

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAYMOND BEARDSLEY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Raymond Beardsley in Middlesex, New Jersey, on November 12, 2008, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Daniel Ruggiero: ... Dan Ruggiero ...

Samir Ray: ... Samir Ray ...

SI: ... Also in attendance is ...

Mike Petrozziello: ... Mike Petrozziello.

SI: Mr. Beardsley, thank you very much for having us here today.

Raymond Beardsley: You're welcome.

SI: Mr. Petrozziello, thank you very much for your role in helping set this interview up; also, thank you to Mrs. Beardsley for your wonderful hospitality.

DR: I guess we will start with your family history. Could you tell us a little bit about your parents, where they were from and when they were born?

RB: Well, ... [I] don't know much about when they were born. I know that they were both from Illinois, and then, they moved out to Colorado, Denver. That's where I was born, and they were both Pentecostal ministers and I was practically raised in a church. That's about it, [laughter] means that they were both ministers and they used to put me on the pew and I'd go to sleep while they had their services, when I was little and whatnot. ... I mean, that's the way I was brought up, and I finally went to school, got through school.

SI: What were your parents' names?

RB: Frank Albert was my father and June Susan was my mother. ... June Susan (Raber?) was her maiden name. ...

SI: Do you know if they met doing their work in the church or if they met while they were in the seminary?

RB: ... Just how they met, I don't really know. I don't even recall them even mentioning it. They probably met while in church, but they were both, ... like I say, from Illinois and had met out there before, long before, my time.

SI: You also wrote down that your father worked for the railroad.

RB: Yes, he worked for the Union Pacific Railroad.

SI: Before he became a minister.

RB: Yes. Well, he didn't do much preaching. He was a preacher to a degree, but he did mostly Bible teaching. My mother was the preacher. She's the one that got in the pulpit and did all the yelling and screaming and my father was ... a Bible teacher. ... There wasn't a question in the Bible that he couldn't answer for you, and don't ask me any of them; I don't know. [laughter]

DR: Did you have any siblings?

RB: Well, like I say, my brother, and that was the only sibling I had. Of course, I had kids.

DR: Did you have any cousins or extended family?

RB: Yes, I had [some] on her [my mother's] side. I met one cousin on my father's side when I went to my grandfather's funeral. That was the only time I ever met any part of his family, ... never close or anything, but they did have a son that was about my age, and with the same name as me, which was very odd, but I met him once and that was it. That was the end of it. I had never met them again. I did a lot of associating with my mother's group of family, and so forth, but, other than that, there wasn't much, cousins, whatnot.

SI: Did your family settle in Denver only because of the church work or was there family out there?

RB: ... They didn't have any family there. They settled there, and then, got [work] through the church, and then, we were born and went to school there and I just grew up there. That was it.

SI: When were you born?

RB: January 14, 1925.

SI: Is your brother older or younger?

RB: He's older, three years older. ...

DR: You said you went to school in Denver.

RB: I went to school in Denver, yes.

DR: Did you enjoy going to school?

RB: I guess you enjoyed it. I went to grade school there, and then, junior high school, up into high school. I didn't finish high school. I went in the service. I quit high school and went in the service in '41, enlisted, and spent the biggest part of my time in the service after that. I got out for awhile, worked on the railroad, and then, I drove a truck for awhile. I drove a truck for quite awhile after the railroad. The railroads kind of went down and I didn't really care for that, and I started driving and I had my own truck, and then, I had my own warehouse. From there on, I finally got rid of it all and retired and this is where I'm at. [laughter]

SI: What section of Denver did you grow up in?

RB: What section?

SI: Or neighborhood?

RB: East Denver, I guess you could call it, eastern part of Denver, central part, not the richest part and not the poorest part, but in the middle. My parents were middle-class.

SI: What was the neighborhood like? Were there a lot of people in the neighborhood?

RB: Yes. It was just a regular city neighborhood. Denver is a big city and it was a regular city, regular high school. We had five high schools in Denver, so, it's a big town. Like I said, it was North, South, East and West High Schools, Manual High School, and Manual was the poorest and that's the one I went to. I say the poorest; it was the biggest mixed crowd.

SI: What do you mean by mixed crowd?

RB: Well, mixed nationalities and what[not]. The rest of them had a mix, but most of them were the richer people, and then, the others, you had, like, the North High School was mostly Italians, you know what I mean? It was [that] the majorities was a certain group. Other than that, it was [mixed], whereas Manual, the one I went to, was a mixture of everybody that could afford it.

SI: Your neighborhood, was that the same way, a mix of nationalities?

RB: Yes, more or less, yes.

SI: How did all the groups get along?

RB: Oh, we all got along well. Kids shoveled snow for everybody for a quarter and helped out the poor people, whatever you could do.

SI: What do you mean, "helped out the poor people?"

RB: Well, like I say, we had a few people, widows and whatnot, that were elderly. We'd shovel snow for them and stuff like that, you know, try to help them out in their yard, mowed their lawns and stuff like that. It was just something you did for your neighbors when they were that way.

SI: Did you have any part-time jobs as a young man?

RB: Yes. Like I say, I worked on the railroad for awhile, and then, I was a salesman, and I drove the truck.

SI: When you were of high school age?

RB: High school? Well, I did deliver papers and, like I say, shoveled sidewalks and did stuff like that. I never had a regular job until after high school, when I went to work in the warehouse.

DR: Did you have any hobbies or things you did for fun when you were growing up?

RB: Not really much of a hobby, I would say. I never could afford anything like that at the time. I'm trying to think of things I did. It's a long time ago and my memory's shot. ...

SI: Did you play sports?

RB: I did. I played Little League baseball. I played football and sports. I played, in high school, football; can't think of anything else. I didn't play baseball in high school. I played, like I say, Little League, and then, later on, I managed a couple of Little League teams, stuff like that, but that's about all I can think of, like I say, nothing outrageous and nothing out[standing]. I never won any big medals or anything.

SI: Were there any organized things, like Boy Scouts?

RB: Yes, we had Boy Scouts. I'd never even thought of that; always had Boy Scouts. I was a Boy Scout, ... then, I was a Boy Scoutmaster for quite awhile, and was also in Sea Scouts.

SI: They had Sea Scouts in Denver.

RB: Yes.

SI: Wow.

RB: Yes, we had Sea Scouts. We used to have to go away for the two weeks to get our boating in, ... outside of, you know, rowboats and whatnot, but ... we got through it.

SI: Where would you go with the Sea Scouts? Was it a local lake?

RB: Usually a lake. We never got to, couldn't afford to go to, the coast too often, but there was a couple big lakes around that we used to do boating [on] and whatnot, learn all about the boats and stuff like that, yes.

DR: Did you enjoy the Sea Scouts?

RB: Oh, yes, yes. I always enjoyed it. That's why, once I had the chance, I was in the Navy and went to sea. I was in the Navy one week when I requested sea duty. ... Well, actually, I started out in the Coast Guard, World War II. I started out Coast Guard and ... they'd sent me to signal school, put me in a signal tower on the Columbia River, where we challenged all ships coming in and out of the river and going along and everything. ... Then, I requested sea duty and they put me aboard ship and, from then on, I was aboard ship in the Coast Guard, and then, afterwards, [after] World War II, I joined the Navy and I went aboard ship right away. Actually, ... I

enlisted in the Navy, they declared World War II the one day, I was down at the recruiting office the second, and, third day, I was aboard the [USS] *Leyte* [(CV-32)]. [Editor's Note: Mr. Beardsley was referring to his enlistment at the start of the Korean War, not World War II, in the last sentence.]

DR: That was right after Pearl Harbor that you enlisted.

RB: Yes.

SI: You were about seventeen at that time.

RB: Just seventeen. I had to get my mother's permission. [laughter]

DR: Did your parents have any problems with you enlisting?

RB: They didn't particularly appreciate the fact that I wanted to, but I was so determined, I told them I was going regardless, and so, they finally gave permission. I was quite a determined fellow at that time.

DR: Did you keep track of events that were going on around the world, like in Europe, the rise of Hitler and Mussolini?

RB: Actually, well, with the time in the Coast Guard, ... so, actually, the Coast Guard became [the] Navy, you know, and then, I got put aboard the KA. [Editor's Note: In times of war, the US Coast Guard becomes a service of the US Navy.] That was Coast Guard-manned and, of course, you know what a KA is. It's a cargo attack ship, and I was aboard her for; I forget. I'd have to look up the dates, but most of the rest of ... World War II, and then, I got out and stayed in the Reserve and did a little time on a "tin can" [destroyer] and whatnot. ... Then, when the other war broke out, why, ... I went right down and went aboard the *Leyte*, did the rest of my time on the *Leyte*.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor, did you know about what was happening overseas? Did people talk about whether America should get in the war?

RB: Well, you always had people talking about this type of thing and you had your own opinion about it, and so forth. I don't think we really wanted a war, but, if they attacked us, we was going to fight. That's about the way it was.

SI: What was your opinion at the time, not to get involved or to get involved?

RB: Well, I would get involved if the country needed me, yes. That's the way I felt. I wasn't drafted or anything; I enlisted.

SI: Before the war was a possibility did you have an idea of what you wanted to do with your life?

RB: Not really. I kept playing around with different things and, you know, ... like I say, I worked on the railroad with my father for awhile. I didn't like that, and then, I fooled around with the trucking. ... Most of my life was with trucks, driving, and then, owning them, and then, I had the warehouse. That kept me busy until I retired.

SI: Before we get into World War II, can you tell us if you remember anything about the Great Depression's impact on Denver?

RB: About the only thing I can remember [of] that time was, I had to go to school without breakfast at home and the schools furnished some breakfast, and we had to have roomers come in to supply a little money, so that my mother had to feed the roomers, and we would go without. ... I mean, things were rough at that time, but, outside of that, I can't remember much of going to school. You got up, you went to school, hoped you had enough clothes to wear. It was cold there in the wintertime and [you] hoped you had enough clothing to keep warm.

SI: You would have to cut back on how much heat you used.

RB: Oh, yes, always had to do that. Yes, ... we had coal heat for awhile. You had to throw coal in and keep that up, [with] wood and coal and stuff, and then, we finally got gas. You know, it all worked up to a time. Of course, I was little when all that started, and then, my brother, my older brother, he got disgusted early in life and went into the CCs [Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)], and then, he come out. He went his way and I went mine.

SI: Was there a lot of CCC or WPA [Works Progress Administration] activity in the area?

RB: Yes, there was a lot of that. Neither one of us got too much. He was in the CCs and we never got too much involved with it, because we had our other things to do. I'm recalling just exactly what all we did do. I don't recall, but didn't pay that much attention to thinking about it. [laughter]

SI: Do you remember homeless people coming through, asking for meals, looking for work?

RB: Always had that. People would come up to the door, want to know if they could do something to earn a meal. ... Of course, my mother was quite religious and hated to turn anybody down. She would do her best to see if she could find something or feed him if she didn't have nothing for him to do. She'd give him a meal, whatever happened. ...

SI: Did the church run a pantry or a soup line, anything like that?

RB: They did, at some times. Like I say, I was in and out all the time, but they did have their dinners for the poor and whatnot, that type of thing, and my mother was quite involved in that.

SI: Did they have you do any work around the church?

RB: Well, no, because, ... when I had to go to the church all the time, I was too little to do much work around there, and then, when I was big enough to go, I went, and so, I didn't do much work

or anything like that around the church. ... I was just involved with it because my parents were so heavily involved, until I left and went in the service, and then, after that, why, I wasn't involved at all in the church. ... I wasn't involved in any church much until I married her. Well, I shouldn't say that, until I married my first wife, and she was involved a little bit. I got involved, but I never was a great big churchgoer, even though my parents were ministers. I had to listen to them too much. [laughter]

DR: You got enough of that at home.

RB: Yes.

Antonette Petrozziello: Of course, he slept in the church.

RB: [laughter] Yes, when I was little, they put me on a pew and they had church while I slept in it.

SI: Pearl Harbor was a real turning point in your life.

RB: Actually, yes, it was, and I started to live then, because I went in the service and I was in the war, and I was lucky. I never got wounded or anything, I was never in any ... real battles, because I was in a few skirmishes when I was aboard ship, but I was never in any hand-to-hand battles or anything like that, in the time. ... Then, of course, aboard ship, we were always in convoy. ... Like I say, I was on the KA, so, it was always equipment we had to unload and we had the people standing by us with guns to make sure that we got the stuff they (cooked?) unloaded and all. To me, it was just a way of life, what we had to do at the time.

SI: Do you remember anything more about the day of Pearl Harbor, how you heard the news or how people reacted in town?

RB: I don't recall too much about it. ... I can't even remember what I was doing. I remember my mother and I arguing, because I was going to go enlist, but, finally, I just went. Like I say, when I first enlisted, I had to get her signature and that was a fight. ... Finally, I told her I was going to go one way or the other, so, she figured she'd just as well let me go. I mean, she just [thought], you know, of course, with her religion and whatnot, war was just an awful thing. To me, it was something I had to do.

DR: Do you remember other people your age going to enlist?

RB: Yes, there was like a group of us [that] went in together. I finally relinquished to her [my mother] and went into the Coast Guard to begin with, but not knowing that, her not knowing that, I could sign up for sea duty as soon as I went in. Of course, I didn't get sea duty right away, but, after a year or so, I got the sea duty, which I craved, and I went and, luckily, got through it all.

DR: Do you remember anything about your training after you enlisted? Did they send you somewhere far away?

RB: Well, yes, I went to Port Townsend, Washington, out of Denver, for boot camp, but, at that time, the war had started and the boot camp was only six weeks, wasn't like how it is today, where you have, what? six months in boot camp or something. We were six weeks in boot camp and they shipped us out.

DR: Did your Scout training help you with that?

RB: It did, a little bit, yes, you might say, give you a little respect for authority, and so forth.

SI: What about the other men in your training unit? Did everybody else get on the way you did?

RB: Well, no, there was always somebody that was always roughhousing or trying to disrupt things and whatnot, and you'd just battle them the best you could. You know, you didn't get excited about it; I didn't. ... I don't even remember too much about it, because it wasn't that exciting.

DR: Was there a variety of people from all over the country there?

RB: All over, all nationalities, everything, ... you slept with and whoever was there, you didn't worry about what nationality they was or what color they was. You associated with them whatever they were, and liked it. [laughter]

SI: Were the drill instructors tough?

RB: ... At that time, not really tough. They wanted to get through it, too, you know, and wanted to get you out. ... Of course, if you would slack, why, they was hard on you, a little bit, but, if you did what you were supposed to do and tried, why, they went along with you. ... The ones I had wasn't that bad. I mean, at the time, I might have thought they was pretty rotten. [laughter] Later on, why, you realized that they were just doing their job.

SI: Let us take a quick break.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: I will start the tape again.

RB: Yes, all right.

SI: It was six weeks of boot camp.

RB: Yes, it was six weeks, yes. That's about all that we had there.

SI: That was in Washington State.

RB: Yes.

SI: What was it like to travel during the war? Had you been outside of the Denver area much before then?

RB: Yes, I traveled quite a bit. ... My father, like I say, worked on the railroad and he'd got passes and we used to go visit relatives in Illinois and travel to places like that, to visit other relatives. Most of my father's and mother's relatives lived in different parts of Illinois. So, we would take the summers, when I was out of school, and we would go almost every summer to there, or Christmas vacations, ... we traveled someplace and went somewhere, and then, of course, when I got on my own, ... every chance I got, I went. [laughter]

AP: And still going.

DR: You enjoy traveling.

RB: Oh, yes. ... We just come back off of a little trip. If I could make it, I'd go, come back and go again, but I can't afford that. [laughter]

SI: After your basic training cycle, you were telling us, during the break, that they made you an instructor.

RB: Well, not right away, not right away, no. ... Right after that, I went, they put me in the (surf?) station, and then, I went ... in a signal tower and I spent time there on the Columbia River in the signal tower, and then, after a couple of years, why, then, I went in as an instructor. ... Actually, what it was was, ... they assigned these young heads to these stations and you had to teach them what had to be done around in your particular area, and I became that type of an instructor, because I had done it all.

SI: When you were doing this watchtower work on the Columbia River, can you describe what a typical day was like? What would you do?

RB: Well, you were in the tower, it was actually a lighthouse, and you ... had your area in there and, every ship, you had your signal, you had a flashing light. You couldn't use radio at the time, because it was blacked out, so, you had to use the signal lights. So, that's what I did. We used the lights to challenge all the ships that went by, and we had some fighting ships stationed right there, that we had a direct call service to them, that if we found something that we thought was wrong, they'd be out there in a minute, plus the Air Force. ...

DR: Did you ever find any suspicious ships?

RB: We had a couple that we thought were a little bit suspicious. We never did find [out what happened]. They did go out after them, [but] we never got the answers of what happened, you know. They never broadcast any of this. They went out, they did their job, what they had to do, whatever happened there. We did our job by notifying them and that was it. We never did find out what [came of it], whether they were really bad or what. We just did what we had to do, if they didn't give the right signal or what they should have done, which was changed every day,

and we had to make sure it was right ... when it went by. ... We just notified the other groups and they took over and did their job.

SI: How concerned were the men that you served with in the military, but, also, the civilian population, if you had any contact with them, about the possibility of a Japanese attack or an invasion?

RB: Well, everybody kind of worried about that, for a long time, right after they first started and whatnot. You always wondered, and then, when we first started going into it and fighting back, and then, when ... they started coming in, why, you always worried about sabotage and stuff like that. You had to watch close for it, but we never ran into an awful lot of it. You always run into a little of it, somewhere, here and there, but nothing that really caused any real major troubles. We caught it in time. ...

SI: How many men were in this unit?

RB: Well, the first station I was in, there was only ... three officers and fifteen men, I think it was, the first time, and then, ... I went to a couple smaller units, then, went to bigger units, depending on what was necessary; can't remember all the little details and all. I try not to remember a lot of them. [laughter]

SI: What did you think of your officers?

RB: We never, I never, had any real problems with them. A couple of them were smartasses, but, you know, you always find a couple of guys like that, but you had to deal with them. So, you dealt with them as little as possible and got through it.

DR: Did you interact with civilians much when you were stateside?

RB: Well, what do you mean interact? I went out with the girls and whatnot, yes. ... I was a hell-raiser, just like everybody else. I was no angel when I went ashore, no sense trying to broadcast I was, you know.

AP: Should I leave?

RB: [laughter] I was a sailor, let's put it that way, and people expected me ... to do my duty.

SI: When you were doing the watchtower type work, would you be able to go into town every night or would you have to wait until you had leave?

RB: Well, not every night, because, ... then, you were [on duty], usually, we were eight on and eight off. Your duty was good. So, unless you got a weekend, you didn't feel like you wanted to go, okay. So, your eight hours, you got four hours of it [for] sleeping, [laughter] rest of it was studying and eating and whatnot, and, [if] you did eight on and eight off, why, you kept pretty busy. So, [if] you got a couple days off, you took off and raised a little hell and whatever.

SI: What were you studying? Were you studying for the next rating?

RB: Well, you always was wanting to get a little promotion, and money was always a thing of necessity and you never had enough of it. ... So, you always wanted to get a promotion and you studied a little bit for that, but I wasn't a great one for studying, so, I didn't get promoted too fast. [laughter]

SI: When you became an instructor, was that in the same area or did they ship you to a different post?

RB: No. Well, in the beginning, I was [in the] same area, but, then, they shipped me from Washington to Oregon and I was [stationed for] a few months in a temporary training camp, and then, ... by the time I got sea duty, why, then, I just did my job aboard ship.

SI: Did you have a specialty as an instructor?

RB: Signalman. Well, when I first went in the Navy, or in the Coast Guard, they were two separate divisions. You had the signalman division and you had quartermasters' division. Later on, right after World War II, or during World War II, they combined the two, signalman and quartermaster. So, you became [a quartermaster], a signalman became a quartermaster, changed it to one rate. So, your quartermaster was either a [member of the] signal division of quartermasters or a [traditional] quartermaster, and so, I was actually a signalman, but I was rated quartermaster. I came out a quartermaster. ...

SI: Did you have to learn additional quartermaster's duties?

RB: Well, yes, because, as a signalman, you didn't have to do navigation and stuff like that. So, as you become a quartermaster, to get a rating or to proceed up, you had to learn to be a quartermaster. You had to learn to take care of all that type of duties, read the charts and chart courses and do everything that was necessary to do, along with the handling of the radios and the searchlights.

SI: You had to pretty much learn that all on your own. They did not send you someplace for that training.

RB: Well, no, not after the first few weeks of signal school. That was it. ... They teach you the primary; you have to learn it on duty. You learned [on the job]. Most of everything you really learned, you'd learn it while you were doing it, the hard way, in those days, [laughter] but some things you learned, if [you] didn't know what you were doing, you got your higher rating to do it, so, just something you did. Well, you had to do it, then, when it was over, you left.

DR: When were you transferred to a ship?

RB: Well, I was on, they put me ... [on], the [USS] *Aquarius*, [(AKA-16)], which was the KA. I forget, I was, I guess, ... about two years in by that time, I remember. I don't remember the dates, and then, I went aboard the *Aquarius* and I was aboard her during that section, division,

and then, I came out, went into the Reserve. ... Then, when the other war broke out, I went down and ... went to the *Leyte*, and enlisted in the *Leyte* immediately and went aboard her and spent the rest of the time there.

SI: Where did you pick up the *Aquarius*?

RB: Seattle, I think it was.

SI: Was it a new ship or had it been making crossings?

RB: No, it was an older cargo ship that ... they brought in and made a KA out of it, and I forget what the original name was, but the KA-16 *Aquarius*, and they put a couple guns on her. That's where we went.

SI: What was it like to go from your previous duties to joining this new crew and getting acclimated to sea duty?

RB: Well, it's something you learned. You know, you just did what you had to do. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed sea duty. I still enjoy going on ships and boats. If I could afford a boat, I'd have my own right now. [laughter] ... Other than that, like I say, I enjoy the ships, the cruising.

SI: What do you remember about your first voyage on the *Aquarius*?

RB: On the *Aquarius*?

SI: Getting settled in, that sort of thing.

RB: Yes. You don't relate too much on there, because you went aboard, you got assigned your duties and you had your time off and your time on. ... You did what you had to do in your time on and you tried to get everything else in your life on your time off. So, you worked around it. I don't recall just everything. ... Of course, I always appreciated liberty and looked for the prettiest girls in town, whatever, you know.

SI: What division were you in on the ship? Did they have divisions on the ship?

RB: Yes. They had the division. Well, originally, it was the signal division, and then, they combined it to the quartermaster [division], quartermasters and signalmen combined. So, you was in the quartermaster division. So, you could be assigned to either signal bridge or the bridge. So, I ended up being assigned to both. So, it works out. You get the smaller ships, you had to do both jobs; the larger ships, you had enough men, enough crew, to separate them.

DR: Did you get to know people well on the ship?

RB: Oh, yes. You got to know [some men]. Well, like on the carrier, you never did learn everybody. You learned people in your division, people you had to work with. Airedales, [Naval Aviation enlisted men], you never did get acquainted with, because they were off and on,

you know, every time the planes'd [take off and land]. So, you met a few of them, you slept and ate with a few of them, but you never really become friendly with the airdales, because you never associated with them that much. They had their job and you did yours and, when you went ashore, you went with your own groups, but, I say airdales, [meaning] those attached to the air groups. We were a ship group and [they were] air groups, you know.

SI: On the *Aquarius*, since it is a smaller ship, was it very formal? The Coast Guard and the Navy are famous for having a very rigid hierarchy; the officers were up here and the enlisted men were below.

RB: You have that, but, once you're on a ship like the *Aquarius*, you're living together, you treat each other as human beings. An officer demands nothing, except on duty. On duty, you had to respect them as such, you had to obey them as such. When you're on your own, you tell them to go to hell if you want to. If you (did, it's done?). Of course, you might suffer afterwards if you told them that, [laughter] but, you know, it was usually a friendly group, especially on the KA. It was a small group, so, you didn't have a lot of problems. The officers went off on their own, the enlisted men went on their own. ... On shore, you never associated with each other very much, only on special occasions.

SI: Did they dispense with saluting when you were aboard ship?

RB: No, this was something that you had to do ashore. If you were in public, [or] there were visitors aboard or anything, you had to do it. ... You didn't have to salute the officer of the deck every time you spoke to him while you was working with him. If you wasn't working with him, you come up, you saluted him first, and then, spoke to him. ... It was a little lighter with the crew, you know, at sea or on duty. You didn't have to worry about somebody looking at you and wondering, "What the hell's wrong with him?" you know.

SI: When you first joined the *Aquarius*, you were shipping ...

RB: You didn't join it; you [were] assigned to it. [laughter]

SI: You were assigned, okay. You were taking cargo out to the Pacific. Do you remember where you first went?

RB: Well, we didn't take cargo on the KA. ... Actually, on the KA, you handled equipment. We handled the tanks, the trucks. The only men we handled were the men that had to handle the equipment, to drive the equipment, and so forth. So, on the KA, it was strictly the equipment, mostly, that we dealt with, and, of course, we did have the men that handled it and they were up there on the bridge with us and whatnot, but it wasn't like a troopship, you know, where you had a thousand troops aboard that you had to fight through to get to the chow line. ... I never was on the troopships; I managed to fight my way out of that.

SI: How large would the convoys be that you would be a part of?

RB: Well, it was quite a few convoys. Like I say, you did your job, you had a group leader, which relayed all the orders by signal, and you had to take all the orders. You had to have somebody continually watching that ship all the time for orders and you had to have somebody right there that could take a message as you relayed it, and so forth. So, you had your people on duty, but, ... on that size a ship, you never had to fight a crowd or anything.

SI: In a typical shift, in the eight hours that you were on, if you were on the signal bridge, what would you be doing?

AP: Drinking coffee.

RB: [laughter] A lot of the time. No, if we didn't have my coffee pot on up there, I didn't go, but you had to maintain a watch. Somebody had to be watching that ship continually and you had to watch all the other ships in convoy. If you were in, like, a ten-ship convoy, you had a certain amount of ships on both sides, so, you had signalmen on both sides, which were taking [messages. You] usually had to watch them in case there was a problem [that would] come up. They would give the signal [that] you would have to give if the flagship was out of reach of the other one [the next ship in line], which was a lot of times. You was in-between them or something. So, you had to have somebody there that could read signals and somebody else with him that could send signals to both. So, you had to have about five or six people on duty at a time, somebody keeping a log of everything that went on. You had to make sure you recorded everything, every message, everything that happened, which was a big deal, because I was never much for log work. So, I stayed on the light. [laughter]

SI: How fast could you send a signal? Were there different levels of proficiency?

RB: Well, you sent them as fast as ... the person you were sending to could read them. A lot of times, you would start out a little too fast and he would give you a signal that it's a little fast for him, [then], you would slow down. [If it was] somebody who could go as fast as you could, you went ahead and you didn't worry about it, but you tried to get the message you had across and that's all you worried about, unless you were just bullshitting, and then, it was a different story, which we did that a lot, too. [laughter]

SI: Sending messages to each other?

RB: Yes, you know, like in port and whatnot, you know. Out to sea, you didn't do that, because somebody was watching that all the time. ... You had to make sure there was a reason for you doing it while you were in convoy or out to sea, but, in port, you've got a ship here and a ship here and a ship here and you're always shooting the breeze with somebody. ... It wasn't a big deal then, unless you come off with a specific signal, and then, everybody'd shut up and pay attention to what you had to say.

SI: What about on the bridge itself, your other duty station; what would you do then?

RB: Well, you had [duty] either on the signal bridge or you had steering duties. Usually, they had a quartermaster training on the wheel, usually put the lower guy on the wheel, except when

you were in port. Coming into port or going out of port, you had an experienced man at the wheel. Otherwise, you had a seaman on there and ... they just followed the compass. That's all they could do. You had nothing else but water, a couple of ships, so, you had to follow the compass to keep on course. So, you made sure that they did that. Otherwise, it wasn't tough duty. You know, you had to pay attention to what you were doing, but, other than that, [it was okay]. So, I was looking for the easy way out; still do. [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

RB: ... Go ahead.

DR: I was looking through a write-up on the *Aquarius* and I saw it visited a lot of different ports and a lot of islands in the Pacific. Do you remember any that stand out?

RB: With my division, we ... didn't have too many people that could handle it, so, you spent a lot of time on duty. You got to go ashore a couple hours at a time, or you may go ashore on this one and you wouldn't get ashore on the next one, because somebody else had [leave]. You had the duty that time, you had to stay aboard, but, as far as socializing, we socialized with each other quite often. Like I say, the officers usually went their way, the enlisted men went their way. You met in places a lot of times, you had dinner together and whatnot a lot of times, but you didn't really associate with each other, because it was a different grade of men at that time. These guys were all college men and whatnot and we were all a bunch of bums. [laughter]

SI: Everybody was very young, it seems.

RB: Yes, yes.

SI: Were there any older guys, anybody in their twenties?

RB: Well, there were, yes. ... They were all ages. [Of] course, your senior guys had been in the Navy and they had to take over the top duties. They were enlisted. So, you kind of followed their rule and went along with a lot they did, but, then, when you were a senior man, you whipped the younger ones.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were talking about the different ages of the men.

RB: Like I say, they were all ages. You had guys in there that were old-timers, you had a lot of us guys, and then, when I went on other ships, I was a middleman. You took the younger guys in stride and tried to keep out of the way of the older guys.

SI: Was the *Aquarius* ever attacked at sea on any of these trips?

RB: We were usually in convoy and we had enough [protection], between destroyers and cruisers, whatnot, around that kept us from actually being attacked. We did have a couple of

submarine attacks. I remember the one time, it scared the shit out of me, when I looked over the side and here's this submarine right there, but that was the only time I really shit my pants.

DR: Was that an American sub?

RB: No, it was a; I don't remember whether it was Japanese or whether it was Russian. Whatever, it scared us all, but I think we scared it more than it scared us, because it took off and everybody was happy about it, but that was the only time I really was ... that close to [danger]; had a few shells go by the [ship], hit the searchlight I was hiding behind.

SI: Was that when you were ...

RB: During missions, an attack; we were being attacked or something.

SI: Was that close to land or at sea?

RB: At sea. When we were in convoy, you would be attacked once in awhile. ...

SI: By submarines?

RB: By either submarines or by other ships. You'd get another convoy that didn't like you, why, they'd [attack], but we usually had enough firepower that we scared them away quicker than they scared us away. ... As a rule, we wasn't right out in front. Like I say, we were confronted with some of these, but we had our gunships out there in the front, then, we brought up the rear and they were usually cleared out before we got into any real combat. Of course, we had the guns aboard our ship and our gunnery men, and they had to use them a few times, but it was nothing serious. ... I had one, only one, fellow on the ship I was on [who] was killed with rifle fire. Other than that, it was [uneventful].

SI: How did that happen?

RB: He just caught a bullet from [somewhere]. Nobody ever knew where it came from, whether it came from another ship or whether it was the enemy. We were close, in bound, ... but we never knew exactly where the bullet came from or who shot it or whatever, but we had one guy on our ship that was shot.

SI: When your ship was attacked, was it usually at night?

RB: As a rule, you didn't get attacked too much at night, because they couldn't see what they were doing, neither could we, because you ran without lights. You ran on compass and you ran on the radio and bearings. You didn't have lights. So, they couldn't see you, you couldn't see them. Most of the time, if they wanted to do anything, they had to do it in daylight, ... as far as we were concerned, and you had the radar, that you knew if somebody was around. You were watching for them. So, you didn't have the specific type of radar they have today, where you can see them a hundred miles away, but we managed to get by without too many problems.

SI: Would you be able to see the ships that were attacking the convoy?

RB: As a rule, yes, as a rule, you could see them. Once in awhile, when dawn broke, you [would] see more ships than you thought you wanted to, but it usually worked out to our standards.

SI: When the ship was under attack or when you went to general quarters, did you have a different position? What would you do during that time?

RB: No, [during] general quarters, well, mine, because I was a petty officer, mine was at the desk, inside. I kept the logbook and they told me what's going on and I'd write it in, and I was on the radio, as far as my particular duties, but, as a rule, you'd see who you were fighting with. We didn't have the equipment, at that time, especially on the ships I was on, that you could fight a blind war.

SI: What about air attacks?

RB: Air attacks, you'd look for cover. [laughter] In reality, you found your way to cover and when you [had] seen a little break, you got out and did what you had to do, but, I mean, [to] be honest with you, you tried to find cover whenever it happened, or hoped you found it. Like I say, I was one of the lucky ones.

DR: I saw that you were delivering to a lot of islands that had just been invaded as the Marines and the Army were moving through the Pacific.

RB: Yes. Well, like I say, we'd drop the Marines off, we carried a lot of Marines, and we dropped them off at the different islands, but we had a lot of cover when we were dropping them. ... We would drop them, and then, we'd move out and re-form and go back for more. ... We didn't have any real major problems. I mean, there was a few ships, a couple ships, got hit, got sunk and what-have-you, few people got killed. Again, I was one of the lucky ones.

SI: Were you usually shuttling equipment between the islands or would you be going back to the United States a lot?

RB: Yes. Like I say, ours was mostly equipment. ... The personnel we handled, they handled the equipment and we were shuttling them between the different islands, ones where you didn't need them, or from stateside to the islands or whatever. That was our major duty, was transferring equipment. We had tanks, we had trucks, all sizes of trucks and tanks, officers' equipment and stuff like that.

DR: Were you able to keep track of what was going on during the war? Did you get newspapers or radio reports?

RB: Only what you heard through the ship's papers, you know. The ships put out their own [news]; all your naval ships put out their own paper or what's going on. They got news from different areas. I mean, you wasn't allowed to have your own [newspaper?]. You could have

your own radio, but, out to sea, you couldn't receive anything anyhow, so, you didn't use it unless you were in port. ... Outside of the radios onboard, on the bridge, that was the only thing you had to accompany you, with the other people [ships in the convoy], that and the lights that you signaled with, radio and lights, and that was it. It worked. We got through it.

SI: What were your living quarters like?

RB: It was like everything. You had three high, canvas [bunks]. You threw a blanket over a canvas and you went to sleep. You know, you had a little mattress there, a little thin mattress aboard ship, little more than some of the poor guys on the land had, but we were pretty well [situated]. ... We were comfortable as could be.

SI: Were you always well-supplied? Did the ship always have enough food and water?

RB: We never went hungry, that I can ever remember. ... Sometimes, [if] you had to stand a double watch or something, you didn't have time to eat until after it was over, and you may've missed a meal here or there, something like that. ... That's happened a few times, but we were never totally out of food or anything, ... as far as the KA was concerned. Even on the carrier, ... there was always enough food to handle it. If not, a plane went and got it, [laughter] but I can't remember any time that we actually ran out of food or anything. Like I say, most of the time, the only time you'd live without meals [was] because you didn't have time to eat it. That was about the only time.

SI: You mentioned you did not like the log work, that it was your least favorite duty on the ship, or was there something else you did not like?

RB: Well, even to this day, I hate to write, hate to write anything. She gets mad as hell at me because I don't write nothing down, but I just hate to write. I don't know why, I just [do]. So, if I don't have to write it, I don't, and a lot of things, I miss, because I don't, but it's just my stupid way. I don't like to write and I don't write any more than I have to and it's always been that way. So, I'd try to get somebody else to keep the log, but, being senior man aboard, I had to take care of it. ...

SI: Were there ever any discipline problems among the crew?

RB: You always ran into a discipline problem, once in awhile. It's nothing serious, ... especially ... on a ship. On the carrier, you turned them over to the SPs [shore patrol]. You had the SPs aboard those ships and you turned them over to them and they took care of them. On the KAs, you dealt with your crew, your men. I had a small crew. I didn't have that many to deal with. If one of them got out of hand, I'd send him to the officer in charge and let him take care of him. [When] you got ashore, you might run into a situation where you want to take care of it yourself, but that didn't happen too often, because you had to work together too much, so, you didn't fight each other too much. So, we got along pretty well. Like I say, on the carrier, it was an altogether different story. ... Ninety percent of the people you never knew, but, on the little ship, you knew everybody there, but you dealt with people ... you worked with directly. You had your deck crew and you had your signal crew, you had your quartermaster crew and you

dealt mostly with them. You went ashore with them. You know, that was your crew, your buddies.

SI: How many years were you on the *Aquarius*? Was it years or was it months?

RB: On the *Aquarius*? God, I'd have to look it up. I don't remember.

SI: Were you on it when the war ended?

RB: No, I was on the carrier. Oh, when World War II [ended]?

SI: World War II, yes.

RB: World War II; I think I was. ... I've forgotten the dates, really have. Like I say, I could turn around and look them up, if I had to. I've still got discharges and stuff in there, and the time of duty, but, ... memorizing them, I don't remember the dates. A lot of people remember those things; I try to forget them.

DR: Do you remember hearing about the end of the war?

RB: Yes, yes, I remember. There was a big celebration aboard the ship when we heard [about] the end of the war, because we knew we were going to go home then, but, as soon as we found out, I mean, I think every ship did. You just [felt like] something relieved you.

SI: What was the celebration like?

RB: At the time, until you got ashore, you didn't do much. You couldn't do no drinking aboard ship, unless you did it [in] hiding, and, if you got caught with it, you didn't do nothing [after that]. So, you waited until you got ashore and you went out and got drunk, but, well, most of them did. I was one that, ... [the] first couple of times, I got sick; I didn't want no more of it.

DR: Did you come right back to the United States after the war?

RB: Not immediately, no. ... We picked up some troops at one place and ... took them to the occupation islands and whatnot. We didn't come back immediately. I guess it was about six months after the war before I actually got [to] come back to the States, and then, I got shore duty. ... With the KA, we kept picking up different troops and, sometimes, we'd take them to different areas, some of them, we'd bring home, sometimes, we'd swap them, depending on what the situation was.

SI: How often were you able to get back to the United States while you were in the Pacific?

RB: Not very often. I don't remember. I think I got back twice while I was on the *Aquarius*, actually got in to do some stateside liberty, raise a little hell, but not too often, you know.

SI: Most of the time, you were out in the Pacific.

RB: Out in the Pacific. You hit the little ports and you got a few hours here, a few hours there, but it was [at sea for] most of the time you were out there. You learn to live with it.

SI: Were you able to stay in contact with your family through letters?

RB: Yes, letters. You would get a month's letters at a time, or something like that, you know, because, by the time they caught up with you, they'd get sent one place, and then, you'd be moved out of there before they got there, and then, they'd have to send them someplace else. Sometimes, it'd be a month before they caught up with you, but you ended up with them, finally, enjoyed them when you got them. ... It wasn't really that big a hardship, with me anyhow.

SI: Was morale generally pretty good on the ship?

RB: As a rule, yes. Once in awhile, you found somebody that just couldn't get along with anybody and you'd run into a little problem, now and then, but, as a rule, people conducted themselves in a general good manner. Like I say, when they got ashore, it was a different story a lot of times. You just stayed out of their way and let it go a day, got back aboard and you did your job and that was it, wasn't a bad thing. Like I say, on the carrier, it was a little different. You had so many people and [it was] a little different story, but, with the other one, ... everybody was friends, the whole ship, you know. You had your own divisions and whatnot, but, when you went ashore, usually you met someplace and the whole group went out, but it depended on the liberty port or whatever. ... If you knew somebody else there or something, you went your own way.

SI: Did you stay in contact with any of those men after the war?

RB: Very few. I did for awhile. We went to reunions. I even quit going to them, because most of the guys in my division had either died or they just quit coming, and I didn't relate with the other divisions too much. So, I just quit going, because there was nobody left that I really associated with. So, I just quit going. They're still having the reunions, ... on both the KA and the carrier, but I don't go to any of them. I did go to, a year ago, ... I went to the carrier. I didn't go [to] the last one. I forget what it was; I was going to go, and then, I had something else going, but most of the guys that were in my division are not even with it anymore and, of course, like I say, the carrier was a big ship. ... If you didn't have a big division, there wasn't that many men that could hang around that long. We were all the older guys and they were getting married and didn't have time to go or couldn't get off work or something during the reunion.

SI: On the *Aquarius*, what did you think of the captain and the senior officers?

RB: As far as what you thought of them, you never associated with them, so, you never really gave it that type of thought. The guys that actually dealt with you, you did what you had to do, you obeyed them to the degree that you had to and, when you got ashore, you left them. Very seldom [did] you see the officer and enlisted men in the same group ashore together, not that they couldn't or wanted [not] to, but it's just the way it happened, you know. You're with this guy all the time, you want to be with somebody else for [awhile], usually found somebody with

the other gender. You know, you were a guy, you went looking for girls. If not, you went looking for booze. ...

SI: Were you usually with the same ships in a convoy? Would you get to know other crews?

RB: No. ... Depending on where you went, you would make one mission and you would come back. As a rule, that particular convoy made the groups. Once in awhile, they needed somebody in another one and you were transferred, but, in general, you stayed with your group. Like I say, one or two would be transferred to something else, you would get somebody else in, but, in general, ... and we were smaller groups, ... wasn't in the really big set ups. We would usually have a carrier, a destroyer and two or three troopships, I say troopships, including the KAs, but there were usually, in that group, ... smaller convoys. So, you usually had a destroyer. When I was on the carrier, you had a destroyer or two with you. When I was on the KA, you would usually have a destroyer with you and that'd be all you'd have to protect you, depending on where you were going, what you were doing, what the mission was. It varied. ...

DR: What did you do stateside, after you got off the ship? You said you were stationed somewhere stateside for a short period of time.

RB: Yes. Like I say, ... I was the instructor at the boot camp up there for awhile, and then, not too long after that, I got out. ... I just didn't want [to make] a career of it. A lot of guys wanted to stay in, they wanted [to make] a career of it, they thought that, but it didn't mean that much to me, at the time. I've often wished, later, that I had, but too late to wish that now. [laughter]

DR: What did you do after you were discharged? Did you go back to Denver?

RB: No, because I got off the ship in Brooklyn and I met my wife, Edna, there, my first wife, and we got married there. We went back to Denver after we got married. I guess we were only there about seven, eight months. She got very homesick. She came from a big family. I only had a brother, and my father had died and my mother was sickly. So, she got very homesick. She had a big family and whatnot. So, we came back to Brooklyn, and then, I got the job in Brooklyn. Then, I went in the Reserve and I taught classes and whatnot. Then, after fifty-one years of marriage, Edna died. I met Antonette, my second wife, shortly after my wife Edna died. We have been married nine years.

SI: When you were doing the instructing, after you came back from the Pacific, it was in the Brooklyn area.

RB: Yes, basically in the Brooklyn area, yes. They had the Reserves, the Naval Reserve, set up there and I went in as an instructor. I had a couple classes a month, got paid a month's salary for a couple classes a month and enjoyed it. [laughter] That didn't last too long. So, I finally, you know, went my own way, too many other things that ... [had been] interrupted, and so, we just went our own way.

DR: When you were in the Reserves, was that when you were called back for Korea?

RB: Yes. I was actually in the Reserve when I was called for Korea, right. Yes, they declared Korea one day and I was called the next, and sent the next to the carrier, which I've never regretted. I mean, it's something, it's an experience you could never buy, but don't want no more of it.

SI: Did you have any children at that point?

RB: Yes. At the time I went in for Korea, I did. ... In fact, I had all three of them. Yes, I had all three of them at that time, the two boys and a girl, and my oldest boy went in for awhile, to the Navy. He didn't go overseas at all, or he went in, and then, the war was over shortly afterwards and he got out. Actually, he got out on a medical. ...

SI: That was at the end of the Vietnam War. Where was the *Leyte* when you were assigned to the ship?

RB: Where was it when I was assigned? Seattle. I went aboard her in Seattle. ... Yes, I went aboard her in Seattle.

DR: Did you have to fly from Brooklyn to Seattle?

RB: Yes, yes. They sent me from Brooklyn to Seattle. I went directly. They met me at the pier and went right aboard the ship; no shore duty there at all. ...

DR: Were you a signalman?

RB: Yes, I had already had my rate. I was already a second class when I went aboard the carrier.

SI: Did the *Leyte* head directly to Korea or did it go anywhere else in-between, like Japan or Hawaii?

RB: I think we did go to Hawaii and, from Hawaii, we went over into Korea, and we did go to Hawaii. ... Yes, we went there, and then, we went to Korea right from Hawaii, and that's where we spent the rest of the time. We [had] very little shore duty. We were at sea all the time. We replenished at sea. Everything was done at sea.

SI: Was it difficult to get back into the swing of life at sea?

RB: Not really. You get used to these things. You swing into it when you have to. ...

SI: What was a typical day's duty on the *Leyte* like for you?

RB: Like I say, it was eight on, eight off, as a rule. In the beginning, we had a bigger crew, we had four on and twelve off. Then, we shortened the crew and did eight and eight. We did that on our own, because it was easier; to us, it was. So, we did eight and eight and it was just a constant eight and eight, until you went ashore for a couple hours. ... If you had the duty, you got

somebody to standby, if you got a chance. If you didn't, you stayed aboard, but it was always someplace that we had somebody on duty, because there was always something coming over, either radio or light, if you were in any kind of a convoy, and, usually, over there, you were in [convoy], didn't do too much traveling, because, ... like I say, it was an equipment ship, it wasn't a troopship. So, the only troops you handled, had, was to handle the equipment. [Editor's Note: Mr. Beardsley switches to describing his experiences on the *Aquarius* during the last response.]

SI: On the *Leyte*, from what I have read, it would go up and down the coast of Korea and the planes would fly missions in Korea.

RB: Yes, right. Well, we were off the coast, yes, different areas. ... They never stayed in one area any length of time, and our planes would always fly into Korea, different areas. Most of them'd come back. I think we only lost a couple, one or two; I forget now. I think we lost two planes and one pilot. They managed to rescue the one guy. He got shot down and another [aircraft], a chopper, managed to be close by and managed to rescue him, but we lost one pilot and one plane. [We] had a few of them come back pretty badly damaged, but they managed to get back aboard ship. Yes, that was quite an experience on that carrier and I was on the signal bridge and, of course, every one of them guys coming in for a landing, you never knew whether they were going to swerve or not, was always worried about it, but [you] had faith in your pilot. [laughter]

SI: Was the signal bridge in the tower that was on the side of the carrier?

RB: Yes, yes. It's on the side, yes, but ... all the way around, you had to have full capacity. So, you were watching the flight operations, or, if there was something else on the other side, the guy, [the] seaman on duty, had to go over there while you come over, did [that], and let him do the work. [laughter] ... As long as you were aboard ship, you had something to do, unless ... it was your time off. Then, you found something to do, hopefully.

SI: Do you remember any situations where aircraft came back crippled?

RB: Yes, yes, we had a few of them come back crippled. Yes, a couple of them barely made it aboard, a couple of them crashed aboard, but nobody [was killed]. If the planes were really damaged, and we went in a war zone, some planes were thrown overboard because other planes were trying to land. They managed to tow the planes forward and put them down deck, and the pilots were all right. They [would] come out of it and they didn't get hurt during the crash of the plane, because, ... by the time they come down, ... there was a couple of them pretty badly damaged, and those pilots were good. You wondered how they flew some of that shit, [laughter] but they were good.

SI: How long were you on the *Leyte*? Was it a year or more or less?

RB: I'd have to look it up. I was on the *Leyte* about two years, if I remember right. You got the records? I think it was about two years, ... eighteen months, something like that.

DR: Did the *Leyte* ever have to go on alert? Were there any threats from Russian ships or Korean ships, or was it generally calm?

RB: Actually, you were always on alert when you were out to sea. You had your duty. You had a man on watch. You had somebody watching every detail. Somebody was watching the other ships, somebody was watching the flagship, somebody was watching this [or that]. You had somebody doing something all the time. ... If you had any free time, you went downstairs and went to bed. ... That was the only free time you ever had. In port, it was a different story. ...

DR: Did the *Leyte* go to Japan, Australia or the Philippines?

RB: We went to Japan. We went to the Philippines. I didn't go to Australia on the *Leyte*, no, not that. ... I've been to Australia, I'm trying to think, I think it was on a cruise ship I went [on] to Australia. Yes, I've been to a lot of ports and whatnot, but, like I say, I've taken about nine cruises since. I love cruising, and she does, too, so, we try to go at least once a year. We just got off of one recently and we've got another one due in May, but, like I say, I love to go cruising. You go see the different places you never had a chance to see. Even though you were there, sometimes, you never got to see them. This way, you get a chance to go ashore and see what you want to, and, like I say, I could spend my life at sea. It wouldn't bother me a bit. Of course, she's got a different view of it. ... So, we just go on a couple trips a year. She likes to go on the trips. She enjoys sailing, but, you know, seven, ten days, she's ready to come home.

SI: Your discharge from the Korean War says that you were overseas for one year and five months. That is about seventeen months. It was quite awhile.

RB: Yes, oh, yes.

SI: In World War II, the military had been segregated. There were no African-Americans serving on the ships.

RB: To a degree; they weren't totally segregated.

SI: They would be cooks or messmen.

RB: Well, not necessarily. We had a colored fellow in our crew on the *Aquarius*. He was a first class signalman and he knew his stuff and he was well-respected. He was just one of the boys. Nobody even thought about color at that time.

SI: What about on the *Leyte*? Were there more African-Americans on the *Leyte*?

RB: There was a lot of them, especially on the air crews; not so much on the pilots, but the crews, the deck crews, and so forth, quite a few. You had a lot of ... them aboard. They didn't discriminate at that time, during [Korea], ... very much, like, maybe [on] the smaller ships, they did to a degree, but, I mean, ... whoever was there, you dealt with and you usually got along with them. Usually, nobody even gave it a thought, whether he's white, black or gray or what,

you know. ... He was your shipmate, that was it. No women aboard, so, you did the best you could. [laughter] Got ashore, that was a different story.

Samir Ray: Did you know anyone who used the GI Bill to support their education?

RB: ... To support the education? Well, let me put it this way, I stole a little bit from it, [laughter] but mainly because I had the opportunity to get it. It wasn't something that ... I went out to get for that reason, but, because it was handy, I took advantage of it.

SI: You took some classes on the GI Bill.

RB: I took a couple of ... college courses, because, like I say, my high school was [interrupted]. I went through most of high school and didn't complete [it] and I took a couple courses. I finally did get a degree. ... Other than that, I can't think of a lot, unless you've got questions.

DR: Were you anxious to get out of Korea when you were discharged and come back to New Jersey?

RB: Well, about that time, I was ready to get out of the Navy and I was kind of anxious to get back and get home, because I knew, when I came back from there, I was getting out. I remember one incident that happened when I [was] being let go. A three-stripper [a commander] got a hold of me and he tried to talk me into reenlisting. So, I said to him, I said, "Can we be man to man or do we have to be officer and enlisted man?" "Let's be man to man." I said, "Take this Navy and stick it up your ass. I don't want no more of it." [laughter] He says, "There's no point in talking to you, is there?" So, that's where it ended. ... After that, I didn't want no more Navy. I didn't want [to make] a career of it. I thought for awhile I did want [to make] a career of it, but, after that, ... it was just [that] I could make more money and do more and like myself more on the outside. So, I did. Other than that, that was the story. ... He tried to get me to reenlist, and I was surprised he didn't get mad, but he didn't. ... I told him; that was the way I felt.

SI: Was it difficult to readjust to civilian life?

RB: Not really, because, you know, I had my work. I went right into my trucking, and what is there to do? You know, you load and unload and you drive.

SI: Was it local trucking or long distance?

RB: I did long distance and local. I had my own warehouse for awhile, after awhile. I drove for a long time before that, and then, a couple of the fellows and myself, we went into the warehouse business with our own trucks. We each had trucks and we decided, "Well, we'll just go into the warehouse business," and we got a couple of good customers and we owned the warehouse and we operated our own trucks. ... That worked out for awhile, for quite awhile, and then, I decided, "The hell with it."

DR: Where did you operate out of?

RB: Out of New Brunswick, had the warehouse in New Brunswick. We had one for awhile in Jersey City, had a warehouse there for awhile. Then, we got the one in New Brunswick, which was a bigger one, ... and then, that one burned down on us. When the one in New Brunswick burned down, ... that's when I got out.

DR: Were you living in Middlesex at that time?

RB: No, I was in Lakehurst at that time, yes. ...

SI: Did you ever join any veterans' organizations?

RB: Well, like I say, I belonged to the Reserves, and joined the Coast Guard Reserve, Navy Reserve, well, actually, they became one after awhile, and there's another one I belonged to for awhile; can't think of it offhand. I finally just got, you know, too much to do otherwise. I didn't have time for them. So, I finally gave them up, not that there was anything wrong with them or whatnot. It's just that I had too many other things that I wanted to do, and I did them. That's about the story of my life; not too interesting, not much happening.

SI: No, it is very interesting. [laughter]

RB: But, like I say, when he [his stepson] told me about it [the Rutgers Oral History Archives], I thought, "What the hell do they want me for?" ...

SI: You have had a very diverse life. You started out in Denver, went all over the world.

RB: Well, covered quite a bit of the world.

MP: Saw a lot of the Pacific Ocean.

RB: ... Yes, I saw a lot of the Pacific Ocean.

MP: And everything in-between.

RB: And a little of the Atlantic, ... because, when we came back from the Pacific, I had an Atlantic cruise.

SI: How long was that?

RB: That was only about three months. We went to the Med. I say Atlantic; it was a Mediterranean [Sea cruise], and then, when I came back from there, like I say, it was when I come back from there, I got out. I'd had enough.

SI: Was that still on the *Aquarius* when you went to the Mediterranean?

RB: No, I was on the carrier.

SI: Okay, the carrier came back.

RB: And that was about the story of my life, not that interesting, but that was it.

SI: Is there anything that we skipped over that you think we should talk about?

RB: Not that I can think about. I ain't going to tell you about my women.

MP: Was he on the *Ludlow*? Did we skip that part?

SI: This is the USS *Ludlow*, (DD-438). Was that when you were in the Reserves?

RB: The *Ludlow* was in the Reserves. I only did two weeks on the *Ludlow*, two-week cruise on the *Ludlow*, yes.

SI: That was a destroyer.

RB: That was a destroyer, yes. Yes, I only did two weeks on her.

SI: When was that? Was that between World War II and Korea?

RB: Yes, that was in-between, yes, because that was Reserves. I had to do a little sea duty during my Reserve time, so, I went on the *Ludlow*. I'd almost forgotten about her.

MP: Where was ... the ship based that you were on?

RB: Norfolk, ... and then, we went with her. We went to, where the hell did we go? California. I forget where I went on it.

MP: Maybe it was the Caribbean. ...

SI: Do you have any other questions?

RB: Well, I hope I did you some good.

SI: Absolutely. If you think of anything else later, you can put it into the transcript. Thank you very much.

RB: I probably won't even think about it later. [laughter] ...

SI: One thing I want to ask about, I saw your display of your awards and decorations.

RB: Yes, a lot of them, you know, ... I don't pay that much attention to them.

MP: I had a vendor do this for him.

RB: He had this done. ... I ended up second class instead of third class, but I didn't bother to change it.

SI: You have the Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal.

RB: Oh, yes, ... I was a good boy.

SI: No fights.

RB: They didn't see me when I was a bad boy.

MP: On the ship, you were a good boy.

RB: I had to be on the ship. [laughter]

MP: They'd throw you overboard with a shell in your pocket. [laughter] ...

SI: The American Campaign, the Asiatic-Pacific, there is one Battle Star on the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, World War II Victory, Navy Occupation. There is an Asia bar and a Europe bar. What was the Europe bar for, or did they give that to everybody?

RB: No, you had to go to Europe. We went to France.

SI: In World War II?

RB: Right after.

SI: Okay.

RB: Right after, before I got out. We took the Med cruise. ... During the war, it was almost all Pacific.

SI: Okay. Was that after Korea or after World War II that you went to France?

RB: ... I guess it was after Korea. Yes, it was after, because we took that cruise, and then, I got out, on the way home ... from there, yes. [Editor's Note: The USS *Leyte* served with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean from September to December 1951.]

SI: This medal was for Korea.

RB: Just for the duty, going aboard. ... I didn't do anything, except flash a light.

SI: National Defense, Korean Service with two Battle Stars.

RB: Well, the ship was in conflict; I wasn't.

SI: You have three Battle Stars total. I wanted to make sure I got that on the record.

RB: Yes.

SI: UN Korean Service, the Republic of Korea War Service, Navy Service, Coast Guard Service and the Honorable Service Medal; great.

RB: Yes, I don't know where they got all those things.

MP: Got it off your record; you were there.

RB: [laughter] Yes, I was there, ... and that's the story of my life.

SI: Thank you very much for sharing it with us. We appreciate it.

RB: It's all right, I mean, no problem. I just didn't think it was that interesting that anybody'd want to know about it, you know. When he asked me, I thought, "What the hell they want with me?" [laughter]

SI: Thank you very much.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Daniel Ruggiero 2/3/10

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/27/10

Reviewed by Raymond Beardsley 9/20/10