

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT REDFIELD

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Molly Graham: This is an interview with Robert Redfield, our second session. The interview is taking place on 102 Ryder's Lane in East Brunswick. The date is February 19, 2015 and the interviewer is Molly Graham. If you could talk me about the years between finishing at NYU and forming the Redfield Agency.

Robert Redfield: Even before that, I was so involved with some of the clubs, doing a lot of lounge work.

MG: How did you start working in these lounges? How would you make the connections?

RR: This was even before the Stone Pony opened in Asbury Park. I was pretty well connected because I had always been connected in the entertainment business. A lot of musicians, they got to know me and they'd come to me because I knew all the clubs. I got to know the club owners as well. Every week, *The Newark Star Ledger* would have two full pages advertising all the lounges, clubs and entertainment. I didn't trust anybody else to do what I would do. I was more or less confined to the clubs, the lounges, the local groups because it consumed most of my time. But the groups I worked with would go all over--Las Vegas, Canada, and all over the country. But when the drinking and driving laws became more strict, this business seemed to stop overnight. That put a stop to that part of the business for me. People could no longer go out a couple nights during the week and have some drinks at a club or lounge because they'd get picked up for drinking and driving. They'd lose their licenses and they wouldn't be going to work, thus jeopardizing their livelihood. So, that put a complete stop to all of that part of the business. I'd say that was around 1989 when that happened. Before that, I had worked with a lot of big names in lots of lounges, attractions doing their show. Then I worked with clubs like the Copacabana in places like the Latin Quarter in New York that Lou Walters owned. That's Barbara Walters's father. He had the Latin Quarter. I remember seeing her in his office when she was seventeen years old when I had an act or two in the Latin Quarter. She was just working in his office as a secretary. I didn't get to know her well. I believe she wouldn't even know who I am today. She used to visit the shore, an area called Deal, which is right on Ocean Avenue before you hit Asbury Park. Very well-known people in show business had homes in Deal, like David Wilentz. David Wilentz was one of our lawyers and probably one of the most powerful men in the state of Jersey. He was the prosecutor in the Lindbergh kidnapping trial. He had a home in Deal, right on Ocean Avenue. The next town north of Deal is Elberon. Billy Joel has a home there. He built it on the waterfront in the shape of an organ keyboard. So, a lot of people would come down to the Jersey Shore and visit the area.

MG: When was the Redfield Agency formally founded?

RR: We had an office in New York at 1697 Broadway, which is the CBS building where they did *The Ed Sullivan Show*. We had offices there for four or five years. The agency was formed when we were first working with Max Baer, the boxer. He was actually the first personality that we managed, but I was in the business for a long time before that as well, managing musical groups throughout the tristate area. Growing up, my mother was always connected to show business and the Ziegfeld Follies. My godmother was Fanny Brice. I met a lot of people in the entertainment business in New York through the years. All the groups I worked with or managed were a high level. They played the music of the day, Top 40, but most also did shows and had the ability to go out and entertain. They were show groups with personality. They would even do a little comedy in the lounges. My business grew through word of mouth. That's

how some of the bigger and better acts in the Tri-state area would get to know me. We would send these groups to venues in the Catskills, which was a popular destination for New Yorkers. These were places like Grossinger's Catskill Resort Hotel and the Concord Resort Hotel. It was a very popular place on the weekends. The groups I managed would perform at the Copacabana and out on Long Island and in the Catskills and many other places.

MG: Was your mother involved in the business?

RR: Yes. She was always involved. She knew the business. Last time, we talked about Marty Richards, who married a Johnson & Johnson heiress. I would book him at the Copa lounge. He then would book modeling jobs and eventually became famous on Broadway after his marriage and produced the movie, *Chicago* and many famous Broadway shows. He started out modeling for our agency. So we handled acts who eventually became famous. I did a lot of work in the Tri-State area, plus, in and out of the United States. One group had a singer--Madonna. She was just a lounge singer who would perform with different area groups and eventually became famous. We did not manage her. This was her springboard into show business. It was such a different form and style of entertainment then than today. There aren't opportunities like this anymore. There's no place for these people to even learn the business. I worked out of my home with the lounges. You saw my setup downstairs. It was like that. Also, you had to be licensed with the musical agencies, the American Federation of Musicians. Then you had to be either a manager or an agent with AFOM and they had tremendous restrictions and conditions. Also, the different groups that worked had to belong to AFOM. Local 802 [American Federation of Musicians], was the big union for musicians in New York. So, I was always a legitimate manager even though they were very strict with their restrictions. They almost put you out of business. If they find that an act complained about anything to the union--as the manager, you're allowed to get only five percent of the net amount of money. As an agent you received ten percent. I was a manager. Within that, the act took all the expenses off--his travel expenses, the union dues that he had to pay, and travel, etc.. They could not pay me as manager more than the five percent. You couldn't take anymore, otherwise the union could take away your license. If the act complains to the union, then you're in jeopardy of losing your license. The union had offices in New York. I remember going up there to be tried. One guy accused me of taking more than the five percent agent's fee. Say, the act got four hundred dollars a week for a five-piece band, we would end up with only twenty dollars a week commission. The acts were fully protected by the union as well. You couldn't book anybody that wasn't licensed by the musician's union. Otherwise you were doing something illegal too. The union eventually disintegrated because it made it difficult for everybody involved to earn a living. That was maybe twenty years ago. Now the union almost didn't matter. They got phased out. We weren't allowed to book any musical act for more than five percent because we were the managers, and an agent would get ten percent.

MG: In addition to Max Baer, who were some of your early clients?

RR: Basically, I worked with hundreds of groups over a period of a number of years. I may have ten acts working in one night. I always knew where every group was. I had groups in lounges, supper clubs, and places like that. I started out booking groups four or five nights a week, but after the drinking and driving laws changed around 1989, we were just booking lounge groups on the weekends.

MG: I was asking about some of your early clients.

RR: There was one group, originally called The (Whalers?) and they later became The Accents, which was a show group. They worked all the different clubs. I had several groups like them. I could sign an act, put them with a major agency and get them booked all over the country. It's now no longer worth it to the major agencies to have a department for smaller lounge acts. At that time, it was a big deal to have show groups that could work the hotels in major cities like Chicago. The better show groups could go around throughout the State or Canada and get booked. Some of the acts weren't good enough for national tours, but would play in areas all throughout New Jersey. There was the Musical Corporation of America, MCA, which very big. Sonny Werblin was one of the heads of MCA. He was a very good friend of ours. A lot of our clients became personal friends and we would start to manage their career as they became known and possible big name attractions. Now, where The Stony Pony is in Asbury Park was then a lounge called Mrs. Jay's. It was a basic lounge with a restaurant right near the boardwalk on Ocean Avenue in Asbury Park. We would book a lot of our good lounge acts, top 40 acts, there. Bruce Springsteen got started while I was working those areas at another place called The Fast Lane. I wasn't involved with him because he was basically hard rock at the time. Just as my lounge work was winding down along the Shore, Springsteen and that kind of rock and roll was becoming popular. Mrs. Jay's eventually became The Stone Pony that everybody knows. Maybe seventy five percent of the acts that played Mrs. Jay's were lounge acts and were good top 40 acts. They were clean acts, nice looking acts. Everybody wore uniforms. Even the lounge acts, they wore the same thing. I know my groups would go out and they would have cufflinks on, their shoes would be shined, and they would wear the same stage outfit--a jacket with a similar slacks. They all looked professional. Today, it's just the opposite. You wouldn't look professional then if you went on stage as a professional today. It is another world in the way they present themselves. So, I booked my groups lounges and big restaurants like The Pines Manor. Do you know where that is? It's a big place on Route 27, near Highland Park. I'm sure you've gone by it. I did a lot of work at the Pines. Those places had good lounges. As my acts began to get a following, we would book them at bigger places. They would get decent money then. They came in with their own sound engineers and lighting guys. The crowds were getting younger and the acts became more rock and roll bands. Now, it's mostly heavy rock. Almost everything you see on late night television, like Letterman, there's always music at the end of the show and it's a lot of heavy rock. Sometimes you'll see a good act performing on the late night television shows.

MG: Some other names you mentioned were Jackie Wilson and Patti LaBelle.

RR: Okay. The Accents was one of the better groups I had. They could play lounges and do shows. They had two guys in front, one was a great sax player who fronted the group and could handle the audience. He did a lot of comedy. They were a show group and played great top 40 dance music. I put The Accents with Music Corporation of America, which was one of the big agencies. They had a department for show groups at that time. The Accents would play showrooms around the country. They were Frank Sinatra's favorite band. One of Sinatra's closest friends, Jilly Rizzo, had a club in New York called Jilly's. Sinatra backed it and put Jilly in charge to front and run it. It wasn't too big. Sinatra and his friends, like Judy Garland, would come in if they were in town. Sinatra wouldn't come into the club until two o'clock or two thirty. He'd have eight or nine of his friends with him and they'd close the club to the public. If

The Accents were in town, Sinatra would call [John] “Muzzy” [Napodano], the leader of the band, and tell him, “Come on down.” They’d end up at Jilly’s at three o’clock and play maybe until eight o’clock in the morning just for Sinatra. The Accents were one of his favorite groups and they were great. They could entertain anybody anyplace because they were really good. They were so talented and so funny. That was one of the better groups I managed. They would play Atlantic City and a lot of other well-known clubs in major cities. A lot of hotels had really good lounges then, but not anymore.

MG: You mentioned The Platters before.

RR: Yes. And I managed the Main Ingredient. I put them in a lot of good clubs. The musical acts I would book played well and drew a big crowd. Others included The Coasters and The Drifters, who sang “Under the Boardwalk.” The clubs where I booked acts and big name attractions always did well on show nights when the club owners charged admission.

MG: When would you have a day off?

RR: The eighth day of the week. Not only that, I’d keep my light on until five o’clock in the morning as I was up talking, calling, thinking and writing. I did all my own contracts. I didn’t even have a secretary. I would do the work of three people and I also couldn’t afford to make any mistakes. I had to do it right. I didn’t have anybody come in and work with me until a good bit later. I’m having some trouble now because a former employee decided to violate his obligations three years ago. Anyway, I used to go to five or six clubs a night. I’d go in and out. I’d listen a little bit, see what was going on and then leave. All the club owners knew me. By the way, ironically, I can’t read a note of music and I can’t sing a note on key or even hum a note.

MG: Do you enjoy music? Would you ever go to these lounges as an audience member?

RR: I liked musicals, *Carousel*. I used to take Jan Clayton out who starred in *Carousel* with John Raitt.

MG: I love *Carousel*.

RR: She did a number called “June is Bustin’ Out All Over.” John Raitt was the star of the show and Jan Clayton was the co-star. She filmed a movie in Asbury Park and that’s where I met her. This was when I was working at the *Asbury Park Press*. They were doing a movie with James Gleason and Wallace Beery about airplanes and she had a part in it. The movie was called *This Man’s Navy*. So, I got to know her there. She was married then and I knew she’d be a big star. I took her out when she was in Asbury doing the movie with him and then she went onto *Carousel* and starred in that. She was also in *Lassie*. With music, I could always tell if a hit was going to be a hit. In one instance, I could tell if an artist was going to be popular and become a star. I would go to Broadway shows or to the Paramount Theatre and see shows. Sometimes there would be a movie and a stage show. That’s the way some of the major New York City movie theaters operated. Once, Les Brown was playing and I saw him perform. That was my first introduction to Doris Day. She used to sing with the Les Brown Band. She was seventeen. She became famous after singing “Que Sera, Sera.” I knew she was going to be a star. She became great in whatever she did, but she had a tough life. I also managed two or three singers that sang with a couple of the big bands like Charlie Spevak. I loved good soul music, like the Four Tops or the Temptations. Patti LaBelle was someone I heard and knew would be famous

one day. She sang with the Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles. I was paid \$300 per show for the act. Madonna was singing with lounge acts, too. I could take a good known group that would be just starting out for me and get them going in the nightclub circuits.

MG: What was a typical weekend like?

RR: It was more than just the weekend. My weekend was just another day I worked. At that time, I would go four or five nights a week, plus days. In a given night I might have ten groups a night out working, and sixty or seventy people. I knew where everybody was. I didn't make any mistakes or put the wrong type of group in a club. I didn't have somebody not show up for an engagement. I didn't have two bands show up to play one gig. Because of polio, I couldn't afford to make any mistakes. I had to do everything right. I was very hands. I sent acts from here in New Jersey to Europe, places in Germany or England, all over. I knew who would fit where. For someone who had no musical talent himself, I worked great with musical attractions.

MG: And to do all this before the internet and cell phones is very impressive.

RR: It seems like I knew and used every phone booth in the tristate area. For some reason that reminds me of the store I had on Route 22. I told you last time about the furniture store. I was driving from here in East Brunswick to my store up to that area on Route 22. I stopped at a small mall along the way. I stopped in to make a call. When I walk in to a drugstore that had a phone and someone said, "Are you Bob Redfield?" I said, "Yes." They said, "There's a phone call for you." One of my acts found me there. I don't know how. Somehow, one of my groups knew how to find me there. We still could never figure out how the timing was right. He figured I'd stop there as I was going out to the showroom on Route 22 in Plainfield, by that drugstore. I'd saved enough money to buy that particular furniture franchise. I bought this place on 22 that the company Furnakit owned, which was their showroom where they would bring people out to look at the different cabinet models. Did I show you the brochure?

MG: Yes.

RR: The cabinets were built from floor to ceiling. Most cabinets go three-quarters up or six feet high. So, I was still managing all the musical groups while I had the franchise. The franchise eventually went out of business because of a new veneer they introduced. Instead of using a maple or a walnut, they used this synthetic veneer. Because I had taken over an already-owned store, I didn't lose anything when the company went out of business, as my store was built, known and doing business.

MG: Do you want to take a break so we can have the tea Jo brought us?

RR: Yes. Let's do that.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: We are back on and you're showing me a picture of Marty Richards. Tell me a little bit more about him.

RR: Martin Richards became well-known Broadway and film producer. He won an Oscar for *Chicago* and produced a bunch of other Broadway shows. (Artie Narvaez?) owned the

Montclair Supper Club in Long Island City. He had a great lounge there and one of my groups would perform there. One performer was Joe Barone, who I managed. Joe Barone married Lily Ann Carol, the lead singer for Louis Prima's orchestra. This group used to work at the Montclair Supper Club for (Artie Narvaez?). He would do five sets a night. The group was self-contained. A young Italian man, seventeen or eighteen years old, inexperienced singer would sometimes join them on stage. At the end of the night, the owner's mother--they were Italian and she made great spaghetti sauce dinner. She invited all of us and the young singer to the kitchen area. And we'd all sit around the table--the musicians, the owners, and me. The young singer became Tony Bennett. The club owner would give Tony ten dollars for the night. The lead singer in another group I managed was Earl "Happy Feet" Burroughs. He worked for me at The Elegant, which was a big club, and the Town and Country in Brooklyn. He left New York and went to Paris, but he wrote a number called "Great Balls of Fire." Jerry Lee Lewis recorded it and it made him famous. Earl's stage name was Jack Hammer, but he was also known as "Happy Feet" Burroughs. He came into the office for us to manage him. He went to Paris to join his friend Jimmy Hendrix, the great guitarist, who worked in New York and New Jersey for eight dollars a night.

MG: Yes, I know you have a whole list of folks to talk about.

RR: I did a lot of work at the Apollo Theatre. Everybody knows the Apollo Theatre. Frank Schiffman was co-owner of the Apollo. We worked with a lot of big name African American musical acts. One of the unknown acts that came to work the Apollo while I had an act there, I remember, they pulled up to the Apollo in a rickety old station wagon. I think they came from Indiana and there were four or five of them. Someone called the head of Local 802, American Federation of Musicians, and said, "Go down and see the act. Maybe you can have your nephew sign them up." The act turned out to be the Jackson 5 with Michael Jackson, who was about eight years old at the time. So, I remember when they first came to New York. Years later, I ended up getting to know Michael Jackson's accountant. He lived in New Brunswick and went to the same YWHA [Young Women's Hebrew Association] as I. He used to go back and forth to California and do the investing for him in real estate, which was a big deal. I saw Michael Jackson at the Apollo when he was very young. I would go backstage at the Apollo. It's pretty tight back there. You could hardly get up those winding stairs. We did a lot of work there. I put several acts in the Apollo, including a black dance team, Delores and Dave McHarris. They opened many shows at the Apollo and other theaters in that circuit. I got Tony Bennett and Jack Hammer also to perform there. We had a big opening with Jerry Lee Lewis at the big Eatontown Mall, which is maybe twenty-five or thirty miles down to the shore. He sang "Great Balls of Fire" when he was there of course. The Four Seasons, I told you about them. They were The Lovers originally. I told you about Sinatra and the Accents. I worked with a tremendous artist and musician, Artie Schroeck. He played every instrument and was terrific. He wrote almost all the Coca Cola commercials at that time. He became a very big jingle writer. Artie worked at clubs for me. He was an unbelievable talent and musician. Artie played every instrument. Joe Barone was one of the guys that I mentioned with Tony Bennett. I put him in the Copa lounge. There wasn't much comedy at the Copa lounge. It was mostly music. But Joe Barone's group was a good group and very versatile. Martha Raye worked in the main floor downstairs in the showroom. She was the big attraction at the time. She liked Joe so much that she would bring him down to the floor in the main room with her whenever she did her show at the Copa. The main room at the Copa was where all the biggest stars wanted to work. They could make more

money going to bigger venues, but the Copa was so important. I also used to do a lot with Jackie Gleason. He had an office at a Sheraton Hotel. I would book the lounge in that hotel. I had Eddie Layton working the lounge downstairs, playing the keyboard in back of the bar. He became a real good friend of mine. He did all of the music at Yankee Stadium and he composed music and played organ for soap operas. Eddie Layton was one of the top keyboard players in America. He played there. So, once I was coming from Jackie Gleason's office at the Sheraton Hotel and as I was leaving the building, a young fellow walks in. He waves to me and I waved to him. I said, "Dick White?" He said, "Well, it was Dick White then, but it's Eddie Fisher now." Eddie Fisher had his own fifteen minute radio show also. We did a lot of work with Jackie Gleason, and Jackie Gleason was very close to Max Baer. One of the top clubs in New York was a club owned by Toots Shor. Toots Shor was a very well-known personality and he owned this club that sports figures and entertainers frequented. Everybody in and out of entertainment went to Toots Shor. So, Jackie Gleason, a heavy drinker, would be in Toots waiting for me and Max to see him. Gleason would be propped up in the corner of a booth someplace, otherwise he'd fall over from drinking scotch. He drank a heck of a lot. I got to know Toots Shor personally. It was a really important showbiz place to be. Just like the Copa. At the Copa, I was very close to Doug Coudy who booked all the entertainment the Copa, except for the main acts. A girl came into my office looking for a job and so I took her down to the Copa to meet the booker, Doug Coudy. They had a regular chorus line of dancers in the showroom and I knew he'd put in a showgirl or dancer for me. Her name last name was Feldon. She worked at the Copa for a short time and was noticed there by producers of a television show - *The \$64,000 Question*. It was a contest show. You'd be locked up in a booth, pick a category and then answer questions. Barbara Feldon was on that show and won. I had no connection with Barbara Feldon after the Copa. From that, she got onto another show called *Get Smart*. She was known as Agent 99. Another person on the show, *The \$64,000 Question*, was Joyce Brothers. Do you recognize that name? Joyce Brothers was one of the best known psychiatrists. She had her own show and newspaper column. She died recently. One of her first jobs was being interviewed in a restaurant that was owned by Al Schacht called Al Schacht's. Al Schacht was a professional baseball player and earned the nickname "The Clown Prince of Baseball" because during the 7th inning stretch he would act like a clown. Everybody knew Al Schacht. When he first opened his restaurant, there was a place where Al Schacht could sit and interview someone and it would be broadcast on the radio. He interviewed Joyce Brothers and Max Baer, who I both knew. And I managed Max.

MG: You had mentioned Whitney Houston once.

RR: In 1991, I had signed The Temptations, but we couldn't call them The Temptations. I had to call them Ruffin, Kendricks and Edwards, Former Leads of The Temptations. The name The Temptations was trademarked by Otis Williams, the former lead singer. So, I was going to introduce them during the 1991 Super Bowl at halftime. I got them on at halftime, but only Whitney Houston sang at halftime, the biggest number she had. Unfortunately, it was the time when the Gulf War broke out and they showed clips of war coverage during halftime instead. Ruffin, Kendricks, and Edwards didn't get to sing. We got paid though. I was going to introduce them to the world at that time. Anyway, have you heard of Branson, Missouri? It's a big area for entertainment and big name act's shows. One of the shows was a country show. It was all country artists. That was the theme of this particular place. There was a young female singer there. She was twelve or fourteen years old. Her name was Dawnl MacArthur. I signed

her to management. I introduced her to Atlantic Records, which David Foster was involved with. He then signed her to his label. He's a very well known composer. He did arrangements for Whitney Houston and so many other big stars. --

MG: I know who he is.

RR: That's who I'm talking about. So, David signed Dawnl MacArthur to Atlantic Records. David Foster brought her out to California and his studios, and worked with her there. I have her tapes. She's an unbelievable artist, but couldn't compete with a lot of the contemporary rock singers and their music. She was really going to be a star if she sang her type of music, but it didn't work out. David had arranged an anniversary concert. A fiftieth anniversary for Israel. David arranged for Dawnl to sing at this concert at the biggest venue there was in California. He had done all the arrangements. Dawnl sang here with a large choral group in Israel. It was wonderful. She came very close to becoming a major star. David was going to put her in duets with Stevie Wonder and the Three Tenors. Do you know the Three Tenors? She was going to sing with them. There were a lot of opportunities lined up for her. But it didn't work out. There was another guy I gave work to out of high school in New Brunswick, who ended up recording "The Time of My Life," which the Sandals resort uses in its commercial. He made a lot of money off of that song. Oh, something else I forgot to mention. Tony Mart had a club on the Jersey Shore. Down past Atlantic City there was an area that was well-known for entertainment. Tony Mart owned a real popular and good club down there. I worked with him quite a bit at that club. He would always book my acts at the Thunderbird Club in Amboy, New Jersey. I booked two bands on a weekend. Then, six nights a week I'd book one group. Then on Tuesdays, along with a band, I ran show groups, like the Coasters, the Platters, the Drifters. They would come from all over to see this place. It was all because I did it. Anyway, down at Tony Mart's I put in the Accents. That's the group I told you Sinatra loved. The drummer with the group was unbelievable. But there was one time when the Accents were supposed to go on stage at a certain time and the drummer is not there. Turns out, he's locked up in jail. The drummer was taking out the Chief of Police's daughter and she was underage. So, he got locked up. I had to get him loose to come in and play with the group. He was an unbelievable drummer. He used to go to sleep with drum pads just drumming and drumming. He ended up being a drummer for Peggy Lee who's probably one of the greatest singers of all time. He ended up by being her drummer in New York at the famous places she would perform. Another connection I have is with Ray Stark, a famous movie producer. He's the son in law of Fanny Brice, my godmother. I also knew Stephen Sondheim. His mother was in *Ziegfeld Follies*, Foxy Sondheim. We were about the same age and would play together. I also knew Chris McCarty, who was a songwriter and worked with the Steve Miller Band on many of their albums. The Steve Miller Band was famous for "Fly Like An Eagle." But McCarty cowrote their big hit "Swingtown." Notre Dame used that song a lot in their halftime performance with the marching band. There's so much to mention. But I forgot what I forgot.

MG: I wanted to ask how you met your wife.

Jo Redfield: A blind date.

RR: Really blind. How many years ago was that?, how many was, many years ago.

JR: Yes, it was a long time. 1957.

RR: Oh, this might be interesting. When Harry Truman was running for President, I was living in New York. Friends of mine introduced us to Nat Lictblaugh. He raised all the financial funding for Harry Truman and the Democratic Party.

JR: Democratic Party?

RR: Yes. So, Nat arranged all the advertising and raising money, which is pretty important in an election. We can tell now how important it is. Friends of ours introduced us to Nat Litwell. I used to go to most of the games uptown at Columbia. The Ivy League was pretty good then. I met Nat at one of the hotels he was staying at. I said, "Well, would you like to go to the Army-Columbia game?" It was on Saturday. He said, "That would be good." He was the fundraiser for the Democratic Party at that time. Thomas E. Dewey was the governor of New York and he was running against Truman. It was no contest. Dewey was going to run away with the election. But Nat took me to a suite of rooms in his hotel and said, "Truman is going to win the election." The next day, I took him to the football game. He was a real nice guy, but Truman was the underdog in the election. The next day, all the newspapers printed, "Dewey Wins the Election." They had to recall all the papers because Truman won. But I remember Nat making that prediction. That was interesting. Truman was one hundred to one the underdog. I could have made a killing.

MG: Yes, definitely.

RR: Last time you were here I mentioned the company that made all the water coolers. That was Fedders in Buffalo.

RR: Frank Quigan was the manufacturer of leading pocket book framing manufacturers. He was going to take over Fedders. Quigan made fortunes for friends and broke others. He was a mathematical genius.

MG: Oh, yes.

RR: Another name you may have heard was Betty Boop. I managed her. . It matters, you never heard of it Betty Boop. I managed her. [Editor's Note: Helen Kane was an American singer who's style inspired animator Grim Natwick to create the cartoon character Betty Boop. Kane is accused of copying the style of the African American singer Esther Jones, or "Baby Esther."]

MG: I only know her as a cartoon character.

RR: Yes, that's who it was. Her real name was Helen Kane. She eventually married Daniel Healy, who owned Healy's Grill in New York. She was really nice. Healy's was a favorite bar for those at NBC and Radio City.

MG: You knew the real life Betty Boop.

RR: Yes, that's who the character was based on.

RR: Teresa Brewer was someone else I worked with. I used to handle all the entertainment at the Dyckman Theatre in uptown New York. Back then, you'd have a show and a movie in the theaters. The manager of the theater, Ed Begelfer, was a good friend of mine and he said, "Let

me put on someone local talent.” So, we would bring in some local groups to stimulate business. I remember I brought someone in from Philadelphia who had a record breaking. He came in with his managers and I gave him two hundred dollars for the night. His name was Frankie Avalon. The first song he did that launched his career was “De De Dinah.” His first public appearance was onstage at the Dyckman Theatre. Then I’d bring in maybe a couple local groups weekly that were good live acts. I mentioned last time that I had a trucking company with tractors and trailers. From Concrete Plank Corporation, we hauled all the roofing for DuPont to its new plant in Delaware when I had Clipper Transportation, my corporation. .

MG: Tell me again how you met Jo.

RR: It was through a friend on a blind date and the rest is history. She had just come over from Ireland and didn’t have the chance to get much of a selection. She had to deal with my phobias.

MG: What year were you married?

RR: 1960.

MG: Tell me a little bit about having a family. When were your children born?

RR: 1961, 1962. I know I mentioned Max Baer, but I also managed other fighters as well. I bring this up because on the night my child was born, my wife was going to give birth at the Polyclinic hospital. Anyway, at the same time, I had someone fighting the main event in Madison Square Garden that night. But Dick Tiger was the middleweight champion and they were flying Fernandes in from Cuba. He was supposed to come over to fight the main event and they wouldn’t let him. Castro wouldn’t let him leave Cuba. So, Teddy Brenner, the matchmaker for Madison Square Garden knew that I had Billy Pickett, a middleweight that matched the weight and everything. They knew that he would knock out my guy quickly, but I arranged to get him. We were on our way up and I thought we had a chance. So we took the fight and it was the main event in Madison Square Garden. It was a pretty big deal at that point. Pickett did not win, but it was a good fight.

MG: Yes, that is interesting. How did you come to settle in New Brunswick?

RR: Because we’re only thirty-five to forty minutes from New York, where I had my office. You don’t need an office anymore because of cell phones and computers. It used to take me thirty five minutes, door to door, to the CBS building, where the Letterman show is now. I wanted to mention a few more projects that Martin Richards was involved in. There was *Chicago* and *Fort Apache, the Bronx*. He was from the Bronx. He was an associate producer on *The Shining*. He also produced *The Boys from Brazil*, and *Some of My Best Friends Are...* He was also involved in Broadway--*Sweeney Todd*, *Crimes of the Heart*. There may have been some other Broadway shows.

MG: Looking back, what has stood out to you?

RR: Oh, so many memories. Let me just see a few things there. Eddie Layton was a good friend of mine. He played the organ. When he was seventeen years old, he had to hitchhike to play one of the clubs that I used to go out and have fun at. I got to know him well. He did all the music for soap operas and then played the organ at Yankee Stadium for years. He never even

got his driver license. He also had a boat that was built like a miniature ferry that he used to take out on the Hudson River.

MG: Can you talk a little bit how your work changed after the drinking and driving laws changed?

RR: New Jersey was really impacted. A lot of these clubs survived because they were doing business six or seven nights a week. But then people stopped going out because they couldn't take a chance on losing their licenses. Police would chalk the patrons' tires in the clubs' parking area and know that they were drinking and driving. This was around the same timeframe that I signed David Ruffin to a personal contract. He wasn't performing with Eddie Kendricks, who did the high voice, and Dennis Edwards, who did contemporary music with the Temptations. So, I signed David Ruffin to a personal solo contract. He was the one that sang "My Girl." He was notorious for his drug use and wanted on drug violations around the country. He was living on a farm outside of Detroit. This was in 1989 when The Temptations were being inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame at the Waldorf Hotel in New York, along with the Rolling Stones. Dennis Edwards and Eddie Kendricks of the Temptations showed up at the induction, but not David Ruffin because he was afraid of being picked up by the cops because of drug abuse. He was wanted for drug charges and abuse. I signed Dennis Edwards and Eddie Kendricks. They had all of the hits. I knew if I could put the three together it would be a gigantic thing, but Eddie Kendricks and Dennis Edwards would not work with David Ruffin because he had so many drug problems and missed engagements. I eventually convinced all three of them to work together and we were getting ready for their first performance as a trio in Chicago. Eddie and Dennis were not willing to work with David. But I worked it out and the three did their first show, and the show was great. It really knocked everyone out. Now, at that point, I had to convince the other major bookers who knew their history of not showing up to book Ruffin, Kendricks, and Edwards formally lead singers of The Temptations. They were afraid to book them and then have David be a no-show. So I had to get David Ruffin to show up at all booked performances. They were one of the top ten acts in the country, in the world really. I could fill a book with David Ruffin stories. Once, when I had him booked in Chicago, he was playing three nights. They gave him a lot of money, like fifty thousand dollars a show. In the meantime, he's been picked up by the authorities in Detroit and he's in jail. I was able to track down Aretha Franklin's lawyer, who had a lot of influence, to see what he could do about getting Ruffin out of jail. He couldn't help me because he was going to the Notre Dame-Michigan game, which is the biggest game of the year, but he changed his mind and went to court to do me this favor. We arranged that Ruffin could be released in time for his Chicago gig and then go right back into rehab. So, David got to Chicago and everything went well. But then I had to get him to rehab. There's a place in New York, a special rehab place, where he could go, and I arranged for that. He was very hard to manage. Those episodes would be a book in itself I had to convince venues to book the act now that Ruffin would show for all engagements because he was so unreliable. My wife loved David Ruffin because he would visit and enjoy his visits here. He could hold ten thousand people in the palm of his hand. He was an unbelievable performer and he held you spellbound. But David Ruffin was difficult to work with. He destroyed a hotel room in a Holiday Inn when they had a gig down in Philadelphia. Ruffin ripped out a bathroom. The toilet parts were all over the place. You couldn't believe the kind of damage that took place. Ruffin always wanted his money in advance, but you couldn't give him too much because he would spend it on drugs. After this reunion tour in England, he was staying with his girlfriend in

Philadelphia, doing drugs and was found dead of an overdose. Then, Eddie Kendricks, who has the high voice, died two years after that from cancer of the throat. Edwards continued to work his show. [Editor's Note: Dennis Edwards died February 1, 2018 of complications from meningitis.] He should have stayed with me for what I did for them, but that's the way it worked out. And I did all of this work with the Temptations and other acts while I was dealing with phobias.

MG: It's very impressive.

RR: I did some work with Morris Levy, who owned Roulette Records. The acts with Roulette made their money only on their shows. A lot of the acts signed to Roulette never saw any money because of Levy's ties to the mob. The artists never saw any record money. Levy was a big deal. He owned clubs in New York. One close friend of mine who had the magnificent apartment on Sutton Place also owned (Glamorene?), which was a very well-known cleaning product. He had an apartment that overlooked the East River. It was beautiful. I sometimes stayed there for a weekend. Micky Rooney stayed there sometimes. Clayton was a real good friend of mine, also. The guy who did all the Radio City murals was a real good friend of mine, also. He went with one of the models that we managed. I have a special Christmas sketching that he made up and signed for me. I also met Jimi Hendrix, the great guitarist, because he played guitar for Joey Dee and the Starlites. Jimi Hendrix worked for me in a couple of places and then he went to France and performed with Happy Feet Burrows. He came back to the US, did that Jimi Hendrix show on CBS or NBC where he was breaking guitars in the act. Yes, Jimi Hendrix played guitar for three or four of the acts I worked with. There is so much to talk about. So much funny stuff, as well.

MG: Yes, there's a lot to talk about. I'm curious about your family. How many children do you have?

RR: Three, but we're not involved with one and it hasn't been completely pleasant.

MG: What are your other two children's names?

RR: Robyn, who works for Morgan Stanley and is high in executive responsibility. She lives in Boston and is involved with finance. She travels quite a bit for work. My other daughter, Ronda, is married and lives in Florida.

MG: Do you have any grandchildren?

RR: Yes, with Ronda.

MG: Should we take a break for today?

RR: Yes, okay.

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Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 8/30/2015
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