the Yankees--real quick. Dan Topping owned the Yankees for twenty-two years. Did you ever hear that name?

MG: I don't think so.

RR: Okay. Well, he owned the Yankees. Dan Topping was married to Arline Judge, who was a big movie star. She was married to Wesley Ruggles. This is going back to the old time movies now. I took Arline Judge out when she was married to Topping and he owned the Yankees. Then, her son became the owner of the Yankees. Then, the Yankees went to CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System], and then [George] Steinbrenner became the Yankees' owner. I could tell you a lot about that stuff.

MG: Please do.

RR: I was really jumping way ahead. Arline was going with a friend of mine, George Ross. She was one of the top actresses at the time. Google her. She was a lot of fun. I remember a couple of times when I was drinking with her. She had an apartment on Fifth Avenue. Twelve rooms on Fifth Avenue, right along the park. She was really a big personality. I often stayed over nights there.

MG: How were you meeting some of these models and actresses?

RR: Again, being close to show business and I socialize a lot. I went out with friends of mine. I was in that mix. I'm thinking of the different clubs, how it was then. I just want to tell you some of the things that would really be interesting.

MG: This is all interesting to me.

RR: My life wasn't exactly the average life of the guy growing up.

MG: Was your mother still performing on stage while you were going to school?

RR: As soon as she got married, Broadway, entertainment and theater was not something that was that much respected. My mother was in the *Follies* of '21. I think it was 1921. Then, when she had gone with my father and married him, she immediately came out of being on stage. Although, she was very close to the stage and entertainers all the time. She was friendly with the Shuberts and with the *Ziegfeld Follies*, and all that. The Shuberts owned the passing shows. So, that time, she was always with the Shuberts and *Ziegfeld Follies*, and had close ties, even though she wasn't actively performing.

MG: How do you think she felt about giving up the *Follies* to raise a family and move to the suburbs?

RR: She was happy. I started to read some of my father's and mother's letters one year ago. They are still tied up in a ribbon. I couldn't believe that there was that much love between two people and love for me who they referred to as "the kid."

MG: What did the letters say?

RR: Before we finish, I'm going to let you read a couple because it really is something. My father happened to die young, at age thirty-three. I would tend to think they had a love story.

MG: It sounds like it.

RR: It was really endearing. I can't explain it because I probably couldn't write one of those. I may have that feeling towards my wife, but I couldn't express it like it was expressed by my father.

MG: I wanted to ask more about your courses at NYU? Were there any professors or classes that stand out?

RR: Basically, it was general, normal as far as class is concerned. I could keep up. I had no trouble keeping up in class. From the time I first remember going to school in Colts Neck, when we first moved there and I was ten or whatever it was--then, two years later, going into Freehold Military School, Peddie and thereafter. I could always keep up with the class.

MG: Were you always planning to work in show business?

RR: No. I thought about it. Being handicapped, I had to be able to earn a living and I didn't know if I was going to be able to.

MG: Did you have a feeling that you had a lot more to overcome?

RR: Oh, yes, I always felt that.

MG: What else about your experience at NYU do you want to tell me about?

RR: I didn't have a lot of experiences other than putting in the normal time, like anybody else would in classes. I had a lot of good friends, two or three very good friends. My best friend was from Massachusetts and his name was (Don Cole?). I met him when I was going to Tilton. He had gone to Bordentown Military Academy in New Jersey and down there and he was the head of the corps. Two or three of them became very good friends of mine--Don Cole and Henry Barry. The three of us were relatively close. Don was from Massachusetts and he had a summer place in Swampscott.

MG: Yes, that's northern Massachusetts, right above Boston.

RR: Yes, near a summer tourist area. They had a summer place there. The rest of the year they lived in the Boston suburbs. That's where their home was and his family lived.

MG: Do you need a hand?

RR: No. I have joint on joint pain and I don't take medication. Nothing.

MG: Wow.

RR: Nobody can believe it. When I go in for a checkup or to see a doctor and they're sitting there writing down all the medication, and they figure they're going to get a list of it and they don't see it--the most I will take is Aleve. Maybe it'll help, maybe it won't, but other than that, I just take that. That basically made me survive, not taking medication. One of the reasons that I developed--and this has been a big handicap to me: phobias like, claustrophobia, being locked in an elevator. It goes back to polio, where I was restricted from doing a lot of things. It's a mental thing. I guess I became a mental case that way, but I got very bad with the phobias that I developed. Enough so that I would not go many places--if I got to a tunnel, I would get real upset because I could get locked in and so forth. That became worse and worse, and that started a lot of years ago. I overcame it, to a degree and was able to accomplish things. Nothing near what I would have done if I didn't develop phobias. It kept me restricted to places that I could go, should have gone, and things I could have done. Kept me very restricted. The phobias were probably the most damaging thing to my life. I had to think all the time and I couldn't make any mistakes. It was the same when I did anything in entertainment, any of the people I handled at the time. I could not make any mistakes. It didn't become a big factor when I handled the big names. But before I did that, I did a lot of groups and a lot of lounges, and that's why I didn't get started managing the big name acts. I did it myself to make sure it was always done right. My restrictions were that, to get in a car and travel to different places, I would be limited to a certain area. I would be comfortable maybe eight or nine miles from home. Then, if I got stuck in an elevator, I would be very unhappy, even more than unhappy because of claustrophobia.

MG: Was living in New York particularly tough? Every building has an elevator and you have to go in a tunnel or over a bridge to leave Manhattan.

RR: I had an office in New York only on the second floor. In New York, you have everything at your fingertips. I was able to become pretty well known and became very big in this business, but still had restrictions of not being able to travel and not being able to do different things or go many places.

MG: Living in New York city doesn't seem conducive to having lots of phobias.

RR: I remember going up to the 21st or 22nd floor and walking down every flight via the fire escape to avoid getting in the elevator. With two canes in one hand and grabbing the railing, I worked my way down twenty-two flights of stairs. I could never afford to lose control by getting stuck in an elevator. That is one of the reasons I didn't touch medication because anything that took me out of full control would be something that I couldn't handle. I figured as soon as I took the medication, it would activate and do certain things that put me out of control.

MG: What about alcohol?

RR: I enjoyed it. Oh, boy. I drank a lot, but not enough to lose control or get drunk.

MG: Even though it puts you out of control.

RR: I can tell you some really funny stories. I get a laugh thinking about that. That's how funny they were. But alcohol didn't bother me. I enjoyed drinking. I could handle it, except--

and my wife will tell you--once or twice she got in the car with me and it bothered her a good bit, but only once or twice in the course of a lot of time. I could handle it. I would almost laugh to think about some of the things because they were really funny.

MG: Any stories you want to share with me now?

RR: Well, one or two that might make you smile. I had enough to drink, let's say down the shore. You don't know the shore. The shore is pretty nice and there are a lot of the clubs down there. So, I'm coming home, from probably the Asbury Park area--a little further south there are different places like Belmar or Spring Lake--but wherever I might have been. I'm driving back and I realize I had a little bit too much, so I better not continue driving. I'm coming through an area which is a real nice area. I figured, "Let me just get off the main road and I'll stay here a little while." I pulled into the train station. I'm there sort of relaxing and the next thing I know, I hear a tap on the window. All of a sudden, my head clears up real good and it's a policeman. He said, "What are you doing here?" I look up, I said, "(Dominick?)?". He said, "Who's that? Bob Redfield? What the hell are you doing over here? you're on the railroad track." I had figured I pulled in my driveway and then I looked up and I realized where I was. I knew all the cops from the different towns, and they knew me. I came to pretty quick and he said, "What are you doing here Bob?" I said, "I just pulled over for a minute." I then decided I'm okay. I went on and quickly drove the next fifteen or twenty miles home. That's one time. I was thinking of another incident. I wasn't drunk, but this is really funny. There was a girl by the name of Norma Eberhardt. She died about two years ago. She married a big star, Claude Dauphin, in California. When she was sixteen, I used to take her out. We went to Asbury Park and we had some drinks. I was teaching her how to drive. So, about two o'clock in the morning, we're coming out of Asbury and along the oceanfront. Coming out of Asbury, the first town is Allenhurst, a small town, maybe two or three blocks--you'll have to go down and spend a little time because these are really nice areas to see. So, she's behind the wheel and we're coming out of Asbury, about two thirty, three o'clock in the morning. Nobody's on the road. So, she's driving. I'm next to her. I look back and I see a police car coming up. I saw that he passed me. So, I think, "Well, that's okay," until he turned around. "This is not good because it's only him and me, and he turned around. This is not good." Because obviously he is coming to check on my car while. So, while we're driving, I let Norma slide over me and I slide onto her seat. The car never stops. The cop comes back and he pulls me over. He said, "You know, there was a girl driving this car." I said, "What do you mean?" Because I'm here at the wheel. He said, "When I passed there was a girl driving the car." Then he looked and he said, "Who's that? Bob Redfield?" I said, "Yes, that's me." His name was Miller Huff. He was one of the cops in Allenhurst. They all knew me enough that if we get a storm like we had recently and you couldn't get home, I could sleep in one of the Allenhurst jail cells. They wouldn't let me drive home because the roads would be too bad. That was a funny thing to see him turn around, nobody else on the road. Norma had one blue eye, one brown eye. She was sixteen. I think she was at least sixteen and we went out drinking, and I was taking her back home. So, I let her get back behind the wheel, nobody was around. We never stopped. He was pretty sure there was a girl driving the car.

MG: That's a funny story. One thing we skipped over was the beginning of World War II.

RR: I read about it. It was despicable. That was in 1940-something.

MG: '41.

RR: '41, yes.

MG: Were you a senior in high school when that happened?

RR: Yes. I had been going to school. The Japanese committed harakiri. The planes would come down and they would just crash the plane into the battleships on purpose. They were called kamikaze pilots, but they committed harakiri by going down and crashing into ships. Eventually, the US became friendly with Japan, but there was a lot of resentment for a lot of years.

MG: Right. I was going to ask if you saw a lot of your schoolmates or people from your neighborhood go into the service.

RR: Yes, probably they went in. I had a buddy go over to France or Germany. I tried to enlist. Tried to, but they wouldn't let me naturally. I tried to enlist in Red Bank, because of my background in military science and tactics, but because of my physical situation, I wasn't allowed in. I knew the things that I couldn't do. I couldn't become a pilot, but I went to Red Bank at the airport and I took flying lessons. I even flew over the farm in a plane.

MG: Tell me about that.

RR: Well, I knew that I was restricted to a lot of different things, but at that point, I didn't have the phobias, otherwise I wouldn't have gone up because I've never been in any planes after that. I learned that I could maneuver from my hip down because basically the planes were much simpler to operate than cars.

MG: How old were you when you were doing that kind of training?

RR: Probably around sixteen or seventeen. I was just taking flying lessons. I also took riding lessons to learn to ride horses. In order to ride, you got to use your knees, if you've been on horses at all. I couldn't, so I had to keep my balance. I did whatever I could. There were a lot of funny things at the farm, really funny things took place down there. We had a pony, Pete the pony. I think I mentioned we left the farm my mother bought in 1946. We were there from around 1932 to 1946. We also had a couple cows. We had a couple of horses and had the pony for me and we had the land. We didn't farm the land, but my stepfather had raised chickens and he sold them at one point. People would take the hay off the fields and take the hay. We had a foreman. We had a five room bungalow for him near the barns and the main house was a few hundred yards away. The pony had been pretty much penned up and cooped up for winter. We had a little buckboard for him. I went to take him out at the end of winter. Ed was the foreman and he said, "Now, be careful and don't give him his head because he'll just fly down there towards the barn area and get away. Keep a good tight grip on him." So, Ed hooked him up to the buckboard. We were up at the main house, which was past the sheds and maybe four, five hundred feet from the barn. The Pony's name was Pete. I take Pete's reins and head to the main house. Gradually, he starts to go on the grass and eat. So, I let him have a little bit of loose reins and the next thing you know, he reared up and he headed down to the barns. It seemed like he must have been going eighty or ninety miles an hour right towards the barn. So, he's going right

at the barn and all of a sudden he turned right and the buckboard went up the air. I come right down on my face. Now, I'm all pretty well bloodied and injured. My mother's in the main house with friends. I didn't want her to see me all banged up like this. I had to get upstairs and get cleaned up before she found out. But I used to get on Pete and I'd saddle him up and ride him. We'd go back in the fields. Back of the farm, we had Swimming River, which ran all the way from Colts Neck to the ocean, the shoreline. At that point, there's a naval pier there in Leonardo. The river was a beautiful site. I'll show you pictures of the Swimming River. I would also go down there with my cane or crutches and a fishing pole and go down and fish. I'd go down at nighttime, and at nighttime you'd catch catfish and eels. I would get my own bait, too. At night, when dew would come on top of the grass, you would get what they call crawlers. They're large worms. Have you ever heard of them?

MG: Yes.

RR: They would come up at night, after a certain time at night, and they were big. I would go out with a flashlight at nighttime, grab these and use them for bait. The farm meant a lot to me and I enjoyed that a lot. I'd ride Pete down the field and then come back. I'd go down the embankment in the back of house, down to the lake. We had different fields that were separated by fences and stuff, some for hay or rye or corn. Another time I was riding Pete, we were coming back from the field and all of a sudden he started to run. He dumped me out of the saddle. I got a foot hooked in the stirrup and he's running towards the barn. I could see his heels clicking next to me as he dragged me. Finally, I got loose of the stirrups, but I'm stuck in the fields. I don't have canes or anything with me. I'm stuck out in the field. Eventually, Ed came and got me and brought me in. This would have been around 1944, during the war. The naval piers were in Leonardo, New Jersey, which is right on the shore. The Navy owned a place in Colts Neck, which just off Route 34. Hand me the folder to your left. I want to find the name of something. Earle Naval Base.

[Tape Paused]

MG: Jo mentioned some other stories you might want to tell.

RR: Oh, yes. We were involved in bringing horse racing to New Jersey. Horse racing was a big deal in New Jersey until about 1890, and then it was illegal. Then, it became legal in '44 because my mother was instrumental with Theresa Mahoney, one of the assemblywomen, in amending the laws and bringing racing back. Prior to that, they had greyhound racing, which you would think if they had greyhound racing you could automatically have horse racing, but it was different. They had greyhound racing in Long Branch. Long Branch is right near Asbury Park on the shoreline. They had greyhound racing there and we knew some of the greyhound kennel owners. When they have a dog that is not controlled properly on the track, they are not allowed to race anymore. So, they had a dog that could be winning, but he wanted to fight with the dog running next to him and he'd be ruled off the track. They gave us this greyhound. He was jet black and his name was Gloomy Gloom. One day, at the farm, we had a couple hams curing off the kitchen area. As you come in, there's a screen door going to the kitchen. In the back of the kitchen was a little pantry and the hams were curing in there. The maid and the cook were in the kitchen and we could hear them hollering. Gloomy was in there and he got a hold of the ham that was curing. The maid was calling for Ed, the head of maintenance. He was in

charge of everything outside. She calls, "Ed, Ed." She said, "There goes Gloomy with the ham." Gloomy was running away with that ham. When Gloomy Gloom smiled, you could see his big white teeth. He was a jet black greyhound, who would fight on the track, but he was a gentle pup, not a fighter. He was just a real good pet. When we first got him he stayed in my sister's room upstairs. One day, we're going to the movies, so we locked him in the room while we're gone. We come back from the movies and everything is ripped to ribbons and he's sitting on a bunch of ripped up stuff. There's Gloomy. He had ripped up everything while we were at the movies. Gloomy was used to running on the track, so we would take him to Route 537, which is the main road in front of the farm to run. So, we'd hold Gloomy near the house. It was a big run from the main road to the beginning of the house. I'd wave the white handkerchief because when the greyhound is on the track he'd follow a rabbit around. They'd let him loose down the driveway and he'd come flying up. That's how he'd get his exercise.

MG: What was the story about falling into the hole that Jo just mentioned?

RR: This was when I started working. The first thing I did was work for the *Asbury Park Press*. I worked for them in 1944. We were, at another time, introduced to Frank (Quiggin?). This was my introduction to stocks and securities. He was one of the biggest owners of one of the big companies. He owned a pocketbook frame manufacturing company in New York, which was a big business actually. It was well known and pretty big. So, I went to work for Frank (Quiggin?) at his pocketbook frame manufacturing company when I left the *Asbury Park Press*. That would have been also one of my first jobs. I was put in charge of the employment department, hiring people. This was in Long Island City. Some of them men who worked for (Quiggin?) were looking to open up an entity of their own. They were looking for lots around New York to set up manufacturing. I was planning to join them in this venture, so I went around to the different prospective places. One of the places was a loft where they could set up the machinery. It was real dark in there. So, I was going to go down the stairs. What I usually do is grab a hold of my canes in the left hand and I grab hold of the railing in the other hand. I could skip about ten steps at one time. I would just grab the railing and swing down to the next landing point. I was near the top when I grabbed the railing and I started to swing, but the railing stopped at a certain point. The next thing you know there's no railing all the way down to the bottom and I'm coming down with my body in full swing, but the railing stopped before the bottom and there was nothing there. And I went flying in the air. I could have been hurt real bad, but I didn't, so it became sort of funny. I took lots of falls in general. I knew how to fall. It didn't bother me then, but now it would be very dangerous.

MG: Yes.

RR: I was very self-sufficient. If I got a flat tire, I would fix the flat. I wouldn't even bother calling AAA or something like that. I'd go out and fix the flat. I'll tell you one thing that might be funny. Since I don't travel, I don't like to buy a car right out of the showroom and pay full new car price. So, I was going to get a car and I love the Lincolns. At that time I always had Lincolns. They had a Lincoln advertised in Long Island. It was used, but only with a few miles on the car. I knew that was the car I wanted. So, I was getting ready to get the Lincoln and I knew exactly what model I wanted. I called the dealer to see if they had what I was looking for. They said, "Yes. Fine. Come on out and take a look." But I didn't travel because of my phobias. I said, "Can you bring it to me? As long as it is as advertised, I will buy it." He said,

“You got to come out and look at it.” I said, “Well, I know it’s exactly what I want. You’ll have no trouble. I’ll pay you for it and I will take the car right there and then.” He said, “That’s a cockamamie way of buying a car, but I’ll do it.” He brought it out and I bought it. It was exactly what I wanted. So, a couple years later, another dealer was going to bring a car for me to see and buy. It was a Cadillac. I guess I had Cadillacs at that time. He said what he had and I said, “That’s really good. Will you bring it to Highland Park?” As you come into Highland Park, there’s a V coming in and there’s a statute. One way you’re on Route 27 and the other way you go towards Route 1. There’s a gas station right there. At the time I had a Pontiac station wagon, which we kept in really good shape. I was going to trade in the Pontiac to buy this Cadillac, which was exactly what I wanted. The dealer drove the Cadillac down to where that gas station is now. When he saw the Pontiac he said, “Wait a minute. You didn’t tell me the car has seventy-thousand miles on it.” In the meantime, I’m looking and I see that he had come down with two or three guys from the dealership and they’re pushing the Cadillac across the highway to the lot. I said, “I’m not about to buy a car that takes two or three guys to push across the street.” It was beautiful looking car, but if it takes three guys to push it, I’m not about to take possession of that car at that point. That was funny.

MG: Yes. Let’s pause, so we can take a little break.

[Tape paused.]

MG: We are back on.

RR: I can’t afford to make mistakes because of the situation I’m in, so I think everything out. I think about everything thoroughly. Consequently, if it comes time to putting an act someplace or a band someplace or if I send somebody to work in Germany, whatever it might be, they belong where they belong and there’s no mismatch. I generally don’t make mistakes because I can’t afford to do them. That’s the way that is. Before I had phobias, I traveled all over. That picture there was taken in Paris. That was around the time Lindbergh landed in Paris. [Editor’s Note: Charles Lindbergh made the first non-stop flight over the Atlantic Ocean from New York to Paris on May 20-21, 1927.] That was my sister who, I told you, had passed away when she was eight years old from encephalitis, which is coming around again. Did you hear about that? They’re talking about it. Right now, they’re talking about on the radio. Encephalitis is inflammation of the brain, but it came from measles. That’s what’s going on right now. It has spread to sixteen states. That’s the first time I heard of this, since we lost her. You can see how differently we dressed then, compared to today. I was standing on two feet at this point.

MG: During the break, you mentioned your daughter. Where does she live now?

RR: My daughter lives in Chestnut Hill in Boston.

MG: That is a nice neighborhood.

RR: She is very high up in Morgan Stanley, right in their Boston facility. She was there when that terrible thing happened with the Boston Marathon bombing.

RR: She was supposed to be down at the finish line because she's volunteers with the Red Cross. They were a sponsor. She was supposed to be right there. Instead, she was in her office and hadn't gotten down there yet.

MG: That must have been so scary.

RR: To tell you a little bit more about my family, my cousin was the team photographer for the New York Giants. Al DeRogatis was one of the big players her photographed. He was one of the four guys on the defensive line, with Sam Huff. Allie Sherman was the coach of the team that year, and it was the worst year they had. Sherman just died a few days ago. Y.A. Tittle was one of the quarterbacks.

MG: That is a great picture.

RR: That's the old stadium. There's a couple action scenes. That's my cousin on the sideline with the camera.

MG: How did he get into that?

RR: That was his life.

MG: Yes, but how did he start?

RR: Probably in a dark room in the cellar. He was in the Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth. My mother had a lot of influence and was able to get him into the Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth, which was down at the shore. They also had photography studios in Long Island City that the Army owned and she was able to get him into that. This picture is Marty Glickman, who was a great announcer at that time. He announced the games. Another endeavor I had was, I owned a franchise once. I owned wall unites, like the one I have downstairs. I have a wall unit, floor to ceiling. A lot of units you see run about eight feet high unless you have a furniture maker come in and make the unit built from floor to ceiling. That's what they made. The buyer designed everything. This went floor to ceiling the way it was set up. That's a heck of a story what happened with that.

MG: What happened?

RR: They went bankrupt. It was very well known company, Furnakit, that had been around for years. These units were tremendous. They were made of walnut, mahogany and oak. You could design anything you want, however you wanted it. You design the whole thing, from floor to ceiling. The company used to advertise on the back of the *New York Times* every Sunday for years and years. So, when they sold franchises, I bought the company store, which was owned by Furnakit. A franchise cost a lot of money back then. They had a special showplace and showroom Route 22, right near here, near a very exclusive area. Instead of buying the regular franchise, I bought and took over the company store and was in business immediately. Fortunately, I took that over and we had someone in the showroom that would help people come in and design different units. The units would come in kits and you would put the kits together. It was amazing. Eventually, the company went bankrupt and people lost hundreds of thousands of dollars on franchising. Luckily, I didn't lose anything. I got the one company store they had.

I've been involved in a heck of a lot. When I was twenty two, I had a trucking company. I didn't know anything about it at that time. Before that, I worked with the pocketbook frame manufacturing company with Frank (Quiggin?). He's an interesting guy. He was five foot two inches. He was a mathematical genius and he broke people and made them. I became the personal manager for employment end of that company. This is interesting. That company was in Long Island City and he bought out--and I'll think of the name of the company up in Buffalo, New York--it's Fedders Air Conditioning. They made all of the heater cores. In the old days, you used to have heater cores, small heaters, in a car. You used to have little heaters instead of putting on air conditioning and heat. You'd have a little heater under the floorboard and you get your heat that way. They made those little heaters for Chrysler and Dodge and different companies. (Quiggin?) bought that company out. We drove up to see the company in Buffalo overnight in a limo that he had. This company, Cordly-Hays, made all the water coolers in the Empire State Building. Two brothers owned that company in Buffalo, which (Quiggin?) bought--water coolers and cores for Chrysler Motors. That's what they had. (Quiggin?), my mother and I were close. He liked us. He was a mathematical genius. He may not have even been five foot two inches. He could take the payroll for New York, look it up and down, and come up with the answer just like that. It's unbelievable what we've seen and what's been done. At that age, I was in my early twenties when I did that. Then, I got the trucking outfit. The trucking outfit was got through Richard Boiardo, who ran all organized crime up in Newark. He arranged for me to get the trucking outfit with one of his men who knew trucking. I had that along with someone who knew trucking, that physically knew the trucking. One of the things that we did--and I know you'll recognize this--on Route 1 near Edison, going up Route 1, you know all the car dealerships on the right?

MG: Yes.

RR: Right across the street from the car dealerships used to be a Ford assembly plant, which is torn down now. When I owned that trucking outfit, every bit of roofing for that Ford plant, which is about a mile in circumference, I hauled. We hauled all of that roofing from a concrete plank company in the Kearny, New Jersey area. My trucking outfit hauled all that concrete plank up in North Jersey. We had open tractor trailers, not closed boxes. We had the contract with Concrete Plank and we hauled all their roofing for them. We also worked with DuPont's Roofing in Delaware. The Ford plant was torn down a couple years ago. I don't know what they're going to do with that space. Home Depot and Sam's Club is back in that general area now. You've probably seen it. That whole empty space now was one of the major Ford assembly plants, yes. At that time, when you had a trucking outfit, you had to have rights to go out of state. I had rights for Delaware and I did the DuPont company's concrete slab roofing plants out there. I only had the trucking outfit for a couple years. These things don't have a lot to do with all the entertainment I was involved in. When you hear the entertainment stories, you won't believe them. I want to get into that now because there's so many names involved that everybody knows. For example, I managed The Temptations.

MG: I know. They are one of my favorite group.

RR: They sang "My Girl," "Get Ready," and "Papa was a Rolling Stone." "Ain't too proud to beg." I managed David Ruffin, Eddie Kendricks and Dennis Edwards for five years, but they weren't called The Temptations because someone owned the Temptations trademark. They were

all the lead singers of The Temptations. I put them together in a show. It was a heck of a show. I especially worked with David Ruffin who sang "My Girl." He was unbelievable. The audience would be captivated and held in the palm of his hand when he got out there and sang lead.

MG: What was their name under your management?

RR: It was Ruffin/Kendrick/Edwards: Former Leads of The Temptations. We wanted to keep The Temptations name in it, but the ownership of the Temptations name was trademarked by Otis, also an original member. But the three guys I personally managed sang all the twenty hit songs while with the Temptations.

MG: Okay.

RR: I managed the group. I also managed Cuba Gooding, Sr., the father of Cuba Gooding, Jr., who is famous for saying, "Show me the money." Cuba Gooding Sr. was the lead singer of the group that I managed, The Main Ingredient. Also, I managed David Ruffin's brother, Jimmy Ruffin, who had the hit song, "What Becomes of the Brokenhearted."

MG: I love that song.

RR: It's a really beautiful number. His brother was a lead singer and I managed him. He lived in England until a few years before his death. People may not remember that number, but I think it's terrific. He had that one big hit and David Ruffin had several of them because everybody knows of The Temptations. Jimmy Ruffin became an attraction in England and remained and made his home there. He returned to America and recently died here, in 2014. I had a lot of good four and five piece groups that I would book in the lounge of the Copacabana nightclub. I did a lot of work there. I haven't thought about some of these things in a long time. I worked with the Four Lovers, who became Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. They became the biggest thing that ever happened on Broadway with their show *Jersey Boys*. A reporter named Tris McCall recently published a story about me in the *Newark Star-Ledger*. Tris McCall is probably one of the best writers I have ever come across. He is unbelievable. I was going to tell you about our farm and the Navy, which is an unbelievable story. I think a book should be written about all these different areas of my life, even some of it humorous. I can't get over it, that thing with the cop in Allenhurst. He said, "I know when I passed this car there was a girl driving it." And she was something. She ended up by being one of the big models for this tremendous illustrator in New York and then she married a big movie star, Claude Dauphin. That was that girl. I was taking Arline Judge out when she was sixteen. She was the one who married Dan Topping who owned the Yankees. Arline and I had gone to the Deal Golf Course for a couple drinks. I like to drink something pleasant. So, I might drink Southern Comfort because it's nice. I like the stuff that tastes good. So, I like Orange Blossoms. I started drinking them at that country club and then we stopped in Asbury and had a couple more. I made it home, got upstairs, and, I think, they found me passed out in my closet a couple hours later after being with Arline Judge. She was a lot of fun because she had a great sense of humor.

MG: There's an article about you in the *Home News Tribune* and the headline is "Star Maker: Show business is in Robert Redfield's Blood."

RR: The *Star Ledger* did a piece too. It's half the front page and half another page. I will make you a copy. The reporter is a young guy. He went to school in Amherst. He is unbelievable writer.

MG: I will look out for him.

RR: He has covered a number of my stories. One was about what happened with the farm and the Navy.

MG: Can you tell me about that?

RR: In 1944, during World War II, they were building a private road from Leonardo. The Navy had their base down there at a big pier. The pier would dock the Navy ships with the destroyers and one of the things that they brought in there was ammunition. They were building a private road from Naval Weapons Station Earle in Leonardo all the way to Colts Neck, which is right off of Route 34. Earle was one of their naval bases for years, a regular naval base, and they kept a lot of ammunition in the ground. Earle is still in operation in Colts Neck, New Jersey. So, the Navy was building a private road and railroad track to go from the pier to Earle to Colts Neck of which they took a lot of our property on the way. They were taking eighteen acres off the back of our property. That eighteen acres cut us off from the main part of the farm and the fields to Swimming River that I was telling you about, that I used to go down to and fish in. They had a Navy acquisition team in Red Bank formalizing this under eminent domain. My mother and I tried to stop them and we couldn't. I didn't want to sell it because I just loved that site down there, but there's nothing you can do. They give you what they think is fair and they take it for their own use. I went before the acquisition board, into the place they were handling all these takeovers in their office in Red Bank, and I sat down with them. I made an arrangement to keep one acre on the Swimming River. I thought if we could keep one acre, we would eventually build a home on it. It worked out that they didn't take that one acre. I have the one acre left on Swimming River, but it's landlocked because they came through with their main road and they landlocked it. Now, I can't get to the property and the only way to get to it is off their private road. We sold the main property a few years later, the main part of the farm, but maintained the one acre on Swimming River. So, I still maintain the one acre on Swimming River. I told them how much it meant to me because I used to get up at midnight, catch crawlers and fish there. It was a big part of my growing up that I didn't want to lose. Swimming River empties into the main river in Red Bank. It's a beautiful sight along the river. So, they said, "Okay," and they didn't take that acre. What they did, they took the seventeen acres that they wanted dividing our property and left me with the one acre that I couldn't get to. Now, World War II is on, this is 1944. They said when they opened the road, we were able to use the road. We tried to get to get to the property after the war, but they didn't allow us. They said, "Well, you have to pay the Navy to access the property." Over the period of time, years and years, they never allowed us to get to the property. We originally bought that property, the entire farm, in 1932 for \$12,500. The United States Navy took seventeen acres from us for \$500 an acre. We sold the farm in the late 1940's. I think I told you the people who lived next to us owned CVS. They tried to buy the property from us, my one acre. They had donated the land for Dorbrook Park, which is a very prime area in Monmouth County. It's one of Monmouth County's private parks with tennis courts and much more. Monmouth County wanted to take it from me for thirty thousand, that piece of property. I didn't want to sell that and I didn't want to give that up at all, no matter

what. I stopped them from taking it and they figured it may not have been exactly continuous with their property and they decided they did not want it. At the end of the property, we're at the widest part of Swimming River. Every bit of the property is on Swimming River and our property was the most desirable piece. Our property ran right down to the river. The County was worried that the property wasn't contiguous with Dolbrook Park. When I spoke to them subsequently, I got them interested in the property again. A year or two later, they said, "Well, it won't do us any good. We don't need it. It's not at the end of our property." Although, it would've been a very desirous piece of land. I said, "Go walk the property. Go down and see it." They got back to me again and they said, "We like that piece of property a lot and we would be interested in it. We only have a certain amount of money allotted to us that we could spend." They got two people to appraise it. Then they would take the amount in between what the two people appraised the property for and they would give you that amount of money. So, let me just get this thing straight. At the same time, the parks department was trying to purchase another property. That sale fell through and it gave them enough money now to purchase my property. So, I spoke to the appraiser in Red Bank, who was familiar with Colts Neck and he realized what a prime piece of property it was. The end result is that they bought the property for \$350,000 dollars for one acre. If the Navy had taken that one acre in 1944, they would have paid me only \$500 dollars.

MG: Wow.

RR: I sold them that one acre. Now, you know how much that one acre was worth then? Because it was landlocked, they're the only ones that can get to it, but if other people could get to it, it was worth a million dollars for that one acre. I had offers for a million dollars for that one acre, but people can't get to it and the Navy wouldn't give me or them the right to get to it. Consequently, nobody was going to buy it if they can't get to their property. This went on and on, so I sold them the property because of the fact that we couldn't get to it and it was at the end of their property. It finished that park off really nice and it was at the widest part of Swimming River. I think I had mentioned the people that owned CVS, his name was (Murray Rosenberg?). He also owned the biggest shoe store chain in the country. I should have gotten access to my property. I'm working with lawyers now to try to recoup money that was owed to me as part of this sale. That reminds me--I'll just tell you something else too. One of the boys I went to school with was the son of David Wilentz. Just to give you some background on David Wilentz. There was a very famous kidnapping in 1932. Charles Lindberg's son was kidnapped. They had a trial and they found the kidnappers. The kidnappers were put to death. David Wilentz was the Attorney General for the State of New Jersey that prosecuted Bruno Hauptmann, who was found guilty of kidnapping the baby. So, David Wilentz's son, Warren, was, a good friend of mine from the Jersey Shore. My mother got him out of speeding tickets and stuff like. Warren is no longer alive, by the way. He died of a tragic automobile crash about five years ago and was paralyzed from his neck down. My cousin, Mark Rydell, produced an HBO show about the kidnapping. [Editor's Note: *Crime of the Century* is a 1996 television movie about the Lindbergh baby case. It is directed by Mark Rydell.]

MG: Wow.

RR: My cousin is a big director in California.

MG: What is his name?

RR: Mark Rydell. He directed Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda and Katherine Hepburn in the movie *On Golden Pond*.

MG: Wow. I love that movie

RR: Before that, he directed another picture called *The Rose* with Bette Midler. He was a big director.

MG: That's amazing. This is going to be a comprehensive oral history interview. We're talking about so many different things.

RR: Yes, I met, worked with and managed so many well-known singers and actors and got to know them personally. For example, I knew that Cuba Gooding Sr. was miserable and his wife was more miserable. Even Barbara Walters, who you probably know of--I knew her father, Lou Walters, who ran the Latin Quarter. I was involved with so many people. Working with the Copacabana nightclub was a big deal. Every big name in the world would want to play the Copacabana when they came to New York. Even though the Copa was a small club, big name acts would be glad to come play. They wanted to play the Copa. The Copa had lounge upstairs from the main room and that's where I booked the lounge acts. I had the best lounge groups. There was a real good and large bar up there, where people mingled. I didn't do anything in entertainment unless it was really good. One of the guys who I put in the lounge at the Copa to sing was Marty Richards. He wasn't the best singer, but he was good enough to sing with the piano in the lounge. He married the granddaughter of Robert Wood Johnson I, the cofounder of Johnson & Johnson, Mary Lea Johnson Richard, but he was openly gay. We worked with a lot of gay talent, including the booker at the Copa, Doug Coudy. He was one of the nicest guys. But Marty Richards married Mary Lea Johnson, and then was very successful in show business using her money. He went on to produce the movie *Chicago* and many successful Broadway shows. He only died about a year ago. He won a number of major awards. At one point, Marty Richards was signed to me and before he was famous I got him a number of modeling jobs. He wasn't a tremendous talent, but he could sing at the Copa lounge.

MG: Wow.

RR: Isn't that something?

MG: Yes.

RR: He was very involved with Broadway after marriage and then produced the movie adaption of *Chicago*. Maybe I can find his original contract someplace because he was signed to me before he became famous.

MG: There is so much to talk about.

RR: Yes, there's a whole book here. I used to go into five or six clubs a night where I had booked talent. I had maybe ten or fifteen groups out in one night working all the different clubs. Just last week, in Asbury Park, they had an annual festival, Light of Day. It's a big fundraising

event and there's entertainment all over town for the whole week. Jon Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen show up. I never worked with or had connections to Jon Bon Jovi or Bruce Springsteen. I looked at this year's line up and see some of the guys that used to play for me.

MG: Yeah? I want to back up a little bit and ask how you spent the war years. You explained you tried to enlist.

RR: Yes, but that didn't happen. During those years, I worked for (Quiggin?) the pocketbook frame manufacturer. I had one year with the *Asbury Park Press*. Then, the trucking outfit for a year or two.

MG: Were you doing anything to participate in the war effort?

RR: No, there was nothing else for me to do, if I couldn't be actually part of it.

MG: Earlier, you had said what your reaction was to Pearl Harbor, but do you remember how you found out about the attack?

RR: Probably the radio, which was a big deal. When I was in school, I'd have a battery set in my room where I could listen to the radio late at night.

MG: Growing up, did you know anybody else who had polio?

RR: Yes, my brother got it a little, just that his little toe overlapped another toe. That was the extent of it. And (Don Cole?), who was my best friend and went to Bordentown Military Academy and then through the years was really a good friend of mine. Don and I lived together for a little while. We used to drive around a lot together. In the old days, we didn't have the turnpike. One time, we were heading to Boston and driving through all the different towns in Connecticut. We'd get up to Boston in just a few hours. One of Don's sisters married Bruce Durkee from Boston, who owned Durkee-Moore, Inc. They make marshmallow fluff. They used to have a summer home and boat in Swampscott, where they had a summer home on the water.

MG: That's so interesting. Is there anything that we are missing leading up to your experience at NYU?

RR: I don't think anything worth talking about other than growing up with polio, going to school and my summers down at the shore.

MG: Did people ever confuse your physical disability for cognitive one?

RR: I don't think I let that happen because I blended in. I liked to have fun like anybody else or go out.

MG: What was your degree or major in college?

RR: I didn't have one. I left college before I finished. That's why I went with the newspapers. Have you heard of Jayne Mansfield?

MG: Yes.

RR: She was married to Mickey Hargitay. Their daughter is Mariska Hargitay on *Law and Order*. Well, Jayne Mansfield did modeling with my French poodle. She was really nice and she worked for me for doing different things in modeling.

MG: Wow.

RR: She was killed in a terrible car accident while traveling in the South. I can even show you the picture with her and my poodle. Also, I took Jan Clayton out. She was making a movie in Asbury Park. She did a movie with Wallace Beery and James Gleason and so I got to know her. She also starred in the television series *Lassie*. She also had the lead singing in a show called *Carousel*.

MG: I love *Carousel*.

RR: With John Raitt. She went to Broadway and had the lead part in *Carousel*, singing "June is Bustin' Out All Over." I knew her well because I was taking her out when she was in Asbury Park making the movie. She was in Lakehurst making a movie that was about airplanes. I knew she was going to be big and she was really good too. I also have stories about Barbara Walter, Bonnie Raitt, Christine Jorgensen, who was the first female impersonator and we managed her. I worked with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis down at the 500 Club. I was associated with David Foster, who is one of the biggest producers and who worked with Whitney Houston and many huge stars.

MG: Yes, he is very famous.

RR: Yes. We connected him with a young girl, Dawn McArthur, about ten or twelve years old, in Branson, Missouri. She was touring and singing in the country shows, and I managed her. She was from Minnesota.

MG: Well, we have been talking for a long time today. I will look forward to our next installment.

RR: I look forward to it. These are really good memories, for me anyway. I'll tell you about a guy by the name of Liberace.

MG: Okay.

RR: He used to work for me for ninety dollars a night down the shore.

MG: Wow.

RR: I'm just going through my notes here. (Harry Vale?) is the head usher at Madison Square Garden. Mike Jacobs was the head boxing promoter, took him in there. He told Harry, "Anytime Bob comes in here, he'll knock on the back door. You let him in the back door and give him seats so he always has seats to watch." So, I saw everything. I saw all the track events, everything in Madison Square Garden. I'd just go knock on the back door of Madison Square Garden. People liked me, so they did certain things like that. It meant a lot to me. I saw Cornelius Warmerdam then, the famous pole vaulter. I saw Frank Gifford walk in with him because they came to Madison Square Garden to see the track meet. I saw the first guy to go

over fifteen feet in a track meet. I also managed a couple of boxers. I don't mean Max Baer when Max Baer was the heavyweight champion of the world. I gave you a little background into who he was. A couple of actual fighters that I managed fought main events in Madison Square Garden. I got the contracts and I managed them.

MG: Well, I am really excited for our next conversation.

RR: Yes. If you ever watch boxing, you would know Sugar Ray Robinson, people like that that.

MG: Oh, yes. Well, thank you for your time and sharing all these stories.

RR: Yes, if anybody wants to write a book there is a lot of material.

MG: I agree. Well, let's take a break for today.

RR: Okay. I've jumped around a little bit.

MG: That is okay.

RR: I'm really glad that you're listening.

MG: Me too. Well, I will end it here for today and just thank you so much for all your time.

RR: Okay.

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

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 8/20/2015

Reviewed by Molly Graham 11/7/2018

Reviewed by Robert Redfield 1/9/2019