

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH OWEN ULLMANN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

JONATHAN ESTERLIT

HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

JESSE BRADDELL

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an oral history interview with Owen Ullmann of the Class of 1970 ...

Owen Ullmann: '69.

SI: ... From the Class of 1969, for the Rutgers Oral History Archive. This is Shaun Illingworth, and I am joined by ...

Jonathan Esterlit: Jonathan Esterlit.

SI: Today's date is July ...

OU: 12th.

SI: July 12th. Thank you very much for joining us. I would like to start by asking you where and when you were born.

OU: I was born on November 16, 1947, I guess, at a hospital in Neptune, New Jersey. I spent the first two years of my life living in Bradley Beach, and then my family moved to Spotswood, New Jersey, where I grew up through my years going to Rutgers.

SI: For the record, what were your parents' names?

OU: My father's name was Marcel Ullmann. My mother's maiden name was Jane Horowitz. They got married on February 22, 1942, on Washington's real birthday, right after Pearl Harbor. I guess you've got a lot of dates in the world. [Editor's Note: George Washington was born on February 22, 1732. On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces launched a surprise attack on the American military base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan and entered World War II.]

SI: Starting with your mother's side of the family, do you know anything about the family background, if there were any immigration stories on either side, that sort of thing?

OU: My mother's family emigrated from somewhere in Russia. I don't know exactly where. She was the first American-born member of the family. She had three siblings. She was the youngest of the four, and they were all born in Russia. They moved to Brooklyn. My mother always told the story, I don't know if it was really true or not, but the family name originally was Gralnik and when her father moved here, he already had an uncle [here] who met him at Ellis Island and said, "Now that you're American, you need an American name." He said, "Well, what should I change Gralnik to?" He said, "Well, I live in Brooklyn. A very common name is Horowitz." [laughter] So, he changed the name to Horowitz. Her parents had a [shop]; they sewed a lot. I think they had a curtains or drapes [business] or just did sewing, but that was their little shop that they operated. Then, my mother, she went on to college. She worked before [she married]. She had a variety of jobs, but I think it was hard for women to get professional jobs at the time. I think she did a lot of work as a secretary before she got married.

My father's family comes from France, the Strasbourg region. Actually, we traced his family back to the early eighteenth century. He was also born in the United States in 1905. He became a, I guess I'd say, electronics engineer. Both my parents went to, I think, City College of New York. I don't know if he actually finished his degree work or not. He worked in New York as kind of an electronics technician and also grew up in Brooklyn. He lived in the Sheepshead Bay part of [Brooklyn], and my mother in Flatbush. Do you want to know more?

SI: Yes. How did they meet?

OU: My recollection is that my father's father had a butcher shop. I think they were kind of politically conservative, but my mother met a lot of artists and free spirits and she [had] much more of a progressive social and political attitude. They met at either some lecture or some social event, and they hit it off. Then, they dated. Basically, my mother converted my father to become much more of a liberal progressive politically.

The reason I mentioned that is because I think both of them, when they lived in New York--this is before I was born, this would have been in maybe the '30s or the '40s--I think they both became intrigued with socialism, and I think they met a lot of people in New York who were members of the Communist Party. They never joined the party. Then, my mother, over time, became a little less political, but my father actually did a conversion and became quite politically left. He attended quite a number of meetings of socialist groups. I remember, as a kid, we went to an anniversary meeting of the Lincoln Brigade, which was the Americans who fought against [General Francisco] Franco during the Spanish Civil War. They were the Republicans against the fascists.

I mention all this because it led to a real crisis for my father. As I said, he was never a member of the Communist Party or Socialist Party or anything like that, but he did have sympathies towards that point of view. He was kind of pro-Soviet. It was interesting later on, many years later, he and I had arguments because I felt that the Soviets had betrayed the true intent of the liberal workers' paradise and had just become another form of ruthless dictatorship. He went to a lot of meetings of various socialists and I guess communists, and he actually met Julius Rosenberg before he was arrested and before they were executed. He wasn't friends with him, but he had met him on occasion. [Editor's Note: On June 19, 1953, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed for conspiring to pass U.S. atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. Julius Rosenberg worked at the U.S. Army Signal Corps Engineering Laboratories at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, from 1940 to 1945. Julius and Ethel had met as members of the Young Communist League.]

During World War II, he worked as a civilian because of his skill in electronics at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey. He told me he used to work on captured German and Japanese radar equipment, when they would try to repair it and learn whatever advances the Germans and the Japanese had. He was also active in forming a union at Fort Monmouth. Now, I don't know whether he later left or was fired because of those union activities, but anyhow, he went on to become an electronics technician for Bamberger's, which was a big department store based in Newark that was later taken over by Macy's. He used to repair radios and early TV sets. This was in the '50s.

Then, he got caught up in the whole McCarthy Red Scare. When McCarthy and his awful lawyer Roy Cohn focused on Fort Monmouth, the technique of the time was to pressure and intimidate people with possible jail, even though they hadn't done anything, and pressure them to turn over names. Well, someone I guess gave his name as a communist sympathizer, and he wound up being subpoenaed to testify before McCarthy at a Senate hearing in 1954. Actually, I have a photo of him I'm going to show you. He became quite notorious in New Jersey. I don't know if you can see this. [Editor's Note: Mr. Ullmann holds up a photograph of his father Marcel Ullmann reading from a copy of the Constitution entitled *The Living U.S. Constitution*, while testifying publicly before a Senate committee on December 10, 1953. Marcel Ullmann testified in private session before the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations on October 12 and 15, 1953 and then went on to testify in public on December 10.]

SI: It is kind of blending with the green screen in the background.

OU: Oh, yes, I am sorry about that.

SI: I can kind of see it, yes.

OU: It says December 10th, I guess, 1953, it was, so it says. He was on the witness stand before McCarthy, "as the two sparred over answering a question." [Editor's Note: Mr. Ullmann is quoting from the photo caption.] It says he's "a former employee of the Signal Corps Lab at Fort Monmouth," where they were looking for evidence of Soviet spying on radar secrets. What happened was that my father took the Fifth Amendment because he didn't want to testify. He didn't want to say anything about other employees, even though he felt he hadn't done anything wrong. McCarthy said, "So, you're admitting that you're a Fifth Amendment Communist?" My father said, "I'm doing nothing of the kind. I'm merely holding the Constitution on my rights against self-incrimination." McCarthy kept badgering. My father had brought a copy of the Constitution with him. He said, "Well, Senator, I guess I need to refresh you so that you understand the Constitution." He started to read the Constitution and then included [the Fifth Amendment] in the Bill of Rights. McCarthy got really angry with him and gaveled and told him to be quiet and eventually dismissed him. Nothing came of the hearing, at least from the role of the government. [Editor's Note: In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy's claims that Communists had infiltrated the State Department sparked a Red Scare. The witch hunts of the McCarthy era relied on innuendo and unfounded accusations, tactics that earned the ire of President Dwight D. Eisenhower after McCarthy alleged that Communist spies were operating at the Army's Fort Monmouth. When McCarthy launched an investigation of the Army in 1953, the Senate countered with an investigation of McCarthy. The televised Army-McCarthy hearings in the summer of 1954 exposed McCarthy's unscrupulous fear-mongering. Soon after, the Senate censured McCarthy, and he died from complications related to alcoholism in 1957. The Fifth Amendment provides protections for those accused of crimes, including the right against self-incrimination.]

My father had become sort of notorious, and it was front-page news in the *Newark Star-Ledger* and *The Home News* and *The New York Times* that he took the Fifth Amendment. He was fired from his job at Bamberger's, and he was considered a bit of a pariah in our town of Spotswood, which was a pretty small, conservative community. He had a really tough period financially for

a while, and my mother had to go back to work. She was a housewife for a while, but she went to work as a secretary at some major corporation at the time to help the family's finances. Then, my father wound up starting his own business, a television repair business, which he operated in nearby Old Bridge, New Jersey, and he operated that until his retirement, actually, in his seventies. He did pretty well in the business. He led a pretty comfortable life, after a pretty tough time financially. Of course, years later, he would run into people who would refer to him as a "Fifth Amendment Communist." He had been torn for a long time, but over time, he had been a successful businessman and most people kind of forgot that era.

Obviously, it had a big impact on me. I was only six or seven when he went to Washington, and I didn't know what to make of it. Actually, when I was at Rutgers, I remember I went into the library and went through the microfiche to look up everything I could find on him. Actually, while at Rutgers, I learned more about him than he would tell me at the time, reading all the articles. So, that was kind of my introduction to leftist politics. Should I go on from then and continue?

SI: At the time of the hearings, were there repercussions for the family? Would people call the house?

OU: Oh, I don't recall that kind of thing, but I do know that my parents had some friends who wouldn't associate with them, who thought they were too radioactive to deal with. So, they'd say, "Well, they weren't really good friends," and they'd stop seeing them. To me, it was a classic case of people who were guilty of nothing more than freedom of speech and expression who were caught up in [events]. The parallels to today are quite amazing, where fanatics, who are, in my mind, anti-Democrats tried to suppress free speech and free thought, and you can see how it ruins people's lives and careers. I'm kind of proud now, in retrospect, that my father stood up to someone who was as evil as Joseph McCarthy, who finally got his reckoning in the end. I hope that happens to the next tyrant, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. I've been sensitive to what I see as one of the most precious gifts that we have as Americans, which are our Constitution, in which the Fifth Amendment is valuable and also the First Amendment is probably the most expansive free speech protection of any country in the world. As a journalist, it's something I feel we have to protect with all our vigilance, which is another reason why I want to cooperate with this project. Should I continue?

SI: If there is a train of thought that you want to run with, go ahead, but I also want to come back and talk about your youth in Spotswood and that sort of thing.

OU: Well, I can tell you something that happened later in my high school years, but why don't you go on with Spotswood?

SI: Tell the story about high school and then we will go back.

OU: All right. Spotswood was this little town. I don't know if you know where it is. It's near East Brunswick. At the time I was growing up there, we didn't have any traffic lights. We lived on Main Street. I could walk to school. There was no high school; our town was too small. We just had an elementary school through grade eight. I had a good childhood. I mean, it was

nothing I thought unusual, other than it was a strange town because on one side of town was the Kimberly-Clark [mill], which they called Peter Schweitzer Cigarette Paper Factory. That was down the block from us, and it smelled whenever it was going to rain. They made cigarette paper and we used to go play in their warehouse. Once, we had to call the fire department because one of my friends got stuck between two huge rolls of paper and couldn't get out. So, we wouldn't do that again. On the other side of town, where Helmetta was, was an old snuff factory that dated back to the Revolutionary War. Spotswood itself was founded in the 1600s. It was a Scottish settlement, and then it kind of fell on hard times. There wasn't really a lot there.

I enjoyed growing up there, other than as part of the first wave of Baby Boomers, there was no room for us. I attended kindergarten in the first-aid building, and in third grade, we were bussed to Helmetta nearby because they had extra room in their school. Fourth grade was actually in a rectory, a church rectory building. They finally built a new public school, so we were able to go there. We went to high school in South River. There, I was classmate later on of--he was a couple years behind me--Joe Theismann. Do you know who Joe Theismann is? We had a great football team in high school, [laughter] thanks to him, but he didn't go to Rutgers. He went to Notre Dame and changed to Theismann. His name was Theismann [pronounced THEES-man]. He changed his name to Theismann to rhyme with Heisman, but he didn't win the Heisman at Notre Dame. Anyhow, he and I have stayed in touch over the years. [Editor's Note: A native of South River, Joe Theismann played quarterback for Notre Dame. In 1971, he led Notre Dame to a 10-1 record and a win in the Cotton Bowl over Texas. That year, in addition to being an All-American, he was in contention for the Heisman Trophy. He went on to a career playing in the Canadian Football League and for the Washington Football Team in the National Football League. His career ended when he suffered a compound leg fracture after being sacked during a Monday Night Football game against the New York Giants in 1985.]

In high school, I'd say the most seminal event is that my parents became active in a civil rights group. They were active in supporting civil rights and immigration. Spotswood had no blacks living there at the time, and from what I had been told, when any black family had tried to move there, they were prevented, I don't know whether through redlining or refusing to sell to them or they were intimidated, but it was kind of an ugly town at that time. My parents were active in this civil rights group through a church in East Brunswick, New Jersey. I remember that they organized a trip where we went to see the March on Washington in '63, and I went with a friend. We got to hear Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech live. My friend--I was fifteen then--I think he was a year older at sixteen. He also went to Rutgers. As we wandered around--security wasn't as tight as it is now--we actually ran into Martin Luther King and Walter Reuther and some other people and briefly said hi. [Editor's Note: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom occurred on August 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C.]

Then, later, my parents got involved with this exchange program, where we had a black teenager from Mississippi, who turned out to be the younger brother of one of the murdered civil rights workers in Mississippi in '64. This young man's name was [Ben] Chaney. Anyhow, he came to stay with us. It was eye-opening for me, and it was eye-opening for him. I remember my parents, when you asked about any calls or anything like that, we got a lot of hate calls, letters, people accusing, "What are you doing, allowing a n-word person in your house?" That was another really important memory in my life, to think that I had actually attended that march. Of

course, that was the first of many marches that I attended, civil rights or just to end the war in Vietnam. I'll let you ask any follow-up questions. [Editor's Note: Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney were murdered by Ku Klux Klan members while working as civil rights volunteers for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Mississippi during the summer of 1964. They had been trying to register African American voters as part of the Mississippi Summer Project.]

SI: The group that your family was associated with at the church, was it a grassroots group, or was it affiliated with CORE or something like that?

OU: It was more a grassroots. I think it was organized through the church. I can't even remember what the church was. But at the time, there were quite a few churches, white churches, that were involved. We grew up Jewish and we weren't religious. Some said they had an obligation to lead the citizens and reach out to try to improve the rights and the lives of black people. So, I don't think it was through any national civil rights movement. That's my recollection at least.

SI: What was most striking about the time you spent with Chaney, the exchange student from Mississippi? Does anything stand out about your relationship or what you learned?

OU: It was like we came from different planets. Our life experiences were so different. He was about the same age and yet didn't share any of the same experiences. It gave me a real window into how disconnected we can be. We're all Americans and yet we live such alien lives to one another. It made me think about my own preconceived notions about race and prejudice. That's something that's been with me forever, which is that it's hard to escape stereotypes. No matter how much you may try to convince yourself that you're tolerant and non-racist, I think we all are. Maybe it's a tribal thing that's hardwired in us, but we do tend to gravitate to people who are like us through the environments we grow up in, and to remember how important it is to empathize. It's important not to take for granted all the preconceived notions you may have about people based on what they look like or where they're from.

SI: Let me see if Jonathan has any questions at this point. Do you want to jump in, Jonathan?

JF: How religious was your family?

OU: My mother's family was pretty religious when she was growing up. They spoke only Yiddish, according to my mother. My father's family was not that religious. My sister was bat mitzvahed, and I was bar mitzvahed. It was a Conservative congregation. My rabbi Joseph Maza was the older brother of the famous comedian Jackie Mason. I don't know if you know who Jackie Mason was. He changed his name from Maza to Mason, and they came from a long family of rabbis. I was bar mitzvahed at thirteen. I remember that. I took religion to be serious. We observed the major holidays, like on Rosh Hoshana and Yom Kippur, my parents would fast, but it wasn't very intense. I would say it was very modest. I kind of had a falling out with my rabbi because when we had a reception for my bar mitzvah, my parents couldn't afford the places that kept kosher and found a place that was less expensive and didn't keep kosher. My rabbi refused to come as a result. I was kind of insulted, "Well, if that was more important than me,

screw religion." [laughter] I kind of left the church, so to speak. I figured, what the hell. I never really became very religious after that.

In fact, my wife comes from a Catholic background, and we raised our children non-religiously. We tried for a while Unitarianism, but we went to hear a service and instead of something about ethics or morality or anything of interest, they gave a lecture about nuclear disarmament. I figured I don't need a seminar on politics, so we stopped doing that.

Years later, I'm a journalist and I'm a member of the National Press Club in Washington and Jackie Mason comes as a speaker. We'd have guest programs, and he was a speaker. I wanted to meet him, and I see him there. I come up to him at a reception prior to his speech. I introduce myself, and I say, "I just want you to know that I was bar mitzvahed by your brother Joseph." He looks at me and he said, "So what, do you want a medal or something?" [laughter] He turns away. Everything is obnoxious; that's his persona. I couldn't believe that he was so rude. So, that's my story.

SI: Was the congregation in Spotswood?

OU: It was in South River.

SI: South River, okay. Were there many Jewish families in Spotswood?

OU: There were like one or two, just a few, two or three maybe at the most. Most of my friends were in South River at the time, because I knew them through high school too. There were a few Jewish kids, I want to say maybe a dozen or so, not a lot.

SI: Do you think there was any prejudice against Jewish families in Spotswood? You mentioned African Americans could not buy a house.

OU: No. We were white. There was a lot of anti-Semitism, but it wasn't more than you'd overhear people talking about "dirty Jews" or something like that. There was no action to back it up. I think both Spotswood and South River had a fair amount of anti-Semitism. South River was a fairly small city. I think the background was very heavily Hungarian, Polish, Russian, a lot of Eastern European immigrants who were Catholics or Orthodox Christians. You ran across some, let's say, mild anti-Semitism but nothing that I felt was severe or threatening or somehow blocked my ability to do anything.

SI: You mentioned you were part of this push of Baby Boomers that were kind of stretching the current educational facilities and systems, and so, like many, you had to go to makeshift places. Overall, what would you say about the education and its quality? Do you think you got a good education out of that system?

OU: Yes, I think it was good. It's hard looking back to compare the education with maybe prosperous school districts, but I think we had a good education. I think we had some pretty good teachers. In high school, we had excellent teachers, and I was active in the debate team and the school newspaper and the yearbook. I didn't feel somehow that I lacked education, and I feel

when I did go to Rutgers, I didn't struggle. I thought I was able to handle the material as well as other students, so from that standard, I think I had a pretty good public education.

It's interesting, there was a relatively new school building in Spotswood for us that I attended starting in fifth or sixth grade. So, we went to a junior high, so I spent ninth grade in South River. That was a junior high, from seventh to ninth, but because I went to eighth grade in Spotswood, I did junior high in South River. Then, there was a new senior high school for tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, so we were in a brand-new school. That was one of the things a lot of Baby Boomers discovered was that they were building new classrooms for the huge number of kids who were going to school then. So, I benefitted from that. I would say I got a quality public school education. I have no regrets about anything at the time.

JE: You mentioned that a lot of the families around your town were from Eastern European countries. Was there a sense of a shared community amongst the fellow students, the children of these families? Did that kind of permeate their children, or did that stay with the parents?

OU: I think that stayed with the parents. Obviously, coming from Spotswood, I was a bit of an outsider. South River was about four miles from where I lived, and I had to take a bus there. Initially, especially in ninth grade, we were kind of the outsiders, but we were integrated socially. My recollection is that the kids all were either first or second-generation Americans, and we thought of ourselves as Americans. We got along. I didn't get any sense of cliques based on the parents' nationality or religion. It did feel like a melting pot, actually. There were a lot of friendships of people across various religions and ethnic boundaries. I mean, there was the social thing, the cool kids and the athletes and the cheerleaders versus the nerds and all that, but that's always been true. But I didn't feel that there was any sort of hierarchy based on our backgrounds, of which there were quite a few. People seemed to get along across those different roots.

SI: I am curious, would you have much contact with your extended family and your grandparents? It sounds like your family was physically removed from them by this point.

OU: My extended family, both my mother's parents died before I was born, but we stayed in touch with all her siblings until they died and their children. So, we were in touch with them, and I'm still in touch with my first cousin's children, one died but three of them are still alive, not that often, but we've stayed in touch. One's in Miami, I think, or in Florida. The others live in New York.

On my father's side, he just had a brother, who died of a heart attack fairly young at sixty. So, he had some cousins that I had stayed in touch with but not very much. However, he had relatives still in France. I actually went to visit them after my senior year in college in 1969, and I spent a lot of time visiting where the family was from. I had two cousins, who were about my age, who now live in Israel. One of the two, I communicate with from time to time, so we've kind of stayed in touch.

It was interesting, the story of this one cousin, since you mentioned it, when I went to visit them in 1969, we did a lot of hitchhiking. We were somewhere in France, far from Strasbourg, and so

this friend and I hitchhiked to go to Strasbourg. This man picked us up, and he had a young daughter, who was maybe nine or something like that. He knew the cousins we were visiting. He insisted, since it was late, that we spend the night with him, and then he would drive us to our cousin's the next day. I'm thinking, can you imagine that now, allowing two strange young men to stay with you, without knowing anything about them other than I guess they're the relation of your friends. So, we stayed with them, and I remember meeting this man's wife and the daughter. Then, we went to visit our relatives.

About forty-five, fifty years later, my cousin was in New York, and we arranged to meet him. My wife and I went to New York and we visited with him and his wife. She says to me, "Oh, it's so nice to see you again." I said, "I don't think we've ever met." She said, "Sure we did. Don't you remember? I was the little girl you spent the night with when you came to visit in 1969 and I wound up marrying your cousin." [laughter] I couldn't believe it. That was kind of weird.

I have a sister, an older sister, I haven't mentioned her. She's three years older and she lives in the Buffalo area and has a husband and kids, three grown kids, and actually I'm going to see them next month.

SI: How much older is she than you?

OU: Three years.

SI: Three years, okay.

OU: She went to Douglass, by the way.

SI: Oh, okay.

OU: It's interesting, the difference between being born in 1944 and growing up when she was a late teenager and going to college than when I went, it could have been two different eras. I mean, the world changed so much. She used to talk about it, she couldn't believe how she missed the drug culture and all the anti-war protests, and I kind of hit it smack in the middle.

SI: I was curious, you talked a little bit about some of the religious practices of family. Were there cultural old-world traditions kept up in your family at all, either from France or from your mother's side from Eastern Europe?

OU: Not from my mother's side. My father's side, he was sort of proud of his heritage. He belonged to some French-Israeli society, basically French Jews who lived in the U.S., and we used to go once or twice a year to these meetings or banquets. I always thought it was strange to hear that people that were Jewish had names like Rene and last names like Loeb, and it just seemed a little weird in combination. My grandmother had a lot of these old dolls from Alsace-Lorraine. She used to make some French dishes. I remember she made a chocolate mousse that I thought was fabulous that I always loved when I went to visit. Other than that, we didn't maintain a lot of the old-world customs. I think they wanted us to integrate into American society.

SI: Growing up, particularly in high school as a teenager, did you have to go out and get jobs during the summer or on the weekends, that sort of thing?

OU: Not on weekends, but I did have a couple of interesting jobs. One was when I was in college. In high school, the most interesting job I had was I got a job at a construction site. It might have been the summer before I went to college, where I was kind of the person who would clean up whatever had to be cleaned from the construction site. They were building houses at the time, and I had to clean up a lot of sheetrock and debris, all kinds of horrible crap that was left in the house before they painted it. It was really horrible work, filthy. One thing I remember that was really gross, [laughter] a lot of the workmen, like the plumbers, who were putting in plumbing in the basement, they would take a crap in the basement because there weren't any porta johns, or if there were, they didn't bother. That was one of the things I had to clean up that I found disgusting. I said, "God, can't you guys crap in the porta john?" or whatever it was. They said, "Well, it's your job." So, I'm glad I didn't have to do that more than one summer.

I think I might have been in college when I had a summer job where my mother worked, at a company called Carter Wallace in Cranbury. I don't think it's in business anymore, but they made both the pharmaceutical and consumer products. They made Miltown, the first tranquilizer, Arrid deodorant, Rise shaving cream, salad dressing. They made all kinds of products. I worked in the laboratory there. I was an assistant, helping to do experiments. It was really interesting. I enjoyed that a lot. I learned to play bridge there and learned something about scientific techniques. It was interesting, except when they needed blood from the heart of rabbits that would screech. You never want to hear a rabbit screech; it's bloodcurdling. I didn't like the fact that they had animals in cages. I learned how to inject something into a mouse's tail and stuff like that.

SI: You mentioned in high school, you were already been getting into writing and the newspaper. Would you say you had already geared your interest in that direction, or were you interested in a wide variety of things? How did your academic interests develop during that period?

OU: I got a lot of good feedback that I was a good writer. I won some awards in grade school for some essays. My rabbi thought my bar mitzvah speech was really good that I gave. I got feedback that I had talent in writing, but I always assumed I was going to be a lawyer because my teachers always complained that I talked too much in class and I'm very good at arguing. [laughter] For some reason, I thought I would wind up being a lawyer. I never really thought I would do anything else. I'm getting ahead of the story, but then I went to NYU Law School and I hated it and dropped out and got a job as a journalist to support myself and never went back.

SI: Well, I am interested in this activism that your parents were involved in that you were also a part of. You talked about the March on Washington. Do any other marches or actions or anything else that you did in the pre-Rutgers period stand out in your memory?

OU: No, I don't know that there were any others that we did. Nothing comes to mind, other than the exchange program with the young man from Mississippi. We talked a lot about it, and my

parents might have donated to various causes. I don't recall any marches or any other specific activities that come to mind.

SI: Would you talk about social and political issues around the dinner table, so to speak? Would you have a lot of conversations with your parents or others?

OU: Oh, yes, all the time. My sister hated them. She'd try to bow out. I think she's liberal politically but just really didn't find it that interesting. My parents talked about politics all the time and got me interested too. Later on, my father and I would argue a lot. I'd argue with my parents about their defense of the Soviet Union with so many flaws. They even went on some peace trips later when they were retired and I was in college or older. They were sponsored by some groups and they would tour the Soviet Union and see all the wonders of the workers' paradise. I think my father, later on, became disillusioned, somewhat disillusioned, but not totally. I think, actually, my father became more disillusioned than my mother, who was still the apologist for the Soviets. My father died in 1990. I think he died shortly after or around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and so we never really had time to do any kind of discussion on that with him. My mother lived another ten years or so. I think she always remained somewhat of an apologist for the Soviet Union. There was always too much propaganda that distorted much of the socialist system. [Editor's Note: The dissolution of the Soviet Union occurred on December 26, 1991.]

SI: Well, going back to high school, you mentioned you did a lot of writing-based activities. Were there other activities you did, like sports or other clubs, that sort of thing?

OU: I wasn't a very good athlete. I tried Little League, and I didn't do that well. I think one reason is because I was left-handed and the coach on my Little League team just assumed I was right-handed and made me bat right-handed, which I still do. I golf right-handed. He never bothered to ask me about [laughter] which hand I favored. I was also short. I grew up later than some of the other boys, so that I didn't have the same strength or dexterity. I wasn't much of an athlete, although I did take up tennis later on. I think I mentioned I was active in the debate club. I got big into stamp collecting, and a friend and I, who was also a stamp collector, there was a store in South River where we would buy stamps. So, we used to do that. I was in Boy Scouts. I was pretty active in Boy Scouts. I forgot about that. I had another good friend and we were very active in that. I stayed in Scouts until I was about fifteen. I got as far as Life. I was like one merit badge short of the Eagle. I just lost interest. I was always interested in camping because of Boy Scouts. That's all that comes to mind in terms of hobbies and activities.

SI: Would you go away to a summer camp?

OU: Yes. Actually, I started going away to a summer camp at a YMCA camp when I was nine or ten. When I joined the Boy Scouts, I went to the Boy Scout camp in northern New Jersey, Camp Sakawawin it was called. So, I did that for quite a few summers. They were usually one or two weeks, which I enjoyed.

SI: Your sister went to Douglass College, so you had some familiarity with Rutgers University. Were there other places you were considering, or was Rutgers it?

OU: Truth be told, I really didn't want to go to Rutgers because it was so close to home. It was only ten miles away. I applied to quite a number of the Ivy League schools and got rejected. I got on a waiting list for Cornell, but I didn't want to take a chance. I wanted to go to Cornell over Rutgers, but I was afraid that if I turned Rutgers down and I didn't get into Cornell, I wasn't sure what I would do. So, I wound up going to Rutgers. I was probably a little disappointed about it, but my parents, because the tuition was so cheap--it was two hundred dollars a semester--my parents said that I could live on campus, which was expensive for them at the time, but it did make a difference. Living on campus at least gave me the sense of the full college experience. I made quite a few friends, and I actually really enjoyed it. It was an excellent experience, and I had no regrets after the first few weeks of going to Rutgers.

I should say, by the way, talking about Baby Boomers, I read at the time that every school that I applied to had a record number of applications because, again, there was this Baby Boom surge and they hadn't expanded enough, so schools were rejecting at a record rate, which was one thing. Then, I remember reading that the president of the University of Michigan said that they had received an extraordinary number of applications from students from New Jersey, and instead New Jersey needs to have more universities and take care of its own, that Michigan cannot serve New Jersey students. So, they rejected most of them. [laughter] I think that was part of the issue, that it was extremely competitive at the time. I went [to Rutgers], clearly being disappointed, but it didn't take long before it turned around and I really enjoyed the experience.

SI: You came to Rutgers in the fall of 1965.

OU: Right.

SI: Had you heard or read about the Genovese controversy?

OU: Oh, yes. Yes, I remember that very well. It was still the talk of campus at the time, and professors talked about it. I mean, it was a big, big thing, so we all were quite aware of it. By that time, a lot of us were anti-war, so there was a strong feeling of support. People were kind of proud, actually, of Genovese and the fact that Rutgers seemed to be at the forefront of allowing that kind of free speech. My recollection is that Mason Gross, the president at the time, who I thought--and still do--was kind of an icon for his time, came to his defense, favoring free speech. It was an important moment for the university to be proud of. It hasn't always had such proud moments under some other presidents, which I won't mention right now. [laughter] [laughter] Not the current one. A couple of the previous ones. [Editor's Note: Mason W. Gross served as the president of Rutgers from 1959 to 1971. Eugene Genovese (1930-2012), a scholar of slavery and the American South, served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1963 to 1967. There were a series of teach-ins at Rutgers in 1965, first in April and then in October. On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Scott Hall dedicated to discussing U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam, Genovese declared, "Those of you who know me know that I am a Marxist and a Socialist. Therefore, unlike most of my distinguished colleagues here this morning, I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Amidst the firestorm of controversy that ensued, President Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted public pressure to dismiss

Genovese and staunchly defended the principle of academic freedom. Genovese later resigned and moved to Canada, where he taught at Sir George Williams University.]

SI: Tell me about your first few days and weeks on campus. Do those stand at all? What dorm did you move into? Does anything stand out?

OU: I lived in the [Bishop] Quad. Does the Quad still exist? I haven't been there for a while. I think I was in Pell [Hall], right across the street from the Ledge, which couldn't have been a better location. That was one of the older dorms, and I had two roommates. I was in one of those big dorm rooms; a few had triple rooms. Again, because of the crowding, there were three of us, but we got along. We were all very different, but we got along really well. [laughter] It might have been my first weekend I was there, one of my roommates was able to acquire a case of beer, and the three of us polished it off. I hadn't drunk that much beer since we used to sneak beer at half-built homes in Spotswood or South River, a couple beers here and there. Anyway, I just remember chugging the beer, and I got very sick and threw up. [laughter] That was my first weekend at Rutgers, probably very typical for the first time away from home without parental guidance. I loved the Ledge. One of the waitresses there, her name was Queenie, I remember her. She was a black woman with a gold tooth. We loved her. She was great, very sweet. We spent a lot of time at the Ledge. What is the Ledge now? Does it exist anymore? [Editor's Note: Built in 1929, Pell Hall is a historic residence hall on the College Avenue Campus. It is part of the Bishop Quad. It is located adjacent to the Rutgers Student Activities Center on George Street, which was formerly known as the Ledge.]

SI: It was the Student Activities Center for a long time.

OU: Right. While I was there, it was the Student Activities Center. I remember sitting in whatever the snack area was and I remember listening to the first time I had heard Aretha Franklin's "Respect" on the jukebox there. I think it was in '65 when that came out. Anyhow, so it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that. I made some good friends early on through my classes, including some that I'm still friends with. In fact, three of us, I was going to mention whether you contacted them, but three of my classmates and I have been doing a monthly Zoom to catch up. Jim Schmidt, did you reach out to him? [Editor's Note: Aretha Franklin's "Respect" came out in 1967. Otis Redding had originally released the song in 1965.]

SI: We probably have, but I do not have a list of everyone we have reached out to.

OU: Okay. Another is William David Burns, who later became a dean here.

SI: I have heard the name, yes.

OU: Then, Gordon Hodas is another friend. They're all very sharp people and would be worth interviewing.

SI: Would you go to performances at the Ledge? Do you remember anybody that came there?

OU: The performances were not at the Ledge. They were usually in the gym. Well, there were some minor performances there. There was the band The Looking Glass. Did The Looking Glass do--what was that?

SI: "Brandy."

OU: Yes, right. They were there before they did that hit. Then, Lenny Kaye was a couple years ahead of me. Lenny Kaye wound up being a backup for Patti Smith. Do you know him at all, Lenny Kaye? [Editor's Note: Leonard "Lenny" Kaye graduated from Rutgers in 1967. Kaye was on the staff of the *Rutgers Daily Targum*.]

SI: No, but I knew there was a Rutgers graduate associated with Patti Smith.

OU: That would be Lenny Kaye. My recollection is that the concerts were in the gym, which was the College Ave--what is that now, across from the library?

SI: Oh, it is still a gym.

OU: Right. The bookstore used to be--there were all these Quonset huts--and the bookstore was in one of them. There was another Quonset hut that was like an auditorium and there were concerts there. I seem to recall that I was on some organizing committee to help get some big bands for dances at night. I think we had The Rascals there once. We had one of the first girl bands that had ever performed. I forget their name, but they were there--not at the Ledge.

SI: When you first got on campus, did you get involved in activities, like joining clubs or committees?

OU: I immediately joined the *Targum* staff, which met in the basement of Wessels in the Quad. It was a really dank space [laughter], but it had its charm. Have you ever been in the basement of Wessels? I don't know if it still exists or not.

SI: No, I have not been in the basement. The Quad buildings are still there.

OU: The basement had leaks and it had mold, but it had a great charm in a Gothic kind of way. So, I was very active with the school newspaper and spent a lot of time, my whole time at Rutgers, active in the newspaper. It was probably my single biggest activity and consumed a vast amount of my spare time, first as a reporter and later I became the editor of the newspaper.

I should say, by the way, that it's interesting that all the student editors who are in the Washington area now, we've stayed in touch. So, the editor-in-chief the year before me is Ken Walsh, and he just lives a few miles from me. Jim Gerstenzang, who was the number two editor with me, lives a couple miles from me. Tony Mauro, who was the editor, I think, in 1971, Class of 1971, he lives in suburban Virginia. We've all stayed in touch.

SI: When you first started on the *Targum*, what kind of material were you covering? Was there a particular beat that you were on, so to speak?

OU: It was like a general assignment, and I covered whatever I could find or whatever I was assigned to do. Maybe I'd go to student council meetings or if some interesting visitor [came]. I seem to recall that Jane Fonda spoke on campus. I was assigned to cover her speech. I remember asking her if I could have an interview afterwards. She said she had to get a flight out of Newark Airport, but I could get in her car with her for an interview while we went to the airport, so I did that. I can't remember the story that I wrote. I thought, "Oh, my God, I'm in a car with Jane Fonda." It was kind of amazing. I got to meet some interesting people. Then, you interviewed Peter Kuznick, I think, last week. He sent me a note saying he ran across an article I had written when Norman Thomas spoke on campus. I remember him speaking. I don't remember the article I wrote, so I asked him if he would send it to me. I'm actually going to see him on Wednesday. So, I'd be curious to see what I wrote about him. I find, as a reporter, I never think much of what I write at the time, but then years later, if I go back and look at something, I say, "Oh, well, that's not bad," not everything, but it's interesting when you read it as if you've never read it before. It gives you an interesting perspective on it, so I'd be curious to see what I wrote about that.

I don't have a lot from those years because there was actually a fire at my parents' house when I was traveling to Europe that summer of '69. It started in my bedroom, and everything, all my memorabilia from grade school, my stamp collection, my baseball card collection, was destroyed by the fire. I have nothing, no artifacts from my life, prior to 1969. Fortunately, I have my yearbook, which made me remember some of the events from when I was in college.

SI: Oh, that is too bad, particularly the baseball card collection.

OU: I know. [laughter]

SI: That is worth something.

OU: I had some wonderful cards.

SI: I want to ask about some events from that period and see if you remember covering them for the *Targum*.

OU: Sure.

SI: Starting your sophomore year, there was the 200th anniversary celebration of Rutgers' founding as Queen's College in 1766. Do you remember anything about the events associated with bicentennial?

OU: I remember there was a 200th anniversary. I don't remember a lot about what the events were, to tell you the truth.

SI: Part of that was Hubert Humphrey coming to campus. Originally, I think he was invited but did not come because of something that had to do with the anti-war movement and then later on he came. Do you remember that at all?

OU: That was Muskie. I don't know about Humphrey. In '68, Muskie was supposed to speak. Now, maybe Humphrey was going to come earlier, but in '68, Muskie was going to come speak on campus. There was a very active anti-war movement, and the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] threatened to try to disrupt him. I was editor of the paper at the time, and I wanted to write an editorial saying he shouldn't be allowed to speak because he was a war criminal. All the editors said, "No, we can't say that because of the First Amendment. He's got a First Amendment right to speak, and even though it's odious, he's entitled. You can challenge him. People can question it, but he should be able to speak." I wrote a column that I now regret, arguing that he represented a clear and present danger, which was the Supreme Court's test for when you could deny free speech, like shouting fire in a crowded theater, you know, it's people's lives. I, of course, subsequently, disowned it because I realized it was not very good. I remember my political science professor Ross Baker told me he thought it was one of the worst things that I had ever written, that if I wrote it for his class, he would've flunked me. He and I have remained friendly over the years. I remember that incident about Muskie very clearly. Muskie cancelled his visit because of fears of protests that would have been harmful for the campaign. I don't remember Humphrey coming to campus. I remember Gene McCarthy--did he come? He might have come to campus. I know I volunteered and worked for McCarthy's campaign in '68. [Editor's Note: Edmund Muskie served in the U.S. Senate from Maine from 1959 to 1980. He was the Democratic candidate for vice president in the election of 1968. Hubert Humphrey spoke at the Rutgers Bicentennial Convocation on September 22, 1966. Humphrey served as the 38th Vice President of the United States under Lyndon B. Johnson from 1965 to 1969 and lost the presidential election to Richard Nixon in 1968. Eugene McCarthy served in the U.S. Senate from Minnesota from 1959 to 1971. In 1968, he sought the Democratic nomination for president on an anti-war platform but lost to Humphrey.]

SI: I do not know if he came to campus, but a lot of the alumni that I have talked to were part of his campaign. He was seeking the Democratic nomination in 1968.

OU: It would have been early '68, when he was running for the primary, in March.

SI: Yes. What would you do for the campaign?

OU: I actually went up to Massachusetts, where he had a headquarters--well, it wasn't a headquarters. Yes, he did, it was some fundraiser, and I went there and I actually met him and did some door-to-door canvassing for one of the primaries. Maybe it was in Massachusetts or in New Hampshire. I can't remember. It became pretty clear after a while that he wasn't going to win, but I do remember doing some door-to-door canvassing on his behalf. I enjoyed getting to meet him too, although I thought he was a cold fish when I met him, one of the first examples of learning that politicians aren't what they always seem to be, when you meet them in a person. [Editor's Note: The Democratic primary in New Hampshire took place on March 12, 1968, with President Lyndon B. Johnson winning forty-nine percent of the vote to Gene McCarthy's forty-two percent. Later that month, on March 31, Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection. The Massachusetts primary occurred on April 30.]

SI: Would you say that you were interested in the anti-war movement even as you came on campus as a freshman, or did that build over time?

OU: I was pretty anti-war from the beginning, and my parents saw it as another terrible war. I was convinced that it was flawed from the outset, the premise that you could create a puppet government and go against their own people, and citing the Domino Theory seemed ridiculous in that I thought that we were killing innocent civilians and risking American lives for no good cause. So, I was very vehemently anti-war. I went to a number of marches in Washington and elsewhere, in New York, during the late '60s, a lot of protests.

SI: Were you ever part of an organization, or was it just more hearing that there was a march and going to it?

OU: No, I didn't join any organizations as an activist, but I just supported the causes by showing up and writing editorial and stories against the war.

SI: I know the *Targum* was independent at this point.

OU: *Targum* was not independent when we were students.

SI: Oh, it wasn't?

OU: We were still dependent on student fees, and the paper was distributed for free daily. It was interesting, when I was originally there, it was printed on old linotype machines at Thatcher-Anderson, this printshop in downtown New Brunswick. It looked like something out of a Dickens novel, they were so old, these machines. I don't know if you've ever seen a linotype machine or not. Actually, through Jon Kantor, who was our business manager, we switched to offset to actually modernize the production. So, we changed the whole production mechanism. It was quite transformational. We also were much more active in selling ads to help support the newspaper. Over time, the ads actually contributed more revenue than the student fees, which we felt was something that we needed since you never know with student fees whether they would continue or not.

I have to say that my recollection is that we distributed five thousand copies of the newspaper, Monday through Friday. The boxes were empty wherever we left them, and we would go around campus and it was very hard to get a copy of the newspaper. We would see students in the library, students in the Commons, students everywhere reading the newspaper. It was quite gratifying. I miss those days. [laughter] Now, everyone always read their phone, and they don't want to pay for news.

SI: Talk about that for a minute, the actual process of putting together the paper. Was it hectic? It was a weekly then, is that right?

OU: No, it was daily. It was a daily newspaper, Monday through Friday.

SI: Daily, okay, all right.

OU: It was very intense.

SI: Yes.

OU: We had this competition with the *Yale Daily*. We thought and I still think we were, it's in dispute, that we're the oldest continuously published daily college newspaper in the country. Yale claimed they were too. We were founded in 1869. Actually, I was editor when we had our hundredth anniversary dinner and we got the university to fork over a lot of money for the dinner. I remember we invited Paul Krassner, who was the countercultural editor of *The Realist* magazine. I don't know if you've ever heard of him or not. He was right there on the fringe, and he was our guest speaker. It was kind of interesting seeing Dean Crosby, who attended, looking quite shocked by Krassner's rather crude, profanity-laced speech. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1869, the *Rutgers Daily Targum* has been published since 1876. The *Yale Daily News*, branded as "The Oldest College Daily," has been published since 1878.]

It was a real production to put out the newspaper. Every night, someone had to be at the printshop. Pretty much during the day--I think it was only four to eight pages, so it wasn't a lot, but still, you had to put this thing out every day. You had to learn how to lay it out and write headlines, put the stories in, and then it would go to the print shop at night, so it was a lot of work, especially for the editors. The reporters had less to do, but it was a daily chore. When I was editor-in-chief, I spent all my time doing it. It was all-inclusive and I even fell behind in some of my classwork and had to get extensions from professors because we were so busy. Especially later on, with issues of rights and the war, it was just non-stop work.

JF: How was your social life on campus impacted by your work at the newspaper? You were in this highly-visible position. Did you get the chance to meet a lot of different people?

OU: That's a great question, actually, because it raises something that you haven't asked me about, which is the fraternity life on campus. First, specifically to your question, yes, I did meet a lot of different types of people that I might not ordinarily have met. I mean, some would be student council leaders and fraternity leaders and people in the administration, so I don't know socially so much, but I did meet a large cross section of people.

I also joined a fraternity, and that in and of itself is kind of an interesting story. So, I joined this fraternity called, I want to say, Gamma Sig, Gamma Sigma. It was a non-affiliated fraternity. I joined it because my friend, whom I went to the March on Washington with, a friend of his that I became friends with freshman or sophomore year belonged. So, they had me rush, and I joined it. It was interesting, Gamma Sig, because it was one of the only non-national fraternities, it also was the only fraternity on campus that had integrated. It had a few blacks and even some foreign students. We were pilloried by the other fraternities. This was on Union Street. Are there fraternities still there?

SI: Yes.

OU: We were known as the "Zoo House" because we had some nerds [laughter], we had foreign students, we had blacks, Christians and Jews, atheists. If you're looking at the fraternity from Union Street, on the left side was Delta Phi. We used to call it the "Nazi House." It was the rich elitists. They were like Nazis. They used to torment us and they would throw garbage at us and once threw a brick through the window. There couldn't have been a greater contrast between the two fraternities. We were in sort of this ramshackle house and they were the big mansion. I don't know if it's still there. So, that was kind of interesting.

Back to the social things, I went to a lot of parties and dances at my fraternity. That's where I kind of met a lot of people and dated and had a lot of fun that had nothing to do with the newspaper or academics, and so I enjoyed it. It was a great outlet and great place to visit. I had some good friends there, some very good friends there. I didn't live there. I didn't choose to live there. I lived in apartments off campus my sophomore, junior and senior year. So, I lived in New Brunswick in private housing.

Then, I don't know if it was my sophomore or junior year, a bunch of the fraternity members decided they wanted us to become more like a regular fraternity. So, we affiliated with Tau Epsilon Phi, TEP [pronounced "tep"], and they changed it to become much more of a typical social fraternity and then it ruined what it was all about. I kind of liked the iconoclastic nature of the old fraternity, and so I wound up quitting. They wouldn't let me. It's like the Hotel California; you can check in, but you can never leave. Decades later, I was getting emails about my membership in TEP. Apparently, once you're a member, you're always a member. It left kind of a bad taste in my mouth. I wound up as editor writing a number of editorials against fraternities, saying that the fraternities should be barred because they were racist, sexist, conservative. There was nothing good about them. I remember there was this fraternity on College Avenue. You can still see it. I forget the name, but it was this big white building not too far from the gym. Maybe you know what fraternity that is. There weren't that many on College Avenue.

SI: Was it Lambda Chi?

OU: It could have been Lambda Chi.

SI: Okay.

OU: Anyhow, they invited me to speak. I said, "Oh, well, that's nice of them." I show up. [laughter] On the front porch, they had taken all these *Targums* and actually had a stick figure of me hanging from a noose and they set it on fire. I figured that maybe they weren't as welcoming as I thought, but I did go and speak to them. I tried to give the argument that I thought that fraternities shouldn't be allowed on campus, including what they had done, burning me in effigy, with a noose no less. [laughter] Does that answer your question about my social life?

JE: Yes.

OU: I had a lot of fun. There was quite a lot of drugs and alcohol. It was fun.

SI: I know there were also some other countercultural papers in the area, like *All You Can Eat* and so on. Were you aware of those at the time, or did you have any interaction with them?

OU: I don't recall that. I recall there was alternative theater on Albany Street. Eric Krebs started a theater group. I seem to recall that. I don't recall any alternative newspapers. I vaguely remember *All You Can Eat*, but I don't know if that started when I was there or not. I do know that there was, was it Richard Pourier? Was he the [editor of] the *Partisan Review*? He had a bunch of unusual speakers at events at Rutgers, like Susan Sontag and some others. I don't remember any other countercultural newspapers. I don't even remember what the literary magazine was at Rutgers, if there was one or not. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1934 in New York City, the literary journal *Partisan Review* was based at Rutgers in the English Department from 1963 until the journal's contentious move to Boston University in 1978. Rutgers English professor Richard Pourier served on the editorial board of the *Partisan Review*, which was edited by William Phillips. In 1981, Pourier founded the Rutgers-based literary journal *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*. History professor T. Jackson Lears became the editor in 2002.]

SI: Yes, the name escapes me now. Were there ever any times when the university tried to exert any control over the *Targum* because of anything that you were writing?

OU: Not the university, but I do know that there were efforts in the state legislature to find a way to withdraw funding because they didn't like a lot of our editorials on the war and on racism. I do remember, I don't know if this was after Martin Luther King was assassinated or not, which was a big event, it happened on a Thursday night, it was too late for us to do anything for the Friday paper, but we came back with a special that following Monday. I know there were student protests. I don't know if that's when black students took over buildings. I do know a lot of protests at the time were civil rights. We put out a special edition called "Racism at Rutgers" and everything was about issues involving race. There was one article where we accused the then chairman of the Board of Governors at Rutgers, his name was Karl Metzger, claiming he was a slum lord and he had all these properties that took advantage of poor blacks. We had a lot of really negative feedback from the university for that. [Editor's Note: From 1950 to 1973, Karl E. Metzger served as Secretary of the University, a position in which he functioned as the official records keeper for the Board of Governors, Board of Trustees and the University Senate. Metzger was also active in local politics and governance, including serving as a Middlesex County Freeholder and as the Executive Board Chairman of the Middlesex County Economic Opportunities Corporation (MCEOC).]

I remember we went to a convocation at the gym on College Avenue where Mason Gross spoke. I remember he confronted me on the steps of the gym. He called me a "spear-thrower." [laughter] I thought that was really unfair. Other than that, we were never [pressured]. I wonder what he meant by that. I guess he meant I was being unfair in targeting members of the administration. But we were never threatened. I mean, he was a great man. He really stood for academic freedom, free speech, and we were very fortunate to have him as president during that period. He resisted efforts from the state legislature to try to rein in the *Targum* or do anything else that would have been utterly convenient at the time. I think we should be very proud to have had someone of his stature as president of the university. When you think of a lot of other universities, Rutgers can be really proud of that heritage, protecting academic freedom and free

speech at a time when there was tremendous pressure to be politically correct. At the time, it wasn't politically correct on the left, but it would be politically correct on the right. If he were alive and present today, he'd defend the right to teach critical race theory and all these other controversial topics, which to me is nothing more than just admitting our history, but, anyway, I digress.

SI: What was your major, and within that, do any professors stand out in your memory?

OU: I majored in political science, and a lot of professors stand out in my mind. I mean, they were great. In political science, there was Ross Baker, who I mentioned is still there and is just a gift to the university. He and I have remained friends over the years. Gerald Pomper taught American government. Gordon Schochet taught political theory. Then, in the History Department, there were gems like Warren Susman, who died way too young, and Lloyd Gardner, and I mentioned Richard Pourier in the English Department. I had a lot of wonderful professors; I couldn't have asked for more. The interesting thing is they're all white men. I guess there's more diversity now. At the time, don't forget, Rutgers College was all male and wasn't really integrated until many years later. Of course, most Ivy League schools also didn't integrate until '69 or later. I know Yale did then. It was a different time. There wasn't diversity of professors; we didn't have enough women professors and professors of color. We didn't have a lot of students who were black. We had quite a few foreign students, but not that many who were black or Hispanic. I think that's something I like to see that's changing. I think Rutgers is probably at the forefront now of universities. I think that's good for them.

SI: I am curious, you said you went to marches off campus either in New York or D.C. or elsewhere. What stands out about the atmosphere of those marches? Do any specifics come to mind about any actions you took part in?

OU: Well, they were sort of like festivals. I mean, I think in '68, the march against the Pentagon got pretty raucous, and there was tear gas and there was some violence. Most of the protests I went to were not violent. They were more like festivals. There were speeches and camaraderie. People were in good moods, and it was much more celebratory. I think the feeling was that if a large number of people gathered in peace, it would send a powerful message to the country and the world. It was a strong voice of opposition to the war and to improving civil rights and that we weren't just a bunch of wild violent hippies. Even before Nixon, a lot of conservatives were trying to say that we were just troublemakers and didn't represent the majority of the country. We were trying to show that that was not true and that we could be very peaceful and we were trying to change the culture and the politics at the time. I found most of them to be very enjoyable, other than the few times there were some disruptions. This one in New York was another one that turned a little violent, but most of the time it was peaceful and more like a fun happening.

SI: Would you just kind of go by yourself, or was there usually like a group from Rutgers that would go together?

OU: I usually went with some other people. There would be a few of us. I will say that something else we did--this wasn't so much protest--but there was a group of us and we would be

night owls. I was one of the few people that had a car on campus, and we would go to the Edison Diner. Is the Edison Diner still there on Route 1 or whatever it is?

SI: Yes.

OU: It was open all night. The Edison Diner was open all night. We would go to the Edison Diner and have coffee or get something to eat and then we would drive to New York to visit somebody in New York. We would come back at four in the morning. We did that a lot. It wasn't really protest, but it was just part of the social life. It was quite a bit of fun. Once, we got stopped by a cop. I don't know if my taillight was out or something. My friend had a huge quantity of hashish, and he shoved it in his shoe. We were panicked that we were going to get busted, but he hobbled out [laughter] and said he had sprained his ankle, so he lucked out, which is why he was hobbling because he had this giant wad of hashish in his shoe. We didn't get busted, thank God. Am I protected by the statute of limitations on that?

SI: Yes, I think it is okay. [laughter]

JF: Do you have a story from Rutgers that either you look really fondly on or something that really changed or defined your outlook on the world?

OU: Yes, that's a very good question. I don't know that there was one story. There were a lot of series of events that I feel kind of shaped my outlook and shaped who I am now. I don't know how much of it was the time or the friends that I had or the professors. I can't say that any one story is a standout. I will tell you, I don't know if this was a Rutgers thing or not, but one of the things that I really enjoyed about going there was that people could be iconoclasts. Some of the good friends that I have today are considered to be kind of earlier creative outliers, not necessarily people who became great successes in their life, but people who are just really, really interesting. Isn't it amazing that the world has all these people who are so creative and different and follow the beat of their own drum? A lot of them remain lifelong friends who I've really cherished and not because of their later success--some were successful, some weren't--but just because they're so different in personalities but yet really creative people. That really sticks with me. It's why I enjoyed being a student at Rutgers.

I will tell you one thing that was interesting, which sort of went to the iconoclastic nature of the time. In our junior year, there was the Cap and Skull Society--if that still exists--a bunch of us were elected to it. I was one of them because I was active in the *Targum*. Howard Crosby, who was the Dean of Students there, he was kind of in charge of it. It's kind of a secret society. It didn't seem to have any purpose to it. I don't know why it even existed, other than he was a member when he was a student and he championed it. We were inducted in his apartment. He had an apartment, a high rise, in Piscataway overlooking the campus. I remember it was quite a view. A few of us thought it was just a really elitist organization with no real purpose. When it came time for us to new elect members--I think I was president of it--through personal lobbying, I got a majority to refuse to elect any new members. There was a big fight when we had the election meeting, but the election stood, with just a majority of one or two that said, "We don't find anyone we want to have join." So, the organization went out of existence, because it was only members elected to the junior class and then that class goes out the next year. Crosby was

furious with us. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1900, Cap & Skull is a highly-selective, life-long honor society at Rutgers that inducts new members by unanimous vote of current members. In 1969, Cap & Skull left campus and remained dormant until 1982, when the society was reinstituted through the help of Howard Crosby, a Cap & Skull member. Crosby served as a long-time administrator at Rutgers, including nineteen years as the Dean of Men and later Dean of Students before his retirement in 1983.]

I considered that one of my proudest legacies at Rutgers, to drive a stake into the heart of a worthless elitist organization that was sort of secretive. People only knew about it because I think when they had some convocation when we graduated, they would announce who the members of it were. Well, anyhow, it didn't last long because I think twenty years later it was resurrected, and now I'm getting emails from them as an alumni. It's much like being a member of TEP fraternity. Once you're a member, you're always a member. But I was very proud of that. I don't know if that answered your question. It just reminded me of times that we would try to fight the establishment, fight the man.

SI: Yes, it is interesting because I have seen, in the history, that there is that gap.

OU: Right.

SI: I did not know what it was about.

OU: Yay.

SI: I know Crosby was very closely affiliated with it. Did you have any other interactions or run-ins with Crosby during your time at Rutgers?

OU: Mostly favorable. He was kind of a traditionalist and disciplinarian and hellraiser every so often. He would meet with me and complain about something we were doing, but it never got to be very antagonistic. He had to do his job. I basically kind of liked him, and I know he was a lifelong Rutgers booster and so I tolerated him, even though he represented the man. I guess he died quite a few years ago.

SI: Yes, he died in 1991. We have a couple minutes left in this session, and if you are okay with it, I would like to come back and interview you again sometime in the future.

OU: Sure.

SI: I am curious about something. I have recently been doing some research on Paul Robeson and his image at Rutgers. Starting in the period when you got to Rutgers, there was very little mention of him, and then a few years after you're gone, there's a lot of recognition of him. In the period you are there, you start seeing a little more recognition, some articles in the *Targum* about him and what he meant to Rutgers. From your perspective, do you remember that being something that came up, something that you tried to promote in any way, that sort of thing?

OU: Right, yes. We learned about him. I remember at Rutgers, we were amazed that he was this iconic figure who wasn't getting his due. I don't remember a lot of details, but I remember he was a big factor in our thinking, and we wanted to write about him and make sure people knew how important he was as a pioneer. I always thought he was well known at the time. I didn't know that there wasn't as much written about him. He was certainly someone we greatly admired and wanted to elevate in people's recognition, but I just don't remember in detail how we went about doing that. It was definitely a big thing to us at the time. It still is.

SI: Were there any objections to talking about him and his legacy?

OU: Not really. My recollection of the climate at Rutgers is that we didn't really encounter much overt racism. Not that there wasn't, but I felt that there was much more tolerance, that students seemed to be much more open to inclusion and diversity. I think that the fault line was much more political over the war between conservatives and liberals, over whether to support the war or not. There was a Young Americans for Freedom chapter and the College Republicans, and the fights were always over the Vietnam War. I don't recall there was a lot of disputes over civil rights. Of course, the black students felt that they were underrepresented and they had a lot of well-deserved grievances. I don't recall among the white students that there was a lot of anti-black sentiment the way you find now people defending their racist views. So, I didn't find that there were people who didn't think Paul Robeson deserved an elevated status.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for this session?

OU: I can't think of anything else worth interest. I guess I have enough skeletons in my closet. I guess I won't run for public office. [laughter]

SI: Well, we will get into these issues again. Thank you very much. I really appreciate all your time, and I am going to end the recording.

OU: Sure.

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