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Interview with Robert and Esther Fortenbaugh, February 22, 2004

Robert Fortenbaugh

Esther Fortenbaugh

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Interview with Robert and Esther Fortenbaugh, February 22, 2004

Description

Robert & Esther Fortenbaugh were interviewed on February 22, 2004 by Michael J. Birkner. Esther discussed her early years and Robert discussed his career at American Cyanamid and then as a United Methodist Minister. They both discussed their time at Gettysburg College (including meeting each other), their life after college, and returning to Gettysburg after retirement.

Length of Interview: 88 minutes

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Keywords

Richard T. Mara, Joy Nelson Mara, Edward J. Baskerville, William K. Sundermeyer, Henry W.A. Hanson, Wilbur E. Tilberg, John H. Knickerbocker, Charles R. Wolfe, Dorothy G. Lee, John B. Zinn, Paul Volcker Sr., Francis C. Mason, Abdel Ross Wentz, gettysburg college, gettysburgian, german club, student christian association, alpha tau omega

Disciplines

Higher Education | Liberal Studies | Oral History

Birkner: This is February 22, 2004, I'm Michael Birkner. I'm sitting at 12 Glenwood Drive in Arendtsville with the Fortenbaughs, Robert and Esther, both of whom are graduates of Gettysburg College. It seems like an appropriate thing to do on this historic day, George Washington's birthday, to talk with Bob and Esther about their lives. We are going to take our time and cover what ground we can. Esther, I'd like to start at a natural beginning point, which is your birth, your family and your growing up years. Start by telling me your parents' names. Tell me a little bit about them and some of your first memories.

Esther: Well, my father, Joseph Anthony Kenyon, was from a big Irish Catholic family that lived in Hudson County. My mother came from Chester County [England] and has a long family history back to 1684 then in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. My mother became a teacher, went to Trenton Normal School and then taught in Lambertville, New Jersey where she had forty or sixty students at a time with multiple languages spoken. That was her background from a family of eight. My father came from a big Irish-Catholic, very strict family, nine children, lived in West New York, overlooking the Hudson River. But when I was two years old they moved to Teaneck and had a house built.

Birkner: So you actually weren't born in Teaneck.

Esther: I was born in Jersey City [in] Christ Trinity Hospital.

Birkner: In Jersey City. What was your father doing at the time?

Esther: My father worked for Mitsubishi for a long, long time. When he actually started working with Mitsubishi I don't know, in the early twenties.

Birkner: Was Mitsubishi in the auto business or something else at that time?

Esther: Oh, no autos, not at all.

Birkner: So what was the firm doing?

Esther: Mandarin oranges, multiple kinds of "art" objects. And gradually they were shipping more and more products to America and more diversified. But the automobile was later.

Birkner: What did your father do for the company?

Esther: He was in accounting.

Birkner: OK. So you were born in Jersey City and at the age of two moved. Now you moved to a section of Teaneck known as West Englewood. Describe the neighborhood at best you can.

Esther: Most of the houses were quite large and it was a very lovely area. My parents' home was a little newer than some of the others. It was just two blocks I think from Bergenfield.

Birkner: Right. When were you born Esther?

Esther: February 3rd, 1924.

Birkner: So you were born in '24. OK, which makes sense because we just celebrated your eightieth birthday. What would you say were your most memorable early experiences

either within the family or as a child playing in the neighborhood?

Esther: It was a very secure neighborhood to live in. All the neighbors were very close with one another. In fact one of my father's closest friends owned the house next door.

Birkner: What kinds of games did you play?

Esther: I don't remember.

Birkner: Ring-a-levio, dodge ball or "duck, duck, goose" or any of that stuff?

Esther: I don't remember.

Bob: She was kind of sickly.

Esther: In fact I couldn't start school when I was eligible age wise because I had been sick a great deal. I hadn't really been out in the neighborhood as much as some.

Birkner: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Esther: One brother born eight years later.

Birkner: So you were almost like an only child. What's your brother's name?

Esther: Richard. He's a medical doctor—an anaesthesiologist.

Birkner: Was your family stable during the Depression years because by the time you were going off to school we're getting to the stock market crash and the Depression?

Esther: My father had a cut in pay. I remember that, but he never lost his job. And it really didn't affect us.

Birkner: As long as you have a job and a stable income even if it's slightly less you do OK during the Depression. The prices are low.

Esther: There were certainly lots of people we knew who lost their jobs.

Bob: Their next-door neighbor was an insurance agent who lost his whole business.

Esther: Well, that was normal, that was during Pearl Harbor. My father was turned in to the FBI.

Birkner: Because he worked for a Japanese Company.

Esther: Because he worked for Mitsubishi and we were very close to this German family.

Birkner: I see. Well that was not the most popular connection at that time. Did you go to the movies when you were a kid?

Esther: I guess so but I don't remember.

Birkner: So it wasn't a major part of your life?

Esther: No.

Birkner: Were you a good student?

Esther: I think I was very good. I think I learned to read at home very early. My mother taught me and I was a bookworm.

Birkner: Did you go to public school or Catholic school?

Esther: No, never went to Catholic school. I never became Catholic.

Birkner: OK.

Esther: There was great pressure from my father's family for me to become a Catholic. And my mother said, "If you want to, you can."

Birkner: Your mother was not a Catholic?

Esther: Protestant.

Birkner: Did you join a church when you were growing up?

Esther: No, [but] I had been baptized as a Catholic.

Birkner: But it was not a regular part of your growing up years?

Esther: No, not at all. We didn't go anywhere.

Birkner: When you were a teenager, did you read the newspapers?

Esther: We had papers all the time.

Birkner: What papers did you have?

Esther: The New York Times. . . . Both of my parents were very liberal and avid New York Times readers.

Birkner: And you picked it up. So, when you were in high school, what got you interested in Gettysburg College?]

Bob: Her high school guidance counselor was Gettysburg College graduate and that influenced her a lot.

Esther: [inaudible] Stauffer.

Birkner: Is that the name of the person who was the counselor?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: What was the person's first name?

Esther: It was a she and I forgot her first name.

Birkner: OK, but it was Miss or Mrs. Stauffer and how did it happen that she picked you as someone that she wanted to guide over to Gettysburg?

Esther: My father was on the school board and she had gotten to know my parents and she was influential. I had thought that I would go to Bucknell, but right after Pearl Harbor there was a temporary reduction in my father's pay and of course there was a lot less happening because of Mitsubishi, and Gettysburg was cheaper.

Birkner: Cheaper than Bucknell. Now you were only about seventeen when Pearl Harbor was bombed but it's a day that lives in everyone's memory. Why don't you say something about where you were when you learned that the Japanese had attached Pearl Harbor.

Esther: I was in my dining room with my boy friend with the radio on and we were listening to music and they announced it.

Birkner: And what was your immediate reaction. Did you know what Pearl Harbor was?

Esther: I don't think so.

Birkner: A lot of people didn't, right?

Esther: No, not Pearl Harbor.

Birkner: But you knew the world was going to change.

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: It didn't change your plans to go to college though at the end of graduation, right? So when you thought about things you thought, "alright, when I graduate in 1942

I'll go off to college and it will be Bucknell"; then it turns out to be Gettysburg.

Esther: Well, you know all these people from New Jersey come to Pennsylvania colleges.

Birkner: I did it too.

Bob: Dick Mara was a classmate . . . [at] Teaneck High School.

Birkner: I did not know Dick Mara was a Teaneck guy.

Esther: He was two years ahead of me. He dated one of my closest friends, Joy Nelson [whom he later married].

Birkner: So he would have been at Gettysburg College before you arrived. [In a letter to Michael Birkner dated April 18, 2007, Robert Fortenbaugh explained that Richard Mara was a year or two ahead of Esther in high school but worked before entering college in 1942. Subsequently he was called into the military and returned to Gettysburg after suffering "severe war wounds in his back." In 1946 he was catching up on his work in physics. He was "very close" friends with Bob and Esther.] Had you visited Gettysburg before you actually started school?

Esther: Yes. I came down and got a guide person.

Birkner: Who did you meet here if anyone?

Esther: I don't remember.

Birkner: But you saw enough to say you were satisfied that you would be comfortable at Gettysburg]?

Esther: Well, I knew we were looking for a smaller more liberal arts college in Pennsylvania.

Birkner: And in those days a lot of them didn't allow women to go. Lafayette didn't allow women. F&M didn't allow women. I'm thinking you came here in September of 1942. Is that when you would have started?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: OK.

Bob: The summer before you came here, did you work for *The Bergen Evening Record*?

Esther: No. I worked for *The Bergen Record* . . . two years after my sophomore year.

Birkner: I'll ask you a little bit more about that in a second. Tell me if you can remember your first memories of the college and what your impressions were positive, negative or whatever?

Esther: Well, it was a beautiful part of the country and I think better financially to come [to Gettysburg than Bucknell]. In the end the finances wouldn't have been a problem, but we didn't know exactly what the finances would be because of [my father's] work.

Birkner: Did your father maintain his job or did Mitsubishi close down?

Esther: In the end he was hired by the Alien Property Custodian handling the assets of Mitsubishi with government workers. All the things you take over when there is a war have to be listed and maintained and all the records kept and money put in accounts. It was amazing, I didn't know all of that.

Birkner: It made sense though for someone who had worked with them and knew their accounting system to help the government in that way, once he passed all the FBI checks.

Esther: And he was turned in by neighbors.

Birkner: Because they were a little hyper.

Esther: Because of Mitsubishi and his close German friend.

Birkner: Was your father OK? Did he adjust to doing what he did in the war as opposed to his older connections with the Mitsubishi people directly? I mean was he a happy man during the war or unhappy or how would you describe him?

Esther: He was fine. He continued with the Alien Property Custodian and then he ended up becoming the Teaneck Tax Assessor.

Birkner: Was that a full time position?

Esther: It was full time.

Birkner: Did he work with Paul Volcker [Sr.]?

Esther: Not then, but the Volckers were close friends.

Birkner: [Paul Senior] was the city manager, right?

Paul Volcker the son became the head of the Fed. He would be roughly your age, right?

Esther: I forgot how old he is.

Birkner: You didn't go to high school with him, did you?

Esther: No he wasn't in my class. I think he is a little younger, I don't know. I don't really remember, to tell you the truth.

Birkner: OK, but you knew the Volckers. So you come to Gettysburg College in 1942. Tell me what you intended to do

in college academically. Were you pointed in any particular direction?

Esther: I think toward history. I don't remember when I declared that it would be history.

Birkner: Did you take some history classes in the first year?

Esther: I don't specifically recall. I think I did. . . .

Birkner: Let me frame it in another way. What do you remember about your freshman year whether it was studies or outside of the classroom. What memories come back to you?

Esther: Francis Mason was one of my favorite professors. He was probably many people's least favorite professors.

Birkner: Tell me why.

Esther: Well he could be [eccentric?] and self-centered at times. Did you know him?

Birkner: I've heard a lot about him through others. I never met him.

Esther: In some ways he was a bitter man about some things. I don't know why. He was very hard on people in my basic composition class.

Birkner: Why then did you like him?

Esther: I think I learned more from him than many, many of the other professors that I had.

Birkner: In terms of writing or more general?

Esther: Writing. I think I became a favorite. He would teach up in Glatfelter Hall and I was stuck out on Springs Avenue in Aughinbaugh Hall. They took a bunch of extra girls

in that year and a lot of girls ended up in houses around town. And he could see me coming, crawling underneath the railroad car, the freight cars.

Birkner: You did that?

Esther: Well, you could go around to Washington Street.

Birkner: I know the shortcut you're talking about.

Esther: You could duck underneath those freight cars and I'd go up in the room and he'd say "You did it again, I told you to stop coming to class that way."

Birkner: Did he have you read things for class or was it just composition writing?

Esther: It was more composition.

Birkner: But he had a good sense of what you needed to learn and had high standards.

Esther: Oh yes, most of the students didn't like him because he pushed so hard.

Birkner: You used the phrase that he was a little bit eccentric. I've heard some versions of that although it's hard to know if that is something from later in his life. For example, Ted Baskerville once told me that he had troubles late in his career facing a class—he just couldn't go into class and teach. Anything else about him as a personality that you remember?

Esther: He didn't conform. I don't think he conformed as much as some of the faculty did to the social norms. The wives were friendly together and a lot of professors were friendly together and he was very stand offish.

Birkner: That's interesting because I've heard other stories that he was a mainstay at this faculty club that they had where they called it the Tampus Club, the absent minded professor und spouse. That is what Charlie Glatfelter told me. They would meet at each other's homes every Sunday night.

Esther: Well, he was not part of the Fortenbaugh group. You know the Fortenbaughs, there are certain names that you know who the Fortenbaughs were very friendly with. They were a different circle.

Birkner: Well, I want to ask you about that but first let me ask you when did you first meet senior Robert Fortenbaugh, the professor?

Esther: I don't remember.

Birkner: Did you take a class with him?

Esther: Oh yes, several.

Birkner: What did you think of him?

Esther: I liked history and I did very well.

Birkner: Bob is just showing me a picture of you and they are referring to you by your first name. They call you "Kenyon burning midnight oil at *Gettysburgian* office."

Esther: Well, I was editor.

Birkner: Which is great and of course that had something to do with ultimately you getting a position at the *Record*. You mentioned liking Francis Mason, you mentioned liking history. Anything else about your academics at Gettysburg that comes to mind as you think about those years?

Esther: Academics. Dr. Sundermyer I think it was.

Birkner: Sundermyer taught German. Is that the one you're thinking of?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: Tell me about him.

Esther: Well, you know the story about him that it turned out that he probably didn't have a Ph.D or something.

Birkner: I've heard something along those lines.

Esther: I don't have the facts. He was fascinating.

Birkner: Was he a good teacher?

Esther: I thought so. I took German all the way through.

Birkner: You did.

Bob: I took scientific German in '46 when I came back so I could do my Hopkins PhD. You know you had to take French and German. And I took scientific German in the spring of '46 so I could pass at Hopkins that fall.

Birkner: Was it actually a course Bob or was it an independent study?

Bob: No, we just had a seminar and we'd read Einstein. He'd hand me a book of Einstein and I'd just go ahead and read with him.

Birkner: Would you agree with Esther that he was competent as a German teacher?

Bob: Oh my yes.

Esther: . . . He was a very good teacher. I also had a course with [George F.] Gutman.

Birkner: Gutman?

Bob: He was a German instructor in '44.

Birkner: How about the other English professors? Did you have them also?

Esther: I had [Thomas] Cline for something.

Birkner: Thomas Cline, is that it?

Bob: Thomas Kline was the head, Mason was there and [George S.] Worthen was there.

Birkner: Did you have Worthern?

Esther: I think I had him for a course too.

Birkner: And they were all southerners?

Bob: All Virginins.

Birkner: As was Henry W.A. Hanson. So what did you think of Worthen and Cline?

Esther: They were alright.

Bob: Her favorite was Mason.

Birkner: Now did you get involved with the *Gettysburgian* right at the outset or did you wait awhile before you started?

Esther: They were having a time for new students to come and see if they would be interested and then they had a course for people who thought they would be interested where they went over their policies. If you wanted to be a freshman reporter or join a staff you had to go fairly often.

Birkner: Right.

Esther: The person who was teaching the course was the managing editor of the *Gettysburgian*.

Birkner: It was a student?

Esther: He was a student who was a senior whom I dated.
And we thought we would marry.

Bob: He had a degree from the University of [inaudible].

Birkner: Well he may not have had that degree. Well you just mentioned something that probably I should get a little more facts about. What was this person's name?

Esther: Which one?

Birkner: The person who was the teacher ~~of~~ the
Gettysburgian course.

Esther: Ralph Stahley.

Birkner: Oh my gosh, someone just referred to him in a conversation with me the other night as one of the most brilliant people that he had met at Gettysburg. He was talking about how tragic it was that these boys had gone off to war as they had and somebody didn't come back. So Ralph Stahley was someone that you knew well and went out with. And he went off to war because he was older than you I take it.

Esther: He was a senior.

Birkner: He was a senior. Was the *Gettysburgian* your major activity at the college when you were a student?

Esther: Yes, I was a member of the German Club. I belonged to the SCA but not very active in it.

Birkner: What kind of things did the SCA do?

Esther: Well they had a wide variety of activities.
I joined it but I wasn't really active.

Bob: [It was] a precursor of the Center for Public Service.

Esther: Yes that's a good way to put it.

Birkner: Now you worked up the ranks of the *Gettysburgian* from being a reporter to being an editor to being the editor?

Esther: Well, I became managing editor and then editor.

Birkner: So it was all that midnight oil you were burning according to this picture. So you became the editor, what kind of things did you most enjoy doing for the *Gettysburgian*?

Esther: Well, some of the editorials we would write about were on policies and the administration. Dick Mara when he came back after the war got involved so we ran quite a few things in the *Gettysburgian* where we could disagree with some of it. . . .

Birkner: What did Dr. Hanson have to say about that?

Esther: They never really put bad pressure on. It was like they tried to ignore us but there kept being rumors about people not liking some of the things that were printed.

Birkner: What was your impression of Dr. Henry Hanson when you first came to campus?

Esther: Old fogey.

Birkner: When he talked at the chapel services for example you had to listen to his standard litany.

Esther: I remember I found every excuse to cut chapel and of course I took advantage.

Birkner: What excuse could you use except being ill? And you could only use that a couple of times, right? You didn't find him particularly edifying, right?

Esther: No.

Birkner: Windbaggy?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: I don't want to put words in your mouth. Bob, you were a student. You knew him having grown up on the campus. Would you add something about Hanson and your reaction to him as a student?

Bob: Well of course my family was so closely connected with him. A whole different relationship.

Birkner: You weren't in a position [to be critical].

Bob: Well, he was technically my father's boss and Mrs. Hanson of course was a very charming woman and very valuable to him in terms of good social relationship between the students and Dr. Hanson. They were--and his statement is true: they were his "boys." He was a Lutheran minister and he had that whole attitude.

Birkner: He wanted "his boys" to be Christian gentlemen.

Bob: He was not a boastful type person at all, very laid back. I have no idea what he was like at faculty meetings, of course.

Esther: Coming from Teaneck which was such a different kind of community you know Gettysburg was conservative, and I found there were some very conservative people at

Gettysburg. But there were a lot of very liberal people, too.

Birkner: So you found a niche?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: . . . Bob brought out the 1946 Spectrum. There's a picture of Mrs. Hanson with two of her sons. I think she had three boys but I can't for the life of me figure out where this picture would be taken. And I'm curious if either of you can identify where this picture from this 1946 yearbook would be taken. It looks like a very nice arbor but I don't recognize it. It looks like there's even a pool or pond.

Bob: I don't know if they were off on a vacation somewhere and that they were able to get both boys together somehow.

Birkner: Does that ring any bells with you Esther?

Esther: No. Who is in the picture?

Birkner: Bob Hanson and his brother Henry.

Bob: T. Painter was the famous one.

Birkner: Why was T. Painter famous?

Esther: Why?

Bob: Oh, I think people made fun of the name, among other things.

Birkner: Well, Painter was probably her maiden name, right?

Bob: Yes.

Birkner: Well they just didn't make fun of him just for his name, right?

Bob: I don't know.

Birkner: I do know that there was a more of a garden in front of the White House in those days, right?

Esther: I don't remember.

Bob: It might have been that floral garden where the Chapel is now located. It could have been there. It's logical that the boys would have come home at that time.

Birkner: Sure, sure at the end of the war. So tell me about that. That was the '46 yearbook.

Bob: That means you were a junior in this book probably. And that would have been '45 when those pictures were taken.

Birkner: Well, let me turn to one of Henry Hanson's friends and that's Dean [Wilbur] Tilberg. Was Dean Tilberg part of the Fortenbaugh crowd?

Bob: Yes, and as a matter of fact because of her health problems she wound up her last year living in Tilberg's home.

Birkner: Explain that.

Bob: That's where I courted her actually.

Birkner: Explain that

Esther: Let's see. I didn't join a sorority in my junior year. My closest friend was Joy Nelson [Mara]. And we decided that we would like to live together. And I had been living in dorms and she said, "Why don't you join the sorority," which I had chosen not to do. [I was] not really interested. So I did, so we could live together at what was the fraternity house. Which was across the street from Huber Hall.

Bob: Phi Kappa Psi.

Esther: Phi Psi. It turned out that I was allergic to something in the house. And we slept up on the third floor with no heat and I finally ended up sleeping sitting up in a little study that we had at the desk, with my head on the desk because I was sick. Joy went out and found a place for us to live. And she arranged it all. She arranged with the school to pay for us to live in a private home, the two of us. For one semester we lived in a private home quite near Huber Hall. And the next semester we lived with the Tilbergs.

Birkner: You were paying room and board with the Tilbergs?

Esther: No, we were paying regular college fees. The college paid.

Birkner: Did you take your meals in Huber Hall or elsewhere. Where did you take your meals?

Esther: Originally Huber Hall.

Birkner: They kicked you out when the ASTRP people came in, right? So where did you have to take your meals after that?

Esther: Well for a while because I was living in Auginbaugh Hall out on Springs Avenue, I was assigned to eat at the Phi Gam House, which was no longer Phi Gam House.

Birkner: I see. So you were eating with other sorority women?

Esther: Yeah.

Birkner: That's a little weird that they had all these different places. There weren't very many men left at Phi Gam/

Esther: . . . Most of them were gone.

Birkner: What was it like living in the Tilberg residence which I assume was on West Broadway? [In his April 18 letter to Michael Birkner, Bob Fortenbaugh recalls the Tilberg home as being roughly where Specialty Dining now is located on W. Lincoln Ave.]

Esther: It was great. They didn't check up on us at all. I met him about the same time and Joy and Dick were delighted not to have deadlines after he had come back to college.

Birkner: Oh, I see, I mean you didn't have to sign in all the time.

Esther: We didn't have to sign in.

Birkner: And how did you two meet?

Bob: We had a reception for returning servicemen. And although I hadn't enough points to get out of the army at that time, my father was able to arrange for me to be readmitted for the second semester of Gettysburg College starting in February, I guess of '46. And so I got back for that and they had this reception for returning servicemen and Esther was there and ready to dance with anybody who came up.

Esther: Well, another of my close friends who were the chemists, chemistry majors then. The same day. "You know

who's come back to school? Bob Fortenbaugh" Well I didn't really know Bob Fortenbaugh. She said, "I think he's really nice. I'd like to see him some more." So she and I went over to this reception but he asked me to dance.

Birkner: I love that picture of you. It's a very nice picture. And so he asked you to dance and then you struck up a friendship and you were studying scientific German, anything else Bob while you were back?

Bob: I audited [Norman] Richardson just for something to do.

Birkner: He was pretty new at that time.

Esther: Yes.

Bob: Yeah, he was very new. I also sat in on the rest of Organic Chemistry. They were winding up as seniors, the last half class semester. And then that summer I took Organic Chemistry. They had Summer School that year. And Bob Deardorff from Gettysburg was in that class and then he and I went to Hopkins as roommates that fall. But I took Scientific French also from the Classics Department, who did I have for a teacher, probably [John] Glenn. Anyway I took Scientific French, Scientific German and Organic Chemistry and all that really paid off. In September at Hopkins I was the only one of the entering PhD candidates that passed both French and German to start.

Birkner: Wow.

Bob: And that essentially almost gave me a full-year start down there. As a result I finished my degree in three years.

Birkner: Why did you choose to go to Hopkins? Was it for Chemistry?

Bob: John Zinn actually.

Birkner: That's right. And did John Zinn think you would do well to go there, is that it?

Bob: Sure, he had the pull. I also tried to get into Princeton and I was accepted. I was probably not fully prepared at Gettysburg. So it was sort of a work study proposition and it was a very complicated thing.

Esther: I don't remember. Weren't you offered a job at Princeton later?

Bob: A job but also I was to start taking classes and I could have gone but it just didn't look good. And Hopkins was much more open. I was part of the first returning group to go to Hopkins.

Birkner: And I know that Charles Glatfelter was not far behind you.

Esther: Well, he went to Johns Hopkins the same time.

Birkner: The same time.

Esther: We never saw him.

Birkner: He roomed with a fellow from [York County] named Henry Young. That was his roommate and they were long-time friends.

Bob: Never met them but obviously they were there. We were there on the same campus.

Birkner: I noticed as I'm looking for the name of the French professor and it could be that it was [William D.] Hartshorne who does one of the languages.

Bob: Yes, that's right.

Birkner: Now there's a name here I almost never get any response to because maybe he wasn't much of a presence for students in the way that Dean Tilberg was. But John Knickerbocker was the librarian.

Bob: Oh, she can tell you about him.

Birkner: Tell me about John Knickerbocker. You just laughed.

Esther: Well he was eccentric. He didn't really understand students very well. He was grumpy. He found a few people he favored and I was one of them.

Bob: They got along very well because she was in there to work.

Esther: Well I was in the library a lot.

Birkner: So what interactions did you have with him? I mean checking out books or other ways?

Esther: Oh, I often would study over in the library.

Birkner: Well, you could study in the library without having to see the librarian, so I was just wondering.

Esther: Well I wondered in and out of the library so much compared to many other students that I got to know him.

Birkner: Anything else you can tell me about him?

Esther: Most students didn't like him.

Birkner: Because he was grumpy.

Esther: He was grumpy. He was fussy and he was not a good mentor for the library for a bunch of college students.

Birkner: They wound up kicking him out of his job by making him head of the Civil War Collection in the library at some point. Did you know anything about that?

Esther: No, I didn't know that.

Birkner: He did that for a few years. . . .

Esther: Did he do well?

Birkner: I don't think so. I don't think he was a particularly strong figure. But that was the job he had after awhile. Now how about Hips Wolfe. Did you have any dealings with Hips Wolfe?

Esther: He [Bob Fortenbaugh] probably had more.

Bob: Well, he was a friend of the family.

Birkner: What kind of man was Hips Wolfe?

Bob: Very personable, very nice man. I don't know how strict he was on his job requirement.

Birkner: Apparently he did the job because they recruited the students.

Bob: Yeah.

Birkner: Did you know Dorothy Lee, the Dean of Women at all.

Esther: Yeah.

Birkner: What was she like?

Esther: Very nice, very nice. She was very helpful to me. I worked at the Gettysburgian office down in the basement at Glatfelter Hall so often, so late. And she let me come in

and out of the dorm at Huber Hall. By then I was living in Huber Hall on my own and provided that I didn't walk around the campus alone at night. And so I would come in at twelve or one in the morning and she did everything to help me.

Birkner: Were all the Deans in the same building or were they spread out?

Esther: I don't remember that.

Birkner: Well I assume, where was the President's office. Was it in the White House?

Bob: No.

Birkner: Everything was in Glatfelter? So he had at least a little commute from the White House up to the Glatfelter during the day to do his business. . . So: campus personalities. Who most stood out for you as far as [inaudible] and Fortenbaugh or anyone else?

Esther: Sundermyer.

Birkner: Sundermyer.

Esther: Richardson, he was very good.

Birkner: You had Norman Richardson for Philosophy.

Esther: Sociology.

Birkner: You had him for Sociology. He was someone who had come in right after the war from Whitman College to become Chair of the Philosophy Department. So it's interesting that he would have taught Sociology also. He was always a lively person right?

Esther: Very personable, very caring person.

Birkner: He seemed to fit into Gettysburg.

Esther: Very liberal, very liberal. He was always attracted to the more liberal faculty.

Birkner: You would have been just old enough to vote in '44. Did you vote for FDR?

Esther: I don't remember if I voted but if I voted it would have been for FDR.

Birkner: Was your family, Bob, Democrat?

Bob: No, not at all. Strongly Republican.

Birkner: It's interesting because I always thought of Charlie Glatfelter along those lines because he was conservative in many ways, but he's actually an arched Democrat.

Esther: Oh, is he? Oh, I'm glad to know that.

Birkner: Oh yeah, definitely. He was an FDR man and a Democrat all his life. Was your father active in Republican affairs at all?

Bob: No.

Birkner. He was more interested in Historical Society and the college.

Bob: He was a Lowell Thomas man.

Birkner: If I could back up Bob, was there any question in your mind that you would attend Gettysburg College?

Bob: No, there wasn't any question. I had hoped my senior year they would allow me to live in the fraternity and eat with the brothers, but of course that didn't work out. I had no senior year, being called up in May 1943. I was in the armed forces during what would have been my senior year.

Birkner: You lived at home during the college years because your parents were conservative that way?

Bob: Well, it was a money problem.

Birkner: Because the salaries of the faculty were not high?

Bob: Right. . . . I had a simple lifestyle.

Birkner: What do you mean?

Bob: For one, I never dated in high school. . . . Actually college the first two years was sort of like high school.

Lived at home, ate at home, went to classes.

Birkner: You just had more freedom in terms of time management.

Bob: Some fraternity life and of course sports. I played football.

Birkner: Now you're rather a slightly built person, how was it that you played football?

Bob: Well, people weren't that big in those days.

Birkner: What position did you go out for?

Bob: Guard.

Birkner: You were a guard?

Bob: Yeah.

Birkner: Well now, I'm thinking about these three hundred pound guys that are guards.

Bob: I was second-string. . . . The guards were maybe ten pounds heavier, I weighed about 170 I guess.

Birkner: Were you an offensive guard?

Bob: We played both.

Birkner: You played both ways. What was Hen Bream like as a coach?

Bob: Oh, wonderful coach.

Birkner: He was a good motivator or what?

Bob: Yeah, yeah. But those were war years, '42, '43.

Birkner: Now how did Bream motivate you? Was it sort of the florid speaker the way that Hanson was or was he different?

Bob: No, no, no. I don't know, You just knew that he was for you and on a good team.

Birkner: Were you successful? Was your team successful?

Bob: Yeah, they were quite successful in whoever we played. And of course the teams they played then, very few are left anymore. Dickinson and F&M, Muhlenberg were the big ones. I remember the biggest team we played that year was Delaware.

Birkner: They played them until the early nineteen seventies in fact. But you enjoyed your football experience?

Bob: Oh, that was good. That was good for me.

Birkner: And what fraternity were you in?

Bob: ATO.

Birkner: Which was your father's fraternity, right?

Bob: Right.

Birkner: Where was the ATO house in those days?

Bob: Right opposite the college.

Birkner: Where the pillars were? The Eisenhower House?

Bob: It's owned by Sebastian Hafer. He comes to alumni events a lot. I guess you wouldn't run into him. [Since this interview occurred the college purchased the house from Hafer and turned it into administrative offices for the Eisenhower Institute.]

Birkner: Sebastian Hafer?

Bob: His brother Jim Hafer was in my class in high school and college. And Jim died of alcoholism but Mrs. Hafer was widely respected when I was growing up. Owned the big house there on Carlisle Street and the corner of Water Street. And they were owners of *The Gettysburg Times*. That was top society in Gettysburg.

Birkner: Now didn't the fraternities have identities for certain sports or anything like that?

Bob: Yeah, I would say they did. The Phi Phis were sporty and Phi Gams, too. There were several football players in ATO. I guess it was more or less spread around.

Birkner: OK. When you were a student, I've already asked Esther this question but I'll ask you. Did you have any particular favorite professor? Was Zinn your favorite or did you have others?

Bob: I would guess he was my favorite professor. I just took a lot of science so you worked more with these profs.

Birkner: Did you take anything with [George] Bowley Miller?

Bob: Yeah. I took all my Physics courses with him. He was the only one.

Birkner: Was he good?

Bob: Yeah, as far as we could tell. What more can you say. The faculty was changing by the fall of '43 and so we had a substitute professor from Hopkins, Dr. [John F.] Baxter, who proceeded to give all the Chem majors Fs and Ds in their first couple of exams. And Zinn eventually had to step in and change a few grades.

Birkner: Oh my. I think that person didn't last. [C.H. Glatfelter's book, A Salutary Influence, indicates that Baxter taught at Gettysburg College for only one year, 1942-43.]

Esther: He was a very famous person elsewhere—I think the University of Florida.

Bob: He didn't think much of our knowledge, I guess.

Birkner: . . . So as you said you made an easy transition given that you were living at home. It wasn't like adjusting to a new world. Esther, you graduated in 1946. What did you expect to do with your BA degree?

Esther: Oh, I was certified to teach high school but I didn't. We got married.

Birkner: So you made a decision that you would get married and then you would go to Baltimore and he would take up residence at Hopkins. You intended to do what with a PhD in Chemistry?

Bob: I had thought originally to teach. I actually did have a teaching job offered at Kenyon College in Ohio. One of the Ohio schools.

Birkner: You didn't take it.

Bob: Didn't take it.

Birkner: So what did you do?

Bob: I took a job at American Cyanamid in Bound Brook, New Jersey.

Birkner: OK. So you wound up moving to New Jersey. You lived in Baltimore for awhile while you were getting your degree. What were you doing in Baltimore? Were you working?

Esther: Well, we had children.

Birkner: So you got pregnant very quickly and then you didn't work?

Esther: For a while I worked as the Bank Hall receptionist at nights.

Birkner: This was after the war so there were a lot of returning veterans.

Esther: A lot of them were using their GI Bill to take dancing lessons.

Bob: We lived on the GI bill. I was allotted \$100 a month and that is what we lived on for three years.

Birkner: I'm sure there were a lot of veterans in your classes at Hopkins I'm sure because they were pouring back in. It was a very distinct time in American history. Did you feel that you were prepared to do the work at Hopkins?

Bob: Yeah. {End of first side of tape}

Birkner: As the tape cut off you were going to tell me a story about your father.

Bob: He would have these exams--blue books in those days. And you were supposed to write little essays or answer questions in more than just yes or no. And I always used to study in the same room with my father because my mother didn't think my English was very good. She was always correcting my English while he was trying to study while smoking his pipe or cigar and correcting his papers. And I can remember him not very happy with a couple of the papers he was reading and trying to put some kind of a grade on them.

Birkner: Yeah, I understand that. That was a fact that in those days you recruited athletes not just students. And some of those people put more emphasis on their football then their Physics. Esther, when we were taking a break you pulled some things out to show. What have you got?

Esther: Well, some of them aren't related to that. I came across that and some things my father had.

Birkner: Oh my goodness a glimpse of the old days at Teaneck.

Esther: It's not well written. It's not documented. It's somebody's remembrances.

Birkner: And they printed it out.

Esther: And they dedicated to Paul Volcker.

Birkner: Dedicated in memory of Paul Volcker. This was done in 1982. That's very nice and I'm sure that it brought back some memories for you.

Esther: Well I read it just recently because I never came across it until very recently. I don't remember much of the places they talked about.

Birkner: There's a small history of Teaneck by Mildred Taylor, a woman who was a librarian there in the 1950s and 1960s. I've read that. And it goes up to probably to about 1965 or so. When I was writing my history of Bergenfield I made use of it. We were talking about your life after marriage. You said you started having kids. Tell me a little bit about the decision to move into Bound Brook. It was close to Bob's work?

Esther: We lived there only one year.

Birkner: One year in Bound Brook.

Esther: Then we bought a home several miles north of Somerville.

Birkner: And what was the town?

Esther: Peapack, Gladstone.

Birkner: OK. I'm guessing it was pretty rural.

Esther: It was a town of 1800 with a lot of Italian people in it and old timers. The Italian people had been stone workers who came over to work on the big estate of the Malcom Forbeses and the Clarence Dillons.

Birkner: In Somerset County probably.

Esther: In Somerset County.

Birkner: The Dillon family and the Forbes family being among the richest. Christie Todd Whitman came from that

group, right? What kind of house did you have there? An old one or a new one?

Esther: First we had one that was built in the twenties, three bedrooms, very standard.

Birkner: And when did you buy another one?

Esther: Four years after we moved to the town we bought a very old huge home, sixteen room house.

Birkner: My, my, you must have been doing well at American Cyanimid?

Esther: He was.

Birkner: You bought this house?

Bob: That's where we raised our children.

Birkner: Well that's a beautiful big old home. This picture that I'm looking at right now is on page 38 of a book by Jacqueline Tutton called The Journey through Peapack and Gladstone which was published in 1993 by the Friends of the Peapack Gladstone Library. It's a frame house with a wraparound porch.

Esther: Well it's not all frame, the larger part is brick.

Birkner: Is that right. You can't tell from this picture.

Esther: No, you can't tell from this picture.

Birkner: How many years did you live in this house? For a fair number of years?

Bob: 1954 through 1970.

Birkner: You raised your kids in this house?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: And it must have been a lot to keep up.

Esther: Well I always had outside help and I taught school on and off. I used my salary, whatever I earned. I started substituting and I taught school a lot.

Birkner: And you used what you earned to do what?

Esther: To pay help to run the house.

Birkner: Oh I see, OK. So you had some assistance. Was the assistance on the cooking side or on the cleaning side or both?

Esther: Both and children.

Birkner: OK. And how many children did you have?

Esther: We had five and one died. The second one died.

Birkner: Did your second one die in infancy?

Esther: In infancy.

Bob: While we were at Hopkins.

Birkner: While you were at Hopkins. And what was the name of your child that died?

Bob: James Berendt. [This was Bob's grandmother's family name.]

Birkner: And how old was James?

Esther: Two and a half months.

Birkner: Two and a half months. And what are the names of your other children?

Esther: Robert Kenyon, Jean Louise, Linda Ann, and Richard Hall. Hall was her mother's maiden name.

Birkner: And they all then were born and raised in this house?

Esther: No. Ken was born in 1947, in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Birkner: I see. Tell me a little bit about what kind of life you had, for example Bob what were your hours at work and did you have any time for anything else in your life besides your life and your family?

Bob: Worked at Cyanimid at Bound Brook from '49, the fall of '49 through '57, '56, '57 worked on the bench for a while and then I was group leader for a year or so and then American Cyanimid formed a new Agriculture Division combining parts of Lederle labs on the veterinary side and parts of Stamford on the pesticide, herbicide side.

Birkner: What does it mean to work on the bench?

Bob: Synthesizing chemicals. Actually in those days I'll show you how early that was we were still working on [inaudible]. And anthracene--"coal tar" dyes.

Birkner: Was this a job where you could be out of the building at five o'clock or did you have longer hours?

Bob: Well, actually because I was married I was different than a lot of people who I guess through the war years they felt compelled to work on Saturday. And some of the unmarried people coming in from graduate school were working on Saturdays. But no way that fit our own family and that's why we built a home. When we bought that home after a year on the job people were just amazed. You didn't do things like that in those days. I think the returning veterans had a whole different view of the future and everything else.

Birkner: Well you didn't have time to waste for sure.

Bob: That's for sure. And when the Agriculture Division was organized I was picked to be the next step up and became a group manager. And we were at Princeton then.

Birkner: You had to leave your house?

Bob: No, until 1970 I commuted every day from Peapack, Gladstone to south of Princeton.

Birkner: How many miles was that roughly?

Bob: Oh it was about thirty-five miles.

Birkner: In this day and age people think nothing of it.

Bob: Gas was eighteen and half cents a gallon.

Esther: He had a car pool.

Bob: And we finally had a car pool going.

Birkner: So you said you lived in that house from 1954 through 1970.

Bob: Yes.

Birkner: And then what happens?

Bob: Then Esther began to have health problems again. She had to quit her job in Westfield High School.

Esther: Well I was, by then I'd gone to Rutgers and gotten my master's degree. I had taught high school.

Birkner: So you get a masters degree in library science at Rutgers. And did you become a school librarian or what?

Esther: Yes, Westfield.

Birkner: Did you like that job?

Esther: Yes. It was a very progressive school.

Birkner: How far is that from Peapack?

Esther: I think I made it in half an hour.

Bob: It was a rough drive because it was into the city.

Esther: Well it was North. It was more traffic.

Bob: The old main road through New Jersey.

Esther: But I liked it there.

Birkner: And then your health problems came on?

Bob: Her health changed and my job kind of changed too.

I became the assistant to the Director of Research. When I was taken on that job he said, "I'd like you to be prepared to stay after work if we have business. Why don't you think about moving?" It didn't take too long to sell the house I guess she was ready to give it up. But it was quite a blow to everybody else. And so we moved suddenly.

Birkner: Where did you move?

Bob: Pennington, which is near Washington's Crossing.

Esther: I had bad allergies and started living in Colorado six months of every year until '74.

Birkner: What year did you start moving to Colorado for six months?

Esther: Well, I went out in '69 first.

Birkner: While Bob was working in New Jersey?

Esther: He worked until '74.

Birkner: So what did you do for that five years, what did you do out in Colorado?

Esther: I worked for a newspaper.

Birkner: You worked for a newspaper? And you were a general reporter or did you do something else?

Esther: General reporter.

Birkner: And that was in what town were you located?

Esther: Dillon, Colorado, which is seventy miles due west of Denver up at nine thousand feet elevation.

Birkner: And you needed that for your health?

Esther: Yep. I had always had an allergic history which was why I couldn't live in the sorority house.

Birkner: Why did you choose Colorado as opposed to Arizona for example?

Esther: I had very close friends from Peapack, Gladstone who moved to Princeton and then moved to Colorado. And I went and lived with them for six months in '69.

Bob: He went in business with Elliot Roosevelt establishing the wildcat wells in Denver, which failed.

Birkner: But you liked Colorado enough that you went back each year, is that right?

Esther: Oh yes. And then I'd be all right after Thanksgiving for about six months and then the allergies would catch up with me again and I couldn't work, couldn't do anything. Well I wrote for the Bernardsville News a little bit, part time while I was in New Jersey.

Birkner: For the Bernardsville News. So, Bob, what was going through your mind in the early seventies? You were going to have to find a way to get out to Colorado, right?

Bob: Yeah. But a change in my life is the starting point. As soon as we moved to Peapack, Gladstone, there was a Methodist Church right across the street, so that's where we

decided to go to church, raise our family and have the kids go there.

Birkner: Before you go on, did your mother or father have any problem with that?

Bob: No. The closest Lutheran Church . . . was a closed communion church. Couldn't even take communion there. Heck with them.

Esther: He told his father about it and his father said, "Oh, find some other denomination."

Bob: Within a year I was Sunday School Superintendent and I had decided to study to become a lay preacher. That was a year's course then. I had decided to take introductory studies for the ministry. That was another two-year course.

Birkner: Where were you doing that?

Bob: During the time I was taking all these courses by correspondence, I continued my job with Cyanamid, first at Bound Brook, NJ and then at the newly created Agricultural Division labs just south of Princeton off US Route 1. And then finally I decided I will take the whole four year credit course on ministry. So by 1972 I had worked my way through all this stuff with all the papers. I was ordained a United Methodist Minister in 1972 for the South NY conference.

Birkner: Did you ever attend a Methodist seminary?

Esther: He went up to Denver to take some courses at the Iliff School.

Birkner: That was a theological school, right?

Bob: When the Wesleyan gang came over and started to established churches in the United States there was no way that local people could be trained other than Seminary. So eventually what they established was this whole system of lay education. And you can still become a United Methodist Minister under this system although now you have to have a year on Seminary campus.

Birkner: Of course it's not a typical move for someone to go from being a high-powered industrial chemist to being a Methodist minister. But you've already explained in a way what made it fit. I guess at some point then you begin to look for a church.

Bob: In '72 I was ordained and I became an Associate Pastor with the Greenwood Avenue United Methodist Church in Trenton, on weekends, and Esther did some work at the school.

Esther: I directed after school tutoring in what became an all-black neighborhood around the church.

Birkner: Bob, had you broken the cord with the American Cyanimid?

Bob: Oh no, I was still working. I worked there two more years. And then in the summer, maybe the Winter or the Summer or early Spring of '74 I interviewed in Denver with the Bishop. He said, "Come on out, I've got a job for you."

Birkner: And was the job in Denver or outside of Denver?

Bob: The first opening was all the way over on the far west slope, a little town called Fruita and we got to Fruita, an

irrigated fruit-growing community. And it looked like it was promising until we went through the pastor's parsonage and he had water running through his cellar. And the house was full of mold.

Birkner: So that wasn't promising.

Bob: So we told the DS find another assignment. So he proceeded to take us all the way back across the state and forty-five miles east out of Colorado Springs there was a Methodist opening plus another church with it another twenty-five miles further out close to Limon, CO.

Birkner: Did you accept?

Bob: Oh yeah. We were there ten years.

Birkner: So you had two churches and they were east of Colorado Springs?

Bob: Yes.

Birkner: And what did you think of that life?

Bob: Oh, wonderful.

Birkner: You liked it?

Bob: Oh, fantastic.

Birkner: Now you never had any second thoughts about doing the Methodist ministry and you were glad for the change as well?

Bob: Oh, that was ideal. It was really a dead end job where I was.

Esther: He decided he had other priorities.

Birkner: And how about you, Esther, how did you feel about this move? Were you happy with it?

Esther: Oh, we were very happy.

Birkner: Were you a librarian or did you work at all during those years that he was in the ministry?

Esther: I didn't take any jobs. We were in a large El Paso County. And I was active in the League of Women Voters and county library in Colorado Springs. And then I was appointed to the member of the Board of Trustees of El Paso County for the library and became president of that at a very active building time when we were opening lots of new branch buildings and I traveled all over the country visiting libraries. [I also visited] legislators in Washington seeking funding.

Bob: Very, very, active. She was named volunteer of the year for Colorado Springs.

Birkner: It sounds like it was pretty exciting because you would be dealing with expansion plans and you would be raising money and you were seeing these things to fruition, right?

Bob: At one dedication she invited David McCollough [and he came and spoke].

Birkner: You're kidding?

Esther: We took him out to dinner and then he was going to be our speaker at the dedication.

Birkner: Well why did someone come out to a small library like that?

Esther: Well, I don't know.

Bob: It wasn't exactly small.

Esther: Well, it was not small. It was a library system serving hundreds of thousands. This was no small library.

Bob: Anyway I gave him a copy of dad's book *The Nine Capitals*, so he has a copy.

Birkner: That's nice.

Esther: He was very interested. When we had dinner together and the program was actually that night but we had dinner at noon on Sunday. We visited for a long, long time and he got interested in Bob's father's history and it was delightful.

Birkner: We've never had him at Gettysburg College to my knowledge. So you got to see him, I haven't seen him except on TV.

Esther: Oh, yes.

Birkner: So you had a good time. Now I guess I ought to back up a second, let's move back to when Esther started going out to Colorado. Were your kids all grown up by that point?

Esther: Not entirely. Our youngest was still in high school. And that really didn't work out too well.

Birkner: Because he didn't have a two-parent family and you were busy at that time?

Bob: Well, the last year we were at Gladstone we had been able to get him into the Pingry School because he was having not such good relations as far as the high school. And they really straightened him out.

Birkner: Their record is a very fine prep school in New Jersey.

Bob: And so then it was a real blow to him to have to move to Pennington. It never worked out. He had a very poor two years and he got involved with drugs and everything.

Birkner: Which son?

Esther: Richard.

Bob: So when we moved to Colorado in '74 we eventually threw him out of the house which is a tough thing to do.

Birkner: But I understand many parents have to deal with that combination.

Esther: Sometimes you do.

Birkner: You do. So you were on your own then. The kids were all doing their own thing, right? Bob for example was getting a library degree and going to work in Trenton which is where I met him in the late seventies when I was a graduate student and working at the New Jersey Historical Commission.

Bob: Linda was married.

Birkner: How about Jean?

Esther: Well, Linda met somebody [Lester Thompson], a doctor out in Colorado, and married him.

Birkner: Did she stay out in Colorado?

Bob: He came back to do a family residency in Denver. And then after that they moved to Wisconsin.

Esther: He had trained at the University of Chicago for his M.D.

Bob: Jean was in trouble, too. She messed up her life.

Esther: She goofed off.

Bob: Goofed off and moved west with her boyfriend. Next thing they got married.

Esther: And he left her one month later.

Birkner: This is the late sixties, early seventies right?

Bob: Yeah.

Birkner: That was in the air. That was in the water at that time.

Esther: Walked out.

Bob: 1971, '72.

Esther: Well she didn't marry again. She ended up without a college degree, but eventually became head of human resources for a firm of five thousand.

Birkner: Oh my, where?

Esther: In Chicago.

Birkner: And did she do her career then and decide to move back to the old home area.

Esther: Yeah, moved back to Gburg. She bought a farm.

Bob: The firm was bought out by Wachovia and they wanted to move her into Virginia.

Esther: She walked out very well.

Birkner: So she, like your other children, but you also had this wonderful homecoming. With your siblings who come back and it's really an amazing thing right now that the Fortenbaughs have re-populated Adams County. I run into one of you or another of you a lot and it is very nice.

Bob: One of Ruth's children is going to come back now. Her father is Neiman Craley, '43. Now Stacy is talking about coming back.

Esther: Stacy's changed her mind. She's changed her mind. She doesn't want to live in that house.

Bob: Oh well, she'll find some other place.

Birkner: It's just a very nice connection of course it's nice for the college too because of the Fortenbaugh.

Bob: Another connection, a New Jersey connection is our son Ken was born in Englewood. He was born the year she was at her mother's.

Birkner: So you've had a peripatetic life. How many years did you actually do the ministry?

Bob: Sixteen.

Birkner: And then you were at retirement age and began to think about moving back?

Bob: We were ten years out on the Plains—near Ft. Carson. And I had a Methodist Church there for six years and then at the age of sixty-seven I decided to retire, [in] 1990 I retired.

Birkner: Is that when you both began to talk about coming back East?

Bob: No, not quite.

Birkner: You stayed in Colorado?

Bob: We stayed there. We built a new home overlooking Pike's Peak, [with a] beautiful view.

Birkner: So what made you think about coming back East?

Bob: Well I guess the kids decided to be thinking about it because there was nobody out there, Jean had moved.

Esther: Jean had gone to Chicago.

Bob: She had left Denver and gone to Chicago.

Birkner: What year did you decide to come back here?

Bob: Early '96. We sold in a hurry. No that's not quite true, we had come east in '95 to contract for the house.

Birkner: And you looked around and you couldn't find anything that would really work in Gettysburg so you built from scratch here in Arendtsville?

Esther: Yes, we decided we needed to build. In most houses people had had cats or dogs and I knew I had to be in a new home.

Birkner: And it seems that you both really took advantage of your proximity to the college because until very recently you both have been very active in coming to events. I've seen you at quite a few lectures. And of course you got involved with the library at a good time when Robin was putting together some programming there and moving things along.

Bob: It's becoming more nationally known among seniors that the best retirement for anybody to go where there is a small college.

Birkner: Or their old university. Because of the intellectual stimulation that's available.

Bob: And it's cheap.

Esther: Well, not necessarily.

Bob: Where else can you go to so many free lectures?

Birkner: So you're talking like you haven't had any regrets?

Bob: No, no not at all.

Esther: I had been going to the Mayo Clinic in '93 for another problem. And I simply asked what would happen in the Allergy Department if I went back east after being away so long. And they said I'd been away from the eastern allergents for so long that I probably wouldn't have any trouble.

Birkner: Were they right?

Esther: Yes.

Bob: Although we did go to the Allergist Clinic in York and got the shots.

Esther: That was a preventive thing.

Bob: So she was on shots until about a year ago and then decided there was no point in worrying about that anymore.

Birkner: Sure, sure so this particular neighborhood you're in worked out for you? Have you been pleased with this?

Esther: It has worked out fine.

Birkner: You have access to what you need to get access to in terms of groceries, and medical care and everything else?

Bob: There's a pharmacy and market, good market there in Biglerville.

Birkner: Great, that's really only what three miles away? That's not so bad.

Esther: When we sold our condo, the condo we had in Colorado, which was at nine thousand feet elevation on the

biggest lake in the state and the mountains all around. We sold it to somebody who was living in Colorado and it turns out that she was from Biglerville.

Birkner: Isn't that something. Small world.

Esther: She called up and asked something about what she was buying and she said "By the way it looks like you live in Pennsylvania? Where do you live?"

Birkner: Isn't that funny.

Esther: Her father grew up in Arendtsville.

Birkner: It is a small world. Well it's been good to have you back to Gettysburg. I'm just going to ask myself and ask you now whether we should tap into anything that I failed to ask you? Did you expect some questions that I didn't ask about your lives either in Gettysburg or beyond Gettysburg. Did I miss some ground here or did we cover pretty much what we wanted to say, expected to say.

Esther: Well, I guess I could have, some of that's in here, the war years I think paints a very different picture of Gettysburg.

Birkner: We can talk about that now. Why don't you say something about that.

Esther: Well, when I was here I worked at the Annie Warner Hospital. The woman at the college was Mrs. Mason, Francis Mason's wife. And some other women in town all ended up taking nurse's training and worked at the hospital over at the Annie Warner Hospital. I think we got a very different look at Gettysburg.

Birkner: What do you mean?

Esther: Well, we left the campus. It was not part of the campus world. Most of the people on campus didn't know there was a hospital in town. And some of us spent a lot of time working at Annie Warner Memorial Hospital.

Birkner: Now were you doing this as a service or did you get paid?

Esther: No, service. During the war years. They were short of nurses and it just seemed like a way to do some good.

Birkner: It was very public spirited of you.

Bob: Well, I called up the National Registry on this World War II Memorial thing and verified the registration and that kind of thing because anybody can register for that kind of work. My father was a block warden.

Birkner: He was checking to see that people had night shades, window shades down. Your father was a little too old to be in World War I right, plus he was a ministerial student.

Bob: Yeah. Let's see he went from Gettysburg Seminary to Syracuse in 1916. So he would have had a ministerial exemption. He would have been ineligible for the draft.

Birkner: Do you think your father expected to be a college teacher or how did it come about that he wound up to teach college?

Bob: I don't know.

Birkner: [Maybe it had to do with the fact that] Abdel Ross Wentz left the college to go to the Seminary. He was

teaching history at the college and he left for the Seminary.

Bob: Who?

Birkner: Abdel Ross Wentz.

Bob: Oh, I didn't know that.

Birkner: He taught history at Gettysburg for six or seven years.

Bob: Did he, I didn't know that.

Birkner: Then he recruited for the Seminary faculty around 1916.

Bob: Well I'll be darned. I didn't know that. What year was he a minister then, much earlier? Was he teaching history as a minister?

Birkner: Yes. Then he got recruited to go over to the Seminary.

Bob: Well that's interesting. Well maybe that was part of Dad's interest in history.

Esther: His father went to Syracuse.

Bob: He got an MA there while serving as pastor of the Lutheran church.

Birkner: Then when we came back here he took the PhD at Penn.

Bob: Right.

Esther: And that was the contingency for coming back--to get the PhD.

Birkner: And he didn't come back here until '23, is that right?

Bob: Right.

Birkner: And that would have been Henry Hanson's doing, probably.

Bob: Yes, but I had always thought until I read recently that it was Henry Hanson that was busy making all the changes at the college in terms of going from Bible to a Religion Department and creating new departments. Changing it from more or less from the Seminary Prep School to a liberal arts college. But no, that was Granville's doing. And Henry Hanson came in there to pick up and continue that but the history of Granville is very interesting.

Birkner: It's one of those things I know least about. Why, for example, he was pushed out in 1923.

Bob: Is that not in Charlie Glatfelter's book?

Birkner: I don't think that Charlie's book is the last word on it because there are sources we don't have.

Bob: Well, that's true, but the two things that caused problems, one was related to his attitude about the war I think, no I forget. He did two unpopular things and he refused to change his mind. He got in trouble with the trustees.

Birkner: He had a career in insurance or something in Chicago?

Bob: Right, and in the Gettysburg area.

Birkner: Is that right.

Bob: He wound up being the head of the thing.

Birkner: That's right, well Granville was a mathematician, right, apparently a very good one, too.

Bob: Very good.

Birkner: Your Dad was a true Gettysburg man.

Bob: He was part of the Academy too. And those are records that which I still would like to see more of. Apparently the yearbook type thing of the Academy was very poorly done.

Birkner: I don't know any records of the Academy.

Bob: I think it was Karen [Drickamer] that told me that she thought that for a number of years both the Seminary and the Academy records were actually in the Gettysburg College Yearbook, which is interesting if true.

Birkner: I don't know if it's true today. Now, Esther you have in your hand a picture.

Esther: Oh yeah, I brought a better picture of the house.

Birkner: And this is the picture of the house.

Esther: It had two wings off the back.

Birkner: Well it's even nicer than the picture in the book. I don't know how you could have left this house without having a pang.

Esther: Well, it really was because the family split up.

Birkner: Right, you did raise your family here and so you have those memories. That's wonderful. And I assume that it has probably passed through several hands since then, right?

Esther: Yes.

Bob: About the time we were leaving it was when AT&T and Bell were moving into the Somerset Hills area of New Jersey, around Basking Ridge.

Birkner: And there were plenty of people who would want a house like that.

Esther: Well, Jean was out in Chicago. She was in touch with somebody who had bought the house who was a broker with a big brokerage firm. I don't know if those people are still in the house. That man had several children.

Birkner: Well it's very nice.

Esther: It's right by a brook and across the bridge from the brook was an old blacksmith's shop, an old blacksmith's shop.

Birkner: Well, I want to borrow a copy of the book and pass the picture and make a photocopy for whenever some day when we get this transcribed we can put them all in the archives as a memento of this. Anything else you would like to discuss.

Esther: [Shows an article she has about Bergen County, New Jersey, and we talk about it a bit.]

Esther: I thought when I read that, "well, I'm going to see if Mike did see that." We used to go into New York a lot.

Birkner: What were you doing in New York?

Esther: Oh we went to operas and theatres.

Bob: We went to the theatre a lot.

Birkner: You did?

Bob: I remember one time for a week of vacation from work we just went into the theatre every night. Drove in, parked came back out and sometimes we had tickets ahead and sometimes we just went in picked up whatever we could.

Birkner: I don't know if you ever saw this but my daughter loves theatre and over Christmas she asked me if I'd take her over to Broadway. And we went and she wanted to go see the *Producers* but they had just announced that Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick were coming back so that was forgetting. But we ran into congestion getting into the city taking the bus in from Jersey and it took about forty-five minutes longer than we anticipated and so we got downtown around ten of two and the matinees were at two. We could see immediately there was no way we could get into the *Producers* so I said to Madeline, "There is a play only one block away called *Wonderful Town* which is a revival of the early nineteen fifties hit." And we went over and just as luck would have it they had a couple of seats left for the matinee performance. I was literally there at two minutes of two. I won't tell you what I paid for these tickets because it was astronomical but I was so glad and we went in and we had a blast. It is a play about Greenwich Village in the thirties that was originally staged in the early fifties and it was a hit. And then they restaged it now to the twenty-first century. And it's a big hit again.

Bob: What is it called now?

Birkner: *Wonderful Town*. And we just enjoyed it very much so I know I could appreciate the excitement of going into Broadway and you took advantage of your proximity to do that.

Esther: Yes. Of course I'd grown up going in and out of there all the time like you could.

Birkner: You did?

Esther: Oh yes.

Birkner: What did you go in for?

Esther: Well I went into the opera regularly. I had subscription tickets during my high school years.

Birkner: Now who did you go in with? It wouldn't be a typical thing a Teaneck High School student would do, would it?

Esther: Sometimes with my mother.

Esther: We'd go in to the city after the proms from Teaneck High.

Tommy Dorsey would be playing.

Birkner: And the bus came right on Queen Anne Road and you'd take it from Queen Anne Road probably.

Esther: And she worked downtown too and took the ferry to work.

Birkner: We never did talk about the *Bergen Evening Record*. How did you get hired at the *Record*? Did you just apply?

Esther: My father knew the editor.

Birkner: Was it one of the Borgs at that time?

Esther: Yes.

Birkner: Did you do some summer internship?

Esther: Well, I ended up doing a lot of casualty stories from post war days.

Birkner: There were a lot of those.

Esther: Very heavy on the families. And that was the same summer that Ralph Stahley died, same August

Birkner: That has to be rough. I read the *Record* during those years, part of my research on Bergenfield. I wouldn't have read the Teaneck stories necessarily but I read the Bergenfield and the more general interest stories. And the *Record* covered a lot of news.

Birkner: So you could have really gone into a number of different directions, teaching, librarianship and journalism. And you did all three.
So it makes an interesting life I think.

Esther: Yes, it does.

Birkner: And Bob of course having a combination of Chemistry and the ministry. And again you two have covered a lot of turf. And five kids. Always something going on in that regard. So you have had a pretty good life. Well, I want to say thank you very much for letting me sit with you for this, this has been a lot of fun. TAPE ENDS