

Oral History of Abe Krash
First Interview
June 6, 2013

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewee is Abe Krash, Esquire, and the interviewer is Stuart Pierson, Esquire. The interview took place on June 6, 2013. This is the first interview.

Mr. Pierson: It is June, 6, 2013 and I'm Stuart Pierson with the D.C. Circuit Historical Society and with me is Abe Krash who through the course of these interviews we will all get to know for his remarkable career in Washington, DC. And unless you have other introductory remarks Abe, I thought we would start with your birth and your childhood.

Mr. Krash: Well as Robert Hutchins, a former President of the University of Chicago, used to say, I was born in the usual way on April 26, 1927, in Menominee, Michigan. My father was a rabbi in an adjacent town, Marinette, Wisconsin. The hospital was in Menominee. He married my mother a year before, in 1926. My father was born in the village of Butrimonis in Lithuania, which was then a part of Russia, around 1890. We never really knew when he was born because he never divulged that to us. But I would say that he was born no later than 1890, and he grew up in Lithuania. We liked to kid him years later about all the amazing things that happened during the twentieth century. He didn't die until 1984. The world was revolutionized in his lifetime. In any event, he came from a family where his father, too, was a rabbi, and he came from a very religious background. He studied in seminaries in Lithuania, where he was ordained as a rabbi as a young man, and then he immigrated to the United States in the early 1920s. He was one of five children. Two of his siblings, a brother and a sister, settled in Chicago, and a third settled in Alliance, Ohio, and became a very successful scrap metal dealer. My father came with a twin sister to the United States. She had some kind of illness-- I

don't know what type-- but in any event, she was not allowed into the country, and he took her back to Lithuania before returning to the United States. She was subsequently killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. My father settled first in Chicago, and then he became a rabbi in the small town of Marinette near the Wisconsin/Michigan border.

Mr. Pierson: Do you know why he would have gone from Chicago to Marinette?

Mr. Krash: He got a job as a rabbi there. Then around 1928 or 1929, he accepted a job as an assistant rabbi for a synagogue in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was very attracted to that because the University of Utah is in Salt Lake City, and he very much wanted to matriculate in an American University, which he previously had not had an opportunity to do. Upon arriving in Salt Lake City, he immediately enrolled in the University of Utah, and he ultimately got a master's degree in history. All his life, that was one of the things he had wanted to do. That was really the moment that changed his life. He greatly cherished that experience throughout his lifetime. He remained in Salt Lake City for five or six years, and then he was offered the position as rabbi in charge of a congregation in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Mr. Pierson: Did he ever reflect on the Mormon experience when he was in Salt Lake City, Utah?

Mr. Krash: No, I don't recall that. But he did feel that the people in Salt Lake were very friendly and very cordial to him, and he liked being in Salt Lake, but he had this opportunity to go to Cheyenne. People are often amused that he went as a rabbi to Cheyenne, a small western town. What happened basically was that as

the Jewish migration from Europe came to America, most people first settled in eastern and Midwestern cities. Then, looking for work, many of them pressed westward to Kansas City and Omaha and particularly to Denver, where there was a very large Jewish community by the 1930s. In any event, by the time my father arrived in 1935, there was a thriving Jewish community in Cheyenne. It is the capital of the state of Wyoming and there was a large army base on the edge of the town, Fort Francis E. Warren, which was a quartermaster base. During World War II, it was very much expanded. Cheyenne is also the site of a big Union Pacific railroad repair yard, and it was the center for all of the surrounding ranches as a source of supply. At the time when my father came, in 1935, the country was in the midst of the Depression. The Cheyenne Jewish community consisted of somewhere between a 100 and 125 families, so it was a substantial Jewish community. Most of the Jewish residents were merchants. They owned clothing stores, sporting goods stores, pawn shops and liquor stores, and they were quite successful.

Mr. Pierson: Was his the only synagogue?

Mr. Krash: His was the only synagogue in the state. My father was a man of small stature, very soft spoken, very scholarly and studious. He would frequently say to me "Do you have a book in your hand?" That is the way my father spoke to me. In years later, one of the things that was sad for me was becoming aware that where I grew up there was marvelous mountain fishing nearby. My father knew nothing about that. In Cheyenne, he was very much welcomed by the Jewish community in his early years. But then what happened was that as many of the folks became more financially successful, they became more assimilated. The congregation when he became rabbi was orthodox; many of

the members were immigrants, but their children were less orthodox, less observant. My father spoke with an accent. He spoke fluent English, but he spoke with an accent. I think a number of the members wanted a different type of rabbi, who had greater social skills than my father possessed.

Consequently, the congregation split into different factions. In 1944, my father concluded he was unable to heal the schism in the congregation, and he decided to leave Cheyenne to accept a position as rabbi of a congregation in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Then, after five years there, he became a rabbi for a congregation in Madison, Wisconsin, and thereafter in Farrell, Pennsylvania. Finally he was rabbi of a small congregation in Washington, DC before he retired in his late 70s in 1970.

Mr. Pierson: Which was the synagogue here?

Mr. Krash: It was called the Washington Highlands Jewish Center in Southwest D.C. It's now closed. My father had a very hard time throughout his life. Basically, during his lifetime there were tremendous transformations going on in the American Jewish community. There was great tension within many communities between the more observant and their children who were less observant people. It was a very tough time for many of the orthodox rabbis, who struggled to reconcile the conflicting views. One thing my father had was this great love for learning and books. He always wanted to obtain a doctorate, and he took advanced courses in New York and in Israel in an effort to achieve that goal.

Turning to my mother, her name was Florence Kaplan. My father married her in 1926. She also came from a family of rabbis. She was living at the time he

married her in Duluth, Minnesota. How he came to know about her, I don't know. She was one of eight children. There were six sisters and two brothers. I think she was the second oldest.

Mr. Pierson: Had her family been in the states for a while?

Mr. Krash: Yes, I think they had been here for several years when my father met her. My mother went to high school here. She was a very intelligent, a very bright woman, who, unfortunately, never had the opportunity to get a college education. She spoke five languages and taught children in the Hebrew schools where my father was rabbi. Unlike my father, who was very quiet and very reserved, my mother was vivacious, very outgoing, very warm. She was very supportive of her family. When we came to Cheyenne, which is where I grew up, I was seven or eight years old. I skipped second grade and entered the third grade and then completed the rest of my public school education there. Cheyenne, at that time, was a community of approximately 25,000 people. You have to remember that Wyoming had only been a state for about a half century at that time. It was very much the west.

Mr. Pierson: Did you have any Indian or Mexican classmates there?

Mr. Krash: I had no Indian classmates. However, I had one or two Mexican classmates.

Mr. Pierson: Were there Indians on the reservations?

Mr. Krash: The Indians were on the reservations. We didn't see them until Frontier Days, which was a famous rodeo that took place every summer during the last week of July, and then Indians were brought into the city for that event. In the high school I attended, Cheyenne Senior High School, I was very fortunate in that the principal was a man by the name of Karl Winchell. He was very

supportive of me. I was the editor-in-chief of the student newspaper, *The Lariat*. I also was the Wyoming state oratory champion. A lot of the reason I had contact with Winchell was because at the beginning of the 9th or 10th grade, I began to write articles for one of the two daily newspapers in Cheyenne. One was called *The Eagle*, which was a morning newspaper; the other was called *The Tribune*, an afternoon newspaper. They were both owned by the same man, a man by the name of Tracy McCracken. I reported on high school sports events. One thing led to the other. During World War II -- now I'm talking about 1941 to 1944, the papers' sports editor had gone off to fight. High school sports were important in a small town like Cheyenne, so I began to write these stories about the high school football and basketball games, and, pretty soon, I was writing more and more stories. I would go down to the newspaper office after school, and after a while they gave me a desk and a typewriter. I learned how to type with two fingers. I was writing more and more. To make a long story short, when I was in about the 10th or the 11th grade, they made me the sports editor of *The Eagle* morning newspaper. Every day after school, I would rush down there and write a half a dozen articles. I had a sports column with my picture on it. I would cover the high school sports events, and a few University of Wyoming events. What was quite wonderful was that I was around reporters at the newspaper and getting to know them and getting to know what a newspaper was like. McCracken, the owner, later, became famous in the pictures of President Kennedy's nomination to be President at the Democratic Convention in 1960, when Wyoming was the state that pushed him over the top. McCracken is the fellow in the picture shown voting for Kennedy that confirmed his nomination.

Mr. Pierson: He was the head of the delegation.

Mr. Krash: I believe he was the head of the delegation. I'm not sure that he was head, but he was a very passionate Democrat and an alumnus and very strong supporter of the University of Wyoming. He wanted me to go to the University of Wyoming, which I didn't do. But this experience with the newspaper was a very valuable one because I learned to write under pressure. In going to sports events, I had to immediately come after the game to the office and write the article for the morning paper.

Mr. Pierson: Was the University of Wyoming in Cheyenne?

Mr. Krash: No, It was in Laramie, which is about 40 miles away. Actually, it was quite a ways away in those days because of gas rationing.

Mr. Pierson: Did you drive to it?

Mr. Krash: You could drive, if you were lucky. On Saturday mornings in the autumn, there was a train which would take people over to the football games. I didn't cover the University's football games. McCracken owned many newspapers throughout Wyoming as well as the radio station in Cheyenne. I became a sports broadcaster too. I was broadcasting the high school games. I began to learn to be a sports broadcaster. As I said, writing a lot of articles under pressure and being around newspaper people every day, I began to learn what the newspaper trade was all about.

Mr. Pierson: Did they give you basics on what an article should be like?

Mr. Krash: Oh, yes they did. The city editor and the other reporters were extremely nice to me and very supportive and encouraged me.

Mr. Pierson: Get it all in one paragraph?

Mr. Krash: Oh yes, like "what, when and how". I learned as well how to make up the layout for the sports page. I also remember being in the newspaper office on the Sunday of Pearl Harbor with the teletypes flashing. In high school, for whatever reason, I kind of blossomed. I had been kind of restless and erratic in junior high school, but in high school I blossomed. Particularly, I think, because Karl Winchell, who was a father figure for me in all kinds of ways. If I got out of line, he would really reign me in. He would read me the riot act.

Mr. Pierson: What was your mother and father's influence?

Mr. Krash: Well, my father was greatly puzzled by all of this. He never went to any of the high school games. He didn't know what the devil I was doing. But he was rather proud of the fact that every morning there was the newspaper with my byline and my column. It was a nice thing, and I think he took a lot of derivative pride in it, as did my mother. But my father wouldn't know the difference between a baseball and a football. He just didn't go to any of the games. Here I was running off covering all these football and basketball games. He was very encouraging and supportive, but a little puzzled by all of it. What he was mainly interested in was what kind of grades was I getting and what was I studying. That was the primary concern for him.

Mr. Pierson: And your mother?

Mr. Krash: My mother was very supportive of everything I did. She was very encouraging and backed me up. Cheyenne was a community that was very open and tolerant on the whole. There was prejudice, no doubt about that. For example, there was only a single country club in town, and no Jewish person would be admitted to the country club. Another example was the Frontier Days Committee, which consisted of a group of business men who ran the rodeo.

You would never see a Jewish businessman in that group. But I experienced very little prejudice or discrimination. Some of my friends were part of a social group from which I was excluded, but as I said I was the editor in chief of the high school student newspaper. I was on the debate team. I won the state oratory championship and there were many, many good teachers who were very encouraging in high school and supportive of me. Particularly, I recall an English teacher, a Miss Gibson, who was excellent, and a debate coach, Miss Rice, who was very supportive.

Mr. Pierson: Did you take a foreign language?

Mr. Krash: I took Spanish one year. My regret in retrospect was that I was primarily interested in humanities, and I should have been more interested in math and science. The educational system was probably not the same caliber that one would get in a high school in a big metropolitan area, but it was reasonably good. The teachers were supportive and they were very encouraging. I certainly had lots of chances to do all sorts of things.

Mr. Pierson: How about your brothers and sisters?

Mr. Krash: I have a sister and a brother. My sister was born a couple of years after me in Salt Lake City. Her name is Hadassah. She later became a teacher. She studied at the University of Wisconsin and she became a teacher in the New York Public School System, where she taught for a quarter of a century. Afterward, she went to Israel and lived there for 10 or 15 years. She lived in Jerusalem. Her daughter served in the Israeli Defense Forces, went to college there, and later moved back to the United States for graduate school at Columbia University. She is now a professor of political science at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. I also have a brother, who was born in Salt Lake City 4

or 5 years after I was born. His name is Esomor. Subsequently, he went to the University of Wisconsin. My father was a rabbi in Madison during the time my brother went to school there and afterward. That's why my brother went to school there. My brother subsequently owned and managed a press clipping service in Washington, DC for many years. He then retired to Hawaii. He now lives in Richmond, Virginia, with his wife Elliott. He has one son, Ethan, and two grandchildren, who also live in Richmond.

Mr. Pierson: What were your brother and sister doing in school while you were there? They were behind you?

Mr. Krash: They were behind me. Yes, of course, my sister was 2 years behind me and my brother was 4 or 5 years behind me.

Mr. Pierson: What was the influence of the war?

Mr. Krash: I vividly recall being in the offices of the newspaper on the day of December 7th. I remember sitting at home listening to the radio. I used to listen to the music program around 1:00 p.m., and they were breaking into it announcing the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I rushed down to the newspaper office-- it was just seven or eight blocks away from our house-- and the office had been open because they wanted to put out an extra edition. Remember, there was no television in those days.

Mr. Pierson: Was there a ticker?

Mr. Krash: There was an AP ticker. There was indeed. There was a cubicle where the AP ticker was and you could hear the bells ringing. The ticker would ring 10 times for a flash. I remember being in there when the AP ticker would go off and they were publishing

an extra edition.

Mr. Pierson: Did you write any of those editions?

Mr. Krash: No I didn't. The articles were all coming off the ticker tape. The effects of the war on Cheyenne occurred, first of all, at Fort Warren, which became an enormously expanded quartermaster base. My father became, in effect, a chaplain. They called on him because there was no Jewish chaplain at Fort Warren, and they asked him if he would conduct services for the soldiers. My father was delighted to do that. Soldiers were in our home frequently during the war requesting all kinds of assistance. I remember one wintery morning, they wanted my father to meet a troop train coming through Cheyenne. I remember my father waking me. They sent a car to our house and drove us to the train, which was on a siding outside the city. I remember my father went into the railroad coaches, and I followed him. There were quite a number of Jewish soldiers and he conducted a morning service for the soldiers. They were on their way to the west coast. As I said, soldiers were frequently at our house seeking my father's assistance in getting their girlfriends out there, getting married or helping them get assigned, or if they were having some kind of emotional or spiritual problems. My father was very much involved in that during the war. Fort Warren was right on the edge of the city. I could get on my bike and go there because it was only four or five miles away. It was right on the edge of the town. For the soldiers, Cheyenne was the place to go for shopping, recreation, or visiting bars. The war really greatly stimulated the Cheyenne economy and changed the whole culture of the town.

Mr. Pierson: In what way?

Mr. Krash: Well, in all ways. There were thousands of soldiers in the Cheyenne community, and many of the business owners became wealthy as a result of the soldiers shopping for their families and girlfriends. The war affected us in many different ways. First of all, people's cars were jacked up in the garage because there was gas rationing and you couldn't go anywhere. Gas rationing was very stringent and food rationing was also in place. There was a Japanese relocation center in Wyoming, which I knew nothing about at the time. The high school instituted an ROTC program which was run by a former army colonel, who was a very able and effective guy. My classmates and I were too young to go into the service. We were in our mid-teens. I would follow the war every day by being in the newspaper office and talking to other folks in the newspaper office and reading the papers. But, physically, the war was quite remote. We were not like cities on the east or west coasts. My wife told me that on Long Island, where she lived during the war, they had black outs and air raid drills and had to cover their windows at night. My father, particularly, followed it very intensely and wanted to listen to the news each and every day. He'd listen very carefully to find out what was going on in the war.

Mr. Pierson: Were there any Japanese or German citizens in the town?

Mr. Krash: I'm sure there were some persons of German descent. We had one or two Japanese students at the school. As far as I know, nobody in any way, treated them badly. There were various war time collections such as cans, aluminum foil, and things of that sort that I remember. There was no question that the war

impacted us and affected our ability to travel. Everybody had ration books.

There were very limited supplies of certain common items. But the war was still quite a distance away. Except that there were soldiers all around us at Fort Warren.

Mr. Pierson: Was the U.P. the only railroad?

Mr. Krash: I believe the Burlington went through Cheyenne also. The Union Pacific was the transcontinental railroad that went through Cheyenne, west through Rock Springs, Salt Lake City and to the Coast. There was a major Union Pacific railroad repair shop in Cheyenne. One of my friend's fathers worked for the railroad. The railroad was very much a part of the city. The other significant part was the state Capital, and I became friends with the son of the Governor. But you have to realize that Cheyenne was a small town. Cheyenne was a town of about 22 to 23 thousand people except for the influx of soldiers. But basically a small town.

Mr. Pierson: You knew many of the people of your age.

Mr. Krash: Oh yes, I knew many of the people of my age. Particularly, because I was the sports editor of the morning paper.

Mr. Pierson: Everybody wanted to know you.

Mr. Krash: They wanted to know me. Naturally, the athletes wanted to know me because I was writing about them almost every day, five days a week.

Mr. Pierson: Did any of those athletes go on to distinguish themselves later?

Mr. Krash: The University of Wyoming won the National Collegiate Basketball Championship in 1944. One of the players was Ken Sailors, who was from our high school. They were really nutty about basketball at the University of

Wyoming, and they had very good teams. My high school basketball team won the state championship for two years. The last two years I was in high school they were very excited about the state championship. I didn't play on any of the varsity teams. I wasn't good enough and I wasn't big enough to play. I was covering it.

Mr. Pierson: Was basketball your favorite sport?

Mr. Krash: Yes, it was. I also played touch football on weekends with friends. I would play softball; I use to play a little tennis, but I wasn't any good at it. Basically I was a sports writer; I was covering sports stories in my junior and senior years of high school. *Esquire* magazine decided to pick a player in each state to have an east-west baseball game in New York City and they picked one player from Wyoming.

Mr. Pierson: High school All Stars?

Mr. Krash: Yes. As a sports writer of Cheyenne, I was invited to come. I went to New York.

Mr. Pierson: What year are we in right now?

Mr. Krash: 1944. For me the excitement was going to New York. The big city for us was Denver. Denver was only 100 miles away, but far away at that time because of gas rationing. I remember going to Denver when the University of Wyoming played basketball and I broadcast the game. I went to Denver, for example, for a big regional debate championship event, which was at Denver East High School. But it was not a readily accessible place during the war years because of the gas rationing.

Mr. Pierson: So when you went to New York for this All Star game, were you there for a weekend?

Mr. Krash: No, it was for more than that. It was for about a week I would say.

Mr. Pierson: You took the train back?

Mr. Krash: I took the train back and forth. However, I did go on a plane once. My first plane trip was to the state oratory finals in Casper. I went there to speak. I won the state oratory championship there. I believe I flew home from there. That was the first time I flew. The war impacted us tremendously and really constricted us. We could barely get around.

Mr. Pierson: So when you went to New York and you were there for a week, did you happen to see the city and what was it like?

Mr. Krash: It was a shock. Denver was the largest city I had previously visited, and in the 1940's it was not a big city as it is now. I was stunned by the bustle and liveliness of New York.

Going back to the experience of being Jewish and growing up in a small town like Cheyenne, as I've said, I did not experience much discrimination. There were some very amusing incidents. My brother, when he was about 7 or 8 was given an Irish Setter puppy. A neighbor had an Irish Setter who had a litter and gave my brother a beautiful little puppy, which my brother brought home and displayed to my father. My father came from a background in Europe where dogs were associated with peasants, and no rabbi would have a dog in his house. He said you are not permitted to keep it. He said we could keep it two weeks and that's it. During the next two weeks, the dog got bigger and we became fond of it. To make a long story short, my father allowed us to keep

it. He, himself, became very fond of the dog. However, he did not wish to be seen with it by members of his congregation. He would walk the dog at night in the winter. During the wintertime in Cheyenne, it is bitterly cold. But he would walk the dog and the dog would sit with my father in his study when he was preparing his sermons. He became very fond of it.

Mr. Pierson: What was the dog's name?

Mr. Krash: We named the dog Flash. He was a beautiful Irish Setter. My mother was very fond of him also. There was a very funny episode involving the dog. There was a meeting in our home involving some dispute in the congregation. Some rabbis from Denver came to our home and joined the Trustees of my father's congregation in our living room. My father warned us in advance that the dog must be kept out of sight. So Flash was placed in the back bedroom. However, somehow he got out and immediately raced into the living room where all these people were present. Flash raced towards my father, who of course, pretended not to know him. He said it was some neighbor's kid's dog. We laughed about it later, but it was kind of embarrassing for him. The truth is that the Jews and our family were in many ways an alien group in the larger culture in Cheyenne. My father never really connected with that larger culture.

Mr. Pierson: But you did.

Mr. Krash: Yes, I did through my school. My father lived on the edge of the community in truth. Things like going fishing, horseback riding, I didn't do because, to my father, those things were strange or alien. My memories of my father were of him sitting studying.

Mr. Pierson: So you are out in the West in Wyoming and there is a lot of beautiful country around you. Did your sister and brother get out in the country?

Mr. Krash: No, they didn't. I repeat, it was for a variety reasons. Cheyenne is not a particularly interesting geographical part of the state. Laramie is a beautiful and interesting part of the state. The most interesting part of Wyoming, probably, is around Jackson Hole and Yellowstone. There were ranches all around Cheyenne. The kids from the ranches would come into town on school buses. I don't ever recall going to a ranch, though. I was friends with the children of ranchers and farmers, because there was only one high school and I got to know them. But I knew nothing about their lives, and I was never invited out there so I knew nothing about that. I grew up in a small western town, but I was part of the culture only in a very peripheral way. Years later, I worked with Judge Arnold, who grew up in Laramie, and who really reflected the western culture. He had this kind of openness, irreverence and antiauthoritarianism. He absorbed the western culture more than I did.

Mr. Pierson: What about your classmates in high school, did they have any aspirations to go to college?

Mr. Krash: Yes they did. Almost all of them went to college. Very few remained in Cheyenne, because there was basically nothing for them to do there following their graduation. One of my best friends, Peter Hanson, became an architect and then a professor at the University of Wyoming. He was a very close friend of mine. Another friend went to the University of Colorado, which was a very prized school to go to in my time. McCracken, the publisher of the newspaper, wanted me to go to the University of Wyoming, from which he was an alumnus. But, Karl Winchell, principal of my high school, said "Go east young

man". One of the main reasons I went East upon finishing high school was because of the influence of my mother's youngest brother. He was the star of the family; his name was Abraham Kaplan. He had gone to the University of Chicago in the late 1930s as a graduate student. He was taught by many distinguished professors at Chicago, including Bertrand Russell, who was there at the time. He later became Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at UCLA and, afterward, he was a professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. Abraham Kaplan was a distinguished teacher. He was named by *Time* magazine as one of ten best university teachers in the country. When I was a young man, he was already renowned in the family as being a brilliant guy. Since he had attended the University of Chicago, that was obviously the place to go. If someone said to me "have you considered going to Yale or Harvard, or Michigan," I would have responded that I knew nothing about those schools. My world was very limited and closed in. All I knew was that Karl Winchell said you should go to an eastern university, and the University of Chicago was fine. As I said, the war was still on, but one would not get drafted until one was 18 and I was only 17 when I graduated from high school in June of 1944. I did well in high school. I was considered to be among the best students. I received lots of honors from the school because I was editor of the student paper and a champion orator. At the end of June 1944, my father left the congregation in Cheyenne and become the rabbi in New Castle, Pennsylvania. I applied to the University of Chicago. Because of the war and my being a fellow from Wyoming -- I am sure there were very few applications from Wyoming-- it was not a big deal to get admitted.

Mr. Pierson: With a recommendation from Karl Winchell I'm sure.

Mr. Krash: Oh yes, I received all kinds of recommendations. Anyway I sailed into the

University of Chicago. It was very different from my children and grandchildren's experience of the admissions process. It was a different world.

Mr. Pierson: So when did you arrive in Chicago for the first time?

Mr. Krash: During the fall of 1944, after my family moved to New Castle, Pennsylvania, and I moved with them. I remember we took the train from Cheyenne to New Castle. My family rented an apartment there, and I was with them. In September, 1944, I went off to college at the University of Chicago without the slightest idea of what I was going to get into or what it was like.

Mr. Pierson: Had you been to Chicago before?

Mr. Krash: No I had not. I remember going with my mother to the train station in New Castle to go to Chicago. This was a kind of great adventure for me. I was off to Chicago.

Mr. Pierson: Any of your high school classmates there as well?

Mr. Krash: No.

Mr. Pierson: You did not know anyone at the University of Chicago?

Mr. Krash: I did not. Some of my father's family lived on the North Side, but I was on the South Side of Chicago in Hyde Park. They were way off on the North Side, so I really knew no one. I was 17 when I arrived at the University. This was the era of Robert Hutchins. He was president of the University. It was war time. The college at the U of C in those days began in the 11th grade and took many 11th graders as freshmen. I came as a high school graduate, which meant that I could complete the college in two years. They had placement examinations to determine where you should be slotted. I took the array of placement

examinations and was admitted as a conventional college freshman. I went to live in one of the residence halls. It was called Burton Judson Court. All over the campus the war was very much of a reality. There were various buildings in which armed guards were posted. You have to remember that a lot of the atomic research was going on at the University of Chicago. I'll tell you about it later. At any rate, the reality is that I knew nothing about what I was going to get into when I arrived. I didn't have the foggiest idea. All I knew was that I was going to college. But I didn't have any idea about what college or the University of Chicago was like.

Mr. Pierson: Did they have courses that you had to take?

Mr. Krash: Everything was mandatory. You had no electives at all for people like me. There was a program that was prescribed for students like me for their first two years in the college. I took the required courses in humanities, social science, biological science, and physical science. Then the second year you took advanced classes in these subjects. The second year I also took a course entitled Observation, Interpretation, and Integration. It was essentially an introduction to philosophy. The U of C was a great culture shock for me. It was a truly spectacular place. Nearly all my classes were small discussion groups. There were some supplemental lectures, but basically we were in small discussion groups. We did not have text books. We read only original books. They were the great books. You would read and come to class of 25 students and we would have a discussion. That is the way we were taught. There were no exams except at end of the year. It was called a comprehensive exam. Everything was prescribed. Everyone took the same courses regardless of

whether they were going to be a doctor, physicist, engineer, or whatever, we were all taking the same courses.

Mr. Pierson: Very much like the English system.

Mr. Krash: Yes, except probably not as demanding as the English system. The emphasis was on learning how to think. It wasn't to cram you with facts, but learning how to think. I'll give you an example. In this course called Observation and Integration, we read things written by Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Hobbes and various philosophers. I remember going to one class and the professor spent the entire hour just going over one short paragraph by Aristotle asking us to explain what was going on, and he would say, "Okay Mr. Kaplan, What is going on here?" What he was trying to get us to see was how Aristotle was making distinctions. We were learning how to read very carefully. That was one of the main things they were teaching, and also to think through an argument very carefully. The professors at the University of Chicago were really extraordinary. During my social science class the second year, the instructor came to class and introduced himself as David Riesman, who later became a famous professor of sociology at Harvard, a very distinguished person. Daniel Bell was another professor. We were required to take a physical science survey course, and one day I walked into a lecture of about a 100 students. The professor was Enrico Fermi, the famous physicist and winner of the Nobel Prize.

Mr. Pierson: Did you understand who he was?

Mr. Krash: I didn't have the foggiest idea who he was.

Mr. Pierson: Your second year?

Mr. Krash: This was my first year. I went to a biological science class and the

instructor was nice to me. She put me in a kind of honors section. The Professor was Ralph W. Gerard, who unbeknown to me, was a world famous neurophysiologist. I mean just a spectacular teacher and professor. Another professor was Frank Knight, who was a very famous professor of economics. He lectured to us. Many of the famous professors in the University, people holding chairs, taught in the college. That was a tradition at Chicago. There was an intense intellectual atmosphere, there is no doubt about that. For the first time, I was encountering students very superior to me. One of the students who lived in the dormitory with me was George Steiner, who later became a renowned literary critic. Another contemporary was James Watson, who together with Crick, discovered DNA.

Mr. Pierson: Francis Crick?

Mr. Krash: Yes. The two of them won the Nobel Prize.

Mr. Pierson: So you have an extremely high level of students and teachers. How did that strike you personally, did you feel out of your depth?

Mr. Krash: I didn't feel I was out of my depth, but I knew I had to work hard, and I came to realize that there were a lot of very bright guys around there who were better educated than I was. They came out of better high schools than I did, had a better preparatory education than I did, and they were more gifted than I was. But I rapidly made friends and I learned a lot from being around them during the bull sessions. They were really bright and interesting people.

Mr. Pierson: What was Enrico Fermi doing there?

Mr. Krash: He was a professor of physics engaged in atomic research. I'll tell you a story about that in a few minutes; my experience with that. A very amusing story.

Many of the courses were taught superbly. Certainly one of the greatest courses I had was called Observation, Interpretation and Integration. It was taught by a man by the name of Joseph Schwab. He was a renowned Socratic-type teacher. He was one of the best teachers I have ever encountered. Schwab was a legend of the University of Chicago. As I said, what he was really trying to do was to teach you to read with precision, how to think with care and logically, and how to structure an argument. The social science courses were eye opening to me. I was beginning to read about people I had never heard of. We were reading great books in the humanities and social sciences. I thought I had read a lot before coming to Chicago, but my eyes were being opened to the kind of things we were called upon to read and discuss.

Mr. Pierson: Did you have any Shakespeare?

Mr. Krash: I don't recall. I think maybe in the second year, we may have read one of the plays. I don't remember. We had a course in poetry where we really read poetry with great care. There was a professor who taught Humanities. His name was Elder Olson. He later became famous as a literary critic, and I treasure him as a great teacher. I remember we were in a class talking about Plato's Republic and somebody said they had found a logical fallacy. Olson replied, "Explain it to me." He said, "Let me tell you something; I have read the book 55 times and I never found a logical fallacy, and I don't think anybody in history has." It was a very challenging kind of atmosphere. It was intellectually exciting and we were caught up in it and I enjoyed it enormously.

Mr. Pierson: So when you get to the end of your first year, do you go back home?

Mr. Krash: I did go home to New Castle. But first, let me tell you something else that

happened during my first year in the College. Shortly after I got to Chicago, I went to work on the student newspaper. It was called *The Maroon*. I showed up at the newspaper office. I had a lot of experience compared to the other students showing up there. I had three to four years' experience with *The Eagle* newspaper in Cheyenne. It was wartime, and the older guys were gone. Anyway, the only people there were either very young or not eligible for the service for one reason or another. So I started to work for *The Maroon*. In mid-winter, the guy who was editor-in-chief of the paper announced that he had to leave the University. In any event, the post for that position became open. I was selected to become editor-in-chief of *The Maroon*, even though I was just a freshman. I repeat, the atmosphere was unusual; it was wartime. *The Maroon* was a weekly newspaper, and I immediately set out to reorganize it. I put a lot of time and energy into doing that. It was challenging and exciting to me.

Mr. Pierson: Did you have a Faculty Advisor?

Mr. Krash: No, there was no Faculty Advisor. There was a University Director of Public Relations, who was kind of a mentor. And, I'll tell you a story involving him. He told me when I became editor that there were a few things we must not mention in *The Maroon*, especially anything going on in several of the University buildings. He didn't tell me what was going on in those buildings, and I didn't ask. We really had no faculty advisor. The paper was very independent. I had a very close friendship with a fellow who was the business manager of the paper. His name was Alan Strauss. He and I became very good lifetime friends. There were a number of other people that I became good friends with. I tried to change the format of the paper and expand its coverage,

but there were various limitations due to the war. Nevertheless, it was exciting.

Mr. Pierson: Limitations on newsprint?

Mr. Krash: Well, it was eight pages. We published every Friday. But what I was thinking of had to do with the content. Earlier I mentioned that I had a class with Enrico Fermi. What happened was this. It became kind of a famous incident. I asked one of the reporters on the paper to write a story about one of the professors. We were writing a faculty profile each week. So I asked her to write a profile about Arthur Holly Compton, who was the Chairman of the Division Physical Sciences. That is what I knew him as. Unbeknown to me, he was also the Chairman of the Manhattan Project in Chicago, but I didn't know that. I said to the reporter, "Let's do an article on Arthur Holly Compton." She went over to the University's Public Relations office and looked through the files and wrote this article. The paper came out on Friday, and we had an editors' conference at *The Maroon* offices on Saturday morning. I went there after breakfast on Saturday morning, anticipating a meeting with my fellow editors to plan for the next week's issue. While I was there, I got a phone call and the person at the other end of the phone said "I am Major so-and-so with G2, military intelligence, and I would like to come and talk to you." I thought it was a gag by one of the fellows in the dormitory, teasing me about something. I said, "Oh, sure" and hung up. To my great surprise, about a half hour later, two guys with trench coats showed up at *The Maroon* office. One of them took out of his pocket an ID showing that he was, indeed, a major in the Army. He introduced his colleague, who was a Lieutenant. He said they wanted to talk to me. So we went into my very tiny office. The Major said, "We need to talk to you because *The Maroon* has just committed a serious breach of the security regulations." I

had never heard of security regulations. He said he was concerned about what had happened not recurring. I stressed that I did not understand what he was talking about, and that it would be difficult to prevent a recurrence if we didn't know what we had done. He told me he had arranged for me to talk to the Dean of Students, whose name was Lawrence Kimpton. I had seen a lot of Kimpton in my capacity as editor of *The Maroon*. The Army representative said he wanted me to talk to Kimpton on Monday. In the midst of this, while we're talking, the circulation manager poked his head into the door. He said, you'll be pleased to know that the paper was sold out yesterday. You didn't pay anything for *The Maroon*. It was placed in piles at various places throughout the University where there was a lounge or cafeteria or other gathering place. In others words, it was circulated all over. I remember the major cleared his throat and said, "Well, I have to tell you that we, that is the Army, went around the campus last night and picked up every single copy of *The Maroon* that we could find and we also went to the printer and destroyed the plates." The major went on to say, "We want you to talk to Kimpton on Monday."

On Monday morning, I went to Kimpton's office to see him. I remember it was late April, a bright, sunny day in 1945. The war in Germany was coming to an end. I was sitting in Kimpton's office. He had a copy of the Friday *Maroon* on his desk. He said, "You gave some of us here in the University administration an anxious weekend." I said, "You know these Army fellows came to see me, and I don't have the vaguest idea what this is all about." He said, "Well, we have decided we have to tell you something because we don't want to shut down *The Maroon*, but we don't want you to publish anything further that could cause problems." He then pointed to *The Maroon* story about Arthur Compton. The story stated that Compton was working on breaking the atom.

Kimpton said, "The reason the military authorities are concerned is because there is a great project related to the war going on at the University involving the development of a weapon that will revolutionize warfare and Compton has been working on that." He told me this exactly. He said the Army people were worried that by disclosing this information about Compton, we would have divulged to the enemy a major secret about what is going on here at the University. He said "We are working here on a great new weapon." However, he didn't call it an atomic bomb.

Mr. Pierson: He may as well have said an atomic bomb.

Mr. Krash: But he didn't say that. He said they are working on a great new weapon that was revolutionary in nature. Actually, Kimpton was an executive on the Manhattan Project at Chicago, and I didn't know that either. He didn't tell me that either. All he said was that the intelligence people were concerned that enemy agents would be alerted to the fact that Compton was engaged in research relating to breaking the atom. The whole thing was ridiculous. In the first place, nearly every physicist in the world at that time was probably working on breaking the atom, whatever that means. Secondly, there was a big dining hall at the University, Mandel Hall. If anybody went there for breakfast or lunch, you would see Fermi, Leo Szilard, and some of the most famous physicists in the world having coffee or having lunch there. They weren't hiding out of sight. They were present there. You didn't know what they were doing but you would see some of the most famous physicists in the world having breakfast or lunch. Obviously, they were not at the University engaged in research about Shakespeare. In addition, there was a military guard marching in front of some University buildings. The notion that we could be

tipping off enemy agents was ludicrous. In any event, the intelligence guys were tremendously exercised about this. How they found out about the story in *The Maroon*, I never knew. Kimpton told me we should not publish anything further about Compton's activities. He told me not to discuss our conversation with anyone. But after I left his office, I did talk to the newspaper's business manager, my friend Alan Strauss, who was a major in chemistry. I asked him if he knew what Kimpton was talking about. Strauss said he didn't have the faintest idea what Kimpton was talking about. We didn't have any idea what Kimpton meant by a revolutionary weapon. It didn't sink in on us.

A week or two later, following this episode, Arthur Holly Compton was named the President of Washington University in St. Louis. That was a big story for *The Maroon*. He was the Chairman of our Physical Sciences Division. Obviously, that was a front page story for us. In the middle of the week, I received a call from the Major. He said, "We assume you are going to be writing a story about Compton becoming the President of Washington University. I said, "Of course, that's a big story for *The Maroon*." He said, "Well, we would like to come and review it." Here I am 18 years old, editor of the student paper, and I drew myself up and said, "Well, in that case, I would have to put a slug line on the story "Passed by military censor." The Major said, slowly but clearly, "I don't think that would be advisable." Suddenly, it dawned on me that I was in a position where my newspaper could be shut down. It took me 30 seconds to realize that. So, I said to him, "You can come and review the article." And he did. He came in an hour or so and read the proposed article. He didn't change a word in the story. We were very careful not to say anything about Compton's research relating to breaking the atom or

anything like that. The Major and I shook hands, and he left. I never saw or heard anything more from him, and we ran the story in the Friday edition of *The Maroon*.

Several years later, there was a series of articles in *The New Yorker* magazine, discussing breaches of security that occurred concerning the Manhattan Project. In the article, there was a paragraph that said the student editors of *The Maroon* at the University of Chicago, in a burst of schoolboy enthusiasm, had divulged information about Arthur Holly Compton and atomic research, which had created a great stir in the Chicago Office of Military Intelligence.

Mr. Pierson: So this was not just a small incident on the campus at the University of Chicago.

Mr. Krash: No, No. So here I was, in the spring of 1945, in possession of one of the greatest scoops of the 20th century, the development of the atomic bomb. I had it in my hand. Of course, I didn't know it, but I was on the edge of divulging it in this article. It was really, of course, not divulged. The spring term ended, and I went home in June. In July the bomb was dropped on Japan, on Hiroshima, for the first time. I then realized what Kimpton had told me.

Mr. Pierson: This is what, two-three months later?

Mr. Krash: We published the article in April 1945, so yes, two-three months later. But it was only in August 1945 that I realized what had gone on at the University of Chicago. Fermi and his colleagues had produced the first chain reaction in Chicago. A lot of the great, basic research on the atomic weapon was done at the University of Chicago. Fermi was a scientific genius and one of the great figures in physics in the 20th century, and one of the foremost figures in the

field of atomic energy. But it was only in August, after Hiroshima and after Nagasaki, that I realized and appreciated what Kimpton had said to me. I remember talking to Alan Strauss later, and neither one of us realized at first what it was all about. At any rate, I went home in June at the end of the school year, and I was called up for the draft. I was turned down. The war in Europe had ended. I had bad feet and weak eyes. The whole thing was changing. The war in Germany had ended several months earlier and the war in Japan ended a few weeks after I was called. So I went back to the University of Chicago in the fall of 1945. I remained the editor of *The Maroon* through the fall semester of 1945. One of my successors as editor was David Brody, who later became famous as a columnist for *The Washington Post* and other papers.

Mr. Pierson: Did you and Brody in later years become good friends?

Mr. Krash: Not close friends, but acquaintances. He died a year or two ago. He was a very fine person. He was exceptionally able.

Mr. Pierson: One of my favorites.

Mr. Krash: He was a terrific columnist and a first-rate guy. At any rate, I went back to the University of Chicago for my second year in September, 1945, and around December, I began to realize that I was pouring so much of my time into *The Maroon* that I wasn't doing what I had come to Chicago to do, which was to get the benefit of an education. *The Maroon* just took up enormous amounts of my time.

Mr. Pierson: Did you think of what you were going to do at this point when you left college.

Mr. Krash: Well, I was thinking I wanted to be a newspaper man and by this time

something else had happened. The University of Chicago had dropped out of the Big Ten. The University of Chicago was once a famous member of the Big Ten, with the celebrated Alonzo Stagg. But the University of Chicago refused to admit students who couldn't qualify as regular students. There were no athletic scholarships and no exceptions, no affirmative action for athletes, or anything like that. In other words, you couldn't get into the U of C because you were a good basketball player or a good football player. So Chicago couldn't recruit most athletes. They were just hopeless in competing against teams like the University of Michigan, for example. It was impossible for Chicago to compete against those guys. There is a famous story that the University of Chicago played football against Michigan in 1938 or 1939. I think the score was 72-0. The story goes that Hutchins came into the locker room after the game and said, "I will make sure this never happens again." He then convinced The Board of Trustees that the University of Chicago should withdraw from the Big Ten. A few years later The University of Chicago did play football and basketball games with teams of their equal. The U of C continued to play basketball against small colleges when I was a freshman and sophomore. I made arrangements with *The Chicago Tribune* to cover those games. The Chicago games only got an inch or so of the space compared with Northwestern or the University of Illinois basketball games, which got major coverage. *The Tribune* would send out a wire operator to sit next to me because they did want The University of Chicago games covered. That's the way they operated. I was able to go to college financed partly by a scholarship. Secondly, I waited on tables in the Burton Judson dining room, and I taught at a Sunday school at a nearby synagogue on Sunday mornings. I also made a little money that way. I made a little money by being a sports reporter,

covering games, which was very little because University of Chicago basketball was not a major subject of interest to *The Chicago Tribune* to say the least. But they wanted it covered. So I did so. I was thinking all the time, because of my experience in Cheyenne as a sports writer, and my experience as an editor of *The Maroon*, and my whole outlook or vision of myself, that I would become a newspaper person. That is what I was thinking I would do. Really, I wanted to become a political columnist, that is what I thought I would do when I got out of college.

Mr. Pierson: Were there any political columnists around at the time.

Mr. Krash: There was Walter Lippmann. But I knew very little about him. I would read some of the columnists in *The New York Times* and became familiar with them a little bit. In any event, I thought I wanted to be a political journalist after I left school. I had no idea of being a lawyer. I didn't have the foggiest idea about being a lawyer. There were no lawyers in my family. That wasn't in my realm of thinking. My thinking was to be a newspaper person.

The second year of college, like the first year, was intellectually very stimulating. It was eye-opening. That is when I had David Riesman and Elder Olson and Joseph Schwab as teachers, and it was really a great awakening for a person like me coming out of Cheyenne. It really transformed me. I made many good friends and met some exceptionally gifted people. Because I was the editor of *The Maroon*, I was known at the University, and I got to know a lot of people at the University. For example, I would go and meet with Hutchins, whom I count as one of the most remarkable people I have ever met. He was a brilliant, charismatic person. I would see him from time to time, and he was extremely cordial and nice to me. I got to know Kimpton, who was the

Dean of Students. Kimpton later became President of the University of Chicago. He succeeded Hutchins. I got to know a number of my fellow students in the residence halls; many of them were very gifted people.

At the end of the second year in the college, when I was graduating from the College, I had to decide what to do, and I was still thinking I wanted to have a newspaper career. Hutchins had been a professor at The Yale Law School and the Dean of The Yale Law School before he became President of the University of Chicago. In various talks, he said that a good place to get a liberal education was in law school. I was pondering whether to go into the Division of Humanities or the Division of Social Sciences and studying political science, or history, or, alternatively, going to law school. I was influenced by Hutchins saying that law school is a good place to get a liberal education. He stressed that point. However, I knew nothing whatever about The University of Chicago Law School or being a lawyer. In order to get into the University of Chicago Law School at that time, you would be admitted if you were a reasonably good student in the College, which I was, and if a couple of professors in the College gave you a letter saying they knew you and they thought you would do okay in law school. I remember on a cold winter day, running into Professor David Riesman in the Quadrangle. Riesman, unbeknown to me, had been the editor-in-chief of *The Harvard Law Review* and, subsequently, a law clerk to Justice Louis Brandeis. I didn't know that. I knew him as a professor of Social Science. He had not yet written his famous book, *The Lonely Crowd*. I asked Riesman to give me a reference letter to the Law School, and I remember standing there in the cold hearing him say, "Oh you don't want to go to law school." And I said, "Yes, but I do." And he said, "You should do something else." I said, "I do

want to go to law school." He reluctantly gave me a two-sentence reference letter. I don't know what he said. That was one of the two letters I had to get into law school. I don't remember who the other letter was from. I didn't have to take any kind of test to get into law school at that time. It was very different from the situation that now prevails.

Mr. Pierson: So now, you've got four years of high school and two years of college and you are going to the University of Chicago Law School.

Mr. Krash: It is now the spring of 1946. I graduated from the College with a Ph.B. degree. I was 19 years old. If you went to the University of Chicago Law School as a student coming out of the College at the U of C, as opposed to a graduate from a conventional four-year college, you were required to go to the Law School for four years. A graduate from The University of Michigan or Illinois, for example, was required to attend only three years of law school at Chicago. In other words, they tacked on another year of law school for U of C College graduates, where you took economics and other courses. So in the fall of 1946, when I was 19 years old, I entered the University of Chicago Law School. The Law School building was part of the Quadrangles. It was at the center of the campus. I knew nothing about being a lawyer or what a law school education was all about. I was totally ignorant.

Mr. Pierson: We have now been at this for an hour and a half.

Mr. Krash: What do you want to do? Do you want to stop?

Mr. Pierson: I think this is a good threshold because when we come back, I would like you to reflect on the same subjects we've covered as you cross the threshold of law school. What are you thinking?

Mr. Krash: I am now 19 years old and I have a degree from the college. But the truth is,

my education is very limited. Let's not kid anybody here. I am very immature. This is the fall of 1946, and the veterans who were in the war are now streaming back and entering the Law School. They are four or five years older than I am, and they have been to war. Many are married. They are really eager to get on with it, and they are far more mature and better educated than I am and, certainly, substantially more experienced. I was really wet behind the ears. There is no doubt that I did have the advantage of the very superior education at the University of Chicago College. That was the high point of my education. That is when I started to understand what being educated was like. They really exposed me to many great books and to ideas. They taught me how to think carefully.

Mr. Pierson: Analytical thinking.

Mr. Krash: Very much so. To think with precision and to read with care. And to be able to present an argument. It was really a superior education, no doubt about it. I would say in retrospect, however, to finish up here, that I feel, looking back at it, that there were some deficiencies in my college education. It did have some deficiencies. It was deficient in that I should have had much more math and science. One needs to know math because it is the language of science. My grandchildren learned calculus and beyond in high school. I didn't have enough science either. Also learning a foreign language is important. I just didn't really appreciate those deficiencies because my interest was in the humanities and social sciences. And I think I should have studied more history, which, up to then, I had gotten only from reading on my own in high school. My education was deficient in those respects. It wasn't the fault of the College. It was my fault, although I think they could have been more demanding. Nevertheless, it

as a rigorous liberal education. It was excellent.

Mr. Pierson: It seems to have served you well.

Mr. Krash: It did. I am greatly indebted to the College. The curriculum was excellent. The faculty was superb. We were not just sitting in big lecture halls. We had small classrooms with professors saying, "What do you think about this?" Asking other students, what do you think about Mr. Krash's answer and to have me respond. You were taught to speak and write with decision and care and to read with care. We read significant books. We didn't have a classical education in the English sense, with Greek and Latin, but we had a liberal education.

Mr. Pierson: And you talked about face to face encounters, analysis and decisions. You talked about reading and writing.

Mr. Krash: Fortunately I came to the College with a lot of writing experience. I was the editor of the high school newspaper and I wrote in the Cheyenne daily paper as a sports writer. I wrote six to ten articles each day for *The Eagle*. There were people there to point out things. By the time I was out of high school, I had written a lot, considerably more than the average high school student by virtue of this experience. But the college did not have us do enough writing.

Mr. Pierson: Did you do writing anywhere other than the comprehensive exam?

Mr. Krash: There were very few papers we had to do. That was a weakness of the College. However, that was later corrected in Law School by my working at *The Law Review*. I had an edge going in because of my prior writing experience in Cheyenne and as the editor of *The Maroon*. Being a sports writer is scarcely being Hemingway, but I became somewhat aware of what writing was all about

because of that experience. I learned much more when I was in law school. I give very high marks to the U of C College. It left me with a lifetime conviction that a liberal education is greatly to be desired. It is extremely valuable. It opened my eyes to ideas. It was the beginning of my education. Some of my fellow students did not like it because it was kind of impersonal. I loved it, however, and enjoyed it immensely.

