RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD GIES

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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AND

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NEW BRUNSWICK

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TRANSCRIPT BY

ROSIE CABANILLIA

Tara Kraenzlin: This begins an interview with Mr. Richard Gies on April 15, 1999 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Van Dyck Hall, with Tara Kraenzlin ...

Rosie Cabanilla: Rosie Cabanilla ...

TK: And ...

Richard Gies: Richard Gies.

TK: Excellent. I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents.

RG: Sure.

TK: Your father, what was his trade?

RG: Well, he had two or three different jobs in his lifetime. He had attended Rutgers, and, right after his graduation, in 1912, he went to work for what I believe was the first mosquito control commission in New Jersey, and he was the commissioner, I guess. The only employee, at least, and that was for Union County, where he lived, and then, he got into the building business. He lived in Summit when I was a young boy and he built about two hundred houses in Summit and New Providence. It was a very lucrative time, and his brother was an architect, so, between them, they had a good combination of architect and builder, and then, the Depression hit, and both of them had lots of land and not much money, and that went spiraling down. So, he, then, reverted back to a mosquito control-type of activity, and he was in that field of work for pretty much the rest of his life, working, at one time, for New York City under Robert Moses, a famous name over there. He was under Robert Moses' jurisdiction. Then, when ... World War II came along, he was called back. He had been an Army officer in World War I, but, he was called by the US Public Health Service, which most people don't realize was also an armed service during World War II. So, he was called back and headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia.

TK: He was drafted?

RG: No.

TK: He was called back?

RG: I think he volunteered, I guess. Anyhow, he had the expertise that they wanted, because they were particularly worried about a malaria outbreak in industry ... in the East coast here. Of course, our servicemen would have been all over the world by that time and bringing back all the possibilities of spreading malaria, in particular. So, they ... were mostly concerned with the Philadelphia area where there was shipbuilding, and a lot industry, and shipping, of course, and so, even I had a brief encounter with that. I was at Rutgers, the beginning of 1940, and, by the summer of '42, I had not yet been drafted or placed in military service, so, I had a summer of working for the Public Health Service. ... I remember kind of vividly going around with my little canoe along the offshoots of the Delaware River, and, every time I got near the Philadelphia side,

the shore patrol and everybody else would chase me over to the New Jersey side of the river, because the Navy base was on the Philadelphia side, and they didn't like people snooping around. So, I'd go over and get in the Cooper River, or whatever on the Jersey side. ... It was a fun thing to try to get out of the river, because all the ... plants also had high security, and fences, and there aren't that many landing places on the Delaware River, that far down. So, I had some fun getting out and trying to hitchhike to someplace where I could connect with people to come get my canoe. So, that's a long story, but, that was my first, semi-wartime service, I guess, but, my dad remained after the war. He was eventually hired by the State of Pennsylvania, and, later, by Delaware County, Pennsylvania, as a sanitary engineer, and so, he kind of followed this path, with stops all over the map, in being involved in, in particular, ... insect control.

TK: To backtrack, your father was born in Newark. How long did he stay in the Newark area?

RG: ... His family was there up until he attended college, which was in the Class of 1912 here at Rutgers, and his dad died when my father was in his sophomore year at Rutgers, which I guess would make it either 1909 or 1910, and the family home was in Newark. ... Newark was still a relatively smallish town, in those days, because I have some letters at home where my dad talks about getting his gang together to walk down to the Christmas tree in downtown Newark and all that kind of thing. The Weequahic Park was a favorite point, and so, that's where he grew up, and his brother, my uncle, was into falconry, you know, birds and all that kind of thing, which you don't think of downtown Newark these days.

TK: At that time, it was still possible to see wildlife?

RG: Oh, yes, and they had big camping trips out to the distant points west, such as Dover, New Jersey, and Lake, what's the one up here, your biggest lake? I can't think of the name.

TK: Lake Hopatcong.

RG: Yeah, Lake Hopatcong. And, Budd Lake, I know. I have some pictures he took of Budd Lake, in the old days.

TK: They would take trips out to Northwest Jersey?

RG: Yeah, because they could catch the railroad and drop off. ... They had a very outdoor club life. Apparently, a lot of people, co-ed, wanted to go camping, and for people growing up in Newark, that was a big thing. So, my dad was very outdoor orientated, and, when ... my sister, and my brother, and I were growing up, he took us places, too.

TK: Where would you go?

RG: Well, ... we camped at a lot of New Jersey state parks and ... we went on auto camping trips in New England and up in Canada. I remember going around the Gaspe Peninsula when I was, oh, thirteen or fourteen years old. My brother, and dad, and I, I believe, were the three on this trip, but, being the youngest guy, every time we got a flat tire, which was six times around that

road, you know who the little guy was who got under and had to place the jack under the car. It wasn't under the bumper in those days, but, the road up there ... was gravel, big, big chunks of gravel, and it was murder on tires, which weren't nearly as good as they are today.

TK: So, what kind of car did you have when you were young?

RG: My dad drove a Studebaker and it was a nice big comfortable car, really, for that time.

TK: You mentioned that your father had a building business. Now, at that time that he was building, what were Summit and New Providence like?

RG: Well, they were, you know, developed, but, not fully, you know. There was still vacant land and my dad had a lot of property on a place called Druid Hill, in Summit, on top of Oakridge Avenue. It was kind of a high point and that's where I moved, as a two-year-old, from Maplewood. My first recollection was being permitted to drive in the moving van up that big hill, and that was my number one recollection of youth, but, anyhow, there was a lot of opportunity in Summit and New Providence, just west of Summit, which was even less developed than Summit. ... So, he built houses, which amuses me, for they were sold for about $5500 and, today, you would pay $200,000 for the same house.

TK: You have seen prices skyrocket.

RG: Oh, yes, everything that I remember, like the three cent postage stamp, or, in fact, even the two cent stamp before it, just multiply by ten or eleven, on everything. A new car was, in my early recollection, ... $800-$850. We'd like to do that again, wouldn't we? [laughter]

TK: No such luck. Your father graduated from Rutgers College in 1912. Did he tell you anything about going to school here?

RG: Yes, he did. He was a member of Delta Upsilon fraternity, and he was very proud of it, and loyal. In fact, I think, my Uncle Howard, who was in the Class of 1908, probably designed what became the DU house here on College Avenue. My dad, at least, put up some money for one of the rooms. He had his name on it, I think. ... One thing I found interesting, I guess I have a historical interest, is that Thomas Edison was a big person in that time period, and he was to receive some kind of honor here at the college, and, apparently, Mrs. Edison was turned over to the DU people to take care of while she was visiting, and my dad told incidents about things like that.

TK: He was in charge of entertaining Mrs. Edison?

RG: Well, I am not sure if he was solo, but, anyhow, he had something to do with it, and there were lots of interesting anecdotes. I can't remember them all. Of course, Joyce Kilmer, the poet, was not in 1912, but, shortly after my dad. I think he was 1917 and my dad knew of him or, perhaps, even, knew him.

TK: Growing up, would you come back to Rutgers to visit with your father and your family?

RG: Yes. My dad was very faithful in coming here. An early recollection was of coming to some of the football games on what was Neilson Field. I had a cousin in the Class of '31, which would have made me eight-years-old, at that point. My cousin was on the team, not one of the stars, but, he was, ... "on the team," and there was a guy in the Class of 1931 by the name of Jack Grossman, who may have been the best football player I have ever seen. Of course, I was impressed as a young boy, so, I am not sure if my assessments are completely accurate, but, there was a game against Lafayette, and the score got in the thirties, and Lafayette was a better team, but, Grossman almost single handedly kept Rutgers in the game. I think he scored five touchdowns. He would run around, zigzag through everybody. He was fabulous. So, I do remember that, of course, as a young kid interested in sports.

TK: What do you remember of your school in Summit?

RG: In Summit? Well, I mentioned I started out up on a big hill, Druid Hill, and my elementary school was down the bottom of the hill, about a mile, possibly a mile and half, away. In those days, you didn't bus to school, you walked, whether it was raining, or snowing, or anything else, and I remember being dressed up as an elephant for, it must have been either a kindergarten or first grade party, and my mother had made this thing, and stuffed some rags in for the snout of the elephant, and, for some reason, I got upset. I don't know why, but, I remember deserting this party, and walking home, and causing all kinds of consternation, because the teacher was responsible for me, and I wasn't there, and, I guess, I wasn't welcomed at home, either.

TK: Did you not like your outfit?

RG: No. I think, I don't know what happened. At that stage, I might have been miffed at some other person. I am not sure. Another dramatic event was when my second grade teacher, ... she had these pinch-on glasses, and, somehow, they got broken, and I remember her floundering around and crying. ... You know, it was a major event in our young careers, to have all this going on, but, those are, I would say, routine childhood things, and, when I was in the fifth grade, my family moved. This would have been in the late thirties, I guess, and the Depression had caught up with my dad as a builder, and we had to sell the house we'd been in on top of the hill. We now moved to a rental property on the other side of town, and so, I changed grade schools, and the big event for me was that in the Lincoln School in Summit, which I now attended, they insisted I print. I had already been winning penmanship awards for beautiful script kind of writing. Today, I am somewhere halfway between each of these. Anyhow, this Lincoln School no longer exists. I think it's now a parking lot.

TK: Like Neilson Field.

RG: Yeah, but, I was, at this point, the smallest kid in my class, and among the youngest, I guess. Lincoln School had a fenced in area, typical of most schools, but, this school was within a block from downtown Summit. I remember being allowed to be the goalie for soccer. That put me with my back to one fence, and the other side of the school yard was another fence. I

remember being hit with the ball right in the tummy and having my wind knocked out, one time. And then, of course, a big thing, in baseball, was, in the same position, to be able to hit the ball over the fence, on the other side. So, I had very fun recollections of school. I did well in school and I enjoyed school. I think I was fortunate, having excellent teachers.

TK: Any stick out in your mind?

RG: Well, I had a Mrs. Bonnell in grade school. I was, I think, a little bit shy, and she was, I think, trying to pull me out of my shell a little bit, and she was helpful. ... Do you want me to continue to junior high and high school?

TK: We can come back to that.

RG: We'll come back to it? Okay.

TK: I would like to ask you about your father's service in World War I.

RG: Yes.

TK: What, if anything, did he tell you about his service there?

RG: Well, he was assigned as an officer to Fort Pike, in Arkansas, and, apparently, he was in charge of a company, which would be 250 men, roughly, who were all black, and, I think, they were mostly concerned with digging ditches, and whatever, in that area of the country, but, my dad got along very well. I mean, he enjoyed his experience there. I am sure it must have been a little different for him growing up in this part of the world, but, the big thing there was, my mother was an army nurse.

TK: That is how they met?

RG: And, they met there at Camp Pike.

TK: Where was your mother from?

RG: She grew up in Evanston, Illinois, which is just north of Chicago, and she'd gone through high school, and then, a nursing school there, and came out as an RN. ... She and my aunt, who, of course, was my mother's sister, were both going through the same route at Evanston about a year apart, and they both became army nurses, maybe, at age nineteen or twenty, something like that. I think they had two years of nursing school after high school, probably. I'm not sure. Anyhow, my mother and dad met, and they went back to Evanston to get married, and then, I think, my mother had to resign. I don't think they permitted Army nurses to be married, and, in any event, she wasn't back to Camp Pike for very long, because she was, you know, requested to resign, which she did. But I never did hear a lot about Camp Pike, other than that it was an enjoyable experience.

TK: So, he was state-side at this site for the whole war?

RG: Yes, yes. No overseas or anything like that and, in fact, that was the only location.

TK: I guess we can continue now with your schooling.

RG: Okay. Well, then, I went from Lincoln School to what was then called a junior high school, not a middle school as these days, and the Summit Junior High School was at one end of a very large building which was also the high school. So, in effect, you went from the seventh to the twelfth grade at the same location, and, for its time, that was a very big, sprawled out, very nice building, but, ... they didn't have quite an iron curtain where the junior high left off and the high school began, because they shared gyms, and auditoriums, and all that, but, I, again, ... enjoyed my junior high school, and junior high was grades seven, eight, nine, and high school was ten, eleven, twelve. ... I remember very fondly a couple of those teachers. I had a Spanish teacher by the name of Miss Carew who was very nice and Hazel Justice was my ninth grade teacher for both homeroom and English, but, I might be mistaken about that combination. Anyhow, she was one I remember. I learned a lot, and I really liked her, and then, of course, I moved pretty smoothly on into high school. I was always, a little bit, in the shadow of my brother, who was one year ahead of me and a very popular guy. I don't think I felt any inferiority complex, or anything like that, but, everybody knew my brother, Russ, you know, and so, you know, I was a marked individual. Coming along, everybody assumed they knew me because of my brother, but, in high school, I was active, especially in extra-curricular things, the dramatic club. I remember my brother and I did some singing at a dance there of a song ... it was "A Bicycle Built For Two," and, you know, which one of us was a female. [laughter]

TK: What dramatic pieces did you do?

RG: Well, ... I had a very talented math teacher by the name of Merlin Temple and he composed musical plays, or musical extravaganzas, and, also, a lot of short independent scene kind of things. I remember being Chefchek, the keeper of the inn where the heroine was my daughter, and, another time, I was a tree with branches, and I can remember being a cowboy, in another episode, with a hip holster, taking care of the bad guys and things like that. So, I was used to being up on the stage. The dramatic club in Summit High School was known as Guise and Disguise, and, at one time, my sister, brother, and I were all in Guise and Disguise. So, it was Gies, Gies, and Gies of Guise and Disguise. So, we all kind of had that. I was in chorus. I liked to sing. I wasn't the greatest person in that, but, I enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun and, for a time, until I realized I didn't have the finger dexterity, I thought I was a trumpet player. [laughter]

TK: So, you tried a little bit of a number of things, especially in the performing arts.

RG: Oh, yes, until about my sophomore year, I was the youngest, the smallest kid in my class. So, I wasn't any athletic star, at that point, but, I did begin to sprout about my junior or senior year. By the time I got here at Rutgers, I was getting involved in sports, too.

TK: As you were going through high school, what was your expectations as far as college is concerned? Did you know that you were coming to Rutgers?

RG: No.

TK: It seemed that it was a family tradition by that time.

RG: Well, it was, and my dad, of course, I knew, would be pleased if I did come to Rutgers, but, I had done very well in math, and mechanical drawing, things like this, so, I really thought of myself as becoming an engineer. My big hope was Cornell, which was a prestigious place for engineers, and, of course, by the time I was ready to come, I had a sister in the Class of '41 at NJC, now Douglass, and I had my brother already in the Class of '43, and I was coming along as '44, and ... the pot wasn't full of money. So, it became obvious I was not gonna go to Cornell, and, in fact, my last hope was to try for a state scholarship here. I remember another kid from Summit, Frank Furth and I were the two who went from Summit to this competitive exam. I am not sure where it was, somewhere in Newark, I believe, but, anyhow, it was a big room and there were tons of people who looked like they were probably smarter than we were. [laughter]

TK: Did you feel intimidated by the other people in the room?

RG: Well, not intimidated, but, a little nervous. You know, I didn't know how good I was or wasn't. ...

TK: Your future was resting on it.

RG: Yeah, and, fortunately, the outcome was favorable to both Frank Furth and myself.

TK: Did he also come to Rutgers?

RG: He went to Newark.

TK: The College of Newark

RG: Right, yeah, and, of course, I came here, and when I say I came here, I commuted to college my entire Rutgers career.

TK: Did your brother and sister commute as well?

RG: Yeah. My brother had been a resident here in his freshman year and my sister was a resident at NJC through her junior year. By the time I came along, I complicated life, so, we ended up buying a Model A Ford for the magnificent sum of $45, and we commuted from Summit to New Brunswick through what was my sister's senior year, and my brother's sophomore year, and my freshman year, and put 10,000 miles on this car, and it was kind of fun. We had the task of my sister dropping the two of us off here at Rutgers, and then, she taking the

car across town to NJC, and then, have to come back after classes to pick us up in ... what was then the library, and, now, your Art Center, I guess.

TK: Right. The Art Center.

RG: Voorhees, it was called.

TK: It was changed.

RG: Yeah, but, there were some interesting events, because, in that kind of car, which was a 1931 Model A Ford, if much went wrong, it only took twenty-five to fifty cents to get it fixed. There weren't too many involved parts. But, to continue my story, they were very insistent that libraries be quiet in those days. I don't know if that's true today.

TK: Somewhat.

RG: But, on occasion, I remember my brother and I trying to do a little work in the library until my sister arrived and my sister comes dashing in, "The car's on fire." [laughter] Of course, it was an electrical fire. A little wire, or something like that, but, you know, you can see the whole library go alert when she comes dashing in.

TK: Did you lose the car on that?

RG: No. On another repair, I remember paying twenty-five cents for the altimeter, I guess you pronounce it. ... Anyhow, so, at the end of that year, my sister had graduated. ... My dad was now in the Public Health Service, but, he was able to rent from Rutgers a house for us to stay in the rest of my time at Rutgers, and that was ... actually a building that belonged to NJC. It's on the corner of George and Jones Street, 132 George Street was the address. It was a corner property and very close to a building which was the bookstore for NJC. I know the college is using it for some purpose today. I don't know what it is.

TK: I am not sure.

RG: But, anyhow, it was a corner where the buses turned to go from George on to Jones, and, at night, it seemed to be a good spot for crime, and I remember a couple of gun shots in the middle of the night. ...

TK: Really?

RG: My brother and I were up on the third floor of this building and we had a marvelous view of the NJC campus, of course, to look out over the girls. [laughter]

TK: The neighborhood there was a high crime area, you think?

RG: This particular street, I know, in those days, perhaps was drug traffic, but, it just seemed to be a lot of noise at night, and so forth. We were almost diagonally across from the Dean's house there, Dean Corwin, at that time. I am not sure she was thrilled with having a couple of young men in her college campus. It was really part of the campus, but, my dad is a loyal Rutgers person, I guess, and had been able to get this building. It was not being used, so, I guess, both parties benefited, but, anyhow, that meant I had to tear across town on foot. The Model A Ford was gone for now. A bargain price for us of $50. So, we made five bucks after using 10,000 miles on it.

TK: Cars were already a little more in demand at that time.

RG: Well, I am not sure of that, but, it was a serviceable car, and I couldn't really use it in downtown New Brunswick too good. In fact, I did not drive it. I don't know if I was of driving age or not, ... 'cause I was about a year younger than most classmates, but, anyhow, I would tear across town, on foot, and go to class at Rutgers. Also, being a math major, the Army and military grabbed off an awful lot of math profs over at Rutgers. It ended up that I and three other men may have been the first four men to attend the New Jersey College for Women for a couple of courses.

TK: Sure.

RG: ... That was an interesting experience, because we were all awaiting ... being grabbed by the military, by this point, and the ladies had much more of a stake in getting good marks, and so forth. So, they seemed to take very copious notes and I would be in the back row looking around.

TK: Women outshone you in academic circles?

RG: No. No. I always did well, and I'm not saying I am smart, but, I did well, and, you know, I know I wanted to learn.

TK: You were distracted?

RG: I wasn't a note-taker. No, I probably got an A in that course, but, I didn't have to take down every word the prof was saying, because I was getting the message of what was important, I think, but, I don't mean to categorize all the ladies as note-takers and all the men as goofing off, but, it was sort of that way. So, anyhow, the big problem here was, the timings of classes between Rutgers and NJC were not very well in sync. We had, I think, fifteen minutes to get from Rutgers to NJC, or it might have been ... ten minutes the other way. So, I ended up doing a lot of running through town, and that led me to think that I might be a cross-country possibility. So, I did try out for the cross-country team, and I remember running through Buccleuch Park, and there was a tennis court. I don't know if you're familiar with Buccleuch, but, the last part of this cross-country route was coming up this very steep hill by the tennis courts. ... I had a classmate, Johnny Wheeler, who was really good, and he would have been long gone, you know, and I, panting up the hill and barely making it, ... always wondered how these folks playing tennis there

looked at this person with their tongue hanging out, panting up the hill, and obviously not very good at it. So, I didn't do too well at that, but, I tried it. But, the one sport I did enjoy was crew, and the boat house was over near where I lived, or down the hill from where I was then living, off NJC's campus. ... It was quite a different environment than I understand it is today, because, when spring came, we had to go, and put a raft, or dock, out into the river, from which to launch these boats, shells, which had been stored in, I forget the name of the outfit, but, there was a big storage shed that this person was either letting the college use, or they were paying rent to use, and we'd have to put our shells back in there when we were through rowing, and take them out again for each row. But, we waited for the ice to move out, to get this docking place, and then, I can remember, rowing up and down the river, ... some of the small fry of New Brunswick liked to flick pebbles off the Victory bridge, if that's the right name, or even the Albany Street bridge, and we would go up as far as, I don't know if they still call it the Landing Lane bridge, where you had to stop and turn around, because it got quite shallow. In fact, you could only go that far in high water tide, and we rowed down as far as South River for work-outs, and so on. My big moment came, ... I was then one hundred and fifty three or four pounds. I had to stay under one hundred and fifty-four pounds for lightweight crew. Anyhow, my big moment came when they let me stroke this boat against Columbia on the Raritan, and the coach, who was coach Chuck Logg, a great guy, had to devote most of his time to the heavyweight varsity. So, we were kind of self-taught, not terribly good oarsmen, but, I think I surprised Logg, because I was able, with the help of the others, to get our boat out in front by several lengths in the early going. We had practiced and we were pretty hip on getting a fast start. I have to say that half way down the course, things changed for the worse, but, it was a big event in my life to be asked to stroke this boat. Later on, we were successful in beating Princeton at Carnegie Lake, which was a nice event, and I still have a tee-shirt that the Princeton guy had to give me for losing. And we went up to Cornell and rowed on Lake Cayuga, and that was, for me, perhaps the thing I got the most enjoyment out of.

TK: Was the Rutgers-Princeton rivalry big at that time?

RG: Oh, indeed, yes. Chuck Logg, our coach, had been from Princeton.

TK: Oh.

RG: And, of course, that increased the intensity, I would say, and Carnegie Lake is not all that wide. You have to be pretty careful to be in your lane, and get out in front in the first half, because it kind of narrows at points, and you could hear the smashing of blades and the cursing of individuals who were having all this mish-mash on some races. But, I also remember probably horrifying my family when I'd come home from these rowing practices down at South River and all. I'd walk up the hill and through the NJC campus to Jones and George and I'd eat about seven potatoes as part of my dinner. You know, I just had a terrific appetite, and I was burning up the energy, so, I didn't put on weight or anything, but, I'm sure they were shocked at how much I was able to eat and still stay under one hundred and fifty-four pounds.

TK: Going back to the year you were commuting, you joined the Commuters' Club.

RG: Yes.

TK: Did you feel separate from the rest of the Rutgers population because you did not live on campus?

RG: I think so. We commuters would take bagged lunches and ... go, I guess it's the student union, or whatever it was then called, nothing to compare with today's, and so, some of us would be there for lunch. But, other than my crew involvement, it was really classes only and you were not in the same class with the same people very often, so, you were almost feeling not too tied to anybody, and even the commuters were buckshot from all directions, and different curricula, and so forth. ... I'd have to say that I really didn't feel too much a part of campus life. You know. ... I did participate in the debating team. Professor Reager was the debating coach, and he wrote a couple of books about debating, and so forth. Apparently, he was a prominent person in that field. My brother had been in that, and, again, I guess, I shadowed him in that we both were on the debating team.

TK: What were the topics that came up that year?

RG: I'm not sure I can really remember. I remember more a particular debate against Rider College which was held at New Brunswick. It was to be a decision debate. Some debates were just debates for the sake of debate, but, the decision makers in this one were to be the audience, which was, I think, ... entirely Rutgers undergraduate men. The Rider team had some very nice-looking young ladies on their team, so, I think we felt the odds were pretty long to begin with, but, we had been taught a very aggressive style of debating by Professor Reager. I think I must have been the first response, but, there was a young lady by the name of Rita Something-or-Other who got up and gave this positive statement for Rider, and I was the defense, and so, I, of course, got up and started attacking whatever she had said, and she immediately burst into tears, and we knew we were done. [laughter]

TK: So, you lost?

RG: We lost by unanimous decision.

TK: So, you were too aggressive.

RG: Perhaps, but it was fun, and I even remember, I think, being rather friendly with Rita on a return debate at her campus, because she was worth being friendly with.

TK: So, she forgave you?

RG: She did. I think that she realized that it was the style that we were taught and it wasn't personal.

TK: Since you bring it up, what was it like being one of the few males living on the other side of George Street, living among the NJC ladies?

RG: Well, I guess, in some ways, it was nice, but, we really did not have time to cultivate. I don't remember dating NJC ladies at that time. My sister had lived on Gibbons Campus, and I remember having gone over there, and I might have dated a person over there, I'm not sure, but, that was only during my freshman year. I went over to see where my sister was and had been living for the previous years.

TK: Did you ever go to the Soph Hop or any of the dances?

RG: I don't think so, I'm not sure. There were some, but, being in war time, they weren't heavily attended, I would say. I don't remember. I might have ... gone to one. I think I went to my Soph Hop because I was now down in New Brunswick, and I never had a senior year here, so, I don't know how that would have worked out, but, I was dating a gal in Highland Park who was not yet in college. She eventually came to NJC, now Douglass.

TK: How did you meet her?

RG: I think through church, probably.

TK: You attended church services?

RG: Yes, initially, I was at the ... First Dutch Reformed Church over on College Avenue. When we moved to the other side of town, I went to the Second Reformed Church, which is off of George Street on one of the cross streets, and they had a very lively, younger element. I don't know if they called it a youth group, but, you know, we enjoyed the singing and the social aspects of that.

TK: You had not been raised in the Dutch Reformed Church, so, that was more of a Rutgers influence that you went to this church?

RG: Yeah, I had been raised in the Presbyterian Church in Summit, a big central Presbyterian Church, which had been a very positive experience for me. In fact, I even considered the possibility of trying to be a minister, you know, as a very young person. We had a man who tried to interest me in going to the Princeton Theological Seminary, and took me down, ... and it was a very lively young people's group.

TK: So, you would go on these different trips.

RG: Yeah, we would go all over. I had been brought up with a very positive view of religion and, as it worked out, having seen a lot of different religions as a very young person, before age fifteen, and later in my life, a lot more, you know. I still like to consider myself religious, but, not tied to any one particular denomination. At present, I am Episcopalian. I guess my wife made me so, but, no regrets. To me, we all are talking about the same entity, and purposes, and I happened to have an experience later in India where I became very involved in Sikhism and Hinduism. When I say involved, I mean, I attended their temples during services, and so forth,

and I think we were all working on the same wave length. So, I respect the person no matter what. One of my very good friends in Summit when I was growing up was a Jewish boy, and I didn't realize what an honor it was, until now, until later in life, to be invited to some of the Jewish events that were high days for them. As a young person, I didn't fully appreciate that.

TK: Your parents were supportive of you going to these holidays?

RG: Yes, yes. Anything else?

TK: At this time, Rutgers had a mandatory chapel requirement and you would go to chapel over at Kirkpatrick as well?

RG: Yes, I'm a little vague on this. I remember going there. I'm not sure whether I did it at all my freshman year when I was commuting. I'm not sure what the hours were and the requirements were, so, while I say that, yes, I did go there, it wasn't nearly as often as if I had been living on campus.

TK: While you were living over at NJC, did you attend chapel as well?

RG: Once or twice. Most of my attendance was at the Second Reformed Church, off of George Street, really at the center of town.

RC: Were you involved in a fraternity while you were here?

RG: No. I think I was a disappointment to my dad.

TK: How about your brother? Did he join?

RG: No, no.

TK: What was your attitude toward the fraternities?

RG: Well, I think they had become, you know, other than a place to live, they had become somewhat irrelevant during the war, because they weren't able to function as fully as fraternities normally would, and, in my case, the most inexpensive route was to live at home.

TK: Now, you entered Rutgers in the fall of 1940.

RG: Yes.

TK: So, you have one full year, more or less, before the United States' entry into World War II. What, if anything, do you recall from this time?

RG: Well, I certainly was aware of it. Most of our information, in those days, was through radio or newspaper, and, of course, you couldn't be involved with either of them without some

understanding of, particularly, what Britain was going through. I don't think I had any overriding, ... you know, knowledge of the thing. I think I sensed that, I think, some day I might be involved, but, you know, anything that was further away than next week wasn't too big of a worry in those days.

RC: Do you think that was the general sentiment of the time?

RG: I don't know. I think others may have been more concerned about the immediacy of being called, and so forth. I was in the ROTC here, which was Army, and, of course, I think my dad thought of me following his footsteps, he having been an Army guy, that was my intention, and so, I went through two years of ROTC here.

TK: You did not sign up for the additional two years?

RG: I tried for the Advanced ROTC, and they only took fifty out of the entire university, and I wasn't one of the fifty.

TK: So, you did want to continue?

RG: Yeah, I really wanted it, because my orientation had been Army, and so, I was disappointed, I guess, but, I don't know on what basis. ... You know, you have to lose, somebody has to lose when they are only picking fifty, and whether my being a commuter had anything to do with it, I don't know. In any event, the reality was, I wasn't going to be in it for my junior year, so, I went over to New York on November 11, 1942 and enlisted in the Navy.

RC: Why did you choose the Navy?

RG: ... Well, I guess I might have felt a little rejected by the Army, but, I was going to be drafted sooner or later. I had no immediacy of being drafted. You know, I applied, or whatever you do, and was on register, but, I hadn't been called for any service or anything, but, I knew it was down the road. It was just a question of time, and, by enlisting in the Navy, I would be offered an opportunity for an officer-type program, which worked out to be the case. So, I remember going over there, I was nineteen-years-old, and I enlisted, and they told me to go back and go to school at Rutgers again, and I did. I completed my junior year here.

TK: Do you remember where you were when you got the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

RG: Not really. I was probably at home, but, I wasn't in a public place where there was a lot of human cry about it. I think, you know, we were all shocked by Pearl Harbor, but, once we had been attacked, I think it was obvious that the whole country was going to rally around, try and win the war.

TK: Do you remember anything that President Clothier or any of the other deans at Rutgers said to you regarding the war?

RG: Not really. Again, I wasn't on campus if they made speeches, but, I remember, Dr. Clothier, because, this might be getting ahead of the story, but, when I was called to active duty, I was sent to the University of Pennsylvania. That was in July of '43, summer of '43 and early fall, and I took twenty credit hours at Penn. ... I remember coming back and going with my dad to see Dr. Clothier, and we said, "Would he consider a transfer of my credits back here?" I had taken more than the minimum my three years here, and so, with the twenty credits from Penn, I was able to graduate in absentia in the January of 1944 graduation, which I was not there for. I remember I had seen Dr. Clothier and heard him speak, occasionally, but I ... was really impressed that he allowed me to do that. I'm sure the fact that I was in uniform had something to do with it, but, he was a great guy, anyhow. So, that was sort of a personal experience with Dr. Clothier, going to his house across the river there, and going into his study, and presenting my case, and having him say, "Yes," he would do it.

TK: Do you have any recollections of Dean Metzger?

RG: Yes, I always thought of him as kind of a chubby, I hope that's the right word, jolly person, and I didn't know him real well. I had no interaction, particularly as an individual, with him, but, he also impressed me as a very nice person, fine person, as were all people at Rutgers. One professor I remember from my freshman year was Oscar Buros, and I must say, this may sound a little self-serving, maybe, but, I found my first year here to be a cakewalk. ... Summit was one of the better high schools, I think, in the state, and so, I was having no trouble knocking off nice grades, and probably was headed for more struggle later, but, at least my freshman year, it was all kind of free wheelin', and easy, and Oscar Buros was in charge of some course, I'm not sure if it was his specialty, but, it was a required freshman course that everybody take. ... I'm not sure of the name of it anymore, but, ... among the requirements was ... that we learn fifty new words each week. We had sort of flashcards to learn, to build up vocabulary, and then, he would use us for guinea pigs on mental testing, and psychological testing, and so forth, for which he apparently was, I would gather, nationally known. He would put out a book each year of testing instruments that seemed to be used by everybody all over the place. So, we were kind of cannon fodder for some of the testing, I guess, he wanted to do. But I enjoyed his class, kind of challenging, and I think building up a vocabulary is important. So, that's one in particular I enjoyed. Later, I remember, I had three majors, English, math, and, I guess, social studies, mostly history, but, I had Professor Lamont for a course in drama as part of my English major. His big thing was having us tested by giving one line from some play, and you had to identify what was going on, or who said it, and that kind of thing, and we had to read a play each class, which was three a week, and be prepared for the line in the middle of all this, but, he was good. He challenged us and he was a nice guy.

RC: Do you think that any of your professors were somewhat inspirational?

RG: I don't think I'd use that term. They were good. I had a history prof over in Bishop House, and I'm sorry I can't remember his name, which I should, but, he was kind of an introverted guy. He was teaching one of these survey courses in early history, you know, the Egyptians and all the rest of it, and he had a habit of coming in the door at the last minute. He wasn't late, but, he

would be there at the dot of the start of the class and we would all be seated. He had a favorite spot from which he taught, and, on one occasion, some wise guys, and I don't think I was one of them, but, I certainly, probably, supported them intellectually, put an obstacle in his favorite spot, moved his desk, or a chair, or something, and it caused all kinds of problems. He almost came apart that his favorite spot had been taken over, and so, I remember that. I guess you always remember the things you shouldn't do. But he was an excellent professor. He liked to lecture, and he had things down very well, and his lectures were interesting, but, I'm afraid that, at least once, we upset him.

TK: Were there any other pranks or anything?

RG: No, not really. I wasn't too much of an upstart at this point.

TK: Also, things were a little different back then, in that you were allowed to smoke in class.

RG: Well, I don't remember smoking being too big a thing in those days. It might have been a Depression thing, that people couldn't afford them, or some of us were in sports and you weren't supposed to be doing it anyhow, but, I do remember, and I'm not sure which fraternity it was now, there was a famous dog here by the name of Bismarck. Have you heard of him?

TK: I have.

RG: Bismarck would come to several classes that I was in and Bismarck was very intellectual. He was quiet. He got in the corner, and was comfortable, behaved himself, and then, he moved on to the next class. He was kind of a woolly, I'm not sure it was ... not a sheep dog, but, he had that kind of fur, anyhow, lots of fur drooping over the eyes and all that. So, he was a very well liked dog.

TK: Now, because of the developments in the war, a lot of the men in your class had to leave before finishing or just after finishing Rutgers.

RG: Yeah.

TK: Did you keep in touch with any of the members of your class?

RG: Not really, no. I would say, almost categorically, no. ... You know, once you are in the military, you are kind of dispersed all over the place. I had not really been terribly close with classmates. As a commuter, again, your earlier question, I didn't feel close to them. I'm much closer now. I think two members of the football team were probably aided though a math class by sitting next to me. One of them, at least, gives me credit for getting him through and I'm not sure if I deserve it. So, those two guys I feel some affinity to, because we did struggle through the same math course. It was one of the more difficult ones, but, to answer your question, no, I didn't keep in touch.

TK: Your brother, when did he enter the service?

RG: My brother graduated in the Class of '43. It's sort of a funny thing. He ... had also enlisted in the Navy program, similar to the one I was in, and he went to Columbia University for Midshipman's School. I think he started, or his active duty, had been twenty days ahead of me, and, as it turned out, he became an officer something like a year and a half ahead of me. A few days head start stretched into much faster completion because there was such a jam of people waiting to go through not only Midshipman's School, but, I'm sure it was true for the Army and Marines as well. ... In my case, I was fortunate that the Navy sent me to the University of Pennsylvania. So, I was able to get my degree, which most of my classmates could not have. Many of them left in their junior year, as I did, but, they had to come back and finish after the war in various years, in '46, '47, '48, whatever. But, ... I kind of lost the thread, now. I don't know what I was saying.

TK: Your brother ...

RG: Oh, anyhow, my brother went to Columbia, and became an ensign in the Navy, and he had quite a different route. He went to service in the European theater, in the amphibious side of it, and saw a lot of difficult action, I would say, in places like Anzio, and the Normandy landing. I guess I looked up to him, as a younger brother, as somebody I admired, and later, when the European war was being wrapped up pretty successfully, he was transferred out to Hawaii and San Francisco, and I was about to ... hop on my ship in the same direction. We had five days together in San Francisco, and I was pleased that we had that opportunity to share some time in the middle of a war, you know, and so, to make his story a little bit shorter, he did serve in a group, ashore in Hawaii, that was responsible for keeping track of where the ships were. They had a big mock-up, and moved model ships around the board as time went by. He was eventually transferred, probably in 1945, to New York City, and not very much later, discharged, and I envied him. He had a chance to get on his civvy clothes and saddle shoes and I was still fighting around in the Pacific, but, he had gone though a lot and deserved it. ...

TK: You had enlisted in New York.

RG: In New York.

TK: When you actually entered into active service, where did you go?

RG: I was called to active duty on July 1, 1943, and this is when they sent me to the University of Pennsylvania. So, I was wearing a neat, little, white ... navy uniform and trying to keep it clean in a very soot-filled city. My roommate was a fellow named Phil Basher from Seattle, Washington. He and I had a room in Rodney Hall, which won't mean anything to you, but, it was on the ground floor along Woodland Avenue, in Philadelphia near a very busy five-pointed street intersection. In fact, Believe It or Not Ripley had published something that said that there was a trolley going by there, I think it was, every twenty seconds. It was summer time with no air conditioning. The windows would be opened, and the soot would just pile into this, you know, ... room we had, and trying to keep white suits white in what was otherwise a gray environment was pretty tough.

TK: So, uniform regulations became rather impossible.

RG: Well, you did the best you could, yeah, but, I'm sure they realized that they had to bend some. You just couldn't have a spotless white in that environment, but, we had some advantages in being on the ground floor. We were surrounded by fences and gates, and they closed at ten o'clock at night, and we didn't have all that much liberty to begin with. As students, we were supposed to be, during the week, studying, but, our liberty would start at noon on Saturday. If it was football season, which it was later on, I wanted to go to the games because Penn had a powerhouse, undefeated team with two or three All-Americans on it, and that's a far cry from today's situation for Ivy League schools. But, anyhow, ... at other times, I was anxious to go visit my folks here in New Brunswick, and Phil Basher and I had an opportunity to go out our ground floor window and over a spiked iron fence, and, maybe, get twenty minutes or a half an hour start on the weekend liberty, officially beginning at noontime. ... Of course, I was trying to catch a train to New Brunswick, and it was kind of critical, in the middle of Saturday, to get the right train, and my roommate was dating a girl, and, in fact, married her during this period and he was trying to catch a train to Washington, DC, where his sweetheart was, and she was, apparently, being pursued by others. None of us had much money, but, Phil had enough to get the train to Washington. ... Eventually, I remember during this time at Penn, he set up a hastily arranged wedding, and asked me to be the best man, and the main function was to provide him with, I forget how much of a loan, might've been twenty-five dollars, to help sponsor this event.

TK: Where was it at?

RG: It was in Washington. His wife was, I guess you would say Native American these days. She was of an American Indian background. Ingaletta was her first name, and a very nice person. Anyhow, so, that's where he was headed. I'm not sure how we got to get the window to our room back down, I guess we could close it from the outside, but, we had to cover our tracks, and I was not one to go against the rules very often, but, I did then, with his setting a good example. He had more reason to than I, though.

TK: He was your inspiration.

RC: Were there any repercussion if you would have gotten caught?

RG: Oh, yeah, we ... probably would have been restricted to the quadrangle area, which was the fenced in part, and have to do extra guard duty, or extra marching, or something, but, we were smart enough to beat the system.

TK: From Philadelphia, you ended up going to Northwestern, or not immediately?

RG: Yes, but, not immediately. ... I finished at Penn in November, early November. Because it was just the end of the football season, I remember, and I think the Navy, ... with so many of us coming through, they had a problem with what to do with us. So, in our case, we were shipped down to Portsmouth, Virginia, which is right next-door to Norfolk. We were still apprentice

seamen, which was the lowest form of life in the Navy, one solitary stripe ... at the bottom of your cuff. Some folks would carefully roll those cuffs up, so it was unknown how many stripes were there.

TK: Or, not there.

RG: Or, not there, but, anyhow, we were, I think, really just staged to this place, and we were given tasks, such as sweeping the streets. They were very clean while we were there. I don't think they have ever been that clean since, probably. I remember, too, some gorgeous KP, kitchen police, which you got for three days at a stretch. When it was my turn, it must have been Fridays, when they had a lot of fish fried in the pans, and it was an extra effort to get them clean, but, it was, for me, a kind of a fun time, because I had not had a campus life, and this became sort of, by default, my campus experience. It wasn't a college campus, but, I had roommates, and we were having fun, and we had some very talented people in this about-to-be officer program. I remember they had great sports teams, the baseball team had several professional players that were very well known at that time. ... My particular interests became a chorus, ... an all-male chorus, which was the greatest group, I guess, I ever sang with. It was like, maybe, fifty of us. Almost as good as the Rutgers chorus. [laughter]

TK: Now, did you keep in touch with any of these roommates or buddies throughout the war?

RG: I'd say no, only incidentally. One of the people I remember was the son of Charles Coburn, the actor. Coburn was a well-known Hollywood person, and his son, James Coburn, was in this marking-time Navy group in Portsmouth. ... In those days, for me to get home on weekends, which I tried to do when I could, you had to cross the Chesapeake Bay by ferryboat, and it could get pretty rough with a rolley-polley boat, and quite enough distance for the wind to kick up waves. So, anyhow, Coburn's dad came to put on a play somewhere in that area, I don't know if the name Zazu Pitts means anything to you, but, she was a movie star, and was with that theatre group, too. Her daughter was a gorgeous thing about eighteen or nineteen-years-old, that we all looked at and sighed. But, I remember crossing Chesapeake Bay with that group, and it got pretty rough, and they were having a rough time, too, but, that's kind of an aside. To answer your question about keeping in touch, ... I think we were going through so much movement geographically that it was difficult. Now, my roommate, from Penn, Phil Basher, I was able to keep up with, and did, and I ... actually saw him out on the West Coast later in my military life, more than once, but, other than people you'd physically lived with, like roommates, I would say, no.

TK: Right. From Portsmouth, you go out to Chicago, and you were part of the Navy V-12 program at Northwestern University.

RG: Yes, yeah, it was middle of winter when they were ready to move us out there. ... I remember being piled on our special train bound for Chicago. I realize they had some transportation difficulties in those days, we were moving troops and supplies all over the place by train, and so, we were on a rather antique type train where the heating system, if they had one, gave out in December, late December. Anytime anybody with higher priority than we came

along, they'd pull our train off on the siding and run through the troops, or whatever had to go first, and so, this became quite a long trip from Virginia to Chicago, and we ran out of drinking water, and I just remember being, you know, not all that uncomfortable, but, it was kind of an unpleasant thing. We were all jammed in there, you didn't waste space, and we were packed in there, not quite like sardines, but, we were certainly overloading what would be, normally, the capacity of these cars, and we were all kind of anxious for what lay ahead when we arrived. So, that's a memory, but, nothing spectacular. But, anyhow, we got out to Chicago, and Northwestern University is based in Evanston, Illinois, but, we were in their downtown Chicago campus. The Navy had, I guess, leased two high rise buildings, Abbot Hall and Tower Hall. I was in Tower Hall. I think they had a preceding midshipman's class ... already in Abbot when we arrived, and these were like nineteen or twenty story buildings, so, they could soak up a lot of people. I believe I was on the twelfth floor. We called them decks from being in the Navy, but, the twelfth floor of Tower Hall, and I really had a great time, again, at Midshipman's School, because I had roommates, and I had seven of them. They were great guys. We had double deck bunks, and we had to have the lights out at ten o'clock at night, and we were supposed to study from seven to ten or eight to ten. We had a lot of sports, because they were trying to keep us in great physical shape, so, you know, we had obstacle courses, and we had competitive things, like basketball, swimming, and water polo. I turned out to be a pretty good part of the water polo team. I guess I was a bit more slippery than I thought, and I could make some goals, so, I did, and I was on the basketball team. Our company was the athletic champion of this particular Midshipman's School. So, we were kind of proud about that, but, anyhow, ... this started in January of '44 and continued 'til May 10th, which was when I graduated. But, it wasn't all smooth sailing, because my birthday was March 10, 1944, and, at that point, I had become twenty-one-years-old, and I also came down with the mumps, on ... exactly that day. So, I remember, ... I didn't have any pain or anything, but, I had, you know, swelling, I guess, just on one side, but, they didn't want someone with mumps around 1300 other midshipmen. So, I got rounded up in an ambulance and off I go, forty miles to Great Lakes Navy station, which is north of Chicago. I was still wearing my white hat and we hadn't gotten to our exalted officer status, yet, in March. So, I remember going into Great Lakes, and I had been told that if I ... wasn't able to return to Midshipman's School, I think within five days, I would have to repeat the whole thing with the next class, and having completed half of it successfully, I wasn't anxious to have to repeat. So, I got up there, and somebody walked me in and assigned me to this particular barracks. I was, you know, not feeling at all sick, and it became clear, almost instantly, that there was this system that you worked your way around the outside of the room, where the bunks were, and, when you got around to this side, you got close to getting turned loose again, and the people who were feeling well did the sweeping of the floor, and the decks, and, I think, helped make some of the bunks. So, I became a very aggressive helper, and whenever there was a bunk that became vacant somewhere further around, somehow my things ended up there. So, I made it out in the prescribed time, just under the wire. You know, I had to go through a medical release, so, I guess I was okay to return, but, if I hadn't, you know, kind of gotten the lay of the land, ... I might have dillied and dallied and had to have gone through the whole Midshipman's thing a second time.

TK: Had you recovered by then?

RG: Oh, yeah, yeah. I wasn't really sick at all, but, I had received a gorgeous birthday cake for my birthday on March 10th, and, by the time I got back, it wasn't there anymore. My roommates had enjoyed it. I was very fortunate. My mother, I mentioned, had grown up in Evanston, and so, I had cousins in Evanston. The Carlsons, and the Olsons, and the Nelsons, and all those good Swedish names, and so, they had been the providers of this cake, and I had also had the opportunity to visit with them on weekends when I wanted to get some home-cooked meal and all that, but, anyhow, that's where the cake came from, and disappeared with my roommates.

TK: Had you traveled much outside of New Jersey before joining the Midshipman's School?

RG: Only on camping trips with my dad. I had never been to another country other than Canada and even a limited part of Canada.

TK: Had you been south at all?

RG: I don't think so. ... Camping was to New England areas. ... I don't really think I went to the South.

TK: What was your impression of the Midwest, of Chicago, Evanston, and that whole area?

RG: I loved it. They were very kind to servicemen, and, I guess, many cities were, but, certainly, Chicago was. We got free tickets to the ice hockey and vast professional sports, and we were using swimming pools, and so forth, that were provided as part of our training program. As potential sailors, we were taken out on Lake Michigan and some of the boats to shoot some guns and do some things that were supposed to get us ready to move on to bigger ships, but, the people in Chicago were very kind. We were invited out to dinners on weekends, and, ... I think, I had a couple of dates with Northwestern girls that were introduced to us. Some of the sororities would send an invitation to whoever would accept it, and so, it was very nice, really, it was fun. I did well, you know, academically, and in sports, and I really enjoyed my roommates. All seven of them were great guys. Unfortunately, one of them was killed shortly after we graduated, but, we had some of the usual problems with the proctors running around to see that our lights were out at ten o'clock, and you would be under the cover, while you were looking at last minute preparation for the exam tomorrow. ... One of my roommates was a fellow named Woolpert, the only married man in the group. He was considerably older. Most of the rest were, you know, in our early 20s, and he might've been in his late 20s, and he was sort of the father image for this group, and he did that part very well.

TK: These roommates and the other men you went through the training with were from all over the country?

RG: Yes, Biertness, the chap I mentioned that was killed shortly, was from Minnesota. He was of good Norwegian background and ... Minor George was from Cleveland, Ohio. We had Doug Groom, ... from Texas. Not naming them all, we were from all over.

TK: That did not really play a role in anything there?

RG: No, I think it was probably an advantage. We had some different stories to share. We hadn't all done the same thing.

TK: It kept things interesting.

RG: Yeah.

TK: In May, 1944, you were commissioned as an ensign.

RG: Yeah.

TK: You went out from there to San Francisco?

RG: Yeah. I had my commissioning on May 10th in a place called Navy Pier, which sticks out into Lake Michigan, and we all got through, and threw our hats in the air, and that kind of thing, and so, it was an event. My parents had come out to see this graduation and either they, or my relatives, provided another late birthday cake, which we worked on, so, we kind of made up for that. I was very lucky, in that I was granted about three weeks of leave to go home before. I was to report to San Diego, in California, and so, I had some time at home to kind of recover from the midshipman's effort. Everything moved by train in those days, so, I had this long trip across country, and I remember that I had enough time that I made one stop somewhere in Arizona to go take a bus up to the Grand Canyon. Again, you asked me earlier if I had traveled, and I hadn't, and I thought, "I had the time, I'm going to go see the Grand Canyon," which I did, and then, I went right back and took a train the rest of the way to California. ... My ship was being constructed in San Francisco and wasn't actually commissioned until December, and this was now June, and so, I guess whoever was the mastermind of getting us all together on this ship assigned me to practically every school that the Navy ever put together, and so, I had been selected, and I guess I am grateful for it, ... to go to torpedo school in San Diego. Most of my classmates had been rushed off to amphibious ships and destroyers which were taking most of the kamikaze attacks, and so forth. So, ... it may well be that I was lucky, and it may have even saved my life by being assigned to a ship that was bigger than those of my classmates and still being built. I was told that I was going to be torpedo officer of this ship. It was an antiaircraft cruiser, which was like a floating gun platform. It had as many guns as you could get on top of the available space. They were three different sizes, 20mm, 40mm, five-inch guns, and then, we had six torpedo tubes, with three torpedoes mounted on each side, which could swing in any necessary direction on that side of the ship. I don't know why I was chosen for this assignment, but, I had never done anything mechanically in my life. ... I guess it was the usual story, to stick the square peg in a round hole, or something, but, I was assigned to torpedo school, where we literally took torpedoes apart, and crawled in, and found out how all the pieces came together, and how they worked, and I must have had an aptitude for it. I had never done anything like that before, but, I succeeded, and ... most of what became my shipmates were in San Francisco going to schools or helping with the work being done in the building of our ship, the *USS Flint* (CL-97).

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

TK: This continues an interview with Mr. Richard Gies on April 15, 1999 with Tara Kraenzlin ...

RC: Rosie Cabanilla ...

RG: And, Richard Gies. Anyhow, I was sent to San Diego to learn to be a torpedo officer, but, I think, partly to keep me out of all the shuffle of what was going on in San Francisco. So, eventually, in something like seven weeks, I graduated from torpedo school, and they sent me to a couple of other schools, like sonar and combat information center, which was CIC in abbreviation. So, I was sort of academically qualified to do a lot of things, I suppose. At the end of all this, they were going to send what was to be my torpedo gang for me to train in this school that I had finished myself on how to repair and shoot torpedoes. They sent down about six or seven guys for me to train. ... We went through the necessary things that were required and part of it was firing practice torpedoes. ... I don't know how much anybody knows about torpedoes, but, the ones that we were firing from surface ships were about twenty feet long and had a diameter of probably ... twenty inches, and a lot of it was just a big cylinder with compressed air at 1800 pounds per square inch, and that, coming out of the rear of the torpedo would, of course, ... drive it forward. ... Then, what was called the warhead was where, normally, you would have your explosives, but, for practice, you didn't want to lose torpedoes. That warhead would also be full of air, and not used up as the rest of it, in sending the torpedo wherever you were shooting it, and at the end, it would kick out some orange dye into the water, to mark the spot where the torpedo had ended up, which might be a couple of miles away from where it was fired. ... Then, you'd go by boat, and chase it, and this air in the warhead in place of explosives was supposed to hold this thing up, so that you come, and get the torpedo back, and save the taxpayers buying another one. Well, all went well, except for one of my shots, something went wrong, and the torpedo went down to the bottom of San Diego Bay. All I can remember is having to fill out all kinds of forms for the government, explaining what happened to "my" torpedo.

TK: You were directly responsible.

RG: Oh, yeah, of course, somebody always has to be responsible, especially in the military. No matter what the most obtuse connection may be, there's gotta be responsibility. Well, of course, ... I have to add, that was one of the things that I remember, because of it not being a smooth operation, but, anyhow, those were my school days in San Diego, a couple of months worth.

TK: You went up to San Francisco.

RG: ... I went back up to San Francisco, and the ship was to be commissioned on August 31, 1944, and I was not yet officially attached to the ship, despite having trained some of the crew. I wasn't living on it. I wasn't in the original group that was already earmarked or assigned to the ship. So, I showed up, and I stood on the pier, and watched the commissioning ceremony as all my future friends were standing on the ship. I was, you know, a short distance away, but, I was there for the commissioning, and I was glad to see it. ... They put me in some kind of temporary

housing on Treasure Island out there, ... halfway between San Francisco and Oakland. They had Navy schools and whatever. So, I was there a few days, and then, I was told I was going to Hawaii, to a place called Camp Catlin, and I was to learn to become ... qualified in fighter direction, which means controlling the use of aircraft from a ship. You know, you say, "The enemy so-and-so, at vector so-and-so, and altitude so-and-so," and all that kind of stuff. So, as it turned out, I was pretty royally treated, not on the way out, but, I'll tell you in a minute, on the way back. I flew out on a seaplane, which took off from the San Francisco Bay. ... You could look around, and see all the downtown area, and the bridges, and everything, and off we go. First time I had ever been in a seaplane, and it was an old wonder bus kind of a seaplane, and I, being a rather new ensign, was given the last seat in the tail of this seaplane. I don't know if you have ever had the opportunity to ride in commercial planes in the tail. Don't, if you can avoid it. It's not like the old planes, but, there is a lot of vibration back there, compared to the other parts of the plane. So, anyhow, when I got out to Hawaii, ... well, it was near Hickman Field, sort of between Pearl Harbor and Honolulu. Well, we came down, and, eventually, I was taken by a truck up this winding road, up a hill, to Camp Catlin, which was in the hills in back of Pearl Harbor and Honolulu, and it was now the middle of the night, and, of course, Hawaii was all blacked out. So, I'm groping my way around. I'm told that I have a bunk in such and such a barracks, and I don't remember the name, but, I think I was turned loose at the door of this barracks, and I was completely deaf, and I can relate to that now, because I am almost that way again, but, the ... vibration on the plane had made me temporarily almost deaf, stumbling around without really hearing what people were saying. So, I come to this barracks, and there were double bunks, I think even triple bunks, but, certainly, double bunks, and I'm supposed to find a particular bunk, and, of course, there is virtually no light in there. So, I stumble around feeling kind of stupid, but, I did find my bunk, eventually. That was my arrival in Hawaii, and then, the next day, we started classes. Part of it was sort of like the amusement parks today. To get us used to the idea, we had these little vehicles, almost like golf carts, to ride around in, on the ground, and ... to give a direction, and try to intercept somebody else out there, and so forth. So, there was some of that to begin with, and then, we eventually got planes to work with, and they would send some plane out that we were supposed to be able to intercept with the planes we were controlling, and so, by radio, you give the necessary orders, and everything was fine for the most part, except, many of the pilots were pretty gung-ho Marines who had come back from pretty tough duties in the Pacific. ... They were much more interested in flying down the beach and looking at the girls than in following this young college squirt's... orders. So, it took a little negotiation, but, we did the best we could, and, eventually, I was qualified as a fighter director, interceptor, or whatever the right lingo, and they also put me through some more CIC, Combat Information Center, which is learning the use of all the equipment. ... I don't know how much this means to anybody else, but, the nerve center on a Navy ship is the Combat Information Center, where sonar, if you are pinging away for submarines, the results are coming back there. The control of aircraft might be there, the radar looking around for ships, as well as airplanes, two different kinds of radar. All this information flows in, and then, you know, your ship's course and speed. So, you are kind of the eyes and ears of the people steering the ship, especially at night, when you're not going to see anything with your naked eye. So, anyhow, I was being prepared to take up some of that type of duty. ... The other thing that was a great source of pleasure there in Hawaii was, when all of us ... got through doing our schoolwork, each day they piled us in trucks and took us down off the airport for swimming and I've always loved

swimming, still do it. I'm really into it, it's what keeps me going. Well, anyhow, late afternoon, we'd go down, and, of course, in Hawaii, you always had the sunshine and a beautiful place to swim. So, that was the exercise, and then, on graduation, I was now to be flown back, which I didn't know. They were going to fly me back to San Francisco. ... It turned out, and I don't know how, other than they must have had a vacant space on it, I was assigned to the Martin Mars, which was the world's largest seaplane, at that time, and they were taking mostly wounded people back who had severe medical needs, and people that had more golden braids on their arm than I was ever going to see. So, I was, again, the low man on the totem pole, but, on a pretty fancy totem pole, and that was a great experience for me, and we landed right in San Francisco Bay. You know, taxied up almost to the foot of Market Street there. It was a nice way to arrive in San Francisco. ...

TK: San Francisco, at that time, was the departure point for people heading to the Pacific. What was the atmosphere like in 1944?

RG: Well, again, this was a city that was very friendly to service people, and it was mostly Navy and, I guess, Marines. ... You know, one of the things that I think came out of the war, to me, was that we were all in this war together, and, maybe, we've developed fences and don't help each other as much as we should anymore, but, you know, everybody was doing their bit. ... I think our service people, for the most part, you know, were behaving themselves, and respectful of properties, and not ... being rowdy, and so forth, and that made a big impression, on me, that it took everybody coming together to do what we ended up doing as a country, but, to answer your question, I like San Francisco. I think everybody does and I certainly did. Again, through my relatives in Evanston, I was made aware of, not a relative, but, a friend in Alameda, which is very close to San Francisco, and ... this family's name was Frye, and they kind of took me in as kind of an away from home son.

TK: More home cooked meals.

RG: Right, I had that opportunity and this was true of a lot of what went on in the war. I'm sure you've heard this from others, but, they certainly made my time there much more pleasant. I mentioned, eventually, ... I don't think it was quite at this time period, but, my brother was being moved when I finally was aboard the *Flint,* and we were in San Francisco. We both arranged dates with some pretty nice girls. ... One of them, named Olive Moody, was in the San Francisco Opera Company, and, you know, it was really superb. She had a wonderful voice and was a great person, so, you know, it was nothing romantic, but, it was really great, just before going out to the Pacific, for the unknown future time, to have a nice experience. So, ... I kind of put the cart before the horse, but, when I got back to San Francisco, ... I had to chase my ship, which had, ... meanwhile, moved from San Francisco to San Diego, and so, I hopped on an overnight train, and, eventually, caught up, and even got aboard the ship that I had been waiting to report to for so long, and that was in San Diego.

TK: So, you get aboard the USS *Flint*.

RG: Yes.

TK: You headed out to one of the atolls in the South Pacific.

RG: Yes, its name was Ulithi. Yeah, ... when I got aboard the *Flint*, there were some final training exercises, and preparations to be cut loose from the States, and so, ... we had some gunnery exercises, and so forth, and all the repertoire that you need to deal with, search and rescue, and things like that, but, anyhow, they took the *Flint* back to San Francisco, to the Bethlehem Steel Company yard, where it had been built, for the last tune-ups before we shove off. ... You know, we had to have some work done on a boiler. So, finally comes the big day, and we go under the Golden Gate bridge, and you wonder when you are coming back, or if you are. We were mostly a West Coast group. We certainly had people from all over, but, the preponderance was West Coast people. So, off we go, and we escorted a battleship to Pearl Harbor, the USS *Indiana*, and then, we almost immediately left there. I had one amusing incident, I don't know if you want to hear it or not, but, before leaving Hawaii, I'm standing my first watch ... in port as what they called the JOOD, Junior Officer of the Deck. The officer of the deck would be up on the forward part of the ship where the officers come and go. The junior officer of the deck is at a gangway to a pier at the aft part of the ship, and so, I happened to have, I think it was, the eight to twelve watch at night. It was the first time I had ever ... had this duty. I'm wearing a pistol, and the equipment you are supposed to have, and it gets to be about eleven o'clock at night, and I see someone I'm somewhat in awe of, our executive officer, who is a commander, kind of weaving down the pier towards the ship, and his name was Commander Johnson, if it makes any difference. ... Commander Johnson should have gone up to the forward gangway and go where the officer of the deck was, but, he comes along, and I don't know what got into him, except, maybe, too much beer, and he decides to come over the gangway to where I am, and he comes up, and puts his face about this far to mine, and says, "Mr. Gies, I'm drunk, aren't I?" [laughter] ... I thought, should I say, "Yes, you are sir," or say, "No, sir, you're not sir." So, I'm not sure I said much of anything, which was probably the right answer, but, I was a little shaky, in the middle of my first watch, ... to have this event occur. But, I survived. ...

TK: Was there much drinking amongst the officers?

RG: Yes, particularly knowing where we were headed, I think, and there wasn't much else to do. I'm not someone who drinks, having been involved in crew and all that, and I guess my family was very conservative. I was not a drinker myself, but, there certainly was plenty of it, and anyhow, maybe one story on that event. ... Eventually, when I got to be somebody on this ship, we had a quartermaster, by the name of Potter, who was one who did drink too much. Apparently, he had gotten into trouble in San Francisco, and would, if caught ashore, have been arrested, and so, you know, he was kind of, in my mind, a bad egg of some sort. I didn't know the full details, but, at one time, when we were out there, we went to general quarters, which is, when you are anticipating an attack, everybody gets where the guns are, and where your particular stations happen to be. Not everyone is on guns, but, anyhow, this general quarters alarm was sounded so suddenly that I didn't have a chance to grab my helmet, and I was, of course, ... concerned with torpedoes and being up where you could see things, and I should have been wearing a helmet. ... I remember thinking, "My helmet is in my stateroom. Do I take the minute to go there or go immediately to where my battle station is?" ... I decided that I better be

where I am supposed to be, and not worry about the helmet, and low and behold, a couple of minutes later, Potter shows up with my helmet. So, you know, here is a tough guy ashore, but, he was really taking care of others when he got on the ship. So, I have always had a feeling that I was on a very fortunate ship to be on, and great camaraderie, and as evidence of that, we still meet once a year for reunions, this year in Nevada in September, and we'll have our tenth annual reunion.

TK: But, you only started meeting many years after the war.

RG: Yes, yes, and maybe we could talk about that later, if you want to. ... We had a lot to be thankful for, I guess. We were very lucky, and that's kept us close together, but, I guess I left you in Pearl Harbor, and when we left from there, which was almost immediately, we just kept going, after my famous night on watch, but, we steamed out for several days and came to Ulithi, which is a ... great natural harbor, out very far ... in the Pacific. They call it a coral atoll, with a sort of a ring. It really is sort of a collapsed volcano. You have what used to be the rim where all these little pieces of island are, and in the middle happened to be, probably, the best anchorage in the western Pacific for mounting invasions, and whatever, for the Navy, and so, as we approached this place, I, again, in the top side looking out, ... saw what looked like sticks start poking up over the horizon, and they were the masts of all these ships. ... They were all being assembled for the Lingayen Gulf landing, which was on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. I had never seen so many ships in my life, and I'm not sure I've ever quite duplicated it. I mean, I had worked with a lot of ships, but, having steamed out there by ourselves, to suddenly come on, you know, it's like downtown New York, except it's all ships, and so, we haul in there, and anchor, and, in the meantime, our mail, apparently, had beaten us out there. They flew the first class mail out frequently. So, among the early events was the arrival of the mail boat, coming up along side our ship and transferring over, by line, a bunch of bags of mail, and, of course, we were thrilled to get some mail so early, and being so new from the States. We sent back in these bags some ice cream, which was still frozen, and fresh strawberries, and you can imagine the impact of that on people who hadn't had either of those for months, or very long periods, and so, it was always amusing, whenever we went to Ulithi, our mail service was top notch. [laughter] Anyhow, we weren't there long, about three days, getting organized. Then, we made off in Task Force 38, which was commanded by Admiral Halsey, who was a famous name for this time period. Well, what was interesting, I'm saying this as sort of an aside, in order to confuse the Japanese, we'd be the same ships, but, we'd be Task Force 38 when we were commanded by Halsey, and we'd be Task Force 58 when we were commanded by Admiral Mitscher, and it would be pretty much the same ships. Occasionally, one ship would have to go back for repairs, and another would have been built, or coming out for whatever reason, but, so, we sent off in support of the Lingayen Gulf landing. ... The actual landing was to be supported by battleships and ships with bigger guns than we had, but, our mission as ... a fast aircraft carrier task force was to kind of create diversions and have the Japanese guessing where we were gonna land. So, we first had our aircraft from our aircraft carriers attack targets on Luzon, and I don't know if you know the geography of ... that part of the world, but, the Philippines are off-shore of mainland China, or Indochina, in those days, and above that was Formosa, now Taiwan, which was just off-shore of China. Well, ... our task was to go through, I would liken it to sort of a top of a bottle, the neck of a bottle, it was called Balintang Channel, between Formosa and the Philippines. We went

through with a bunch of ships into the South China Sea, which would be the bottom of this bottle, and we were between the Philippines and China, both controlled by Japan. So, they could shuttle planes right across over us, if they wanted to. It wasn't that big a distance, and, I guess, the good Lord was in our corner, because it got to be bad weather, and we weren't spotted going in. I remember, being now prepared for CIC duties, seeing on the radar screen the town of Saigon, on the Chinese mainland. What's the name of that place now, Ho Chi Minh City, I guess it is, and we were about twenty miles ... from Saigon. ... This was pretty scary, to go into what looked like you're putting yourself into real jeopardy, but, our planes, apparently, were able to operate to good effect while the Japanese did not seem able to. So, despite the bad weather, I think our planes did a lot of bombing damage to the shore and shipping in this place. I won't dwell on it, but, a very unpleasant thing for me was seeing, I would say, perhaps a hundred bodies floating in the water, Japanese, and I, you know, don't know where they came from. So, anyhow, I won't dwell on that, but we made our retreat out through Balintang, again. The weather was really a monsoon by then. Our ship was rolling. If you take a vertical, which is where you're supposed to be, we were almost half way over, forty-three degrees on either side, and ... if you're trying to eat, or even stand up, you gotta hang on to something, but, that was probably as rough as we ever experienced, and it probably was to our advantage that we got out of there without being detected going out.

TK: From there, where do you next see action?

RG: Okay, from there, we were going to attack Japan itself. I guess I want to say this, and I mean it sincerely, that I don't look on myself as any hero, personally. The people who preceded us out there in '42 and '43, they did the dirty work. By the time we got out there, we were, you know, on the way to pretty complete control. We had to win it, but, it was a different war by the time I was in it than some of the other people, and I think my Rutgers classmates who were in the Class of '41 and '42 were probably seeing a lot more war than, it turned out, I did. But, ... our task, the USS *Flint*, before I answer your question, "Where did we go next?" was to protect aircraft carriers, and the typical arrangement would be to group three or four aircraft carriers in a circle with some distance between. So, if a plane fell in the water taking off, the pilot could be rescued. And so, the carrier circle, if you have the center of this formation as a dot, might be out two thousand yards from the center and stationed on spots on that circle. Okay? And then, the next circle was the *Flint* and other ships that were supposed to protect these aircraft carriers, which don't have much ability to defend themselves, except their own planes. So, we were the big fire power to protect the various big name carriers, and so, our station might have been on a circle two thousand yards away from the carriers, and there might have been three or four other ships doing the same kind of thing, and, finally, and much further out, like eight miles away, would be a ring of destroyers who were supposed to screen off any submarines that might be trying to get in and enter this formation, to keep them a distance so that they can't shoot the aircraft carriers, and so forth. This whole thing, this whole formation, in order to act as a defensive measure, would change course frequently. If you are trying to go a straight line, say due north, they would go for five minutes thirty degrees to the right of north. The next time, they would be swinging ten or twenty degrees to the left with a so-called zigzag plan, and we operated with these almost continuously in dangerous areas. Your main course would be predetermined, where you're supposed to be going, but, you had to make these simultaneous turns with the

whole formation doing it on signal, and you might change course every five minutes, so that if a submarine was trying to take a shot, you are on a different course, and, hopefully, they miss. I say all this so you understand what the *Flint*'s role was. We can't say that we personally did so much, except protect aircraft carriers, and, of course, that was important, but, my hat's off to the guys who were flying off those carriers. Anyhow, the next stop for us was attacks on Japan proper, Tokyo area, and we had, through our aircraft, great success up there. We thought that the Japanese would send some of their fleet, which they still had, out to try to ... attack us, but, they didn't. So, the only problem we had was with aircraft. On several occasions, *Flint* drove off Jap "snooper" planes with her gunfire.

TK: Where was your next area?

RG: Well, after this first attack on Japan, we were involved with Iwo Jima. As you know, there was sort of an island hopping approach to getting to Japan, and Iwo Jima was, I'm just guessing, maybe five hundred miles from Japan, and we were there. Anyhow, it became the target. We thought we had to have it, and the Marines are the people who deserve the glory here, if there is any glory in war, and we were there as air support. You have all seen pictures of the flag raising at Mt. Suribachi. We got close enough to see, not the flag raising, but, Mt. Suribachi, and we were there for several weeks. ... Eventually, we needed a complete re-supply. They sent us back to Ulithi, where we had a hectic two days to take on ammunition, refuel, and reprovision before our Task Force left for Kyushu and Okinawa.

RC: What were your experiences in Kyushu and Okinawa, the next places you went to?

RG: At Kyushu, the southern island of Japan, we had four or five days of pretty heavy going, where we, you know, as a ship, did have to shoot down several planes, and I can still recall some of that, of course. One plane in particular was known as a Betty, a twin engine plane. We hit this guy while off our port quarter, which would be the left side of the ship, and yet, despite being hit, he kept coming, coming, coming, on fire, and, fortunately, went down just in front of us. I even had a closer shave another time. ... I'm not saying this as a heroic accomplishment. ... I was only there because that's where I was supposed to be, but, we shot down a guy who was overhead, and, literally, he came down so close that we could see this, and I say, "poor chap," because I knew what their side had to go through. This guy was wearing a green robe, which was kind of a sacred robe, and I'm sure that he had been drugged, or given stimulus, before coming out. His job was to commit suicide, and he came pretty close, so close that we could see what he was wearing as he came down and hit the water. So, ... most of the time, ... well, I'll say this now, because I think it is appropriate, despite some action in various places, a lot of time at sea is just monotony.

TK: Right.

RG: You go days, or weeks, or months, and then, you have a couple of instants of action that you hope you are ready for, and can be alert.

TK: As an officer, did you have any problems maintaining discipline and control against this boredom factor?

RG: I don't think so. ... Again, they kept us busy. You ... stood watches every four hours out of twelve. So, you know, by the time you eat, and sleep, and stand eight hours of watches, there was little idle time. If you're in an area where it is necessary, you'd have general quarters, which means being up and on battle stations. You'd be there for dawn alert, so-called, or dusk alert. This is when the Japs often wanted to attack, because it was much harder to see 'em. They'd come low on the water, or out of the sun, if they were at that angle. So, it was customary to have general quarter, GQ we called it, morning and evening, and by the time you do this, and you eat some meals, and get some sleep, your sleep is often fragmented. For instance, GQ, three hours before I'd go on watch, at midnight or something like that, and so, ... I think keeping us busy was really what prevented problems. I am proud of the shipmates we had. I don't think we really had major problems of any kind. We had some small things mostly. When we were lucky enough to be at shore, somebody would be in over leave, or get into a fight, or something like that. It was very little, even of that.

TK: Could you describe the conditions of the ship, like your living quarters, eating, and so forth?

RG: Yes. Again, I think I was pretty lucky considering the junior level I was when I started. I normally would have been assigned to what they called a junior officer's bunk room, where seven or eight people shared that room, and, of course, some of my good friends were in it, but, not having been aboard when they started assigning people, I ended up sharing a room with the junior medical officer, who was a lieutenant junior grade, and we had one other roommate later. So, there were three of us in my state room, instead of seven or eight, and compared to what most military people went through, I was in the life of luxury. I, you know, had a descent bunk with a nice mattress on it. I wasn't trying to sleep on the ground, or worrying about the rain, or anything like that, and we had, for the conditions, really good food. It became tiresome because most of it had to be canned. You missed the fresh food. The thing I missed most was milk. I had grown up as a milk drinker and it was a long time before I got back to it, but, you know, I just have to say, I think we were basically a very spoiled group, compared to most.

TK: Where did you go next?

RG: From Kyushu, we went to Okinawa. For me, at Okinawa, there were two kinds of important episodes, personally. First, I ... had been trained on board to deal with the five inch guns. Torpedoes were becoming useless, ... sitting in the middle of a formation where the only people you're going to shoot are your own destroyers. So, I was being worked into the five inch gunnery and we had a shore bombardment at night on a small island near Okinawa called Minami Daito Shima. Jima and Shima are, I think, words for island in Japanese, but, anyhow, I was in the aft director of our ship. We had two directors, one forward, the forward director, and the aft director, and I had a couple of enlisted men helping me, and our task from the aft director was to fire star shells to light up this island, so that the forward director could control all of the other guns. We had six turrets of five inch, two guns per turret. So, we had twelve five inch guns, and we were using one turret with two guns for the star shells, and kind of alternating. I

forget now whether we were supposed to put one up every forty-five seconds or every minute. It was sort of like the Fourth of July. You know, you had to keep firing these things and we were trying to fire for effect over a hillside to the opposite side. So, you know, you had to have a pretty good view of what was going on. My personal task was to direct the firing of these star shells on the appropriate intervals, and keep them lit up over there, ... and the other five turrets were tied up to the forward director, where more experienced guys were doing the firing for effect. I was just a support for this, and then, there were two other very large ships, they were battle cruisers, the *Guam* and the *Alaska*, also firing. They had bigger guns, eight inch guns. So, my lighting operations were supposed to help not only our ship, but, these other two fire, and that ... was somewhat of a diversion, again, to keep the Japanese guessing, "Were we trying to go ashore there or weren't we?" We weren't, really, but, we had to make enough of a scene to make them think it was a possibility. So, that was, for me, being given responsibility that, I guess, I had grown up to by then. And then, on another occasion, I was assigned four aircraft, so-called CAP, Combat Air Patrol. These were our aircraft that would fly over the carriers as protection if any other planes were showing up that shouldn't be there, and I ... was really pleased, I guess, to be given the responsibility from our CIC to control these aircraft. Fortunately, no dramatic events occurred, but, this is what I had been trained for at Camp Catlin, and so, I felt, "Well, I hadn't wasted all that training." I did, actually, get to use it for a short time. So, anyhow, Okinawa was a Marine and Army show. Those guys deserve all the credit. They were magnificent, but, we did whatever we were supposed to do and that's about all we can say. Then, we went back to Ulithi, again. ... From the time we attacked ... Japan, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and, finally, got back to Ulithi, I had gone almost three months without ever putting foot on land. ... They'd bring the bullets, food and oil for keeping us going out in tankers and supply ships, and transfer while we were still under way. Over a longer period, I remember I got ashore, literally ashore, for only fourteen hours out of a year. So, ... I talked about monotony and I think that was the biggest concern.

TK: It was amazing to actually touch land?

RG: Yeah. Personally, I dealt with it, when at sea, by taking up the game of Acey Ducy, which is sort of a roll of the dice kinda game, a little bit like Monopoly, or something. It was a fun thing. ... I had quite a rivalry with one of my fellow officers from North Carolina, and I don't know whether he won or I won, the score was probably 1003 games to 997, or something. ... Of course, I must admit, my life as an officer was a lot pleasanter than probably the enlisted men. Not that they were ill treated. We had all of five records and a record player in the officer's ward room and three of the five records were the "Student Prince" operetta. Are you familiar with that at all? Well, anyhow, I think I could substitute for the singers of that operetta. [laughter]

TK: Based on how well you knew the music?

RG: Yeah. Well, we heard it frequently, and it happened to be the favorite song of another officer there. So, whether you wanted or not, you got it.

TK: How would you describe the division between the enlisted men and the officers?

RG: Well, there is no doubt that officers enjoyed a privilege. You can debate whether it was too much or too little, or whatever, but, I would say, on this ship, there was less, you know. I don't recall ever having anybody pull rank on somebody else, or something like that, because most of us were reservists. We all came out of the same pot, we were civilians a year or two earlier. ... I think most of us cared more for ... civilian life than ... the Navy. And so, I think I am right in saying this, that there was respect, even love, among all of us, because we were all in it together, and we all had our little piece to do, and I think that spirit has carried through to these reunions that I now attend.

TK: Were there many African-Americans on the ship?

RG: No. We had some Filipinos. They were stewards for the mess wardroom and that's one example of racism, possibly, at that time. I don't know what they would have been doing had they not been there. They ended up getting, probably, better treated than they would have been treated somewhere else. Those were the only "minorities" and there were only six, or eight, possibly, of these Filipinos, and they probably ate better. I don't mean to justify the system, but, that was the system, and I'm not too sure it was bad for them, either.

TK: Did you ever have food or water shortages on the ship?

RG: No, but, we were restricted on water. We were allowed, on a per man basis, ... twenty one gallons of water per day. That included showers, cooking, anything that needed cleaning. For a shower, you'd get wet, turn off the shower, soap, and all that, and rinse down.

TK: So, that was it, a minimalist purge to water usage.

RG: Yeah, that's right. An important part of the Navy, and less glamorous, was bringing the supplies, ammunition, food, and mail, everything out to us, and those people had the monotony and dirty chores as much as anybody, but, they never got the headlines, but, we, therefore, had good food. ... I'm sure we all, I am using the slang, bitched about it a little bit, but, it got to be, you had to eat your way through this layer of whatever it was before you got to the next layer. ... You know, we were so much better off than anybody else. It would have been ridiculous to have complained.

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

TK: Where were you, actually, when the atomic bombs were dropped?

RG: Well, we were at sea, of course, just, you know, patrolling out there. I forget the date of those bombs, but, it was August, I think.

TK: It was the 6th?

RG: Well, anyhow, ... we were, you know, patrolling off of Okinawa, I guess, and we, of course, got the news. It was meaningful to me, because my brother- in-law, John Sites, who married my

sister here at Woodlawn in New Brunswick, ... actually ... was working on ... part of the ingredients for the bomb down in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and he never was able to tell me what he was doing, and, you know, there were sort of hints that something unusual was being done. ...

TK: As far as you knew, he was working ...

RG: The minute I got the news, I knew what he had been working on. A lot happened in a big hurry there at the end. The bombs were dropped. We think we were probably winning handily already, but, it hastened the end of the war, the bombs. The Russians declared war. I don't think the Japs were ready for more people to gang up on them, and they finally offered some peace proposals, and, eventually, they were accepted, and became the end of the war. That was on August 15, V-J Day, and we had had so many false alarms within three to four days of that date that I don't think that it was nearly the event it may have been here in the States. I don't know.

TK: You were close to the action?

RG: It didn't change anything for us. You know, we were still going to steam around for months, and, of course, we were thrilled it was finally over, and the danger element became much less. Not immediately, but, shortly thereafter, we could turn on lights at night, we could send home some mail that actually said something, and it wasn't censored. So, things changed.

TK: But, you knew that this would not necessarily mean that you were going home.

RG: No. They had a system, that others may have told you about, of points, that determined when you could go home. I was single. The biggest ingredient was to be married. I had goofed by not doing that early enough, but, anyhow, I was going to be one of the last off this ship and we did end up, to shorten the story a bit, by being assigned to Magic Carpet duty, to bring back other people, Army, Navy, both. ... It was great to be back in the States in November of '45, but ...

TK: You would be leaving again.

RG: But, we had to turn around. It was three or four days, and head right back out to pick up some more people, and I'll make a little story of our return the second time. Our skipper, Captain Will, ... had his wife in San Francisco, and we were due to arrive in San Francisco on December 26th. There was a great feeling that it would be nice to arrive there on the 25th, for obvious reasons, be there on Christmas Day, and the skipper was a good guy. So, when you are that far out in the Pacific, if you put a few more turns on the turbine that's driving you, you might still be pretty close to what they say you are supposed to be doing in speed, and, I think, we would have made it on the evening of Christmas. We got ... to about 150 miles, or 200 miles, of San Francisco, and you could hear all the radio business coming out from there, and then, fog set in, and we had to anchor about six or seven miles out of San Francisco. So, despite all this effort to get there, we had to wait until the morning of the 26th, but, I think it illustrates how far out you are in the Western Pacific, that a few more turns on your propeller could make a half a day difference at the other end.

TK: How many trips did you make, back and forth, on the Magic Carpet operation?

RG: Only two. We thought we were going to be sent back a third time, and we [were] resigned to our fate, but, ... one of the things about military service is that you never know what you can count on, or what's going to happen at the last minute. Fortunately, this time, luck was with us, and they decided not to send us back. The *Flint* was assigned to the so-called Reserve Fleet, which was headquartered in Bremerton, Washington. ... So, in due course, almost at year's end, we went up there, and were anchored off Bremerton for a few days. There was such a concentration of ships coming back, and to be laid up in reserve that, despite being part of Bremerton, we were assigned to another place known as Everett, Washington, which is about forty miles above Seattle and Bremerton. So that became the eventual destination of our ship. ... I was on the *Flint* until May of 1946, and seeing all the married men, and those with more service than I had leaving. Eventually, I was placed in charge of the whole task of laying up this ship, except for the engineering spaces. I was now all of ... twenty-three-years-old in March of '46, but, I was given all of 132 men, which was most of what was left on the ship, and told to prepare this thing, you know, for being in mothballs forever, virtually. So, that was a challenging assignment and I must have done a good enough job at it. ... Fortunately, I had some other, now junior, officers working with me. All the young guys were the only ones left, and so, we literally had to crawl down to inspect all these spaces, and I got stuck in them, being a six-footer, at the time. My guys had to haul me out by my feet in some of these spaces I crawled in, but, we got the *Flint* prettied up. I left about a month before the final decommissioning of the ship and I won't go into the reason for some delay, but, I almost had to fight my way off the ship, after I had the points ...

TK: But, this job had to be finished.

RG: I think somebody thought I should be kept as long as possible and I didn't agree with that. So, I was lucky to finally get off.

TK: After V-J Day, did you stay in Japan on any occupying duties before doing Magic Carpet rides?

RG: We got ashore there for liberty. We were not responsible for anything ashore.

TK: What was it like? What was the scene like?

RG: Oh, boy. Things I'll never forget, I suppose. Our ship was actually on the line to pick up any planes bringing in the people for the surrender ceremony. We were just off of Tokyo Bay and our ship was there to be a communication point for planes coming in from Guam or the Philippines. MacArthur went over on a fancy plane, and so forth, getting ready for their surrender. ... If a plane went down, we were supposed ... to fish out any pilots who had gone down, and, also, it was a navigation thing to have us at this spot for everybody to come in on, and, as the officer of the deck, which I now was, it was the most boring existence. We'd go ten miles one direction, turn around, and go ten miles back, and we had to stay within that confine for all these people to depend on us for navigating airplanes, and all that. ... So, for weeks, ten

miles this way, ten miles that way. There was a little island out there called Nii Shima, and we'd see some fishing boats come out, part of the Japanese fishing fleet, and we were within range of their normal waters. They would come up, and hold their hands up, and wave a white flag, or whatever. ... They were afraid of us, of course, and when we were finally through this patrolling bit, and got in, five days after the surrender, to Tokyo itself, well, actually, it was Yokosuka, the Navy base just south of Tokyo, they still had white flags up on a lot of the buildings. The Japanese adults were afraid of us. If we were walking on the sidewalk, which there weren't too many of, they would get off, and bow, and scrape, and that kind of thing. ... But, the things that I remember best, I guess, two of them. In Yokosuka, the Navy base itself, Admiral Halsey had set up his headquarters on the second floor of a building. The first floor was the officers' club, and there would be, for lack of anything else, ... some booze available, I guess mostly beer. I don't think we had hard liquor anymore, but, anyhow, there was a lot of gambling with Japanese money, which was basically worthless. ... Our guys, of course, they weren't referring to the money as yen, but, "I'll bet ten million dollars on this," or "ten thousand," or whatever it was. ... I remember, there was a table, it had been the dining room table in this magnificent building. It must have been thirty feet in diameter, and it was piled high with all this money, and people getting off ten or twenty feet, and running up, and throwing the dice. I never saw a crap game ... with as much money floating around, worthless, you know. So, that became a big thing. On another occasion, the weather got rough. ... I won't bore you with a lot of monsoon talk, but, the *Flint* was anchored out in Tokyo Bay. One night, the officers on liberty were supposed to be picked up there at the Officer's Club landing at such and such a time, I'll say eleven o'clock at night, and it was too rough for the boats to come in for us, which meant men drinking more than they should. My roommate, by now, was a little guy by the name of Ensign Hall, about 5'3". He had been through the Naval Academy, and was kind of the Napoleonic type. And so, suddenly, I realized that my roommate wasn't to be seen at this event anymore. ... So, I went out, and looked around, and under a bush, I see this pale face looking up at the moonlight, and that's Ensign Hall flat on his back, you know, somewhere within a hundred yards of the boat landing. We got him hauled off to where we were supposed to get our boat, and, eventually, around two a.m. a boat gets in. It was one of those flat-bottom types, with water splashing in. Going back to the ship, it gets worse as we go out. At the stairway, or ladder I'll call it, you're supposed to go up to get on the main deck from water level, and we were going up and down like this, and it was very dangerous, because this ladder is made of metal, and if you miss your step, you could either get crushed, or get your leg broken, or something, and so, it became obvious we weren't going to make it that way. So, around to the ... other side and put the cargo net over, dump all of us on to the cargo net, haul us up, and dump us into the deck, and some people literally needed to be, you know, dumped out. A few of us could still walk out, but, that was an event. Another was going to Yokohama, which I did not on this first time ashore, but, we came back later from the Magic Carpet duties to Tokyo area, and I got to Tokyo, and Yokohama, and Kamakura, and a few other places, but, Yokohama made a big impression, because it had been fire bombed by our B-29s, mostly, and you could look out over this expanse for miles, where it was nothing but a flat field. Everything there had been built so flimsily that it all just burned. Everything burned and the only thing that remained was the little safes that each little shop or merchant had. These were about one cubic foot in size made of steel, and so, about every twenty-five feet down this field would be one of these little safes, and it was the only thing left, and it was a very depressing place. I'm glad I saw it, but, there was really nothing to see. Finally, I realized the impact of

what was being done to these folks, you know, in a way that I won't forget. But, happily, later in life, I had a chance to return to Yokohama.

TK: With a peer group?

RG: With a tour group, as a tourist, and to see a beautiful city, you know, and it was great.

TK: How had it recovered?

RG: Full recovery, of course. The Japanese, as you know, became very affluent and prosperous, and it was great to see the change, but, I had other experiences ashore, just two others I'll mention. Shortly after being ashore there for a second time, I bumped into a Japanese chap who had been, I think, educated at Yale University, and spoke English, and was now an English teacher, or a second language teacher, over there as a native Japanese. He invited myself and a colleague on the ship as guests to his home and that was a really neat experience. You know, we took our shoes off, and went in, and sat down on mats in this little sort of elevated first floor of this place, and the wife and daughter came and played musical instruments. We were treated to things that I'm sure were in very short supply. They gave us some kind of chocolatey drink which must have been a very scarce item, and we tried to reciprocate with some small gifts, but, ... you know, actually getting into somebody's home was a tremendous experience, at that particular time. ... My first time in Tokyo, I remember, I went by train from Yokosuka to Tokyo, a short distance. The train was the only means of getting around, and I got off the train, and I heard this beautiful symphony orchestra. Here it was, you know, within a week of the surrender, and out of the first floor, which was the ground floor, of this three story building, I could hear this music coming, and I went and opened the door, took a peek. There was a symphony orchestra. That soon after surrender, you know, it must have been the top symphony orchestra for that area. That was kind of an eye opener to see, amidst all the desolation and destruction. A lot of the people had a lot of money, but, they couldn't get anything with it. It was the old story of shortage. So, to see them doing something, I thought, very worthwhile with their time and effort, was a good experience.

TK: So, you have already seen hopeful signs?

RG: Yes. Yeah.

TK: After you already went back and returned to Japan this final time, you went back after the Magic Carpet rides?

RG: Yes. I would say, possibly, for ten days. I'm just relying on poor memory now, but, long enough to have two or three liberties ashore, and it was through these that I got to Kamakura. There's a famous Buddha statue you may have seen pictures of. It was hollow. I could go inside, climb the stairway, and get up in the head. It had a little golden Buddha inside this big Buddha, and so, I was fortunate. There wasn't a lot you can do or see, understandably, at that time. Within the limits of the immediate Tokyo area, I did get to see those places I have mentioned. I should add, having, ... just helped to win the war, our ship came to its anniversary of

commissioning, which was August 31st. The surrender was on the 15th. We were still patrolling around offshore Japan for the most part, and then, on *Flint's* anniversary, we had a big cake, ... a three layer cake with USS *Flint* seal, ninety-seven, and, "Happy Birthday," on it, and everybody had a great meal. Remarkably, the ship had actually, at that point of time, ... its first year, gone exactly 100,000 miles from San Francisco where we started. You think of 100,000 miles at sea, and we were ready for land, of course, but, it was just a coincidence, I think, that probably would have never happened, to go that many miles in peacetime. Nobody would, as tax payers, ... pay for you to use up that much oil to get around that many miles. It came at exactly four p.m. in the afternoon that we had logged 100,000 miles.

TK: The crew celebrated?

RG: Yeah, in terms of a decent meal, and one of our officers, who was officer of the deck at the time, wrote a poem in the log book that I thought was really great. It's in my booklet that you have and he talks about it very well, I think.

TK: Then, after your final stop there, you went back to San Francisco?

RG: Yes. Yeah, and that's when we thought we were going to come and turn around a third time and didn't have to.

TK: You did not have to, and you finished decommissioning this one ship, and you actually requested for an extension of your active service, right?

RG: Yeah. When I finally fought my way off the ship, to go back, my interest was going back home, of course, to New Brunswick, which was our family home. So, I came to New York and I got to the separation center. I asked if there was any opportunity to get duty there in the New York area, because I wanted to return to Rutgers in the fall. ... You know, to go out, someone newly landed, and find a job for three or four months, I am not sure I would have been welcomed with open arms by anybody. So, I did extend, and they offered me a job in Lido Beach, Long Island, which was a fancy estate. I think it was Jay Gould's estate. It had a swimming pool and all the goodies that go with a big estate.

TK: It becomes the summer job.

RG: Yeah, that was my summer job. It was close enough to New York to take in a few of the plays. So, that was kind of my reward for my time away in the Pacific, I think. Then, I did come back to Rutgers for the Fall of '46.

RC: On the GI Bill?

RG: Pardon.

RC: On the GI Bill?

RG: Yes, one semester's worth, and I had gotten, in absentia, my degree, as I told you, through Dr. Clothier's generosity, but, I started a Masters' degree that fall, and I had still to complete practice teaching. I had intended to be a high school teacher in math. So, they sent me to Metuchen High School for six weeks of practice teaching, which was an experience.

TK: How did you enjoy it?

RG: Basically, I enjoyed it, but, they'd send somebody from Rutgers out to look at me every once in awhile and sit in the back row to see how this guy was doing. Fortunately, I had, literally, a genius by the name of Francis who sat in the front left row. When the chips were down, Francis got the questions. So, he came through. [laughter] But, I had two completely different faculty types that were my overseers at Metuchen High School. I won't name both of them, because somebody in this territory could know them, even though they are probably deceased by now, but, the one that I will mention by name is Miss Octavia Sparks. She was as grand an old style teacher as you can come on. She loved the kids, would do anything for them, would stay hours after school and help kids, and all this kind of thing, and she was my positive image of what I should be. ... Then, I had a gentlemen who was, I am afraid, the opposite, who would show up in the last instant to ... open his class, at best, a minute early, and would depart instantly when it was over, and if anybody was in trouble, that's their trouble. So, it was kind of discouraging to see that, but, I think I concluded, and Mrs. Sparks, certainly encouraged me, to not become a teacher, despite doing reasonably well at it, I think, because she felt, and I guess was right, my maturity, at that point, was such that I would do better with adults than with young kids. I didn't have any problems. I enjoyed it. The only thing I didn't enjoy was, I had the superintendent of schools' daughter in one of my classes and that poor girl and math just didn't go together at all. ...

TK: So, you had to find a tactful way to deal with her?

RG: I had to flunk her. I didn't know whether I should just pass her, but, you know. ... So, I flunked her. You know, we got along fine. She worked with me after school, she tried hard. It was quite obvious that this wasn't the right program for her, and I hope I was able to convey that there was nothing personal, but, I had my duties to do also.

TK: What did you think about being back at Rutgers? How had the campus changed?

RG: Well, I guess I had to say I was disappointed. I was back taking math courses. ... The math group, at that time, and the professors, generally, were old timers who might have retired earlier, had they not been kept in service, and I guess I was disappointed. I didn't feel, I don't know if the right word is challenged, that they were presenting the material in a way that made it exciting at all, or anything. ... I don't mean to be critical, you know, if people are kept on after long careers, and know it's only a matter of when someone younger comes along, they are going to be replaced, you know, well past retirement age. So, at that point, I decided one semester was enough, and I was interviewed at Rutgers by several prospective employers, and chose one. My family was moving to the outskirts of Philadelphia, so, I took the Insurance Company of North America which was headquartered in Philadelphia, and that got me started into an insurance

career, and, at that time, this was a major company, one of the largest insurance firms. They were having to fill the pipelines of people they didn't put through while the war was on. So, I was offered a job to go through their school, which was six months in length, and had seventy-six different instructors, including the chairmen of the board and other big shots, and many lesser people. ... Anyhow, I was given the option to go through this and go out as what's known as a special agent, in charge of working with a group of local agents with their problems of ... directing business for the company, a sales type thing, or, to stay and help with a school they were founding that did not have their top officers all tied up teaching. So, with my teaching background, the school job was my choice. My boss, as it turned out when I took the job, was a fellow named Paul Abbot, a Princeton man, and, despite being from Rutgers and Princeton, we got along fine. ... He had been a Navy aviator, so, I think that helped me slide into this company when I was being selected. ...

RC: When did you meet your wife?

RG: ... Let's see, I went to work for the Insurance Company of North America in February of '47 and my family was building a home. My dad, as I told, a former builder, was building a home in Media, Pennsylvania, which was on the outskirts of Philadelphia. That was underway during the summer of this year when I was going through the INA's training, and I remember helping him put in the insulation, the attic, and a few things like that. So, in the fall of '47, we moved into ... this place and I was commuting by either ... trolley or train from Media to Center City, Philadelphia, where the Insurance Company of North America, INA, was located. ... My wife-to-be was riding the same trolley to go to her work, which was with a cement company in Center City, Philadelphia. She was in the office, and taking orders, and getting them up to Allentown, or wherever their plant was. The day came when the empty seat on the trolley was next to hers, and she recognized me as the new boy on the block, or whatever, and from the very same neighborhood. She was around the block from where my folks ended up living. So, that was where I met my entrapment. [laughter] Or, maybe, the other way around, I don't know.

TK: How long did you date before you married?

RG: We were married in February of 1950, so, we dated a while and shared some very nice experiences, of course.

TK: You lived in Pennsylvania ever since?

RG: No. But, when we were first married, we moved to a third floor apartment in downtown Media, Pennsylvania, which was our first home. Eventually, we bought a house. I have to say, my wife and I were unfortunate enough ... that I was recalled by the Navy nine months after I was married.

TK: You had stayed in the reserves?

RG: Yeah, I had stayed in the reserves. I think I would have been called, anyhow. There's a story goes with this, which I will keep short. The Navy classifies all your experiences according

to numbers. I think somebody got the wrong numbers for me. I had a lot of qualifications, at least on paper, and so, there was a ship in the Philadelphia Navy yard, the USS *Macon*, a heavy cruiser, and they were waiting for me, with baited breath, to report and straighten out all their electronic problems of their main battery, which is a very complex thing. So, when I reported on board, I said, "I once walked through one of these places and that was my experience." Unfortunately, it was too late, I was now trapped. They assigned me other duties, and I put in another twenty-one months in the Navy, but, I remember it very pleasantly, in some respects. If you have to be away from a new wife and home, once you get past fifty miles, it doesn't matter too much where you are going. ... Instead of going ... to Korea, where bullets were flying, they sent me on the *Macon* to the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, and I had, really, a grand tour of the Mediterranean, later of England, and North Ireland, ... and the Caribbean. We were in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Jamaica, and Haiti, a few other places. So, I really had a lot of travel opportunities, which I relished, I enjoyed, but, I wasn't thrilled with the timing, right after a wedding, but, anyhow, I think I got derailed. What was the question again, please?

TK: We were talking about your marriage. You say you came back after being in the Navy in 1952?

RG: Yes.

TK: What was your next job?

RG: I was back to the Insurance Company of North America as a senior fire insurance instructor.

TK: What does that entail?

RG: Well, I had a couple of junior instructors. This was a school that was pumping out special agents, claims people, underwriters. We had a lot of different kinds of people coming through, but, I was sort of a specialist in fire property insurance, and I found I was reporting to a boss who was three years older than I was, and his boss two years further older. So, it was obvious I wasn't going to take their jobs away in any short period of time. Eventually, I had to make pretty drastic changes, of course, to get out of that and do something else. I worked briefly, twenty-one months, for RCA in Camden, New Jersey, and that was based, mainly, on my Navy experience with electronic gear, radar, sonar, and so forth. ... Eventually, ... I got a double promotion, and I have to say, I got five years of experience in about two years of time with RCA, but, they made me training manager of a facility in Moorestown, New Jersey, which was involved with missiles and radar, and they ended up not getting their contract after developing a missile. ... I had an opportunity to get back into the insurance business. I thought, "I am not really technically capable of being a big shot in an electronic firm, despite being very well treated and doing well in the early stages." There was certainly going to be limitations. They were talking about moving me out to Ohio, and do this, that, and the other. So, I did decide to go back to the insurance business, with Allstate Insurance in Murray Hill, New Jersey, if you know where that is, up near Summit, where I started. I was with them five years, and then, again, very successful, I would say, but, they were making noises, like I was to be shipped out to Skokie, Illinois, which was their headquarters. I had already been out to Skokie for several assignments out there and

decided the real estate market, in particular, was going to do me in. The lots were like sixty foot wide with a quarter of a million dollar ... home on it. Big house, no lot, and I had a family that was gonna ... need some space. The house was less important than a nice location. So, anyhow, I decided to go with my final company, Harleysville Insurance. My first question, when I heard about it, was, "Where is it?" I discovered that it was in Eastern Pennsylvania, thirty-five miles north of Philadelphia. That wasn't all that far from where we'd been in Media, a different county, but, I became very happy there. Being a young, growing company, I was allowed to do a lot of things and feel my career was worthwhile to me, but, also, to them. They were in need of a lot of personnel things which I had eventually gotten into: pension plans, and benefit plans, and just plain hiring the right people, and all that kind of thing.

TK: So, you eventually came to specialize in human resources?

RG: Yes. Yes, I did, as head of the Personnel Department.

TK: When was your first daughter born?

RG: She was born in 1955, and we had three more daughters follow, in sort of two year increments, '57, '59, and '60. (We snuck one in '60.)

TK: They were all very close in age, but, also, very close together growing up as four girls?

RG: Yes. Yeah, we think they were very nice kids, of course. ... They turned out to be, you know, the kind of people you'd like to raise. So, we now have eight grandchildren and enjoy them. In fact, coming here to this interview, I stayed over night with our number two daughter and her family.

RC: Did any of them ever go to Rutgers?

RG: No. [laughter]

TK: Did you ever go back for homecoming or anything at Rutgers?

RG: Yes. We'd go to a couple of football games and things like that. Our girls went to good schools. I wasn't pushing them. I may have assumed they might have not gone where dad went, and that's okay. My two oldest went to Bryn Mawr College, the third went to Bucknell, and our fourth went to Delaware. So, they were good schools. They had what the kids were looking for, and so, we were supportive.

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

TK: This continues an interview with Richard Gies on April 15, 1999 with Tara Kraenzlin ...

RC: Rosie Cabanilla ...

RG: And, Dick Gies.

TK: Now, after you had been living in Pennsylvania for a while, you became involved in local politics.

RG: Yes, as I mentioned earlier, our first home had been in Media, Pennsylvania, and while I was working with the Insurance Company of North America, we lived in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, which was an easy train commute to Center City, but, ultimately, my final job was in a different direction from Philadelphia, north of Philadelphia, and Souderton, Pennsylvania, was our home. ... Souderton is a smallish town of about 6,500 people now, and about one square mile, so, there wasn't much room to expand, or be different, than you had been, and it had a long history of being on a railroad line and strong in certain industries. Well, I got there, and joined the Rotary Club, which was an important part of my civilian life. ... Through that, I got to know the people who were the movers and shakers in the local government there, and they asked me if I would become a councilman, or run for councilman in one ward, of which there were three in the town, and I said I would, and I was elected by the populace. For better or worse, they had me and it was an interesting experience. I had no great ambition to displace the governor, or become president of the United States, or anything like that, but, in a small town, I hoped to be helpful, if I could be helpful, and so, I did stay on the ... Council for several years. I was vice-president when I ended my political career.

TK: Now, this is in the mid to late sixties. What kind of issues were coming up at these meetings?

RG: Well, Souderton, as I mentioned, was a railroad town, and it had a railroad elevation that cut the town in half. ... You couldn't get from East Broad Street to West Broad Street. If you were a pedestrian, you could walk down steps to an underground pedestrian tunnel, and eventually come out the other side, but, if you were driving a car, you come up to this blockade, and you have to make a detour, a block or so to the left, cut under the tracks at that level, and back to Broad Street to continue on, and so, it was obvious that this was a deterrent to a lot of positive things that could be going on in the town. So, we had to fight the railroad and a bunch of stuff, but, we eventually got that crossing eliminated, as a dead end, and the tracks are now ground level, ... and you could cross them. They have crossing gates, and so forth, but, the railroad doesn't have passenger service on this line anymore, so, it's quite obvious that most of the time, with very few exceptions, you could breeze right through one part of town to the other. So, that was an important thing. ... Souderton, being almost completely built up, we were looking for green space, for parks and amusements for the kids, and so forth as other issues.

TK: Was it a very suburban community?

RG: Despite what I say, it's been quite a rural community, where the big enterprises were raising chickens, and selling of garments by the ladies, and that kind of thing, but, it was rapidly changing, being that close to Philadelphia with good train service. So, I would say, it certainly is suburbia, if not urban, by now, and it was going through all this transition. I might have been viewed a little bit in awe, because of having more education than most the folks there. You

know, I never thought of it that way, but, I think that some of why I was asked to run for councilman was because I was well-educated, college grad and a bit beyond. ... I got to know these people through the Rotary Club. Our mayor was, and still is, a member of Rotary, and he is still mayor, [laughter], so, they go on forever. I wasn't going to do that. I did get enjoyment from it.

TK: What were some of the projects that the Rotary Club was involved in?

RG: Well, we put up a bandstand in the park. We put up a fence around one of the baseball fields. There was a lot of little league ball, ... and soccer, and lacrosse, for both boys and girls, and having girls, I was happy to see the transition from all boys sports. When we first got there, ... it was all, football, and by the time we were leaving, it was much more fair to the ladies.

TK: What were your opinions of the US involvement in Vietnam?

RG: Well, I guess, realistically, I hated to see us there. I think President Johnson made a mistake. Of course, in hindsight, it's better, and he had to see it from the front end, but, you know, I wondered if we belonged there. You know, I have the same feelings today in Kosovo. You know, you want to help people, but, you have to have the ability to do it. I think Johnson, President Johnson, to come back to Vietnam, was annoyed by the Vietnamese people to the point that he was provoked into something, maybe in his better judgment, he wouldn't have gotten us into. I don't know, but, I wasn't going to second guess, or go out in marches, and that sort of thing. I guess, particularly having been in the military, and being on military duty during the Korean Conflict, I was going to support his decision even if I didn't personally favor it.

TK: Did you always remain active and involved at Rutgers? You said you went back for a few football games. Did you attend reunion weekend?

RG: I attended reunions. At a luncheon I went to a month ago with some of my classmates, I looked around that table and I realized I was the only one at this lead group for our 55th reunion coming up shortly, ... who had never lived on campus, and so, I felt obligated to say something, because I thought that these guys don't know me any better than I know some of them. So, I described the situation I was in as a freshman, that my sister and brother and I had to commute. I told them about the big money we made by reselling that car after a year of use, the five bucks of profit, and I said, "I was only able to go to Rutgers because I won a state scholarship, which paid virtually everything, except living expense," and I said, "I had gone to last year's scholarship reception, where I met some of the people who had won the Class of 1944 scholarships and I was impressed with them." There was this one young girl by the name of Agrawal, whose roots go back to India, and I had spent six weeks in India, and realized that Agrawal, a very common name, is the equivalent of Smith over there. ... I had quite a nice conversation with her, and realized that her brother, who was a year ahead of her, had been the spokesperson at the reception of scholarship people last year, and she was this year. An outstanding person, and I had some things in common that we could talk about, her Indian heritage, and that sort of thing. ... I got to talk with a Chinese-American scholarship winner. I just happened to sit next to him, and he asked me, "Why do you support these scholarships?" and I told him that I wouldn't have

gotten through school without help, and I wanted to try to fill the pot, so that others might be able to benefit, and he said, "I hope to do that someday, too." So, I said that to my classmates, because there were two things we had been trying to raise money for. One is to improve Athlete's Glen, which is near the stadium. I don't know what a big deal that is, but, our class put that in some years ago, and I'm not sure it was very well maintained, but, we want to add a pavilion, so that if it is bad weather, people can picnic there, and things like that, better shrubbery, and landscaping, and lighting, but, the other thing is scholarships. I had the feeling that at this meeting I was attending, there were people who were pushing for Athlete's Glen and I was going to get my two cents in for scholarships, so that it would get equal treatment.

TK: So, that has been your number one priority in your alumni activities?

RG: Yeah, yeah.

TK: Okay, excellent. Is there anything you can think of that we did not ask you to talk about?

RG: No. I wanted to end up by saying that, you know, it's easy to have people look at you and have people say that, in some way, you were some kind of a hero. I don't feel at all that way. I very seldom talk about war experiences, even to my own family, and the reason for it I think is, ... what I wanna really want to say is that people think of war as a terrible thing, and it is, but, it also has its positives, and for me, the thing that I remember best is how everybody came together. We were attacked, we had an enemy, well, it wasn't just Japan, but, we were involved in wars where our side had been attacked. ... We weren't going to win unless everybody put in their fair share of the effort, whether in the factory, or wherever it took you, and I think our country came together, ... rallying behind President Roosevelt. He died while we were off Okinawa.

TK: Right, and so, what do you remember from hearing the news?

RG: Well, we were not in a position to do much about it. We had a Catholic chaplain aboard our ship. I happened to be Protestant, not that it matters, but, we were all at various points on the ship. We couldn't come together for any kind of a service or anything, but we had some messages over the public address system by our chaplain, and I think everyone felt a great loss, because, ... whether or not you agreed with every ... political decision, we didn't even know what most of them were at that point, he was our Commander-in-Chief, and he had been in office for four terms, which was unprecedented. I think his fireside chats had gotten everybody, you know, ... we didn't have TV to turn ... on.

TK: It had your full attention.

RG: So, it was meaningful, but, we couldn't do much about it, of course.

TK: The last thing I would like to ask you is, you mentioned, for about ten years now, you have been attending reunions of your ship. What, if any, other involvement have you had in veterans' organizations?

RG: None, but I did remain in the Naval Reserve until 1974, retiring as Captain.

TK: You did not join the American Legion or anything when you came back?

RG: No, no. This group I'm attending, the USS *Flint* Association, I think is kind of special. I'm going to take a minute or two to answer this one, if I may. I went to the USS *Macon* reunion of my second and last ship, ... in Philadelphia, which I attended, and I found that there was only one person at this whole event, which included several hundred people, that I recognized at all. The *Macon* had existed before the war, it was brought back into service during the war, and had people serving on there until about 1970, I guess. It was actually mothballed in the Philadelphia Ship Yard for a while, but, anyhow, if you take that ship, which had a complement of 900 to 1000 people, and you put twenty or thirty years to it, you think how many people were shipmates over various time periods. It's no wonder that I didn't find anybody. One person, I didn't even know him, had literally been on the ship at the same time I had, a much larger ship. So, I come back to the *Flint*. We all went on there at commissioning, and we all came off either before, or at, or almost immediately after the time of decommissioning, which was only a little over ... a year and a half time, so, we all shared the same experience. ... I don't know who started this, we went for years with no reunion, and then, somebody, and this person, unfortunately, has had an illness, so, I had not met him in recent years, but, he got it started, and it was several years before they caught up to me. You know, it's the old game of, ... "I wonder if I know where so-and-so is," and unless somebody knows where so-and-so is, it's pretty tough. I was contacted ten years ago, and we were meeting in Denver, Colorado, and I've been to everyone since, and that includes San Diego, San Antonio, Tulsa, Reno, and even York, Pennsylvania. What's been nice about this is that it includes spouses, ... and even some kids. And so, it's not a booze, get drunk, and hooray for the good old days. Whoever is hosting one of these reunions arranges tours and we've seen the country through the arrangements of people who live in these places. We were in Melbourne, Florida, and that was a special thing for me, because my roommate from the *Macon* turned out to live in Satellite Beach, right next to Melbourne, and there was a missile launch going off from Cape Kennedy while we were there, and so, you know, there were really exciting and interesting things to do ... with people we now know very well. If you go to the same places for eight to ten years with people, you know, we cry over each others' health problems, and we rejoice in the good things, and it's been a lot of fun, and so, I'm looking forward to it, and my wife does, too, very much, and so, we share that.

TK: But, initially, coming back from the war, what was your attitude towards talking about it?

RG: I didn't think I had a lot to talk about. I had been along for a ride. Some others had done some things, one experience. Perhaps one of the more trying experiences, our ship went to aid ... the USS *Hazelwood*, a destroyer that had been hit by a kamikaze plane. It was one of the more pathetic things I had ever seen. The compliment is fourteen officers and 290 men, something like that. We were sent to aid this ship that had been hit right on the bridge, and because of where this bomb hit, the only officer in sight, and I think he might have been the only surviving officer, unless there was somebody down in the engineering area, was a Lieutenant JG, young guy, holding a hose from which there was a trickle of water coming, trying to fight fires, you know. It was really pathetic, and here's a guy who was in charge of this big mishap, and so, we

did help. We eventually took thirty-five people aboard our ship. We took one body that we had to bury at sea the next morning. I'm not going to dwell on all this, but, you know, we did what we could and my roommate was a junior medical officer. We sent him over with some medical people to help with the casualties. ... So, we did all we could, but, what makes this story kind of come home was that I come over to my class committee here, and I find that one of the men served on the USS *Hazelwood*, and he was smart enough that, at the moment that this disaster occurred, he was off to school, and that probably saved his life, because all these other guys who were in the critical nucleus were wiped out. ... I'm bringing him, which I don't have here to show you, ... my ship's log, which has a couple of pages which described all this, and who these people were who we helped, and he's going to know some of those guys. So, as I say, I don't brag about my war experiences, because I don't think I have anything to brag about. I did what I was supposed to be doing, hopefully reasonably well, but, when you see what others had to go through, ... I was lucky, in my timing, to go out when it was all coming our way.

TK: Maybe that is a good way to end it. Do you have anything else you want to add?

RG: No. It's been a pleasure being with you.

TK: Thanks for coming out today and thanks for the interview.

RG: Well, I hope I didn't impose on your time limits.

TK: Not at all. This concludes an interview with Richard Gies on April the 15th, 1999, in Van Dyck Hall, Rutgers University, in New Brunswick, with Tara Kraenzlin ...

RC: Rosie Cabanilla ...

RG: And, Dick Gies.

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

Reviewed by Bojan Stefanovic 9/9/99
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 9/11/99
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 9/27/99
Reviewed by Richard Gies 10/99