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Interview with Robert Reynolds, August 23, 2000

Robert Reynolds

Michael J. Birkner
Gettysburg College

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Interview with Robert Reynolds, August 23, 2000

Description

In the last part of a series of interviews conducted by Michael J. Birkner, Robert Reynolds discussed on August 23, 2000 his life after World War II. After the war, Reynolds moved to Gettysburg. He discussed his time at a rubber factory and his decision to become a teacher at 50.

Length of Interview: 49 minutes

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Disciplines

Higher Education | Liberal Studies | Oral History

08-23-2000 Interview - Robert Reynolds

Michael Birkner: I'm Michael Birkner. I'm sitting at the home of Robert Reynolds of 170 Old Mill Road in Gettysburg. We have just completed an extensive series of interviews about Mr. Reynolds' World War II experiences. And now we're going to talk about his life after the war, and specifically his years in Gettysburg. So, why don't we start with how you came to Gettysburg.

Robert Reynolds: OK, as I said, I went to Hagerstown to work for Hagerstown Rubber Company in 1946. My uncle, Joe Reynolds, was a sales manager here at Victor Rubber in Gettysburg. And as a youngster, I used to spend half of my summers in Hagerstown and half of them in Gettysburg. And he used to take me on sales trips and all over the battlefield and everything. And I loved Gettysburg. I made lots of contacts in the Army through people from Gettysburg. And when I went to work for Hagerstown Rubber Company, I was an assistant superintendent, and it was manufacturing rubber heels and soles for the new shoe industry. And when I got there, we had an old superintendent that was a bull in the woods. He was an old stubborn, old New Englander. And then he didn't go in for me very much. He says, "You're just a young whippersnapper coming to take my job." And I said, "No, No." And we had fights and knock down drag out and everything. He wouldn't help me any. So, finally I got a hold of the foreman and the assistant foreman. And they would tell me things, and I would try to translate it. So, this old guy would be negative about everything. He says, "I've had 35 years experience in the rubber business." The salesman used to say, "hell, my 35 years. He's had 5 years experience, seven times." He was so stubborn and so old-fashioned. And I started organizing the foreman and the assistant foreman just like the Army. Because they had good ideas, and they had good suggestions, and finally, I got in charge over the old fellow. And he had a heart attack, and they

wanted to make me an engineer. I said, no, I've had my chance to be factory manager. I've had my chance to be industrial engineer. I want sales. I want the product. Because I'd been working with the sales, and working with the customers, and that was my field, not manufacturing. I've done millions and millions of dollars worth of transactions with the big corporations and everything. And being stuck in a little old factory was not my idea of glamour. So, I suddenly woke up one day, and I said, "this isn't for me." A new owner came in, and he was an old Scotchman, tight as they come. And in fact, his brother was vice president of the Gettysburg National Bank. And he used to tell me stories about his brother, how tight he was. So, I woke up one morning and I said, "You know, I'm going over to Gettysburg and talk to Ray Hoffman, the owner of Victor Rubber. He told me that when he was retirement age, he was going to sell it. And I said, "he's about 65 now," and I said, "I'm going over there and talk to him." Well, my uncle heard about it and he says, " Why don't you let me go over with you?" He says, "We will buy it. Because I wouldn't have had the money to buy it outright." So my father-in-law and my uncle back me at this little Victor Rubber Company here in Gettysburg. We were competitors with Hagerstown and O'Sullivan and Cat's Paw. But we had a good reputation. Goodyear, and Goodrich were our competitors. But we had a reputation of working very closely with the customers. We could change our schedule overnight.

Birkner: Wait, you're getting me a little confused here. You're talking about your job before you came to Gettysburg or the job in Gettysburg?

Reynolds: Gettysburg and Hagerstown.

Birkner: You need first to describe getting into Gettysburg.

Reynolds: I bought Victor Rubber Corporation on North Washington Street. That's right where the Flower Boutique is now. There was a railroad powerhouse with a trolley that used to

go up to Big Round Top and Little Round Top.

Birkner: Was the building the building that the Flower Boutique is in now?

Reynolds: No, it was an old red ironstone that should have never been torn down. It could have been made in a gallery of antiques and everything.

Birkner: And they tore it down.

Reynolds: They tore it down. It was a monstrosity to them but it was a beautiful, red sandstone front.

Birkner: Of course, at that time was the hotel still up?

Reynolds: Oh, yes. The Eagle Hotel was up on the corner. That burned in the spring of '60. And I could have bought that whole corner where the 7 Eleven is now. Right on down, I could have bought that whole corner. But they wouldn't back me at Hagerstown. They wouldn't put up the money for it, so we let Mr. Hoffman take the building back. He kept the building. We rented it from him for three or four years. And then we could see the handwriting on the wall. I was traveling up and down the east coast of Detroit, Chicago, down into the South and Canada. And my uncle was still in Hagerstown Rubber Company. But, he had been squeezed out of ownership because he was very careless, and he got squeezed out. So, I was vice president here at Gettysburg. So, the Japanese imports started hitting on us.

Birkner: Let's go back to when you got your investment in the Victor Rubber Company here.

Reynolds: December of '58.

Birkner: December of '58. When you came in, what were you expecting to accomplish with that enterprise?

Reynolds: Well, I wanted a new factory. I wanted a modern factory where the raw materials

-- now you can imagine unloading box cars on North Washington Street, right across from the college. We were known as the dirt and dust company. Soot coming out of our boiler. Rubber scraps were burned. There was no environmental control in those days. But the railroads were tying up downtown Gettysburg. I knew that my time in Gettysburg was limited. I wanted a new factory. We even look at the Bridges Golf Course up there. *Note:* My uncle was owner 45% stock, Campbell was 45% . The other 10% was Mr. Snively of Hagerstown Leather Co. sales. Mr Campbell, owner of Hagerstown Leather Co., fired him and got control of his 10% of Rubber Co., making him 55% owner of Rubber Co.

Birkner: That building is now Country Club.

Reynolds: Yeah, and there were Leroy Winebrenner's farm is at the Peace Light, along the avenue there at the Peace Light. I was offered that place for a factory right on the railroad siding at the cut. Of course the Park Service wouldn't have liked that, but the restrictions were not there then. But seriously, I was expecting to expand, because I had some wonderful customers, and I was oriented for expansion.

Birkner: What were you making in the factory?

Reynolds: Rubber heels. But Hagerstown was making rubber soles. Now, we made millions and millions of cowboy heels, boot heels, combat boots, saddle shoes.

Birkner: You literally specialized in heels.

Reynolds: Heels, right. But Hagerstown had soles. So I was going to put soles in. But I had to have a new factory. I had to have expansion. And then there were demand for slabs, rubber slabs, so they could dink out what they wanted. For example. Hanover, had they Hanover Heel, Coulson Heel Company?, they would put top lifts in heels, little slabs of rubber. And they would dink them out the size that they wanted. And they would cement them to these heels. So I had

to have expansion room. I had to have new pressers.

Birkner: Again, let's back up. When you got into the company, how many people worked in the factory?

Reynolds: Gettysburg?

Birkner: Yeah.

Reynolds: About 100. 125.

Birkner: And were they local people?

Reynolds: Yes. But, Gettysburg is not a manufacturing center. I couldn't get help.

Hagerstown and O'Sullivan, my competitors were running three shifts. I was out there running one shift. I was barely getting the second shift off the ground. Some people would work two shifts, but only a handful of people. So, I would go to the unemployment agency and I said, "You're paying unemployment insurance for all these people, laid off from Knouse laid off from Musselman, laid off from Lucky Leaf. I used to have Cubans coming over from Chambersburg, driving over a big old Packard with 1948, 50 Packard with six or seven people in. We had people coming in, basically Fairfield, New Oxford, McSherrystown, people coming in. A lot of those people were being laid off from seasonal work in the apple orchards. And they would work for me over the winter months. But, I couldn't keep a steady workforce, so I was hoping to expand elsewhere.

Birkner: I was wondering, what happens if you have a contract in the summer, and you've got no people?

Reynolds: It was tough; it was tough. It really was. If people were elderly, the first thing I did when I came in, was put in piece rates. I'd been trained as an industrial engineer while I was working in Hagerstown. And there's a lady that goes to our church. She says, "I blessed you the

day you came to work in Gettysburg." I was paid for the work I did, while others loafed and chatted.

Reynolds: These industrial engineers used to come in to Hagerstown Rubber when I was production manager. And they begged me to go out to Cleveland to take courses in Industrial Management. They sent me down to Richmond. It's called Measurement Time Movement. They would measure the wrist movements, the elbow movements. And of course there'd been all kinds of music written about sweep sweep Chica-broom -- working in the factory. But, these girls had carpal-tunnel. They didn't know what it was in those days. And then some of them would get their long hair caught in the machinery. And it was old time, old fashioned. So, we were just starting to modernize. One man was getting his hand caught in the machine. And of course he had been drinking. And, I was being trained as an industrial engineer. But, I didn't want anything to do with personnel and machinery. I wanted sales. And, that's why I came to Gettysburg. And this lady said, "When you came over from Hagerstown, I blessed you, because you put in piece work." I'd been working my tail off. I had two of the fastest trimmers and I had to work like a slave to keep up with them. And the girls all on the side of me, they're just so lazy. She says, "You put piece work in; for the first time I got paid for what I was earning." And we had to lay off some of the older people, because they were under the minimum wage. Of course that was the first time the put in minimum wage. So, I'm starting to get new customers, and starting to build up quite a backing for -- and I was ready for an expansion. And then, the first thing that fell was the women's slipper trade. Tennis shoes came into the picture for the first time at about 1960. Every child was starting to wear tennis shoes. Every woman until then wore bedroom slippers around and they had felt slippers with little rubber heel. Nurse's shoes used to have white rubber heels. And things like that. Saddle shoes, what?

Nobody's going to wear saddle shoes. Millions and millions of saddle shoes. Little Mary Jane's. Little girl's slippers. And then the barefoot sandals. Millions of them. Tennis shoes took their place. The Japanese tennis shoe came in at 59 cents a pair. They didn't hold up, they didn't last. The average girl shoe was a \$1.85. Now, remember people were working at 25 cents an hour now. \$1.59, finally the tennis shoes got up to where we can compete. And they started bringing in a better grade of tennis shoes, and the Japanese started a pretty good quality. One of my best customers was down here at Cambridge Rubber in Taneytown, and they used to buy an uncured Tennis Soles from me. So, we got the handwriting on the wall. So, I was in New York one time at a sales meeting, and a distant cousin of mine was sales manager at Hagerstown Rubber Company. And I said, "Bud, we're damn fools competing against each other. You know, the only reason I left Hagerstown Rubber company was because Old Mr. Campbell wouldn't give me a raise, wouldn't let me do what I wanted to do. I said, "Here we are both selling and we're competing with one another." He says, "Would you consider merging the two companies?" I said, "Bud, you just said the magic word." I said, "We are fools. The way this market's going, we ought to go back." So, within six months we sold the company back to Hagerstown Rubber Company, but -- I kept sales. And then I was free to travel.

Birkner: And what year was that?

Reynolds: That would be 1961.

Birkner: So, it wasn't very many years before you --

Reynolds: Oh, no. Because the Japanese imports just killed American made shoes. I had at one time at least 200 customers within a 150-mile radius of Gettysburg. You can't imagine what the payroll was in these little communities. All around. Litiz, Ephrata, Columbia, all these towns, McSherrystown, Elizabethtown.

Birkner: They bought it from you?

Reynolds: Yeah. To tell you a story. There was a major, Bob Campbell, who's in the history columns from time to time, the Gettysburg Times, had factories in McSherrystown and Littlestown. He had four factories. And he overextended himself one time. Best customer Hagerstown Rubber Company had before I went to work there. And he went bankrupt. *Note:* The Maitland Bros., George and Dick were purchasing agents for their cos. Bob Kenworth's father was also a good customer. Local shoe manufacturers were in New Oxford, Westminster, Thurmont, Emmitsburg, Waynesboro, and Heel Co. in East Berlin. All gone now.

Birkner: What was he making?

Reynolds: Rubber shoes. Sears Roebuck was his best customer. And Sears temporarily had a lay back or something and cancelled a couple contracts. So, this Major Bob Campbell was temporarily embarrassed. He and his older brother told me this, the one that was running my factory then, let him go bankrupt on 85 cents on a dollar. That's not bankruptcy. When you pay your credit of 85 cents, that temporary fiscal embarrassment. And this man told me, he let his own brother go bankrupt. Four factories, right here in the area. OK, well, that's why I wanted to get away from this guy.

Birkner: And that would have been when?

Reynolds: I would have been about 19 -- I would say, *55, *54.

Birkner: Let me ask you this. When you began your sales work in Gettysburg and the vicinity, did your family move to Gettysburg?

Reynolds: Yes, my wife came over in March of *59.

Birkner: So, where'd you live?

Reynolds: Country Club Lane.

Birkner: So it was opened then?

Reynolds: Yeah. But there was no houses available. Gettysburg was a tight market. There was very little available. And I took this small house and it was too small for a growing family. My mother would come up from Annapolis, Peggy's family would come over from Hagerstown and her brothers and brother-in-laws. So, this little house across the street opened up, four levels. Right across the street. #145, and that was wonderful. And then we had room for my son to bring his friends home from college. My daughter brought her friends home from college. And then, that would have been 1967, in 1964 we sold out to Seiberling Tire and Rubber Company. Seiberling Tire and Rubber Company made me an offer I couldn't turn down. I had control of Victor Rubber Company customers. I took over Seiberling Tire and Rubber Company customers in New England and in the South and in Pennsylvania. I had to give up New York. I had some wonderful customers in New York. I had to give them up. Seiberling had work shoe business. They had slabs. And they had a plastics plant. Mansfield, OH. And I mean, I was really doing well with Seiberling. But, Seiberling was then owned by a wheeler-dealer, Ted Lamb out of Toledo. Ted Lamb had been invested by the McCarthy Committee because he was a labor pink lawyer. And he was up before the McCarthy Committee and he bragged. And \$900,000 isn't much today, but in the 1950s, that was a lot of money. He bragged and I have his book called No Lamb for Slaughter. Ted Lamb spent \$900,000 to feed him, the McCarthy committee hearings. His lawyer came from the McCarthy committee. And it wasn't Bobby Kennedy, it was Roy Cohn. Have you ever heard of Roy Cohn?

Birkner: Sure, of course.

Reynolds: He was rotten, while on the McCarthy committee he would feed info to Lamb.

Birkner: He was a character.

Reynolds: And he was behind this Ted Lamb. And we found out Ted Lamb controlled nearly a hundred corporations, but all he did was raid them and gut them. Ended up shells. Nobody ever knew where the money ever went, Goodyear of Canada. Nobody ever knew what happened to any of the corporation shells that he had. He had companies all over. I met him once. But they sent in and would you believe -- (inaudible) was the headquarters of the Seiberling Tire and Rubber Company, and you can't deal with anyone from Arkansas. They sent in characters that would have made Bill Clinton look like [laughter] an angel. I mean, women, sex, drugs, alcohol -- I had nothing to do with them. One guy, the general manager, I wouldn't let him in my house. They used to pick me up from Gettysburg, we'd be on our way to Atlantic City or New York City for a convention or something. I'd say, "that man is not going to set foot in my house," because they would stop here for breakfast, and my mother would send up fresh fish from Annapolis and I'd have fresh fish for them early in the morning. I'd sit here and have coffee and everything. And I said, "But that man will never set foot." But they said, "What do you mean (inaudible)" And I said, "If you ever bring him here, I won't let him in the house." But, it was that kind of people. I didn't last with them. *Note:* Mr. Ted Lamb was a corporate raider. He would buy companies like Goodyear of Canada, and gut them. Their assets would disappear in his various holding companies and only a shell would remain.

Birkner: Seiberling?

Reynolds: Yeah. I said, in 1967, I stayed with them for two and a half, three years, and they kept taking my territory away. They gave me a five percent commission and I was really making money. And each time, they'd give me another territory or take one away. I said, "I'd give them the thing." I said, "Well, look, I take your family out to dinner, I bring your family there, here to, not Disney World, but Fantasyland. Entertain your family." And he said, "That's not what we

mean. Just give us gifts." I said, "You want to kick back?" " Oh no, just remember us." And they'd come out and ask you for commission and everything. And I said, "No way, no way." They actually took payoffs from the other sales agents but I wouldn't pay off!

Birkner: Meanwhile they owned your shoe factory?

Reynolds: Oh yeah, but they were just. Where they ever picked them to -- see Lamb was the owner of Seiberling, but where he got his managers, God only knows. Only one or two of them had even the slightest experience with shoes. *Note:* Mr. Seiberling was founder of Goodyear and was squeezed out, then started his own Company. Eventually he moved to heel business to Batesville, Arkansas because he owned land there. He loved goose hunting and this was on the flyway of geese over rice fields.

Birkner: For the sake of this interview, I was going to say, I wanted to be clear that it sounds like -- when these people came over into run the Hagerstown factory, they were not that interested in making the product and making a good product.

Reynolds: I owned it for two years, two and a half years, that's what I was interested in. We didn't sell Victor to Hagerstown until 1961. In 1961, Victor, Hagerstown sold out to Seiberling. So from 1964-67, so in '67, I said to heck with this. I can't work with these people. I'd been offered a job with O'Sullivan, I'd been offered a job with Goodyear. I said, I've got a growing family. I don't want to travel anymore. I resent leaving the house at one or two o'clock Sunday afternoon to go to New York or Boston or Chicago or something. I don't want any of this anymore. My wife says, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Honey, I've been working with the college kids, I've been working with the college fellowship." I have a wonderful ecumenical program. Course the new chaplain broke it up finally.

Birkner: You have to explain that for a minute. What do you mean you were working the

college kids?

Reynolds: We had an ecumenical church group of the students of the Gettysburg College. This was the United Methodist Church. It was called a Methodist Church then. Down where the city hall is on East Middle Street. Where the police headquarters is now. That was our church building. We had a series of arson fires. And the different churches are burned and ours was burned. And we were forced to merge with United Methodist, United Brethren up on High Street. But, at that time, these college kids were from all faiths. And a couple of black girls in it and all. And very wonderful to chaperone them. They would call my wife on Saturday morning and say, "Ms. Reynolds, we would like to have a spaghetti dinner. Or we would like to have bacon and eggs, " or something. And my wife would go to the store and buy what they wanted. And some of the ladies would leave baked goods and baked bread and all. Pies and donuts and all. And these kids would come in, Sunday afternoon and cook, and then have a meeting. If they wanted a speaker, they would tell me what they wanted. And I would go around get the local people to speak to them. We had one program called "Ethics in the Workplace." I got Judge [Oscar] Spicer, the present judge. He came in and spoke. We had doctors and surgeons come in and speak about ethics in the medical profession. I had businessmen come in. One man was a cancer survivor and he spoke. Whatever type of program we wanted, we would get them. If they didn't want a speaker, we would just have fellowship. But, we would take them on retreats. We would take them up to Methodist camps, and they would have weekends up there. I worked them in with the Senior High Group. And I remember the first time we decided we wanted to square dance. They said, "We don't dance in a Methodist church." I said, "This is not a Methodist church. I was raised in Episcopalian." (laughter) I said, "This is the social hall." But, we had a lot of fun.

Birkner: Why did the college chaplain break you up.

Reynolds: Well, he wanted the kids to be under control of the college.

Birkner: Was that in the *60s?

Reynolds: Yes.

Birkner: Was that Rev. Vanorsdale?

Reynolds: Yeah, that's who it was, yup.

Birkner: So, he brought them back to his balwick.

Reynolds: He brought them back to the college chaplain. One of the kids is a local school teacher, music teacher, he and his wife. One boy became an Episcopal priest. He married the local girl. They own the Rose Garden motel out there on the battlefield. Mrs. Sargent still lives out there. John Latcher would love to get that place away from her. But anyhow, these kids were fantastic.

Birkner: So, what you're saying though is that --

Reynolds: I said I'm going to be a schoolteacher.

Birkner: In *67 you decided that was enough for you.

Reynolds: I called Francis Coulson, the Superintendent of Schools, made an appointment with him. I said, "Francis, I want to be a school teacher." He said, "I'll send you over to Shippensburg; I'll let you talk to Dean Kern." Dean Kern says, "Yes, sir." He says -- I thought I'd be a college professor myself. But they told you right point blank in those days, you were too old to be a college professor. I was 50 years old. And I applied for several colleges. I even applied as headmaster at my old prep school in Southern Maryland the military academy. But, when I got to Shippensburg, I loved it. Oh I mean it was fantastic.

Birkner: You already had your bachelor's degree so you were taking your teacher's

certification and Master of Education.

Reynolds: I majored in math and sciences. And Dean Kern says, "You're a fool not to get your master's in math and science." And I said, "I don't want any nuclear physics or any electronics or anything, I hate that stuff. That's why I dropped out of mechanical engineering." I said, "I want literature, I want history from literature. The great books." In fact a list of novels, the great novels, my god. Come to think of it, I was looking at that the other day. That was all the books we read in college, when I transferred from engineering school. But, I was going to teach history from the great novels at college. But they wrote back and said, "I'm sorry, but -- " They said I was too old. They couldn't do that.

Birkner: So you went back to get your certificate.

Reynolds: In social studies.

Birkner: And that went well?

Reynolds: Oh yes. I had no problem whatsoever. The professors used to use me as a sounding board.

Birkner: Can I ask you how you made a living if you were going to school -- how you raised your family and put bread on the table?

Reynolds: As a salesman I made good money. My wife was a specialist in flower arranging and helped at Murray's and Craver's Flower Shops, also she was a manager of International Village Flower Shop.

Birkner: So you were doing it while you were selling.

Reynolds: No. I was substituting at Fairfield while I was still a salesman to see if I'd fit back in the classroom. Well, I'd saved enough money as a salesman that I could afford to go to school. I even took a correspondents course. ICS and Plastics in the 1940s to find out what

Polymers and all those things. But, when I went back to Shippensburg, for examples, one of the professors was asking questions and this boy says, "Well, my gosh, don't ask me. Ask that old gray haired man back there. He's lived history." (laughter) But they would bounce things off of me. But the amazing was, going back to college at 50, the Kuder® Preference Test. The different psychological (inaudible) -- I would come up with combinations that would astound the professor. He says, "This example, this answer should have been blossom time." "Well, I put bombs." He says, "Bombs? It's blossom." I said, "Cherry bomb, time bomb." He was (inaudible) by cherry springtime, and cherry blossoms, I'm talking about stink bombs (laughter) and cherry bombs (laughter).

Birkner: So you did this degree at Shippensburg, and did you then go back to Mr. Coulson?

Reynolds: Oh no. Fairfield had an opening for three part time teachers. Fairfield was just beginning to grow. When I realized I couldn't get in to college, they wanted young men to be proctors and to live around the dormitories and things like that. So, I was going home for my doctorate naturally and Fairfield needed three part time teachers, because Carrol Valley was taking off. And Judge John McPhail said they could have their own school district. They did not have to merge with Gettysburg, as long as they offered top notch instruction.

End of Side A

Reynolds: I took a part time math job, and would you believe, I had to teach modern math. I took one look at that class and no way in the world I'm going to bother with the theories of Math -- I want you to know what a decimal is. I want you to know what a fraction is. This was 7th and 8th grade math. And I said, "you're going to know how to handle 0s." They didn't know anything about long division, anything like that. They didn't even know how to handle 0s. And

I'm going to teach them modern math sets? The old head of the math department came to me one day and said, "I understand you're not teaching modern math." And I said, "Fred," he just retired this year, Fred Smith. I said, "Fred, you're kidding yourself." I said, "These kids are going to be the best mechanics, the best plumbers, the best electricians, the best auto mechanics." And I said, "I'm going to teach them math or arithmetic." Forget it! They're going to learn fractions, decimals and multiplication and division. And I had wonderful rapport with the kids, because I said, "Look, there's nothing you can pull on me I haven't seen in the Army, or I haven't seen in the factory."

"How come you're stricter than everybody else?" they would ask.

I said, "Look. It's simple. There's the right way, the wrong way, and the Army way."

"What do you mean the Army way? Suppose you're in the navy?"

I said, "That's what I'm trying to tell you. There's the right way, the wrong way, and the Navy way."

"Well, suppose you're in the Marines?"

I said, "Now you're catching on! The right way, the wrong way and the -- "

And it would go right on to the Air force, the Coast Guard and everything.

"OK, Mr. Reynolds." Sometimes they'd call me, Pappy.

"Mr. Pappy, what's the Army way?"

"The army way is, the first law of survival is to protect your own rear end. Your life depends on me and my life depends on you. And if you're a goof off -- and I wouldn't use the fancy word. I don't want anything to do with you, because I can't trust you." I said, "You do what you're supposed to do, and I'll do what I'm supposed to do, and everyone's going to be happy. I won't be sued."

"Well you can't sue a school teacher."

"Oh yes you can. Your mummy's and Daddy's could. But it's negligence. But I won't be negligent if I lay out the rules ahead of time."

And they caught on. So that was the math. Then I took a science and I had science class. And I loved that. That was earth and space science. They wanted me to teach field biology, and I said, "No." Let me take Earth and Space Science. These kids will be turned on. Here's the landing on the moon, and I said, "This is ahead of us, you know." Incidentally man lands on moon. I've got the headlines. (inaudible) Kennedy to explain Chappaquidic. Same day. Man lands on moon. (laughter)

Birkner: 1969. So you're working part time or fulltime teaching science?

Reynolds: Well, I was full time then.

Birkner: So you moved from the part time job in math to teaching full time in Fairfield?

Reynolds: While I was going through a master's degree at Shippensburg, they had hired me at Fairfield.

Birkner: And what were the grades you took?

Reynolds: Seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth. And then I had 12th grade economics and POD.

Birkner: Wow, you really had a lot of stuff to cover.

Reynolds: Well, look at the background. I had had a history of the world atlas. This one old professor, Dr. Hogg. He was retired right after I went to the Shippensburg. No matter what he would say, I never spoke up. I kept quiet, but he would bounce things off of me. And he would be astounded. He says, "How in the heck." He would call me after class. "How could you know about the canal in the Dismal Swamp?" I said, "I surveyed in North Carolina. In the army engineers I saw it. I came through there on the railroad. I came through there on the buses."

And he'd shake his head. "How could you know about this, how could you know about that?" I said, "Teddy Roosevelt, Captain A.T. Mahan, a two ocean navy, the history of the British Navy. The American Navy. It all came through. Annapolis, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the War of 1812, it all came through there.

Birkner: How long did you teach science?

Reynolds: Alright. As the District grew, they would hire a new teacher. While I lost out math to Remalley. But, I picked up civics. 8th grade civics. So, now I have three social studies classes. Economics, POD. And POD to me is sociology. And American Government. So gradually, I pushed that in to American Government. And then -- Steve Baker, who's the assistant pastor at the Memorial Baptist Church was hired for science. So then I took over an American History class. So gradually I ended up fulltime social studies, where I wanted to be. But, see I had had math and science background. And I could have gotten my master's in that even. But, I enjoyed teaching.

Birkner: So you liked Fairfield?

Reynolds: Oh yes.

Birkner: And you didn't have any inclination to move to Fairfield, did you?

Reynolds: No. But I owned property there. I did not. So, somebody said, "Well, why didn't you go to Gettysburg?" I said, "Oh no, I know too many people." I know too many children. I don't want to have anything to do with anybody I know. I was offered a job at Linganore. That's outside of Frederick. You know, * [Linganore], Lake Linganore, was a big development growing. And the facilities there were terrible. They were growing to fast. The place was being overcrowded, and I didn't want any parts of that. But I'd been offered a job there, and then a good friend of mine was superintendent of schools in Frederick. And he offered me a job in

another Frederick school and I didn't want that. And then -- oh by the way, while I was going to Shippensburg in Social Studies, I was also taking my certification in Vo-Tech school. A good friend of mine, Paul Burns, was hired to develop the Vo-Tech school here in Adams County. And this morning's paper, one of the school districts just signed with the West Perry Vocational Program. Well, Adams County was going to have its own Vo-Tech school in 1967, and I was going to be hired for that. And that's when I was going to Shippensburg. I was going to school at Temple at night. At the college campus up near HACC. There was a community college, Elizabethtown, Temple.

Birkner: In Harrisburg you mean?

Reynolds: Yeah, Yeah. And I was going there for Vo-Tech. And I was working on transportation programs for shipping and receiving and warehousing and all the programs production that I'd been doing in Hagerstown and Victor Gettysburg. And the Vocational School in Chambersburg offered me a job too. But honestly, Mike, that was with young kids, mentally disabled. And it broke my heart. They were so eager. And I sat in on a couple of classes. I couldn't have stood it psychologically. I wanted academic students.

Birkner: So you stayed in Fairfield?

Reynolds: Yes, I stayed and had a wonderful time there. I taught 13 years straight. I had two years substitution before I took the job, and then ten years as substitute when I retired.

Birkner: Did you keep going to Fairfield after you retired?

Reynolds: I was -- I'd substituted up at -- Well, I was offered a job in Littlestown, Frank Bashore, and said, "Thank God, you're the first man whose ever called in and politely turned me down. The others left you hanging." I was offered a job with Mr. Hudson at [Biglerville?] That was all Junior Highs. See, I didn't want Junior High. I wanted Senior High.

Birkner: So you had a good experience in Fairfield.

Reynolds: Oh yes. Definitely. But you knew, commuting over from Country Club Lane.

Birkner: It sounds. A couple things are going on here. One, you have obviously a lot of energy for a middle-aged man at this time, doing all these things. How did you deal with the family the stuff? You seemed to have an awful lot of balls in the air.

Reynolds: Wonderful family life. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Y teams, camping director, church, Sunday School, Church Administration, etc.

Birkner: You did that all on top of what you were already doing?

Reynolds: Oh yeah, that's why I didn't want to be a salesman. Because then I had all of this available. Professor [Chester] Jarvis was the economics professor at the college. And he and I worked together on several programs.

Birkner: Not Chet Jarvis?

Reynolds: Yeah, Chet Jarvis.

Birkner: Because he taught political science too.

Reynolds: Well, I said economics, political science. Ok Yeah. Chet Jarvis, yeah?

Birkner: What was your connection with him?

Reynolds: Through the church. Jarvis's wife.

Birkner: Thank you. He just died recently.

Reynolds: I know he did.

Birkner: He was close to 90.

Reynolds: Yup. Well, see, I'm 83 now. All these things were bottled up that I couldn't do as a traveling salesman. As I said, Goodyear made me an offer -- and O'Sullivan in Winchester.

Birkner: before we close it off, I do want to go back and make sure I didn't miss anything

from your years with the shoe or heel factory that we should have on the tape. You were -- in the office, what percentage of the time, and on the road what percentage of the time?

Reynolds: Well now that was a difficulty. Victor, if you think old-fashioned was the world in Gettysburg, or Hagerstown you should have seen what I had here in -- (pause) I mean. I wanted to clean that factory up. I wanted to be there. I had experience with purchasing. I had experience in compounding rubber. I had wonderful rapport with the salesman. These companies, the big chemical companies, Monsanto, Vanderbilt, all the big companies. Firestone. Sent in wonderful representatives and salesmen. They would work right in your factory and work with you on any problem. They were the kind of men I was working with. But, the old superintendent rejected them. He didn't want their help. And I came over here and the same thing. But, my uncle said, "Now look. You're the sales manager. I want you on the road." I said, "Well Joe, I have a thousand and one little problems that I can clean up here. I can handle the sales on the phone, and a couple visits."

"Naoe. You've got be on the road full time."

I said, "All right."

So, I'd come back and then I would go in the factory and for example, the old superintendent in the white heels, the customers were saying, "Your heels are too heavy. Your heels are heavy like lead. I'm going to go look for the formula." He didn't want show me the formula.

I said, "George, you're going to have to show me your formula."

["They're not in my possession."?]

I said, "They look comfy." I looked at the form -- and he's putting lead into the white heels. And the customers said they feel like lead. It was called something like, oh god, my

chemistry -- litharge or something.

Birkner: That doesn't matter, but the point is, it was too heavy a shoe.

Reynolds: Yeah. And it wasn't white. It was grayish. I said, "You've got to put white in. Titanium. Titanium-oxide."

"No, you can't tell me what to do."

Then I'd go on a sales trip. I'd come back.

"George, did you make this improvement?" Nope, nope. And he's spit tobacco juice in the waste can. Oh well that's funny. It was comical. Well, anyhow, I finally got control over the formula, and I had brought these young chemical engineers in to start working. And then I tried to put a third shift on. I built up the second shift finally. I even went down to Frederick trying to get workers for unemployment. And they would laugh and said, "Well, we have people up near Gettysburg, but we can't -- Your work is heavy, it's dirty --"

I said, "Well women are doing the work in O'Sullivan in Winchester. Women are doing the work in Hagerstown."

"Oh I know, but you can't work people like that, it's too heavy."

This is the unemployment office telling me what I could do and couldn't do! So, I got the second shift working, and then I tried to make the third shift. I had a couple people come over from Hagerstown, offered to work with me. And my uncle heard about that and raised hell because I was stealing men away from him. I said, "Now look, I'm running the plant in Gettysburg."

"I know, but you can't take my help." And it was comical.

Birkner: You wouldn't happen to have a picture of the factory as it looked in those days?

Reynolds: I gave it to [Charles] Glatfelter at Adams Co. Historical Society.

Birkner: Oh good.

Reynolds: I gave it to Glatfelter.

Birkner: That's splendid. Because that's who I was going to give a copy of this to.

Reynolds: Oh, I've got a picture, yeah, I made a copy of it. You know? I've got one. But it's where my wife has one of the books.

Birkner: Well, as long as he has it, that's the important thing.

Reynolds: Yup. In 1941, just before Pearl Harbor. Right after Pearl Harbor, they gave Christmas Turkeys to all the employees. And I gave them to one of the Real Estate men here. His mother worked there. Old Ma McLaughlin, Mike McLaughlin, Dr. McLaughlin's grandmother. And -- he recognized his father, and mother in all those pictures. But -- I really did like public relations. I could have gone with a big corporations, but I'll never be able to have my family life.

Birkner: And that was important.

Reynolds: That was all I wanted because we'd go fishing, we'd go down to Annapolis and visit my family. And we'd go to Ocean City and we would -- I'd take them on sales trips occasionally and I'd take them to the Empire State building. I'd take them to Boston. And the kids were fighting so bad. One time, going across the Housatonic River. I couldn't go up the Mystic, Connecticut Museum. (laughter) I mean, we had a good family life. And my son was active in scouting.

Birkner: You had how many kids?

Reynolds: Just two. I had -- what did we have the RH positive and the RH negative. The doctor says, "You're a statistic of having eleven blue babies, not one of them yet."

Birkner: So you had two boys?

Reynolds: A boy and a girl.

Birkner: And they were born in what years?

Reynolds: My daughter was born in *48, and my son was born in *50. They were both born in Hagerstown. We were married March 1 of *47.

Birkner: That's very close to my parents. My parents were born, married in April 6, 1947 and then my mother had a miscarriage in '49, and then I was born in 1950. So, very close.

Reynolds: Yeah, my son was born December 2, 1950. I called a doctor for my son. I said, "Peggy's ready to have the baby." Well, he's not in. Why? "Well, you were supposed to call Doctor Kingsley." So, the next morning, after Skip was born, in comes the doctor.

I said, "Where've you been?"

He says, "To the Army-Navy football game."

December 1, in Philadelphia, he says, "I've always wanted to go. Always wanted to go to the Army-Navy football game." I said, "So did I, but it was too expensive."

Birkner: So you wound up buying this house that you're living in right now in 1972.

Reynolds: I think *87.

Birkner: In *87.

Reynolds: Yeah. I lived across the street from *69 to *87. I had moved from Country Club Road.

Birkner: OK, why did you move here from --

Reynolds: Because I was an empty nest then.

Birkner: Is this more?

Reynolds: Oh yes. That was four levels over there. That was a split-level.

Birkner: So you bought this house because it was smaller.

Reynolds: Yeah.

Birkner: It's a beautiful house.

Reynolds: Oh I mean this is what we wanted. I was on my way to Hilton Head, Charlie Wolfe the attorney, says, Idona Teeter up there was the nurse for this lady, says, "I understand that you like this house. That you want to buy it." I said yup. She says, "Well, it's yours." My wife agreed, next day, we signed the contract and we're on our way to Hilton Head.

Birkner: Well, I'll tell you what. You made a beautiful place out of it and it's a lovely place. This is a good place at when to end our interview, which has been a really treat for me to talk with Robert Reynolds.

Reynolds: Well you've got me started on something. Look at all this stuff!

Birkner: I think it's great that you're doing it.

Reynolds: This is a German ammunition chest. I've got stuff in there. Letters, pictures, etc.

End of 08-23-2000 Interview - Robert Reynolds