

Oral History Center  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Jack Rosston

Rosie the Riveter  
WWII American Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by  
Sam Redman  
in 2011

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Jack Rosston

## Table of Contents—Jack Rosston

Interview 1: May 24, 2011

Audio file 1

Personal background — The Great Depression — Parental background — San Francisco—  
Elementary and high school experiences — Experience at UC Berkeley — Racial and religious  
demographics in the Richmond District — Family’s migration to California — Grandfather’s  
involvement in Woodland politics — Mother’s move to San Francisco — 1906 Earthquake —  
National Youth Administration — Pre-atomic bomb lab work — WPA Bureau of Occupations  
— Work at Bethlehem Shipyards — Co-op living experience — International House — Cal  
sports — Pearl Harbor — Fears of attack in the Bay Area—Stanford ROTC—Young Communist  
League — Japanese evacuation and internment — Class of 1941 Reunion and Japanese  
graduation ceremony — FDR — 1939 World’s Fair at Treasure Island, San Francisco —  
Meeting his wife, Barbara — Increased awareness of population diversities — Rationing —  
Golden Gate Bridge — Street car system — Ferry boat system.

Audio file 2

20

Golden Gate Bridge as metonymic symbol of San Francisco — Bethlehem Shipyard — First  
black women to shop at Magnin’s — Pre-Officer Candidate School — Army Specialized  
Training Program — Stanford Research Institute — Port Chicago Explosion — Camp Stoneman  
— Lucky Lager.

Interview 2: July 25, 2011

Audio file 3

31

Scientific work for the NYA while a student at UC — Thoughts on the Golden Gate and Bay  
Bridges — Joining San Mateo Alumni Association and fundraising — Philanthropy after World  
War II — Loyalty oath — UC Regent Eleanor Heller and introduction to the UC Bancroft  
Library — More on his role in the UC Alumni Association and the council’s board of directors  
— Work on UC’s Board of Regents — Problems recruiting good UC faculty — Bancroft  
Library’s advisory board and fundraising — Recalling Bancroft Director James Hart

Audio file 4

51

Thoughts on some big donors — Changes over time in fundraising for the UC libraries,  
including involving University leaders in library fundraising — Charles Faulhaber as Bancroft  
Library Director and Willa Baum as Regional Oral History Office Director — Love for the  
University of California — Recollection of December 7, 1941 and the subsequent internment of  
Japanese

Interview 1: May 23, 2011  
Audio File 1

01-00:00:06

Redman: Today is Tuesday, May 23, 2011. I'm here today in San Francisco with Jack Rosston. My name is Sam Redman, and this is the first tape of my interview with Jack, focusing primarily on his life during the Second World War. In addition to learning about the war, I'd like to ask Jack about his recollections of his time at UC Berkeley and his ongoing interests in the Bancroft Library and his time with the Board of Regents and with the UC Alumni Association. Jack, I'd like to just begin by asking you to state and then spell your name, if you wouldn't mind.

01-00:00:38

Rosston: Jack Rosston, R-O-S-S-T-O-N. Formally, John W.

01-00:00:44

Redman: Can you tell me where and when you were born?

01-00:00:49

Rosston: I was born in San Francisco, October 18, 1921, at Mount Zion Hospital, which is about ten blocks away from where we're sitting.

01-0:01:00

Redman: It's sort of come full circle for you. You're back in this area.

01-0:01:04

Rosston: Back in San Francisco.

01-0:01:06

Redman: Based on our conversations over the phone, it sounded like you were quite young during the Great Depression. In fact, you wouldn't have really known what life was like for people before the Great Depression. You sort of were growing up, and some of your earliest memories would have been during the Great Depression. Was there an awareness, maybe, when you were very young, that people were very poor and this was sort of a tough economic time?

01-00:01:30

Rosston: I know that my family's income went way, way down. We used to turn out the lights and all that to save money. I was sixteen when I started at Berkeley.

01-00:01:47

Redman: Let's jump back a little earlier. I'd like to hear a little bit about your parents and what they were like.

01-00:01:55

Rosston: My mother was born in Woodland, California, of six children. My grandfather was a hale fellow. He enjoyed his life and his booze and his women, but he raised his family very nicely. He had a store in Woodland. I didn't know any

of my grandparents, because my grandmothers both died in 1922. I was born in '21. My grandfathers predeceased me. I was the youngest of a family of a lot of people, but the youngest of my generation. For several years, I've been the only survivor in either family.

01-00:02:50

Redman: You had siblings, then?

01-00:02:52

Rosston: I had a brother, who went to Berkeley.

01-00:02:54

Redman: He was an older brother? A couple of years older?

01-00:02:56

Rosston: Three years older.

01-00:02:59

Redman: So it was the two of you at home, and then your parents, growing up. Is that correct?

01-00:03:05

Rosston: Yes. We lived in San Francisco.

01-00:03:08

Redman: Before you started at Berkeley, I'd like to hear a little bit about what San Francisco was like as a young child.

01-00:03:21

Rosston: I started at Sutro School, which was on Funston Avenue and is no longer a school there. It's kind of a building that has replaced the building. Then I went to Presidio Junior High School for three years, which was in the neighborhood. Then I went to Lowell High School, which was the high school, but George Washington High School had just opened. I was in the first group of people that went to Washington, and I was in the first June graduating class. I was the valedictorian. It was a successful place for me to go to school. Then I went to Berkeley and I had a \$125 scholarship, which paid my \$26 fees and my lab fees and my books. But I had to work.

01-00:04:24

Redman: Let me jump back to high school. I'm curious, were there some topics that you found particularly interesting, even as a high school student? Were there some subjects in school that—

01-00:04:36

Rosston: Looking back, I was sort of herded into chemistry. I had a job of five dollars a month, setting up the chemical experiments. I was fascinated with chemistry. My father thought it would be a wonderful place to have an income. Well, I got to Berkeley, and the first year I did fairly well. Then I started falling apart. By the end of my sophomore year, my grades were going down. I said, "I

don't want to be a chemist," so that's when I wanted to become an economist. But I could not become an economist in two years, and I really wanted to get out in two years, but I discovered that some of the courses I had taken in chemistry would be a credit for me if I majored in agricultural economics. So I changed into the college of agriculture and graduated in Agriculture/Economics.

01-00:05:32

Redman:

Let me ask, because you had been a pretty accomplished young student—even leading up to your time at Berkeley, you'd been valedictorian. You'd graduated pretty early. You graduated from high school at, what, fifteen years old? Is that correct?

01-00:05:49

Rosston:

Sixteen years old.

01-00:05:52

Redman:

Can you tell me a little bit about the acceleration of your academic program?

01-00:05:58

Rosston:

I guess I accelerated one semester when I was in grammar school, and then I was in high school—they were in for six-month semesters—and I was going to get out in December. I thought, really I want to go to college, so I took an extra course. Instead of four heavy courses a year, I took five, and so that got me out six months early. I did six-month skips to get out of high school at age sixteen in June 1938.

01-00:06:29

Redman:

What were the other kids like growing up in San Francisco? Did you make a lot of friends in San Francisco?

01-00:06:35

Rosston:

I had a lot of friends. Of course, when I went to Berkeley, a different atmosphere. I had grown up with this guy who lived a block away when we were little kids, and we went all through public school together. But I got out six months ahead of him and went to Berkeley and really never saw him again until about a month ago. His sister moved in here. We put things together. We had talked over the phone a couple of times. It was pretty exciting. Obviously, I wouldn't have recognized him, and he wouldn't have recognized me.

01-00:07:17

Redman:

Tell me a little bit in general about what the other kids were like growing up. I'm curious how diverse San Francisco would have been in that time in terms of race and religion.

01-00:07:29

Rosston:

It was not very diverse. I lived in the Richmond district. In my class, there was one Japanese boy. His name was Seichi Matesueda, S-E-I-C-H-I, M-A-T-E-S-U-D-A. I had two or three or four other friends, including this man who I just met again. So I went through grammar school with Seichi. We were in

different classrooms in junior high school, but we kept in touch, but I had other friends who were in my classroom in those days. Then I graduated from there, and then I went to Lowell High School for six months, and then I went to Washington High School. I ended up as the number one scholar, so I became valedictorian. I was a very shy kid who worked, even going to high school, to get spending money. My father's business—he was a brilliant man, but his business just fell apart.

01-00:08:38

Redman:

Can you tell me a little bit about that, when that happened, when his business fell apart? It affected you by then because you had to go find work here and there to—

01-00:08:49

Rosston:

I started selling magazines when I was in grammar school. Then I got a job in the chemistry lab, setting up experiments at five dollars a month to go through high school. Then in my senior year I did some coaching and got paid thirty-five cents a half hour.

01-00:09:05

Redman:

What did you coach?

01-00:09:08

Rosston:

Math, probably, or science. I only had a couple or three clients, but it gave me a little bit of extra money, or a little bit of money.

01-00:09:18

Redman:

So you'd maybe spend that on clothes, or did you contribute to the family's expenses?

01-00:09:26

Rosston:

My clothes were all hand-me-downs. I had a cousin in New York who shipped things out, and then my brother wore them, and then I wore them. I think I did have a suit, a new suit, when I graduated from high school.

01-00:09:45

Redman:

I'm just curious if the idea to go to Cal was pretty clear in your mind. It strikes me that in that time, even some of the very good students, or some students that were maybe a little more average at the time, could go down to Cal and you'd register and you'd pay your fee, and you were a Cal student. It wasn't always assumed that even very smart people would go to college in that period.

01-00:10:16

Rosston:

I think that there was some restriction. I don't know. I know a lot of my friends from high school went to Berkeley, and some who could afford it went to Stanford and other colleges.

01-00:10:31

Redman:

For you, it was in part a financial decision to come to Cal, maybe?

01-00:10:38

Rosston: I just wanted to come to Cal. My brother was in Cal. He was three years ahead of me at Cal.

01-00:10:46

Redman: What was he studying at Cal?

01-00:10:48

Rosston: Pre-law. He went on to law school. He then went to law school at Berkeley, but he didn't finish until after the war. He went two years before he went into the Navy.

01-00:11:05

Redman: I'd like to get into that story again, too. I'm curious. I've read about the waves of immigrants that really started to come, or migrants from other places in the US, from, say, the Midwest and the South, that really started to come here after the war started. But I know that there had been a lot of waves of new migrants of different types of people coming even before the war, and I'm curious because we talked about growing up, maybe San Francisco wasn't as diverse, but then prior to the war, you start to have a bunch of people moving in. Did you notice any of that at the time?

01-00:11:45

Rosston: It started really early. My mother's parents came—she was born in 1885. She was the youngest of six, so they had gotten over here. They settled in Lake County, and my grandfather had a store. Then they moved down to Woodland, and he got involved a little bit in politics. He was the mayor of Woodland, and he had a store. I think he had a wonderful time with life and booze and women. My mother's family finally moved down to San Francisco in the early 1900s, before the earthquake. My mother was here for the earthquake.

01-00:12:29

Redman: Did she tell stories about the earthquake and how that had affected her life?

01-00:12:35

Rosston: Oh, sure, yes.

01-00:12:36

Redman: What did she tell you about that?

01-00:12:38

Rosston: She, I think, went as far as the eighth grade in school, and then the family moved to Sacramento, and she was terribly shy. She didn't want to go to school, and so my grandfather said, "You've got to do something, or I'm going to send you to business school." At age sixteen, she graduated from business school and became a secretary in Sacramento, at twenty-five dollars a month. She gave her mother twenty dollars and had five dollars for spending money but also did some work for taking shorthand from the assemblymen and worked for them. Then the family moved to San Francisco in the early

twentieth century. Then along came the earthquake, and she worked for Southern Pacific for several years, and then she was secretary to the—I guess he was one of the leading lawyers there. He said, “You’re never going to get anywhere here,” and he got her a job with an importer/exporter, so then she went to work there. Then when she got married—women, in 1916, who got married quit.

01-00:13:54

Redman: That was the end of your working career.

01-00:13:56

Rosston: That was the end of my mother’s work.

01-00:13:58

Redman: Did she talk at all about the actual events of the day or the week that followed the San Francisco earthquake?

01-00:14:05

Rosston: Oh, yes.

01-00:14:06

Redman: What did she say about that?

01-00:14:13

Rosston: The family lived west of Fillmore Street, so they were affected by the quake, but not the fire. That night, her older sister was getting married and had some wedding presents. They put her in a Morris chair, which is a chair on wheels, and wheeled it out to Golden Gate Park, and they slept the night in Golden Gate Park. They offered railroad passes to relatives outside the area, so all my mother’s family—a couple of her brothers had been married, but I think about three or four of them went with her mother and father down to her older brother’s house, newly wed with one child. They all descended on him, including her sister-in-law’s family. Then they came back to San Francisco, and she got a job at Southern Pacific. By the time she married my father, she had left Southern Pacific; she was secretary to one of the vice presidents. He said, “You’re not getting anywhere. I’ll get you another job.” So then she worked for a year and got married, and that was it.

01-00:15:43

Redman: And that was the end of the working career. Let’s go back to Cal. What year, then, would you have arrived at Cal, do you recall?

01-00:15:57

Rosston: Nineteen thirty-eight.

01-00:15:58

Redman: Let’s take some time, and I’d like if you could explain to me what your first impressions were of the UC campus and Berkeley, the city of Berkeley. In 1938, what were the University of California and Berkeley like?

- 01-00:16:17  
Rosston: Oh, I was so excited. I was so pleased to be there. Actually, my first semester, I got very good grades. Then I just fell apart during my second year. My grades just went [makes sound effect].
- 01-00:16:33  
Redman: The chemistry was challenging.
- 01-00:16:36  
Rosston: It was challenging, but it was not my interest. My first job over there was NYA and they were doing, I guess, pre-atomic bomb work.
- 01-00:16:53  
Redman: NYA, the National Youth Administration?
- 01-00:16:55  
Rosston: Yes. That was like WPA. At any rate, I got a job, would you believe it or not. It was in the labs, where they were producing vacuums for research on what eventually went into the bomb. The professor that was in the lab I was working for had apparently been poisoned from inhaling mercury. There were vacuum pumps. They had mercury in them, and the mercury pellets fell on the floor, and the professor began to get poisoning. So this little kid, at forty cents an hour, crawled around on the floor with a flask and a little vacuum tube and swept up all these things. I guess I was exposed to mercury, too. But, at any rate, obviously I've survived it. I'm going to be ninety.
- 01-00:18:05  
Redman: It was dangerous, but thankfully—
- 01-00:18:07  
Rosston: Then, afterwards, they found out I had some knowledge of French, so I went in and library-searched for any articles about heavy water in French, and to refer them to the scientists. That was a much easier job to do.
- 01-00:18:27  
Redman: Yeah, certainly better than sweeping up mercury. I'm particularly interested in New Deal-era programs like the National Youth Administration and the WPA and then the Civilian Conservation Corps. Can you tell me what your recollections are about the NYA in particular? You got hooked up with them as a student that maybe needed a little extra—
- 01-00:18:52  
Rosston: For my freshman year, I got ten dollars a month. That paid for my transportation to Berkeley from San Francisco, and that's about all I paid for, so I had to have other jobs. Then my second year—
- 01-00:19:09  
Redman: I'm sorry to interrupt. Do you remember how you would sign up for a job at the NYA?

01-00:19:13

Rosston:

There was something called the Bureau of Occupations. Everybody was in line, and there was this woman who was in charge of it, and she did a very good job. She had a few jobs, but she had to be very tough. But she did a good job, and I got that job. NYA, that was a standard, ten dollars a month. I had a chance to move to Berkeley and to live in a co-op boarding house for twenty-two dollars a month. Well, I couldn't afford it. Two of my mother's friends, whose father died, said they'd give me five dollars a month so I could move over there, so I got five dollars a month when I was a sophomore. I worked, and NYA went up to fifteen dollars a month, and then I did a lot of extra jobs. I would work as a waiter at I-House for sixty cents. I lived in the co-op, which was only twenty-three dollars a month.

01-00:20:22

Redman:

I want to ask about both your experience at the co-op and at I-House in the late 1930s. Can you tell me what your impressions of the other students were at the co-op? Did you make friends there?

01-00:20:35

Rosston:

Oh, I had very good friends. In fact, I still have one of my friends, who is about ninety-three. We're trying to get together. He's the one whose mother did an oral history on film.

01-00:20:52

Redman:

One of ROHO's very early filmed—

01-00:20:54

Rosston:

The first.

01-00:20:55

Redman:

First filmed oral history. Anyway, your impressions of the other students at the co-op, I'm interested in.

01-00:21:02

Rosston:

They were working pretty hard. There were certain degrees of sophistication. I was at the bottom. I was the most unsophisticated kid. I was one of the younger ones in there when I got there, but I was so damned unsophisticated, it was unbelievable.

01-00:21:18

Redman:

Tell me about in what sense you mean that. I'm curious.

01-00:21:21

Rosston:

I was very shy. I didn't have any money, practically, to date girls. I could take her to a dance. It was fifteen cents a piece. Maybe we could go and have a Coke.

01-00:21:36

Redman:

Right, so your dating life was a little handicapped by your income at that time. As far as the other students, were you impressed with their intelligence and

their interest in academics? I'm curious if a lot of other students at this time, because economic times were so tough, they were working a lot of these jobs, it sounds like, and I'm curious how that would affect—

01-00:22:01

Rosston:

Some were and some weren't. I've kept up with several of my friends from the co-op. They're all in their nineties now. One of them, who has been my best friend all these years, was raised on a farm. His father said, "You don't have to go to college to be a farmer." But somehow or other, he got to go to Cal Poly for a couple of years, and then he transferred to Berkeley. That's when I met him, when I started ag-econ with him. I could do the econ; he could do the ag.

01-00:22:41

Redman:

So you helped each other out a little bit, maybe, studying periodically?

01-00:22:45

Rosston:

Yes. He lived in Sheridan Hall. Then he got married when he was in his twenties. He's older than I am. He must be about ninety-four now. That's been a lifelong, very close friendship.

01-00:23:02

Redman:

How about I-House? You said you waited tables there. Is that correct?

01-00:23:09

Rosston:

Only when I could get sixty cents and an artichoke. I didn't really do much at I-House.

01-00:23:24

Redman:

I'll just ask this quickly. Prior to the war, did you attend football games or sporting events or things like that?

01-00:23:32

Rosston:

Yes. Ten dollars a year would get you into the ASUC, and you got a football pass for the year.

01-00:23:44

Redman:

Did you enjoy going to games periodically?

01-00:23:47

Rosston:

I enjoyed it. I was not a great athlete or a great athlete follower, but I did enjoy the spirit. I went to the basketball games and the football games, but I was not athletic.

01-00:23:59

Redman:

So it was less so for you about observing the actual sporting event and more so the pageantry of having the band, the colors, the songs.

01-00:24:11

Rosston:

I loved, and still love, Berkeley.

01-00:24:15

Redman: Yes, just spending time—

01-00:24:16

Rosston: Yes. I'm still doing a lot of things at Berkeley. Not nearly what I was doing, but I still get over for library meetings.

01-00:24:25

Redman: It sounds like, from the very beginning, you'd fallen in love with the idea of being a student at Cal and living in Berkeley. Was there a particular moment for you where it sort of clicked, where you realized, this is going to be a special relationship that you have with—?

01-00:24:44

Rosston: I just felt that way from the very beginning. I was so proud to go to Berkeley. I had a lot of friends from George Washington High School who went to Berkeley. During that period, Lowell had been the number one feeder to Berkeley. A lot of students from Lowell went to the brand-new high school, and it became the number one feeder to Berkeley for almost twenty-five years. Then Lowell became more of a specialist area. It's been the number one feeder to Berkeley for many years.

01-00:25:24

Redman: The next question I'd like to ask is actually about Pearl Harbor. My understanding is that Pearl Harbor was attacked in December of 1941, in the midst of finals at Cal. I'm curious if you could tell me about what your recollections are of that day.

01-00:25:45

Rosston: During that period, I was not much of a scholar as I should have been. I had to get a term paper in. I stayed up all night on December 6, finishing that paper and submitting it. I got to bed and then I heard people screaming, and that was how I learned about Pearl Harbor. I was isolated over there. I was living in a co-op boarding house, which was fine. I think I called my parents for ten cents, just to check on things. We had blackouts at Berkeley.

01-00:26:26

Redman: Did the blackouts come more or less immediately after—?

01-00:26:28

Rosston: Immediately after, just about. In San Francisco and Berkeley, I remember we had black paper over our windows in my parents' apartment. There was a basement that they had for emergencies.

01-00:26:50

Redman: Now, I understand that, again, very quickly, people volunteered to be blackout wardens, or would be paid—

01-00:26:58

Rosston: My father was in his fifties and not very healthy. He became a warden.

- 01-00:27:04  
Redman: So he would go around in San Francisco—
- 01-00:27:06  
Rosston: He would go around with certain equipment. I don't know where that came from. It was pretty scary, because we thought we were going to be bombed. A submarine did put shells in Santa Barbara.
- 01-00:27:25  
Redman: Let me ask about that. I've sort of been given some different perspectives on the degree to which people thought there would actually be an attack in the San Francisco Bay area. Some people tell me that, yeah, the fear was very real and it was there, and other people say people wanted to be prepared, but they realized that there was—
- 01-00:27:50  
Rosston: Sort of halfway, each way. Some shells hit Santa Barbara from the submarines.
- 01-00:28:00  
Redman: When there were submarines off the coast, and I know there were newspaper reports about those. Were people also talking about that?
- 01-00:28:07  
Rosston: Oh, sure.
- 01-00:28:08  
Redman: So that was a very real thing?
- 01-00:28:10  
Rosston: Yes. Women really hadn't started working in the factories. The movement of people from other parts of the country hadn't started that much because the jobs were not there, but they did get there. When I got out of college—I think I told you—I got a job in a shipyard and made a pile of money, for those days.
- 01-00:28:42  
Redman: It strikes me that in December of 1941, when Pearl Harbor is attacked, students at Cal are presented in some sense with a series of choices. That they could continue on with their education, and some, presumably, left Cal and signed up for the armed forces or for other kinds of—
- 01-00:29:02  
Rosston: Or in the reserves and were drafted. My brother was in law school, and he was in the reserves. They clapped him in.
- 01-00:29:11  
Redman: I'm just curious how other students you may have known, or just what your impressions were of students, how they would navigate this. It seems like, for you, you were a little young at that time to join the armed forces, and then you decided to go to work at the shipyards. How did you sort of come to that decision, and how were other students navigating this?

01-00:29:32

Rosston:

I really had applied for an ROTC program at Stanford. It was in conjunction with Stanford Business School, which is just exactly what I wanted. I went to Stanford, and I had to find money to go to Stanford, which I got in the shipyards. Enough for two quarters.

01-00:29:57

Redman:

Let's switch gears, then, and we'll talk about what life was like at the shipyards. I'm just curious. Let's just finish up on Pearl Harbor before we get to the shipyards. Can you tell me just a bit more about what the reaction on campus was like? Do you remember, maybe, the next day?

01-00:30:17

Rosston:

Oh, yes. The student body of Berkeley always goes from left to right. Maybe more on left, but I remember that boarding house, there were idiots who were saying, "We've got to go kill all the Japanese and the Japanese students come."

01-00:30:42

Redman:

There was a very powerful anti-Japanese sentiment?

01-00:30:45

Rosston:

Not very powerful. There were just a few idiots. I just couldn't believe it. I had been raised in a family that didn't have any racial problems with anybody. That's what I grew up with. "Let's get the Japs, all of them, and kill them." That was the worst, but most people were not that way.

01-00:31:14

Redman:

That was a surprising thing to you, having grown up in a place where there was more tolerance, it sounds like, of different—

01-00:31:21

Rosston:

Yes. There were just a couple of really rednecks in there, and I really got upset with them.

01-00:31:35

Redman:

Just briefly, I'd like to ask about your impressions of political activism on campus. Berkeley has this very exciting reputation as far as being a place for activism and free speech and that. We associate that more in some sense with the fifties, sixties, and seventies. I'm curious—

01-00:32:01

Rosston:

It was in the thirties. Before we were in the war, Germany and Russia were together in Poland. There was the Young Communist League. Young people, Socialists, over here at ASU, active at campus. The more extreme ones were picketing the campus because they couldn't do anything on campus in those days. I can remember posters at the gates to the campus: "The Yanks are not coming." When Germany and Russia got together, the signs were adjusted to say, "The Yanks are not coming too late." It really is absolutely true. I don't think there were many Nazis, but there were Communists over there.

- 01-00:33:06  
Redman: Were there people, too, that wanted to stay out of the war entirely for a variety of different reasons?
- 01-00:33:13  
Rosston: I didn't get that impression very much, no. It was a traumatic thing to have your mainland bombed.
- 01-00:33:24  
Redman: It seems like, then, as soon as Pearl Harbor happens, that sort of wipes clean any sort of political fervent of trying to keep us out of the war.
- 01-00:33:36  
Rosston: I think it did, but there were some people who were over-extreme. The over-extreme, in my opinion, was what they did to the Japanese.
- 01-00:33:45  
Redman: Tell me about that, because that happens soon after the start of the war.
- 01-00:33:53  
Rosston: They took all of the Japanese on the West Coast. First of all, they put them down in the peninsula, in Tanforan, which was a horse racing place, and they accommodated them in the stables, and then they shipped them off to the camps. I knew people who were shipped off to the camps. The University of California was fantastic. The President and the Provost—there were some students who were six months from graduation. They saw to it that they had all their information so they could take the courses by mail. That was Sproul and—I forget the name of the Provost. They were really incredible. On the fiftieth anniversary of my class, the Japanese, who now had come back and been successes, gave more money per capita than the other students to the University. They had never graduated. They got diplomas by mail. So that year, they had a ceremony on campus, handing out diplomas to the Japanese in caps and gowns. I was there and I took part in it. It was exciting.
- 01-00:35:38  
Redman: It's interesting. It seems like, for you, as someone who had grown up with some Japanese friends, that that would have been a challenging moment for you in terms of hearing about the Japanese being interned, but at the same time, having this distant enemy. Were there any sort of conflicting emotions, or did you sort of immediately—?
- 01-00:36:05  
Rosston: I didn't have conflicting emotions. I didn't have many, because there weren't many Japanese. I didn't have any conflicting problems about it at all. I didn't like to see what happened to them. That was conflicting. But about them, no, there were no conflicting feelings.
- 01-00:36:27  
Redman: One of the things that I've heard is that—and this would, I believe, be true in your life—basically, your entire awareness, your life as a person, Franklin

Delano Roosevelt had been President. For a lot of people, they had seen him as the end-all, be-all of the executive office. He was sort of the only president they'd ever known.

01-00:36:56

Rosston:

Yes. I remember—I don't know how old I was when he came to San Francisco. My aunt took me down to Geary and Van Ness, and I saw him go by in a car. It was a parade. He was in an open car.

01-00:37:19

Redman:

It must have been a truly exciting moment.

01-00:37:21

Rosston:

Oh, it was. It was before we got into the war.

01-00:37:28

Redman:

Speaking of which, I would like to jump back. There was a series of questions—something that came up upstairs that hadn't come up over the phone when we spoke earlier about the World's Fair in San Francisco. You had mentioned that one of your odd jobs that you picked up was cleaning bottles up during the 1939 World's Fair.

01-00:37:47

Rosston:

Picking bottles up on Treasure Island, yes. They had glass bottles, but they couldn't take them off, so people just left them on the ground. Someone had to go around and collect them.

01-00:38:02

Redman:

Can you tell me what your recollections are of that fair? As someone who obviously never had an opportunity to go to that fair, tell me about what it was like.

01-00:38:18

Rosston:

It was a very exciting thing. I went both years. It was not a big expense to go to that fair because the ferry boats were a nickel. It was still a reflection of the Depression.

01-00:38:37

Redman:

What was there to do when you arrived at the fair?

01-00:38:41

Rosston:

Oh, there were all kinds of exhibits. All kinds of exhibits. Then there were lots of things you paid for, and then there was a lot of entertainment, outdoor entertainment. Orchestras and Hollywood stars and that sort of thing.

01-00:38:55

Redman:

One of the things I'm curious about is that it seems like art assumes a place in your life. At least to this day, I saw your own art collection, and then we talked a little bit about art on the way down to this room. At the '39 fair, I know there were some art exhibits in addition to all kinds of entertainment,

related to music or everything else. Do you remember, just in particular, if it was music or art or entertainment or dancing?

01-00:39:25

Rosston: There was music, and Hollywood people would be up there. [John Phillip] Sousa's Band. No, I did not have much appreciation for art. I really got that from my wife.

01-00:39:40

Redman: So that only came a little—

01-00:39:42

Rosston: I did get some, but then after I got married—she was an artist, or is an artist. She's still doing things.

01-00:39:50

Redman: Can you tell me her name, because she's going to come into this story?

01-00:39:53

Rosston: Barbara Hearst-Rosston.

01-00:39:59

Redman: When did you first meet, so that I can ask you a question about that later? It was following the war?

01-00:40:05

Rosston: Oh, yes. We didn't get married until I was thirty-six years old. I had known her for over five years. The romance didn't start until after four and a half years.

01-00:40:22

Redman: We'll get back to that. Let's talk about the shipyards. I've seen photographs and some old video footage of what it was like to sign up for work. This was the Kaiser Shipyards, correct? In Richmond?

01-00:40:42

Rosston: No, I worked in San Francisco.

01-00:40:45

Redman: At the Bethlehem Shipyards?

01-00:40:47

Rosston: Yes.

01-00:40:50

Redman: At some places, you'd go and sign up and you'd get an identification badge of some sort. You'd have to fill out an application and maybe you'd get a health exam of some sort.

01-00:41:00

Rosston: I think maybe I did not. I'm hazy on that, but I was young and I was healthy.

- 01-00:41:05  
Redman: So that wouldn't have been much of a consideration?
- 01-00:41:07  
Rosston: It wasn't important to me. All that was a concern was that I could get in there. Of course, working twelve hours a day at double time was incredible for someone who was in debt for sixty-two dollars. I really needed the money to go to Stanford. It cost \$162 a quarter, plus books, room and board. I was able to finance it for a couple of quarters.
- 01-00:41:36  
Redman: Now here's a big question. What was the difference in your impression of the people that you'd met at Cal, these young students that you'd met at Cal, versus the people you were meeting now at the shipyards?
- 01-00:41:51  
Rosston: Oh, I was really shocked. I was out in the Richmond district. I was pretty much protected. These were just unbelievable people. Yet I did make a couple of friends.
- 01-00:42:11  
Redman: What was so different about them from, say, your average young Cal student at that time?
- 01-00:42:22  
Rosston: I met one guy, who became a good friend, and he died quite young, who was married and was not healthy. He was working in the shipyard and we became good friends, but then he died shortly after the war.
- 01-00:42:37  
Redman: You probably were interacting with men who may have been older or may have had—
- 01-00:42:45  
Rosston: Everybody was older.
- 01-00:42:47  
Redman: Yeah, I suppose. You were such a young guy. Everybody was older. But there may have been men with health problems or things like that, or maybe had a draft—
- 01-00:42:58  
Rosston: I never noticed that. This was a rough-and-tumble bunch. I'd never been out in factories or that sort of thing. I'd been in a rather protected environment.
- 01-00:43:12  
Redman: How about things like the language or jokes or things like that? Was there a different sort of—?
- 01-00:43:18  
Rosston: Oh, yeah, and sexual performance.

- 01-00:43:20  
Redman: Tell me about that in particular. Were there things like catcalling and stuff like that?
- 01-00:43:27  
Rosston: Oh, yeah. I was so innocent, I didn't know what was going on.
- 01-00:43:32  
Redman: So these were all kind of new things.
- 01-00:43:34  
Rosston: Yes, I was exposed to something—and I worked such long hours, and transporting back and forth on the bus. Or streetcars, I guess I did part of it.
- 01-00:43:53  
Redman: One of the things that you've mentioned is performance of sexuality, which is very interesting. San Francisco now is known as the city where there's a more open and free sense of sexuality, and certainly it's known as a city where there's a large homosexual population. Before that, in this period, from my impression, it was something that was, in some sense, out there, but in another sense, it wasn't talked about in nearly the same way.
- 01-00:44:29  
Rosston: Homosexuals were made fun of. I think they would be gathering at Foster's.
- 01-00:44:41  
Redman: What was Foster's?
- 01-00:44:43  
Rosston: It was a cheap restaurant. Serve yourself. I don't know. It was like something strange. A lot of people were observers. I didn't care to look at it. Anyway, I couldn't afford to do any of these things, so it didn't make any difference how I felt.
- 01-00:45:12  
Redman: The impression that you had was that there was a distinct group that maybe worked at shipyards or did different types of work and then would go meet up at a restaurant.
- 01-00:45:24  
Rosston: I didn't even notice. As far as I knew, everybody at the shipyard was heterosexual. That was probably not true. I was pretty damn innocent.
- 01-00:45:39  
Redman: My understanding is that at the very start of the war, the factories were still heavily male. As more and more young men joined the service, there were these campaigns to bring young women into the factory, the so-called Rosie the Riveters. So '41 is the start of the war, and then you end up at the Bethlehem Shipyards for a six-month time period, starting when about?

01-00:46:12

Rosston: Forty-two.

01-00:46:13

Redman: Forty-two. It's just incredible that you can remember that.

01-00:46:16

Rosston: Well, I graduated from college in '42. I don't think I spent six months there. I got out in May and then I started in September. It was almost six months.

01-00:46:30

Redman: In that time, then, were there more and more women starting to enter factory jobs?

01-00:46:40

Rosston: Not that I know of. The shipyards I was at were men—and white men.

01-00:46:49

Redman: That's the other interesting thing. My understanding at the Bethlehem Shipyards is that they were slower to hire women, but also, in particular, minorities. You had noticed that maybe a little bit.

01-00:47:04

Rosston: Yes. I don't know about Chinese, but obviously there were no Japanese. I don't remember particularly any Chinese. I had one Chinese friend in high school. There were a couple of Chinese. That was all there were in my high school. In George Washington High School, maybe a couple of Asians. The Chinese would be working out in Sea Cliff and have a basement room that was about the size of a cubicle, and go someplace else to go to the toilet.

01-00:47:43

Redman: Different living conditions at that time. If there are any other memories about what the other shipyard workers were like—there was a bit more of a brash sense of humor than you're used to. Is that really one of the striking things? How was the work ethic at that time do you think?

01-00:48:10

Rosston: I think it was pretty good. It's hard to say. But there obviously were no women. Particularly, I did have one friend who I kept up with for a year or two, and then he died. That's why he was 4-F.

01-00:48:42

Redman: One of the things that we talked about a little bit, we sort of talked about the dissent with the Communist movement. There had been these sort of very minor threads of dissent. It interests me because it seems like the vast majority of people were very patriotic and unified at this time.

01-00:49:05

Rosston: Oh, no question. It was a very patriotic country.

01-00:49:10

Redman: It seems like the vast majority of people were volunteering, were signing up for war bonds, for things like that.

01-00:49:18

Rosston: My father, in his ill health, in his sixties, was a warden. My mother was out sewing for soldiers and sailors.

01-00:49:27

Redman: Let me just ask, then, was there any dissent that you had encountered in terms of both from the Communist movement or an isolationist? It seems like that sort of vanished.

01-00:49:41

Rosston: I think once we were bombed, this became quite a unified country.

01-00:49:51

Redman: How about Victory gardens? Was that something that existed at all in the urban environment of San Francisco?

01-00:49:58

Rosston: A little bit, yes. A little bit. I lived in an apartment where we didn't have a garden. People did do that.

01-00:50:06

Redman: The next thing, then, that I'll just jump to as we finish this tape is rationing. Everybody seems to have a different story as far as what was their priority. If you don't have a car, you maybe don't care as much about the rubber tires being rationed, but if you eat meat or wear shoes, you obviously have a ration for those things as well. How did rationing affect your life, if at all?

01-00:50:39

Rosston: Not that much. We didn't have a car. After I became an officer, I was never assigned overseas. I bought a couple of second-hand cars, which were absolute disasters, so I ended up with no car.

01-00:51:03

Redman: How would you get to work each day? What was your main mode of transportation?

01-00:51:10

Rosston: Getting to work, before I got into the Army, I took the streetcars.

01-00:51:18

Redman: Tell me a little bit about the streetcar system in that era.

01-00:51:24

Rosston: I was in the Richmond district. I would take a streetcar down to the center of town, and then take a streetcar that would take me out to the shipyard. It was maybe an hour each way. I don't remember that that clearly. It may have been less.

01-00:51:40

Redman:

How about the bridge systems? I'm curious because the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge had been completed prior to the war, in the 1930s. Do you recall those being completed or people talking about how that had changed?

01-00:52:02

Rosston:

I went to George Washington High School, which had a gorgeous view of the Golden Gate, and I watched that Golden Gate Bridge go up. I walked across it the first day it was open.

01-00:52:11

Redman:

Is that right? How did people talk about the Golden Gate Bridge as it was going up?

01-00:52:19

Rosston:

Everybody that I know was very proud of it. It cost sixty-five cents to go across it when it was first opened, and then it went down to twenty-five cents when it started to be used, and then it went up and up. The Golden Gate and Bay Bridge both did about the same. Neither one of them were terribly crowded.

01-00:52:42

Redman:

At that time, it was something that you could easily utilize as a way to get across into Marin or back into San Francisco.

01-00:52:53

Rosston:

Yes. I used to hike in Marin. I would take the ferry boat over or the bus over. I guess before the bridges, I'd take a ferry boat over and then take a train to go to someplace to go hiking. That was rare. That was expensive. I utilized the ferry boats when I first went to Berkeley, because the first six months there was no service to Berkeley except by ferry boat.

01-00:53:29

Redman:

Let me ask a follow-up question about that, but I'm going to add a new tape.

## Audio File 2

02-00:00:07

Redman:

Today is Tuesday, May 23, 2011. I'm here in San Francisco with Jack Rosston. My name is Sam Redman. This is the second tape of our interview today. Jack, when we left off, we were talking about the Golden Gate Bridge and what sort of an effect that had on the Bay Area. I'd like to ask you a question about the Golden Gate Bridge as a symbol of the San Francisco Bay area. Now, you grew up here, and you were born in a San Francisco without a Golden Gate Bridge. I've heard it compared to—it's the Eiffel Tower of the West Coast, in some sense. It's a symbol of, maybe along with the Hollywood sign and the Space Needle in Seattle, the West Coast. Can you maybe tell me a little bit about what the Golden Gate Bridge means to you and how you think it's an icon? Do you think it's an icon in this sort of way, in some sense?

02-00:01:11

Rosston:

I think it's more important than the other places you mentioned because it's actually quite utilitarian and quite beautiful. It serves transportation, getting back and forth on buses, and certainly transportation for the communities from the North Bay. It built up that area, the suburbs of San Francisco.

02-00:01:41

Redman:

That's really a terrific observation. Maybe you can just tell me a little more about the first day the bridge was opened, walking across it. You would have been a young man and—

02-00:01:55

Rosston:

I was about fifteen.

02-00:01:58

Redman:

What are your recollections of that? From the sounds of it, it just sounds like it was a fun, big party.

02-00:02:03

Rosston:

It was a fun, big party. I think I had a cardboard hat, a cowboy hat. Everybody dressed up. All the young people were going across the bridge. I had an elderly aunt who got on, and I remember seeing her on the bridge sitting down on—there was a thing between the walking and the automobiles, and she was sitting on that because she couldn't walk that much further. I was there on opening day, but I was in Europe on the fiftieth anniversary. My son took that walk. That was when the bridge cluttered up and almost fell down.

02-00:02:49

Redman:

But he was able to do a similar sort of event, but it was maybe a little too crowded.

02-00:02:58

Rosston:

The bridge almost fell down, I think.

02-00:03:03

Redman:

Let's get back to the shipyards. We'll maybe go from the shipyards up to your time at Stanford Business School, and then we'll see where we're at there. I'd like to ask about union activity at the Bethlehem Shipyards. I have to confess I'm not sure, based on my readings, to what extent unions were there.

02-00:03:30

Rosston:

I was a member of a union. I had to be a member of a union.

02-00:03:31

Redman:

Do you recall what union you joined? So it was a closed shop?

02-00:03:38

Rosston:

Something Electricians. An electrician's union. There was a fancier name for it, but.

02-00:03:48

Redman:

What were your responsibilities at the shipyards? Do you feel like the union played any role other than—?

02-00:03:58

Rosston:

One of the things we did—they had magnetic mines, and they had something called degaussing. They put cables around inside of ships so that the magnetic mine wouldn't go on one of them. I was involved in that. I got involved in it because I went to the school to learn to become an electrician, which was going to take six months, which was absolutely impossible. I had to do a diagram the first week, and I could do it because I had taken physics. So I immediately became an electrician.

02-00:04:36

Redman:

After basically a few hours of—

02-00:04:39

Rosston:

Yes. I think it was only a matter of a day or two before they took me out of school and said, "You don't need this school," and I got a job.

02-00:04:47

Redman:

But in particular, it was the activity of drawing a diagram that signaled to them that—

02-00:04:54

Rosston:

I knew how to connect things in a diagram. I was mainly pulling cables through holes in the things between parts of the ships. It was mainly manual labor, but at least I could understand what they were doing, which I think gave me a go-ahead that I could get in. I was the lowest-paid, which was pretty high pay in those days.

02-00:05:30

Redman:

Was the attitude of most of the workers towards someone like yourself, "Okay, here's this young guy," or "Here's this college guy"?

02-00:05:42

Rosston:

I think they kind of put up with me pretty well, and I put up with them pretty well, and I did make some friends.

02-00:05:49

Redman:

So people were generally pretty friendly and—

02-00:05:51

Rosston:

I wasn't used to people of this environment, actually, is the word to use. I was only sixteen years old. They were having a hell of a good time. I didn't know how to do it.

02-00:06:11

Redman:

Did it seem to you like most people were enjoying? It seems like a lot of people were suddenly making money.

02-00:06:18

Rosston: Yes, that's right. These people had all been workmen or out-of-work men. This was pretty good pay.

02-00:06:31

Redman: Did you get an impression of what they did? You were obviously taking your money and paying off debt from your undergraduate days.

02-00:06:41

Rosston: I did that in a weekend. That was the fastest I ever thought I could do it.

02-00:06:46

Redman: Then you're saving some money for future studies, but what do you think most of the other people were doing with their money? Do you think they were—?

02-00:06:57

Rosston: I really didn't have any feeling. I'm sure they spent it. There were stories of women who worked in the shipyards going to [I.] Magnin's, and the first black women to buy clothes at Magnin's. It was sort of a leveling, leveling both in sex and in race. There were a lot of good things that came out of necessity. I think it leveled the United States a lot. Women in the shipyards and racial mixtures in the shipyards.

02-00:07:39

Redman: There were stories, then, that would have been circulating about black women being able to go into these stores for the first time.

02-00:07:46

Rosston: Oh, yes. There were shocks when black women went into Magnin's. Magnin's was the fancy ladies' store.

02-00:07:55

Redman: But they had the money to—so it's interesting.

02-00:08:00

Rosston: Well, they had the money, but they also had the right.

02-00:08:03

Redman: That would have been something unique for a lot of people in San Francisco versus places like—

02-00:08:08

Rosston: Well, there hadn't been any black people here. I don't know whether I told you when I was a little kid in the streetcar that I saw the first black person. I said to my mother, "Why don't they wash?" and my mother was going, "Shh! Shh!"

02-00:08:23

Redman: These embarrassing things that kids say.

02-00:08:26  
Rosston: I had no idea. I had never seen a black person before. I must have been about seven years old.

02-00:08:32  
Redman: Just a total mystery, right. I'm curious about religion at the shipyards. If you got any impression if there were people of maybe differing faiths, or if that was even a consideration.

02-00:08:54  
Rosston: I don't think I noticed anything like that. I really was not from a formally religious family. I just went through it. I did not go to Sunday school. We did not go to a place of worship.

02-00:09:20  
Redman: It sounds like you were moving around the ship and doing this electrical work. It strikes me that other people doing factory work, either building ships or airplanes, would be working on one section of the ship.

02-00:09:35  
Rosston: This was like wiring a ship, but it wasn't wiring. It was putting cables in to reflect so that magnetic mines would not hit the ship.

02-00:09:47  
Redman: Did you feel like you got an impression of what the entire ship was like because you moved around the entire ship?

02-00:09:54  
Rosston: Not that much. I just remember going into where I was going down to the hole. It was manual labor, mostly, but I had some idea how electric things were connected, and that's how I got through without going to school.

02-00:10:11  
Redman: You would have been the youngest. Did you have a crew of men that you would do this work with?

02-00:10:18  
Rosston: It changed. Some of them were quite young, but I don't think any of them were as young as I was.

02-00:10:27  
Redman: They were, at this time, pretty much all white in that shipyard?

02-00:10:31  
Rosston: Yes, they were.

02-00:10:32  
Redman: But maybe from different class backgrounds?

02-00:10:35  
Rosston: Yes.

- 02-00:10:38  
Redman: Tell me about paying off your debt. It's an incredible thing to be able to pay it off in a weekend.
- 02-00:10:46  
Rosston: I owed sixty-two dollars, and I made \$130 that weekend. That was just absolutely outstanding. I hadn't made that much in a year.
- 02-00:10:55  
Redman: You had it in your mind from pretty early on that you wanted to attend Stanford Business School?
- 02-00:11:01  
Rosston: Not really. It was a program that I thought was fascinating.
- 02-00:11:07  
Redman: And you thought maybe you could do an ROTC program there while—
- 02-00:11:11  
Rosston: That was part of it. I joined this program to become a quartermaster officer. It was a contract, and it got all screwed up. I was moved in and out. I went through basic training in Wyoming, Fort Warren. We had something called pre-OCS [Officer Candidate School] that I went through. We had a lieutenant who was in charge of it, and he had a book that he opened up. They didn't have spiral books, so it always opened to one page, and I was on the page. So he asked me all the questions. Then they gave me an examination of a course that I didn't take, and I flunked it, so then they kicked me out of the program. Then I got into what they called ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]. Have you heard of it?
- 02-00:12:16  
Redman: No.
- 02-00:12:17  
Rosston: That was the language—I applied to go to ASTP because I was kicked out of the program I was in, and I was accepted. I ended up in Wyoming for training, and then I ended up in Minnesota. They put me in French language, because I'd had French in high school. After about two or three weeks, they said they don't need French anymore; they need German. I had taken one year of German at Berkeley, and it was my first disaster with an academic thing. I got in. I was sent to Minnesota at Carleton College. I had about four or five weeks of French, and I was so excited. Then they said, "We don't need French. You're going to be changed to German." There was an aptitude test that I'd take, and I could switch language and I hated German. Well, I had fabulous set of teachers, and I really enjoyed it. And I enjoyed German poetry. After about six weeks of this, the Army caught on that they'd had a contract with me about this ROTC. They said, under the contract, could I get on a train and leave where I was and go to Stanford? I got on and met all of my friends who were not kicked off the program. Six weeks later, we were all called to active duty. I went back to OCS then, in Minnesota.

02-00:13:59

Redman:

Tell me about what Carleton would have been like at this time. That's actually not far from where I grew up. I'm curious because it seems like a lot of college campuses were asked to do various training programs and things like that. You said your teachers were quite good.

02-00:14:19

Rosston:

Oh, they were very, very good. I took a year of German at Berkeley. I was getting As and Bs, mostly As, but Cs in German.

02-00:14:32

Redman:

German is a tough language. It's not easy.

02-00:14:36

Rosston:

I got in—for five or six weeks we were in a group where we didn't speak English. We got along. Then I got other training, because I was transferred out to Stanford again out of that program. I loved German poetry. I loved it. I'd hated it before. It's just how things are presented. My father—who had spoken German in New York before he spoke English, I think—was so excited he could speak German to me. I had gotten along without English. I got back to San Francisco; I couldn't speak. I never could get back my German. It's interesting when you get into a concentrated program. I brushed up on my French a bit, but I've lost that now.

02-00:15:33

Redman:

Were your instructors at Carleton—you got the impression that they were Carleton professors?

02-00:15:38

Rosston:

No, they were sent from other places. There was {Herb Roker?}. I don't know where he was from. And {inaudible name} something or other. They were both just *excellent* teachers. I got into German poetry. I loved it. By the end of six weeks—

02-00:15:57

Redman:

Pretty amazing for an Army training. Certainly, in order to learn German, you want to—

02-00:16:03

Rosston:

These were intellectuals doing their part. We would learn so that we could be in the government when we got into Germany. That was what we were for. My brother had learned Japanese, and he was in the Pacific.

02-00:16:20

Redman:

So you both had some sort of an aptitude for languages.

02-00:16:25

Rosston:

I guess we did. We passed tests well.

02-00:16:32

Redman:

Let me ask about your active duty. You spent three years, until the end of the war, in the US Army? Is that correct?

02-00:16:43

Rosston:

Yes, I did. I had three or four months in Wyoming. I thought it was just absolutely awful. In May, I was out in the rifle range, and the glue froze. The whole bunch of us from Stanford went out. There were about thirty of us.

02-00:17:07

Redman:

Wyoming was a bit different from Palo Alto.

02-00:17:10

Rosston:

Yes. I was one of the few, maybe two or three, that didn't end up in the hospital with pneumonia or other things, and I was not the most vigorous kid. Then I was dropped out of the program, and then I got back in again. Then I went to OCS, and I got to another guy where it opened to my page, but he changed books and he never called on me again, so I got through OCS. Then alphabetically, they put us in—I was in Camp Lee, Virginia for about five or six weeks after I graduated. Hotter than hell in June. They really had nothing for us to do. They broke a bit from the alphabetic roster, two rosters, both starting from A and going to Z, and they sort of alternated. Then they gave assignments. The Rs and Ss went to California, Camp Stoneman. I spent the rest of the war there.

02-00:18:23

Redman:

Then at the end of the war, you were discharged.

02-00:18:26

Rosston:

My father had had some strokes, and he was the sole support of the family. He really wasn't doing that well anyway. So I got early discharge and really ended up as a nurse and running his business for him. Then he died, and the business all fell apart.

02-00:18:56

Redman:

I'd like to do a follow-up interview with you about your continued life at the University of California, but let's conclude at Stanford, if that's all right. Let me ask about what the experience was like going to Stanford business school.

02-00:19:13

Rosston:

It was a fantastic school. I had my two quarters there. I worked in the library for forty cents an hour. I could study at the same time. I had the two quarters there. Then after the war, of course I could have gone there on the GI Bill, but I was also needed to support my mother and father.

02-00:19:37

Redman:

So you used the GI benefits in that way, to support your family?

02-00:19:45

Rosston:

No. I had adequate work fulltime, but then I went to work through the Berkeley employment agency, which was called the Bureau of Occupation. I don't know if it still is. I got a referral to Stanford. The Stanford Research Institute was just starting, and I got a job down there. Then I worked there. It was owned by Stanford, and it was later just associated. Then they said employees could take one course a year, so I started taking courses there. Then they ran out of money, and they fired two-thirds of the people because they almost closed. I couldn't go to school anymore.

02-00:20:48

Redman:

I want to ask a question that I completely forgot to ask. Port Chicago. In 1944, there was a massive explosion.

02-00:20:59

Rosston:

I was in Camp Stoneman, which was not far from it.

02-00:21:03

Redman:

Tell me about what the reaction was like at Camp Stoneman at that time.

02-00:21:10

Rosston:

We could have been on another planet. That's really what it was like. It didn't affect us at all. The job that I had at Camp Stoneman—there were truck companies, and the truck companies would take these GIs either to the docks, or if there was a troop ship going out, they would take a skeleton group to get things started. We would take them by truck. Then we would then take them by truck down to the ferry boat, which would take masses of them down. Then after the war, we were taking them back. It was a motor pool. I was assigned to this. We never had a car. I didn't know how to drive. I was a real kid of the Depression. At any rate, I had to teach myself to drive, because I was leading convoys. They one day said second lieutenants will not have drivers. I took a jeep and went around the motor pool, and then I was leading convoy. So much for that. I was not happy there. I was so close to home.

02-00:22:39

Redman:

When the explosion happens, presumably—I've heard stories that people in Berkeley and Oakland either had their windows shatter or they could feel it.

02-00:22:49

Rosston:

I don't think that was true. I was at Camp Stoneman, which was quite close. I didn't know it had even happened, except I read it in the papers.

02-00:23:00

Redman:

The other thing is that it was quite secret.

02-00:23:02

Rosston:

Yes, and it was all blacks.

02-00:23:07

Redman:

Did you hear about that, then, later on? That there had been—

02-00:23:12

Rosston: I knew it happened, but that's about it. It did not affect what I was doing, because we were not using that as part of our operation.

02-00:23:21

Redman: This is a challenging question. You'd mentioned that you were a child of the Great Depression. I think that's a really fascinating way to state it. You'd also come of age during the start of the Second World War. I'd like to ask if you could just reflect on both of these two things in the course of your entire life. It seems like these were both pretty important influences.

02-00:23:49

Rosston: Oh, they certainly were.

02-00:23:50

Redman: Tell me if you could sort of summarize what the—

02-00:23:54

Rosston: Obviously, they gave me a discipline for just survival. I was very close to my family. My father died very shortly after the war. My mother lived for quite a few years after that. She lived to be eighty-five. He lived to be about seventy, and he was eight years older than she. So she was a widow for a long time. My life worked out. I worked at SRI, and then when that fell apart, I was able to do some research on what I wanted to do. I had some reserve practically done. I decided I wanted to get into marketing, and I thought the two things in San Francisco would be either beer or bread. So I went to some of the bakeries, and I also went just to a couple of the breweries, but I did some research on them.

02-00:25:07

Redman: What made you decide beer or bread?

02-00:25:09

Rosston: Because I figured that marketing and advertising was important for {brand checks?}. I prepared a study on the beer industry, and then I went to the switchboard, and I said, "I want to speak to the sales manager." It was a good day. She sent me, and we clicked. Then he hired me.

02-00:25:36

Redman: What brewery was this?

02-00:25:38

Rosston: Lucky Lager. It was then becoming the largest brewery in the state, or west, of the Pacific. I got the job there. I was living with my mother on 23rd Avenue, in, I guess, a five-by-seven room, sharing the flat with my mother and my aunt. My first assignment was during the Korean War, and I said, "The Korean War is here. I'm in the reserve." So the guy who was hiring me said, "So what if it happens? I was here before the war and I came back after, so if you get called back, we'll take you back again." So that made me feel good, but I was never called up.

Then there was a steel shortage. They had a brand new brewery, and they couldn't buy canned beer because they couldn't get steel. I don't know how I got involved in it, but anyway, I did, about a request for an allocation. I knew how to write reports. I had been an editor of reports. The President called me in. I was making what a beer salesman was making. And I think the guy who hired me was wonderful, and he's the one who was sort of pushing it. He said, "He can do something for us." At any rate, I wrote an analysis of what was happening to a new brewery that had no allocation, and why should a brewery that had a huge allocation—because they had to look at sales—should get an allocation. I did some work on it, and then the President called me down and said, "Don't tell anyone, but I'm sending you back to Washington," which was the beginning of my career there.

So I was sent back to Washington, and I'd never been there except for {inaudible}. At any rate, I got back there, and the former Quartermaster General was working for the can company in Washington. He took me to lunch every day. I spent my time in my underwear in the hotel. It was summer, and the air conditioner wasn't working. At any rate, I finally got in to be interviewed, after about three weeks of just sitting and getting out at four o'clock to go see a museum. I got back, and I got an allocation, which was tremendous for the brewery. So I was suddenly put on {inaudible}, and that was the beginning of my career there.

02-00:28:36  
Redman:

Let's pause there. You and I are going to need to sit down, I think, for another follow-up interview, because this was very useful.

Interview 2: July 25, 2011  
Audio File 3

03-00:00:07

Redman: My name is Sam Redman, and today is July 25, 2011. Today I'm in San Francisco, sitting down again with Jack Rosston for a second oral history interview, focusing primarily on Jack's many ties and contributions to the University of California. Before we really turn to campus, so to speak, I'd like to return to a couple of themes that we discussed in your last oral history session that I wanted to get just a little more material on, if that's all right. We talked about how you were working for one of these New Deal alphabet soup agencies, the NYA, the National Youth Administration, and how, as a sixteen-year-old young man, you were taking the ferry over each day to campus to work. Could you tell me a little bit more about what jobs you were doing as an NYA employee?

03-00:01:01

Rosston: I guess it was in the early days of getting ready for the atom bomb, really, in the Physics Department in San Francisco. One of the things that they needed to have was a complete vacuum. They used mercury to get the complete vacuum. A little bit would spill. One of the professors got poisoned, and so they hired me to take a vacuum, which was just a tube and a flask connected to a vacuum, to go around on the floor and pick up the globules. I didn't realize what I was doing, which was probably prevent him from getting mercury poisoning, but I was right in the middle of it. Nothing happened. They did get to the atom bomb.

03-00:02:00

Redman: We talked a little bit about that you had gone to an employment office. Bureau of Occupation was it?

03-00:02:07

Rosston: Yes.

03-00:02:08

Redman: To sign up for this type of work. If you were intending to be a student, say, at the University of California at that time, could you say, "I would like a job at the University of California"?

03-00:02:22

Rosston: I was a student at the University of California. I was a freshman. They had the NYA jobs for students who needed to have extra money. It was like the YPA was for people who had families.

03-00:02:41

Redman: If you would summarize for me what your thoughts are on the effect of the NYA program on students like you at the University of California. It seems to me that it was a pretty important work program that allowed you to keep going to school at Cal, since you were able to pay for your transportation

using your NYA checks, your checks from that job. Is that too much of a stretch to argue that?

03-00:03:11

Rosston:

That's about what I had. I had a scholarship, which paid for my fees and my lab fees and my books, and then I had to pay for my transportation. The NYA, which was ten dollars a month, I did. That was my first year. My second year, they let me get fifteen dollars a month, and I lived in Berkeley then.

03-00:03:35

Redman:

Thinking about those scholarships, then, taken together, the scholarships and the NYA job, it seems like that helped you further your education and that that was a pretty important program.

03-00:03:51

Rosston:

It was the only way I could do it, because my family had no money. My brother was also working his way through college.

03-00:03:59

Redman:

That was just a simple fact of the Depression in some sense, that these families had no money to give to their kids to go to college, even if they wanted to. It seems like the NYA was a pretty important aspect of that. The other topic that I'd like to talk about—we talked about both of the bridges, the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, as going up about the time when you were starting college. Is that correct?

03-00:04:29

Rosston:

No, it went up when I was in high school.

03-00:04:32

Redman:

They were being built while you were in—

03-00:04:34

Rosston:

They were finished when I was in high school.

03-00:04:35

Redman:

Do you recall what the Golden Gate, for instance, would have looked like before the Golden Gate Bridge was there, from your teenage years or from your younger days?

03-00:04:48

Rosston:

I knew what it was. I watched the bridge built, because I went to George Washington High School, which had a fantastic view of the Golden Gate. I was there for two and a half years. We watched the bridge being built.

03-00:05:07

Redman:

At that time, I would imagine that it would be immediately clear that this was a major engineering project. Was it clear right away that this was going to become such an important symbol of the Bay Area?

03-00:05:22

Rosston:

I don't know that, but it was pretty damn exciting. There was a great festival in San Francisco when the bridges were opened.

03-00:05:37

Redman:

Some of that excitement and enthusiasm, I imagine, continued on in terms of the 1939 Treasure Island Fair. The mid-to-late 1930s must have been a pretty exciting time in the Bay Area for a number of reasons.

03-00:05:53

Rosston:

For a number of reasons, a real number of reasons. It was still the Depression, but the building of Treasure Island and the World's Fair—it was going to be an airfield afterwards, but planes got too big. It was a big move for the Bay Area, and it attracted people here at the World's Fair. I think San Francisco really came into leadership.

03-00:06:28

Redman:

The bridges really facilitated the movement of people from one place to another, but do you think it also changed the mood in San Francisco? Was that festival atmosphere about the bridges, do you think that was fairly short-lived?

03-00:06:48

Rosston:

We were just beginning to come out of the Depression and go into World War II, but after World War II that's when San Francisco started building very heavily. Los Angeles then, too, even faster.

03-00:07:04

Redman:

Let me ask the final question, then, about the bridges. Can you compare for me, when you look today, as someone who's lived in San Francisco for much of your life, or the Bay Area for much of your life, when you look today at the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge, what are the things that you think about? What comes to mind when you see those bridges?

03-00:07:27

Rosston:

I think the Golden Gate Bridge is a monument in itself. It's a beautiful bridge. The bridge to the East Bay is more utilitarian. But they both are utilitarian.

03-00:07:41

Redman:

Having seen the Bay Bridge constructed, and the Golden Gate Bridge, very memorably, constructed, seeing the new east span of the Bay Bridge, which is being constructed now, this massive structure, do you have any thoughts on that as far as the future of those bridges?

03-00:08:04

Rosston:

I think the romance of the thirties was exciting. These are much more utilitarian. We have a subway under the water. We had ferry boats in those days, going both to Marin and the East Bay. That was kind of fun.

03-00:08:24

Redman:

So there's a little bit of a different mood there.

03-00:08:26  
Rosston: Yes. The ferry boats were romantic.

03-00:08:34  
Redman: For a couple of years, in the 1950s, you attended MBA classes, or maybe it was immediately following World War II that you took classes towards an MBA at Stanford.

03-00:08:50  
Rosston: That was during World War II. I was there for two quarters in 1942, '43. Then, after the war, I got a job at SRI, which was just starting. I took a couple of courses for one or two quarters.

03-00:09:11  
Redman: SRI?

03-00:09:12  
Rosston: Stanford Research Institute.

03-00:09:15  
Redman: Can you tell me about what that experience was like? I know we're jumping now in topics, but we'll get a little bit more into a narrative theme here. Tell me about the experience, during the midst of the war, taking classes at Stanford.

03-00:09:31  
Rosston: I did at the beginning of the war, and then I was in a ROTC program. After two quarters, we were called to active duty.

03-00:09:41  
Redman: That's when you did your language training.

03-00:09:44  
Rosston: Language training then, yes. I came back to Stanford Business School for about six weeks, and then I was called to active duty.

03-00:09:55  
Redman: So you were thinking at that time that you would potentially be able to extend your education there before being called into active duty?

03-00:10:08  
Rosston: I was on active duty when I went there the second time. I was a full-time soldier.

03-00:10:15  
Redman: What was that like, maybe being in a uniform in the classroom during that time? Were people just kind of used to that at that time?

03-00:10:25  
Rosston: After being in an Army post, it was like going to heaven.

- 03-00:10:31  
Redman: Because the environment was a little nicer and it wasn't as strict? So there was a lot to—
- 03-00:10:41  
Rosston: The level of what was going on was at a much higher level than just being a dirty soldier.
- 03-00:10:50  
Redman: So you felt like you were using your intellect in a way that maybe hadn't had the opportunity for some time. Let me ask about your earliest activities with the University of California Alumni Association. Did you join the Alumni Association right after you initially left Berkeley?
- 03-00:11:11  
Rosston: No. I think after I got out of the Army. I guess when I was working; I joined in the late forties.
- 03-00:11:23  
Redman: Do you remember what the Alumni Association would have been like in the late 1940s? If someone were to ask you to paint a picture of what the state of the Alumni Association was in the 1940s—
- 03-00:11:40  
Rosston: There was a local Alumni Association in San Mateo County, so I became active in that and active in scholarships. I think I still have a membership. I was on the scholarship committee, then I became president of the Alumni Association, and then I was called into the Alumni Association.
- 03-00:12:15  
Redman: Let me jump back to your earliest work with scholarships. That's one of the main efforts of an alumni association, is raising funds and then also selecting students for scholarships. What attracted you to that activity?
- 03-00:12:35  
Rosston: Of course, I owed a lot to it, because I was a beneficiary of it. That's how I got started in it. I enjoyed meeting people who were interested in the same thing in the peninsula, and then I got involved in that. Then I became president of the chapter. Then I was invited to join the Alumni Association. They call it board of directors, but it was just a member. Then I worked on the scholarship committee, and then I became president.
- 03-00:13:19  
Redman: When you work on a scholarship committee for the Alumni Association in that era, what was the work like as far as the various duties?
- 03-00:13:33  
Rosston: When I started in San Mateo County, part of it was interviewing students, and part of it was calling people up on the phone and asking for money. It goes that way. The Alumni Association itself was doing things, and I got involved

in several of the programs and was working with scholarships. How to get students, how to treat them, what the alumni magazine is, and how communications to alumni come. Very gratifying being able to help the role of the University in the state of California.

03-00:14:23

Redman:

I'll ask you this question numerous times today, but I'd like you to tell me about students in the 1950s that you may have been interviewing. Imagine yourself, then, as a younger man, working with the Alumni Association on scholarship committees and interviewing these young students. What do you recall about the students from that era?

03-00:14:51

Rosston:

The main students I interviewed were from the peninsula at the beginning. When I did student interviewing, I was fundraising. San Mateo County was a fairly well-heeled community. It was much before computers. We used the telephone to call people up. Sometimes I'd get good answers, sometimes I wouldn't.

03-00:15:26

Redman:

As far as asking for contributions?

03-00:15:27

Rosston:

Asking for money.

03-00:15:29

Redman:

Was that hard for you or was that something that you took to fairly easily? For a lot of people, it's a challenging thing to ask for money.

03-00:15:39

Rosston:

Once I started doing it, it was much easier.

03-00:15:44

Redman:

It took a little getting into, but once you—

03-00:15:47

Rosston:

Yes, and then I would get other people to tell them what I was doing and getting them. I did make some money by just sitting on the telephone. Maybe it would be five or ten dollars, but that was a good amount of money. I think we probably, with the chapter of the Alumni Association, we did have some fundraisers.

03-00:16:15

Redman:

Do you recall what types of fundraisers those might be in that era?

03-00:16:20

Rosston:

We would have one event a year. One of them was somebody had a place where they had bows and arrows. We had a party down there and got one of the faculty members to come down, and ran it as a benefit. I think we did have other things. That's in the history someplace. It's not in my head.

- 03-00:16:46  
Redman: Jack, will you remind me what year you graduated from Cal?
- 03-00:16:50  
Rosston: 1942.
- 03-00:16:51  
Redman: Can you help me interpret the significance of the Great Depression and the New Deal for people in your generation in thinking about higher education? Do you think those experiences contributed to how alumni of your generation thought about the University after the war?
- 03-00:17:11  
Rosston: I think it went in two directions. I think there were a lot of people who worked their way through, and some of them became very, very successful. Then there were people who had money. They were able to do things that we weren't able to do. Some of them became philanthropists and some didn't at all.
- 03-00:17:36  
Redman: It's a very interesting question for me when you see some people who are very wealthy and some of them are very willing to give back, and others are more reticent. They hold onto their money. Were you starting to learn a little bit about that in that era?
- 03-00:17:52  
Rosston: I was. I, of course, was attracted to those who wanted to do good. Some of our big money comes from people who, A, have it, but B, have a great loyalty to Berkeley. The Haas family has given tremendously to it. The Goldman family has given.
- 03-00:18:18  
Redman: This is a multigenerational thing, often, for these families.
- 03-00:18:20  
Rosston: Oh, yes.
- 03-00:18:21  
Redman: That's something I'd like to get into, again, in a little while. One of the biggest stories emerging out of the University of California campuses in the late forties and early fifties was the loyalty oath controversy. Do you have any specific recollections about that?
- 03-00:18:37  
Rosston: Yes.
- 03-00:18:38  
Redman: I'd like to hear what your impressions were of that.

- 03-00:18:42  
Rosston: There were some wonderful faculty members who were just kicked out because they wouldn't sign the loyalty.
- 03-00:18:50  
Redman: Because they wouldn't sign the loyalty oath?
- 03-00:18:53  
Rosston: Yes. It was what we had been fighting for in World War II and what our country stands for. It just went so far from one side to the other, as happens in this country. You've got two different sides in this country that are just so far apart, I wonder if they're ever going to get together a little bit.
- 03-00:19:18  
Redman: That was a moment of political swing in the state of California. Far to the right, with—
- 03-00:19:26  
Rosston: Some. California now is pretty leftist, and I think it was then, but there were both sides, as there are now.
- 03-00:19:38  
Redman: In particular, it seems that, in the forties, fifties, and then definitely sixties and seventies, Berkeley starts to get this particular reputation as being farther to the left, of course. Sometimes on the extreme left. But then, obviously, there are examples of faculty members and alumni that are much further on the right. Do you think Berkeley starts to get a little bit more of a cutting-edge reputation politically around this time?
- 03-00:20:10  
Rosston: I think it does. It's like a country that's got all kinds there. I think it has become more liberal than it was in the twenties.
- 03-00:20:27  
Redman: What were your impressions of the loyalty oath controversy from the perspective of someone in the Alumni Association? Were there problems in terms of then continuing fundraising, or was that sort of a blip on the radar?
- 03-00:20:39  
Rosston: I was not that active at that time. I didn't do anything about it. I didn't really get active until the 1950s.
- 03-00:20:50  
Redman: Were you reading about the loyalty oath controversy?
- 03-00:20:52  
Rosston: Yes.
- 03-00:20:53  
Redman: You presumably took a special interest in it because of—

- 03-00:20:56  
Rosston: I did, yeah. I remember my father, who died, I guess, in the late forties, had opinions about that, too. We agreed.
- 03-00:21:06  
Redman: So he felt like it was over the top to ask faculty—
- 03-00:21:08  
Rosston: Yes, and the way the Japanese were taken out of California was bad.
- 03-00:21:15  
Redman: Your father had agreed with you on that?
- 03-00:21:16  
Rosston: Yes, or I agreed with him. I was younger.
- 03-00:21:22  
Redman: To what extent do you think the alumni differentiated between a red scare, sort of this falsely created red scare, versus an actual threat of Communism? Do you think the alumni also represented a full spectrum of the political—?
- 03-00:21:39  
Rosston: I don't think that the red scare was there. It was there when I was in college. When World War II started, the Russians and the Germans were on one side. The Young Communist League was not allowed on the campus, but they were at the campus gates, with big banners, "The Yanks are not coming." When Germany and Russia decided they weren't getting together, the signs were changed to, "The Yanks are not coming too late." It was unbelievable! Overnight, they took their signs and changed them.
- 03-00:22:26  
Redman: That's pretty amazing. Eventually, you rose to the San Francisco chapter Alumni Association president.
- 03-00:22:38  
Rosston: No, San Mateo.
- 03-00:22:39  
Redman: The San Mateo Chapter. How did your association deepen at that point?
- 03-00:22:46  
Rosston: I guess I'd been active in scholarships, but it was all local. Then I got a call from the Alumni Association, asking me if I wanted to be on the council. I think they went out and they reached.
- 03-00:23:02  
Redman: They were trying to find people to be on the council. Were the meetings for that in San Francisco or in Oakland or Berkeley?
- 03-00:23:12  
Rosston: They were in Berkeley, on campus.

- 03-00:23:17  
Redman: What were your first impressions of the council?
- 03-00:23:20  
Rosston: I was very impressed.
- 03-00:23:21  
Redman: What impressed you? What were your first thoughts on—?
- 03-00:23:30  
Rosston: I loved the University, and I was very comfortable being with people who loved the University.
- 03-00:23:39  
Redman: You had taken a special interest in the Bancroft Library. You had mentioned to me before starting this interview today that your first donation to the Bancroft Library was a very modest donation in honor of your father. Can you tell me a little bit about that?
- 03-00:23:58  
Rosston: I wanted to do something, and my father and I had a love of books. I guess I had a love of California, and I saw something that came in, and I said, that would be a way to do something in his honor. That's why I gave up ten dollars.
- 03-00:24:14  
Redman: Had you known about the Bancroft Library?
- 03-00:24:17  
Rosston: I knew a little bit about it, but I didn't know much about it.
- 03-00:24:22  
Redman: It was some sort of a piece of alumni literature, maybe, that mentioned the Bancroft Library?
- 03-00:24:28  
Rosston: I don't know what it was, but I did know the Bancroft Library, and I did know it was California history. All that impressed me.
- 03-00:24:42  
Redman: That was the start of a relationship, in some sense.
- 03-00:24:48  
Rosston: The Bancroft Library—Ellie Heller is the one who got me really interested, but I had already been interested.
- 03-00:24:56  
Redman: Can you tell me about Ellie, and then spell the last name for me?
- 03-00:25:08  
Rosston: H-E-L-L-E-R. Eleanor Heller.

- 03-00:25:03  
Redman: Eleanor Heller. Can you tell me about who she was?
- 03-00:25:08  
Rosston: She graduated from Mills College. I think she may have been in a wealthy family, but she married into a very wealthy family. They were millionaires over and over.
- 03-00:25:32  
Redman: Was she on the council?
- 03-00:25:35  
Rosston: I don't think she was on the council, but she was on the Board of Regents, and her husband had been on the Board of Regents.
- 03-00:25:49  
Redman: She sort of reintroduced you, in some sense, to the Bancroft Library later on?
- 03-00:25:52  
Rosston: Yes. I had not been to the Bancroft Library before Ellie called me up and said, "Jack, I want you to serve the University in something that's non-controversial."
- 03-00:26:07  
Redman: Was she making that in terms of a pitch, like in terms of, "I promise this won't be controversial"?
- 03-00:26:15  
Rosston: She had a good sense of humor, and I knew her enough to talk to her, so I was very pleased. I guess she'd been off the Board of Regents at that time.
- 03-00:26:31  
Redman: Once you became part of the council, eventually you moved up to being the president of the national University of California Alumni Association. Tell me how that took place. Was there a major turning point in your involvement, or was it just sort of gradual?
- 03-00:26:50  
Rosston: I was very involved in the mission of the University of California. I got involved in a lot of different things on the council, and I became part of the council's board of directors; I don't know what it was called. Then the time came for election. It was scary, but I got it.
- 03-00:27:12  
Redman: You had decided to run for the position, or did someone—
- 03-00:27:17  
Rosston: I was asked to, and I said yes.

- 03-00:27:21  
Redman: It seems like this obviously became a great fit. It's something that was a good thing, both for the University of California and for yourself, but were you aware that this was a role that you wanted to take on?
- 03-00:27:37  
Rosston: I was so thrilled with it. I was president of the local chapter. We got involved in things, and I guess I got involved in things, so they put me on the council. They called me from Berkeley to put me on the council because I had done things.
- 03-00:28:00  
Redman: So it was maybe your success in raising funds or scholarships? Do you know what stood out?
- 03-00:28:05  
Rosston: I don't know exactly what their thinking was. They knew I was an active person, I guess.
- 03-00:28:14  
Redman: I understand your first year as president, you became a non-voting member of the Board of Regents. Is that correct?
- 03-00:28:20  
Rosston: That's right. With a voice. I could speak up, and I did.
- 03-00:28:31  
Redman: Was that sort of just a matter of course, that your second year you become a voting member, or was that a change that—?
- 03-00:28:42  
Rosston: In those days—I don't know what it is now—the president of the UCLA Alumni Association and the Berkeley Alumni Association took turns. Now I think the other campuses are getting involved. I don't know whether it's changed. I would be a non-voting member the first year, and a voting member the second year.
- 03-00:29:06  
Redman: Did you work in fairly close collaboration with the Alumni Regent from UCLA that first year? Do you recall that?
- 03-00:29:15  
Rosston: We were friendly, but I don't think we worked together. I worked more with University people, including the President.
- 03-00:29:24  
Redman: Who was the President at that time?
- 03-00:29:27  
Rosston: I can't even remember your last name.

- 03-00:29:36  
Redman: I can sometimes remember my name. We'll get into that in a bit.
- 03-00:29:42  
Rosston: That's history. Bill Coblentz was on the Board of Regents at that time, and he was a good friend. We would walk together and everything.
- 03-00:29:55  
Redman: What was his last name?
- 03-00:29:56  
Rosston: Coblentz, C-O-B-L-E-N-T-Z. He just died this year.
- 03-00:30:02  
Redman: Tell me about what direction he had come to the Board of Regents. Was he a faculty member, or was he a—?
- 03-00:30:08  
Rosston: He was a lawyer. A very politically oriented lawyer. Very high in the state Democratic Party.
- 03-00:30:17  
Redman: You had mentioned to me that you noticed a difference between various Regents that essentially cut across the lines of gubernatorial administrations that had appointed them. You had served with Regents appointed by Pat Brown, Ronald Reagan, and Jerry Brown. Is that correct? I'd like to hear your recollections on the make-ups of the Regents.
- 03-00:30:37  
Rosston: I think one thing that Brown Regents and the Reagan Regents had in common was love of the University, which was incredible because they were so politically different. The Jerry Brown Regents, in my opinion—maybe it shouldn't be for the record—Jerry was kind of a wild one. He's calmed down a lot. It took a lot of calming. Every time he came to a Regents meeting, and he didn't come to all of them, he would come with a host of protestors. That was very upsetting for me.
- 03-00:31:18  
Redman: What about that bothered you? Was it that people were protesting against the University, or that they were protesting on a particular political issue while University—?
- 03-00:31:28  
Rosston: I think they were just protesting. The other two-thirds of the Board, because it was about two-thirds, were really interested in the University, and I was surprised that some of the conservative Republicans, which were not my style, agreed with me. I went down to one of the places where they did the atomic research.
- 03-00:32:03  
Redman: Oh, sure, the Lawrence Berkeley Lab, or the National—

03-00:32:07  
Rosston: The one down in New Mexico.

03-00:32:10  
Redman: Los Alamos.

03-00:33:11  
Rosston: I went down to Los Alamos. I was new on the Board. They invited us down. I didn't realize you could bring your wife. She actually knew some of the scientists down there.

03-00:32:28  
Redman: Your wife did? Barbara?

03-00:32:30  
Rosston: Barbara. Barbara did cancer research, and they used nuclear things in that.

03-00:32:35  
Redman: Is that right? So she knew some of the scientists there.

03-00:32:37  
Rosston: Some of them came over and said, "I know your wife." That was a thrilling thing to go down there.

03-00:32:43  
Redman: Tell me about that experience. I suppose probably fairly early on, but later on, it becomes this visible point of contention that UC Berkeley had been involved in nuclear research, but not only atomic weapons development. They'd become involved in cancer research and all sorts of—

03-00:33:05  
Rosston: Yes, and Barbara was in cancer research. Some of her cohorts she worked with. At any rate—

03-00:33:17  
Redman: Was that a controversial trip to—?

03-00:33:20  
Rosston: No, it wasn't. All the Regents went down, and it was very, very well done. It was just an absolutely thrilling thing to do. Barbara would have loved it if I brought her with me, but I was a new kid on the block and didn't think you brought your wife to those things. Be careful.

03-00:33:44  
Redman: What are some of the major things you remember from your time on the Board of Regents? Were there particular political events, or were there particular points of contention or debate at that time? You'd mentioned that both the Regents on the right and the left of the political spectrum were tied together by their love of the University.

03-00:34:04

Rosston:

They were. They didn't always agree, but they really had strong love for the University. All of them had great respect for them. That worked out very well. A couple of Jerry Brown's Regents were yo-yos as far as I was concerned, but don't quote me on that one.

03-00:34:25

Redman:

Were there particular things where you may be surprised that people on the other side of the aisle, so to speak, agreed with you about?

03-00:34:34

Rosston:

I think it was an era where you could really work to have the University of California remain as one of the top universities in the world. I think that the science there was wonderful and the intellectual level was wonderful. The University of California, I think, probably due to lack of funds or whatever, has not been able to attract some of the people. One of the problems I saw then was, if you got a great, promising chemist or physicist, and he had a wife and two small children, and he got an offer from a job at UC or Harvard, he couldn't afford to come to UC. Or he could go to—I hate to call it that—but a secondary, good university, and still support his family well. I really campaigned to have the professors get something that was nearly comparable to Harvard and Stanford and Princeton.

03-00:35:50

Redman:

You were on the Board of Regents in 1981, 1982. I'm curious if you could sort of paint me a bit of a portrait about what the academy was like. Was it pretty similar, do you think, as far as the time that you were a student? It seems a lot of things had probably changed in terms of science and the humanities and the types of research that was going on on campus by the 1980s.

03-00:36:20

Rosston:

Yes. I think my knowledge of what was going on went way up, too. The University really emerged during World War II, and the scientific research they did to help the war effort, which was the atom bomb.

03-00:36:38

Redman:

That really helped, in some sense, the reputation of the University academically, but it vaulted it into a new political position, that it was in some sense more of a complex political world.

03-00:36:52

Rosston:

While I was a Regent, I went back to Washington with the President of the University to meet the senators. He said, "I want to bring you back because I want them to see what a Regent looks like." I guess he didn't add, "But nobody else had the time." Anyway, it was an incredibly exciting time for me.

03-00:37:21

Redman:

We'll summarize on this and then get into the Bancroft for a bit. I'm just curious if you could sort of summarize what your major experiences were on

the Board of Regents. Was the thing that stood out the other Regents or the activities for the University? It seems like a love of the University was a common thread there.

03-00:37:45

Rosston:

It was a pretty common thread. The skin color was changing, and the Latin Americans were coming in. There was a very brilliant woman who I think was Mexican, and she and I became very good friends. We always voted together. She was very vocal, and I would say, "Sshh, quiet." Then she'd say, "Jack, get up!" We always sat next to each other. It was really fun to be with people that I admired so much. I was very privileged.

03-00:38:36

Redman:

Did you get opportunities to meet faculty as a regent in ways that you wouldn't have?

03-00:38:42

Rosston:

Probably, yes. Just by saying "Regent," it was prestigious. All I have left is parking privileges.

03-00:38:54

Redman:

Perhaps about the time when your time on the Board of Regents came to a conclusion, you became especially active in the library. Can you tell me why you chose to get involved with the library in particular as an aspect of campus?

03-00:39:11

Rosston:

I was looking for things to do. That's when Ellie Heller called me up and told me to get involved in the Bancroft. I was involved in it from the time I started, but then when I became president, I was president for three years, I think, because of the vacancies. Then when I was through with that, my son, Greg, had just graduated from Berkeley, and his fifth anniversary class was the first fifth anniversary to give a gift to the University. They gave a desk for the undergraduate library. They raised \$5,000. I thought, my god, that's a wonderful kid. I don't know how I got involved, but I did get involved. I was in the Bancroft, and then my time at the Bancroft expired. I guess the librarian had retired, so I went in to see the new librarian and said, "I'd like to work with you." That's how we started the library advisory board.

03-00:40:37

Redman:

That comes along in the early 1990s. Is that correct? The library advisory board. I understand that you had a strong personal connection to the UC President, David Gardner. Gardner had studied the loyalty oaths for his own doctoral dissertation, so I'm wondering if you two in particular had talked about that, or—

03-00:40:56

Rosston:

I don't think we talked about that. We talked about the University. We talked a lot about the library. I asked him to be on the library advisory board as one

of the first people on it. I think he was President of the University at the time or had just been finished with that.

03-00:41:13

Redman: How had you first been introduced to him? Do you recall that?

03-00:41:17

Rosston: I don't really recall. Oh, I do. I think he was working for the Alumni Association. I met him and I was very, very impressed with him and we became friends. Then I think he went down to UC Santa Barbara. Then he was called up. We kept in contact, close contact. He came up from Santa Barbara to Berkeley again.

03-00:41:45

Redman: Tell me, what was he like, personality-wise, David Gardner?

03-00:41:48

Rosston: They're all outgoing guys.

03-00:41:50

Redman: All of the presidents, they tend to be—

03-00:41:53

Rosston: Differently, but he was enthusiastic. He was brilliant. He had a great idea about what should be done. The stacks in the University library are named the Gardner Stacks.

03-00:42:09

Redman: That's a fitting tribute to him, intellectually and then also in terms of his ability to build the University.

03-00:42:15

Rosston: Yes. He did a lot to help raising money. He was on the original library advisory board.

03-00:42:23

Redman: Let's jump into that. There are two major committees, then, at the library that you're very involved with. Of course, the first is the Friends of the Bancroft Library, and the second is the library advisory board that was established in the 1990s. Let's begin, though, by talking about the Friends of the Bancroft Library, because that seems to come first, correct? There seems to have been an old version of the Friends committee, and then, today, there's a new model of the group established during your tenure. I've heard some critique of the Friends of the Bancroft Library prior to, say, the 1980s, and even during much of the 1980s. It was primarily an outlet for bibliophiles or individuals who were very interested in volunteering on behalf of the library, but there was little or no fundraising going on. Can you maybe respond, if you would, to that sort of critique?

- 03-00:43:17  
Rosston: Jim Hart [James D. Hart] had a lot of fingers he could point to people and come back with money. Jim Hart was a great fundraiser for the Bancroft. I guess that was all that was needed.
- 03-00:43:33  
Redman: Jim Hart was the longtime director of the Bancroft Library.
- 03-00:43:39  
Rosston: Director of the Bancroft for a long time.
- 03-00:43:40  
Redman: James Hart was a literary scholar. He becomes the Director of the Bancroft Library around 1969, and holds the position until the time of his death in 1990. There's no doubt a lot to talk about during those years. Do you recall your first meeting with James Hart?
- 03-00:44:00  
Rosston: I don't know. I knew his daughter maybe earlier.
- 03-00:44:10  
Redman: What do you remember about James Hart? What was he like?
- 03-00:44:14  
Rosston: He was like a king. He really could run that place. When he left, there was a big vacancy.
- 03-00:44:25  
Redman: Thinking about Jim Hart, what does it take to be director of the Bancroft Library at the University of California?
- 03-00:44:31  
Rosston: To be an intellectual, obviously. To have a love of California history, and have contacts to be able to work with people in providing library. I don't know how the Mark Twain collection got in there, but it did for some reason, and that was an important part of the Bancroft, and it still is.
- 03-00:44:58  
Redman: Let's talk about the Mark Twain collection, because my understanding is that it came to Berkeley but it was unclear whether or not it would stay permanently at the University of California. There was some question that potentially it could be purchased by an East Coast university like Yale, who could come up with the money. That's apparently where you came in, in some sense.
- 03-00:45:25  
Rosston: Jim Hart was doing very well. When he died—
- 03-00:45:28  
Redman: Do you remember about what decade? This was in the nineties, or about early nineties?

- 03-00:45:33  
Rosston: Early nineties. When Jim Hart died, he had had people who funded it. Maybe they died, too. The communications were broken and we had to come up with \$40,000 for the Bancroft Library or we couldn't have it. I was then president of the [Friends of the] Bancroft. That's when I called on the Bancroft Friends committee to do something about it. I think I told you this. I said, "You either got to give or get \$10,000 each."
- 03-00:46:15  
Redman: So you turned to each of the Friends of the Bancroft Library, saying—
- 03-00:46:19  
Rosston: Horrified them.
- 03-00:46:20  
Redman: That horrified them. Was that hard for you to do as well, to ask—
- 03-00:46:26  
Rosston: No, because I was so damn opinionated.
- 03-00:46:29  
Redman: Were you frustrated with the lack of fundraising that was going on, or did you just see it—?
- 03-00:46:37  
Rosston: We'd all depended on Jim Hart. When he was no longer there, I had to find it, and I was chairman of the Bancroft at the time. I thought, "I've got to find some way. I got \$40,000."
- 03-00:46:55  
Redman: You had mentioned to me before we turned on the tape that three of these individuals came back to you with money that they were personally giving, and one person raised the \$10,000.
- 03-00:47:12  
Rosston: That was enough money just to pay for the Bancroft that year.
- 03-00:47:16  
Redman: Really? Wow. Did that surprise you?
- 03-00:47:24  
Rosston: I asked for \$10,000. There were about ten or eleven who didn't do anything over \$200 or something. I had expected we would get more in an emergency. At any rate, we sailed through it. We had to do something. That was very important.
- 03-00:47:49  
Redman: That establishes a tradition for the Friends of the Bancroft as a fundraising arm in some sense. It's not exclusively a fundraising arm, but it establishes a tradition of fundraising.

03-00:48:04

Rosston: Now the Director of the Bancroft is a fundraiser.

03-00:48:16

Redman: Tell me about, then, after this initial decision to raise funds through the Friends of the Bancroft Library, did that subsequently come up again as needs arose—

03-00:48:29

Rosston: I think it did gradually, and I think we've got some terrific fundraisers in the Friends of the Library now, and they have contacts and they are very conscientious about it. When I joined, it was just a pleasant place to be.

03-00:48:45

Redman: Can you maybe describe, then, for me what the personalities were like of the initial? You had mentioned—

03-00:48:51

Rosston: They were intellectuals. Some of them had money, some of them didn't. Most of them, as intellectuals, had contacts. They were not in the business of raising money. I can understand that, but when you get down to practicalities, in order to keep something going, and it's not supported by state funds, you've got to get volunteers. I had worked on the foundation, so I had some idea about how to do it. The Berkeley Foundation.

03-00:49:31

Redman: Were there different experiences or attitudes in maybe the seventies, the eighties, and nineties about fundraising for the long term? It seems to me that the real endowment, the movement for universities to create these massive endowments, is more of a modern phenomenon.

03-00:49:52

Rosston: I think it is, but also, I don't think it was necessary at Berkeley. There were some endowments, but endowments come in later at Berkeley. Now they have an office of planned giving, which they've had for fifteen or twenty years, and that's [recent]. As the state dries up, you've got to do something. The state is really drying up much more than it should.

03-00:50:20

Redman: Were there changes in the nature of the alumni? You mentioned your son's involvement with the Alumni Association in helping raise \$5,000 for the Moffitt undergraduate library. I'm curious if you can tell me about how alumni were maybe changing. Was the face of the Alumni Association changing?

03-00:50:43

Rosston: I think it had to. I know Greg, whenever his class has a reunion, he's out putting his hand in people's pockets. I think that that's happened in a lot of the classes. A lot of loyalty.

03-00:51:02

Redman: Do you think the efforts to fundraise are more straightforward nowadays, or more open, or more obvious in some sense?

03-00:51:10

Rosston: I think it's more necessary. Some people realize it.

03-00:51:16

Redman: I'm curious, then, about some of the friends initially being horrified at being asked for this. Some people, of course, rose to the occasion. Were others extremely upset by this in any way?

03-00:51:34

Rosston: Nothing came in.

03-00:51:36

Redman: So they just would maybe make their regular \$200—

03-00:51:39

Rosston: I had about three or four people who worked with me very closely, and that's how we got the money. That's dirty linen. That doesn't make much sense to publicize that.

03-00:51:58

Redman: Some people were jumping right onboard, and others may have had feelings that they kept to themselves.

03-00:52:06

Rosston: Yes. A lot of them were wealthy, and a lot of them weren't.

03-00:52:10

Redman: Some people were just purely interested in the literary aspect of it, or the California history aspect of it.

03-00:52:16

Rosston: Yes.

#### Audio File 4

04-00:00:05

Redman: This is our second tape today. Today is July 25, 2011. One of the topics that we were talking about earlier is that some University of California families have very strong philanthropic traditions, very strong traditions of giving, and many of these families in San Francisco have a Jewish cultural heritage, Jewish religious heritage. Not only have these families raised money, they've sent their kids to Cal, and some have even gone on to be faculty members at Berkeley. I'm curious if you have a perspective on the connections between these families of Jewish ancestries in San Francisco and UC Berkeley.

- 04-00:00:50  
Rosston: I think that there was discrimination fifty years ago, or sixty to seventy years ago. There are two primary universities in the Bay Area, and a lot of Jews have gone to both of them. There's a lot of loyalty to each of them, and some with cross-loyalties.
- 04-00:01:18  
Redman: So you think that you would find a similar series of connections at Stanford as well?
- 04-00:01:22  
Rosston: Oh, yes.
- 04-00:01:25  
Redman: Thinking about the Haas family in particular as being one, and then you'd named—were there any big—?
- 04-00:01:30  
Rosston: The Koshland family.
- 04-00:01:33  
Redman: What were some of the major families that you had worked with? Did you have an impression of particular families, well-known alumni families, that you connected with?
- 04-00:01:45  
Rosston: I didn't connect that way. No, I did not.
- 04-00:01:49  
Redman: I suppose that you were more working with individual donors at any given time?
- 04-00:01:57  
Rosston: People I got in contact with, I worked with. I spent some time with the foundation over there, after I was president. I automatically got transferred over there, and I was vice chairman. I worked with him, and I worked on ideas.
- 04-00:02:22  
Redman: The library advisory board. It's amazing that this board has only been around since the 1990s; since you look at it, you look at the mission of what it does, of helping the university librarian and providing a fundraising body for them. It's surprising that this wasn't already around.
- 04-00:02:46  
Rosston: There was state money coming. The building of the library itself was philanthropy.
- 04-00:02:59  
Redman: The changes in funding necessitated the need for a library advisory board.

- 04-00:03:03  
Rosston: Yes, and there were a lot of families in the years after World War II who were rich and became much richer, and they wanted to do something.
- 04-00:03:16  
Redman: Do you think people connect with the library in a way that they might not connect with other places on campus because of the nature of books and studying and reading?
- 04-00:03:27  
Rosston: There's all kinds of connections. There's a lot of money going into athletics, which upsets me.
- 04-00:03:35  
Redman: Tell me about that. Tell me about your thoughts on—
- 04-00:03:40  
Rosston: I hate to be quoted on that, because I could get into trouble. A lot of people give a lot of money to athletics, give all sorts of money, and some of them don't. When there's millions of dollars going into the stadium, and the library—it's doing all right now. The University is getting fitter.
- 04-00:04:05  
Redman: So that concerns you. That disparity.
- 04-00:04:07  
Rosston: I would just like to get more money to come in. They've got quite an outfit for planned giving now. I remember when it was two people. I think we get a Christmas card with eight signatures on it now.
- 04-00:04:26  
Redman: The library advisory board, it's the President of the University, chancellors, vice chancellors, and then a selection of faculty members and alumni. Did you originally construct that board, and did you choose people from different places?
- 04-00:04:46  
Rosston: What I did was I found some benefactors, but I got all the former chancellors and a couple of former presidents, and that gave it a hell of a prestige. From that, we moved on. We didn't have anybody in the library except the librarian.
- 04-00:05:05  
Redman: It was particularly important, do you think, to have people from outside the library, but then specifically the presidents and chancellors?
- 04-00:05:12  
Rosston: Yes. Then we made the Chancellor the president. I was president. I said, "I'll be something else." Or I was chairman. I said, "But you've got to have the Chancellor as chairman."

- 04-00:05:25  
Redman: The Chancellor and Vice Chancellor, they have a lot of additional responsibilities. Was it hard to get time and attention? The library being so central to—
- 04-00:05:40  
Rosston: The chancellors always attended the meetings, and they hosted them in their office. The annual meetings were in the Chancellor's Office. I don't know whether they are anymore, but that's how it started out.
- 04-00:05:51  
Redman: That's a really impressive commitment to that, to a new board.
- 04-00:05:55  
Rosston: I think Heyman was Chancellor at the time. He may be the first one. I don't know who was the first one.
- 04-00:06:00  
Redman: What were your impressions of Heyman? You worked with Chancellor Tien as well. What were your impressions of Heyman as Chancellor?
- 04-00:06:11  
Rosston: I thought he was wonderful.
- 04-00:06:13  
Redman: What in particular impressed you about his time?
- 04-00:06:17  
Rosston: His time, his fairness, his intelligence, obviously, and his love of the University. You have to have all of that put together, and getting out and doing things. He knew how to meet people, to talk to people. His wife was wonderful. It becomes a family thing, like it does with the library.
- 04-00:06:40  
Redman: Let me ask about the role of wives and faculty wives. In the fifties and sixties, you think that there was this idea of the faculty wife who was an intelligent woman who might be able to cook for her professor husband, but then also was able to converse on Shakespeare or physics.
- 04-00:07:02  
Rosston: We had some pretty damn good wives.
- 04-00:07:06  
Redman: That played a role, it seems, in a lot of these activities in terms of fundraising or get-togethers.
- 04-00:07:13  
Rosston: The Sprouls.
- 04-00:07:15  
Redman: Tell me about the Sprouls.

04-00:07:18

Rosston: His daughter became a very good friend of ours, and she was one of the original members of the board.

04-00:07:27

Redman: Did it help to have that family namesake on the board?

04-00:07:30

Rosston: I don't know, because she was such an individual, too. She was great. She had friends. She knew how to do things. She was somebody good to talk to about planning. All that worked.

04-00:07:44

Redman: You had mentioned that the Regents were becoming more diverse in terms of the backgrounds, the ethnic backgrounds, of a lot of people. That must have been a change, but it sounds that there were more women playing a role as—

04-00:08:05

Rosston: Strong women.

04-00:08:08

Redman: Can you tell me about how that may have changed the dynamic from your perspective?

04-00:08:13

Rosston: I really don't know. I was never sitting in the Board of Regents until I did, and a lot had happened since then. It was all set up for me.

04-00:08:28

Redman: I'd like to then jump to a recent series of events. One that's in my mind, of course, recently, with the retirement of Charles Faulhaber as Director of the Bancroft Library, I know there were a pair of failed searches for the Director, where Charles was a finalist. Peter Hanff, who is, again, many years later, serving as Acting Director, spoke about the process of going through these two failed searches before finally bringing on Charles. From the way stories pass down within the building, it sounds as though nobody could have anticipated that Charles, the scholar of Medieval Spanish literature, would be so successful at running the Bancroft Library, and that he'd be such a successful fundraiser in particular. Can you tell me what your role was in those searches?

04-00:09:23

Rosston: I guess I was chairman of the Bancroft Library Friends. I sat in. There were I think three or four of us, and faculty members, on the committee. It was sort of half divided. Charles was on one side, and I forget the name of the guy, who was wonderful, on the other side. The vote came, just from the rolls they had, and it was even. It was maybe thirty-five, forty people, and it was even. It was too close to call, so they didn't want to disturb anything. I think it was right. That's when they postponed it for five years. The only thing that I was

worried about was absolutely wrong, was that he couldn't raise money. He'd never raised money before.

04-00:10:22

Redman: He was a scholar.

04-00:10:24

Rosston: He was a scholar, and he'd never raised money. I remember when he got appointed, he called me up and said, "Can I have lunch with you today?" That was just charming.

04-00:10:37

Redman: As soon as he was appointed, he called you, and you two had lunch. It started your relationship pretty early.

04-00:10:45

Rosston: I'd been a friend of his, but not close, because we didn't come across. He was a professor and I was an alumnus. I wasn't in his field.

04-00:10:55

Redman: You were familiar with him.

04-00:10:58

Rosston: I had been through the search. I was on the search committee.

04-00:11:03

Redman: What were your impressions of him when he first started as Director?

04-00:11:07

Rosston: I was already for him. I wanted him to be director for five years. I think I could have done with either one of them, but I sort of leaned toward—but I had no idea what his potential was for fundraising. His wife has been a big help, too.

04-00:11:27

Redman: It sounds like that was a pretty hard task of finding a director and vetting them and going through those searches. Was that a challenging—?

04-00:11:36

Rosston: It was, because we came out with two prize-winners. That was the only problem there was. It wasn't that there wasn't enough talent, but they were different talents.

04-00:11:47

Redman: Would you describe for me the sort of impressions of the realization that the Bancroft Library really needed a new building, a new facility? My understanding is that when Charles was appointed the Director, some engineers and administrators on the campus described the Doe Annex as the building most in need of attention but least likely to get it. Can you sort of talk about that?

04-00:12:11

Rosston:

When Jim Hart took me through the stacks, I was just shocked at the conditions. With all of the valuable collections they had, it was like a fire trap. Things were falling apart, really, in my mind. The scholars were there. The Mark Twain collection. I remember going through with Jim. They pulled out a drawer and they gave me a piece of paper. Mark Twain had been out for a walk one day and made notes to do something, and they had a whole bunch of his notes that he made, which are still in there, I'm sure. The rooms up there were just like cells, and they're overloaded with books. I think that went on for a lot of the University, because scholars also put things away and pile them up. It needed a lot of money. Jim Hart was getting it, but not a revolution to happen later like—

04-00:13:32

Redman:

What, then, was the difference? The story goes that Charles receives a call from the campus administration, explaining that the plan to build another university building had fallen through and that the Bancroft Library, if they were able to raise funds, they would be next in line for a new facility. The University was willing to commit to retrofitting the building. Can you add to that story for me a little bit?

04-00:13:55

Rosston:

I think I was out of it. I was no longer involved.

04-00:14:00

Redman:

Okay, but you were aware of—

04-00:14:03

Rosston:

I was aware, but not involved at all.

04-00:14:06

Redman:

Tell me a little bit about your surprise, then, at what happens next. The Friends and Charles kick into high gear, and the University kicks into high gear, and they're able to raise a massive amount of money for a gorgeous new building. What were your impressions of that, then?

04-00:14:29

Rosston:

Delight.

04-00:14:34

Redman:

Did you see this as part of an extension of a tradition that you had set up, or did that only really occur to you a little later?

04-00:14:41

Rosston:

I was there. I didn't set it up. I do remember all the drawings and going all through the whole process of what was going on as an observer, because they were doing it.

04-00:14:55

Redman:

Were you excited by that prospect?

04-00:14:56

Rosston: Oh, very. I got so excited when it all happened.

04-00:15:01

Redman: Was your primary excitement—were you thinking about the preservation of that California history or its role in the scholarship or University? What in particular do you think—?

04-00:15:12

Rosston: I think all of that, all three things. It is a scholarly place. A university should be a scholarly place. It's a history place, because that's where it is. It's going into new things. It's pioneering in oral history, which is a complete new way to do history. It got its start under Hart.

04-00:15:46

Redman: I'd like to ask about Willa Baum, if I may, and the Regional Oral History Office. Can you tell me a little bit about your impressions of who she was as a scholar and the director for the Regional Oral History Office?

04-00:16:04

Rosston: And a person. Oh, I was very fond of her.

04-00:16:08

Redman: So you were fond of her personally and also intellectually. Tell me about what she was like.

04-00:16:15

Rosston: She was all business, but very warm personally. She set that up, and she knew what she was doing. I don't think she had any ego at all. She was just ready to do her mission. She had a bunch of very intelligent women working with her. Each one of them could have done something else, but they wanted to do that, and they did a very good job.

04-00:16:45

Redman: Within the Bancroft Library, there are these research arms of the Mark Twain Papers and the Regional Oral History Office, but then there's also a mission of preserving and archiving documents, primary sources. Do you think those two things go together quite well? It seems like, on occasion, one of the projects will have an unusual fit within the Bancroft Library, or a more strenuous fit within the Bancroft Library.

04-00:17:13

Rosston: I think it's a combination of things that work pretty well together. I don't think that there's that much competition between them. I think they appreciate each other. I feel good about that.

04-00:17:25

Redman: Maybe it's different personalities occasionally that come and go.

04-00:17:30

Rosston: You've had some wonderful people there who are absolutely selfless.

04-00:17:37

Redman:

As we wrap up this session, I'd like to ask a couple of questions. Between your arrival at Berkeley and the construction of the new Bancroft Library, a lot has changed, especially in terms of the academic creation of new knowledge or scholarly research. The web has added a new component to scholarly life. Can you tell me, from your perspective, how academic departments at Berkeley have shifted their relationship with the library?

04-00:18:06

Rosston:

I don't really know, but I would judge that, because of the way libraries are treated now, it's easier to move in and out when you have a computer. It meshes. I think Berkeley is a very good place for that, because I think they're so advanced in those sciences as well.

04-00:18:30

Redman:

As we wrap up, I'd like to ask about the place of the University in your life since the time you graduated. Obviously, this is a big question, but I'd like you to maybe take a moment and pause and reflect on the development of the campus and the library since your time. It seems to have meant a lot for you.

04-00:18:47

Rosston:

Oh, it has.

04-00:18:49

Redman:

Can you maybe reflect on the place of the University in your life since the time you graduated?

04-00:18:56

Rosston:

Even before I got there to school, I loved the University of California. I remember when I was in the second or third grade, we'd have teams on math problems, and I was always on the Cal team.

04-00:19:12

Redman:

So you'd always aspired to go there and be part of it. It seems to have been a very good relationship for you.

04-00:19:20

Rosston:

I think I mentioned that I had a cousin who went there who died in 1927, on her seventeenth birthday, of polio. The year before they discovered the iron lung. That's a first. I didn't even know what was going on then, I was so young. I remember them saying that she went over to Berkeley, and that was about all.

04-00:19:46

Redman:

So you gradually became more and more familiar with the University and wanted to stay.

04-00:19:51

Rosston:

It was my only possibility of going to college, too.

04-00:19:54  
Redman: So it represented that for you to a certain extent.

04-00:19:56  
Rosston: Yes, but it was obviously one that I wanted to go to. I was glad I had one son who went.

04-00:20:04  
Redman: Your other son went to Harvard.

04-00:20:08  
Rosston: I refer to them as my smart son and my dumb son.

04-00:20:11  
Redman: The one who went to Cal as the—

04-00:20:14  
Rosston: Smart son. I don't worry about egos.

04-00:20:19  
Redman: You don't worry about egos. That's funny. I would like to jump back. I know this is a bit of a tangent backwards, but I think we did talk about where you were on December 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. I understand that they were in the midst of finals at Cal. Can you tell me what campus was like on that day?

04-00:20:45  
Rosston: I guess finals were just beginning, and I had to get a paper in before finals. I stayed up all night the day before, on December 6 to December 7, because I was getting my paper in. I woke up to people screaming, and that was the day we got the news, December 7.

04-00:21:06  
Redman: This would have been in the co-op?

04-00:21:08  
Rosston: I was in a co-op, yeah.

04-00:21:11  
Redman: And people were frightened?

04-00:21:15  
Rosston: They were different things. Even in a place like a co-op, they're not all conservatives. A couple of guys bombed the Japanese student club. That kind of pressure going on. It horrified me at that time, and most of the kids were horrified at that.

04-00:21:38  
Redman: We did talk last time, too, about the internment of Japanese and some of your friends leaving, and your reaction to that. Can you talk about what the reaction on campus was like? Do you remember what other students were saying?

04-00:21:56

Rosston: Not too much. Not really.

04-00:21:58

Redman: There was so much else going on in the world. Do you think that the internment of the Japanese sort of got lost in some sense?

04-00:22:05

Rosston: I think that, particularly people living in San Francisco, where there was some mixture, were very upset. It was hysteria going on. I think that that was what it was. I had friends who went to visit. We had a future congressman go. At least one.

04-00:22:31

Redman: The war was a pretty powerful moment in your life, and then obviously in the history of California. I asked if you would reflect on the Great Depression and the New Deal as far as how that affected people's thoughts and opinions on higher education. Can we just finish up with World War II, and I'll ask, do you think the war influenced your generation in terms of alumni and their relationship to the University at all?

04-00:23:02

Rosston: I don't know. I really don't know. My kids are postwar, and they have allegiance to their universities. It's parental influence, too, that gets into the blood. They're both loyal. Greg is loyal to both Cal and Stanford now, and Steve went to Harvard and he's loyal to Harvard, but he also did graduate work at Stanford, and he married a Stanford professor. Stanford is a part of their life, but he still does things for his dad.

04-00:23:46

Redman: I think that's a great place to wrap up. Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your involvement with the University since the Second World War?

04-00:23:56

Rosston: It's been very gratifying for me to be part of it. I love going over there when I can do things. It's getting to be more and more difficult for me to get around. I don't drive anymore and I get tired easily. If there's a library or a Bancroft event, I do want to get over to it, and I do get over to a lot of them.

04-00:24:20

Redman: Very good. I think that's a good place to end, and I thank you very much.

04-00:24:24

Rosston: You make me feel good when you do this. I love to get involved with the University. I miss it a lot.

[End of Interview]