RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD DE SANTE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Jonathan Gurstelle: This begins an interview with Richard de Sante on April 16, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, conducted by Jonathan Gurstelle and Shaun Illingworth. Mr. de Sante, to begin, can you tell us a little bit about your family?

Richard de Sante: Yes, I have one brother and I had one sister. … That was the extent of my family. My parents were both born in this country. … My father is of Italian extraction. My mother is Irish. My mother came from the Troy, New York, area. My father came from the Massachusetts area. They got married in 1913, I was wrong there [on the pre-interview survey] on the date, and my father worked for Swift and Company, [the] meat people

JG: What did he do at Swift?

RD: He was a bookkeeper, and they moved down to Long Branch, I don't know how it came about, but, it came about, he moved down there, and they had a daughter, born on … February 15, 1918. My brother was born in 1920, he was on the 30th of October, and I was born two years later, 1922, on the 20th of October, so, [that was] the three of us. My parents, of course, they're both deceased now, and my sister died several years ago of breast cancer, before it was, you know, very popular, because she didn't really recognize it. By the time she caught on, it was too late. My brother's still alive and well. He is eighty-two, now, yes, I guess he's just about eighty-two, and I'm about eighty. What else do you want to know about my family?

Shaun Illingworth: Do you know how or when your father's family immigrated to the United States?

RD: No. You know, what happened [was], he was, as I say, of Italian descent, we weren't interested in that when we were your age. About when my father passed on, we became interested, but, then, it was almost too late. Because when he was young, he was here, his father had a roving eye and left … his mother, and he just went someplace, and his mother died, and my father was raised by his sister, and he doesn't have much Italian heritage. He didn't tell us too much about it. He didn't even know how to speak Italian, and it was so bad, he was running for office in Long Branch, which is a heavily Italian populated town, and he had to take Italian lessons, [laughter] but, anyhow, what was I saying now? I lose my train of thought once in awhile. Give me a prompt.

JG: Which office did your father run for in Long Branch?

RD: I guess it was councilman. He didn't make it. [laughter] At that time, … let's see, what was he? I think he was a Democrat, and he got mad at the Democrats, and he became a Republican, [laughter] … because politics is local, all local. … He worked for Swift and Company, as a bookkeeper, and he used to do books on the side. He's a general accountant. He never became a CPA, but, he was pretty good, and he had a lot of big accounts, local builders and things like that. … For awhile, [laughter] this is an interesting story, he would do income taxes for a lot of the old Italian people in the area, who, "Don't speaka good English," you know, that talk like that, … and he was dying. He had several mini strokes and he had a lot of things wrong with him. He was gradually dying, over a period of maybe eight months, and these people started calling, asking him to do their taxes for them, and we said, "He can't do them. He's sick." They

kept saying, "Hey, Mr. de Sante'll do 'em," you know, and so, they kept pestering and pestering, and, finally, we said, "All right." My brother and I got their things from … the year before. We'd never done an income tax and we got them out, and looked at them, and just faked them out, made them all for the next year for all those people; nothing happened. [laughter] Don't record that for Uncle Sam, [laughter] but, it worked, you know. We did that, but, that's what my father did, … but, my brother and I never went into the business with him. We could have. My brother … took a business course. He went to St. Peter's College and he worked for (Simmons?) Company for most of his working life. He's retired now and I went to Rutgers Engineering School.

SI: What was it like to grow up in West Long Branch?

RD: I grew up in Long Branch, which is a town of about thirty thousand people. It was a lot different than it is now. Now, it's almost, oh, half Hispanic, I would say, and … there was a very small African-American population, we didn't call them that then, but, maybe five percent or something like that. It was torn with a lot of strife between the politicians. Nobody was happy. Everybody was sniping at everybody else, you know. It never got any place. Only recently, within the last five years, have they got a group of people in there who are working all together and the town's coming back. You've been reading in the papers about a major, major revitalization of the town, so, it shows you what you can do if you work together, you know. … We used to have little races with automobiles. You could not do today what we did then. We would drive around in our cars, turn the lights out, and try to play hide and seek, try to catch a guy, go through people's backyards. [laughter] There were no cars around, you know. You couldn't do it today. That was one thing I remember. The other was, sometime during my growing up, the police started to get radios, radio cars. They didn't have them before and this had a major effect on Halloween. Prior to that, you know, you could do what you wanted to do, but, once they got the radio cars, they got on top of everything, and they cut down our activities quite a bit. I remember that. One other thing we did that you guys don't have the fun of doing is, Fourth of July, we could legitimately buy a lot of fireworks. We weren't very well off, so, my father would wait until the night of the 3rd of July to buy the fireworks, because they always reduced the price, right. He'd go and haggle with the local guy, whoever it was, to get the fireworks, and we'd shoot them off. We would take these little salutes and put them in cans, and, the best thing to do, we used hub caps, because hub caps wouldn't explode, but, the cans would only take, maybe, three shots, and they're all ripped apart. Some cans were better than others. We used to get to know the good cans and the bad cans. [laughter] So, we did that, too, and one other thing that I thought about that you guys don't have the fun of doing, and other younger people, a lot of games we played that they don't even think about today, you know, like ring-o-leveo, kick the can, Johnny jump up, that kind of stuff. … You may never have even heard of them. …

SI: We have heard of some of them.

RD: Yes, and we had a game where we took a stick and cut the ends of it down, so [that] it was tapered, and you hit it … on one end, … hit it with a stick, and then, you'd see how far you could hit it, you know, that kind of stuff, but, a lot of games, oh, and then, the knife, remember the penknife? … You take the penknife, open it up, and you'd start flipping from your fingers, from

your elbows, shoulders, ears, and go all the way around, and the guy who missed had to start all over again, see who'd get through the whole thing. I forget what that was called, that and marbles, but, you don't have anything like that now.

SI: No, it is all video games.

RD: No. [laughter]

JG: Was your neighborhood mostly Italian-American?

RD: Predominantly, I would say, Italian and Irish, the town was, yes. We lived in a two-family house, we rented the house, and, as I say, my father was a bookkeeper and he didn't have an awful lot of money. I don't know exactly when, maybe some time before World War II, the bank, … they owned the house, he was renting from them, they said, "We're selling the house. Somebody's going to buy it, so, you're going to have to get out." He got frightened, so, he turned around, borrowed money and bought the house. … That made a major change, but, you know, that was it. So, we had a two-family house, another family next to us. We used to play ballgames in the backyard and there were two brothers that were [there], like, my brother and I were this and they were like that, one older than us, you know. … So, me and the older guy would play together against the two middle guys, and we'd play touch football. [laughter] … That family, the father was a postman and a gardener and every year, about August, he would order a load of manure and it would come in with a horse driven thing, and the backyard stunk, but, it was good for the flowers. So, the manure would go in the middle of his side of the backyard. So, when we played football, we'd take three steps and cut to the poop, you know, right around again, use it as a "pick off" play, kind of, you know. [laughter] So, we had a lot of fun.

SI: Was Long Branch primarily a rural farming community then?

RD: I don't think it was a farming community, no, but, it wasn't a commuting community either. I'm really not sure, but, there weren't too many farms there. They had about thirty thousand people in the town, twenty-five, thirty thousand, which was pretty good.

SI: Did many people come down from New York and Pennsylvania during the summer?

RD: Every summer, from Newark, especially, that area, mostly Italians. … They'd all come down and either rent a house or they had a house that they would use, yes. … My brother and I both worked as locker boys, you know, and as lifeguards, you know, as we kept progressing up the scale. We worked there almost every summer. I picked up two melanomas working on the beach, one of them here, one on my back. They discovered them in the early '80s, but, it comes when you're, you know, … really young, tough sunburn. It's very popular now to get melanoma, you know, but not then.

SI: Did the Shore play a big part in your life as a child and teenager?

RD: Oh, yes. I loved the beach, never really liked boating, but, I used to swim all the time when we worked. We used to take boats out and ride waves with boats, you know, and ride waves on our belly, and … slither, on about three inches of water, you could slide across the water. … I loved it. Now, I don't go in the ocean at all anymore. [laughter]

JG: Did you have any other hobbies or activities growing up?

RD: Yes. … We had a field behind our house and a bunch of the local kids would clean it out. We'd start a fire, burn all the brush and straighten it out and have a baseball field. We played baseball. We played football. We didn't play much basketball. We had a couple of dogs that were greyhounds. At that time, Long Branch had dog-racing, you know. They had a stadium and they used to run greyhounds, and they did what they do today, it's kind of popular today, they give greyhounds away, you've heard of that? Yes, well, we got two of them. The first one we got was a black one, his name was Tom Shadow, and my mother was cooking some chops on the stove and the dog went right up and took the chop right out of the pan, and nobody could touch him in the house. [laughter] My father went over to him and the dog growled. … We had a dirt cellar and the dog was in there. The dog dug his way out and took off, and we just let him go, we didn't want him, because he was not a friendly guy. So, we got another one and this one's name was Kansas Blue. He was white with a big brown spot on him and he was a nice guy. We had him for about eight years. We used to take him up to the local field, where we had also played football, we called it the station field, it was up by the railroad station. It was a good size, about the size of a football field, and it had a hedge all around, with a couple of entrances. So, we'd put ourselves at the entrances and let the dog go. He'd just run and run and run and he'd get exhausted. My mother would send us shopping and, whenever she went to her pocketbook to get the change out, the dog would know, and he'd come, and he wanted to go out with us. So, he'd get so excited, he'd wag his tail and he wagged his tail so hard that he broke the skin on it. It's hard to believe. Well, they can't feel their tail, but, it bleeds a lot. So, he splattered blood all over the house. So, we're trying to stop the blood. [laughter] So, my mother wraps it up in tape and bandages, you know, all that stuff, "Whoosh," that all goes. So, we had a long time trying to get that straightened out. Finally, we got it straightened out, but, he was a good dog. We finally gave him away to a farmer in Eatontown, a nearby town. … He was starting to get kind of, like I am now, fat, you know.

JG: What was your relationship like with your brother and sister when you were growing up?

RD: My brother and I were pretty close. We were two years apart. We used to play a lot together. [When] we went to school, you know, I was one year behind him. … I picked up a grade in grammar school, so, I caught up with him one. So, we did a lot of things together. We played a lot of games with all the local kids, you know, but, it wasn't all organized like you guys have, or like the kids today have. We'd just go up there and whoever was there, we'd pick sides and play football, baseball, like that.

SI: What role did religion play in your life?

RD: We're all Catholics.

SI: Did you go to church every Sunday?

RD: Oh, yes, I still go. I went to a parochial grammar school and a parochial high school. So, Rutgers was my first non-parochial institution of learning.

SI: Was your elementary school nearby?

RD: Yes, it was about three blocks away. We walked. When we went to high school, that was seven miles away. We went to Red Bank Catholic High School; no transportation provided by the State or anybody, so, … we hitchhiked or walked. So, we'd walk most of the way and, sometimes, half of the way, never the full way, we'd always get a ride somehow, but, in [some] cases, we'd take a bus.

JG: Did your mother work while you were growing up?

RD: No, no. … She had a sister with us, Theresa. She was an unmarried woman. She lived with … our family, she was … an aunt who stayed with us all the time, but, my mother never worked. My mother had an eye problem. I don't know what it was, but, … something wrong with it. It was set off to the side, she couldn't see very well. When she got older, she had to sit right in front of the TV to watch, so, she was a homebody.

SI: When you first entered elementary school, were your classmates the children of first-generation Americans and immigrants?

RD: I guess, yes.

SI: Was it a situation where not every kid spoke English?

RD: No, didn't have that at all, no. I misunderstood you. … They spoke like you and I do. … [When] I look back, I have a graduation picture from grammar school and they were either Italian or Irish, yes.

SI: Were you taught by nuns?

RD: Nuns, yes. You know what that experience is?

SI: No, but, I was taught by brothers.

RD: Well, the nuns [Mr. de Sante bangs the table to demonstrate the nuns' preferred method of discipline].

SI: Oh, yes.

RD: Never hurt anybody, really. In fact, I remember, growing up, I can't remember what part of my growing up period it was, but, I read an incident of a teacher in New York City being sued by a parent because they had, you know, chastised their son or child, or hit him or something, and I

thought to myself, "This is the end of the beginning," and it was, because once … they took [that] away from the teachers, any kind of control they had, and, now, it's nothing. So, that was the beginning of the end, but, I never got hurt by the nuns, frightened, but, not hurt. [laughter]

SI: Which subjects were you most interested in elementary and high school?

RD: Scientific studies, you know, physics, math, things like that. That's why I went into engineering. … I was the first one to go to college in my family. … My sister, who went to, also, parochial school, girls' school, was offered a scholarship, but, she didn't take it. I'm not sure why, I guess she was frightened or whatever, you know, and my brother, when he graduated from high school, he took a year off, wasn't sure what to do, because it was, I got out in … '39, he got out in '38, but, I got out in '39, from Red Bank Catholic, and I wasn't sure what to do, but, I had, again, good marks. I was … second or third in my class of about two hundred people and they used to grade you ninety-two, ninety-four, not A-B-C, and, you know, three-tenths of a point separated the first, second, third, fourth, you know. … It's a precise judgment on something which is not that precise, but, anyhow, I decided I would go into engineering. I don't think it was the right thing for me, but, I did it, because … I did very well in all the subjects, but, I wasn't really that practical. … What did we get on to that subject from? I can't remember.

SI: I had asked about your favorite subjects.

RD: Oh, yes. Let me tell you about some of my instances at Rutgers, or is it jumping ahead a little bit?

SI: We can jump ahead.

RD: [laughter] I have a very distinct memory of a professor named [A. Lloyd] Greenlees. He was a physics professor and he said, "How would you students like an open book exam?" Did you ever take an open book exam?

SI: Once or twice.

RD: Well, we'd never heard of it before. So, we said, "What is it?" He said, "Well, you can bring all the books you want. You don't have to crib. You don't have to put things on your cuffs." "Great, we'll do it." Well, we learned our lesson. One of the questions, I can't remember it exactly, but, it was something like this, "A man is flying in an airplane, he has a hot dog, and he drops the hot dog out of the airplane. By the time it reaches the ground, it has expanded so much. Now, the coefficient of expansion of a hot dog is so-and-so. How high was the airplane?" Well, I keep looking in the book, … hot dog, airplane, I can't find it. [laughter] I couldn't find a damned thing, but, I don't think anybody could. … Then, we found out that the problem was finding out what the problem is. That's the big thing, but, it taught us a lesson. So, I never forgot that one.

SI: Was Red Bank Catholic just starting up then?

RD: … No. In fact, … when I went in there, it was the ninth grade, there was a grammar school and a high school, and the students who were in the ninth grade with me were (the first students in the group?), so, the school was nine years old then.

SI: I see the building now and it is quite large. Was it more like the one-room classroom then?

RD: Yes. … What do you mean "one-room?"

SI: Well, maybe not one-room classrooms, but, smaller.

RD: Yes, the classroom's about this size. We'd have thirty people in there, maybe.

SI: Close-knit, that is what I wanted to say.

RD: Yes. There's a lot more buildings there. One guy in our class had a car, I remember that. Everybody, you know, gravitated to him, you know, and he was the big wheel, but, now, the guy who doesn't have a car is unusual, right, in high school?

JG: Did you have a job while you were in high school?

RD: Yes, I worked at the beach, for the City of Long Branch. In fact, I worked as a lifeguard. … Also, you know the boardwalk in Long Branch? I nailed a lot of that down, me and another guy. I remember, we, "Boom, boom, boom," you know, a lot of work. [laughter]

SI: My grandfather grew up in Matawan and he told me about Ku Klux Klan activities in the area in the 1920s and anti-Catholic attacks. Do you remember anything like that from your childhood?

RD: I remember stories about it, in West Long Branch.

SI: I believe I remember him saying that there was some activity out there also.

RD: Yes, … what had happened, in Long Branch, it wasn't too much, but, in West Long Branch, it was a community of people who didn't want any Italians in there. They wouldn't let them in the, it's a volunteer fire department, wouldn't let them in there at all, and they wouldn't let them in, … they were held back, and they used to have meetings, but, … I don't know how it broke down, but, it gradually broke down, but, that was a hot bed of the Ku Klux-ers, in West Long Branch, which is just next to Long Branch; it's like next to New Brunswick, you know, like Highland Park.

JG: Did you encounter any discrimination then?

RD: You know, I remember something, not serious, not much, but, my name belies my face. I don't look Italian at all, I don't think I do, and I remember some people making some remarks about Italians, you know. It bothered me and I realize now how some other guys feel about that subject, because, I'm jumping ahead now, again, but, in college, one of my friends was a guy

named Walter Alexander, a colored guy, very bright, very good, very good engineering student. We graduated and he went to an interview with, I think it might have been General Electric. They said, "Your grades are great, … but, we filled our quota of blacks this year, can't give you a job." So, this guy got pissed off, I don't blame him, right, and he almost continually had a chip on his shoulder and, you know, I could kind of understand it, because, on top of that, … one of his parents was at least half white, so, he didn't look, he wasn't black, he was sort of white, you know, like, dark skin, but, he talked to me about it, and … it kind of bothered him all the time. … I could see that, but, I didn't experience anything serious. My wife, who's Irish, Irish and Scotch, and another girl I used to take out, told me their parents said, "Don't go out with Italians," but, it didn't bother me. [laughter]

JG: Why did you decide to go to Rutgers?

RD: I wasn't sure. I wanted to go to West Point and my father said, "Well, your brother's older than you, let him get the first chance." So, he took the test and he flunked ancient history. So, in the meantime, I didn't know what to do, so, I heard about that they had a State Scholarship exam. So, I took it and passed and got it, and … I got a State Scholarship. That's how I went to Rutgers. I didn't know Rutgers, where it was or what it was. I just took the test, okay.

JG: This was in 1939, right?

RD: Yes.

JG: How did you feel about what was going on in Europe at the time?

RD: It was becoming more and more a part of our whole life and we knew something, eventually, was going to [happen], you know, we had to get in it, and the thinking, then, was that everybody, most everybody, was patriotic. Everybody wanted to get in. … Not like Vietnam, not like today, but, … it was almost one hundred percent, everybody, all the guys, wanted to get in some kind of service. So, we knew we were going to go in there. In fact, '39 is when it started, in Poland, right? That was when we started college. So, you could sense it was coming, but, we didn't know when or how.

SI: Before the war, since Long Branch was predominantly Italian, did anybody ever express any feelings about Mussolini and his regime in Italy?

RD: No, I don't think so. No, in fact, no, I never … really noticed that. Can I have a break?

SI: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RD: … Well, there were a lot of people in the country who were, I don't want to say pro-German, but, felt strongly about the Germans, you know, that [what] they were doing was right or whatever, and there were a lot of rallies and fights, you know, things like that.

SI: The *Bund*?

RD: Yes, yes, more so than the Italians, because I think we kind of looked on the Italians, neither of you are Italian, right? … that they were inconsequential. They were really not a factor, you know, even as soldiers, I mean, just not like the Romans of old time. That was the feeling that mostly we had, that they weren't really important. It turned out they weren't, in the war.

JG: What was Rutgers like when you first arrived on campus?

RD: … You know, now, you realize that I'm the first one that went, … I wasn't even seventeen yet, and I was not too mature as a young fellow, I was sort of a slow [guy]. I was just in awe of the whole place. It took me probably a year to catch on to what was going on. … In fact, we came here and my father didn't have much money. Of course, it didn't cost an awful lot to go here, either, but, we shopped around for a room, and I got a room up Easton Avenue, almost to the hospital, one house, I guess the only room [for rent] in the house. I used to walk across Buccleuch Park, [laughter] but, then, the next [year], I finally convinced him I ought to go into the dorms, and I got in the dorms, and it was a lot better. It didn't cost an awful lot more either, but, I didn't know it. I had no concept of anything. …

SI: What was the transition like between Catholic school and Rutgers?

RD: You mean the non-sectarian school, as opposed to the religious school?

SI: Yes. Was Red Bank Catholic co-ed then?

RD: Yes, yes. … The teaching at Red Bank Catholic was pretty rigorous, so that didn't bother me so much, but, I didn't notice any difference. I don't know. I can't give you a good answer to that one. [laughter]

SI: Do you remember any hazing when you were a freshman?

RD: I never got involved in any fraternities. I came close and I think I would like to have, but, I never did, because I was, again, afraid of the financial commitment. I didn't realize, then, that had I done it, we'd have found a way to afford it, but, I didn't understand that. Nobody could tell me, you know, [in] my own family.

SI: Was there a general freshman hazing, like having to wear a dink?

RD: I don't even remember that, so, it wasn't serious. It wasn't much of a problem.

SI: Did you have a roommate when you lived on Easton?

RD: No. [When] I lived on Easton, I had nobody. I can recall that, later, I had several different roommates. I lived over on Mine Street; is there a Mine Street here?

JG: Yes.

RD: Right by, there used to be a drugstore, (Catsen's?), I think it was called.

SI: I have heard of it.

RD: Yes, yes, over that way, [across from Van Dyck Hall]. There were about four or five of us [who] lived with an Irish lady who was a ward heeler for the Democratic Party, you know, local politician, and we had about five guys, a couple of guys from the Class of '42, some from '43. I remember their names. You want to know the names?

SI: Sure.

RD: Ed Schermerhorn, [Class of 1943], that's a tongue twister, John Toole, [Class of 1942], Vinnie, oh, boy, can't remember his name (Scammel).

SI: Not Vinnie Utz?

RD: No, no, no, but, I remember him.

SI: Yes.

RD: He was great. You know, he used to, playing football, I remember, they'd kick the ball to him, we're wandering, but, it's fun, and he would make believe he wasn't going to field it, and it was laying there. He'd pick it up and run for three or four yards and the other guys would be startled by him. He was quick and he was aggressive and he was good. Back then, our football teams were fun. We played Lehigh, Lafayette, Bucknell, schools like that, and Princeton, and we were competitive.

SI: Who else did you live with?

RD: Oh, then, I moved into Ford Hall and I roomed with a guy named Myles Conner. He was in my class. He's an engineer, and then, … we accelerated the following year. … Our senior year, we took the first part in the summer and we went into the quadrangle, down over there, Wessels, I think it was Wessels we stayed in, yes.

SI: Did you enter the engineering program right away?

RD: Yes, yes. I went in and this was an engineering school. I can recall some things there. The professor in mathematics, just, they kind of sneered at us, because they were teaching us mathematics for the engineers, as opposed to pure mathematics, … you know. They kind of looked down their noses at us. I can't remember the professor's name, but, I recall that, and we had a professor in mechanics. Neither of you are engineers, right? You're history, too?

JG: Yes.

RD: This guy's name was [James J.] Slade and he looked like Jerry Colona; I don't know whether that name means [anything to you], the guy with the pop eyes. … He was a comedian.

SI: Yes, he did the USO shows.

RD: Yes, [with] Bob Hope, that's right, but, Slade used to go down to Princeton and talk with Einstein. He was that kind of a nut. He was a real bright guy and he would lecture to us and he would put a formula on the board, then, he'd say, "Well, this," and he'd give us the answer to the formula, and he had skipped about fifteen steps. We said, "How did you get there?" You know, so, he'd then do it, but, he was sort of absent-minded. He'd come in one day and he had a twenty-dollar bill sticking up here (vest pocket) and he didn't even know he had it. [laughter] He was that kind of a guy. Again, I'm wandering, right?

JG: No, that is fine. You mentioned Dr. Greenlees before. Was he your favorite professor?

RD: I remember him well, because he was a good teacher.

JG: Do any other professors stick out in your mind?

RD: Yes, not all good, but, I remember some guys. There was a guy named Fish in engineering drawing. By the way, back in those days, we went to school Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings. We had at least three labs a week. A lab, three hours, gives you one credit. So, it was probably the toughest undergraduate course, as far as taking up your time to get the credits. No Coke dates at three o'clock in the afternoon, because you're busy in the lab, you know, or something like that, so, it was a tough schedule. I remember that. We lost, probably, I guess, maybe, of all the engineering students that started, one-third finished. The attrition rate was pretty high and it's probably the same now.

JG: Did they switch to other programs?

RD: Yes, yes, most of them switched to other programs, business, things like that, and there's something to be said for business. I think that, in business, you can get by, I'm not sure I'm right, but, … with, maybe, like, a C average, C+, B-, without doing too much, but, to get an A or A+, you really got to stand out, you know what I mean? In engineering, the answer's 4, not 3.6, 3.9 or 4.7, it's 4. You either got it or you don't have it, and you can do all the work you want, if you don't get the answer, it's not right.

SI: Many of the engineers that we have interviewed, especially if they have kids who became engineers later, say that the program at Rutgers then was much harder than anything that followed. It was not only classroom work, but also a lot of hands-on experiments.

RD: Yes, labs, three hours of lab. Yes, I remember, friends of mine would be, … "[I want] a Coke date with you guys at two o'clock in the afternoon." "I can't do it." … There was something I had, I was thinking as you were talking. When it comes back to me, I'll tell you.

SI: Most engineers only had time for one elective.

RD: That's what I want to talk about. Yes, we had to take one elective, at least one elective in the last two years, I believe, non-technical. I took "Music Appreciation" and it was great and the guy's name was [Howard D.] McKinney. He was all white-haired, sort of, you know, kind of a gentleman, but, it was so good. I'd never had anything like that before and I like to sing and stuff like that, and I really enjoyed that. … I never forgot it. I took a course, I guess, in economics with Galbraith, not Galbraith, I don't know what his name is, but, it was well worth it. … He was pretty good, but, that was my best elective, and, if I had to do it all over again, I probably would have gone more into another area. The engineering gave me a good background. It gives you a trade, … so [that] you can make a buck. … See, when I went to school, … you don't think of just going to school to learn, you're trying to be able to make a dollar, because my parents were [struggling], you know. It did that. It gave me a thing to think logically and, you know, all that kind of stuff, helped me get a job, but, if I had to do it all over again, I think I'd like to go in and take history, history of art, all these kind of things, would have been great.

SI: Did your parents encourage you to become an engineer?

RD: No, they didn't, and we didn't have counselors in high school at the time, so, I just did it because I was good in those kind of scientific subjects. What else should I do? …

SI: Some people say that their parents wanted them to become doctors or lawyers only because they knew that they were good professions. Even if they wanted to become an engineer, it was not good enough because it was not law or medicine.

RD: I'm wandering a little bit, but, I have a son who is very bright and he's now forty-seven, I guess, something like that. When he got out of high school, he went to the public high school, because, when I went out of town to this Catholic high school, I missed a lot of my local friends and I regretted that, having to go eight miles away to high school. I didn't want my son [to do that]. I wanted him to go with his friends; you know, it's worth it. Anyhow, he got out of high school, he was, again, high in his class. We went around looking at colleges. He applied to Stanford, Princeton, Duke, the place down in Virginia, VPI, I think, … Brown, maybe. He got accepted at all of them, so, he took Princeton. He was between Princeton and Stanford, and I said, "Well, Princeton is closer. It will save you money, you know, and it's a pretty … good school." So, he went to Princeton and he took engineering, and then, he graduated and got an MBA at University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business, and he sort of moved away from engineering, into management now, like I did when I got further along. I also had a daughter, Karen, two years older than my son, also very bright. She graduated from Boston College with a nursing degree. After working several years as a cardiac catheterization specialist, she went back to school at the University of Connecticut and got a BSEE (electrical engineering) degree and, currently, she is working as an electrophysiologist. So, you can see, both our children followed my engineering path.

SI: Going back to Rutgers, do you remember having to go to chapel services?

RD: Yes.

SI: Did you actually go or were you excused?

RD: No, I went, I went, yes. They were pretty good. Fraser Metzger was the dean at the time. … I didn't know him too well.

SI: I hear that he was very stern.

RD: … Yes, … and you wouldn't dare get friendly with him. [laughter]

SI: Do you remember any of the speakers that were brought into chapel?

RD: No, I don't remember any of them.

SI: Do you remember ever going to any concerts or social events at Rutgers?

RD: I went to the dances and I went to the mixers, yes.

SI: We do not really have those now. They disappeared long before we got here.

RD: Is that right? How come?

SI: Too many people.

RD: Oh, okay. We used to have them in the gymnasium, [which] was on that side of the street. I don't know what it is now.

JG: It is still a gym.

RD: Oh, okay. We used to have mixers there in the gymnasium. I remember, when I was a freshman, I met a girl that I thought she was cute and I was afraid to do anything about it.

SI: It happens.

RD: Yes, yes. [laughter]

JG: Did she go to NJC?

RD: Yes.

JG: Did you interact with a lot of the students from NJC?

RD: No. … I used to go over there, but, not too much. I was shy, really. … I went to one dance in high school, yes, the senior prom, … I guess it was the senior prom and, here, I went to two proms, maybe. I just didn't get into that too much, I don't know.

SI: You were in the ROTC for two years.

RD: Two years, mandatory.

SI: Does anything about that experience stand out in your memory?

RD: No, nothing stands out. …

SI: You had wanted to go to West Point.

RD: Yes, I don't know. …

SI: Did military life appeal to you at all, at that time?

RD: Well, I don't know. I don't know why I didn't go for the four years, but, I didn't.

SI: However, you did not mind those two years.

RD: No. It was kind of easy.

JG: Did you enter the ROTC after the US entered the war?

RD: … No, we started ROTC in '39 and [ended in] '41, yes, '39 and '40, you know, those first two years. I've got something to show you. This is jumping ahead, though. That was the summer after December 7, '41, when we accelerated. That was the summer of '42 and we were in Wessels Hall. That's me, I think, … and that's my roommate, and there's about four or five engineers here, other guys. This guy agreed to let us cut his hair that way and we cut it like a V. At the time, Churchill was going around, "V for Victory," and we marched him down to New Brunswick and he was, "V for Victory." …

SI: Which roommate was this?

RD: That's Myles Connor.

SI: Okay. Oh, there is an Asian student in the picture.

RD: Let me see; yes, you're right. I don't know. …

SI: Do you remember his name?

RD: No. … This guy was an engineer, this guy, this guy, this guy and a couple up here. The rest of them were other guys. I don't know who they were. They were in the dorm.

JG: Can you tell us about some of the clubs that you joined?

RD: Yes, I wasn't really active … in the Catholic club, what do you call it, Newman Club? ASME, that's the Society of Mechanical Engineers. I was in one other club, I forget which it was.

SI: The Quad Club and the Ford Club?

RD: Yes, I guess that's the one.

SI: Based on where you lived.

RD: Yes.

SI: You also played 150-pound football.

RD: Yes.

SI: How long did you play for?

RD: Two years and it almost killed me. …

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

SI: Please, continue.

RD: The 150-pound football, we had a coach named Tom Kenneally. … He had been a coach at Notre Dame, one of their lower coaches, and he was the 150-pound coach, a little guy, a little martinet, something like the guy from the Packers, Lombardi, and I weighed, then, 147 pounds. … Do you have 150-pound football now?

SI: No.

RD: In that, you could weigh 154 pounds the Thursday before the Saturday of the game. If you weighed more, you couldn't play. [There were] a lot of guys there that were 170 pounds, normally, and … all week, they'd spit, you know, all this stuff to lose weight, to get into the … 154 pound [range]. They were all muscle. I don't know why, it probably ruined their bodies for the future, but, they did that kind of stuff, and Kenneally, we were playing then, and … we were using a T formation, we'd shift to a box. You know what I'm talking about? He says, "I want to bring in some new plays." This was in '42, I guess. He says, "We're going to play right from the T formation. We're not going to shift and it's going to throw the opposition off." That was the year that the Washington Redskins played the Chicago Bears and I think one of them introduced the T formation and they won seventy-three to nothing. Do you recall that incident?

SI: I have seen it on TV.

RD: You've heard it, right? and they had the T formation and I remember that, because he was, you know, proud of that thing, because it worked, but, it was the forerunner of what goes on

today, but, he was a martinet, very tough. … We used to play the local high schools. The high school guys were bigger than us, heavier than us, but, we were quicker than they were. So, we could beat them, at practices, you know.

SI: Did you also play against other colleges?

RD: Yes, we played Navy, Army, Princeton, Cornell, Lehigh, Lafayette, Penn, I don't remember them [all], but, we had a whole thing. It was a great thing, maybe thirty, forty people in the stands to watch us, you know, [laughter] very popular sport, but, it was good. Oh, I know what I wanted to tell you. It almost ruined my career, because it was my sophomore year, we would go out there, and Kenneally, as I say, he was a martinet. You go out there and you work; you worked hard and you get tired. … Maybe I have a lab and I'd go from the lab to football practice and get home from football practice maybe six o'clock or something, whatever it was, no supper yet, no supper, and zonk out, because I'm tired, wake up, eleven o'clock, study. My marks went into the tank that … one year, the fall of my sophomore year. I had not good marks, so, I didn't go out the next year. I figured that was a mistake, but, I learned, you know.

SI: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

RD: Yes. I was in the dormitory, in fact, it was Wessels, and I was writing a lab report and it was about two or three in the afternoon, something like that, on a Sunday, and I had the radio on. … The news came out. So, it changed everything, you know. We knew it was coming, but, we kept saying, "Well, maybe, you know, some time in the future." Now, it was here. Now, I had signed up for aviation cadets in August of '42. This was, you know, December, yes, is that right?

SI: December of 1941.

RD: Yes, yes, that's right, I signed up after. I went and I signed in, and then, I was … allowed to finish my course in January 1943, and then, sent to Yale two weeks later as an engineering cadet in the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command.

SI: I want to ask a few more questions about that day and the immediate aftermath. Do you remember any kind of a panic or any reaction on campus?

RD: No. I don't remember anything, except that, where I was.

SI: Did anyone run right down to the recruiting station to join up?

RD: No.

SI: Did you realize that, because you were in the engineering course, that you would be allowed to finish up? How did you find out about that?

RD: Yes. I guess it was pretty soon after. The college came out and said, "We're going to accelerate, particularly the scientific and medical [students] and that kind of stuff, because they'll

need them," basically. So, that was between December 7th and the following June. They reorganized everything to start our senior year. … So, the college reacted pretty quickly.

SI: Do you remember if the war changed Rutgers in any other way? Obviously, the curriculum was accelerated. Did any of the amenities of college life begin to fall by the wayside?

RD: … I don't recall that, no.

SI: In your engineering courses, did the emphasis change at all? Were you still studying the same material or did they focus you in a different direction?

RD: No, I took a course in aeronautics in the senior year. I might not have, if it hadn't been for that, but, I remember that.

SI: Was that course introduced after Pearl Harbor?

RD: No, I don't know that, but, I don't think[so]; I think it was there all the time.

SI: Did your Rutgers courses actually help you when you were in the service?

RD: In the service?

SI: Yes.

RD: I guess so, but, I can't, you know, tell you the specific examples, but, I think all the training and all helps and a lot of the basic stuff helps, because, you know, I had a course in internal combustion engines and, … of course, the aircraft that I was working on were piston engines, not jets, you know. … They weren't around. … You can analyze things a lot better knowing how the engines worked and how they were designed.

SI: You eventually joined the Army Air Force. What led you to that branch of the service?

RD: I don't know, talking with the guys, you know, … and I wasn't particularly interested in the Navy. I just liked the Air Force, you know. I guess they were good [at] PR, right? It was the US Army Air Force, right? Army Air Corps, I guess, originally.

SI: Do you remember seeing any movies, recruiting movies, or big Hollywood films?

RD: Yes, yes, sure.

SI: Did they influence your decision?

RD: I'm not sure of that, what made me decide. You know, it could have been discussions with some of the guys in my class, [who] also went this same route. I don't know why I did it.

SI: Was the Army Air Force particularly interested in recruiting engineers?

RD: Well, we went to a maintenance engineering course and that's what they wanted, because it's simple to get them to understand all that's going on, you know.

SI: When you joined up, did you know that you were going to go into mechanical engineering?

RD: Yes.

SI: Okay.

RD: Yes, I signed up, "Aviation cadet, maintenance." That's what it was called, yes. It wasn't flying, because, at that time, I don't know whether it's like that now or not, but, … I couldn't go on merry-go-rounds, I couldn't go on roller coasters. I was very uncomfortable and I used to throw up all the time. So, I said, "I don't want to fly. I just don't want to go sick through the whole war or whatever. So, I wouldn't want to do that." In fact, when I shipped overseas, I had orders that I wouldn't go by boat. I flew. [laughter] …

JG: After you graduated from Rutgers, you went to Yale for basic training.

RD: Yes.

JG: What was that experience like?

RD: It was unusual. Let me tell you about it. We lived in a quadrangle, like Wessels, and we got up every morning, four-thirty; lights out at eight-thirty in the evening. It was something like [the] West Point thing, in that your time is allocated. You get up at four-thirty, you wash up by five, you do something, everything, by the numbers, and I felt that it was made very simple. You don't have to think, all you did was do it, you know. There was no problem. … It isn't like the experience of going to Rutgers as a student, on your own and being able to decide when you could do things. I used to fritter away a lot of time playing table tennis, Ping-Pong, at the Student Union, on the corner over here, and I remember, you know, like, three or four hours, we'd play table tennis; "Oh, shit, I've got to write a report." There, [you] didn't have that opportunity. Everything was done for you. So, the guys that talked to me about West Point being hard, I don't think so. If you're bright enough, it would be very simple. All you had to do was do what they say. We had some interesting experiences there. [While] we were there, we used to have lunches and they had tremendous meals. I mean, it was the big saying, "Eat all you want, but, take all you eat," or, "Take what all you want, but eat what you take." Glenn Miller came there and he was getting his orchestra ready to go to Europe. He played every noontime. I guess he was there for a couple of months. Then, he went over and he died. We had an athletic instructor named Bob Kiputh. He was the swimming instructor for Yale and … I guess the Army signed him on to train us, and I can recall one thing that he had us do. They had a seventeen-story gymnasium there and he says, "All right, we're going to run up the seventeen-stories and down, twice. I was young, thin. It didn't bother me, but, as I go by, I see guys pop off on the side. They're waiting for the group to come by [again]. They couldn't do it, [laughter] but, now, I can't do two stories, but, I remember that. That's a lot, seventeen stories. So, I remember that. Then, he had another test, he called them the brouha tests, where you'd climb up and down on a stool. Every second,

you're up and down, up and down, and do it for a couple of minutes. You've seen that test, I guess. What else did he have up there? Well, we'd go through the town, New Haven, about five-thirty in the morning or something like that, singing all these marching songs, you know. We were guys from all over. We were in Class 43-19, was the number of our class. We had an Order of Eager Beavers, and I got a card, I was one of them, and we would go and we'd sing old songs. It was a lot of fun. The service, the school approach is different from here, less theory. Actually, they say, "We'll talk about this engine;" they'd have one there, and they had all the facilities that maybe Rutgers wouldn't have, or most colleges don't have, you know what I mean? To me, it was a very good, practical experience. So, later on, when I worked at Fort Monmouth, in the electronics area, I saw the same thing in the school they had there. So, they were very heavy on practical, "Here it is, look at it," you know, which helps a lot. So, it was a good school at Yale, had a lot of fun.

SI: I was just reading an interview with another man who was in the Army Air Force training program at Yale. You may have actually met him there. His name is William Bauer. He was a ceramics engineer.

RD: Yes, in my class?

SI: No, he was in the Class of 1942.

RD: '42, husky guy, he was a husky guy.

SI: He was in one of the first classes of Air Force men at Yale.

RD: Yes.

SI: You may have been in the same class or in a later class.

RD: I was later, 43-19.

SI: Yes, but, he discussed the rivalry and animosity between the Navy guys and the Army Air Force guys.

RD: We didn't have any Navy guys there.

SI: Oh, they were not there?

RD: I didn't see any. I don't remember any, let me put it that way.

SI: What about between you and the Yale students?

RD: Yes, … there was a group of guys that came up from Texas, I remember them, and they'd gone to a military school and they had more military training to go in than we, with only two years of training, and they kind of took over. I remember that, but, it was only six months, you know.

SI: What was the make-up of your class? You were from the North and you had these guys from Texas.

RD: No, there weren't that many of them; there were maybe four or five of them. … They became the squadron leaders and, you know, that kind of stuff, because they had all this training.

SI: Was there a good regional mix in your class?

RD: Oh, yes, yes.

SI: What was it like to meet all these different people?

RD: Fun, fun.

SI: Had you traveled much outside of New Jersey before you went up to Yale?

RD: I do not think so, no.

SI: It was all a new experience.

RD: Yes.

JG: Did you encounter any discrimination in the Army?

RD: In Yale?

JG: Yes, when you were in training.

RD: No.

SI: Was there any hazing as an aviation cadet?

RD: No.

SI: At this time, you were not only training as maintenance personnel, but also as officers. What segment of the training was specifically officer's training?

RD: I don't remember what kind of training they gave us to be an officer.

SI: Additional things an officer must do, that sort of thing.

RD: Now, remember, I was only twenty at the time and I really wasn't mature enough to understand what was going on. I don't know how they told us about the [officer part]. We had to have some training, but, I do remember, when I first went to my first assignment, can I jump ahead?

SI: Sure.

RD: I go there and it's in Dyersburg, Tennessee. That's the Second Air Force, a training air force, and it's a B-17 group. I walked in, I reported to a major, who was a permanent Army master sergeant, and he'd been given a direct commission. … A lot of the guys were, as I went around, I found out, they'd taken their better master sergeants, just promoted them, you know, to officer right away, and there were a lot of old Army guys in there that had been there their whole life … in the Army, and then, we come in as young kids, you know, lieutenants. You had to tread very lightly, I recall that. …

JG: What was your first assignment after Yale?

RD: First assignment? Are we finished with Yale?

SI: Do you have anything else to say about Yale?

RD: I might. …

SI: Were you at Yale in the summer or the fall and winter?

RD: What happened, I was to graduate in … May or June of '43 and I graduated in January of '43 and I went on the 2nd or 7th of February to Yale, and, on the 7th of July, I was commissioned and graduated. That was the early part of 1943. … First assignment was in Dyersburg, Tennessee, and it was the Second Air Force, and that was all around the country, the Second Air Force was, and it had places where they're training pilots in B-17s and B-24s and things. … I got there and the first job I got was additional duty as tech supply officer; that means you sign for everything. … "We got a kitchen knife." "Just sign for it." So, I signed for everything, airplanes, trucks, hand tools, I had to sign for it. I don't know what it was, but, I noticed something. The B-17 then, you know what it cost? 247,000 dollars, that's all. Now, that can't buy a tire for a big airplane, you know, they're millions, 247,000, I thought that was a lot of money then, but, anyhow, I signed for all of them. … Now, I was there from, roughly, July of '43 to December, six months, whatever it is, and, during that time, … the supply people in there say, "You better have an inventory and put a report of survey in." That was a major job, a pain in the rear, especially things like hand tools, because, you know, you got screwdrivers in your home? You know, you got a three-inch common screwdriver or a four-inch Reed and Prince, and they get all mixed up, and the guys have their tool kits and you never can straighten it out. So, it was impossible. The big things were kind of easy. Fourteen airplanes is fourteen, but, anyhow, I tried to get this report of survey in. They turned it back; something was wrong. So, I tried again. They kept … putting it back to me; … you know, they're threatening me. So, in the meantime, I was dating a young girl that worked in the depot at the end of the base and the base maintenance officer, a major, was also dating this girl. [laughter] So, it happens. So, I was a little younger than him. I was away with her and I came back, I guess it was sometime in early December, I have special orders, immediately, to go to Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas, for a shipment, a B-29 group in India, and I said, "Well, I've got a report of survey." He says, "Don't worry about it." "Whoosh," he signed it, it was gone, taken care of, and the Major come down to me as I'm

leaving, and he says, “You know, it had nothing to do with your dating the girl," which told me it did, [laughter] but, anyhow, … I now have to get to El Paso in a day or two. … It was raining like it never rained before. I couldn’t get out, I couldn’t do a thing. Let me get back to that; now, I think I have some more to tell you about Dyersburg, then, I’ll come back to that story. Oh, yes, we had an incident there. We had to service the airplanes that would take training missions. Maybe eight or ten airplanes would go out at a time and somebody came running to me and says, “We serviced some of these B-17s with the wrong kind of gasoline," lower octane, for trucks, as opposed to aircraft, "and they're up there flying. Don’t know what will happen." So, we went into panic mode, you know, because we don’t know. So, we got them all back. We never could find out, but, everything worked out all right, but, it was kind of frightening. That happened. I guess that’s all, yes. So, anyhow, when I got these orders, I’m trying to get out of Dyersburg, and I went to Memphis and I tried to get a commercial air [flight]; I couldn’t get out. Finally, I took a train to, it could have been Louisiana or something, then, I took a flight, and I got to El Paso, and they had shipped out the group, and they had refilled it with somebody else, and, now, I’m there as a guy hanging on, you know, no place to go. I was very disappointed, because, … you know, B-29s, they were the biggest thing, … and India. I was later to find that I was lucky. My whole career in the Army, I was lucky. You’ll find out later. So, I was in El Paso for about, maybe, the better part of December of '43, as an extra person, you know. So, finally, they put me on orders to go to Blythe, California. You've probably never heard of that. It’s almost directly east of Los Angeles, at the bottom of the Mojave Desert, hot. This was now in January of '44, 130 degrees Fahrenheit on the wings. You want to service the airplanes, you can’t even touch them. You've got to have gloves and this is wintertime. So, I was there and I was fumbling around and, finally, I got orders, again, to go to Casper, Wyoming, with an aerodrome squadron. … These aerodrome squadrons were a special idea of Hap Arnold, who was the head of the Army Air Forces, and … he wanted to have, I don’t know, like fifty aerodrome squadrons who could maintain the aircraft and, also, maintain the security of the area, in case enemy soldiers come in. So, we had guns and you had to learn how to be soldiers, and none of us were, you know what I mean? … I wasn’t and the guys, the mechanics, weren’t, either. So, we go up to Casper, Wyoming, and we start to fill up the squadron, … and it's about, I think, maybe, two hundred men, I don’t know, … and about ten officers, something like that, and all kinds of specialties. We start to go through a series of training things, shooting on the range, you know, getting physically ready and stuff like that. So, there was a captain who was the head of the squadron, his name was Max Wexler, and he was from the Chicago area, and I got along pretty well with him. So, he said, “We'd better have a hike, see what the troops could do. Let’s lay one out." So, he and I get in the jeep and we lay out this hiking thing and we picked twenty miles, which isn't too bad, right? So, we got on there, we took off; we got the troops to go. Well, it was a debacle, because we had them walk too fast, too quick, [Mr. de Sante imitates heavy breathing], blisters, all kinds of [problems], and we just jumped into it, you know. So, we quickly regrouped and said, "No more of that. We have to learn," you know. Nobody told us what to do. We're just trying to figure it out. Another incident, which is kind of funny, … we were living in tents and we had this bivouac area and we set up perimeter guards. [laughter] "Captain," I said, “let’s try to penetrate the perimeter." So, we go out, in the middle of the night, one night, we're starting to crawl around in the dark. This is, you know, the middle of nowhere, creeping up on the sentries. We hear this noise in the underbrush, big hog, big, black hog. I mean, he was monstrous, scared the heck out of us. We just took off and ran away. [laughter] So, that was the end of our penetration of the defenses. …

SI: At all of the different bases that you were assigned to in the United States, how would you describe the men in the units that you were assigned to? Were they from all over the country? Were they young?

RD: Yes, the people that were working with me?

SI: Were most college educated?

RD: No. Most of the guys, … well, I was working mostly with enlisted men, who were a mix of old regular Army guys and young kids, just come in, … and some were real good, some were real bad, you know, but, we had several kinds of trades there. We had, like, sheet metal workers, electronics, not electronics, radio people, didn't have much electronics then, … engine people, things like that, you know, parachute people.

SI: Did you get the sense that the Army Air Force had tried to draw in experienced people from, say, the airline industry or was it more haphazard?

RD: Yes. You know, [it was] mass confusion, because, now, I jumped around from place to place and I never got settled. … I kept missing things, you know. I did notice, we interacted with the community pretty good. We were in, it was either Casper or McCook, Nebraska; we moved that squadron, … directly to McCook, which is, I don't know, maybe three, four hundred miles away. I'm not sure why. Oh, we had the overseas POM, they called it, Preparation for Overseas Movement. It's the predecessor to actually going overseas. So, we'd gotten that some time when we were in Casper and we were accelerating all our getting ready, you know, and that means that you get priority on filling your replacement people, on building up your supplies, all that kind of stuff. …

SI: How long were you stationed at McCook Air Base?

RD: … I've got to refer to my notes, because I don't remember exactly. We went to McCook, Nebraska, yes, with two hundred-and-fifty enlisted men and ten officers, six months training there, being soldiers, … from about January to June of '44. Then, I was promoted to first lieutenant, because it was just about a year … and we shipped to Casper, Wyoming. The same, the whole unit, was shipped, and then, our POM was cancelled. I have no idea why. Now, we're a squadron, but, we've got nothing to do. So, another guy and I were sent to B-29 school in Pratt, Kansas. It was about a six-weeks … course. I have an incident there I remember. We were being shown around … this monstrous plant where they're building the B-29s, and all the women working there on the floor, and we're walking, young officers, you know, and the girls down there are whistling at us. Well, I felt about this high. I really never felt so embarrassed in all my life, you know. So, I realized how, sometimes, … the girls feel when the guys do it, you know, but, really, it was a shock to me, but, anyhow, we went through that course, and it was pretty good. Then, I came back; now, the squadron is broken up. I go to Hamilton Field, California, and, now, I'm shipped overseas, to APO 953, Hickam Field, and I report there, and that was about … August of '44, and I report to a full colonel. Do you have any military at all? …

SI: No.

RD: Okay, a full colonel, back then, was like God. Today, it's nothing, anyhow, and I'm a first lieutenant. So, I go to the guy and salute, you know, stand there, and he says, "What kind of airplanes have you worked on?" So, I said, "I worked on B-17s, B-24s, B-25s, and I went to this B-29 school." So, he says, "Well, … we can assign you to Kwajalein," you've heard of that? "or to John Rodgers." He said, "Do you have any choice?" and I've always been told, "Don't opt for anything, just take what they give you. You might make the wrong choice." So, I said, "No, sir, no preference." So, he says, "Well, I think we'll send you to John Rodgers," and I said, "Okay, when do I take off?" He says, "You don't, it's right next door." So, we were at Hickam Field, and right next to Hickam Field is a Navy air station, it's called John Rodgers. It's now the commercial airport for Honolulu. It's connected, by the taxiways, to Hickam Field and we were sent over there because it had longer runways and, also, runways of deeper impact. … A B-29 could not land at Hickam, because it would break the runways; it's heavy. So, we were sent over there and I used to live in Hickam Field and drive, I had my own jeep, and I'd drive over to the thing, and I was there for about a year, more than a year, I guess two years. We lived in BOQs, bachelor officer quarters, four officers to a group, and … one side of Hickam was men and the other side was women. [laughter] It was tough. … [There are] a lot of bugs in Hawaii, so, we'd go to the supply sergeant and get cans of aerosol bombs, and, … I don't know how often, but, maybe once a month or so, when we'd go out to work, we'd put aerosol bombs, on newspapers, set them off and go to work, put them in all the rooms, come back and sweep all the dead bugs out. My wife had a fit at that, but, that's what we used to do to take care of the bugs, but, we had a lot of fun there because, you know what it's like, living with a bunch of guys, good times. What our job was over there was to service the airplanes going through from the United States to the Pacific Islands, and we'd get thirty to fifty airplanes a day, big operation, and there was a Major Stoup, S-T-O-U-P, I remember him, … he was the head guy, and … I and another first lieutenant were his assistants, and we had five hundred people, all kinds of trades, and, while we're there for this two years, the Major gets a heart attack. So, guess what happened? … I got promoted to captain, nine months after being promoted to first lieutenant, because I ranked my friend by seven days. … If it was the other way around, he'd have made it. That was back in the day; now, the Air Force is more like, then, it was the Army Air Force, I guess, now, … you go by years you're at [a rank], but, this was only nine months. So, I got promoted very quickly and I had to run the thing while he was in the hospital and they needed a little bit of rank, because they had guys coming in with all kinds of ranks. So, we had this operation that ran twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. So, it was a busy field, that's why I had so many people, and we used to work different shifts. You know, you work graveyard, whatever it is. I had to do all the shifts … and all the planes would leave, like, between six-thirty and seven-thirty in the morning to go south, so that they would land in daylight, and they would come in the night before or whatever it was, you know. … As soon as they could get ready, if they had nothing wrong with them, we'd just put gas in them and they'd go. So, one time, we're out there and I was on duty, and we had, let's see, [to] give you an idea of what this thing looked like, see, there's about forty of them there, lined up, … wingtip-to-wingtip, see. … The way we kept track of the status of these planes was, we had a big blackboard, like this, only bigger, [each] airplane, red "X" means it can't fly, red diagonal means something is wrong with it, and nothing means it's good, and, starting about midnight, they would go out and service the airplanes with fuel, the good ones, the ones that could fly out, and these things would pump gasoline at a very high rate into both wing

tanks, and it would go through all the things. I mean, I don't remember what the gallons per minute [was], but, a lot, because they would service maybe thirty airplanes, you know, in a couple of hours. So, we're out there, we're talking, and so, one plane had a fuel transfer valve in the bomb bay [that] had been replaced and … [the board] indicated it was okay, so, they were going to service it. It wasn't. Something went wrong. They put the gasoline in the top, it went out the bottom, because this valve hadn't been replaced. Well, there was a pool of gas, you could smell gasoline a half-a-mile away. So, a guy comes running, "What are we going to do?" I said, "Shut down everything." They used to move those planes with [what] we called a Cletrack. It was like a small tractor, you know, like they have in the airports. They had a little bar and you pull it. So, it's nothing. So, they shut everything off. I called the Navy commander over at the other side of the field and I said, "We've got a crisis," you know. So, there was somebody there. So, they bring over their fire trucks and nothing moves. Everybody's quiet, because if anybody had [made] a spark, the whole bunch would have gone up, and then, my career would have gone, [laughter] the whole thing would have been a fiasco. Well, we came out of it all right, but, they went out there and they put foam all around, and then, they put a rope to the B-29 that was sitting in the fuel. They pulled it out with the rope, and they got it out, and they gradually contained all this mess, and it came out all right. We never could find out how it had happened, but, … it wasn't as sophisticated as it is today. It was just, you know, a marking system; so, somebody marked something wrong. I don't know, … but, that's one that really scared me. … [If] we changed anything, [if] we changed an engine on one of the B-29s and, every time, back then, when you change it, you have to slow time it, go up and fly around a little bit. So, I went up with this [plane]. I would go up on a lot of test hops, when I knew the pilot. If I didn't know the pilot, I wouldn't go, because I found out, from my experience, that most accidents start with something going wrong with the airplane, but, if a good pilot's there, he knows and he can take care of it, because, you know, it's a mechanical thing and things go wrong, but, if you don't have a real smart pilot, it may get … out of hand. So, anyhow, I'm sitting in the bombardier's thing, it's up in the front here, and the pilot and the co-pilot are behind me. We lost an engine on takeoff and the whole thing, "Boom," like that, you know, stopped, and I slid right up against the glass. … By the time I got myself reorganized again, he had the prop feathered, the engine shut off, the fuel shut off, nothing. So, we just came around, but, if he hadn't been good, you know, what might have happened? Also, I served on an accident board while I was out there and we had a lot of different aircraft. We had a B-25 incident, you know what that is, that's the airplane that Mitchell used, right? There were several versions of it. … There was an H, I think, where they had the cannon in there, but, anyhow, this was one of them, and it crash landed. I don't remember the specifics, but, I do recall, we got the airplane and … we began to look at what had happened. … The pilot had lost one engine while he was flying, and then, he started to transfer fuel from that engine. So, for weight and balance, he moved the fuel back and forth, you know, from one to the other, and there's twenty ways to transfer it. So, he's moving it to the good engine and he lost the second engine. Now, he's got no engine and we looked and we found it. So, we said to a guy, one guy we knew, … "Will you take a B-25 up, shut off one engine, do exactly what this [guy] had done, and see what happens?" So, he did it and he starved the engine of fuel, the second engine, so [that] there was something wrong. So, we then looked into it a little more, found out that there were twenty ways of transferring fuel in this airplane. You've only got a pilot and a co-pilot. So, we wired Wright-Patterson and said, "There's something wrong here." So, they shut all the B-25s down, right then and there, just put out a tech order that said, "Do not fly until they straighten this out," and they played with it for a week and they said,

you know, "Just cut out this particular way, so [that] you can't do it that way anymore." So, that took care of it, but, it was something [that] just happened, you know. If we didn't have this pilot go up and find it, we never would have found [out]. So, we had that happen.

[TAPE PAUSED]

All right, a little bit more about Hawaii; the B-29s, at that time, … they hadn't flown them too much and there were problems with them. You know, if you notice from the design, it's a very beautifully designed airplane. It has a nice tight nacelle, you know, very aerodynamic, but, the price you pay when you do that is, you don't have an awful lot of air going over the engine, and it's an air-cooled engine. … You used to check those engines out by running the full power, and then, cutting out one of the magnetos and seeing how much the RPMs dropped off. You couldn't do that with a B-29, because it would get so hot. … So, they said, "What are we going to do?" Well, they checked them by getting ready to takeoff and going down the runway, full power, then, they checked the magnetos, and, if they didn't work right, then, they'd abort the takeoff. So, you have to do this while they're going down the runway, so, it's very hairy. So, they kept working at it and they eventually got it so they got more air. They put baffles in there to get the air in, especially the top cylinders, which kept running hot. They did that, but, it worked out pretty good. Now, what was I going to tell you about? Oh, we used to get, as I say, maybe thirty airplanes a day, maybe more, and there'd be ten '29s in there, you know. We used to get all kinds of airplanes, but, anyhow, there was a group of B-29s that went through that had a special marking on the tail, it was like a triangle, and they had civilian guards, and they said, "We don't want anybody to service these airplanes. We'll service them. Just give us the gas truck, bring it out by the airplane and leave us alone." We said, "All right." So, we did it and we wondered, "What's going on?" you know. This was about June or something, maybe May or June of '45. So, the next group of them come in, … you know, all with the triangles would be all the same bomb group or wing, whatever. Four of them came in in the next group. They weren't as careful as the first group. They said, "Service every part of the airplane but the bomb bay." So, we began to figure, "Something's in there. There's some kind of a bomb in there," you know, or whatever. So, we didn't hear any more until … the bomb dropped, and then, about two days later, the *Enola Gay* showed up on the scene. That's when I took the picture there. They flew back then, after that. So, that's how we knew about that. A couple of days after that, General LeMay, who you may have heard of, he was very, very much of a … hawk, I mean, over-hawk, [laughter] … he had his own B-29, and he smoked a cigar where you're not supposed to smoke, you know. Anyhow, he took off from John Rodgers, non-stop, to Washington, DC, the first time it had ever been done. That was a long flight.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Richard de Sante on April 16, 2002, with Shaun Illingworth and Jonathan Gurstelle in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Please, continue.

RD: Yes, I forget where I was, but, talking about General LeMay, he flew from … Hawaii to Washington, non-stop. They put extra special, more fuel in the bomb bay tanks. It was loaded with gasoline. Now, a B-29, I'm not sure [if] you know this, but, … characteristically, when it took off, it stayed right on the deck for a long time before it got enough speed to go up. Most

airplanes, they go right [up], like that. This thing, you couldn't see it for a long time; finally, it would go. Well, it was really bad with him, because he was so heavy, they took off and they just hugged that water, you know, for the longest time. Then, finally, he got up and he made it. That was interesting. After the war, then, everything was geared toward, "Well, what are we going to do now?" and I was now working in the Hawaiian Air Depot as chief of maintenance, which was back at Hickam Field, and a lot of guys got separated and, you know, that kind of stuff. Everyone wants to go home and they started a project called the "Sunset Project," to take all these airplanes and put them back someplace around Arizona and put them out in the desert there, … protect them, save them for the future. There were about eleven hundred aircraft in this Sunset Project and I was made the maintenance officer of it, and … we had no, hardly any, people, because most of the GIs were gone. So, we got some people from the depot, we scrounged here and there, and we took a long time, [but], we finally got enough people to start servicing [them]. There weren't enough people to fly them back. It was a real mess, but, it took maybe the better part of seven or eight months to get this all organized and off the ground. I was recommended for the Bronze Star and the recommendation went up to the next office and they okayed it, but, then, it disappeared. So, I don't know what happened.

[Interviewee's Note:

Bronze Star Award for services at 1522 AAFBU, APO 953

Upon completion of the oral archives interview in April 2002, I decided to investigate the "unfinished" status of my Bronze Star recommendation referred to in the interview.

I brought the matter to the attention of my US Congressman, the Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr., and, as a result, I was belatedly awarded the Bronze Star on January 28, 2003 for, "exceptionally meritorious performance of duty during the period of 17 November 1944 to 1 September 1945 at the 1522 AAFBU, Pacific Air Transport Command, APO 953."

During that period, as a first lieutenant, I had been abruptly thrust into the position of Acting Chief, Aircraft Maintenance Officer, (to replace a Major Hugh Stoup, who suffered a serious heart attack) and, as such, was responsible for some five hundred commissioned and enlisted Aircraft Maintenance personnel, of all trades, in the servicing and routing of all the thousands of US Army aircraft *en route* through Hawaii to the Pacific Theater combat areas.]

I guess that's about all. I went home in the summer of '46 and I went to Camp Beale, California, and I was separated there, and, when you get separated, you get enough time to go to your home, which is all across the country. So, I got, like, forty-five days transit time as part of my separation. I was now a captain; I got promoted to major in the Reserves. I joined the active Reserves and I was in there for, I don't know, twelve years in all, … a total of about sixteen, fifteen years I had of active and Reserve time, and then, I got out. I was a lieutenant colonel now, but, I still got out, because I was working for the government, and some friends of mine had been in the Reserve and they got called up. … By the time they came back, they got their job back, but, they missed opportunities for promotion. You know, if you're a GS-14, let's say, and you go away and you come back, they give you your 14 again, but, in the meantime, if you'd been there,

you'd have been a 15. So, I figured it wasn't worth it, so, I got out, and I got my honorable discharge in 1960 from the Reserves. That's about it, I guess. Oh, my brother.

JG: Oh, yes, please tell us about your brother.

RD: … He went into pilot training about the same time, … well, a little bit after when I started, and he was also in Tennessee. When I was in Dyersburg, he was nearby, or some time later, but, he went around the route of Second Air Force training. He became a P-47 pilot and he got into the Pacific Theater, '45, in the spring, I guess, and he was flying off an island called Ie Shima, which is near Iwo Jima [Okinawa]. They were providing fighter escorts for B-29s. It was in the twilight years of the war, you know, but, he flew about ten missions, I guess, or something like that, and he was successful. He came back, which is important.

SI: Did you ever meet any Rutgers men at anytime while you were in the service?

RD: Yes. We had a meeting in Hawaii of a bunch of Rutgers guys that you said you had the copy of. I forgot who they were, but, I was looking for it before I came here and I couldn't locate it. I went frantically through all my papers.

SI: I remember one man's name, Christopher Maggio.

RD: In my class, from Buffalo; did you interview him?

JG: I did not interview him, but the project has.

RD: Oh, okay.

SI: We just posted his interview to our Internet website.

RD: I remember it. Well, anyhow, I had that picture for some time. That was the only incident I had where I met any Rutgers guys. I met a lot of people in Hawaii, different guys going and coming, you know. Oh, I did meet Al [Alexander N.] McClees. I don't know. He was a classmate of mine. He went through, I can't remember when, and, I think, another guy named Sam Piller.

SI: Yes, we have interviewed him.

RD: Recently?

SI: It may have been in 1997 or 1998.

RD: He's had a stroke.

SI: Oh, yes. I am sorry to hear that.

RD: Yes, … they were both flight engineers on B-29s. So, I happened to see all these guys because all the '29s would come through our place. I'd keep an eye out for them.

JG: How did the war shape who you are today?

RD: When I came back, I was eligible for a full GI Bill, you know, and I never took advantage of it.

JG: Why?

RD: I don't know why. I went back to Rutgers for some courses, like I was talking to you earlier [about]. I took a course in psychology, public speaking, marketing, maybe they were the three, and that was it, night courses. I was working, but, in retrospect, I should have gone back, you know, got a Masters and a doctorate. I could have done it easily, but, it just … never entered my mind, you know. So, I went and got a Masters later, at Monmouth University. … I got it in '74. I was not a young man then. [laughter] In fact, I was … one of the oldest guys in the class and I was helping direct the professor in which way we should run the course, because they were just starting. Remember, I told you how it was a small school and they were just bringing their MBA program online, kind of like, because we helped tailor it and that was fun. So, anyhow, I did not use my GI Bill. When I got my house, again, I didn't use the GI Bill, because I bought an insurance policy, life insurance policy, which gave me the same rate as the GI Bill. I think it was four percent or something, very nominal. I didn't need it, so, I never … took advantage of it. I never used the 52/20 Club. You heard of that? I didn't need it. … I guess I should have used the education part, but, I didn't.

SI: Was it difficult for you to enter the workforce after the war?

RD: Well, when I came back, that's interesting, … I drove back across the country from Camp Beale, California, with one of my friends, who had worked with me on the Sunset Project, and he had some girlfriends in Texas. So, we stopped to see them, went out a little bit, and we talked to Braniff and they offered me a job on a DC-6, I think. It was a new airplane for them at the time and … I said, "I'll let you know." … So, I got home and, now, look at the job offers, you know, and all. I turned them down. I went to work for Esso at the Bayway Refinery, which was a mistake, because my mother, God bless her, said, "Take the money." Esso was paying more, but, I really never liked it, so, I left them after about a year, I guess, and I went to work down at Fort Monmouth.

SI: What kind of projects did you work on at Fort Monmouth?

RD: … I'm a mechanical engineer in an electronic environment. So, I got involved in what's called equipment improvement, analysis of failures. We used to get failures from all over the world, complaints, and most of the complaints, in the Signal Corps, then, were heat related, because … they had packed these things and don't have any way to get rid of the heat. … It's a mechanical engineering problem, rather than an electronic engineering problem. So, that's what we were doing for a while. Then, I got involved with a very interesting project called Advent. Advent was a special project to put up the first military communications satellite. That was in

1960 and we were the biggest project at Fort Monmouth. We had a general officer and we had about five full colonels, all of them had doctorates, you know, … physics, some of them had MBAs, that kind of stuff. To be part of this group was something special. We had the highest priority in the post. We were similar to the Navy project Polaris. In fact, we went down there once, to one of their [meetings]; they had a meeting every Monday morning in Polaris and I went down with a lieutenant colonel who worked for me. We go down and we were invited guests, you know. You had to get in ahead of time, get all kinds of clearances and all. So, we go in this room, it's a little bigger than this room, and there's a three-star admiral, a redheaded guy, I forget his name. He was running the Polaris project and the Polaris [project] went throughout the whole Navy and, [when] they did something, everybody jumped. So, we go in there and they start the meeting and say, "We have two guests," and introduced us, you know, all that stuff. Then, the Admiral comes in, everybody hops up, you know, and they sit down. They're talking about their problems and they were having a problem with the motor, a thrust motor in one of the missiles, and … the Admiral says to some colonel, or a captain, maybe, he says, "What are you doing about it?" … "Well," he says, "we have two contracts, one with Thiokol," and I forget the other … company, "and they're competing." He says, "Well, the first guy that solves it gets the contract," and he said something else, we've got something with the submarines up in Connecticut, … New London, and we have a problem there. He says, "What are you going to do?" … This Navy commander says, "I've already got my orders. I'm going, tomorrow morning, up there to solve that one." He says, "All right, … let me know." So, it was just, "Boom, boom, boom." So, we get back, and we were trying to do the same thing, and we're pretty successful. We actually had this program. We were the first outfit to put a communications satellite up and we did it. … Subsequently, you know, all the commercial satellites are up there, but, we paid the price, we, the government, because there were a lot of unknowns. We're building a satellite and we're building a vehicle to put it up. Well, the vehicle keeps losing it's ability to put a bigger satellite [up] and the satellite keeps getting bigger, so, they're working in the wrong direction, you know. So, they don't know what to do. So, we keep going and we had a contract with General Dynamics, out in California, and they were making the Atlas missiles and the Atlas missile, the side of it is as thin as this paper. … I don't know, you ever seen the side of one of those things?

SI: No.

RD: They're soft. The only reason why they stay in is because they've got all this liquid fuel inside them, but, they had an assembly line going out and we had orders for numbers six and five, whatever the different numbers [were], and we had to take whatever changes they made on them. We just had to take it. We didn't even know, at the time, and we had another contract with General Electric for the satellite, … outside of Philadelphia, Valley Forge, a million dollars a month, sole source, cost plus, fixed fee. … They kept saying, "Send more money." So, we had to keep sending more money. … The satellite we were designing was what's called triaxis-stabilized. It was stabilized from the three axes, so [that] it would sit at twenty-four thousand miles up and would be relatively standing in the same spot. It's going at the speed of the earth's, you know, rotation, but, we're not sure we'd get it up there, and, as I say, the thrusters we're getting, you know, didn't have as much thrust. So, we opted to change to a medium altitude satellite, which is now up about five thousand miles, but, the significance of that is, when you do that, the satellites are going across the sky pretty fast. Now, if you're talking to somebody, and

you're here, and that's the satellite, it takes a finite time, … even at 186,000 miles a second, [for] that voice to get up here and down to the other one. There's maybe ten thousand miles or something, maybe more. So, this is going along and, now, you've got another one coming here, and you've got to switch from this one, which is moving out range, to the second satellite, and you have that handover problem. So, we had that problem and … our original terminals, ground terminals, were set for a fixed satellite. Now, we have to make them so that they move, because the satellites are moving. So, we had all kinds of problems, but, we worked them all out, and … Hughes Aircraft came in to us and said, "We can build you a synchronous satellite that's spin stabilized." It looks a little bit like a coffee can, you know, only a little flatter, and it would be stabilized. So, we looked at it and said, "I don't think we can do it." One of our experts, a guy from Canada says, "When you're spinning this thing and it's in a rocket, and, now, you have to turn it, it'll just wobble. It'll never stabilize right. You can't do it." So, we turned them down. … They offered us a fixed price contract for these things. So, they went to NASA, … in Greenbelt, Maryland, [who] were just starting up. We had meetings with them. It was very funny, because we'd go down and meet them one day and they'd say, "Well, come back next Monday." We come back next Monday and a new building would be up. They were spending money like mad, concrete, and a day later, you'd have another building up. I mean, it was just fascinating, but, anyhow, they took it and it worked. Syncom worked; you may have heard of Syncom. That was the first successful, commercial, psuedo-commercial, satellite. So, we started them, we built them, and then, RCA come along, and Hughes built (it for commercial roll-over?), because of our spending all that money, you know, making all those mistakes. They were able to gain from it. We were lucky in that we kept changing our approaches, you know, and they had things then, they called them technical development plans. Books that you had to make to sell this kind of a program to Congress. We'd make a new one every week. We called it a new TDP and we'd work all weekend to do it and the General would go home and … he'd come in Monday morning, he'd grab the papers and go down to Washington and sell this program. We traveled first class, any place we went. … It was a great thing and it lasted for twenty years. Now, it's no longer a project, but, it was a great thing, a lot of fun.

SI: Were you working at Fort Monmouth at the time of the McCarthy-Army trials?

RD: Yes.

SI: I believe that there was at least one Fort Monmouth person who was taken away because he was a Communist. Do you remember anything about that era?

RD: Sure I do. I have mixed emotions about that. I knew some of the people. I didn't know them before, but, I got to know them, and I think that … most of them that were involved came from … NYU, and, at that time frame, there was some Communists there, I'm sure, and these guys were students, like yourselves. … When you're a student, you're kind of a freethinker. … You're growing up, you're maturing, and you want to try things out, whatever. So, I [have] no doubt in my mind that they probably did join or whatever, you know, but, the ones that I knew … were good, loyal citizens. I think that they did it, and then, they probably regretted it, but, they could never get rid of it. McCarthy was a bad apple, bad apple. He just was ruthless, trying to further his own ends, because one of those guys worked for me and he was as dedicated as

anybody you'd want. Yes, I never, you know, got involved in it or anything, but, I was aware of it.

SI: Since you had to have such a high security clearance, did the FBI interview your family and friends?

RD: Yes.

SI: Were you ever able to tell them what you were working on?

RD: Tell who?

SI: Your family.

RD: Oh, yes, I could tell them. You know, what I worked on, generally, wasn't that highly classified, although I had this clearance, but, just occasionally [needed it]. I could see why that Chinese guy, whatever his name was? …

SI: Yes, at Los Alamos.

RD: Yes. There's a tendency, if you have papers, I'm not sure how to word this, because it's going on the record, [laughter] … to not treat all the things that are so highly classified the way that they're, by the book, supposed to be, because, you see, things … are classified high and, really, there's no apparent reason for it. So, you tend to, sometimes, get a little careless. I guess that's it.

SI: Are you surprised by how the technology that you developed for the military has transformed our everyday life?

RD: Yes.

SI: As you were working on it, did you ever think that it could be applied to civilian use?

RD: The satellites, I did, yes, sure. Some of our guys left and went to work for companies and, you know, made out very well.

JG: How did you meet your wife?

RD: Interesting. I was at an officer's club at Fort Monmouth, at a dance, and there were maybe six or eight couples, and she was at the table with another guy, and I was at the table with another girl, and the girl that I dated was a nurse, who, it turns out, was gay. I didn't know at the time, [laughter] but, my wife's date was inebriated. Her name was Alice Gallivan and she was a real cute, blue-eyed, blonde, Irish-Scotch girl. So, I don't know, we danced a couple of times, and then, I asked her for a date and my wife says, I must have done this, I called her father ahead of time to tell him that I was coming over, and I introduced myself to him. So, that was the masterstroke, because he accepted me and he liked me, you know, and so, when I go over to pick

her up the first night, her father, who had never said anything to any of her dates, got up and talked to me, you know. … She was really swept off her feet. She didn't know how to handle it. [laughter] Yes, her other dates, he just never would bother. So, I met her in 1948, married her in '50 and we have two children, a daughter, Karen, and a son, Richard, Jr.

SI: You mentioned that, some days, you would get thirty planes coming through the base. Were you ever able to tell, by the flow of traffic, if there was something going on, such as a major operation or invasion?

RD: No. The only thing I could tell was … when I was talking about those B-29s marked and there was something going on there. No, because there was just a constant stream of [planes].

SI: How did you react to the atomic bomb? How did you hear about it? Did you realize what it was at the time?

RD: … At the time, not when it went through, no.

SI: I mean after you heard the news that Hiroshima had been bombed.

RD: Yes, I don't recall; I guess relieved that the thing was over.

SI: Do you remember any V-J Day celebrations?

RD: I don't remember. I don't recall having, you know, specific recollections of what happened there, I guess, just mostly relief. It was inevitable, I think, that it was going to happen. …

SI: Do you have any other questions?

JG: No.

SI: Is there anything that we forgot to ask or that you would like to put on the record?

RD: No. … I think I'm about talked out. [laughter]

SI: This concludes our interview with Mr. Richard de Sante.

RD: Okay.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/15/04
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/17/04
Reviewed by Richard de Sante 6/27/04