RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GARY E. CHRIST

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on May 7, 2007, with Gary E. Christ in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. To begin, Mr. Christ, thank you for coming in today and sitting down with us to talk about the experiences that you've had here at Rutgers and in the Navy during Vietnam. Just for the record could you tell us where and when you were born?

Gary Christ: I was born in New Brunswick on December 8, 1945.

SH: Okay and let's start with your family, your father first. Can you tell us a little bit about his background and his history?

GC: He grew up in Milltown and he was a veteran of World War II. I believe he went in 1942. He was in naval aviation, had very tough duty, mostly he was stationed in the Caribbean.

SH: Now, your father was a Rutgers alum.

GC: He went on the GI Bill after the war.

SH: Did he?

GC: Yes.

SH: Did he talk about how he got into the aviation program in World War II?

GC: Just by the luck of the draw. I guess, at the time when they were starting to draft people he decided he'd rather go in on his own choice, so he joined the navy and he was a radioman. He was just assigned to naval aviation.

SH: Did he talk at all about his duty in the Caribbean?

GC: He did. He did a lot of flying; he was mostly on anti-submarine patrols throughout the Caribbean. He was stationed in Curacao, in Trinidad and a number of other places like that. He never saw any kind of action *per se*, it was a very quiet sector which was, I guess, good for him. But he wound up being a chief petty officer and, of course, he got out of the war in '45 and then he went to Rutgers.

SH: Was he able to go to Rutgers full time or did he work and go to school?

GC: No, he went full time.

SH: Did he live on campus or…

GC: No, he commuted.

SH: I understand that housing here was unbelievably tough to get, so it was a good thing he lived close.

GC: Right.

SH: Can you talk a little bit about his political interests or his family's history at all?

GC: Well, his grandparents, I guess, were immigrants. They came over from Germany. They lived in Milltown their entire lives. He was active with a number of organizations in Milltown, the Board of Education, and some of the other clubs there. He owned, basically, a convenience store, I guess, a luncheonette for a while and he sold mutual funds for a while and he wound up being a teacher and, eventually, a school principal in Burlington.

SH: Oh, really?

GC: Yes, and he retired in about '75, I guess it was, and moved to Florida and he lived in Florida for twenty-something years, I guess, before they moved back up to New Jersey in 2001 or thereabouts.

SH: Then let's talk please a little bit about your mom and her background?

GC: She also grew up in Milltown. She also went to Douglass, and she became the guidance counselor, and [worked] in education as well, and retired as well in 1975, and she's still with us. She lives in Rossmoor now and she's eighty-six years old and still very active.

SH: Do you remember what year she graduated from Douglass?

GC: It was in the late '40s, or mid '40s. I believe, she went before my father did because he was involved with the war, but they were married, I think, in '42. I believe, she went to college right after that.

SH: So, she went to Douglass as a married student?

GC: I believe so.

SH: Did she talk about anything that she was able to do as part of the war effort? I mean, I know they knitted, and wrapped bandages at J&J, and things like that, did she ever tell you any of those kinds of stories?

GC: I don't really know. I know she was with my father for a while because they had a place in Beaufort, South Carolina for a while when he was undergoing some part of his training, I don't know just which part. She wasn't with him, obviously, in the Caribbean when he was on active duty and basically, I guess, she just waited out the war with her parents, probably in Milltown.

SH: Okay. Did they talk about how they met? Were they high school sweethearts or…

GC: Basically, they met in the church choir in Milltown. Milltown is a small town. It was even smaller back then, so everyone knew everybody else, so they, basically, knew each other I suspect from pretty much the time they started going to school.

SH: What did her family do in Milltown?

GC: My grandfather was a banker. He was an investor. He also was a partner with my father in that basic restaurant and delicatessen, whatever they had. [He was] adversely affected by the Depression, like everybody else was. I mean, I heard all kinds of war stories about that. He was very active in the township as well. A lot of the streets in Milltown are named after their families, because, at one point in time, there the north end of town was basically a farm that they owned, and so, a lot of the streets there are named after the various family members.

SH: What was her family name?

GC: Kuhlthau, K-U-H-L-T-H-A-U, another German family.

SH: I understand there were a lot of German families in Milltown from what I have heard from other stories. You said that your mother was a teacher as well. Did she also help your father in the store or the delicatessen or…

GC: A little bit, not that much. Her and my grandmother both did some stuff in there but not that much.

SH: Was your mother home when you were going to school or was she out, was she working full time at that point?

GC: During grammar school and so on she was home but she went back to teaching, she was into teaching… oh, geez,… late '50s.

SH: Okay. Because one of the things we wonder is when the women enter the workforce more or less full time.

GC: Well, she did. She worked at Rutgers for a while. She was somehow involved in the admissions office. She talked about that and I suspect that was probably during the war when she was there, and she did help out some at the store with my father and, I believe, she went back into teaching, got into the teaching part of it, around in the late '50s. They both had gone for their Master's, they both got their degrees, and my recollection [is] that was the late '50s, early '60s, when they started that.

SH: Okay. Now, did either of your grandparents serve in World War I?

GC: Yes, my grandfather did, my mother's father.

SH: Did he talk at all about that?

GC: Not that much. He never went overseas, he had enlisted, or joined up, just before the war was over. They were in New York and ready to board a troop ship, and the war was over. So, he never had to go.

SH: All right, well, then let's talk a little bit about your growing up. I assume you grew up in Milltown?

GC: That's right.

SH: What are your earliest memories of Milltown as a young boy?

GC: Just that it was a real small town atmosphere, where everyone knew pretty much everybody else in the entire town. There were a lot of activities going on, between Scouts and various sports, Little League, and so forth, it was always active. I mean, play ball everyday, skated everyday when there was ice on the pond back there, and ice hockey, and basketball, and anything else.

SH: Did you have brothers and sisters?

GC: I had a sister and a brother younger than me.

SH: Okay, so you were the oldest.

GC: Yes, my sister was exactly three years younger than I, same birth date, and my grandkid has got the same birth date as well, and my brother is seven years younger than me.

SH: So, then you really were out on your own. You weren't having little brothers or sisters tag along too often with you.

GC: Not that much.

SH: You talked about being involved in all these different organizations, how long did you stay involved with it?

GC: Boy Scouts I stayed active in it until, actually, while I was in college still. I was a camp counselor for four years at the local camp up in Sussex, New Jersey.

SH: Which camp is that?

GC: Sakawawan it was called, just outside of Branchville I guess it is, and I was active with them until I was in college. So, I had a lot of good experiences with that.

SH: Now, you were an Eagle Scout?

GC: I was an Eagle Scout.

SH: Have you stayed involved in Boy Scouts?

GC: No, I haven't.

SH: Were there other organizations? Were you involved in the church at all? Your parents met in the church choir so I wondered if you continued the tradition.

GC: I never sang in a choir, no.

SH: I have to ask.

GC: You wouldn't want me to sing in a choir. No, I didn't stay real active with that. I was involved with the Little League when I was a kid, and I was involved with sports when I was in high school, track team and football, and so on, and that was basically it. Fairly normal, nothing exciting.

SH: Did you have an after-school job?

GC: I had a paper route. I worked in the store for a while. I used to assemble the newspapers on Sunday mornings, general "chief cook and bottle washer", I guess, you know, little things like that. The first real job, I guess, I had was as a camp counselor at the Boy Scout camp in the summers.

SH: Did your father serve as your Cub Scout leader or…

GC: He was active with the Scouts, not so much as a leader *per se* but he was a big volunteer. In fact, one of the years that I was up there, after he started teaching and I was up there as a camp counselor, he joined the staff as well, so we spent the summer up there, which actually was a neat experience because we actually got to know each other a lot better. You know I was getting a little bit older, I was starting to go a little bit more on my own and he was up there. So, it was an experience.

SH: Had he been involved in scouts as a young man?

GC: No.

SH: You were actually almost his counselor, sounds like.

GC: Yes, we were co-equals, I guess, for a while there on the staff.

SH: That must have been very unique. When you would go up, did you stay up for extended periods of time as a counselor, or would you come home or did you have breaks in between?

GC: Every now and then you could come home on a weekend but, basically, it was like an eight week camp season and you were there for the entire time.

SH: Any wild experiences?

GC: Not that I can recall. There was the typical stuff you do with a bunch of teenage boys up there. A lot of tricks, a lot of games, moving people out of their bunks in the middle of the night when they were sleeping and putting them on a raft in the middle of the lake, that kind of a thing. It was a lot of silly stuff. It was a lot of fun though.

SH: So, your mom stayed in Milltown and held the fort down, so to speak.

GC: And she came up, they had a tent for her up there as well, so she came up for a number of times during the summer where she spent a couple of days and then go back home. But, yes, she was basically holding down the fort.

SH: Was your sister involved in Girl Scouts?

GC: Early on but not too long, I don't think.

SH: And your younger brother?

GC: Same thing, a little bit, not too long.

SH: When did you first decide that you wanted to go to college?

GC: Well, I guess, with my parents being in education, I don't know if there was any set period of time. It kind of was just a normal extension of the education that I just assumed that I was going to go to college as a matter of course. It wasn't like, I had a big awakening at one particular time and decided I was going to go. It was just sort of implied that, you know, when you finish high school you're going to go on to college and that's how it's going to be, okay. I didn't go kicking and screaming, it was okay.

SH: Did you have a favorite teacher in Milltown after you went to high school?

GC: Well Milltown was grammar school, it was New Brunswick High School that's where Milltown students went… They don't anymore but they used to go to New Brunswick. I enjoyed the coaches with the sports. I guess, they're the ones I was closest with, in terms of some of the teachers. I don't recall too many of them, if you want to know the truth. But I was involved with some of the coaches, and so forth, through the different sports I played.

SH: Had you stayed involved with Milltown, with what goes on in Milltown and…

GC: Not so much. I had a house there for a while, a number of years ago, and so I was back there for that period of time, that was in the early '80s, and then moved on out again. I don't really have that much contact with people that I grew up with, in fact, I hardly ever see any of them anymore; I don't know where they are.

SH: When the decision, as you said, it was just assumed that you would go on to college, was there any choice as to where you would go, or were you committed to come to Rutgers, or how did that come to be?

GC: Well, I guess, Rutgers was my first choice, but I also was looking into NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps] programs. I applied as well to Oregon State and Penn State and got accepted to them and they had the NROTC programs at the time. Rutgers didn't have an NROTC. But then when it came down to picking and choosing I said, "You know what I'd rather go to Rutgers and stay close by, rather than go to Penn State or go to Oregon State," so I just wound up at Rutgers.

SH: Was the NROTC because of your father's affiliation with the navy?

GC: It may have some part of it, I'm not sure. I was just always kinda interested in it, I always liked the military. I kind of felt like I had an obligation to do something, so I wanted to do that but I wanted, if I was going to go in, I said, "You know I'd rather go in as an officer." So, the NROTC program was you know, sounded pretty good at that point in time and that's, I guess, where my interest came from.

SH: So, when you decided to come to Rutgers, had you already been involved at all with Rutgers? Had you come to football games, did you know people who had come other than your parents, who had been to Rutgers?

GC: Well, I used to go to the football games, my dad would take me. I didn't have any other affiliation with anything. I didn't really know anybody at Rutgers. It just seemed like a natural place to go, because it was close by and because my parents had attended.

SH: Were you a commuter student, I guess is the best way to ask the question?

GC: No.

SH: You made the decision to come to campus as a

GC: I was a thousand miles away and I was two miles away.

SH: Where were you first housed when you came to campus?

GC: In my freshman year, the first semester was over in Corwin Campus, I don't even know if it exists anymore, it was those individual houses off of, I think, it's Nichol Avenue, over in Douglass, and, I guess, they had about twelve of the houses at the time there that were turned into men's dorms because of the shortage of housing over on the main campus, here, and after the first semester then they moved us over to the Quad, I guess. I don't even remember the building and then after that I lived in the fraternity house.

SH: When you came here, were you planning to stay involved with the sports, or did you stay involved with sports?

GC: I ran track, I threw the javelin, and was in the intramural sports.

SH: As a freshman did you take ROTC?

GC: Yes. It was mandatory back then.

SH: That's one of the things that we're trying to document, how long did it stay mandatory at Rutgers as the land grant college.

GC: My recollection is it was mandatory for at least two years and I was in Air Force ROTC. And I dropped out after the second years. I had enough of the Air Force.

SH: Did you still have it in your head that you would look into the navy programs?

GC: I did and actually what happened is they had a program at the time, it was called the ROC program, it was a Reserve Officer Candidate, and what that allowed you to do was, you could apply for the program and if you got accepted to Reserve Officers Candidate School then you enlisted and you went in as an enlisted man and you drilled with the local reserve unit, which was on Front and Gordon Street in Perth Amboy… I believe I signed up along with two other fraternity brothers of mine in 1965 or '66, and we drilled down there on the weekly drills whenever we didn't have exams, and then we went to Newport, Rhode Island for OCS between the junior and senior summers for nine weeks. Went back and drilled again, you know, with the reserve unit through the senior year and then back to Newport OCS in mid-August and then got commissioned in October, or early November in 1967.

SH: So, just after graduation, then, you finished OCS.

GC: Right. Yes.

SH: How unique was it for someone to stay involved in the military here at Rutgers between '63 and '67, or was it unique?

GC: Well in my fraternity there was quite a few of the brothers that were involved with the Army or Air Force ROTC, a lot of them went in. It was a pretty turbulent time. There wasn't all that many people that wanted to be involved with it, and I would say that at least fifty percent of the people in the fraternity were involved in it, which was very untypical, I would think at the time.

SH: I think we need to say for the record which fraternity we're talking about.

GC: That was Zeta Psi.

SH: Why did you choose Zeta Psi?

GC: Actually, when I was working at the Boy Scout camp, the last year before I started Rutgers, the camp chaplain was a brother at Zeta Psi. He was, I believe he was a Class of '64, maybe '63. Anyway, I became friends with him working in this camp, and not that he recruited or anything like that, but, I mean, I got the stories from him about what it was like and, actually, when I came to Rutgers then, because I knew him and knew a little bit what was it about, it was basically the only house I rushed, and I was lucky enough to get in.

SH: As you said, the ROTC was mandatory, were there very few people who were exempt from ROTC?

GC: I frankly don't know. I'm not even sure it was totally mandatory at the time. It seems to me, my recollection is that everybody was in it, you know, for those first two years and then most of them dropped out at the end of the two years.

SH: At that time, were people exempt from the draft as long as they were in college?

GC: They were but towards the end there, they were starting to, there was noise about drafting out of the colleges as well and I think that's also one of the reasons why I said, "You know what, if they're going to do this, I'm going to go in on my own terms."

SH: That's what I wanted to know, were there conversations among your peers about that?

GC: There were some. I guess right after that is when they had the lotteries, and so on. That took some of the pressure off a lot of people, if they had a high number, but, up to that point and time everyone knew somebody that had gotten drafted, regardless of, whether they were at college or not.

SH: What was your major here at Rutgers?

GC: Geography.

SH: Why geography?

GC: Well, my original intent was to go into oceanography, that's what I wanted to do eventually. As it turned out, it never came about because I was in the service and then I had married and I had a child and geography was just the beginning. You had to go back for all kinds of other courses before you could get into that, so that just kinda like passed by. It never happened.

SH: Maybe we should go back then and talk about when did you marry?

GC: In '67.

SH: In '67 when you graduated, okay, before you graduated?

GC: No, right after, as did an awful lot of them as well, because with Vietnam and people going overseas, I guess, the phenomenon of the time there was that so many of them, the guys that I graduated with from the fraternity house, got married right after they graduated because they were going into the service in one shape of form and another.

SH: Where did you meet your wife?

GC: In high school.

SH: So, had she come to Douglass or Rutgers?

GC: No, she had gone to Trenton State.

SH: What was her major?

GC: I don't have a clue. Education, I would guess.

SH: To back up a little bit, in '63, when you came here, how much of what was going on in Vietnam were you aware of, or were you more involved in knowing about it because of ROTC or Air Force ROTC, or was it just something that you really weren't paying any attention to?

GC: There wasn't a whole lot about Vietnam going on back then. It was very low level; it was mostly advisory groups and so on. It wasn't until the '66-'67 really, where they really boosted up the troops over there, and so on, that it became a political issue that everyone knew about. Prior to that, it was just boiling along under the surface there. I don't think anyone was really too much aware of it at that point in time.

SH: That is one of the things we are trying to document in regard to World War II as well as Vietnam when you're here at school. Of course technology has changed now for this generation, but were you reading the papers, were you hearing about world events, on TV or radio, or were you just pretty insular here?

GC: It was really pretty insular I would say in the early going. The first couple of years you didn't, it wasn't too much of a controversy at all. It was the last two years, [that] is when it really started to get nuts around here with the marches and the protests and all the other stuff that was going on. By then it was, you know, it was a big issue, but it really was a growing type thing from '63 until, you know, it was like a non-event until '65, maybe, '66, and then that's when it really had gotten nuts.

SH: Can you talk about how you became aware of how nuts it was here at Rutgers? I mean with Zeta Psi being right on College Avenue, what were you seeing here and what was the discussion?

GC: Well, in the house there wasn't that much about it. Like I said, most of the people in the house had involvement with the military [in] one way shape or form [or] another with ROTC. We heard about the protests obviously. That was Professor Genovese who recommended, he

said he'd welcome the Viet Cong victory in Vietnam and so on. That was controversial at the time and, frankly, I didn't agree with the people that were making a whole lot of noise about it.

SH: …What was the reaction to Genovese and his comments?

GC: Well, they had people that thought he was saying the right thing and then you had the rest of us who thought he was a nutcase.

SH: As a student, what do you do when there's a professor that's making these comments and it's making the papers and…

GC: I just ignored him.

SH: Had you ever had him as a professor?

GC: No.

SH: Did any of the other faculty make any comments one way or the other about…

GC: He's the only one I remember. I'm sure they did, but I don't recall.

SH: When you were here at Rutgers can you talk a little bit about life at Zeta Psi? What some of the traditions are and, perhaps if they are different now?

GC: Well, my class was the last one that they allowed physical hazing, and they beat the hell out of us. But it was a real close group and it was a lot bigger than it is right now. We used to have pledge classes of forties, where now they get them in the teens if they're lucky. We had forty-something guys that lived in the house, now they have twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven. I think things were more traditional back then. They've gotten away from some of the traditions over the years but a lot of them still remain.

SH: Did you have a house mother when you were there?

GC: Yes, and, I think, ours was one of the last classes that had a house mother as well. In fact, we had three house mothers.

SH: Really, at the same time?

GC: No.

SH: Oh, over the course of the four years.

GC: Over the course of the four years.

SH: Talk a little bit about the traditions because, as you say, things have really changed and I know that our students enjoy hearing how did you dress for dinner or was there a table set aside if you came in from practice…

GC: Well, you did dress for dinner. You had to have a jacket and tie, which they don't anymore. We used to seat forty to forty-five brothers for dinner each night. Then, like as now, we used to like to have parties, the big weekends. The Military Ball weekend, we used to fix the house all up, you know, we used to decorate it for different themes, the toga parties, and all the other good stuff that we used to do. They still do that, a lot of informal events. They used to have a tea every spring for the faculty, we used to invite faculty over. You used to have to have chaperones for the parties, either a professor or a teacher or a parent or the house mother. We used to find out which one of the instructors liked to party and we'd invite them to be the chaperones.

SH: So, you can confirm there was partying going on campus.

GC: I heard rumors about it.

SH: Another rumor that we heard is that there was a tunnel from the Zeta Psi house…

GC: To the Corner Tavern? Myth, or I haven't found the tunnel anyway, yet.

SH: You've looked. As a young pledge did you…

GC: That was a rumor. That was a rumor, I guess, that's still going around but no one has been able to find it.

SH: Was there any faculty that you would not have invited to a party?

GC: No, I don't think anyone was barred from it.

SH: But I understand that there were some faculty members that were more vigilant than others as far as the fraternities were concerned?

GC: Well, there was always a little bit of noise about; we always thought we were a little bit persecuted. It's the same controversy now. I guess, the fraternities are looked upon a little bit as frivolous I suppose and, I guess, it was the same thing back then, no different. You know the fraternities have their good days and then they have their bad and I know it from being a trustee with them, with the alumni group. I know they still have some situations there when they're always up against the wall, a little bit on it. Sometimes it's deserved, sometimes we don't think it is, but it was the same, I don't think that's changed so much.

SH: Did the fraternity set out to be involved in different activities here? You talked about the Military Ball, were there people involved say in the *Targum* or against the *Targum* or…

GC: I guess we were fairly well represented. We had some people that were in, what's it called Scarlet R? It was people that had a pretty fair amount of activities, you know, with the university over all. I mean, there was a number of them that played sports, there was a number of them that played basketball, they belonged to a lot of different organizations.

SH: You talked about your involvement now with the alumni trustee group, but were you involved as an officer of Zeta Psi?

GC: I was a president and a few others, minor positions, prior to that.

SH: So, were you elected president in your junior year?

GC: My junior year, yes.

SH: What were some of the responsibilities of a president of an organization like that here on campus?

GC: Well, it was mainly just to maintain order in the place, to keep the place looking decent, and you had a whole bunch of committees in terms of building and grounds, and upkeep, and so on like that, and you made sure that people were staffed into those positions so that the place was always kept up. It looked a lot better back then than it does right now. I think we took a lot more pride in the building itself back then. Of course, when we had a party, it looked like hell when you got up the next morning, and all, but then it was cleaned up right afterwards, and you wouldn't know what happened, and that doesn't seem to be there anymore as much.

SH: Were alumni involved when you were coming

GC: They had an alumni group, there was, actually, it was the Class of '51 that seemed to have provided the majority of the alumni that were involved, and they were involved for quite a few years, [helped] run the place.

SH: At homecomings, did you have a float, or was there a parade at that point?

GC: Well, they had a parade and they had a float, at the stadium, and they used to judge on it. I think we won it three years in a row. We were known for having very elaborate floats and the three years I was there, they won the first place for the floats each year. That's when they, like the field house they used to have that turned over to the float building. We'd be up all night, the night before, you know, stuffing the paper into the chicken wire, you know, to make your floats and then get it to the stadium.

SH: It just had to make it through that stage, right? So, do you think at that point there was a lot of involvement within all the activities here on campus?

GC: There was and then, with the fraternities, they had the Keller Trophy, which I guess they still have today, and all the fraternities were very active in that, in terms of the intramurals for all

the different sports; volleyball, flag football, softball, basketball, you name it, during the year. So, we were very active in that. That was another big thing.

SH: What was the charity that you supported? Usually there's some sort of a community outreach or…

GC: There was no real charity at the time. We used to put on a Christmas party for underprivileged children every year, where we'd, through some of the neighborhood groups, invite children from the area to come down here and we have Santa Claus there. We'd have all these, you know, small toys and presents and things like that to give them. That was an annual event we used to do. There was nothing formalized, or anything like that, which is something, I guess, that was one of the traditions we always used to do. But really not that much, other than that.

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

GC: I don't know that I had one.

SH: It was in your junior year that you went with the navy reserve.

GC: Right.

SH: Had you still maintained between semesters, or I should say between your freshman and sophomore year were you still up at the Boy Scout camp as a counselor?

GC: My freshman year, yes.

SH: Your sophomore year to junior year, do you remember what you did?

GC: I don't recall. I'm not sure if I was still a counselor at that point in time or not. I forget which year I didn't. I outgrew that a little bit. The next thing I know is between my junior and my senior year, that's when I had the first nine weeks at OCS up in Newport.

SH: Was it what you expected it to be?

GC: OCS? Didn't know what to expect, I mean, you…

SH: Because you have been in Air Force ROTC and now you're doing…

GC: Well, the ROTC was a little bit different. That was just drilling and marching, and so forth. It wasn't anything [as] much as OCS. You know, you saw the movies about boot camp and you kinda knew what was expected, what was going to happen, but then the reality of when it really happened to you was a little bit of a different story, too. I never went to boot camp. We were supposed to go, and when we joined the reserves, because we were college students, the guy that was the CO at the time said, "Well, okay, you can be the active duty for training officer." I said, "Well that's good. What do I do?" "Well, you send people to boot camp until the different A

schools, or whatever they have to go to as part of their military duties [opens up]," and in that capacity, as the applications for myself and my two buddies came to the top, I happened to put it at the bottom so I never went to boot camp and when we left OCS they wanted to know, "How come?", "Geez, I don't know, someone must have screwed up, I don't understand it either." But then when you got to OCS, you get out of the car and everything is normal and the next thing you know, someone's up there screaming in your face, "Button your buttons," "Roll down your sleeves," and, you know, that started it. From then you just rushed all over the place, get the equipment issued to you, and from then on your life is changed entirely. I mean, every waking moment you're doing something; you're up and doing PT or marching, you're drilling, you're in class, you're studying, you're out on the YPs, out on Narragansset Bay, trying to figure out how to steer a ship.

SH: I was going to ask had you any sailing experience other than the lake in Sussex County?

GC: No. No other experience. I mean, I'd been out on a boat before but in terms of having to control it or do anything, I hadn't a clue, and of course that was one of the things they tried to teach you up there and, you know, you got involved in it, just the ABCs, the basics, but, of course, in the navy you're expected to be able to drive a boat somewhere.

SH: Now, were your buddies still with you through OCS?

GC: Yup, same company.

SH: What are some of the stories from that, that you're willing to share? It sounds like it was quite a shock in '66 to be…

GC: Yes, it was. Nothing really out of the ordinary, they just kept you busy all the time and you were beat all the time up there, especially in the summertime in the heat up there, walking on. You used to get thirty-one hours of liberty on a weekend, after about the second or third week, so that's what everyone lived for, was to get that thirty-one hours of liberty, and they'd open up those gates and everyone went to the Viking Lounge and you spent the rest of the weekend there. I remember one of the songs was *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place* [1965 hit rock song recorded by The Animals], or something like that, that was requested by everybody, every fifteen minutes, you know. It was some good times, some funny things that happened and, I guess, that happened to everybody. It used to crack me up because with the military discipline [over] everything you had. We actually had rooms, not barracks, they're actually dorm rooms like right here, and when we got assigned to Nimitz Hall, "Boy, that's great." They got a rug in there, you know, nice navy blue rug in between the two beds and everything. I got to hate that rug like you wouldn't believe because it grabbed all this lint, all the time and you wound up [I don't know] how many times I spent on my hands and knees with masking tape in my hands blotting up this damn lint on this damn rug, which I got to hate. When you pulled your blinds down, you had that long cord that had to [be] coiled around just perfect. The ashtray had to be absolutely square on the desk, like this; it couldn't be off like that, you know. You used to put on your sweat socks and skate over the tile floor there to buff it up, to keep it clean, and they inspected it everyday. You walked [in] and saw a little pile of lint like that and a little dust bunny on your pillow, or something like that, you know you were in trouble. I mean, it was just insane. One of the other things that cracked

me up, was you had to have a laundry bag, and it was one of those you tied and then you had to take the ends and stick it down in the grommets, and then you hooked it over this hook in the back of your door. Well, it took you ten minutes to do that. So, everyone just threw a couple of pairs of underwear or socks in the darn thing and left it there, and all the rest of it you hid under your bunk, thinking that the chief didn't know you're hiding it under there of course. Or you hid it under the false ceiling, you know, like the magazines or candy. Of course, the chief would come by and hit the thing and everything would come crashing down and you're in trouble again. Everything was so regimented. The way they had that thing up there, it was comical and, of course, you have to make the beds so you can bounce a quarter on it, you know, and people would get under their beds and put their hands up there and that's where they'd try to catch a couple of zzzs when you had a few minutes off. You look like you were fixing your bed while you were zonked out.

SH: Who was in charge of your area? Wasn't there always someone in charge of your floor, or were you ever given that duty?

GC: Well, you had a company commander, who was, I think, he was a lieutenant but the main person you were in contact with was the chief petty officer and these were all grizzled guys that had been out, I'm sure they're all World War II veterans at the time, tattoos up and down their arms. These were tough guys, I mean, they were and they were something else. They weren't quite like a Marine drill instructor in Parris Island, but they were not that far behind either. They were pretty good taskmasters. One of the things, I think one of the funniest events we had up there was we had a guy that couldn't seem to do anything right. Everything he touched turned into a disaster. He was the guy with all the candy that would fall out of the rack when he was in it, and he made the mistake of one day leaving his locker open and everyone had a rifle and, if you know an M1, when you strip an M1 you got to pull back the trigger guard on the thing. It snaps it off, it takes out the trigger housing and then the muzzle breaks from the stock. To get that apart, sometimes you had to get a screwdriver and really pull the trigger guard back. It's that hard to get out sometimes. Well, we took his and we took his trigger guard out. So, it still stuck together, because, you know, it was a little bit stiff and we go out to drill and the first thing they do is they give right shoulder arms and he puts the gun there and the barrel flies off and separates from the stock. He's around looking like this, like, "Where's the trigger guard? How did this come out?" Like it just fell out, and this chief went nuts on him. We laughed about that. I mean, that was amusing to us; we laughed about that for a long time. He never got over it, I mean, this Mulcahy his name was.

SH: Did he make it through?

GC: Yes. Yes, he did.

SH: What was the commitment that you had, the years in service to go into this program?

GC: It was a kind of changing thing. It was a two-year commitment after commissioning or it could be longer, it was dependent, and it turned out to be funny, because in '69 they were actually starting to wind down some of the things in Vietnam and one of the things they said was that you had to either put in an extra year from when you were supposed to get out, or you had to

get out right at that point in time. At the time I didn't have an OOD [Officer of the Deck, ability to command a ship at sea] certificate, and they had changed the time in grade requirements, and I said, "Well, if that's the case, then you're going to make me stay an extra year. I'm going," and I got out. No, it was a two-year commitment, but I didn't even spend, I just barely spent over two years.

SH: Did you? So, you come back to Rutgers then and finish out your senior year after this time.

GC: After the first nine weeks.

SH: Did you come back do you think more disciplined?

GC: Well, yes, you had to be. I mean, you couldn't go through nine weeks of that thing, you know, doing all the things you did without having it affect you in some respects. It wasn't like you walked away from it because, during that year in between OCS, we still had the commitment to meet every week with the naval reserve in Perth Amboy.

SH: Every week, okay.

GC: And we used to do that and so you still had some involvement with it even though you weren't at OCS *per se*. Now, granted, they made some allowances for us. If we had exams, or something like that, we'd call up and just say, "Hey, listen, we have exams," and they'd say, "Okay, well, don't bother coming in." You know it was kind of a painless type of thing and it was good for us because the time in counted for pay purposes so the time in grade, you know, you had.

SH: I wondered if you felt like you were a little bit more mature than maybe some of your brothers here who had not had that experience.

GC: Well, like I said, a lot of them had stayed in ROTC. They went through the final two years of that, and then they got commissioned in the army as, or the Air Force as well, so they had kind of the same experience and you know parallel different venue but you know they had it as well so I don't think we came back feeling any different than that. I think that the one thing that we felt in our senior year was that, "Oh, man, I got to go through nine more weeks of this thing, when this is finally all over." I mean, after you had the first experience, the first nine weeks OCS, and then stopped, and you'd say, "I got to go back and do this again?" You know, that wasn't too much fun. I guess, you knew it was coming but on the other side of the coin, you wanted to get it over with and you want to get in and get on with the career. You didn't really look forward to it but you knew you were going to do it and that was okay.

SH: Do you think it changed how you made your plans then, your decision to get married and maybe do that earlier rather than put it off till you finished your two years?

GC: Well, it's something that I don't think anyone was really conscious about it; it just sort of happened that way. Like I said, a good number of guys in the fraternity house same, situation, they got married right after graduation because they knew they were going into the service, and a

lot of them were going to Vietnam, and I guess it was just sort of felt that way, to well, okay, everyone got married when they were twenty-one years old at the time, which thankfully it doesn't happen anymore, not much.

SH: Were you engaged in your senior year?

GC: Yes.

SH: You had already made that decision with the date and all that.

GC: Yes. As soon as, something that just happened. It was really, I can't say that it was a real conscious thing, that anyone really made big elaborate plans about it. It just sort of, that was the natural flow of things at that point in time.

SH: So, the courses that you were taking here at Rutgers, nothing really changed, you just continued and this was considered to be part of it, your senior year, after having gone through OCS. Were you more aware of the demonstrations against what was going on in Vietnam?

GC: Yes, because at that point in time it was starting to boil up pretty well and, yes, we were aware of it and I remember not liking them, not liking the demonstrations. I had a strong feeling back then that, you know, there was a reason for being over there, that it was something that was important, and the whole idea of the protesting, and so forth, like that I personally felt was very distasteful. I didn't agree.

SH: Did you ever take anyone on?

GC: No, not really. Well, yes, you'd have [a] conversation with somebody. I can remember playing out on the Rutgers golf course one time with somebody that started a whole bunch of noise and I just left, because it wasn't going to come out to be a good thing and, you know, I think that's what a lot of people did, is they avoided it. You know, rather than get into a confrontation with someone because no one is going to win the argument.

SH: No one picked you out because you had made this commitment to the military and to challenge you or to…

GC: No. You did run into stuff every now and then. I mean, actually, it was in the first batch of, the first year at OCS, the Newport Jazz Festival and Folk Festival [annual music festivals in Newport, Rhode Island] [they] used to have up there, and a bunch of us had tickets to go to it and, of course, you had to go, anytime you left the base you had to out in uniform, and we come walking into the jazz festival there and the next thing you know, we're getting rained on with beer cans and beer bottles and things like that. So, I guess, that's probably the only incident I had and I think the first song was *Is There Anyone Here Who Wants To Change Their Clothes For A Uniform?* or something like that. Well, we were the only six idiots in the place in uniforms, so I guess we stuck out a little bit. But that's the only time it really was that there was any kind of a confrontation *per se* of ideologies.

SH: Was your wife supportive?

GC: Yes.

SH: And your parents?

GC: Yes.

SH: Was there any difference between, any kind of kidding or ribbing each other, between those who had stayed in the ROTC and the Air Force ROTC and yourself, who has been in the navy, was there any rivalry or ribbing going back and forth within the house?

GC: I'm sure there was but nothing that would amount to anything.

SH: Do you remember your graduation?

GC: Vaguely.

SH: Do you remember who spoke at your graduation?

GC: No.

SH: Did you graduate in uniform?

GC: No. Cap and gown. That was it.

SH: Let's then talk about when you got back to Rhode Island for OCS, did you take your wife with you? Were you married at that point?

GC: Yes, I was, but no. The housing up there was not so great. They didn't have any provisions for spouses at that point in time; it was an unaccompanied tour while you were still at OCS. But after OCS and getting commissioned in late October, early November, then I had orders to Fleet Sonar School in Key West, Florida. I had my orders already for Argentia, Newfoundland, that was going to be my duty station, and we had five weeks down in Key West at the Fleet Sonar School, and then it was up to Newfoundland and my wife did accompany me up there, that was an accompanied tour. So, she was finishing out a semester at Trenton State, and then after the fall semester she joined me up in Argentia, Newfoundland.

SH: Talk a little bit about what your assignment was, what your duties were.

GC: I was assigned to Naval Facility, Argentia, which was a sort of an independent facility on the naval air station up there. Naval Facility, Argentia was part of what they called Ocean Systems Atlantic, which was under the command of the Submarine Forces Atlantic. At the time it was one of the most secret projects in the United States Navy, it was top secret. You had to have a top secret clearance to be involved with it, and it was very, very, hush, hush at the time. Now, it's talked about, they've closed those facilities down, because they have bigger and better

things. Basically what we were involved with was the tracking, detection and tracking of Soviet nuclear submarines. It was basically a fixed passive array sonar that was on the ocean floor. It ran a cable back to the facilities, we had that, basically, was like an old fax machine, where a stylus would go back and forth across this paper and it would register the hertz of the different sounds and vibrations, and so on, of whatever it was tracking. Each of these arrays was set at a certain angle so you could actually track where this source of sound was, whether it was the SSTG, the ship service turbo-generator, at fifty hertz for a Russian nuke or sixty hertz for American nuke, or the turbine-to-blade ratios. It would all print out on this continuously moving piece of paper that was stacked and we had three or four different arrays out there so that we could triangulate them, okay, and we could fix the position of the ships. Now, what happened was that as soon as the Russian nukes used to come out of Murmansk and come around the North Cape by Norway we'd pick them up, four thousand miles away, and we'd track them all the way down to over there, on station, off New London, Connecticut or Charleston, South Carolina, or wherever they'd happen to be and they'd be on station for three months and they [would] be there sixty miles north, sixty miles west, sixty miles south, sixty miles east, and they just stay there. We'd track them in transit and fly on them, periodically. They didn't allow us to do that too much because they didn't want us to tip our hand, but every now and then, they'd let us go up there and drop a couple of PDCs on them, practice depth chargers, little one pounders, just to say, "We know you're there." Never did any harm except for the sonar operator; I'm sure his ears probably felt like he had his brains blown out, when those things would go off on him. We do that, and then, we'd be involved, sometimes we'd have exercises with the different anti-submarine groups that would fly on them out there and track them, and then be involved with exercises with American submarines as well. American submarines were much, much, much quieter. The Russians it sounded like someone was banging on a garbage can. I mean, they had pieces of junk that they used to have out there; it was really something, the noise that these things would make. Americans were quite a bit quieter, and much, much, much harder to detect. But that's what we'd do. It was very, very interesting work.

SH: Your specific job was…

GC: Well, I started off as just a watch officer. I guess, there was about thirty men on each shift. It was of course twenty four hours a day seven days a week, all the time, and each one was an operator. They were the ones that were trained and actually reading these sheets, like faxes, that would, you know, would allow them to pinpoint, they would get the strongest angle so they would know what it was. There were the ones that were classified, we would oversee that. We had to attest to what, to what they said and make sure all the proper paperwork is going in, that the communication with Norfolk was always up and running so that they were aware when we had an active Soviet nuke out there, that we were getting the information to our headquarters, you know, in a timely manner. After that, for a while, we used to do all kinds of drilling and I was moved up into what they called research officer where basically you did a lot of the research on the thing, trying to pinpoint the specific submarines, what they were, the different classes that they were so you knew. You know, we were building up information on all the Russian submarines, and so on, as much as we could; it was an ongoing effort to get as much nailed down as you possibly could. So, I was involved then with the training, setting up drills, you know, we put tape on in the middle of the night sometimes, a Russian nuke that we had maybe tracked two or three years earlier and we put that up there just to make sure that the operators, that were

supposed to be able to pick these things up, would pick them up and do all the proper things that they were supposed to do in terms of tracking and reporting. I basically did that, and then, I was the top secret crypto officer as well, so I had to get up if a top secret message would come in at three o'clock in the morning. Well, I got the call to go down there and punch out these top secret messages that would come in, and it was always a treat.

SH: With all the things that were going on in the world, you know, that were affecting American defense policy, what was the tensest moment for you?

GC: I don't know if there was anything that was really, really, super tense. I guess, the thing that got us most, where we got the most involved with a lot of outside people getting involved was when the *Scorpion* [the USS *Scorpion* (SN-589), an American nuclear submarine, was lost with 99 aboard on May 22, 1968] went down. No one knew exactly, or at least to the best of my knowledge no one knew what caused that to happen at the time. We didn't even really know exactly where it sank. But as it so turned out, there was, we had picked up a disturbance. Apparently, I picked up some kind of a disturbance that no one understood exactly what it was. It didn't have any meaning to anybody and, I guess, going back then, they had some experts come up from whatever, whoever the people of, I think it was Westinghouse or General Electric that was involved with this program and they went back and recreated these tapes and were able to triangulate where this noise, or this thing happened, and shortly after that is when they got the pictures of the *Scorpion* down below. So, we had actually helped track that whole event, and then there was a lot of speculation of what was going on. Someone had said that they had tracked us, with the Russian nuke in the area at the time, that they thought that the *Scorpion* was on a high speed attack run on the thing and it came out, it actually jammed his bow planes and came out of the water and broke in half. So, I mean, I don't know, but that was a conjecture at that time. I mean, the American nukes used to get behind the Russian nukes, you know, and track them all over the place, and, you know, if they were going to start to do something they would blow them right out of the water before they even got a shot and that's what they used to do. That was the speculation, anyway, with the *Scorpion*. That was kind of tense, because everyone was really trying to find out what the hell happened with that thing. We had all these experts all over, looking over your shoulder on everything you were doing, as you were going back and reviewing these tapes, trying to figure out what you had and what you didn't.

SH: Did you wind up having extra duty, or how does that play out then with someone on station like you're on because there was all this speculation as to what happened to the *Scorpion*?

GC: It really didn't have any; we had three watches, four watch groups, that rotated around all the time. The only thing you might have, like your CO maybe they're a little bit more, your operations officer, your executive officer, might be there a little bit more watching what you're doing, second guessing you, and maybe you know, it was some of that, but that went on pretty much all the time, so it didn't ratchet up. I mean, they couldn't put anymore people on there, I mean, you only could have so many people to read X amount of these consoles, you know, that put the stuff out there, so it didn't make a difference.

SH: You were dealing specifically and only with the submarines?

GC: Well, we could track surface ships as well. One of the things we used to do was, the Russian trawler fleet used to be off the Grand Banks quite a bit now. They were, supposedly, fishing. They had antennas and aerials on those things like crazy. I mean, they were communications ships, and the Russian nukes used to get underneath there and hide. They thought they were hiding under there. We'd track the Russian trawler fleet, as well, because odds are if we track them long enough we'd find some of their nukes. So, we used to track the surface ships and we'd also been working with the VP squadrons, the anti-submarine squadrons. We'd go out there and we'd locate a particular ship and we'd give the coordinates, and so on, and fly out there. The P-3s [land-based, long range anti-submarine warfare patrol aircraft] would go out and fly on the thing and they'd document that we had hit the location and that's how they, basically, train. So, that if there ever got to be a shooting war they, you know, pretty much know what they were going to do. It was interesting, too, because one time we were up near where the Canadians used to fly, and they were part of the group, since we were in Canada, they were involved with us, as well as the anti-submarine [squadrons]. They were a little bit crazy. They were really pissed at the Russians because they thought that they were sneaking into some of the coves in their territorial waters. The Canadians didn't like that one bit. They were out flying this one time, and we were up at night in the middle of North Atlantic, and they had a big searchlight in the front of their planes and the bomb bay doors. They'd come in, off the water, they turn on the spotlight, this big searchlight, and they go right over the Russian trawlers fleet and take off a bunch of their masts. I said, "You guys, you got to be crazy. Here we are five hundred miles out in the North Atlantic, you're going to puncture a gas tank, or something like that; we're going to go in the water; who do you think is going to pick us up, the Russians? We just took their masts off."

SH: Now, you were flying with them?

GC: Yes.

SH: How often did you go in the air?

GC: Not much with the Canadians, but I would guess maybe ten different flights over that period of time with the P-3 squadrons that were assigned up there at the time. They used to rotate them around, from Azores or from Greenland or from Bermuda or wherever the P-3 was home based, they'd go on temporary assignment up to Argentia and then we'd fly them up there for a bit. I guess, maybe eight or ten times, I had to go up with the crews.

SH: Now, why were you flying with the crews?

GC: Well, it was just the other part of, just another part of the whole Ocean System as far as how everything is supposed to work together. You had to know how the Air Wing acted in that capacity, because, you know, you were coordinating everything with them in terms of the detection and tracking of the Soviets. What they had was sonar buoys that they would drop across the area, we'd say, "Okay there's a Russian nuke sailing on this course and go in here," and they would fly up ahead of it and drop sonar buoys across it and they'd track them the same way as we would track it with a fix, passive gear. That was their training because they had, I mean because you could say, "It's there," but they had to find it if they were going to drop a

depth charge or whatever they were going to do on it. They had to find it, as well, so that was part of it. We detected them; we tracked it; we told them where they were. They had to go up there and do it, and we had to observe them doing that so we knew what their capabilities were and that's, basically, the reason why you flew. It was just basically so you knew what they were doing, what they were capable of, and how they had to go about doing it.

SH: Were you confident in your exec officer and your commanding officer? Did you feel they were up to what they should be?

GC: Well, frankly, they didn't know as much as we did in terms of the detection. That was our experience, I mean, that was our thing. The skipper had more responsibility. The operations manager was more knowledgeable in terms of what we were doing. The XO and the skipper, basically, they were administrative. I mean, they had to be involved, and they were involved with all this, but as far as the technical aspects of it, they didn't have that.

SH: How many navy personnel were there, officers and enlisted, at Argentia?

GC: At the naval facility, not the whole base, I would say there was probably a hundred on the four watch groups, plus the communications department, the research departments, and the maintenance departments. Officers, two officers a watch, and about ten or twelve enlisted men that were actually involved in the detection and tracking, I guess, about a hundred overall complementing the naval facility in general.

SH: With this being such a top secret facility was the designation something else? You did this but did people on the base know who you were and what you were doing? I understand it's a much larger facility than just this navy group.

GC: Right, there was a whole airfield there and a harbor, and so forth. It happened to be the base where they signed the Atlantic Charter, I guess, Roosevelt and Churchill back in the early stages of World War II. People knew that we were assigned to the naval facility. It was a kind of a funny thing. We were, basically, pretty young at the time and the people from the naval facility basically hung out and stayed together, only because they warned you, over and over, "Be careful when you go to a cocktail party. Don't go here. Loose lips sinks ships, you know, don't go talking about what goes on." It was top secret. They didn't know, the rest of the people didn't know, what we did. They knew that it was a secret facility. It was up on a spit of land, you know, actually separated from the base itself. It was surrounded by a chain link fence, with razor wire, and so forth, and access was not available to anybody, other than people that were assigned to the naval facility itself, unless they had special permission, obviously. So, it was separate. It was apart and the people from the naval facility, basically, pretty much stuck to themselves because you didn't want to be in a situation where you were going to say something wrong that shouldn't have gone out. So, that was always in the back of [our] minds a little bit. I mean, that was hammered into us in terms of the secrecy that is involved with it. The communications was all secret. It was all encoded, encrypted. A lot of rumors about what we were doing, we used to laugh about, you know, everyone was way off base. But that was about all. They had a Marine contingent up there. That [is] all we've got there. If something was going on at all, we just dial this one number and they'd be hauling ass up the road fully armed in

a heartbeat. I mean, they'd go right over the razor wire, and everything else like that, to secure the compound, and they called it "the sabotage alert drills" and we used to have them quite frequently, just to make sure that you know in case anyone was getting around where they shouldn't be, that they, you know, you couldn't allow it.

SH: Did anything ever happen? Was it ever infiltrated in anyway that you were aware of?

GC: No. Only by our own people.

SH: Just as a drill.

GC: Yes. They used to have operational readiness inspections every, oh, I guess, it was a couple of times a year, maybe, where they would fly up a group from Norfolk, from headquarters, and basically, they'd try to get into the building, one way or the other, simulate sabotage and you had to go through this whole drill of, you know, taking care of that. You got graded on it to see how you made out, and that was just part of the ongoing readiness type of inspection, but only our own people. I mean, no one ever, to my knowledge, no one from the outside ever stuck their nose in.

SH: Inadvertently or…

GC: No.

SH: You talked about how you were able to have your wife there. What about the housing? What allotment and things were you given because you're obviously on Canadian property, did you have base housing *per se*?

GC: Well, yes, the first couple of months I was up there I was in the bachelor officer's quarters at the time because my wife wasn't with me. When she came there they had base housing. It was basically four units, attached units, four apartments, two bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, you know, fairly decent, all furnished, and I would say that there was probably seventy or eighty or ninety units like that. There were some individual houses stand alone houses basically for the higher ranking brass. It was a great duty station. It was. If you've ever been to Newfoundland, there's not a whole lot to it. There's not a lot to do, I mean, the nearest town, St. George, is eighty miles away. But it had every kind of shop, every kind of hobby place you would want there, from rifle ranges to furniture shops to automobile shops, to anything. If you wanted to go fishing for Giant Bluefin Tuna you signed up; they had a couple of tuna boats. They'd take you to Concepcion Bay and you'd be out there with eight-hundred-pound fish. Just sign up and go. If you wanted to [go] hunting or fishing in the interior, you signed up for this place and there was some places that [you] only could [get] to by sea plane, they'd land you right there and they had guides out there for moose hunting, for fishing, and so on, and you fly back a couple of days later. Just everything you would want to do up there. You didn't wait for a nice sunny day to go and do it, because you didn't have that many of them. It never was really super cold up there, because it just happened to be in a area where the Gulf Stream happens to swing by there, so the temperature is not out of this world, but it is rainy and overcast a lot, but it was a great tour. It was a great place to party and have a good time and be. They had the officers' club

that was there. We stayed pretty close to our chief so we wound up over to the chief's club quite a bit and everything was reasonable, twelve cents a pack of cigarettes, a dollar for a quart of gin, you know. When we had a wetting down party when we made, two other guys and myself made JG at the same time, and I don't know if they still do that, but it used to be tradition if you made rank then you had [to] have a wetting down party. So, they had these cabins, and so forth, off the base, on like a little fjord, sleep about eight or ten people and, you know, it was a pretty good sized cabin. Well, we went out on a sailboat and went around to all the Newfs [Newfoundlanders] out there, their lobster traps. We each kicked in seventeen dollars apiece, went out there and about a hundred and fifty pounds of lobster right from these Newfs. Throw them a five dollar bill, they throw over ten-twelve lobsters to you. Then [we] picked up a whole bunch of steaks down at the officers' club and all the beer and booze, and we had about a hundred people out at this wetting down party. Everyone partied hardy and had a good time and they had plenty to eat and when it was all over, we each took a bunch of lobster back, a bunch of steak back, a bunch of booze back, and we got $7.00 back. So, I'd have to make about $350,000.00 a year to duplicate the social life up there for $10.00. I haven't gotten over it yet.

SH: There are regrets, right?

GC: Yes.

SH: Did your wife enjoy it?

GC: Yes, she did. I mean, like I said, it was a close group by necessity, because we had to kinda stay together so we didn't go yapping about what we shouldn't we shouldn't, be talking about. A lot of activities; a lot of card playing, a lot of partying, a lot of base movies.

SH: Did you have any children at this point?

GC: My oldest daughter was born up there, she's got dual citizenship.

SH: Were there good medical facilities and other things?

GC: Adequate. I mean, I don't know how modern they really were at the time. They had, obviously, doctors, dentists. There was quite a few babies born up there so they, obviously, had all the right people to do all that.

SH: It was done by the Navy?

GC: Yes. No, it was all done by the navy.

SH: What about the enlisted people, were they also provided with housing or were they…

GC: They also had housing. It was similar. There was a lot more of them in barracks, especially the unmarried ones. But it was an accompanied company tour, quite a few of the people there did have their wives up there and their families. They had mixed housing as well. Not a whole lot different than what ours was actually.

SH: Was there any problem with the integration or segregation of the men?

GC: No. They were the same way in their area. They kinda hung together the same way, as well for the same reasons that we did. They were indoctrinated to the fact that it was a top secret facility, that they had to be careful what was said and what they didn't say, and they kinda hung together pretty much themselves, too. But we had a very, very open, I would guess in there, because it was a small group, especially, when you're on the watches. You were on with these people forever and it wasn't one of these super-discipline type facilities and things like that. These guys were experts, you know, you accepted them for what they were, that they knew how to read these graphs, and they were able to interpret what they saw down there. They were the ones that came in there and almost always made the initial detections. We worked very close with them. Overall, I had a very good relationship I think with them.

SH: Other than the *Scorpion*, were there any other incidents that you recall?

GC: No, not really. It was, basically, just the routine tracking of these. It was just an ongoing thing. As one would come, the one submarine would come down and the other one would be leaving, and so on, and they just rotated off station. We did have some interesting things with them. We had one that a November-class submarine that used to be on station quite often down there. It had been in some type of an accident, we don't know what. The Russian nukes had twin shafts, twin blades, twin props I should say, and the ratio between the turbine and the blade ratio was, 10.98 to 1 was the Russian nuclear submarines, and on this one particular November-class submarine, it had, I forget which one it was now, the starboard or portside, had a 10.98 to 1 ratio and the other was a 10.89 to 1, so, by that little bit of a difference, we were able to pick that one up every single time it came up and we used to watch him. They got him on the surface one time, it was pennant number 301 and so that's how precise we could track these things, at any rate, like that. It became routine after a while. It was, you know, you'd see something new, just before I was leaving there. While I was in there we had the November, Hotel, and Echo-class submarines. They were, basically, attack submarine, a guided missile cruise submarine, and a beginning of a ballistic submarine in the Hotels. Just when I was getting out the new classes were coming out with the Yankee, the Charlie and, I think, it was the Victor-class. Brand new submarines that we were just starting to track, and pick up and classify, and learn about these, this was the next generation that was coming out at the time. They were only out for a couple of months before I left the service, so that was sort of exciting, but it was just because it was new territory. Basically, it was just a routine, it was just ongoing tracking, and knowing where these guys were every minute of time.

SH: You talked about your decision not to stay in the military. Would anything have changed that for you, a different duty station, a different…

GC: Actually, I extended my tour up in Newfoundland. I put it in for another year past when I was supposed to have rotated out. But what happened is I got assigned to Ocean System right out of OCS, right out of Fleet Sonar School. Normally, you would be assigned to a destroyer or some surface ship first. At the time it was important to have an OOD certificate in your file, which is officer of the deck, meaning you qualified for command at sea. In other words, you

could handle a ship at sea. They also had taken out the time in grade requirements. There was no longer a requirement to be a lieutenant J.G. for two years before you got into the zone for lieutenant. You didn't have to be a lieutenant for five years before you got into the zone for lieutenant commander. They had taken that out, so you had more rapid promotion, and I never had the OOD certificate. So, then, when I was getting ready to stay and I said, "I want to go in to destroyers," I need to get this OOD certificate, because you really need that for promotion at the time. Well, there is a problem now. Now, you're J.G. or a junior lieutenant, and you're going to have to go out on the ship and you're going to have to train under an ensign or a junior J.G. and they didn't want to do that. So, at the time, I was kind of between a rock and a hard place. I didn't have the OOD certificate, and they were making it difficult for me to get one because of their hang-ups they had with rank and time and grade. So, it turned out that after this all happened that they basically took that requirement away. You didn't need that because there were so many areas of technical experience, and so on, that was as important as the OOD certificate, command at sea, that it wasn't necessary anymore. But at that time it was, so when the time came, they said, "Well, you can either spend an extra years in or get out now." I said, "Well, I'm out here. I don't have my OOD certificate, you're going to put time in grade requirements back in, why?" As it turned out, like I said, those requirements went away for future promotions, in a way [I] always regretted getting out after the fact.

SH: Well, at the time, did you stay in the reserves?

GC: No.

SH: What did you decide to do after that? Was this training that you had, were you able to put that to good use?

GC: Absolutely not. I don't know what a civilian counterpart there was to that. I mean, I just don't know. I mean, I suspect there might be something but I didn't have a clue. I mean, like I said from the time that they had this announcement, you can either stay or you got to get out, I was home pounding the pavement within two weeks and I didn't have a clue what I was going to do, and I didn't really see a translation from what I did in the service to civilian life. I can't even yet think of what, whether there might have been some kind of transfer. I mean, I guess you could have gone to work for, I had the technical background, I suppose you could have gone to Westinghouse or any of the other big companies that were involved in defense systems but that wasn't my expertise either, so I just don't know where to take it.

SH: So, what did you decide to do?

GC: Well, I wound up going into distribution and transportation for no good reason other than that [I] took a bunch of interviews for all kinds of different jobs, because I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do at all and I just happened to have been involved with the distribution and transportation area and kinda grew into that over a period of time and I wound up doing that until I quit, retired.

SH: When you look back on that era and Vietnam, what stands out the most for you? Because your duty station was top secret, very necessary in the Cold War as it was called, and Vietnam is

happening on the other side of the world, what were your thoughts about them now looking back?

GC: Well, obviously, we all knew we were involved with Vietnam. I mean, we used to get a lot of intelligence because of Vietnam. We were certainly aware of all the protests and all the other stuff going on at the time. We were kinda insulated on the base that was up there. I had wanted to go to Vietnam, foolishly. When we were going through interviewing in classification one of the things I wanted to pursue was patrol boat river, swift boats. I guess, fortunately, they thought anyone that was interested in that had a screw loose, so they didn't send you there. The navy's kind of always been known for it. They figure out where you want to go and they send you as far away from there as you can go. Probably if you took a pole and stuck it through the globe from Vietnam to the middle of the earth it would have come out in Argentia, Newfoundland, as about as far away from Vietnam as you can get. Yes, I guess, we knew what was going on and we got a lot of intelligence on it. We were certainly aware of the, we had television up there, we weren't in the middle of nowhere, you know, you saw all the protests and all the nonsense that was going on. We were very much aware of it but we were insulated from it. We were on a base. It's not like the Newfs were out there protesting about the war outside the gates; they could care less.

SH: Is that true, that's what I wondered, did they…

GC: No, the area around the base was very rural. I mean, dirt roads, the people dirt poor basically. I mean, the only thing they, some minimal farming, minimal numbers of jobs. Fishing was about the only industry up there, and not a whole lot of that. Really, really, nice people but very, very poor, Scotch, Irish descent. I never heard any of them say anything about Vietnam, ever, and we used to do a lot of things with them. They had crew racing. We had interaction with them in other areas, where we got to know them fairly well. They were just totally uninvolved with Vietnam and so we never heard anything about it. It was quiet.

SH: So, you moved your family and came back to Milltown?

GC: Yes. We came back there, then bought a place in Freehold and another one in Piscataway, a bunch more since then…

SH: Did your children come to Rutgers?

GC: My daughter did. She graduated in about '92.

SH: Well, is there anything that you'd like to put on tape before we end? Any thoughts or regrets, or what are you most proud of?

GC: Well, I'm glad I was in the service. I wouldn't have missed it for the world, to tell you the truth. I think it's an experience than more people should avail themselves of. There's some parts of it that aren't really too much fun, some of it's really miserable in some respects, but there is a lot to be said for it because there's a camaraderie. You learn some hard lessons there, you have some good times. I mean, I can go back and think about some of the things we did

there and the experiences you had, you know, I never would have had them if I hadn't gone to the service. I've always thought of myself as fairly patriotic and I would have thought I was cheating somebody if I hadn't gone in. All in all, I think it was a good experience and I'm glad I had it.

SH: Have you kept in contact with any of the people that you served with up there.

GC: A couple but it's been thirty-something years right now and they're all over the world again. I've lost track with most of them. A couple we had visited back and forth with and that were down in Charleston and he was out at Guam. I lost track of him after Guam. I don't [know] whether he went to Adak [Alaskan Army and Naval Operating Base]o r where he went after that. The facilities we were into, I guess, were shut down in the mid '90s. They got better ways of doing things with all these super spy satellites right now, so the facilities that were so important to us then, in terms of these NAVFACS [naval facilities], they don't exist anymore. But I've often said that I'll probably never do anything half as interesting as what I did when I was in the navy there.

SH: You must have done something really right to be able to qualify to be in that position at that time.

GC: It was fairly new technology. It was funny they were having a Canadian-US war game and the meeting was going to be at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the *Bonaventure*, which was about a 35,000-ton Canadian aircraft carrier. Myself and one of the other guys that worked with me were sent there as the experts in this particular area, because it was going to be a combined submarine, the whole nine yards operation, and here was a Lieutenant J.G. Christ and Lieutenant J.G. Kinney, you know up there and I think that the next lowest rank I saw, anywhere, was a four-stripe captain. So, here was these two punk kids, basically, up there going through all the stuff with all the ones that was running this big war game and maybe there was a commander or two, I don't know, but I said, "What am I doing here? I must be in the wrong building."

SH: What do you call it, scrambled eggs, is that the term for…

GC: Field grade, for commander on up. There was none on my hat.

SH: But, again, we thank you. We take great pride in being involved in something like this. When you were there, where were your buddies?

GC: Paul [Allman] wound up on a ship somewhere, I have no idea where. Bob Lewis wound up on a destroyer tender out of Norfolk. I ran into him when I had to go to the cryptography course in Norfolk for top secret clearance for communications and I met him on his ship at that point in time. That's the only time I saw him since he graduated. Paul, I saw a couple of years ago, at a prior reunion and I'll see him Saturday for the first time in probably twenty years. Bob, I haven't seen since we walked out at OCS back in 1967. We've played telephone tag a couple of times, trying to hook up. I understand he bought a bar out of Galveston Island in Texas, that's done real well, but I can't get a hold of him. I stayed in close touch with Jim Riley, he's been my best man twice and I stay close with him. In fact, I tried to get a hold of him last night. Henry Daum

is another one, but he never went in the service, but I stayed pretty close to him. Basically the rest of them I haven't seen them since the days we walked out of that fraternity house.

SH: Were you aware of the fraternity brothers that were lost in Vietnam at the time when you were…

GC: At the time, no. I mean, lately Carl Burns, you know, I said it's Veteran's Day Memorial every year now and he's had some names, but at the time [I] wasn't aware. I've known quite a few people that were over in Nam but I didn't know anyone really at the time. I know Riley was over there and I know Carl was over there along with a whole bunch of others.

SH: Again, if there was anything that I didn't ask that I should have that you would like get on the record, please feel free to talk about it and get on the record…

GC: No, I think, basically, we covered everything that was of any kind of importance. I guess, it was really nothing earth shaking and nothing spectacular, it was just routine type of stuff, which I guess a lot of the military; it's just a routine stuff. You know, it was important at the time and I think we did it as good as you could possibly do it and I think we were important and, I guess, that's really about it.

SH: Did you stay involved with Rutgers?

GC: Not a whole lot. I mean, I go to football games here and there. More involvement through the fraternity house. I've been back and forth with them a number of times. I go and get involved with the alumni, then they get me mad about something and I walk away and a couple years later I go back again, and it would repeat the cycle. Carl has been excellent as far as pulling some things together over there, that's really what they needed, so I've been more involved with [them] the last couple of years since he's been back involved than I had been prior to that. It was one of those hot and cold things.

SH: Well, I thank you so much for agreeing to come in and talk with us today and, again, my thanks on many levels for what you've done and, again, thank you.

GC: Okay, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Greg Flynn 10/8/07
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 10/16/07
Reviewed by Gary Christ 1/19/08