Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University
Joe Riggs Interview
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KM: This is Kevin McLatchy; the person sitting across from me is Joseph Riggs. He is a professor emeritus from Slippery Rock University. The interview is for the Slippery Rock archives oral history collection. Today is October 13, 2008. Could you please give me some basic information about yourself? Your full name . . .

JR: I'm Joseph Howard Riggs; I was born in Middlebourne, West Virginia, on February 18, 1928. We have a funny extended family; my mother was married when she was sixteen or so. Her husband's wife, Albert Fuchs's wife had died, and he had five children. So at the tender age of sixteen my mother had five step-children. She and Albert Fuchs had seven children and he died. So then she married my father who already had two children and then they had six more.

KM: Wow.

JR: So the sum total of all that is twenty. So I had half-brothers and sisters, who had half-brothers and sisters who were not related to me.

KM: Where did you fall into all of that?

JR: I was number seventeen. No, sixteen. I had four younger brothers; so the last of those Mohicans were the five Riggs brothers, in a little town of seven hundred, Middlebourne. And we got credit for every rotten thing that happened in the town. [Laughs] There were a couple other large families, but not very many. So five brothers, they were an easy target. So "Them Riggs's did it," you know? It was great fun.

KM: Yeah, now how did your parents name you Joseph?

JR: Well I had an uncle, on my father's side; his name was Joe Kendall. I think I was named for him and for my great grandfather, who was Joe Riggs. The great grandfather was a very religious man, would have been a great singer, and he rode this mule around the hills of West Virginia. You could hear him coming from a mile or so because he had a big voice. And he was kind of an itinerant preacher, you know, when people were gathered together he would say something spiritual, whatever that means. But my wife's grandma was Molly Mason, who was a genuine preacher in the Church of God and anytime two people were gathered together Molly would give a sermon. All she needed was one listener. The thing I objected to was, that when we had Sunday dinners you know the gravy got stiff and the chicken got cold because [laughs] Molly's prayer was a thirty minute job. And that'll ruin the gravy every time.

I think the thing that was really interesting about growing up was that it was the '30s, you know? I was born in '28, so it was the depression years. In this little town nobody had a lot, but nobody knew that. There were people who were poor and then there were people that were just happy;

and if you're happy then it's hard to think of yourself as poor. So we were a happy bunch and we didn't consider it poor, and the other part of that was, when I'd go home to that town - I was just there this weekend for alumni - I would walk around and there are thirty, forty houses where I ate when I was a kid. Because the people fed children, they gave children their extra clothes. In our case, my three brothers-in-law, Jack Long, Louie Solomon and Burl Mercer, came through and paid our rent from time to time. So we had a support group because my older brothers and sisters got married and some went off to World War II. But the town was a beautiful town for kids and you could get spanked by most anybody. [Laughs] You know, if you misbehaved, they'd grab you by the ear and give you a little spank and send you home. If it was a terrible crime then they would call your mother, but in our case I was raised also by my big sisters . . . who had big hands.

KM: [Laughs] What were some of the activities that stood out in the '30s; were you involved in any specific activities?

JR: I don't really like much using the word prodigy, but I was spoiled by the town because I was kind of a hotdog, and I was in everything. I was in amateur hours, and I could talk. Our first grade teacher was a phonetics teacher and I became one of her star pupils and she used me as an example of learning. But it wasn't just true of me, all of the kids in that town talked pretty well because their first grade teacher was a whiz-bang phonetics teacher. [KM: Interesting.] And I won an amateur hour when I was seven or eight years old, doing a recitation called "I've Got a Pain In My Sawdust, That's What's the Matter With Me." And I've got a copy of it somewhere.

KM: Seven years old then?

JR: Yeah, I won the amateur hour, and the woman who won second was named Eva Bean; and she was double-jointed. So she could twist herself into kind of a pretzel, and it's a remarkable performance. She deserved first place, not the little kid with this recitation. Then they took me to the local bar and put me up on the bar to recite it again for the bar clientele; and that was the Green Parrot. It was not a rough bar; it was a very clean place, run by a guy named Peck Jackson. And Peck Jackson didn't tolerate any foolishness in his bar, so I guess that would make it a tavern.

KM: Moving on maybe to your adolescent years, some reminiscence.

JR: We were in a little town, and you take about three big steps and you're out of town. So we ran the hills a lot and we camped out; we'd take a piece of tarpaulin and drape it over a rope and we'd sleep out in the woods. We had a large creek there called Middle Island Creek and it had little runs that ran into it and our favorite there was Gorrel's Run. We swam in Gorrel's Run all summer long, sometimes with a bathing suit, and sometimes not. I don't know what made the difference, but we didn't always wear swimsuits; that's the guys.

KM: How about high school? What activities were you involved in?

JR: I was president of the freshmen class, of course part of that was hotdoggery. I was so full of myself as a center of attention that I didn't do very well. I walked into one class and that was Latin, and the Latin class was all girls but one, and that was me. And then I walked into typing class, and that was all girls but one, and that was me. I thought, "I can't do two of those sissy classes," so I chose not to do Latin, and I took typing. And I got the lowest grades that anyone

had ever heard of. The second semester I got a sixty, a forty, and a twenty, and flunked typing. Probably nobody had ever gotten a twenty, and nobody had ever gotten a forty. Somebody surely got a sixty somewhere along the line. His name was Frank Keyes, and obviously I didn't do well for Mr. Keyes. And it wasn't his fault, it was my fault; I was just kind of running amuck because I thought I was such a special thing. Having that kind of ego when you're that little is not exactly a good deal. So I had a couple of years there I was kind of a semi-juvenile delinquent. I got into finding a can of beer somewhere, and people made homemade wine, so I did a little drinking. But I was a kid, fifteen or sixteen, and that was a dumb thing to do. And that was very difficult to do in that kind of town, because everybody knew everybody's business. They nurtured their children. I'm making this into too much, I think. Part of my freshman and sophomore year I kind of didn't do very well; I didn't behave myself the way I should have.

KM: I got the feeling you must have picked up though, dramatically, I mean the war came along.

JR: Well, my junior year I got hooked up with two people. The guy who taught shop and who taught farmer stuff, agriculture courses, his name was Charles Corrie, and he would pick me up and take me out when he would vaccinate sheep. I say we, but he would vaccinate sheep, I guess I watched the sheep or something. He was a remarkable man, he was also our scoutmaster and he was just totally instrumental, and so were my older brothers and sisters, but they had a lot of people to look after. They had all my kid brothers. So Charles Corrie and Jessie Wall. I had forgotten what Jessie Wall was up to, but her real name was Wallrabinstein. And Jessie Wall was another one of those do-gooders. She took kids under her wing and she was a super lady, and between her and Charles Corrie and my older siblings, I kind of got squared away and became a pretty good student. So those years of seventeen and eighteen, I had a job; I worked in the Home Store, drove truck, delivered groceries, worked in hayfields, cornfields when I was even younger. So we were all kind of industrious; kids worked, and kids had chores, and kids kept their hours. Kids went to school. We had a guy who went to school, never missed a day in eight years or something like that. I don't know how that happened. We only missed when they were giving shots, if they were vaccinating.

KM: I know from speaking to you in the past you were in the service that would have been '46? So right after the war. [JR: Great choice.] What was that like, what were you involved in, in the service?

JR: Like I said, when I was eighteen I was working at the home store and I was teaching Sunday school and I was a folk dance person. We did exhibits as folk dancers, and the war was over of course in June of '46. We didn't have money in the family and fifteen million people came home from the war or something like that, and a few thousand stayed in. My choices were not enormous so I joined the Army Air Corps and went in, in June of '46 and began three years of just really having a great time. I met great people, I had good jobs. The typing is what got me working as a clerk typist, and then I worked my way up to Duty Sergeant and athletic director. I coached softball and basketball and boxing. I was the punching bag for the guys who could really box! So I won't overstate that. We won the base championship in softball and in basketball and we played in the Goldball League in San Antonio, which was a league of better softball teams and ours was really good; we had two super pitchers.

My commanding officer was Bill Barnes, my first commanding officer. He and his wife didn't have youngsters, so they were good to the kids like us in the squadron. It wasn't just we became

his pets or anything like that, he and his wife were great to all of us, and that's a lot of people, really. He was just a good guy. When people screwed up a little bit then he would feel bad for them. He was always kind of in trouble with the Wing Commander. Wing Commander is a full Colonel, and Barnes was a Captain, and there's a difference between Captains and Colonels. And so Bill Barnes was on the hot seat for protecting his people, but to us he was kind of a saint. So he did wonderful things.

My first Sergeant was a terrific guy from Mississippi, James Bryant, and he was another one of those guys, a war guy, WWII vet and all that. The Army Air Corps became the United States Air Force in '47. What happened was a lot of the guys who were officers came back in as Master Sergeants; it was very common because they'd been in long enough, they wanted to go the distance and get retired. They wanted to work under more lax conditions and that was the Air Force; the Air Force was the sissy outfit. "They weren't real men like the Army and Marines!" So the Air Force attracted a lot of reenlistment men and women too. Then WACs [Women's Army Corps] became WAFs [Women in the Air Force]. They were kind of surrogate mamas to the kids, like 18, 19 year olds. They kept them from getting into trouble and drinking too much. They had little tea parties and they were absolutely wonderful. I was in the training command, so that was the training base for all Air Force enlistees. So thousands and thousands and thousands came through there.

KM: Now where was this?

JR: San Antonio. It was San Antonio Aviation Cadet Field during WWII, and when I was there they renamed it Lackland, so Lackland became fairly famous. So being in the training command, we wrote our own courses for our trainees. We had times when the squadron did stuff, and I was one of the trainers, and I wrote a course called "Customs of the Service." I wrote that from army regulations and then I was a lecturer and I had a great time because I got to be a hotdogging again. We did shows, variety shows and things like that. I've got one of my scripts that I wrote while I was there. Spanky McFarland from "Our Gang" came through; he was in Special Services.

KM: Now I'm really picking up the theater and communication. What attracted you to that? It just came naturally?

JR: In high school I spoke a lot, and I was in all the plays. In elementary school we had an outfit called the rhythm band. And the rhythm band had little triangles which went ding, ding, ding, and they had little wooden things you whacked, and the tambourines. So the rhythm band was big stuff, and then we did musicals in elementary school; so the kids got to be in shows. I went to college for ten years or something like that, and I went to elementary school for eight years, and high school four years; and out of all the teachers I had, the elementary teachers are the ones who stand out. I can remember them so well. Because we were in a little town, and they were all surrogate parents, we saw them through the summer, and we spudded potatoes and raked their leaves and mowed their yards. And of course most female teachers did not marry. On some of the school boards, if you got married you got canned. Just really, really dumb stuff. Except that it was to the benefit of the kids because those were full time kid lovers and they did marvelous things. So they did shows in elementary school. In high school I was the toastmaster at the junior-senior banquet. I had the lead in the senior play; "Professor How Could You?" was the name of it. The eighth grade play was "Aunt Samantha Rules the Roost," and they had one called

"Silas Smidge from Pumpkin Ridge". So they had some really hokey stuff. And cantatas, we did cantatas. Our chemistry teacher was Hiram Sweeny; and Hiram was a singer, and he could sing a bunch. And a massive ego, massive ego. He was always talking about playing football with little leather helmets, or without helmets.

We were writing for the school paper. I was a sports writer at the high school. The high school and elementary school had lots of stuff going on, and all good. Lively. Elsie Duty was a first grade teacher, Bernice Ferguson second grade teacher, oh wow, Lillian Twyman was in there somewhere.

KM: It's amazing you can remember the names.

JR: Elsie Duty, she was the phonics whiz. And of course we read books all the time, and every time you read a book you got a little star and they put that up on the board. I suppose you could lie about it, [laughs] I don't remember. Anyhow, Elsie Duty, I was telling another school teacher who had moved to Washington D.C. many years later—when Elsie was eighty five or ninety about how important she was to a generation of kids, maybe two generations, because she drilled people in spelling and speaking and phonics. So this person I was talking with was Winnie Witten, who was married to my cousin, Orren Jones, who had been a Colonel in WWII and mayor of Middlebourne once upon a time, big stuff. Anyhow, I was telling Winnie about Elsie Duty and how much I thought of her, and she said, "Why don't you tell her that?" So I wrote her a love letter, big time. She called everybody in town and read them the love letter.

So I went to see her, and of course my sons had long hair, all four of them. Now they have no hair, but they were long-haired. Doug was a redhead, so he had long red hair, and Phil was a towhead, he had funny blondish hair. Elsie was well along in years, and she thought they were girls, so she would pat them on the head and say, "These are lovely little girls you have." The boys were furious. Our kids had long hair for a long time, the only one who has long hair now is the oldest, and he's in Santa Cruz, California, and he still has, not a lot, but it's long.

KM: Now, you've been involved with the academic world for a long time.

JR: I would say since I was in the service. When I was lecturing it was an academic thing, and I was really on fire. I had little jokes and all kinds of stuff. It was a great experience.

KM: So it was after the service that you went to college?

JR: When I got out of the service I went to West Liberty State College. While I was in the service I went to night school at Saint Mary's University of Texas in downtown San Antonio. Those were Jesuits and it was tough; a C was a very good grade, [laughs] a C was a *very* good grade. My English teacher's name was Schuster, Brother Schuster. I always wanted to talk to him, but it was night class, the class was full of professionals who were coming back to re-learn their grammar, and he was incredibly handsome. So the women flocked around him and I didn't get to talk with him very much. Brother Black was my history teacher, and he wasn't handsome. He was just an old, gray-haired guy; so I could get in to see him and we would talk. At the end of a semester, he would talk to you about your grades. He would call everybody in and say, "What do you think you deserved?" And he called me in, and this was my second semester. I had a C taking him the first semester, and I was getting a C again this semester in English, and I told

Brother Black, "Well, I might deserve a C but I sure would like to have a B." He said, "I think that's okay." So I got a B.

And then when I got out of there I went to West Liberty and got into speech there. My teacher was from Marietta, Ohio, I can't remember her name. Anyhow, she had worked on Broadway in WWII and had been a roommate of Uta Hagan. Uta Hagan was a great actress who did *St. Joan*. Anyhow, my teacher, Lillian Smith was a dynamite, electrifying, teacher. Great, great presence, it was almost stage presence. She was powerful. She never sat behind a desk; she was on her feet all the time. So I got in her speech class, and then she cast me in plays. I did *Rebecca*; I did *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, about twenty-one acts in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, dogs and all that stuff.

But I got in with her and I did oratory. I was in the West Virginia Oratory Contest, and placed second. Miss West Virginia was in that contest, and she made the best speech I ever saw! She was gorgeous. Anyhow, a guy won it and I was second. And then we had a debate team. My colleague was named Polly. We went to Marietta and won a debate tournament. And so we were kind of doing a lot of stuff at West Liberty. I also had become a registered basketball official, so I had lots to do, plays and speech and officiating at high schools. That was fairly lucrative. I got twenty-five bucks and a little mileage. Sometimes I refereed the junior varsity of the high schools so I could watch the guys who were doing the big games, the senior games. I watched them and how they worked, because that's really the way to learn how to officiate: is to work with someone who really knows their stuff. Or to stay in touch and watch them because officiating means control and you flat have to have it. And I had some exciting times; I did little schools later on.

I have a story. There was a little high school, a country high school, named Casson. After I left West Liberty I went to Alderson Broaddus College because my father had a farm over there and I worked on his farm and met Ginny, my wife-to-be. I was refereeing at Casson and they called me their "homer" because they used me quite often and they never lost; that's what homers are all about. So they were playing a team from Harmon, and Harmon had a big guy who was their thug. So when they wanted to cripple one of the best guys on the other team they sent in their big guy to assassinate. So the coach from Harmon sent his big guy in to bang up some little guys from Casson. The guys from the Casson team were small, but they were good shooters. So the guy got in there and he committed a deliberate foul, and I blew my whistle and awarded two shots to the guy he fouled. Then I went over to the coach. I said, "This is not a prize fight so you better restrain your guy." So shortly after that, a little kid from Casson was going up for a basket and this guy was going to hammer him, but the little guy's elbow got this guy in the eye. And a big old mouse came up on this guy's eye, the big guy. Which was good, I mean he deserved it. He wasn't crippled for life or anything, so I threw him out of the game, for this, another deliberate foul; even though he was the one who came out of it injured. So I tossed him out of the game, and the coach took the team and went home.

KM: Right in the middle of the game?

JR: Yes, that first half, yes. He took his team and went home, then filed charges against me with the state basketball commission or whoever the big doggies were. We had a hearing, and I was vindicated because he had done stuff like that before. West Liberty was really good. I went through another period at West Liberty where I thought I was big stuff. My ego got swollen again; I guess because I was in the plays and I was doing a lot of stuff. We did *Romeo and Juliet*;

that would be in the spring of 1950. I tried out and I got the part of Mercutio, which is one of the really good parts. Mercutio gets killed in the third act and he says "they have made worms meat of me." I was so pleased, and then Ms. Smith got to thinking it over, that I really didn't deserve to be Mercutio. She saw me the next day, and said, "I changed my mind; you don't deserve to be Mercutio." It helped me, it was a good thing to do, it was a kick in the butt that I needed.

So I was upset, terribly upset. I thought about that a long time, then I came to the conclusion that I was not worthy of being Mercutio. And so I went to see her, and I said, "I've got to make a contribution to *Romeo and Juliet*, what can I do to help?" So she said, "Okay, you can do costumes." I said, "I can do what!" She said, "Well, the actors have to be measured, and we've got to order costumes. They cost a lot of money, and we can't mess it up, we've got to do it right." She said, "You measure guys for their costumes and Lulu Margeurites will help with the girls." Lulu was a great person, a wonderful theater person and terrific actress. So we did costumes, and I was backstage doing costumes. that was a good thing, because I got put in my place. Put me into my place is not exactly the phrase, but I got taken down a peg, that's what they used to say. So I got de-pegged or down-pegged and that was a good thing.

KM: I suppose that gave you a rounded perspective of theater too, I mean to get right down into the nitty gritty of making costumes . . .

JR: Oh yeah, but then I left. Went to go to Alderson Broaddus, and worked on the farm. Dad had five hundred acres. My father hadn't raised me, he left back in the '30s, and that's not to say that was a horrible thing because I came through all that with all these brothers and sisters to look after me. And Charlie Corrie and Jesse Wall and the town. Divorce in the mid '30s was a thing that happened. You never know about those things, you don't live their lives, especially if you're a little guy at the time. So I went to Philippi, West Virginia, Barbour County, and lived on the farm, had a little house there, and refereed basketball and I was in the plays and stuff at the college. Ran for student government—president of student government—didn't make it. [I] got beat by a Baptist preacher. Ten votes! Jack Pierce or something like that, he worked on the railroad, and he was good.

I met Ginny the first month or so I was there. She was working at Westinghouse in Fairmont. She had graduated from high school at 16 and went off to a school of nursing in Clarksburg, West Virginia and then decided that wasn't for her. She went to Fairmont where her grandma lived and became a bulb inspector or something for Westinghouse. She had a good job, had an electric typewriter. Prime wife-to-be. The farm was good; I really liked it, and Alderson Broaddus was good. We were all kind of country and a very small college; I think there were only a couple hundred students. So it was a small community and like I said I kept refereeing and I had my own horse.

I had spent the summer of '49 in Montana on a ranch owned by Bill Barnes, my former commanding officer. When he left the service in '48, he said, "When you get out of the service, come on out and spend the summer with me," and I did. And I had a horse there too.

KM: That must have been dramatic and quite an adventure.

JR: Yeah, Montana was great; I had never seen that country. The Big Sky, you know? These enormous valleys and mountains and rivers. We were near the headwaters of the Missouri River.

When you are driving east towards Helena—we were in Craig, which was halfway between Helena and Great Falls—and when you're driving east towards Helena, you can see Helena. But it takes two more hours to get to Helena. You know one of those things, where it looks like you're there, but you're not there. And we fought forest fires. The number was up that summer. One really tragic forest fire, that they've written books about, was the Mann Gulch fire. They were just then training smoke jumpers, so they had a C47 probably and they all jumped out with their firefighting equipment. They had two teams as I recall. You had to stay with the leader and the boys, they were young guys, eighteen, nineteen years old, and thirteen of them died, they burned to death. They had left their leaders. It was a huge tragedy, and of course then, probably still now, if there is a forest fire, every male has to go, except doctors probably. So we had all kinds of professional people out there on those forest fires, especially at the Mann Gulch; we fought that one for about four days.

So I never got to Yellowstone. It never happened because every time we went out and did a forest fire, we lost time getting the winter feed in for the cattle. Barnes had 12,000 acres, but I think the guy next door had 300,000 acres or more. That was the Seiben Ranch, which was a very famous ranch. And this Seiben ranch guy came around sometimes, and he always had cold beer in his station wagon. So we field hands liked to see that station wagon coming. It took about a day to ride across his ranch; it was about twenty five miles.

KM: Amazing.

JR: But Montana, oh, it was so beautiful. And there were sheepherders. Cattlemen didn't care much about sheep, but we had sheepherders. They drove their sheep to the railhead at Craig. The sheepherders were Scots and Swedes. The Swedes were big guys and the Scots were smaller guys, but the fascinating thing was the calves of their legs. Enormous. Because they were up there in those mountains climbing. So it was great fun to watch the sheep come in to the railheads. And wonderful people, the ranchers and all those people, the friends of the Barnes were just lovely. We'd have picnics; we went to a rodeo with real Indians there, the Blackfoot. These were oil-baron Blackfoot. So they came to the rodeo in Augusta, we went to and they came in their powder-blue Roadmaster Buicks. And here come whole families of Indians in their new, big ol' Buicks. And they came and laid out their stuff, and I asked Bill Barnes "are they going to do something for us?" He said they might. He said, "If they feel comfortable with us and we're not here to have them as entertainers or whatever, then they'll probably do some ceremonial stuff." And they did. I got a picture of Brown Boy, who was chief.

KM: Yeah, Montana has changed a lot today, that's for sure, from those days.

JR: Oh I expect so. Judge Cooper, his ranch was there. That's Gary Cooper's father. So Gary Cooper had grown up with these Indians. We'd see them and ride along; my horse didn't go very fast so they ran off without me. My horse's name was Nuggets. They called her no guts because, she was kind of slow. But that was okay because every time I rode ten or fifteen miles I couldn't walk right for a couple of days.

KM: So then after Montana did you get involved with academia again? Did you go to graduate school then?

JR: No. Montana was ’49, and I didn’t graduate from Broaddus until ’52. So I spent two years at Broaddus, ’50 and ’51, just being a student and a farmer, because we cut two hundred acres of hay on our farm. I say our farm, but my daddy’s farm. I never owned any of it. Anyhow, I saw Ginny on the weekends a lot and I was refereeing basketball and doing some churchy stuff. I sang in the choir at Broaddus and I wrote radio shows performed over at WPDX Clarksburg or whatever it was, and I sang with three girls, who were from Ohio and two were sisters.

KM: On the radio?

JR: Yep. Anyhow, it was just wonderful. Broaddus wasn’t academically very much, they only had five or six books in the library and stuff like that. But the kids there were all kind of first generation college kids and we were doing plays and I taught. Things were pretty loose at Alderson Broaddus, so I taught argumentation and debate. I had been a debater at West Liberty. So Joe Ford was the theater teacher. Joe’s gone now, and he’d shot me for this, but Joe said, “Do you want to have a debate team?” And I said, “You bet!” And he said, “Well I’ll schedule argumentation and debate and you teach it and coach the debate team.” I said, “Great!” So I was the phony Joe Ford! So I taught the course; gave myself an A and coached the debate team, and we went to the West Virginia tournaments. And then in the summer of ’51 I was taking American poetry and the poetry teacher got sick. Sorry I can’t think of her name. So I taught the course for a couple weeks.

KM: This is all undergraduate?

JR: Yes, a six week course. So I taught while she was sick. She asked me to teach so I taught the course for a couple of weeks, and she gave me a B. Maxine was her name, sorry I can’t think of her last name. So she gave me a B. In the courses I loved, I did okay, I got an A or a B. In the other courses, chemistry and all kinds of stuff, I got C’s. I don’t know that I ever got any D’s, just C’s. So my QPA was never anything to write home about, or even to show publicly. Maxine and I went to lunch much later, and she said, “Did you ever wonder why I gave you a B in that course you helped teach?” I said, “Maxine, I’ve thought about it, but I don’t let grades rule my world, and I don’t whine about a grade if I think it’s unjust.” She said, “Well, you know you taught the course for me for a couple of weeks and there was a lot of talk about that, about you being my pet. So I just gave you a B to make sure that everybody knew that wasn’t true.” And I said, “Oh, that’s why I didn’t get an A, okay I can live with that.”

My darling companions there were the school nurse, Tyrell, Sue Bartlett, the registrar and Maxine, the English teacher. I spent a lot of time with them. They were bright, we were all young, I had been in the army; they were just good people. So I spent my time with those three ladies; it wasn’t a romance thing at all, but they were just good buddies, and it stayed that way. And a Smith girl from Philippi, also. In the winter time I worked in the Barbour Department Store, a clothing store. We did little parties there in the balcony of this clothing store for the college students, to try to jack up sales. My boss there was named James; I’ve forgotten his real name, Arthur James, I think. But we called him Jesse James because he was kind of a crook. No he wasn’t! He was a tough guy, but that was a good place to work. I enjoyed that. I had worked in the Home Store in Middlebourne.

Over the years I always had a job, and always had work to do other than going to school, but so did my brothers. My brother Jim, good night, he always had two jobs. He cleaned up the barber

shop all the time and also worked at the Main Street Garage in Middlebourne. My brother worked there for years, and he learned mechanics, and much later on he taught mechanics at a high school in Memphis. And he taught in New Mexico. He was really a diligent guy, and he worked all the time, two jobs. A very small guy, but fierce. People didn't mess with him because he would level the playing field with a brick, or a rock, or something. So, you know the story. The big guys beat up on little guys sometimes, and they didn't do that to him. His reputation preceded him. And then I had another brother, Nile, who was a fullback and a linebacker, he was the athlete in the family. The rest of us were so-so, very so-so. All of the buddies I grew up with, they tell stories about what I did when I was an athlete, all not true. But it's nice having them do that, it makes it kind of fun. None of it's true. I became manager of the football team. I was so little, 100 pounds when I was a freshman, 105 pounds when I was a sophomore, and I was getting killed. We had the best team in the Kanawha Valley or whatever they called that league they were in, we had big guys by those standards. So the little guys, during practice we'd get hurt. The equipment was not good; my shoes were too big, I was too little for my shoulder pads and so you know we became cannon fodder and cannon fodder is not good.

KM: And it was flimsy equipment to begin with back then.

JR: Yeah! So I told the coach, "Gee, I want to contribute, but I'm getting injured out there and I'm just too little." And he said, "Okay, you can become a water-boy." We played on Friday nights. Saturday morning we would wash up all the socks and jockstraps and all that stuff. And the coach was a cousin of my half-brothers and sisters. But he was no kin to me. And his name was George Wood. George Wood was a fine gentleman. There were three of the Wood brothers and they all became fairly famous athletes and coaches. He was a big, big guy. When he coached he just wore shorts and a t-shirt. He was teaching how to hand off the football and a guy on the team named Charlie Henderson—Charlie couldn't hear very well, and Charlie was a big guy. So he thought they were snapping the ball and he was supposed to go in and get the ball carrier. So he went in and he knocked the coach down. I mean really busted him. Back then a lot of people cussed, they cuss worse now than they cussed then. Anyhow, George Wood did not cuss, and he got up, and he brushed himself off and he said, "Goodness gracious Charles, goodness gracious." So that was his cussing. The other thing about George Wood was that he was a great math teacher, algebra and plain and solid geometry. We had a good math program in the high school, and he was the teacher. And when you take kids out of the hollers there in West Virginia and you start teaching them math, it's a little uphill, but he taught math and I think everybody got it. Not an easy thing to do and especially if you're a coach, because back then coaches were famous for not knowing anything. They couldn't teach anything so they taught social studies. They taught a nothing course, but he didn't, he was a math fine teacher.

KM: Interesting. I'd like to maybe move on to . . . You finally get your degree, right?

JR: Yes, in the winter of '52, I only needed one more course to graduate, and that was French. So I left; I did it by correspondence, and by coming back for exams to Hans Karl Ladewig. He was a refugee from Hitler's Germany and a fine teacher and a very scholarly man. He had been serving as a judge in Berlin. He had five languages, one of those multi-lingual guys. And he had a squeaky little voice and people made fun of him, which was a big mistake, because he was a scholar and a really excellent teacher. So I took French and that semester I got a job in the Ohio Valley, Pittsburgh Plate Glass, as a timekeeper and paymaster for a hundred pipe-fitters and twenty-five welders. Great experience.

So that spring I studied French and worked and was getting ready to get married. So that was a great spring semester. So Ginny and I got married and graduated that summer. Graduated in June, and we got married in July, and I had no idea what I was going to do, but I was interested in speech and theater. I went over to West Virginia University and started their graduate program. Don Knotts had just graduated from there. He was already famous before we got there. I got to meet him, just a little bit, in New York. I started graduate school in September of '52 and it was excellent. The chairman was Jim Henning, kind of a difficult guy. He had a temper and if you didn't do well, he showed his temper. But I had been in the army; I had met temper before, so I got along fairly well with him. He was an excellent classroom teacher, really good. We had another teacher who was Don Knotts's mentor. Sam Boyd was his mentor. Sam was a Carnegie Tech graduate, now Carnegie Mellon. The two professional theater schools that I recall in the country were Yale and Carnegie Tech.

KM: Oh, I didn't realize Carnegie Tech had one.

JR: Of course, Carnegie Tech graduates were big in NYPD Blue, the actors and the directors. And Sam Boyd was his name. One of his buddies was Max somebody, who was Imogene Cocoa's husband. They kept trying to get Sam to come back to New York and work on television. But he had inherited some money and he had a yacht on the Chesapeake Bay, and he had a nice bar in West Virginia, and he was directing theater, and that's what he wanted to do. So he stayed there.

I took his dialects course; we did thirteen dialects or something like that, and he was superb, just an incredible dialectician. And also a great guy, because after Henning chastised someone for not performing very well, then Sam was always there to nurture them back to health. Don Knotts had problems early on. Hollywood isn't for everybody. Knotts would fly into Morgantown to see Sam Boyd. Sam was our priest.

It was a great year. I didn't do theater. I ran the West Virginia High School debate festival for them. So I didn't do a lot of extracurricular stuff; of course we were just married and we lived in Fairmont which was twenty miles away. So I was a commuter and I was busy being a better student and a newlywed. Anyhow, I didn't do theater there, but I did some other little things. When you go to graduate school, of course, you can concentrate on things that you're more interested in and so I got into this West Virginia Statehood Movement, all the speaking and the gatherings, the Civil War period. I really enjoyed that. I became a very good research person; my masters' thesis was published in the West Virginia History Quarterly in its entirety. Strangely enough, later on I did other books, from oral history mainly, and I think of that masters' thesis as the best thing I ever did, for whatever reasons.

KM: Now were you doing oral history with them?

JR: No, no.

KM: Just pure research?

JR: I graduated from West Virginia in the summer of '53, it was only a one-year course, with a masters, and applied at Lehigh and got the job. So we moved to Bethlehem—Allentown, Bethlehem. I taught one year at Lehigh and had a rich experience with the students, and a rich experience with two of my colleagues who were my office mates; one of them later became

president at WQED in Pittsburgh. I was in the English department, a department of poets, painters, scholars, had one rocket scientist guy who was an English professor, and we had pedigreed people at Lehigh; it's sub-ivy league. And we were treated like we belonged there. These hicks you know. There are some renowned people, physicists and such. We got invited to things and we were treated so well, and we had our first son there. But the man I worked directly for was a theater guy and we had a terrible time from eight to five. He was difficult, very difficult. And then from five o'clock on, he was like a father. So the contrast made it difficult. And he was a climber and a jealous person of people who—he didn't have the right degrees or whatever. Whatever his problems were, they were real problems, and he was the one who had been damaged somewhere along the line.

So when we had our baby—we had our first son under the Star of David in the city of Bethlehem. Anyhow, Ginny was in labor for sixteen hours so we went to the hospital at two o'clock in the morning, and then the baby didn't come until that evening. And then I got to see the baby. Anyhow, I spent about two full days of no sleep and in the middle of all that he called me in to tell me what a rotten job I was doing. And my teams were winning. I had one of the biggest men's debate teams in the country; I had about forty guys and they were good, they were pedigreed. They came out of these rich prep schools, and they had money, these kids had dough and culture. We were winning and I didn't care, winning was not what my coaching was about; my coaching was for an educational experience, and a social experience—meeting other very bright kids from Penn and Harvard and all those places. So anyhow he was nasty when he spoke to me, I just told him I was leaving as soon as the semester was over. Then he said we needed to have a talk about that. So he scheduled a little talk and I wrote on a little piece of paper, I dated it, and then I wrote "I quit." And I signed it. So we had our little meeting and I handed him the piece of paper and I left. I really hated to do that because Lehigh was a good university. They're serious about stuff, and the guys in the English department—the poets, the painters—they were good people. I was in such a quandary all the time because I never knew which way this man was going to jump.

KM: That's unfortunate.

JR: It was very peculiar. They had a place on Cape Cod, and they would give us their house. When we got married, we went to Sears & Roebuck and got a couch that made into a bed. It was hard maple, so it wasn't much of a bed. Wasn't much of a couch. That's where we slept because we didn't have any money. So he and his wife would go to Cape Cod and give us their house. They treated us incredibly well, after hours. But from eight to five, it was torture. Anyhow I quit, which was hard to do. And then that summer I went to work on a pipeline. I worked on a pipeline in West Virginia, and found out about a job at Glenville College, and went down and interviewed and got that job. We all got fired from the pipeline; I guess the guy who was our boss was not doing well.

END OF 10-13-08 CD (CD 10-13-08 cuts off at end)

BEGINNING OF 10-15-08 CD

KM: This is Kevin McLatchy; this is our second interview with Joseph Riggs. The first interview was on Monday, October 13, 2008. Today is October 15, 2008. As I recall, we left off where you were talking about your teaching at Memphis State and how you really appreciated it. Somehow we started to talk about oral history and you wanted to make sure that you emphasized that teaching is really important to you.

JR: I didn't mean to treat oral history as just a silly hobby; it's something more than a hobby and I did do some important stuff with some very important people. The topics were important and preserving those things is important. But none of it measures up to being a teacher. Teaching was really important because you do it for forty or fifty years. I really have strong feelings about teaching; mainly I do feel that it is a calling, it's a ministry. I'm sure everyone doesn't believe that, but I believe that strongly that you have to be in love with it. There are probably all kinds of degrees of this stuff. There are some pure scholars and they go into their scholarly work, and they're scholars, not teachers, more scholar than teacher. But most of us are teachers, and when I see people who don't like students very much, who think that classrooms are drudgery—it's sad.

Colleges and universities and I suppose high schools and elementary schools have far too many people leaning on their shovels. So one of the things that is so great about being a teacher is when you find colleagues that you have great respect for and you can bounce off them with ideas about how to make that classroom a better classroom, how to be a better advisor, how to be more communal within that college or university setting, and have the students have access to you, and you have access to them. You're their mentor and it's a heavy responsibility. It's big time and when I see people who shouldn't be here fundamentally, and they're paid very, very well, especially in the Pennsylvania system, it hurts. The pay is great, the perks are great and the teachers should be grateful for having this kind of life because you're immunized, you're protected. You know, you're not in the mill, although some of them talk about being in the mill, but it isn't like that at all. The freedom is huge, the freedom to create your own classes, to perform as you choose in your classroom. So I see it as, it was my life. I've taught about 12,000 students.

KM: This is overall, from Memphis combined with Slippery Rock?

JR: Yeah, Memphis and night school and American Institute of Banking and Savings Loan Institute. I taught for the Navy.

KM: When you think about it, 12,000 individuals you've changed.

JR: You bet, you bet. Of course, a lot of them are majors and they kept coming and you'd have some students repeat in a second course. I taught in graduate school but I thought that was extremely dull, largely because the graduate programs were part-time. I mean too much part-time. If graduate learning doesn't have a lot of intensity to it and continuity within that framework of a masters or a doctorate—you got to be there, and taking the course. A course a semester doesn't cut it, and that's what we had here at Slippery Rock; the graduate program had never been very good. And it has been costly; it's an expensive program and it was piecemeal, and piecemeal is a bad thing, generally. That was true at Memphis State. It's true of smaller colleges and universities who try to get into graduate programs, but they're not geared up to do it. They don't have the library for it; they don't have the scholarship for it, things like that. And Memphis State was like that.

KM: I get an impression that maybe things have improved a little.

JR: Yes! Oh yes.

KM: Probably when you first came . . . actually we should maybe touch on that, when you first came to Slippery Rock too. This might be a good time to talk about the comparison with your early days here at Slippery Rock and how things progressed while you were here. How did you even end up at Slippery Rock?

JR: Everything is an accident, I'm quite sure of that. No one lives a life step by step by step, planning and it all falls into place; it isn't like that at all—certainly not for me. I was at Memphis State for fifteen years, and I never was very well paid at the university, largely because I was on the list of people who were involved in integration, and I was part of a black/white community in terms of politics and in terms of cultural development, I think. And so the president of the university had total control over how much money you made, and I got promotions but I never made any money. So people who came after me, well after me, five or ten years after me, passed me in terms of income. It was an act of discrimination against me, and I understood that. If you're going to go upstream, if you're going to fight against the establishment, whatever that may be, you must understand that they'll punish you. And if you don't understand that, you're in for a big surprise.

So I knew what was going on, and I knew that I wasn't going to thrive at Memphis State financially. I had four kids, so I worked at night; I worked at the American Institute of Banking, the University of Tennessee Extension Division, I taught at the Savings and Loan Institute, I taught for Blue Cross and Blue Shield. I worked at the library as a curator—a dollar and a quarter an hour. I was trying to feed my family in the middle of all this other stuff that was going on. That, plus Dr. King being killed. I was part of Bob Kennedy's staff in Tennessee, and Bob Kennedy was killed. Oh god, you know, the city was falling apart, and it was hard for me to keep track of my kids. So a friend of mine who had been chairman at Memphis State went to Indiana State University at Terre Haute, Harry Ausprich. Harry called and wanted me to come to Indiana State to start a graduate program because I had directed the graduate program in speech and theater at Memphis State for several years. So, I thought about that, and I thought I should do it. I took a leave of absence and went to Indiana State. I got about a $4,000 raise. I went from $13,000 to $17,500 and that was good because it had to do with survival.

So I went to Indiana State and started their graduate program. Then Ted Walwik, who taught with me at Indiana State, got the job here at Slippery Rock as Chairman of the Speech Department, Speech and Theater. We were good friends. I judged him back when he was an intercollegiate debater at Butler University in Indianapolis. Anyhow, he came here and he called and said "This department is growing; I can hire some new people." Tim Walters and I were teaching at Indiana State; we were both Illinois graduates. So we got in our car with our wives and headed for Slippery Rock and came here and we were interviewed and hired. We were not excited to be living in Terra Haute, because Terra Haute was kind of a strange place; a lot of racism at the university, within the city, gambling, they had prostitution. It wasn't a pretty place!

KM: Decent size population.

JR: Pardon me?

KM: There's a good sized population there.

JR: Yes, yes. The university had had 16,000 students; I think that had shrunk a great deal. The black students had a bad time there, in Terra Haute and at the university. There were a lot of things that weren't very good, so Slippery Rock was much better. Being near West Virginia got me closer to my brothers and sisters, and my wife has three sisters in Akron, which is just down the street, I took a second leave of absence because I was still in tight at Memphis State with my colleagues. We had some heavy hitters at Memphis State who were involved in politics, who were involved in cutting-edge theater. Some fine scholars, we had a good bunch—The American Association of University Professors. We were lively, and I was president of AAUP and I was chairman of the faculty council. So I had a lot of good stuff happening in Memphis, but we had a hiatus there where all kinds of things were falling apart. The death of King and Kennedy was a part of all that. It was time to move on, although I'm still connected to Memphis State and those people I worked with there.

That was back in '70, '71 and here we are thirty-eight years later, and those guys and girls—the people I worked with, we're still solidly connected—philosophically, physically, and all that. And I missed that when I came here because this was not a place where we had very many activists who were on the case. So coming here was kind of a step down in terms of my relationships to colleagues who were doing stuff I thought was important. Like the racism thing—important. A lot of things might have been happening here that weren't. The other part of that is that these were first-generation students, and I'm from West Virginia. We hicks are all first-generation something or other. So first-generation is important to me.

KM: And you found that here at Slippery Rock.

JR: Oh yeah, you bet. These mill hands were sending their kids out here, and this was 1971, and I liked that population very much. I also got to teach night school here almost all the time I was here. I liked the night school population—that assortment of age groups, and the motivation of the night school people who have a full-time, day-time job and kids, and here they are plugging away trying to get a college degree. I really liked them. They're great in classrooms.

KM: I've enjoyed that myself. So the campus, what was the impression? The physical layout of the campus, let's see this would have been '71, they were probably in a building boom around that period. The library would've been built.

JR: It was already finished.

KM: It was already finished, okay.

JR: Wow. It was moving from a very large city and a bigger school, but it was pretty. Slippery Rock was extremely friendly and the faculty was friendly. It wasn't the hustle and bustle that I'd been used to in Memphis, but that was a good thing. For us to settle down and to get in tighter with our own children was important. All the guys and our friends in Memphis say, "You shouldn't have left."We say, "Okay, we shouldn't have left." But we left. We're talking about forty years ago, so it's a little late to rewind that clock. So anyhow, I came here and I liked the community and the people.

KM: Now, who were the leaders, the presidents, the deans?

JR: Well, Watrel was the president and he was about to be canned, so I didn't know very much about him. You know, that awkward Watrel story, I was never very much into that. He was not my enemy; he was very good to me. And Al Schmitlein was dean of all the departments; I think twenty-six departments. And Al was the dean of the whole place. That changed quickly after that—more deans and vice presidents—so there was a period of growth going on there. I liked Al very much and the people who interviewed me. Of course, Roy Stewart came at the same time and Mary Marzolf came at the same time. Tim and I were hired at the same time. So, in terms of the speech department, we had kind of a new half staff and these were people who were excellent. Roy Stewart was a very good classroom teacher; Mary was a very good classroom teacher; Tim was a good classroom teacher.

KM: Tim? What's Tim's last name?

JR: Walters. He just died; we just lost Tim—great friend and an interesting guy. He hated . . . I can't think of the word I want. Boredom! Two of the biggest things about the college environment—one is boredom and the other is pretentiousness. I'd like to talk about boredom and pretentiousness because of the guys with their little pipes and their little satchels and their brand new PhDs. So Tim was kind of the major enemy of boredom. He didn't let anyone sleep in his classroom.

KM: What were the major events or activities while you were here? What you were involved with.

JR: When I came I had done a lot of oral history and the college wanted to get on with the oral history program. So Don DiSpirito, Bob's brother, was here and he was interested in that; he was the public relations guy here at the college. Ted was interested in our department doing all kinds of stuff; he wanted us to have a piece of the action, whatever that action may have been. So we launched an oral history program that was pretty good for a while, then that was a good thing. The other thing when I came here I was tired of messing with graduate school. So we had an agreement that I would not develop a graduate program, nor teach any graduate courses. And of course that never happened because the program just didn't take place. Several department had assortments—strange little programs which weren't graduate programs at all, they were just a piecemeal kind of thing. But the oral history thing was okay. We were doing a lot with our students; we spent a lot of time with our students. We formed a committee of advisors: Mr. White, the editor of the Butler Eagle, and Larry Berg, who had done a lot of work on television and public relations and radio, from Butler. We had him and we had a general manager in radio from Youngstown. So these guys came in and they met with our students and told them about the real world out there and how to make your way through that and how to prepare yourself for that. We had a lot of stuff going on, and a lot of theater, one-act plays, oral interpretation, reader's theater. So we got cranked up and that department eventually had three hundred fifty majors. And the program where you send students out to work in industry

KM: Internship?

JR: Internship! Our intern program was good; that was a real gem of a thing. We were connected with some good people in the professional world. I was head of the graduate school placement. I did that for our department and we sent thirty or forty people off to get PhDs and MAs. We helped other departments if someone came in and asked for help. We were connected really well.

We were connected with Illinois, with Penn State, with Pitt, with West Virginia, with Marshall and Ohio University. Our biggest connection was Miami of Ohio. We were sending graduate students there, and to Northern Illinois, and some to California schools. We kind of asked our students to apply at ten schools, but we could pick up a telephone and pretty much place our best students because we had credibility with good universities. It was a lovely thing because we were getting assistantships, so they were going to end up in classrooms or as research assistants and earn some money.

KM: Impressive. I think I'm going to step back here a bit because I'd like to cover some of the oral history projects you've done over the past.

JR: Okay, can I say one more thing?

KM: Oh sure!

JR: A couple other things. Their names are Jeffrey and Douglas and Phil. We had our son Jeffrey in '56, the first year we were at Memphis State. I had an offer from Hawaii and one from Oregon and one from one of the New York SUNY system schools, and they were good offers, and some old friends. But we had a brand new son and a brand new house, so we stayed in Memphis, though we thought about leaving. Funny thing about the University of Hawaii, this lady wrote to me and said I want you to come and be a teacher with us and I thought about that. Hawaii sounded really good. Finally I knew I couldn't cut it because I didn't have enough money to move to Hawaii, I mean we had the new house and the new son. So I wrote back and I said, "I'm sorry I can't accept the job." And she wrote me back a letter that said, "I didn't offer you the job in the first place!" Really bizarre and I thought, "Gee, I'm glad I didn't go work for her!" Anyhow, that was '56, and then Douglas came along in '59, and then Phillip David came along in '62. So we had three more sons and those were huge events. I wanted to make sure I got to mention them.

KM: Okay, I'm going to go back to some of the interviews, specifically not so much with books, I know you were eventually involved with some books, you edited a book. I'm going to talk specifically about the interviews and I'll eventually get to the books you were involved with. It sounds like at Memphis, I know you were involved with Governor Browning, Gordon Browning. Could you talk about that?

JR: Sure. Browning had been a governor in '36 and had been deposed by Boss Crump, Edward Hull Crump, who owned the state of Tennessee, and was mayor of Memphis way back in 1910. They called him the "Red Snapper" because he had red hair and he was a charger and he formed a dictatorship. He was benevolent in some ways, depending on where you were in that system. Browning had been tossed out of the governorship by Crump because Crump picked the governors and they had to do what he said, and Browning kind of bucked the system and lost his governorship. So he got re-elected again in '48. Along with Estes Kefauver. Browning was reelected in 1950. Albert Gore, Sr. joined Kefauver in the Senate in 1952.

KM: Albert Gore, Sr.?

JR: Albert Gore, Sr.! Yes, the one with the curly hair. Albert Gore, Jr. has straight hair. But senior had curly white hair. Anyhow Browning—in 1960 I was working on my dissertation with the McKellar collection and I was invited to Browning's house. He had a picnic for the Western

Pennsylvania Historical Society, that was ’60 or somewhere around there. I had gotten considerable publicity because I’d opened the McKellar collection and I was curator of the McKellar collection and it was a ten ton collection. So it was big stuff historically in Tennessee. I got invited to speak to the historical society at Governor Browning’s house at a picnic. And he was old and palsied at that time. I may have had more than a ten minute talk; I had a talk ready because I liked to talk at that time.

I got there and a fellow named Seale Johnson preceded me on the platform. Seale Johnson was a raconteur—did all kinds of stuff and was editor of *The Jackson Sun*. So he got up and made a speech. The name of his speech was “Adam Houseman’s Wooden Leg: A Footnote to History.” And it was a riot. Adam Houseman and Davy Crockett were congressmen from Tennessee, and they were travelling in west Tennessee and they stopped at this tavern inn for the night. Davy Crockett, who was a lady’s man, spied this young woman and got interested in her. Somewhere in the night he went to her room and invaded her room and she screamed. Being Davy Crockett, and a quick thinker, - Adam Houseman had a wooden leg - Crockett ran down the hall hopping on one leg and using a chair for the other leg, and they almost lynched Adam Houseman.

Well, that was Adam Houseman’s footnote to history, and Seale Johnson was just super funny. And he had the crowd laughing, and me too; I was falling out of my chair. It was a funny, funny story, and then I remembered that I was next, and it was a killer. I thought, “Oh my god, what am I going to do?” I said, “This is pretty dull stuff!” So I cut that speech short, very short. But there was a lesson there: don’t follow Seale Johnson to the platform, go before him. Don’t get on the platform with him at all if you can help it. But the position you’re in on this speaking kind of thing is important.

KM: So then you had the interview?

JR: Oh! I’m sorry yes. And while I was there I met Governor Browning and I asked him if I could interview him about Crump and McKellar, because Crump and McKellar were colleagues from the get-go, for decades. And he said yes, he’d be delighted. So I made an appointment and drove up to Huntingdon and we got into his office and got some coffee and he shook. He was palsied; he had Huntington’s disease I believe. Anyhow, we were splashing coffee all over the place and we started talking about Crump and McKellar. He said, “You know, this is really the wrong topic. We should be talking about me.” He said, “Why don’t you do an interview on me? Or write a book about me or something?” And I said, “Fine Governor, I’d be delighted.” So we switched, I don’t even have any idea what we talked about or said about McKellar or Crump. We talked about them later on. But we talked about them in the context of Browning’s career. All the tapes are in the Memphis Public Library. And all I have now is the unpublished booklet manuscript, it’s bound. We did seven or eight copies; the library got a copy, the university got a copy.

KM: And you’ve given one to the archives too, right?

JR: Here?

KM: Yes, here.

JR: I don’t know whether I’ve given that to you or not.

KM: I'll have to check.

JR: But I've got a copy. Anyhow, the Browning thing was fun because he laughed a lot and had a lot of energy, a lot of stories. He'd been accused of all kinds of things when he was governor the first time, selling pardons. It was neat stuff; I'll have to look at it. It is kind of an interesting story. After this unpublished manuscript came out, Jack Smith got a hold of it to read it. Jack Smith had been Browning's Commissioner of Education, was president at Memphis State University, but by this time he had retired, and Cecil Humphreys was the new president. Browning and Smith were at the King Cotton Hotel in downtown Memphis and called me. The Governor said, "I need to talk with you." And I said, "Alright." He said, "Come on down to the hotel." I went down to the hotel, and there's Jack Smith, President Smith, for whom I had worked and have Jack Smith stories. So he said, "You know Jack Smith?" I said, "Oh yes, President Smith, good to see you." Browning said, "I wrote something in the book and Jack didn't like it because he thought it was kind of a criticism of him and some of my other colleagues in my cabinet." He said, "What can you do about that?" I said, "Well I don't know, it's hard to unprint, but there are only a handful of copies, maybe we can scrub it somehow." He said, "Well, I'd appreciate if you'd do that." And of course it was a travesty on scholarship or something. But I got us some whiteout and the copies—you'll see it in the manuscript. What Jack Smith didn't like we whited out!

KM: I get the feeling you didn't mess with Tennessee policy back then.

JR: John Jay Hooker ran for governor of Tennessee and I was on the Hooker committee doing PR for Hooker and we lost there because the Republicans could cross over and vote in the democratic primary, and they would kill my candidates, and John Jay Hooker was one of them. But Hooker would come and we would have meetings and they would always bring Browning; he had a state police man driving him around, retired governor and all that. But they wanted someone to look after him because he was palsied and he wasn't really a big part of these meetings because he was an old man and not in great health but he was the guy they had to have there, solidarity you know? And I would get called down to sit with him and to help feed him which was okay. We were friends, and I was in the Hooker camp anyhow. Browning was the one who talked me into, kind of talked me into doing a television special on Mrs. Alvin York, Sergeant York's widow. He said, "She's a great talker, good stories." So Greiner of WMC-TV, which had done the Crump documentary, said, "Well, let's get a crew together and run up to the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf" where they lived, near Jamestown, Tennessee, up on the Kentucky border, remember that from the movie. Anyhow, we got a camera man and a sound man and my colleague from theater went along, and the four of us got in this big Cadillac and off we took for the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf.

KM: Small town.

JR: Got us a motel and we called Mrs. York. We got there and we spent two days and to every topic I brought up or question I asked, she said yes, no or maybe. Stories did not happen. We did finally piece it together and they aired it, and I'll try to find a copy of it. But, it was a bomb. I mean an absolute bomb. And they aired it to punish me for talking them into it in the first place! Mori Greiner was the CBS vice president there, and Mori was the one who had approved the Crump documentary, with Craig Leake who later won a couple of Emmys.

KM: Yeah, maybe we should talk about the Crump . . .

JR: Well the York thing. There were four of us there: Craig went behind the camera, another guy was on sound, and then Keith Kennedy, the director of theater. I was the main interviewer and Keith just went along, but I wasn't getting anywhere as interviewer, so Keith gave it a shot and he may have done better than I did, but we weren't getting anywhere. Alvin York was such a hero; you know World War I hero, at the dining room table in his house the head table chair stayed empty, no one ever sat there. He had brought back a Mauser, a little Mauser automatic, and Mrs. York kept that by her bed. She also had a .410 on a .45 automatic frame, and I asked her if those guns were loaded and she said they were and I said, "I'm scared of guns."

KM: And how old is she?

JR: Oh my, I don't know the answer to that. That would have been '68 or '69, something like that, and she would've been born at the turn of the century. So she was seventy or so, and a wonderful lady. She fed us, and the guys wanted to whip up a card game. She was kind of offended by the card game and said, "There are no cards in this house; there will be no cards in this house." This is on a Friday I guess, and we were on our way back to the hotel with the crew, and we were going to try again the next day. Her sons were there: Thomas Jefferson York was there, Alvin Jr. was there, Woodrow Wilson York wasn't there, and there was another one named after a president, Theodore Roosevelt, perhaps. Anyhow, there are three or four of them named after presidents. One named after his brigade commander in France, and of course Alvin Jr. and some grandkids. And the sound man said, "I bet I can get that old broad to talk." And he offended, , the director of theater. And we almost had a fight at the motel; Craig and I separated them, it was kind of a nightmare. Well, it wasn't a nightmare; it wasn't so bad. I enjoyed meeting Mrs. York and I enjoyed the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf; that was historical and a very beautiful place.

KM: I know also you were also involved with TV interviews at that time too, WKNO was it?

JR: WKNO was the PBS station, and I had a live show called *MetroMeeting*, and I did that for a couple of years and I did it every other week. And John Bakke, who was a colleague in speech and a heavy hitter in the political world, did the other. So we alternated, and our guests were elected and appointed officials. We talked about alcoholism and we talked about the jails and the hospitals. We talked about community stuff, but we were never really allowed to let adversaries come on at the same time. We would get two points of view but they were isolated, they were not head to head, and I was always bothered by that because I really wanted to smoke them, get this thing moving. You know, I believe in argumentation.

KM: They didn't have that firing line format so much back then or like we do.

JR: We did have call in; people could write in or call in, and so I had all of these questions and we took phone calls and it was live. Jo Potter was the lady who was running it and she was very good. It was in a big old gymnasium, well that isn't very important, but we had good people on. And we were getting somewhere, it was a good show, but it would have been better if we had two points of view simultaneously.

KM: Now, I have in my notes that you even interviewed Aldous Huxley?

JR: Yes, there was a very wealthy school, private school, Lausanne, L-A-U-S-A-N-N-E. Lausanne school, and every year they brought in some guest lecturers. So this one year they had Linus Pauling, Margaret Meade, Aldous Huxley, and ...

KM: Malcolm Muggeridge.

JR: Malcolm Muggeridge! So, because I was already hooked up with WKNO, I got to be an interviewer on the show. We did Muggeridge and we did Aldous Huxley. The airplane travel and all that got screwed up so we didn't get to do Linus Pauling and we did not get to do Margaret Meade, though I think they came for their public speeches. I was already a fan of Huxley; I had read some of his stuff. When I found out I was going to go on TV with him I read a bunch more so I could be a little more literate. So he came to the studio the day before or the night before, and we taped the show. He had had sight problems through his life; he was sixty-eight or seventy, sixty-eight I think. We had tea before we did the show, and we did it in a dark part of this old gymnasium that had been turned into a TV studio. So we're sitting over there in the semi-darkness with Aldous Huxley, having tea, and then we went on the air and his style was really remarkable; he spoke in literary forms. He spoke almost as he writes, and that is not an easy trick. It just doesn't happen. The spoken word and the written word are two very different worlds. He was so literate like that and he thought through his thoughts.

I wish we had a tape of that. I tried to get a tape, and someone may have taped it off the air. WKNO, I don't know if they threw stuff away back then. But I was thrilled, and the pictures I have of Huxley and me, he's listening to me and that's probably the only five seconds I spoke. I may have helped ask a question or two. We were in the presence of a very famous man, and of course he had a famous relative, a famous biologist or something. And he was modest about who he was, he wasn't a hotdog. So being in his presence was easy. Still, I wasn't very articulate, but it was all about him, it wasn't about us.

KM: That would have probably been about the time just before his death.

JR: I think so. And then Muggeridge was of course a hotdog. And he had been on Jack Parr's show—I think more than once. And he had this thing about the royal family, the Kennedys, and he tied in the Kennedys and the royal family and all of the mythology we were building then he said, "And there are no two stones in America one piled on the other which posterity would ever address itself to," which was a hell of a thing to say, but he had already said that at other places. So Muggeridge was a powerhouse and being with him is kind of funny because, I think pretentious works there. He had been editor of *Punch*. Anyhow he had been editor, and he was a writer and a scholar.

KM: Right, I know he had moved away from being agnostic and then wrote extensively on Christianity.

JR: Oh I heard a guy the other day on television; he said he was a spiritual agnostic. It may have been Buckley Jr., I'm not sure about that. Buckley was on MSNBC yesterday; he endorsed Obama.

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KM: Sorry for the interruption.

JR: No, no, no. When I interview people I've had lots of interviews where people say "turn that thing off." And then they would tell me some story, they'd tell me the truth about something they had just lied about. It's pretty funny. We really had some of those on the Crump documentary. This judge would say, "Mr. Crump loved black people, you know, and he took care of them." Then he would say, "*Turn that thing off."* He'd say, "That wasn't true you know!"

KM: Now, that was quite involved wasn't it? That documentary, it was quite an involved—it was a major TV production.

JR: Oh yes, it was a CBS station. We filmed in 16mm; we filmed twelve and a half hours. I have the manuscript and I'm going to index it and turn it over to you. It's 70,000 words. And it's really interesting. And the stories that went with it were kind of interesting.

KM: Sure let's talk about them.

JR: Okay, so Craig Leake was one of our graduate students at Memphis State; I was head of graduate studies. He was doing radio and television, and the head of that at Memphis State was David Yellin. David Yellin had been a New Yorker, and he had directed Bela Lugosi in Arsenic and Old Lace and he was something else. And he came to Memphis his wife was an editor for Reader's Digest; she did some of the Digest books that they published. She rewrote them, condensed books, much talent. And David was a talent, too. I've got some David Yellin stories, but I don't need to do that I guess. Anyhow, Craig Leak was working at Channel 5, WMC-TV, and they decided that he should do a documentary on Boss Crump. Crump died in '54, so he had been gone a long time. Lucius Birch, the Democratic guru of Memphis who was instrumental in getting Kefauver elected, in one of the interviews said that Crump was like a giant bay tree: glorious to behold, but nothing grew up under it. Well we were in a period where city administration was a problem and the leadership of the Memphis community post-Crump was difficult. There were some lean years because he had run the show completely and it's hard to follow that if you don't have people coming up who are ready to become leaders.

Anyhow, Mori decided to do the show and Craig was the cameraman and the editor and the works—he was it. And they asked me if I would be an advisor and interviewer—four hundred bucks. I said, "Gee whiz of course." So then we went on the road and I don't know how long I worked at it, six months, a year? Craig did all the work, all I did was gab. You know, what is an oral historian? Are they just a chronicler? Are they an editor? Are they an author? Well all those titles are screwy, but the interviewer—if they have freedom in that interview situation—can be an author of sorts because he can control topics and topics are what the manuscript or the book is all about. If the person you're interviewing has that stuff in their head and you know that, then you go after it. You don't go after it with a club because they don't have to answer your questions so you use a very small stick. So in that sense, the oral historian can be an important person if they are going after something that needs to be published or preserved.

Anyhow, I got to put the questions together and that was what my part was all about, in addition to doing the interviews. I'm on camera very little but that's what it's all about—the interviewer isn't visually very important. So everything was shot over my shoulder and we

interviewed a lot of people in the black community; we interviewed George W. Lee, he'd been a lieutenant in the First World War. He was called Lieutenant Lee. In the South you got a title, you're a colonel or a lieutenant, while some are only corporals. Sergeant York was only a sergeant. An elementary school teacher is a professor. This title stuff is really a screwball world. Anyhow, George W. Lee, a black leader and kind of a famous leader, had spoken at the Republican Convention in '56, I think it was. Anyhow, he was an orator. When you see the documentary he lights up like the biggest Christmas tree. He'd say, "Now Mr. Crump, he weren't no Simon Legree, but he weren't no Abraham Lincoln either." Anyhow, he was quite wealthy; he had insurance companies, a car about a block long, but a very interesting fellow. I saw him at other times when John J. Hooker was running for governor. He'd get Lieutenant Lee to come out and speak for him, to endorse him. And oh he drew a crowd.

Russell Sugarman was a civil rights attorney and a Rutgers graduate. I think his law school was Harvard. Russell was the black counterpart to Lucius Birch, the other liberal leader in the community. And the years that I worked in politics I would wait for Lucius to tell me what to do or Russell to tell me what to do because these were the brains, they were powerhouse political intellectuals. I'm not sure about the word intellectual; I have a problem with that one too. But Russell was on camera and he talked about barbeques and watermelon and the kind of stuff they did with the black community to get their votes. And they also paid the black community; they paid the preachers or whoever decided that they controlled a number of votes that they could deliver to the candidate.

KM: This is all under Crump?

JR: It was still going on after Crump's death; the business of buying votes went on. I was a party to that. I sat in the outer chamber waiting for my guy to go in and face off with these black ministers or whoever we were meeting with who claimed to have a number of votes and they had to have money to get out the votes. I don't know how much money that was, I have no idea. All through my political activities, I never had anything to do with money. I'm not safe with money because I don't understand money and I'm not a good beggar or an arm twister. None of that was ever a thing that I did. I did work in precincts, I did public relations and I did speaking. Russell is a close friend of mine . . . when I'm in Memphis I get to see Russell. We interviewed Lucius Birch. We interviewed John Hooker's father, who had been in politics back in the Crump years, and a wonderful interviewee. We tried to interview Tom Stewart. Tom Stewart was the prosecutor for the state at the Scopes trial. He had been made a United States Senator by Crump and then Crump made him an un-United States Senator. He fired him! That ain't easy firing a United States Senator.

KM: Shows the amount of power he had.

JR: And Stewart was still bitter toward Crump but he also didn't want any publicity, so our conversation with Senator Stewart was very brief. He said, "No." So we didn't get an interview with him. We had an official who was in the Crump machine—machine is a fair word to use, I think—I'm sure. And we went to interview him at 10:30 in the morning and he was in his underwear drunk. Interviewing a guy who is in his underwear drunk is not a thing to pursue, so we spared him and ourselves from that one.

KM: But it was successful, it aired, the documentary.

JR: Yes, it's an excellent documentary; it's an hour and forty-five minutes, so getting it edited was kind of hard for Craig to do. The mayor of Memphis at that time was Henry Loeb, an arch segregationist, handsome dog who graduated from Williams or Brown and could have been a significant leader in the South, but he was wrong. He was just wrong. He came after Mr. Crump as the mayor of the city. We called him and asked for an interview and he declined. I don't know why he declined, but he found out later that everyone else was being interviewed: the commissioners, the judges, all kinds of folks who were part of the Crump machine and part of their adversaries. He found out it was a big deal and he wanted back in. He wanted in, and he called and he was turned down. I'd like to take credit for that, but I can't. I didn't turn him down, I would have. I wouldn't have asked him in the first place probably. He was important and Mori Greiner told him no. Mori knew everybody; he was a vice president of CBS, a powerhouse and a very good man.

KM: We have that production now in archives. It's a welcome addition to our archives collection, is that documentary.

JR: You bet. I showed it in Canada. The Crump family thought that their family was going to get dragged through the mud in this documentary and they wanted to preview it. So they asked Mori Greiner if they could preview it. And Mori thought about that I guess—pre-censorship and all that—but Mori was not about to get censored. So he told the Crump family that they could have a look at it before it went on the air; he did that out of generosity, he didn't have to do that. So they showed up with a federal judge, Judge Battle. So here come the Crumps and a judge, a federal judge, I don't know if he was still on the bench at the time, and we gulped. And he showed them the documentary. There were some critical parts of it and I gather they didn't like that, but I don't really know. I wasn't privy to the post-conversations. Anyhow, we aired it in Memphis and it's been used. I took it to Canada for an oral history convention and it's a good piece of work. Craig Leake was the guy who did it. I got a piece of it and Norman Brewer does the introduction. He was the head of news for Channel 5.

KM: In Memphis?

JR: Yeah, for WMC-TV.

KM: Yeah. I'd like to maybe talk about some of the book projects you've been involved with.

JR: The Browning manuscript is unpublished. Then there was a four star admiral who had retired in Memphis. He was commander of Kaneohe Naval Air Station when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and he was commander of seventh fleet in the Korean War. He was a four star admiral. I don't know who arranged for us to do him.

KM: Was this . . . ?

JR: Harold Martin. I sent you a copy of Harold Martin. Yeah, it's pretty good; I hadn't read it for forty years.

KM: I haven't had a chance yet to read it.

JR: It was a difficult thing; I didn't enjoy it very much and he was a difficult man. He didn't like beards, and I had a beard. I was a reserve naval officer, and he didn't like reserve naval officers

that much. It was okay, he was a navy guy, but a real navy guy, not the part-time or sunshine soldier. Anyhow, the interviews were unusual because he talked and I almost never talked. We did have libations—gin—and that helped because I was suffering a little bit. He didn't like liberals and I think that someone had maybe tipped him off that I was a left-winger.. He quit watching baseball because there were too many non-white guys out there playing. But he was an important part of the navy at Kaneohe. You don't get many four star admirals, you have to do something right, and he did. He took the Valley Forge through the Suez Canal and that's part of it. His wife was a super cook which was really another piece of my salvation. It was a thing I had tried to erase, because I didn't have a good time doing this. But the other day I read the book again and its good; he did a good job of it—lots and lots of facts about the military history and about who he was and what he did.

KM: Especially at a crucial time in our history; I mean he was there at Pearl Harbor.

JR: Yes, yes, he was there in his pajamas with a machine gun.

KM: Oh really?

JR: Well he had his uniform on, and I gather he put some pants on and a shirt and charged out into the place like Burt Lancaster.

KM: Right, the attack on Pearl Harbor.

JR: What's Burt Lancaster's movie? Oh, *From Here to Eternity*.

KM: Yeah, that sounds right. If you don't mind, did you want to talk some more about that?

JR: About Martin?

KM: Yeah.

JR: I don't know how many copies of that we've made, but I have a copy. I had the copy that I gave you; it was one of the drafts. I think that it was a final draft, but that's a thing we can determine. And the reason I gave the archives that was because the bound volume we'd have to take it apart in order to reproduce it. But I don't know that I need to hold on to it. The admiral graduated from Annapolis in 1918, was immediately sent to sea because they only went to school for three years at Annapolis during the war. Then he went on convoy duty out of Brest, France. He was there when Woodrow Wilson steamed in for the Paris Peace Conference. So he was at a lot of places in history; he was one of the first carrier pilots and he was there before they even had carriers. The old Saratoga was turned into a carrier in '22 or '23 and military aviation was struggling against the establishment, and of course the Billy Mitchell court-martial of the '30s was about Mitchell promoting army air aviation as a tool of war over battleships. Battleships can't fight. They're great big old mastodons and anyhow Martin was a part of all that and then became a carrier admiral in WWII. He was commander of Kaneohe when the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor, and he was commander at Wake Island when Admiral Nimitz was there. So he was in the middle of things. During the Korean War he met with Richard Nixon and Syngman Rhee, the president of Korea. He got to be with a lot of people doing a lot of planning—Macarthur. And he loved the Japanese. He had great friends among the Japanese—naval officers from the '20s and the '30s because he met those men while he was sailing the seven seas, so he didn't say "Jap."

KM: Now, you touched on aviation and I don't know if this was intentional on your part as a theme, aviation, but I know you wrote . . . co-authored the book with Michael Osborne *Mr. Mac*, about William MacCracken.

JR: Memphis had a small college of optometry, the Southern College of Optometry, run by Spurgeon Eure. Spurgeon was kind of a Mississippi riverboat gambler. He was a high roller and he wanted to do things. At that time they had set up a committee, some kind of a thing to promote those smaller schools of optometry, and they had to certify them. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools were part of the certification process. At Memphis State we had just done a self-study of the University. The Southern College of Optometry had to do the same thing. A man named Vonne Porter had been a cog in the one at Memphis State and The Southern College of Optometry hired him; he was a psychologist, experimental psychologist, and a genius, a flat genius.

So they were going to do this self-study to get accredited by this association and Vonne Porter and I were friends, and I had worked on the self-study at Memphis State. I wasn't in his league at all. He didn't have time to do it at the school of optometry because he was the vice president and he had other things to do—grants and growth and all that. So he called and asked me if I would edit their self-study and I was thrilled, because to work with Vonne Porter was a big thing in my world. So I said, "You bet." They had me down for a luncheon; I went to lunch with Porter and Eure and they said, "We'll give you fifteen hundred dollars and a secretary." Then later on Spurgeon said, "Ho, ho, ho, I had twenty-five-hundred dollars and I got you for fifteen." And I said, "Ho, ho, ho, I would work with Porter for nothing."

Then Spurgeon found out I was doing this oral history stuff: Browning and Martin. The first international colloquium for oral history was at Lake Arrowhead. Lake Arrowhead was part of the University of California, the center there, and I wanted to go, but Memphis State wouldn't give me any money and I didn't have any money. So Spurgeon found out about it. He said, "Are you going to go to this colloquium?" And I said, "No, I can't go." He said, "Why not?" I said, "It's money and I can't afford the trip." He said, "How much is it?" I said, "It's California." He turned to his secretary and said, "Red," he called her Red, and said, "Give Joe a check for three hundred dollars." So he gave me three hundred bucks and I found an airplane and went to this colloquium.

Then Spurgeon decided that he would like to do a book, an oral history book. William MacCracken had become the Washington Counsel for the American Optometric Association—their leading lobbyist. This was during WWII, when they hired MacCracken. The chief council was Harold Kohn from New York City, and Harold Kohn and Bill MacCracken were a dual powerhouse. They went to war for optometry against the American Medical Association and all that they controlled, which was a lot—congressmen and senators, lots of power, the AMA. So Spurgeon said, "The biggest name we've got in optometry is Bill MacCracken." Well, that was true. Bill MacCracken was the first Undersecretary of Commerce for Aeronautics, or Aviation. He worked under Herbert Hoover in the Commerce Department before Hoover became president. He pretty much authored the Air Commerce Act of 1926, which was the first act that had to do with the safety of aviation and had to do with commercial aviation.

KM: It would have probably been . . . no federal laws at all about aviation.

JR: Very little.

KM: People were just flying about everywhere wherever they wanted to go. He was instrumental.

JR: Yes, pretty much. Unregulated, like the United States government today. No regulation, just steal everything you can steal and leave town. Mr. MacCracken was also Secretary of the American Bar Association. He was a renowned big-time Republican and a superb human being. We got in touch with him and he was all crippled up; he was on crutches and still going to his office. He was an old man, but an old and very bright man. So we worked over three years with Bill MacCracken. He held the number one pilot's license in the United States. He was decorated by many governments of Europe for his work in aviation. He was well known and deservedly so. We worked for three years plus on the MacCracken book and at the same time we were working on the history of optometry because it was supposed to be the first in a series of books called "Pioneers of Optometry." We had a five thousand dollar expense account; part of that was wages. So he made us fly first-class. We couldn't ride in the back of the airplane; we had to ride in the front. Mike Osborn, a department colleague and a first rate scholar, agreed to share the MacCracken project, and we got underway.

KM: That would have been a considerable amount of money back then.

JR: Five thousand dollars back in 1968. Bill MacCracken wanted Orville Wright to have pilot license number one. Orville Wright was a cantankerous old buzzard and aviation always had problems getting him to do whatever they wanted him to do as part of their public relations. Wilbur had died back in the WWI period, so they ask Orville if he would accept the number one pilot's license. He said, "No, give it to Bill." So Mr. MacCracken became pilot number one in the United States. It was so incredible, just being in his presence.

Lindberg had to come and see him in order to fly the Atlantic; Lindberg did have permission. And Lindbergh had cracked up two airplanes but that was back when they flew down and grabbed the mailbag off of a pole. So MacCracken wrote to Lindbergh. We wanted to interview Lindbergh. Of course Lindbergh had been burned by all the media because of his admiration for the Luftwaffe and America first. So we have the Lindbergh letters, and he wrote back and said, "Here's what happened." We got to interview him by mail and it was really good. And when the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped, Bill MacCracken was instrumental in negotiating the ransom money. I don't remember all the details but it's in the book. And he and Lindbergh became close friends. Ford had just built their tri-motor aircraft and they were showing them off all over the United States—this was after Lindbergh became a hero. So he was the pilot and they'd go into cities and they had two of these tri-motor airplanes and they'd load them up with dignitaries. He would fly them around the city and then they'd load the other one up with the dignitaries who were waiting for him to land, then he'd land and run across to the other one. Mr. MacCracken was involved in all that.

Mr. MacCracken was involved in everything in aviation. When the Democrats came to power in '33 with Franklin Roosevelt, they started to do a witch hunt pretty much against the Republicans who had been in power for so long. Part of that was an investigation into ocean and air mail contracts. Mr. MacCracken was an attorney for some of the people who the Senate wanted to put on the hot seat. So they subpoenaed people and Mr. MacCracken would not turn over private

records of correspondence with people who were his clients. Anyhow, it got complicated. So Senator Hugo Black of Alabama and his committee found Mr. MacCracken in contempt of the Senate and they put him in jail. He spent ten days in the D.C. jail and that's one of the chapters of his book. Ten days in the D.C. jail and he taught the prisoners how to play bridge, which is what MacCracken would've done. He also climbed the Washington Monument, he and one of his buddies, Clarence Saunders. They were sand-blasting the Washington Monument, cleaning up, and they had all this super-structure on the outside. Clarence said, "Bill, we ought to go over and climb that sucker." And he said, "You bet!" So they went over and up the outside of the Washington Monument they went.

KM: Sounds like a real character. I guess you know being a pilot back then.

JR: We worked a long time [on the book]; we interviewed lots of people, hundreds of pages and much tape. And it was so exciting because we interviewed a lot of good people. He was so revered, you know, he was clean. There's an undercurrent—it's so common for people to sit around and scream about their government, you know, congressmen, senators, and it has changed a lot. The influence of money has been dreadful and when I was much younger I had senators and congressmen I revered; I thought they were great people, honorable and so forth, and I'm not a Republican. Public servants, like the first Undersecretary of Commerce, somehow get in that line of fire; if you are associated with the government, that's not a good thing. But this country has been blessed with magnificent public servants, and that ought to be talked about more. There are great people in the executive branch of this government; they're not in the White House. But we've got public servants all over the place who are very good people. They're kicked around, it seems to me.

KM: Yeah, I think you're right. It's good to remind ourselves of the dedication.

JR: So the MacCracken book came out and nobody ever read it.

KM: I'm wondering if it has to do with the title, maybe someone was thinking about the optometry when, I think you mentioned, most of the book is on aviation.

JR: Oh, it's almost all on aviation because optometry didn't fit aviation, and it was one of those things. The book is lopsided; there's a little tail wagging the dog. Optometry put up the money to do the book and the book isn't about optometry at all. It's about Bill MacCracken and aviation and what he did for optometry, he and Harold Kohn.

KM: Yeah, it's a very wonderful book.

JR: We went to his 50th wedding anniversary party; Mike spoke.

KM: Now who was this for?

JR: MacCracken.

KM: Oh, MacCracken.

JR: Mike and I went to Washington and Mike spoke at the banquet they had. The picnic they had was enormous and Justice Black was there, Secretary of the Navy was there, all kinds of people were there. Perle Mesta, the grand lady of Washington who was *the* lady to know, was also there.

Everybody got their picture taken with Perle Mesta, I think, except me and Mike. But at that gathering I met a man named Graves. His father was a Major General. At the end of World War I the revolution was going on in Russia, and they had the White Army and the Red Army and the Bolshevik Army; they had several armies running around Russia, fighting each other I guess. So in all of its wisdom, the Allies sent an expeditionary force under General Groves into Russia. I don't remember the number of men, but it was idiocy. So Captain Groves, who was General Groves' son, was at this picnic. And I spent most of my time with stories about the expeditionary adventure that he went on with his father into Russia. That was great fun; I wish I had had a tape recorder. And of course I spent a lot of time with Harold Kohn. Harold Kohn is just one of those great people; few will ever know how much he did for vision care. You know, he was the Chief Counsel for the AOA [American Optometric Association], he fought the AMA [American Medical Association] in the courts and in Congress and in hearings. He helped build the vision center in New York; he was a saint.

KM: I think you mentioned he was instrumental in making sure that the populous of America was having their eyes checked.

JR: Yes, the first line of eye examination now is optometry, and the growth of optometry was slow and painful like other minority medical professions. Nursing has had the same problem; they've been second-class citizens, not so much now, but for a long period of time. The podiatrist had the same problem, the chiropractors had the same problem, the osteopaths had the same problem. But once you're fighting the AMA, you're fighting a giant, with a lot of money and a lot of influence. And Harold Kohn was leading that charge for optometry; he hooked up with Bill MacCracken and they were moving and shaking and got someplace. The ophthalmologist is an MD who has specialized in eye surgery. So the second person you meet when you have pathology of the eye is your ophthalmologist, but optometrists are very well schooled. The schools are four years of college and four years of optometry school. Those minority professions now are big stuff and they're treating millions of people in this country.

KM: Now you were also involved with . . . is it Isaac Borish?

JR: Irv Borish.

KM: Irv Borish.

JR: Irvin Borish was close to MacCracken, but Irv Borish has been a spokesman for the AOA for a long time and he wrote their premiere textbook on refraction.

KM: You had interviewed him too, right?

JR: Oh yes. He looks like Albert Einstein, spittin' image. If you put Einstein's picture on the wall and you put Irvin's picture on the wall, you'd have twins. He was a painter, an artist, he was a rose grower—a champion rose grower. He put a clinic in at Kokomo, Indiana. He was at the Needles Institute. His family went through that early migration process thing, with big families and little apartments.

KM: He was one of the giants of optometry in the beginning.

JR: Yes, yes he was on the ground floor at this little private college in Chicago. He kind of made happen the University of Indiana School of Optometry and he taught there for years. That's where I interviewed him.

KM: We have a wealth of information on optometry regarding your interviews.

JR: And of course optometry was doing everything they could to establish graduate programs. They kind of hooked up with physicists and psychologists because the psychologists had done a lot of work on vision and what it means to the human animal. I can't talk very much about that because I don't understand very much about it. But they got hooked up with some heavy duty scientists from Europe and from Australia. Irvin Borish was not particularly a research scholar; he was kind of more than that in some ways. He was the guy in optometry who explained it to the world. That's an overstatement. But he traveled all the time and he was a giant cheerleader and a very intelligent man. His interviews are wonderful, and he talks about the ups and downs, the ins and outs, some people in professions just want to be as rich as the people with MDs. So the motivation for the rank and file of optometry is to have a good job and to serve their community. In the middle of all that they had their state associations and those people were appearing before congressional committees; they were trying to get the social security laws changed, and they did.

Bill MacCracken was the man who got them their commissions in World War II. Optometrists went in and were refracting lenses through the day and doing KP at night. He was a private or PFC, and professionals aren't supposed to be doing KP at night, so they got some optometrists commissioned. Bill MacCracken knew everybody—in the navy, in the army, all of the big airline companies and leaders in optometry got him on their side as a counsel. They hired the right guy. And of course, if you hook him up with Harold Kohn you had a dynamic duo. It was Batman and Robin you know? I copied the MacCracken's and Kohn's correspondence. I have copies of them because I want to do something about that. There are letters between the two of them and the strategies in congressional hearings; not only were they exciting but also in great depth. These men were pros, but they were also funny. The letters are just delightful, absolutely delightful. I don't know what I'm going to do about it. Maybe I'll do a piece and put that in the collection. You have to separate them in some way because it kind of is about the heart of the matter. Here's what has to happen in order for optometry to find its way through the maize.

KM: That sounds like a wonderful resource for something like that.

JR: Spurgeon Eure was phenomenal. He wanted to do something and he did it. When I was working on the MacCracken book I went to the AOA library headquarters in St. Louis, their other headquarters was in D.C., I went to their St. Louis library to work on MacCracken and optometry, and I went down in the basement and here are the American Optometric Association papers there with silverfish and roaches and stuff, rotting. I'd already been through that in Memphis with other archives. Anyhow, I got back to Memphis and Spurgeon said, "How was the trip?" And I said, "It was terrible." I said, "The AOA's manuscript collection, the correspondence, all the stuff from congressional hearings and all that, it's up there rotting."

KM: What a shame.

JR: And he said, "It won't rot anymore." He picked up a telephone and said, "Hey! What's going on up there with that collection? Oh, it's just in the way? Good, mail it to me." And they did. And then Ginny and I indexed it and prepared it for microfilm, and they microfilmed it. I also had a lot to do with putting together the MacCracken Library at the Southern College of Optometry. And then MacCracken's daughter threatened a lawsuit to get back all the memorabilia that we had on the walls; and so they removed the name of the library and turned the memorabilia over to her. I don't know what she has done with everything. The MacCracken papers, from his days in commerce and the American Bar Association—that all went to the Herbert Hoover library. Slippery Rock University has all the tapes we had done on MacCracken, plus the transcripts, and of course they're here in the archives. We made copies of everything and shipped it off to the Hoover Library and put our name on it: Slippery Rock University. So that was a good thing.

KM: Most definitely.

JR: Yes, absolutely. And they were thankful; they sent us a copy of what is in the collection.

KM: Well that was certainly a major achievement for the university, too.

JR: Yes, yes it was a good thing.

KM: I'm going to cover some other things.

JR: Oh my goodness, I always talk too much.

KM: Well this has been very useful in terms of our collection and what you've donated to us and you've given us a wonderful background on MacCracken and history of the optometry which you've given to us, so this is all great information. But I'd like to also . . . you've been involved with so—you wrote the other book . . . well you were an editor anyways on Everett Cook and we also at some point want to get to Kap Monahan, Kasper Monahan.

JR: Oh, you bet, you bet.

KM: So which would you . . .?

JR: Well, the Cook book preceded that. I don't know how I got connected with Mr. Cook, General Cook. I don't know how all these things happen really. Probably Lamar Wallace made it happen; he was the head of the library and he was my mentor. And he gave me my start in the McKellar papers and like I said, I worked with a public library there for ten years.

KM: And part of the archives too, right?

JR: Yeah, I was the archivist for Memphis and Shelby County. That was kind of a short-lived thing because there were a lot of political shenanigans going on. Anyhow, they started criticizing me for moonlighting and if I hadn't moonlighted I couldn't even raise my family. I told them I didn't need to be paid. So I think they unpaid me or something; I don't remember what all happened. Mr. Cook was a World War I flying ace. He made all kinds of connections then and he was a powerhouse business man. He started and made his company into a very large corporation, Cook Industries. I heard they were the third largest grain exporter in the world, but I don't know if that's true. He had ships on the ocean and a big headquarters there in Memphis. So

someone got me connected with him to do a book. And I met with him, and he said, "Great, you can help me along." He said, "Just get me a machine and let's go to it." So I went down to interview him and he said, "How's this thing work?" And I filled him in on the buttons, and he said, "Okay, I'll see you." And I thought I was there to interview him, not so. He didn't need me. So he did his own recordings and his secretary did the transcripts and Margaret Lawrence and I edited it for publication.

We got hooked up with Memphis State University where I was teaching, because they had a print shop and they had automated their printing process like all the newspapers. Jesse O'Dell was running it, so Jesse put the book together. The president of the university was not a pal of mine, but when Mr. Cook called Cook to talk to him, all of a sudden I was okay. Working with him was super. Equally marvelous was Mrs. Cook. I would go down to Cook Industries—we met from time to time to talk about the progress of the book. At Cook Industries they were all Republicans and they were all a part of the Memphis establishment. They knew that I worked with Senator Gore, Albert Sr., and so I was a little bit on the hot seat every time I went down there to meet with him.

The corporation had their own private dining room; the food was fine. So I got fed really well. I had to take a little funny abuse, but these people were nice Republicans and nice rich guys. And they set-up on me a little bit; that was okay, I'd been there before. So we got the Cook book done and by that time I had gone to Terre Haute, so Ginny and I flew back for the big signing and he turned all the money over to the library and the library established the Cook Oral History Collection. The meeting place they have in downtown Memphis for conventions, that's the Cook Center also. He was one of the industrial giants, along with Abe Plough, who owned St. Joseph aspirin. I've got correspondence that he had with Abe Plough and I've had with Abe Plough, because he wanted me to do a book on Abe Plough. And Mr. Plough, another billionaire was only mildly interested in me doing it; he wanted somebody else. So he wrote Mr. Cook, and he wrote me a nice letter saying he was going to have that done but he wasn't quite ready. I didn't get the job.

KM: Cook was in aviation, you mentioned.

JR: I'm sorry; yes he was a World War I ace.

KM: Would he have known MacCracken or Cook?

JR: Good question. I don't know if their paths ever crossed. He was part of the military and industrial establishment, so was MacCracken in lots of ways. MacCracken was only on big boards later on, I can't name them.

KM: If you wanted to talk about that some more, I don't know how you feel about that or if you're pressed for time or if you want to do another interview. But I'd like to also touch on Kap.

JR: Oh, oh yes. The other thing about Cook is, during World War II, he was put back on active duty and worked for the State Department and he went to Europe as Assistant Chief of Staff to General Spaatz, Carl Spaatz—Tooey Spaatz. But through all those years Cook was in close with a lot of huge industrialists.

KM: So would you consider this a time of the very beginnings of what Eisenhower called the military industrial complex that he warned us about?

JR: I don't know the answer to that. Anyhow, he went to Russia and all that is in the Cook book, and he was such a gentleman. I loved being with him. We spent a lot of time together during the editing process but a lot of that was just social because he invited us to his penthouse. So I was running around with some kind of industrial royalty; I wouldn't have done that if he hadn't been such a great person. I wouldn't socialize with the Admiral at all. You know, you take to some people and you don't take to other people.

KM: That book is in our collection, too.

JR: Yes, you have the Cook book. One of his friends did the illustrations, a young woman, Lynda Ireland. Margaret Lawrence helped me with the editing; she was an archivist. It was a team effort, and the university was important, but if Mr. Cook asked the President of the University to do whatever, they could have named the basketball team after him. It's really strange, the South is different and that establishment—they were not my people to begin with—but in the middle of all that were some industrialists who were giants, who were philanthropists of the first order and who were probably doing something about making the world a little better, and maybe even with the desegregation thing because they controlled a lot of employees. The Cook and Plough—huge companies. So my guess is they were doing some very good works, but the world they operated in was a white world of very wealthy people.

KM: It was definitely a time in history of transition.

JR: I don't want blanket condemnation. I'm not knowledgeable about all that stuff, but the farewell address of Eisenhower was an interesting document and very unexpected.

KM: It seems to be quoted a lot nowadays. Okay how do you feel? Do you want to come back to finish up or do you want to keep going? I'm perfectly fine if you want to keep going. Do you want to talk about Kap now or . . .? You also had your sabbatical with the BBC and some other topics.

JR: I think if it's okay with you I'd like to do another session.

KM: Sure, that'd be great. Why don't I end this right now then?

END OF 10-15-08 CD PT. 2

BEGINNING OF 10-16-08 CD PT. 1

KM: This is Kevin McLatchy, today is October 16th, 2008, and this is our third interview with Joseph Riggs. Joe could you tell me a little bit more about the oral history project and how it was to work with Leah Brown.

JR: I don't know who instituted it, but they asked me to do it and then I don't know how I got Leah Brown to work with me, because generally if you do interviews you do them one-on-one. That's the best way. But there are alternatives to that if you got the right people and she was the right people, she was really dynamite. She had this facility for analysis; she knew the questions to ask which were the underpinning of the unknown stuff. She's just so smart, and then I was the

hotdog so I got to make a lot of noise, but then Leah made a lot of sense, and there's a difference. Anyhow, it was fun; it was really good because we stayed on track because of Leah. It was just a pleasure to work with her. The transcriptions we were looking for right afterwards, so we could move along and collate stuff and preserve them, came very slow. So, I don't remember how many of those things we did—fifteen or so. Bob Dispirito wanted to do a book. Some of them said, "You can't tell anybody this." And I said, "Well, we'll hold it for five years."

KM: This is Bob Dispirito, the football coach?

JR: Yeah, that wasn't Bob's thing, though. It was another person who talked about another faculty member and said some stuff. He wasn't embarrassed about saying it, he just didn't want it to be known right away, which is not uncommon for people to do memoirs and then have them stashed away and was not to be opened for fifty years; the Kennedys' did that, Woodrow Wilson. So anyhow, people at the library were great. The work that Ginny did with retrieving the Monahan 10,000 columns—we're talking about a lot of paper and a lot of microfilm to copy from, and she worked for about five years. That took a long time.

KM: That sounds like a major project.

JR: Yeah it was. Of course we had all kinds of plans for doing the history of all these movie stars that he worked with and met and interviewed, but the thing fell apart. It must have fallen apart on account of me. But it fell apart; a part of that was Kap. Kap didn't want to die, and he and I became buddies. I spent time with him and we were great friends, and he wasn't very interested in concluding his memoirs. He kind of delayed that, so we drank bourbon instead. We went around and did things; they had parties out there at their house all the time. His wife was the consummate hostess and a magnificent woman. She was one of the great women in my life; she had this facility for calming people, she was just so bright and so lovely. If you had a problem and you were her friend, go see her, because she'd cure you, and not everybody can do that. But through my lifetime women have played such an important part at important junctures and when I wasn't doing well I had a person like Lois Monahan. Dynamite. She was the head of advertising for the Pittsburgh Press; she came there in 1929, and she and Kap got married in '58. She married the art critic for the press much earlier than that, Doug Naylor. But she had all of these women in her department and she was kind of their minister and they had all kinds of male/female, all kinds of funny problems, and Lois was a mother confessor. She didn't put herself out there to do all that stuff; she just did it when people were in trouble. Absolutely remarkable woman.

KM: Yeah, this is all of course during your time at Slippery Rock College, at the time, and it looks like you also were involved not only with Kap Monahan down in Pittsburgh, but the television stations while you were here.

JR: Yes, Lloyd Kaiser came as president of WQED; I'm not sure when that was. He built the PPTN [Pennsylvania Public Television Network] station at Hershey. He was my officemate at Lehigh back in '53 -'54 and we resigned on the same day. Neither of us got fired; we left because it was an unhappy situation. And then he got a job with the SUNY system at Fredonia and called me the next year to come join him but I couldn't do that because of our new baby and our new house. Later, he was part of the Futures Course that Bob McCoskey did, that classroom thing where he brought in all these whiz-bangs from all over the place and we'd tape it. We'd

taped fifty-two hours or whatever it was. Anyhow, when Lloyd called me, he said that they were selecting people to be members of WQED's board and that the mediocrity spot had not been filled yet. And I was the most mediocre guy he knew, so that's how I got on the board. And then he appointed me to be their liaison with the PPTN network out at Hershey.

KM: PPTN . . . Pennsylvania Public Television Network? Right.

JR: So every three months I got a car from Pete Heinz here and off I went to Hershey and met some good people from the other colleges. Our job was to kind of be a planning and advisory commission to public television programming. It was complicated because we didn't have any real power, so we did a lot of talking; we'd go out to lunch. But we did make a connection or two with some people who did have money and who were willing to invest in public television; one of them was APSCUF [Association of Pennsylvania State Colleges and University Faculties]. I'm not sure what came of all that. I saw some correspondence I had the other day, but I didn't spend any time in Pittsburgh with the WQED board. I had this other job and I went to Hershey for several years. I was on the board six years. Anyhow, Lloyd was always poking fun at me. Just an enormous talent; he put WQED on the map. He got all this money from Gulf Oil, and they were doing National Geographic stuff. And of course he got taken to the task by the press. They claim he had a golden parachute retirement program worked out. He was worth it. Whatever he had worked out in terms of his income and his retirement, it was done with the board of directors, it was done above board, I'm convinced of that, but the newspapers did a horrible smear job on him when he retired. It was most unfortunate. Super talent, good man.

KM: Let's talk about this, go back to maybe optometry because you were still involved . . .

JR: Yes, when I came here I was still supposed to be doing these pioneers in optometry and I worked on Irv Borish and the other guy.

KM: Was it Glen Fry maybe?

JR: Glen Fry, yes. I had support here from the college, I'm not sure what form that support took; I don't think it was money. It was just they were happy I was out there doing stuff, so I went to Columbus and worked there with Glen Fry twice. And I went to Indiana and worked with Irv Borish, and then I got a substitute interviewer and I helped send in questions and we did a follow-up on Irv Borish, which is in the manuscript that I've given the library.

KM: Could you tell me more about Glen Fry now?

JR: Glen Fry was a psychologist; he had a doctorate in psychology and he got hooked up with Ohio State and he founded the school of optometry there. He was a powerhouse educator, and that was his long suit, giving credibility to the world of optometry, changing the curriculum, and he had a big university, Ohio State University. The university optometry programs were very different from private schools in terms of quality and in terms of credibility. And Glen Fry was one of those men kind of in the trenches; he wasn't a fire-eater. He wasn't out there selling, you know, beating the drums. He didn't go to Washington to scream at the Congressmen and all that stuff; he just quietly built a fine program with some very good people.

When I interviewed him he was extremely modest, but his contribution was large. He knew all the international vision care physicists and psychologists, and they were different, of course.

Optometrists were technicians, but they were technicians who were dealing with a very important part of the human anatomy, the eye. And of course the psychologists were really into eyes, I can't tell you more about that because I don't really understand it very well. But interviewing Glen Fry was a delight; he was so highly thought of—in Europe, in Australia, and across the United States. And he furnished educators out of the Ohio State program to other universities. His wife was a speech teacher and she hid in the hall while I was working. She wanted to make sure that I knew how great a man he was. That's understandable because he was. She also didn't want him to say something she didn't want him to say, so it was very peculiar because I knew she was out there, and I said, "Come in Mrs. Fry!" It was better that she be inside than out in the hall. So she came in and then she started talking about the regency. He became a Regency Professor. A Regency Professor was more important than an endorsed chair. So she was explaining how important he was—and he was—but he wasn't going to say that, so she wanted that on the record. She talked and it was fine, nothing wrong with that.

Then Borish was a pied piper for optometry. He went around to all the schools, he lectured, he made things happen. He was involved in the politics of it all with some very important men, Charles Sheard, who was early on in optometry and then went to Mayo Clinic and worked out of Mayo for a long time. Sheard had a lot of muscle, and [Borish] fundamentally harnessed the people that it took to get a school of optometry at the University of Indiana. They had all kinds of little problems with the private schools; some of them weren't very good. But if you get tied to a university then the quality standards change measurably—at Indiana University and Southern California, Yale. Borish, like I said, was a rose grower, he was a painter—portrait painter, landscape painter. A man for all seasons.

KM: Yeah, we did talk about him a little bit.

JR: We did talk about him, he's just an absolute delight to be with because he had all this energy, you know?

KM: Yeah, a giant in the field.

JR: Yeah, yeah, he wrote this twenty-five pound text book on refraction and I guess everybody is still using it as far as I know. But gee he was fun to be with.

KM: I'd like to move on maybe, that all took place in the '70s, right?

JR: Yes, and I think '74 was when I ended up with Fry. They were supposed to become hardback books, but something happened to the Southern College of Optometry—money became scarce or something. To publish five thousand copies of the MacCracken book, it's a big number and that's expensive. So I think they ran out of money at the Southern College of Optometry; we ran out of gas, whatever that means. I was a party to that; I didn't follow through and so I don't remember exactly why it fell apart. But Glen Fry certainly qualified, along with Irv Borish and Harold Kohn as, pioneers in optometry. Well MacCracken, not a pioneer in optometry but the Washington counsel, who was the chief lobbyist, and who had real connections.

KM: Those are some pretty major achievements.

JR: Oh dear.

KM: I'd like to move on to the 1980s and take a look at your sabbatical to Europe.

JR: Yes, in 1980, I got my first sabbatical ever.

KM: What was involved with that? What did you do on your sabbatical?

JR: Craig Leake was the guy who did the Crump documentary and the York documentary and later won Emmys. I got in touch with him and he got in touch with Chris—somebody who was head of the BBC in America. Chris said, "Shoot, yeah I'll give old Joe a job." So they hooked me up with the BBC to be kind of an apprentice there, a gopher.

KM: This is in London?

JR: In London, yes. And I was delighted, but then the guys at the BBC went on strike and I wasn't about to mess with any picket lines; I'd have been scared. So I couldn't get into the BBC to do my thing. So kind of at the last minute I got Glen Fry to write letters for me and he connected me with the schools of optometry in London and in Cardiff and in Vinci, right out of Florence and Paris. So I had some connections to people to work with after I got there. So I changed my plans in mid-stream and got hooked up on vision care—Cambridge University. So I got all these people lined up to get in touch with at sometime on this sabbatical, which was a very good thing, though I would have loved to work at the BBC. But they did give us a tour; we got a free lunch at the BBC and a tour, Ginny and I, and that was swell because we were VIPs. West Virginians aren't used to being VIPs.

The first interview I did was with a guy from London, Arthur Bennett. It was really good because he was an old-timer and he knew a lot about the National Health Service. He knew a lot about technology and all the training that optometrists and optics people go through. He took us to lunch; we were always going to lunch with somebody and that was good. Anyhow, that was several visits to London, and they gave us a flat on campus. So Ginny and I had a flat, it was a little teeny thing. But there is nothing wrong with that and Arthur treated us really well. And then Ginny learned about London and of course she could go to London; she went to London by herself a lot, to go to all kinds of expos and things.

Then I went to Cambridge and did Fergus Campbell. And he was the eternal Scot, and a fine research scholar. He came to Ohio State, he came to Brown and he came to the University of California. He came to America a bunch of times. He was a very funny guy, whose hero was Groucho Marx, and he was just funny. He said he wouldn't do just any kind of research if it was boring; he just couldn't stand being bored. So it had to be fun and exciting, and he didn't mind working twelve hour days, fourteen hour days, one hundred hour weeks. He talks about that in his transcript. And he was just so bright about science and about research and about plagiarism and about America and about titles. He was just a dandy fellow. His father had been a doctor in Glasgow way back, and he got paid in chickens and potatoes. So Campbell was probably a socialist at heart; you know a man who believed you had to spread that wealth so that the people on the bottom always had a chance. So that was just a big thrill. He said, "If the grant doesn't come through or the equipment doesn't come through, I have five more things to do." He said, "I ask questions we need to get answers to and sometimes we don't get those answers, but the research gets us in some other direction and you follow the yellow brick road."

KM: Yeah that sounded like a wonderful sabbatical.

JR: We bought an old car and we traveled ten thousand miles and got to interview, like I said, at Cambridge and London and we went to Cardiff, Wales and interviewed a person by the name of Michelle Millidot. [He was] a French guy who had gotten a Ph.D. at Brown University under a guy named Riggs, no kin to me, who was a fairly famous psychologist. Millidot had done optometry in Canada, and so he became the head man at Cardiff. I think we have transcribed all that; we have about an hour of it. But I've got the other tapes and we'll get that done. I want to do it because he was a funny guy; we met a lot of funny guys and some funny girls, I suppose.

KM: Sounds like some researchers will appreciate the humor of these; it's not all cut and dry.

JR: Probably the most low-profile interviewee would have been Glen Fry; he had heart problems, so it was pretty serious business. He was awfully cautious; he didn't want to hurt anybody. And that isn't true of all interviewees, some will turn it loose. Fry did not do that. But he had been like that; he did not make enemies. He made friends of potential enemies, he turned them into friends; the ophthalmologists, the people who didn't want to see optometry make its way up through the maze. I think I interviewed someone in Paris, but I'm not sure. We had such a good time in Paris! And my mother-in-law was with us, and she was an amateur painter. Of course, Ginny's mom was one of my great love affairs.

I don't have any mother-in-law jokes, kind of a super, super mother-in-law, and she was so thrilled. She went to the Louvre and I thought she was going to have a stroke. She was so happy in art galleries and in Florence. Wow, did she have a good time in Florence. It was just a great thing because we all came out of the sticks of West Virginia and she had never got to go anywhere really. She had a tough life and worked hard.

KM: Now, when you returned from the sabbatical and came back to Slippery Rock, can you highlight some of the things you were involved with at Slippery Rock?

JR: Wow. Gee . . .

KM: I know you did the oral history interview with Leah.

JR: I did the oral history with Leah.

KM: The radio station too? You were involved with the radio station?

JR: Yes, we had a radio station on campus and it was a problem; we were trying to develop two radio stations and Ted Walwik asked me to chair the committee Ken Harris was on. So we worked like the dickens to set up a format so we could have two stations; I think one FM and one AM. We worked a long time and Ted sent a report on our progress to Herb Reinhard, the president. I don't have any idea what his problem was, but he was not about to have two radio stations, but we didn't know that. I don't know why we didn't know it because we were doing all the planning for it. And he called Ted and said, "I want to find out who is responsible for this foolishness." And of course, that was me. Ted said, "What do you think we ought to do?" I said, "Tell him it's me. I'm a full professor; I'm tenured, no big deal." But every time I had a dealing with Herb Reinhard it went sour. But he was not a big part of my life; I don't mean to make him that important because he wasn't. Teachers have work to do and you can stay away from the deans and presidents and people who get in the way. Sometimes. And that's one of the problems with some faculty; they kind of get in a little lock-step and they get in a little hierarchy thing and

they don't exercise their freedom. We have enormous freedom, it seems to me. It was particularly true in northern schools; in the south it was a different ball of wax. But for people to shake in their boots because Herb Reinhard is in the neighborhood just should never happen. The divide and conquer thing or the for-me-or-against-me kind of thing was a bad situation. It's terrible for morale, but for people to dump on you, it kind of takes two to make that happen, and if you don't recognize the dumper then you're not the dumpee—maybe. I'm not sure that makes a lot of sense. When Reinhard came around with visitors in tow he would introduce me as one of his best faculty, so there.

KM: Maybe it'd be interesting to hear a little more history about the radio stations and how you remember them back then.

JR: Well, gee, I don't know. I was on the radio station committee and we worked on programming and we were doing very well. We worked on football games at other places; so we were getting somewhere, but the student government got all balled up somehow. We had too many people who were trying to make decisions and being in charge and we didn't crystallize those things very well. So it was like Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin; it just grew, and it didn't grow very well. So I don't know what else I can say; it just became kind of a hodgepodge.

KM: Were there ever the two stations still? How was that resolved?

JR: No, we never got around to two stations. I think the big problem was control. Who was controlling this station and their programming? And I think also that Reinhard thought it should be him or his representative. I think that's kind of what it was all about, but I'm not sure. Ted Walwik would know! Ted remembers!

KM: It sounds like you did some radio broadcasts on Lawrence County.

JR: Yeah, I did a show about Kap Monahan. What's the name of the guy from Lawrence County?

KM: Bart Richards.

JR: Oh yeah, Bart Richards. I don't know what all he did in his lifetime, but he was a raconteur and a kind of Bill Jackson; he had spats and fancy hats and he was absolutely a delight. We were talking about Kap, and he had been a follower of Kap through the Pittsburgh Press. Bart Richards had done fifty-two weeks on New Castle Radio, which was on the history of Lawrence County. No small trick; it's a remarkable thing. He was a bright, bright guy. We took the Monahan collection to the New Castle Library for an exhibit and I met Laura there and found out that Bart Richards had done this. And I thought, "Fifty-two tapes, you know, Lawrence County, sitting in a moldy place somewhere, rotting. That should be retrieved." So I asked her, "Could I have those tapes to take them up to the college and Bailey Library?" And she said, "Yeah." So I got the tapes and I brought them over and then Pat Wallace was here, and Pat took the tapes and indexed them. So we had a history of Lawrence County and we took the originals back to the library; I think they had been stored under education, some strange depository. And I'm not sure if I remember correctly, but I think Bailey Library shared those with the State Library. I'm not sure about that. But it was a neat little find and I'm sure they're a treasure. You know, the great Haywood Hale Broun; that was Bart Richards.

KM: Now in the ‘80s too—you and your son Jeffery, you interviewed John Hancock.

JR: John Hancock. John Hancock was a sharecropper guy in Arkansas and he grew up and got in the Union movement and he was a black man and he was a songwriter and a singer. I think he wrote the song “Roll the Union On.” Anyhow, a guy at the University of Washington named Mike Honey is doing a book on John Hancock. A friend of mine, Jim Kelly, from Santa Cruz, who’s a Slippery Rock graduate from about ’77, put on western festivals for the Union and they use musicians. Pete Seeger didn’t get there but he sent a banjo head with some writing on it. So John Hancock was one of their stalwarts. We met him in San Diego and he came over to Jeff’s house, my son’s house, and we spent part of the day and then we went downtown and then we went to the park. There’s a beautiful community park in San Diego, and we sat down out in the bowers somewhere and I think we have a little film of him, but Jeff and I did a tape recording. And I’m going to get in touch with Mike Honey and find out what else is in that collection. But we have John Hancock tapes.

KM: Of music or . . . ?

JR: Well, no, talking. I mean he sang on the tape, yeah, he did a little tune for us. We went to a saloon in downtown San Diego, thinking he’d like to have a beer, and he didn’t like the saloon. So we got out of there! But he was just another delightful person who grew up and escaped the lynch mob; he had a lynch mob story.

KM: Are there any other items we haven’t touched during your time here at Slippery Rock you’d like to talk about?

JR: Yes, there are some other things we put together—a childcare center. I was involved in that—finding a place, getting the hours worked out and getting a student who could handle the little buggers. And it was for mothers of small children who, when they came to college, had a place to put their children. It makes a lot of sense. And so we did that, and I’m very proud of that because that was just such a neat service and it was free. I think they could have paid something, but it was not much. Planning on the Staff Center we had Rhoda Taylor and George Sorg, he was the director of development and a retired navy commander. Anyhow, he was on the committee, and we worked two years while Larry Park was president here. Getting that Staff Center together, the place and the support from food services and all the little things that we had to do, and so when Herb Reinhard got the president’s job he told Larry Park he would be glad to open the staff center.

KM: Now, where was this? What building would that have been in?

JR: In North Hall, where it is now. That’s where it started. So we were having a grand opening and I went and got some beer and wine for the grand opening. That afternoon the women’s group had had a wine and cheese party. But somebody got to Reinhard and he cancelled the wine and the beer. It was just the wrong thing to do because he had appointed the board for the Staff Center, and he told us we were decision-making and we were permanent. Well, neither one of those things was true. We were temporary and we could be disbanded at will. So I wrote him a letter. Of course it was wonderful; the Staff Center was just super. And everybody including maintenance, everybody could go there, and that was a very good thing.

I was proud of the work we had done and getting that thing ready. And I was happy that Herb had endorsed it, but I wrote him a letter saying that it was a wonderful thing; the letter was about 80% good. And then I said that I was disappointed that he had cancelled our wine for our opening. I was in a night class and he called my wife and said, "Where is that rat Riggs?" And so I got home and she said, "The President called and he's very upset with your letter." And I said, "Gee whiz, it was a good letter I thought." And he had yelled at her, so I called him at eight o'clock the next morning and I yelled at him, a little bit, you know. And I told him not to insult my wife. So we got off to a great start. But it was a very, very small matter. I only had dealings with him four or five times, and each time it wasn't good. So that's once a year, so messing with Herb once a year was okay.

KM: Now, who followed after Herb?

JR: Bob Aebersold. Aebersold was our Academic Vice-President, while Herb was the President. And Bob Aebersold was head of physical education. When the Speech Department decided they wanted to be a Department of Communication, the English Department went up in smoke. They said, "You can't be a Department of Communication, everybody is into communication!"

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So we had a free-for-all, and Bob Aebersold refereed. And he was just wonderful; just a lovely, lovely touch. He didn't make everybody happy but at least he cooled the thing off. And then we did the Department of Communication because that's what had happened all across the United States; they were all communication or speech-communication. So we won and Aebersold refereed and he was very, very good—and a good president, too.

KM: Do you want to give me some impressions about the early stages of the Communication Department?

JR: Well, when Ted came, he had met Mary. He had worked with Tim and me.

KM: I'm sorry, Mary is?

JR: Mary Marzolf, who became Mary Garfield, and retired very young. Tim could do anything; he did speech and theatre, and he directed musicals here for our department for years. And he found Roy Stewart, who came out of Illinois. So Roy and Mary and Tim and I showed up about the same time.

KM: Tim's last name was?

JR: Walters. And we were a bunch of live wires, and Roy was a very good teacher. Mary was a very good teacher. These classrooms lit up, you know? And it's not to make any judgment about the other people who were there, we just didn't know them very well, and we knew that the department needed a shot of something, and Ted had all these vacancies. So, we came in and we started doing things. We had picnics with our students, we had a strong advisory program, we

brought in outside professionals to meet with students, and that department blossomed. We got Bruce Russell from A.V.; he worked at the library and he joined us.

Anyhow, it became one of the things the university was kind of pleased about because our growth pattern was good. We put in journalism and public relations, and of course we were into radio and television and all of the standard speech courses; public speaking, argumentation, debate, persuasion, small group problem-solving. Good stuff. I liked what we were doing because we were into everything, even the Quarterback Club. I didn't go to the Quarterback Club, but I put in twenty-five bucks because Ted put in twenty-five bucks and he said, "I just joined you to the Quarterback Club." He did that same thing to me on boy scouts; every time they were passing around the hat, he would put something in for me and then collect. So we had that kind of relationship. And we had the Bad Crow Society. There was an ancient story from back in the Greek rhetoric days. They had a school for rhetoricians, or philosophs they were called. So the teacher had to train this guy to be a lawyer kind of; that's what rhetoricians were, lawyers. And the guy lost a lawsuit, so he sued the teacher for not training him very well and the teacher counter-sued him for being a lousy student. And the judge said, "Bad egg, bad crow." So we formed the Bad Crow Society, and Monahan was in with us and Steve Glinksy the German teacher.

KM: Oh, Glinsky?

JR: Steve Glinsky was in it! I think we met once a month at somebody's house and had lots of food and a gathering and some beer. And the faculty then was having dinners at the church, the Catholic Church, and that was once a month I think. We were having dinners, and the motif was a particular country. So we held a Russian dinner where everything was Russian, all the soups and stuff. And then we would have an Italian, we'd have a French. We did a lot of fun stuff; we had poker games. I wasn't a full-time member but the English Department kind of ran the poker thing. I think they had an "A" gathering and a "B" gathering. And so once in a while somebody wasn't going to show up and they knew it and they would invite me. Those were funny because some of the players would make a speech, and when you're in a poker game you would like to get on with the game.

KM: A real sense of community.

JR: Yeah, and then we did the Monahan thing. Mary Garfield came out and did one of the interviews.

KM: Now who was Mary Garfield?

JR: In the Speech Department. And Orley Holtan, who was a theater director, came out and helped interview Kap for a session, and Ed Walsh. Ed was in the English Department, and Ed had connections with the Pirates and the Steelers. He had known about Kap. So every time we had a party at Kap's, Ed and I would be there. When we were doing the Monahan exhibit for the library, I said, "We need Art Rooney, the old man." He and Kap had been friends for a long, long time and we needed a picture from Art Rooney to Kap, an autographed picture. And so Ed worked it out and the picture came and it said, "To my buddy Joe Riggs." So I have this picture of Art Rooney with his cigar and it's to me.

KM: What other events, historical events, happened during those times that stick in your mind that were happening nationally maybe and also affected the campus here somehow. The student uprisings, were you here at that time? '70, maybe not?

JR: Oh, wasn't much of an uprising. About the Vietnam War?

KM: Right.

JR: Yeah, they had a few people gather around Old Main, they sang "We Shall Overcome," my recollection is that it wasn't very significant. Ronald Reagan got elected. We brought groups to the campus; Bright Morning Star was a pioneer, cutting-edge music group, and they did a lot of race-relations kind of things that were positive. And I brought them to campus a couple of times. I brought Dan Kamin, the Pittsburgh Mime who wrote a book on Charlie Chaplin, and he was a consultant for the Chaplin movie and also for "Bonnie and June," another movie. Dan has been working with symphony orchestras as a mime; he just got back from China, his second trip to China, and he's been to England a number of times. Marcel Marceau met with Dan when Dan was doing the Chaplin book, and Dan wanted him to do the intro. He and Marceau did "City Lights" in this hotel in New York. How about that?

Anyhow, so Marceau did do the intro and Dan has got the book out, the redoing of his book is out, it just came out. But he came here and the special ed. would put up a little money, phys. ed. put up a little money, speech and theater put up a little money. Anyhow, I went around and begged all of these people to ask their deans for a hundred bucks, so when I got seven or eight-hundred bucks we'd bring Dan in and he'd do a public performance for us, and then he did this lab work of what movement could do to help handicapped kids and things like that. We've kept our friendship together for thirty-five years or whatever it's been.

KM: What, if anything, do you miss about SRU, not being here?

JR: My great pleasure was classroom; I liked my students a lot. I liked my night students a lot. But that's something I didn't miss very long because I went down to South Carolina and went to a tech-school there and got a job at eighteen dollars a classroom hour. Big deal! And I taught at the Horry-Georgetown County Technical College, I taught with them three years. Then I went to North Carolina, a community college, Brunswick County Community College, and taught there a couple years. So I had my people, you know, people who were trying to become upwardly mobile and find a way to raise their families. But that was true here, too. We had lots of first generation folks and we had lots of night school students trying to find a way to get a college degree so they could make a better living for themselves and their families.

Some of my friends used to kid me about having a do-nothing job, you know, those who can work and those who can't teach, so I was one of the teachers. People would razz me for sitting around and drinking coffee. But there's a lot of work in teaching. If you spend a lot of time trying to figure out how you can improve the quality of the production of your students; that's what it's all about. So I was accessible, easily accessible, and I went to a lot of parties because after night sessions someone would be having a little party at their apartment. I went to a number of those, and they were fun, and good gatherings. And the people from out of town who were here for night school joined us. And I thought that's what professoring was all about. It had something to do with our relationship with students and I believe strongly in that. We weren't

there getting crocked or anything like that. Live music was always great. So you miss that kind of thing, the camaraderie is beautiful. Working with a person like Leah Brown, it doesn't get any better than that. The Dean Mastriani, the Dean of the School of Business, we had this Marjorie Stevenson scholarship here in the library.

I was on that committee from the get-go, and Dean Mastriani was a money genius. So all we had to do was sit there and say, "How are we going to spend this money?" And Mastriani would go *bop bop bop bop*; he came prepared, everybody didn't come prepared, but he did. He was a real dean; there were eighty people in his School of Business, and speech was in there for some reason. I never quite figured it out; I thought we were traditional arts and science. But anyhow, he knew what those eighty people were about; he knew something about their teaching skills, he knew something about their research skills, he knew what kind of contribution they were making. That's what deans are supposed to do; they need to know the quality of their faculty, and what they can do to make that quality better. And I thought that he was that kind of person, I liked him a lot.

KM: Reminisce about her; every year someone usually speaks about Marjorie Stevenson.

JR: Oh well, she drove a little Plymouth car. She was in the food co-op with us, so we knew her really well. She was just a do-gooder and a delightful lady. And she couldn't see very well; she was called Mrs. Magoo, I'm not sure to her face. We would go to Pittsburgh to pick up the food for our food distribution here, and she would volunteer her car and go and scare the hell out of everybody because people pulled off the road when they saw her coming. She was just a sweetheart. And we had our Marjorie Stevenson luncheons for years and years and years, and they are still going on.

KM: Did she talk to you personally about her motivation about that scholarship at all, do you remember?

JR: Well, the scholarship was for underprivileged, so the scholarship was a little vague, but it became thoroughly clear that she wanted underprivileged kids who had some talent, so that's the way the committee operated. We had these applications, and everybody read the applications; some people showed up to read the applications at the meeting, you were supposed to read the applications before the meeting. But that was not a huge deal. And then we would vote and try to figure out how to distribute the money without unloading the bank account. And we were dealing with someone up at Old Main, and there were some things I didn't understand. But I did understand the selection process and we'd interview and that was important, and of course a lot of those kids who got the money worked in the library which was helpful. We did a lot of good; we were giving out five-hundred bucks and we still remember some of the people. I think Marjorie's money that she originally gave was forty-five thousand dollars, something like that.

KM: Now, I know that you live in Slippery Rock.

JR: I've always lived in the country. I didn't move into Slippery Rock; don't have any interest in it.

KM: But you live locally?

JR: Yes, exactly. I've got a little, almost like a farm, halfway between here and Butler.

KM: I know you're still active with the community. I know recently you're still involved with oral history.

JR: Oh yeah, I'm doing some interviews for the Heritage Foundation of old timers. I did one the day before yesterday; John West. Mr. Montgomery of the Block Company at Harrisville; he just died. And I interviewed him when he was ninety-five or six. And his daughter was there during the interview, and of course I didn't really know much about him. So my questions were open-ended and he wasn't real talky when I was there so I wasn't getting anywhere and his daughter . . . I'm sorry I don't remember her name. But she triggered stuff, because she knew where he'd been, what he had done, so she was wonderful. So we got an interview and we got some substance, but we got it only because she was there.

KM: Yeah, that's a long time.

JR: Yeah, and the John West I just did, he had stories. And I'm anxious to see some of the print because I don't know whether it's good or not. He and his wife were just delightful. One of the funny things is that I'm interviewing these old people, you know, and I'm eighty. So I walk in, interviewing these guys who are seventy-seven, and they say, "Well, how old are you?" And then I have to confess that I'm eighty and they say, "Well, you must know something so we'll talk about something." And some of the interviews have just been really good. The Ted Walwik interview is dynamite. The Paul Suorsa—Dr. Suorsa—good, good interview.

KM: Now Dr. Suorsa . . . ?

JR: The veterinarian. And I interviewed him in a tent at that Heritage Foundation thing last year, so I didn't have a really good sound, but it's a good interview and I really ought to go do him again and do him some more because he's got an incredible history of doing things for the community. He's something. Let's see, I've got Millie Haag and I got to do Bill Martin. I've got another half-dozen maybe on my list. I'm about to go to California, so when I get back I'm going to do those and try to finish up my end of it. And then Dorothy Thompson, here in the library, is holding the tapes. We're also picking up some manuscripts and old land plots and things like that. I understand when the library is renovated that some of those things will make their way here. I think that's kind of in the offing, and I hope that's true because it would be nice if it had a permanent home. I think her daughter is handling most of all that stuff.

KM: It's a nice project.

JR: Yes, it is. And there are a lot of people out there who have things that we could reproduce or copy that are meaningful and part of the Slippery Rock history. Library committees in small towns do some beautiful things. Some don't know what they're doing and it all falls apart.

KM: I thought maybe at this juncture, you could maybe leave us some words of wisdom, other things you would like for the current or future Rock Community members to know.

JR: I will say something about the most disappointing thing here, and that was hiring faculty. Presidents, we could have done that better. I'll leave Herb alone. Anyhow, we had a lot of money, this institution, lots of money. Good salaries, good perks. We had the wherewithal to hire very good people. We did hire some good people, but we didn't hire enough good people. That's my opinion. And the hiring things that I was in. We had a lady who came here from Yale with a

Ph.D. in theater. She had worked with Leonard Bernstein in Austria, and we didn't even offer her the job. She was a dynamite interview; I thought, "What in the world?" That was our department. The lady who was head of nursing here, her husband was an internationally famous writer about golf, I'm sorry I don't remember the name. He came and got interviewed; he had been teaching night school at Pitt, he traveled to the British Open, the U.S. Open, the Masters, and he wrote for a golf magazine and for the newspapers. Dynamite. And then taught journalism, and we were into journalism. He interviewed, you know, and no job. I think that was happening around the college, too, because I thought, with that kind of money we ought to be hiring some top-notch people who would come in and make a mark, make a mark as part of the college community. People with talent and who wanted to share it. I thought we should have done much more of that, and we didn't, in my opinion. It's just the way I was seeing things, and I was so disappointed. We had a guy named Peter Lev right out of UCLA film school who wanted to be one of our T.V. film guys. Oh boy, what an interview. We didn't get him, and could have. So that happened too many times and I was disappointed.

We granted tenure to people who lied about their doctoral work and I didn't like that—lying about your academic stuff. You have a contract. In five years you're supposed to have this Ph.D. or your D.Ed. or your M.F.A., the M.F.A. was okay. And then you get near the tenure time and nothing had happened. And then we were told that things had happened that didn't happen. So there was some sleazy stuff like that; lying is bad business in the academic world. Falsifying things is a bad deal, we had some of that. We had some sexual harassment problems on campus and that shouldn't have been happening, and I felt strongly that the college's position was that they just didn't want it in the newspapers. This is a critical thing I am saying, but I believe it's true. That people who run colleges and universities and other kinds of institutions, if they have a rape or teachers sleeping with their students, they just don't want it to be publicized, because if nobody knows then it's okay. But it's not okay.

I knew about some of those things, I think, but I was never one to poke my nose into a lot of people's business, unless it was part of my function to do that. I was head of the sexual harassment committee and we did do investigative work and we made our report to President Reinhard and I was told he refused to accept it. Our conclusion, in the case of this professor who was putting his hands on young women, was that he needed help—mental help. And that's what they did. First they told us they didn't accept our report and then they gave him a year's leave of absence, and he came back fine. So he must have gotten some type of psychiatric assistance, which made sense. A lot of psychiatrists were just giving drugs, you know, and I think he must have found some psychoanalysis by a pro, somewhere, because he was a good teacher. Anyhow, it was things like that which were bothersome, but I'm not a straight-laced person; I'm as tolerant as I can be. But there are just some things that are beyond the pale, and we ought to take care of those things, and I thought that's what deans and people up the ladder who approve sabbaticals and who approve promotions ought to know that there are people out there who are behaving badly. And it's not in the best interest of our community for that to be going on. Consenting adults is one thing, but using your power position for those kinds of things is a bad thing.

KM: Do you feel like we've touched base with a lot of the issues?

JR: Well, I did want to say some things about oral history. When I was in Memphis, Senator Albert Gore Sr. was a prime mover for Medicare legislation. I was president of the Public Affairs

Forum. Richard Annis was a past president of the A.M.A. and also President of the International Medical Association and I invited him to debate Senator Gore in Memphis at the Public Affairs Forum. He cancelled a trip to Rio de Janeiro, that's my recollection, so he could face Gore. So we scheduled it; it was a big deal. We were on television and we were on radio, but the main auditorium where this was to take place, all the doctor's wives and their families showed up early and took all the seats. So the Gore supporters had to sit in another auditorium. We did a closed-circuit telecast on the campus at Southwestern University. It was wonderful. I have that tape and I have the transcript and I'll turn that over to you. But the Gore/Annis debate was important, because here were two of the top doggies in that whole business of Medicare. Gore had funny pronunciations once in a while. We did a lot of things like that; Paul Mawluko from Tanzania, Paul Martin from Canada, Bell from the Agency for International Development. We had Red from the TVA. We brought in a lot of really top-notch people and had debates. And [we] had hearings on police brutality.

I was on kind of a shadow committee and we put together five black leaders. A County Council member, head of the NAACP, and Ben Hooks, who later became head of the national NAACP—he came out of Memphis. So we had five black leaders who were prominent in the community. And we had eighteen hours of testimony; we brought an Indian judge from Oklahoma. We had all kind of powerhouse people who talked about police brutality in Memphis. I expect there is still some police brutality around. Pittsburgh seems to have some problems in that area as well. Anyhow, the police brutality study was eighteen hours; never saw it in print, but the tapes are in the Memphis Public Library in the Cook Collection.

There are some other things down there; Shelby Foote, the historian, who was a big star in Ken Burn's Civil War series. Shelby, I knew him a little bit, and I did a radio show with him and he decided that if Mississippi seceded again, he'd go with it. We started the Friends of the Library in Memphis and we had hundreds of people come out for this Friends of the Library opening. Shelby Foote was in Washington D.C.; he was a novelist and a historian. Some foundation brought in a lot of authors and writers to do plays in Washington, so we flew him back to Memphis to speak at the first meeting of the Friends of the Library. He got up and said, "I sure do like librarians" and he sat down. Nobody knew what to do. The meeting ended. Then the people who were coming in met the people who were going out! It was really funny. So later on Hodding Carter from Jackson, Mississippi, a newspaper editor and famous civil rights pioneer, was coming to speak at the library, but the airplane had run into some bad weather and he was delayed. Lamar Wallis, the head of the library, was going to filibuster until he arrived. Shelby Foote was in the audience and so Lamar went over and said, "Shelby, you owe me." The topic was the great author from Mississippi.

KM: Not Faulkner?

JR: Yes, Faulkner that was the topic. So he got up and he knew Faulkner, and of course he made a talk. We also did a study on poverty. I was chairman of the Poverty Study Committee and we were in motion a long time and did some great stuff. We had physicians, social agency administrators, black leaders, ghetto workers and ghetto dwellers. I have some of those transcripts. The people who I appointed to the committee were solid people; Catholic leaders, Republican leaders, women who helped us. We had to keep the firebrands off the committee. Some of them wanted to be on. We wanted that thing to have credibility, and it did. We got huge publicity. And we got the Agricultural Department in to help feed the school children and that

was a separate kind of operation. Gosh, there were some good people there. The nuns from the local Catholic college were great. They were in the King March after Martin Luther King was killed. We had a march immediately, about 40,000 people. The paper said there was twenty five or something, but busloads of people came from the American Federation of Teachers Union from New York City. Busloads came.

KM: Because Martin Luther King was killed in Memphis.

JR: Yes. Anyhow, I was a marshal on that march; I had a little marshal's thing on my shoulder. One of my friends from Boston, a colleague from the University of Illinois, saw me on network TV. So the next day I got a telegram saying, "I knew you'd be there." Anyhow, my kids were in that '68 march and lots and lots of faculty. Peter Yarrow, of "Peter, Paul and Mary", he and I were on the front page at the second march. It was my first and last front page. The man who put me on the front page was a reporter I had interviewed for the Crump Documentary. Some of our oral history work turned into investigative things like the police brutality and the Poverty Study Committee. We attracted the head of medicine of the state, the people who were running the charity hospitals, a research scholar from St. Jude who was just on 20/20 two weeks ago.

Craig Leake is back in Memphis and produced the piece on infant mortality. We did a lot of interviews on infant mortality back in our poverty study work. We did it at the university, and I'm not sure the president was happy about that but it's hard not to support it—poverty study. The nuns who worked in the ghettos [were a] powerhouse. They thought we were all kind of latecomers when they testified they said, "Look, we've seen this stuff before, and we think it's embarrassing for you to pretend like you're going to do something." So our motives were questioned and they should have been; it was the right thing to happen. So we got the kick in the pants once in a while when people thought we were just messing around, but we weren't. It was a good study, it had an impact; the impact obviously is temporary. But everybody's impact is temporary, said Thomas Jefferson. And Abigail Adams—Abigail is still with us. She's smoking them out there, talk about a librarian, an archivist; there was *the* archivist for America. And she and Jefferson were sort of enemies until later on when John Adams and Thomas Jefferson started writing letters and getting together again. [They] died on the same day in 1826: July 4th.

Anyhow, some oral history can be serious and impressive. Most of my stuff was fun, like Fergus Campbell said, "If it isn't fun, I don't do it." Oh his interview, it is so good. It is so good and he was so funny and so smart. And he talked about titles; in England they don't call doctors "doctors," they're "Misters." In England, high school teachers and university teachers are paid roughly the same, and their stature is very much alike. And that's the way it should be, it seems to me, that all of us are in this boat together and we ought to be working together. And that means that high school over here across the street and the elementary school down the hill there . . . we ought to be saying hello and finding out how we're all interrelated and interconnected. We're not doing that, not very much. We get these school boards, you know, there are some really funny people on school boards. There are some really funny people in Congress. A lot of funny people all over the place, a lot of things we are not doing very well.

Kap Monahan took me down to interview Marie Hartley. Marie Hartley's father had managed the Grand Theatre at the turn of the century, that's my recollection. She was in her nineties, tall, stately lady living on Negley Avenue in Pittsburgh . . . very fancy, assisted living apartment. So she had this apartment and she had a lot of money. I don't know if she ever married, but she was

an animal lover. And a circus came to Pittsburgh and they had two old lions that they were going to put away. She adopted them and put them onto her estate, a couple of toothless lions. Buffalo Bill came to Pittsburgh for the Buffalo Bill show, put on a parade and all that stuff. She was a horse woman and so she'd put her horse on the train and go with Buffalo Bill to Chicago. She was a remarkable lady. Anyhow, when I interviewed her, she was embarrassed that I had never met Buffalo Bill. She said, "Didn't your parents ever take you anywhere?" My being from West Virginia didn't come up, but she knew I was a hick because I didn't even know Buffalo Bill! So the timeframes in her mind would alter with some regularity and once in a while we were in one decade, and then sometimes she would be in the present. She had pictures of the cats she'd owned. They were all over this apartment, beautiful pictures. And I said, "Do you miss your cats?" She said, "Yes, you know, we can't have them here." But she said, "If I saw a cockroach run across the floor I would pick him up and make love to him, and never tell anybody." The Marie Hartley tape got broken, but I think we can patch it up and then dub it because it's a good tape.

KM: A lot of the stories are about Pittsburgh, right?

JR: Oh yes. And then I did Ernest Kiekenap of Milwaukee, who was the secretary of the American Optometric Association for a couple hundred years. Anyhow, Ernest Kiekenap was a concert whistler, so he was explaining that to me and I said, "Gee, I've never seen a live concert whistler." And so he got out his tape recorder and he played it and I picked it up on my tape recorder. He did "Flight of the Bumblebee." He whistled with an orchestra for the Shiners, for the Shiners' Hospital, you know, money-raising things. And it's a beautiful little piece of tape, and he was wonderful. Milwaukee was good.

We did about three hundred pages of Kap. The tapes are kind of squirrely. Then we had friends of Monahan. Mrs. Monahan would get all of Kap's favorite guys and then we'd get together down at the Duquesne Club or someplace like that and tape record reminiscences, and I've got those. I think some of them were transcribed. But Kap, as a kid was always at the theatre there in Salida, Colorado, he had been in the army in World War I. He didn't have any money; his mama ran a boarding house, he had two brothers, and he was befriended by a lawyer there. I have a tape of the lawyer's wife about Kap, and they sent him off to the University of Colorado, and he became a cartoonist. He could draw well. I got a self-portrait that he did; I'll give that to you if I didn't already.

KM: I think you did, but I didn't realize he did it.

JR: Yeah he did that. So he was the cartoonist for the Silver and Gold, the newspaper at the University of Colorado. He never graduated. Then he worked for A.P. and some papers that are long since gone, and then he worked for the Rocky Mountain News. When I went to the Rocky Mountain News the managing editor there had been in Memphis and I had worked with him on some feature stories for the Sunday paper in Memphis long before that: Governor Browning and Admiral Martin and the English Department at Memphis State University. We did a piece on them; they were flunking about fifty percent of their students and the question was why? And so the guy who wrote it called it "The Cave of the Winds." I'm not sure what that was all about. Blackburn was the guy's name, this managing editor, and he was a National Rifle Association kind of guy, and he said, "You know what all those students at the University of Colorado are majoring in?" I said, "No, Blacky, what are they majoring in?" He says, "Laidback. They're all

majoring in laidback." Anyhow, he took us down to the morgue at the Rocky Mountain News and we went in there and they had three or four people working, librarians, you know.

KM: Morgue?

JR: Morgue, yes. The library of a newspaper is called a morgue. I don't know why they said morgue, I guess because you're stuck down there with a lot of dead news. So he took us down to the morgue and before he did that he said, "Joe, I don't let anybody in here." He said, "Those Ph.D.'s and all those people, they don't get in my morgue." But he said, "You're my buddy, and I'm going to let you in there, and you go in there and you get what you want and then get out of there." And then he said, "I'll take you to lunch." So he went in and he said, "People, people, this is Joe and Ginny, and give them anything they want." And so we pulled Monahan stories and duplicated them and . . . oh, it was good. So all my right-wing friends are not losers.

KM: Well Joe, this has been wonderful.

JR: Well I can tell you, Bailey Library has been big stuff for me. I don't know what all we've got in terms of oral history, but I've got a list of all kinds of things that we did that I think we need to go over sometime and take a look and see what we saved.

KM: The project you were involved with Leah I think we have most of. Well, thank you very much. It is much appreciated.

JR: Oh, I'm flattered. I'm just delighted to be doing this.

KM: Well thanks.