

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP I. GOLDBERG

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Rachel Greene: This begins an interview with Philip I. Goldberg on Monday September 16, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Rachel Greene and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

RG: First, we would like to thank you for coming and I would like to begin the interview by asking you when and where you were born.

Philip Goldberg: I was born August 16, 1918.

RG: Where were you born?

PG: Brockton, Massachusetts.

RG: Where are your parents from?

PG: From Russia. They came over to this country in the early 1900s.

RG: Do you know why they chose to live in this country? Why they chose to move here?

PG: Well, I believe that was the time that big influx of Eastern Europeans came to this country because they were in a ghetto and they figured they would have a better life in this country.

SH: Do you know where in Russia they came from?

PG: Yes, my mother's family came from Kurland and you have to look it up in an encyclopedia to find out where it is, but I think it was part of either Latvia or Lithuania, one of those three countries, and my mother spoke German. Now, ... she spoke German fluently and, of course, when I was growing up, she spoke English fluently. In that big influx of immigrants, I think, when they came to this country, they landed in East Boston, because I went looking, at Ellis Island, to see if I could find any trace of them, but I couldn't find any. Then, one of my brothers told me that they had landed in East Boston instead of New York.

SH: Was your father from the same area?

PG: I think he was born in Odessa.

SH: Had they met and married before they came to this country?

PG: No, they married in this country, in 1907, in Boston.

SH: Okay. Did your mother talk about what it was like to come here? Did they come over with large numbers of family members?

PG: No, she never ... [said]. They had a big family. They had thirteen in their family. We had about a hundred aunts, uncles and cousins when I was growing up. They were so numerous, I

didn't know half of them, and when my mother died and we were sitting *shiva* in ... the house of one of my brothers, I was introduced to three generations of my father's family.

SH: That is interesting.

PG: I didn't know them. Well, see, I left home at seventeen. Then, I never came back, except, in 1941, I came back, and I stayed about, almost a year, and then, when the war started, I went back in the service.

SH: What was it like to grow up in Brockton, Massachusetts? Did you stay and live there? Did your family stay in Brockton?

PG: Yes, the family stayed there. ... I had one sister, she lives in Washington, DC, but my three brothers that were still living [were there], two of my brothers died in their infancy, and the other three lived in Boston, except when they were in the service. My mother had four boys in the service during World War II and they all came home.

SH: What was it like to grow up in Massachusetts when you came along?

PG: We lived in a poor neighborhood. ... Boston, at that time, when I was a kid, was mostly Irish, but they were mixed. I grew up with Italian kids, Jewish kids, Irish kids and ... the primary school I went to [was] the same school from the first grade to the fifth grade, and then, I went to an intermediate school from the sixth to the eighth grade, and then, I went to high school. I went to Boston Latin School. I played a lot of baseball. I used to read a lot. I had my mother get me a library card, so, I could take out four books and I still have a couple of thousand books in the house.

SH: Can you tell me about the Boston Latin School?

PG: It's a classical education. Everybody took the same subjects. First year, ... I took Latin, French, math, English and ancient history. In the second year, we took math. We took algebra, three periods of algebra, two periods of geometry. In the third year, they reversed it, and then, I took German, we had an elective, between German and ancient Greek, and I took German, and English, and French. I took five subjects. In the junior year, it was the same subjects and, in the senior year, we had to take Latin again, and we took American history, and we had a choice between physics and chemistry, and I took physics. We had five subjects and we went from nine to two-thirty.

SH: Will you tell us about your family? Where do you fit in the family?

PG: I'm the sixth one. When we were in Latin School, there were three of us there at the same time. I was a freshman, my brother next to me was a sophomore, my oldest brother was a senior and my mother used to make us lunches and get them all mixed. This one didn't like this and this one didn't like that and we [would] have to chase each other down to change the sandwiches around.

SH: Was it usual for someone to get into Boston Latin?

PG: No. Well, I went because my brothers went, both of them went. When I started school, I started kindergarten [when] I was four years and no months, and so, I went in the first grade, and they said I was too smart for the first grade. I'm not bragging or anything, but they put me in the second grade. So, here I was, six years old, in the third grade. So, when I graduated grammar school, I was eleven years and ten months, and [when] I started Latin School, I was twelve years old and no months, and here I was, with kids fifteen years old in the class, and I was about this high, and it was quite an experience. I always worked. I had a paper route and I worked on a paper truck. We used to jump off the paper truck and put papers into the stores. I did that after school. Sometimes, I don't know how I did it, because I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning when I sold my papers [and] had all this homework to do because they loaded us up. We used to get sixty lines of Latin, four pages of German, four pages of French and math and English. ... When we studied English, we always had to find the Latin root for the words. The teachers were superb. My oldest brother used to say any one of these could walk into a college and be a professor right away, because they were good, and all they made was eighteen hundred a year.

SH: Unbelievable.

PG: My sister, she got a scholarship for Radcliffe, because we had no money to go to school, and she graduated Radcliffe in 1932 and she [is] still living. She's ninety-one years old. We got eight degrees in the family. My two older brothers, my youngest brother and my oldest brother, both graduated [as] engineers and my brother next to me dropped out of high school. He never finished high school, but I caught up with him in high school.

SH: How did the Depression affect your family? What was your father doing?

PG: My father never worked too much and, in fact, my mother and he separated. He had to move out of the house, because he wouldn't work and she was a single mother. Here, she had all those kids at home and she worked, I don't know. She was an embroiderer, you know, Naval officers, those stripes, she used to do that. That's similar type of work. So, she had her own business when she married him, and so, after he left the house, I think one of my relatives used to pay the rent, because there wasn't enough money for everything, but we survived. I don't think anybody really went hungry, but it was tough and we lived in a place with two bedrooms, I think, no hot water. You know, we had a kettle like this, one of these hot water burners to get hot water, and all us kids, we were in the same boat, so, we used to [go to the] "Y" every Saturday, so [that] we could take a shower, because we didn't have a shower. We thought that was great, ... but, you know, when I look back, I had a happy childhood, at least I thought I did. I've always been an optimist anyway. So, what happened was, in 1935, when I graduated high school, President Roosevelt had started that CCC, [Civilian Conservation Corps], so, my brother next to me went in there. So, I went in with it, too. So, my father was going to have my mother arrested for prevention of cruelty to children, because she signed the papers, so [that] I could go transfer to Oregon. I never had been away from home in my life. I don't think I ever slept one night away from my mother and here, at seventeen, I'm going to the West Coast and I stayed over there sixteen months.

SH: Tell us about that.

PG: Yes. It was quite an experience. What we did [was], we used to make forest trails and fight forest fires. In the wintertime, in Oregon, it rains all the time in the winter and they take all these trees, ... they're called "snags," there's no foliage on [them], everything is gone, and we used to fell these trees, I guess you'd say, and then, we'd cut them up, and then, we burned them. We didn't have these automatic saws that they have now, we had to back and forth like this and the trees are enormous, so, we had to get up on a springboard, make a notch in the tree and climb up about ten feet and stand on this thing, and then, one guy [is] over here and one over here, and back and forth, pull that thing. It takes us all day sometimes to get one tree down.

SH: I can believe it.

PG: And then, when they had the forest fires, ... we fought one of these forest fires that is in the history book. The Tillamook Fire would burn for six hundred miles, from the middle of Oregon all the way down to California. [Editor's note: In 1933, 1939, 1945 and 1951, four forest fires devastated a large section of Tillamook County, Oregon, subsequently known as the "Tillamook Burn." The 1939 blaze Mr. Goldberg refers to here consumed over 189,000 acres of forest.]

SH: It has been in the news.

PG: Yes. These big forest fires, they just happen spontaneously sometimes. Sometimes, the lightning sets them off and there was a controversy [about] what to do and, you know, when the Indians lived here, they had these fires. They didn't burn the whole state down, but, then, I was getting homesick. I wanted to come home, so, I went home in 1937, and then, I stayed home for about three months and I went in the Marine Corps.

SH: Why did you pick the Marines?

PG: Well, I went down [to] the recruiting station a couple of times and the Navy wouldn't take me and it's amazing, because the office was like this, ... the Navy was here and the Marines were over here, and in-between, the doctor walked back and forth. See, the Marine Corps doesn't have any doctors, all the doctors are Navy doctors. I guess, the Marines were looking for people, so, I dragged two of my buddies with me and we all went in together, the three of us.

SH: Why did you go to the Marines?

PG: I went there to go in the service. Originally, I wanted to go to Annapolis and I took the exam and I didn't make it. That's when I went in the service. ... Then, when I got in the Marine Corps, the first ship I was on, I took the exam again on the ship, and I had one of the ensigns tutor me, and I thought I passed everything, but they told me I flunked geometry. I couldn't believe it, of all [the] subjects to flunk. Not to jump way up ahead, though, for the last eighteen years, I've been an adjunct at Kane University, teaching math. So, I just felt they didn't want me, and so, that's the way it was. So, anyway, I was on this ship, on the USS *Brooklyn*, and I stayed on that ship for two-and-a-half years, and then, I went to San Diego and stayed there a

year-and-a-half. I played baseball there, you know, I was always a ballplayer, and so, for [the] six months that I was on the ball team, we didn't do anything but play ball, and then, I was in the First Defense Battalion that went to Wake Island, but I didn't go, because ... I had about less than a year to do, and in order for me to go with them, I had to extend my enlistment and I didn't want to do that, and they first went to Dutch Harbor, and then, they moved from Dutch Harbor to Wake Island, in the early part of '41. ... So, that was one of the breaks in my life, that I didn't go there, because I knew a lot of people [there]. I got a couple of books written about Wake Island, with a list of all the people in them. See, the commanding officer I had ended up as a Congressman. He was a Congressman from Maryland for eight years, trying to think of his name, you know, names escape me. [Brigadier General James Patrick Sinnott Devereux (1903-1988), then a major, commanded the First Marine Defense Battalion at Wake Island during the Japanese invasion in December 1941. He later served in the US House of Representatives from 1951 to 1959 as a Republican from Maryland's Second District.]

SH: You went off to Parris Island with two of your buddies. Can you tell us about your training there?

PG: Well, we went to Parris Island and we had, they call it a platoon, and we had about sixty people in there. We had a staff sergeant and two corporals to watch us and anything you did out of line, they used to carry a forty-inch stick, because you had to have forty inches in-between ranks. They'd whack you across the legs, or [if] you'd get out of step and you couldn't say anything, never talk, and the sand fleas down at Parris Island, I went in May and it's hot down there, the sand fleas are buzzing your ear, and, if you moved, you'd get whacked, you know, but, you know, I was eighteen years old and, you know, you shake that stuff off. ... They're very strict and, like, we had to fire the rifle on the rifle range, they had Springfield '03s, and my arms are short. I couldn't put the rifle in the position that they wanted, and so, one guy used to put his foot [on me] and push it in. See, you have a sling on that thing, you know, and I just couldn't get in position the way they wanted, so, me, being a fresh kid, I told the platoon sergeant, "I'll beat you when we go to the range." I did. I fired my own way and I became a sharpshooter. I got three dollars a month, for a year, or something like that, I forget. We only got twenty-one dollars a month in the first place. That training, it was brutal, but they had a sign on the bayonet course, "A bayonet fighter kills or gets killed." ... They had these dummies, you hit them with the thing and you stuck them like this, and it was really intensive. Then, when I finished there, they sent me to sea school in Portsmouth Navy Yard, because they were going to send me on a ship. Well, on the ship, the Marines always get in everybody's way, but they're there and they only put them on capital ships. Like I say, I stayed on that ship for a couple of years, and then, I went to San Diego. So, because I didn't want to go with the First Defense Battalion, they put [me] in the Second Defense Battalion and I had about six months to do and they were looking for volunteers to be a cook. So, I say, "I volunteer." The officer says, "You only have six months to do. What do you want to go in there for?" I say, "I'll do it in the galley, because I'm getting out of here," and they said, "You know, you're going to get drafted," because the draft law was in effect since 1940, and I said, "I'll take my chances." So, I finished my enlistment and we came home. The way I came home, this lady had advertised in the newspaper [that] she was looking for somebody to help her drive cross-country, because her husband had been retired from the Navy and was called back, and he had to go to the East Coast. So, she was on the West Coast. So, my buddy and I, he was with me for four years, even though he was in a different outfit, but he went to San

Diego with me, so, we came home together, with this lady driving cross-country, took about ten days, I think, or something, but, anyway, we finally get home. ...

SH: This is pretty amazing, though, when you think about it. You had never been away from home before going to Oregon.

PG: We went cross-country on a train, you know, five days and five nights on a train, ... going and coming.

SH: How much of a culture shock was it to go from Massachusetts to Oregon?

PG: Oh, yes. Well, they always told me I talked funny, because I had a Boston accent.

SH: Who were these CCC crews made up of?

PG: They were supposed to be on welfare. So, when I got in line, I noticed that people in front of me were always giving a number, their welfare number, or something, so, when it got to me, I gave them a phony number. [laughter] You have to think quick.

SH: Obviously, you did. When you got to Oregon, where were the members of your crew from?

PG: The way that CCC ran, the Army fed you and clothed you and paid you. ... What they did [was], we were in a state forest, so, the Department of Interior, I think, was responsible for our work. I don't know if you ever saw the movie *Paint Your Wagon*, well, we worked right in that forest, in (Wallowa?)-[Whitman] National Forest, for the summer of 1936 and we built the ranger station there. We also built a telephone line. We felled the trees in the forest, Tamarack trees, we peeled the bark off of them, we dug the holes, we put the poles in, and then, we strung the wire, all under supervision, of course, because we didn't know anything, but, they had people, they called them "local experienced men," they would teach us everything that we had to do. We were just like "a strong back in a weak mind."

SH: Did they treat you well?

PG: Oh, yes. They fed you well. We had a captain in the Army [who] was our commanding officer for that place and we weren't strictly under [Army] rules, because we were civilians, that was the title, Civilian Conservation Corps. He was the commanding officer and I think he had another officer as a lieutenant and the other people [who] worked [with] us.

SH: Did you get to go off and mingle with the other Oregon-ites?

PG: Well, we go on liberty, like any place else.

SH: That was what I wanted to say, did you have liberty?

PG: Yes, oh, yes, yes, we were at the mouth of [the] Columbia River, at Fort Stevens, when we first got there. Then, they moved us to a place in the middle of Oregon for the winter. Then,

they sent us way east, right near the Snake River, right near Idaho, in Enterprise. I'll always remember [when] we got there on a train and somebody says, "Where's the town at?" They said, "It's on the other side." When you look at one side of the train, there was nothing. It was just quite a place, because we went to the Pendleton Round-Up, in Pendleton, it's a famous thing. They had Indians there, stagecoach races, and it was very interesting, especially for a city kid, you know, [who] never saw all the trees and everything like they had.

SH: Here you are, from the Northeast and, now, you are in the Northwest, and then, you were sent to Parris Island.

PG: That was a revelation, Parris Island. I've never been down South before and I remember it was cool in Boston when I left. By the time we got down there, we got rid of most of our clothes, like sweaters and stuff. We didn't need them. ... What they do is, they pack up all your clothes and send them back to your house, and then, they issue you their clothes, you know. You stand in line. Everything is done in a mass formation.

SH: Where were your brothers at this point, when you entered the military?

PG: My oldest brother went in the Army in 1939, but the other two were home, and then, when the war started, we were all in there. My oldest brother was in from 1939 to 1945.

SH: You said you grew up in a pretty diverse neighborhood, but what did you think of the South when you got there?

PG: Oh, the rednecks? I don't know. You know, we never had any liberty out of Parris Island.

SH: Not one?

PG: We went in and, when we finished, we went out. I never saw anybody down there.

SH: Okay.

PG: Yes, we never mingled with the natives. Actually, the first Southern city was Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia, that I was in.

SH: Were there any adventures driving back from the West Coast in the 1940s?

PG: Oh, yes, that was something, yes. We drove each day about, well, probably, three or four hundred miles and she was a pain in the neck, this lady. She was unhappy because her husband was called back and she had to go to the East Coast and here we are, a couple of kids who didn't care about anything except the fact that we were out. We were going home. ... She dumped us off in Washington. My sister had lived there, lived there then, so, we went to her house, and then, from there, we went home.

SH: Before Pearl Harbor, what discussions did you take part in or hear about World War II? The draft was in place. Did you discuss Hitler or Great Britain at that point?

PG: Well, see, when I got out, I went to work at an ammunition depot for the Navy, and so, at that time, you know, we had ships on patrol helping the British out. We were convoying some of their stuff. We weren't supposed to, see, President Roosevelt wanted to get into the war more than he was allowed, and so, he said that the Germans sunk the *Ruben James* in 1940, and then, another ship was torpedoed and we used to discuss it all the time because we were making the ammunition for them. ... When the war started, the captain had a blanket deferment for everybody working in the ammunition depot. It was about fifteen miles south of Boston, and then, I said, "I'm going back in the service." So, I went down [to] the recruiting station and I ran into a first class gunner's mate [who] had been on the *Brooklyn* with me. So, he says, "I'll ship you in as a third class gunner's mate," because I worked on guns on the ship, I was a gun striker when I was on that ship. So, that's what happened. He shipped me in and he made a mistake in what to do with me and they sent me to boot camp in Newport, Rhode Island. So, I had to go to boot camp again and the guy said, "Well, ... it's all right, it's only five weeks, and it wasn't anything ... [like] the Marine Corps." ... So, I left there and they sent me down to New Orleans for a mine sweeper being built in Orange, Texas. So, we stayed there two months, at a receiving station there, and then, when the ship was just about ready to be built, they sent us up there and we lived on what they called "subs and quarters" in Orange, Texas. So, we're paid, I forget how much money, for room and board, and everything, you might say, and so, we decided that four of us will get one room at the "Y", so [that] we could save all the money before spending it and that's what we did. We used to drink a little bit too, you know, it's what they do. Anyway, there was a guy in the room next door to us who was a real teetotaler, so, every time we emptied a bottle we shoved it outside his door, drove him crazy, but that's where we had a culture shock. We'd go out for breakfast and we'd say, "Give us ham and eggs," and I'd say, "No grits," because I don't like their grit and she said say, "No grits?" I'd say, "No grits."

SH: Is it still no grits?

PG: Yes, oh, I don't like them. Looks like Purina.

SH: What about the political climate in the country from the perspective of a young kid?

PG: Well, you know, I don't think they were so apprehensive. They didn't want to go to war. See, the Congress was full of isolationists, you know, the draft law only passed by one vote...this (Senator Deborat?) [Burton K. Wheeler] was about the worst, from Montana. They were definitely against getting in; well, they thought the ocean would protect us. They still do, but, anyway, they just didn't want to go to war and they, you know, they always said that Roosevelt engineered the whole thing, just to get the war started, because he wanted to go in, because, see, he met Churchill in the Summer of '41 up in Portland, Maine, or someplace, Newfoundland, somewhere up there. They met on the *Augusta*, I remember that. Of course, we never knew that Roosevelt couldn't walk. The media never printed that. We knew that the *Houston*, he used to ride around on *Houston*, they had an elevator put in there, on that ship, just for him and he loved to go to sea, because, you know, he'd been Secretary of the Navy in World War I, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and so, the Navy was his, he liked it. You know, I never noticed much about talk about the war except for the fact that we didn't want to get in it. Most people were opposed to it.

SH: Do you have any explanation as to why the Navy would take you this time and not before?

PG: Well, during the war they took anybody that could walk.

SH: Where were you when you first heard about Pearl Harbor?

PG: I was visiting some friends in New York, in New York City, and that's when I heard about it, so, I went home and then, of course, I was working at the depot, so, everything changed right away. The whole country shut down, you know. See, most of the things they were worried about were lights on the East Coast because the submarines could see it. You'd be surprised how light reflects out across the ocean, even a flashlight, or anything. You know, they took the white hats and dyed them blue. Oh, yes we didn't have any white hats during the war, yes, because the white would reflect. You could see it.

SH: Where were you in New York when you heard about Pearl Harbor? What were you doing?

PG: I was visiting some friends up there at their house and it came over the radio because they didn't have television then and it came over the radio. It was in the paper. See, it was eight o'clock over there; it was one o'clock over here. I think it's five hours difference, yes.

SH: What was the discussion right then, there in your friend's home?

PG: Well, as I said, you know, because I was working for the Navy I said "Geez, I better get back. They'll probably be looking for me." I left that day, then I went right back. Yes.

SH: Were you driving back?

PG: No, I took the train.

SH: Was there a lot of discussions on the train or were people just quiet or what?

PG: Gee, I really can't remember.

SH: Because of what happened...

PG: But I know the papers were full of that stuff and the radio was buzzing and, "We interrupt this program" and all that and I think the Giants were playing football that day, I'm not sure. I really can't recollect all the stuff that was happening at that time, you know.

SH: Where was your brother? You said he was in the Army at that time

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PG: Yes. He was attached to Hickam Field and on December 7th he was down on Christmas Island. He was a weather man and they had something, we didn't know where it was at that time, because when they attacked Hickam Field, we said, "Gee, I hope nothing happened to him," and when I was in Pearl Harbor, after the war started, you could still see the holes in the

walls where they strafed. They're still there I think now, but, anyway, he came back. The first time we saw him, he came back in about February. They sent him back to Officers' Training School, and so, then we found out where he had been. For three months we didn't know where he was and we had relatives who were in the Death March at Bataan. It was one of my cousins and I had friends who were in Shanghai in the Marine Corps and we never knew what happened to them either. It was really a time of reflection, there's no doubt about it, but, I guess, I wasn't that interested in what everybody else was doing at that time.

SH: Were you playing baseball at that time?

PG: I used to play at home. Yes, when I was home we played all the time.

SH: Were you a semi-pro player?

PG: I think we were the equivalent of that. I was on a carrier and managed the team and we won the AIRLANT championship that was the championship, of all the stuff that the admiral in charge of air in the Atlantic was responsible for. It's called "COMAIRLANT". [Editors Note: COMNAVAIRLANT was the senior type command for all aviation assets used by the Atlantic Fleet during World War II. COMNAVAIRLANT was formed in Norfolk in January 1943. The new command was to take the place of three older organizations: Commander Carriers, Atlantic Fleet; Carrier Replacement Squadron, Atlantic Fleet; and Fleet Air Wings, Atlantic. The mission of COMNAVAIRLANT was directly related to prosecuting the war against the U-boats.]

SH: What position did you play?

PG: I was catching. I was working for this warrant gunner on the carrier and we had our own bus. One [of] the players drove the bus and we used to travel all over Virginia playing ball on weekends and in the daytime days, he said, "You better get somebody to take your job because you're no use to me." I spent all morning scheduling games on the phone.

SH: Talk about when you enlisted in the Navy and boot camp in Rhode Island, and then, where are you stationed.

PG: They sent me to the USS *Pilot*, a minesweeper, and the ship was commissioned in January of '43 and at that time the Navy didn't have enough destroyers and destroyer escorts, so, we escorted ships over to, I was on there for two convoys going... from Norfolk to Casablanca. In order to avoid submarines it used to take a long time. Sometimes we'd leave Norfolk and go all the way down to the Caribbean, and then, come around this way and go back. One time it took us twenty-seven days to get over there and the first one... we stopped at Bermuda. The ship was only 220 feet long and it drew eight feet forward and nine feet aft and it would roll on a bathtub... This storm we were in, I read a book about the sub chaser and we were mentioned in this book, and we'd had to take five guys off on stretcher, they were so sick from being seasick. Then, we proceeded...and when we were going over one of these tankers, it looked like one of our tankers, but it turned out we had given this ship to the French, and we were eating supper and she got torpedoed and in ninety seconds it was sunk and here are all these people in the water. We thought they were Americans, but here they're singing the *Marseilles* and because, you

know, I had four years of French in high school, so, I could speak French, and so, we fished all these people out of the water and I had to interpret. We didn't have a doctor, we only had a corpsman and I was helping him because my general quarters was general repair because I was in charge of all the guns on the ship. So, I went around with him, help patch these guys up and talk to them and there was a few that died. We buried them at sea. The next day we couldn't keep up because we had 110 on our ship and here we picked up another hundred, and so, they got these two ships, we were running alongside the ship, and they put a plank across there, which was really dangerous, but it's all we had and they'd run across when the roll was benefited them, and so, then ...

SH: Now what were you escorting?

PG: Merchant ships. See, we had convoys so big they were out of sight. You couldn't see them for miles and you had to go as slow as the slowest ship. Some of them [could] only do eight knots that's [why] they're easy to torpedo, they couldn't get out of their own wake and on this same trip, see, we carried fifty-two depth charges. We dropped all the depth charges going over. We loaded up and dropped them all coming back. The subs were all over the place, and so, we finally cornered a sub, on this same ship, and we were going around about ten ships. We had this guy in here in the middle and we finally got him. What happened, one guy got off the ship and one of these ships picked him up and they sent this other guy and I go over to pick him up in a whale boat and bring him back, and then, I spoke a little German, because I had two years of German, but I didn't speak it too well, so, I told the Captain. He said, "Well you talk to him," but this guy spoke excellent English. He said he was the captain. Well, you couldn't tell because he had no insignia. He had a coverall on. So, anyway, I had to watch him, I had a forty-five on and he would sit over here in the aft part of the ship because we only had him aboard for about thirty-six hours.

SH: Did you force him to surface or did you sink the sub?

PG: Well, what happened when the ship gets depth charged, sometimes they come up, and then, they take on all this water, and then, they go down again and he was the only one who got off. There were pieces of bodies all over the place and, you know, I had to pick them up and they'd put them in jars. You had to prove that you sunk these things, so, you need the proof.

RG: Did you have them surface? Is that how he got out?

PG: Yes, this stuff was floating, entrails and stuff, you know, not the best thing to talk about, but there it was.

SH: You're educating...

PG: Yes, so, there it was. So, they gave me this big gallon jug, when we went over to get this guy, and they brought it back and the Captain said, "Don't let him get too close to you because he'll take your gun and shoot you." He's not going anywhere. He's tickled to death that we captured him. It's not like when they captured our people, the way they treated them, and so, we took him into Norfolk in the middle of the night and last I saw him, he was going down, some

Marines took him into custody, but he obviously, there was no doubt he was an officer because of his knowledge of navigation and everything else, but he claimed he was the captain. He could have been.

SH: Now this was on your return trip, the first return trip?

PG: Yes, yes and another time when we went over there, you know, they had a big campaign in North Africa and we finally defeated Rommel and they captured thousands of prisoners. In the second convoy I was in we brought all these prisoners back. We escorted them and brought them back on these other ships. They had prisoners all over the United States, Italian and German. I don't think we ever had any Japanese prisoners in this country because they would rather die than give up. Then, I got transferred up. They wanted somebody to go to Mine Warfare School. I was first class gunner's mate then and I didn't want to go, so, the exec says "I'll give you two weeks leave." "I'll take it." So, I went to Mine Warfare School in Solomons, Maryland, no, I mean in Yorktown, Virginia, and then, when I finished they sent me to Solomons, Maryland. It's way down the tip of Maryland the into Chesapeake Bay and I was there about eight months and we used to test mines, mostly counter measures for mines, and sometimes we used to plant mines. They would blow each other up, and so, we used to make tests to see how much, how far away one mine has to be from the other, so [that] they won't do that, and what we do, we would plant these mines with a little detonator in them and not a real mine loaded with plastic. Anyway, we'd get out on a boat and planted depth charges and blow the depth charges up... Then these things were hooked up to a barge and the sonograph on the barge to see, they counted mines, and that's what we did there. I stayed there for about eight months, and then, I wanted to get out. I didn't want to do that. I want to go back to sea. People say, "You're crazy, they're fighting out there." I said, "It's all right." So, they sent me to school in Washington, DC and they put me in this course, what they call a merchant type mount, and they had all these APA programs for carrying troops and my whole class went to the West Coast for these ships, and so, I was assigned to an APA and this was in ...

SH: Tell us what an APA is, please?

PG: An APA is a troop transport, but you carry the troops and all their equipment. We carried six hundred troops and everything they had, tanks and everything else, and so, the ship was commissioned in the summer of '44 in Wilmington, California, and then, we took a load of troops up and took them to Pearl Harbor and they loaded up at Pearl Harbor and they sent us to Saipan to train with these troops, and then, we went to Iwo Jima and we landed our troops on I think D-Day was February 19th, 1945 and we landed the troops at nine o'clock in the morning, at ten o'clock the wounded, back already. It was a bloody campaign. It was all Marines. There were no Army in there at all. They had to take that island in order to, because the B-29s were flying all the way from Guam and Saipan to Japan and they needed fighter escort, and so, they had to take this island and have a fighter base on there. So, that's the reason they took it and we were there for about two weeks, or something like that, and then, they sent us out of there. While we were there we were under air raids every night. We used to leave the island because the Japs would come over at night and raid. This type of ship I was on, they were always after those troops, so, we used to make smoke, so [that] the smoke would cover the ship and they couldn't see us. One night we had a portable smoke blower up in the bow. We had these big

things back aft and this thing blew up instead blowing smoke and lit us up like a Christmas tree. I said, "Oh, we're really sure we're going to get it now." So, we got a couple of guys and threw the thing over the side, that was the end of that. You know, what goes up must come down and one night I think one of our fellows ships raided us because the stuff came down and I was only about twenty feet away from this gun crew here and they all got wounded, nothing severely, but, you know, superficial wounds and everything else, but I was only twenty feet away. It could have been me, but it wasn't.

SH: Now when you went back on the APA you went back to the gun crews?

PG: Yes, yes. I was in charge of all the guns, all the machine guns on the boats. All these boats we had fifteen boats that take the troops in. They had machine guns on them. They were mine, too.

SH: When you have a landing like that and you're the navy man in charge of these boats and the guns, what's the chain of command?

PG: Well, what they do is, when they embark on the boat they put these cargo nets down the side of the ship and they crawl down there to the boat and they circle around 'til they get ready and there's a boat commander out there. See, the APA carries what they call a beach party and a boat crew. They're independent of the captain of the ship. Their commanding officer reports to the captain of the ship because the captain of the ship is the last king on earth. So, anyway, they get all these boats ready, and then, they go in. The beach party goes in first and they get the beach ready. Meantime, everybody is shooting at them. So, then the boats go in and I was in charge of the machine guns to make sure they worked. I didn't have to; my people didn't shoot them, or anything. They got their own people to do that. I had this idiot taking care of them and he packed them with the wrong grease and I told them to get rid of that grease, but he didn't and if salt water hits this mineral grease. It makes it harden and the guns jammed. I told him, "Next time it happened I'm going to put you in the boat and you're going in there with that gun, see if it works." Then, when that was over, they sent us down to, I think, we went back to San Francisco because we took another load of troops, I can't remember now, but, anyway, we took another load of troops and went to Okinawa. Now in Okinawa, we had 1400 ships there altogether and we had the biggest trouble in Okinawa. It was this Kamikazes came in there and we had, like I say, the officers weren't too bright, so, we had this guy who was supposed to be the recognition officer. So, he's up there and here comes this Japanese plane coming right at us and they resembled the TBF that we have and he's saying, "That's a TBF," and you could see that big meatball on there. So, some kid on the ship drew a cartoon of the whole thing, how Ensign Wagner, he's up there, "That's not a Jap, it's a TBF," and the captain is over here and they wrote this conversation like you do on a cartoon. It went right past us, it hit the next ship, but the captain tried to confiscate all the copies of this thing, but I still have one. Then, we left there, and then, we went down to Guadalcanal.

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

PG: I had a working party all assembled to do this and I told them, "We'll do it at five o'clock in the morning because it's really hot down there," and I said, "We'll be done by noontime." So,

when we got started, I looked around, I couldn't find where I had placed all these men. So, this Ensign Wagner, he was assistant gunnery officer he had moved these people, so, I told him off. I called him an SOB and everything else. So, anyway, he took me to the captain and told the captain the whole story and the captain said, "You are stupid." So, I won that round. The captain liked me. I got along good with him. Anyway, we went down to Nuomea, and then, on the way back, we stopped at Guam and they tied us up alongside a merchant ship and, you know, sailors do anything for a drink, and so, these guys had booze on their ship and they were looking for something to trade. Well, they needed shoes. So, they went on and got a whole bunch of shoes and trade it back for the liquor. So, the captain was all upset because these guys are getting drunk and there was no obvious way that they could get the booze except from that ship. So, we had a doctor on, we had five doctors, and so, he wanted the doctor to examine these people and pump their stomach out to see if they had booze in there and the doctor wouldn't do it. He said, "That's cruel, I'm not doing it." Anyway, that didn't end there because we get back to San Francisco and they had filed charges against the captain for doing this, but they threw them all out, but, anyway, that was really something.

SH: They brought charges against the captain for what reason?

PG: For torturing the crew. The doctor said he was torturing the crew.

RG: Did the doctor actually do it?

PG: No, he wouldn't do it. I think they had put them in the brig on bread and water, or something, and they didn't have any food in them, and so, he felt that was torture, to put a stomach pump on something with no food in there. So, anyway, we went back to San Francisco, this is, the war ended while we were there. In the meantime, we were supposed to get ready for an invasion of Japan, and so, we had all these troops aboard and we took off and they didn't know what to do. So, they sent us to Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands, it's the end of the earth. That's where they had the Bikini Atoll test. So, we sat there, sweltering in the heat. I'll never forget the captain went alongside a concrete barge that had fuel and he bounced off the thing and some kid hollered out, "Hit us again captain, we'll go back to the States." The old man, he went crazy up there pulling his hair out. So, anyway, we left there with the troops. They told us to go to the Philippines. So, we get into Manila and Manila was full of sunken ships, it looked like all sticks sticking up, the masts, and we dumped these troops off, and then, they loaded us up with other troops and we went up to Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan and we landed these troops. It's now October '45, we landed these troops up there, and so, they came in as the conquering army, and then, my enlistment had expired and I was trying to get off that ship. So, six o'clock one night a guy came up says, "Captain says you're getting off this ship at nine o'clock." I said, "Pack your bags." So, I packed all my bags. I packed a whole bunch of sheets for my mother's house and everything else. Everybody else was doing it, and so, they put us on this other ship. They loaded up 2700 sailors, took us all the way back to Long Beach.

RG: What ship were you on at this time?

PG: This one I forget, this was another APA, but it was a big one. See, ours was a medium-sized ship.

SH: And the name of it was?

PG: *The Berrien*, yes, APA 62. So, we get back to Long Beach and I got off and they put us on a train, troop train, and we went across. Another five day trip on the train and I got back to Boston. I got discharged and I went home. I went back to the depot for a couple of months and I said, "I'm going back on the Navy." See, you could stay out for ninety days and go back. So, I reenlisted and they sent me to the receiving station in Boston and everything was in a state of flux. You know, people going out, coming in, so, they didn't know what to do with me. They gave me three different sets of orders while I was there. So, what I would do was muster at nine o'clock in the morning and I go home. My mother was upset when I reenlisted, but, anyway, I'd come home. She said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I told you it's a racket." I was there for six weeks. I'd come home. Then, they put me on the *Saipan*. [Editors Note: The *Saipan* was renamed *The Arlington* in 1966 when refitted as a Communications Relay Ship] It was a new carrier being built and they sent me to Newport and I stayed in Newport for about three months, almost, and then, the ship was being built down in Camden, New Jersey and I went down there, worked at the shipyard until it went into commission and went into commission July, 1946 and I stayed on that ship for about two-and-a-half years.

SH: Tell us about the commissioning.

PG: This was in July 14th, and it was hot and on the flight deck, especially, and they had all these people down there, visitors and families and relatives and speech makers and everything else. What happened was when they turned the command over to the ship, the Captain says, "I accept," or something like that and he salutes and they run the commission pennant up. It's a little like a ribbon and they run that up and ships in commission and they say, "Set the watch," and everything is going and they bring the crew aboard, well, the crew is already aboard. When they commission a destroyer, they usually get them all lined up on the dock, and then, they all run aboard, but we were already on there. The skipper was Captain Crommelin. He was a very famous World War II pilot and, in fact, he was on the ship that was blown up and sunk. They killed the admiral and the captain and everything else and he had all his clothes blown up. He took over that ship and he didn't have a stitch on. He was burned. You could see his face where he was burnt, but, he was tough. He was a good skipper. He used to fly a fighter plane home, then down to Pensacola. What they did, they sent us down to Pensacola after we were commissioned to train the carrier pilots. See, when they get their wings in the Navy, the final thing is five landings on a carrier, then they get their wings. We were down there and he had his own fighter plane and he used to fly home to Alabama. So, one night he wanted to go home, one weekend, and it was raining and he goes over, and his plane was kept at the Air Station, and he goes over there and some ensign wouldn't let him fly, because of the weather. He came back to the ship talking to himself, because he was a hot pilot. Anyway, there were five Crommelin brothers and there are a couple of ships named after them.

SH: Talk about the sea trials for the mine sweeper that you took out of Texas.

PG: We went to Galveston back, and forth from there, and then, we went to a shipyard somewhere where they checked it out. We ended up in Norfolk, I know that, and then, we operated out of Norfolk.

SH: Was there any commissioning ceremony?

PG: Oh, yes, yes. Same thing. Yes. Of the six ships I was on, four of them I commissioned.

SH: Oh, really, some kind of a record, I bet.

PG: I guess so. You go out as a plank owner, that's what they call you.

SH: When you went to Casablanca, could you get off the ship? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

PG: Yes, yes. I had shore patrol, with a Tommy gun, because these Arabs would loot everything. They like to steal our mattress covers, you know, they wear them. They make a dress out of them or something, you know. If you see Bob Hope in the movie *Casablanca*, they had the meat hanging down with the flies on it, same thing. We didn't get much liberty there, but some people had liberty. I know I had to go on shore patrol and I carried a Tommy gun because it's a little better than a pistol. We were only there for a couple of days, but like I say, it looked just like you'd see it in the movies.

SH: You talked about your interaction with bringing prisoners back. Were there any interaction you that know personally with the other Allied forces, the British, or any of the others?

PG: We tied up alongside a British ship in Casablanca and we started whistling at them because they had shorts on and everything. At that time our Navy didn't wear shorts, but, that was funny. They were funny. These kids, you know, they really picked on them. The British don't understand our humor and they go, "woooo". It's something. See, most of the time a small ship is nested. One ship is tied next to the dock, and then, they would run them abreast. That way they saved a lot of dock space. So, we had to go over, I think we had to go over their ship or, they had to go over our ship, to get off and all their stuff is so bulky, the British Navy. We're more streamlined in everything we manufacture.

SH: You never got invited for tea or anything like that?

PG: No, no, but they had beer on their ships.

SH: Really?

PG: Oh, yes. They have a bar and everything, oh, yes.

SH: What did you trade with them?

RG: Any shoes left together?

PG: No, you know, the Navy was full of alcoholics not so much now. Like I've been retired since 1958 and when I first went in the service, anybody retired they used to live about one or two years. They drank themselves to death. But these people, they have a lot of drugs now in the Navy, but you can't revolutionize society and change it overnight. It takes time, but I don't think they drink as much anymore as they did then.

SH: Did you bring any memorabilia back from Africa, from Casablanca?

PG: Geez, I'm trying to think. I didn't have too much. I brought back a carbine and a pistol. See, when the wounded came back on the APA I was on, I had to meet them and take all their weapons away, and so, I had this carbine. I took it apart and sent it home piece by piece, and put it back together again, and then, one of my brothers picked it up and took it. I said, "Listen, I don't want it. I don't know why I ever took it, anyway. I don't want a gun." I'm against people having weapons anyway, and so, he took them and, I guess, they're still there. But he died in 1987, I guess the stuff is still in his house.

SH: When you picked up the APA did you go to the West Coast to pick up the ship?

PG: Yes, yes.

SH: You never went through the Panama Canal or anything?

PG: I went through the Panama Canal on another ship, not that one.

RG: What ship did you go through the Panama Canal on?

PG: On the *Brooklyn*, the first ship I was on. It was a cruiser. Yes, we went, see we were there for the World's Fair in New York in 1939. At that time, the whole fleet was supposed to come to the World's Fair and they were going to anchor in the Hudson River, all the way up as far as Yonkers and President Roosevelt changed his mind. He didn't want all the ships on the East Coast, so, he sent a lot of them back, but, we stayed because we were still technically an East Coast ship, and so, we went to the World's Fair, and then, I don't know if you remember the *Squalus* sank, the submarine in 1939? So, we were the nearest ship of any size, so, they sent us up there to be the station ship for the divers, and everything else, and so, all the divers lived on our ship for two weeks, and then, this other ship, the *Sacramento* came up and relieved us, and then, we went to the West Coast. We went through the Canal and we went to San Francisco for the World's Fair, and then, when, in 1939 in September, the President declared a national emergency, because the war had started in Europe, because that was the end of the peacetime Navy then.

SH: How did it change your duty then?

PG: Yes, we didn't go to all the places we were supposed to go and there were more drills. We went to Portland, Oregon for the, they have a flowers, Rose Festival up there. We went up there, all the way up the Columbia River. That's a nice ride, about a 110 miles in from the ocean, and

you go up the river and we tied up in Portland and, you know, usually when you tie up the tide rises up and down, but there's no tide all the way up there. So, we tied up, we were right next to the dock. You could step off the ship right there and we stayed there for that Rose Festival for about a week. Then, we went back to Long Beach. See, the fleet was stationed in Long Beach and they were all anchored out, too, there's no place, at that time there was no navy yard there. They built the navy yard during the war in Long Beach. Yes, it changed overnight because then you couldn't have lights on the ship anymore. You had a darkened ship. You never know how dark it is until you go out on the ocean and there are no lights.

SH: Talk about the competition between the Navy and the Marines. You've been a Marine and you've been a Navy man.

PG: Well, the Navy doesn't have much use for the Marine Corps, especially on a ship. They think they're useless on a ship. Now when we carried, we carried Marines to Iwo Jima, I ran into some guys I was with in the Marine Corps and it was really funny. I'm standing up on the deck; you always watch when people come aboard. You go there, like a tourist, and I'm looking on and I see this guy and he used to, I forget that program was on the radio and one guy used to call Hezzy like that. I saw this guy coming and I screamed at him, "Hezzy," and he almost flipped. But, I don't know what happened to him after that. But we took them aboard in Pearl Harbor and I remember they wanted to eat in the Chief's Mess, the top grades, and they outnumbered us three to one and we just couldn't do it. So, they say, "Why don't you make some kind of a deal," you know. The chief radioman wanted to make a deal because he was going to get radio parts from the Marines, and then, he was going to let them eat in there, and I said, "Can't do it." Couldn't do it and we went to Okinawa, we had the Marines on there, and every time we had an air raid, we locked the ship up, and so, the Marines that were on the ship were locked up. They were down below. Well, they went in the Chiefs' Quarters and ate everything in sight. But, there was always that rivalry, you know, but, I think they're more close now than they used to be because with the joint organization of the armed forces. See, after the war there was so much of that turf protection that Harry Truman decided that he's going to organize, reorganize, the whole armed forces, put them under one roof and that's what he did and he put James Forrestal as his first Secretary of Defense and Forrestal was depressed all the time and he jumped out of the window at the Bethesda Naval Hospital and killed himself. That's similar to the organization that the President wants to do now with the Homeland Security, yes. It's a big reorganization and when Captain Crommelin on the *Saipan*, he was deathly against it. See, what they wanted to do, the Air Force wanted to get rid of the carriers and we had a carrier being built called the *United States* and they had this guy, who was Secretary of Defense, and he stopped the carrier being built because they were going to have this B-36 bomber that was going to replace the carriers. They had a big fight in Washington, they had the revolt of the admirals, and all this, and Captain Crommelin went up and testified and that was the end of his career. He never made admiral. What they did, they used to take people like him and when they retired, they gave him what they called grade graveyard promotion in retirement to Rear Admiral, but, he never would have served as one. He testified against the people, the Chief of Naval Operations resigned and everything else. It was quite a mess. Harry Truman, he was a good president. He was tough. He fired MacArthur.

SH: Tell me about that.

PG: Well, I was in MacArthur's Navy. See, what happened during World War II, Nimitz was in charge of the whole Pacific and MacArthur was over there. But MacArthur didn't want to take orders from anybody, so, Roosevelt divided the ocean up and Nimitz was given the Fifth Fleet and MacArthur was given the Seventh Fleet and we were in the seventh Fleet. See, the strategy was they wanted to bypass the Philippines, Nimitz did, but MacArthur being the big egoist that he was, he said he was coming back, "I shall return." So, he wanted to go into the Philippines. So, his Navy went in there. That's why we went to the Philippines and it was quite a campaign. I wasn't in on that. When the Philippines were being fought we would have been in the States getting the Berrien ready to commission. My youngest brother was there, though. He was in a fighter squadron in New Guinea and he went in the Air Force and never got out until the war was over, never came home. He was in that same squadron Major Bong was in, [9th Squadron, 5th Air Force] [Editor's Note: Major Richard Bong was the top decorated US fighter pilot in WWII] and he said MacArthur came down there to decorate Major Bong and he's got his khaki all pressed, shined, and all these other guys looked like slobs, with their old clothes and they're dirty, and everything else, and he had his wife with him. You know, he was something else, Dugout Doug [MacArthur]. If you ever read his biography his mother used to sit up in West Point and watch him. She used to have a room at the Hotel Thayer at West Point, watch him, see what he's doing. Big mama's boy. I read this book "The General And The...", you know, I read all these books, and I can forget the titles. "The General And The Something Else," [Editors Note: *The General And The President* by Richard Rovere] and I think it's a semi-historical book about MacArthur, because the protagonists in this book falls in love with a Philippine girl from a wealthy family, and then, he goes, see he's a like a flag lieutenant to MacArthur, and he is a captain in the Army. He falls in love with this girl, but it's like a parallel thing with what MacArthur did. MacArthur, they always said that he was in love with one of those Filipinos over there because he lived over there, you know, he was, he lived at a hotel in Manila. See, he designed that hat he wore. Everybody wore a helmet, but he wore the cap. He was lucky though because he was on the *Nashville* when they had that campaign against the Philippines, and a bomb hit the *Nashville* and killed about 300 men and he never got a scratch.

SH: Some people are very lucky. When you took the troops you said at one point you stopped in Pearl Harbor, did you see some of the devastation?

PG: Oh, yes, yes. Let me tell you about Pearl Harbor. When I was on this APA first thing, we needed air bottles to, you run the guns in battery, and you have to have air to do that. On a steamship they have the ability to do that with the engine room. Well, this ship didn't have that. We had to use air bottles. So, I took my coolies with me and we went over and stole about two of these air bottles and took them back to the ship. So, somebody must have followed me, and so, the next thing I know the gunnery officer has me up and he says he comes from Virginia, and said, "What's this all a boot?" I say, "I told you we needed air bottles, and so, I went and got them." "Well, take them back." So, they took them back. The next day, I went back and stole them again, and so, when we went out to sea that time, he says, "Gee, where did you get those bottles?" "I told you we needed them." The same time, I wanted a fuse setter for that ship and I went over to supply in Pearl Harbor, at the base, and they wouldn't give the fuse setter and the fuse setter was sitting there. In 1952 I went back to Pearl Harbor. I was assigned to the *Radford*, a destroyer, and I went over there just for curiosity, and there was the damn fuse setter. It never

moved. This is seven years later. Just to show you how they did it. When I used to try to get stuff for the ship, see, amphibious force was like orphans. The combat ships got everything, and I went over to Pearl Harbor to get some stuff. I had my whole list and everything else and this guy, "You can't have that," he says. "Who the hell are you? I want to talk to a naval officer." He said, "Who's making all that noise?" I said, "I am." I didn't get what I wanted, anyway, but, that's what it was. It's a constant fight. Even now, it's a constant fight for money. See, the captain of the ship gets a budget, but it starts with the fleet. The fleet gets the budget, he allots it to his different commanders, then it gets on the ship, and then, it comes down, one time I had \$200.00 left. I thought I was going to get some new tools and they says, "You can't have it, we don't have any money." "What do you mean? I have \$200.00 here for tools." "We had to buy toilet paper." See, my commanding officer, my gunnery officer was also the first lieutenant, first lieutenant is the ship's janitor, so, his money was mine and his. So, we got the toilet paper and I didn't get the tools.

SH: I hope this was in peacetime?

PG: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: When you were part of the landing forces on D-Day what were some of the stories and what was some of the things that you saw?

PG: Well, the wounded would come back. We had five doctors and they operated constantly. I remember one incident and, I think, I saw it mentioned in a book that I read, where this guy wrote a book about Iwo Jima, and this kid came back, he didn't look like he even shaved, and his hands were mangled and he looked like he had grabbed a sword, which he did. He got to pull the sword I away that this guy had shoved into him, but they saved his life, you know. They operated all the time and we had, some of them died. I remember one poor kid that was dead and they put him on a stretcher and they put him underneath one of my spaces. The captain, he didn't want to bury him at sea. He wanted to send him ashore. See, you can't send him ashore; they're still fighting over there. They're not burying anybody over there. So, finally, after three days, we buried him at sea. Never knew who he was because he'd lost his dog tags. Yes, that's what happens. That's when they put missing, you know, but we were lucky. We never had too many wounded on our ship. We saw a ship pulling up, they had a lot of casualties, especially at Okinawa, because at Okinawa, we sent destroyers out way ahead of the fleet and the Kamikaze would attack them. We lost a lot of destroyers; I think we lost about sixty-three ships up there. All the old battleships that were sunk at Pearl Harbor, they'd resurrected them, they used to ring around and do all the firing, ring around the transports, because the transports, there were hundreds of them and, you know, you carry a lot of troops. When they go in, the first wave is really, they used to get hit about here, and then, it's tough. See, they made mistakes, especially in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. They had charts that were a hundred years old and they didn't know how deep the water was and these things would go in and the boats would hit a rock and they'd sink and these poor guys had all these combat packs on and all the weight on, they'd go right down... It's quite an operation to assemble all that stuff.

SH: You talked about the difficulty in getting the money and some supplies that you needed, but what about mail and food and things like that? How did you rate in the pecking order?

PG: Well, they knew where the ships were going to go, so, they would send the mail there and sometimes, the ship wouldn't go there, you know. I had my mother send me some salami. I'll never forget it. That thing was four months getting to me. Oh, boy, so, anyway, but that's what happened. The mail would get there if they possibly could get to you. They were very good about that. That was a big deal. In the Marine Corps, in boot camp, if you got mail you had to sing the *Marine Hymn*. They really heckled you, you know.

SH: You talked about the one brother who was in the Army. Where were your other brothers stationed?

PG: My oldest brother was in a weather squadron stationed at Hickam. He made three invasions with them. He landed at Makin, he landed at Saipan, and he landed at Okinawa. In fact, three of us were at Okinawa at the same time. We didn't know that.

SH: Oh, really?

PG: Yes. See, my brother, being a captain, he censored his own mail. So, when I came in there on the *Berrien*, into Pearl Harbor, he wrote my mother, told her that he saw me. Somebody in San Francisco opened up the mail, even though he had censored it, and they read that his brother, then they put two and two together, and said "He is telling us where the ship was." So, he got bawled out for that, given away movements of ships...then when the war was over he went home and then he went to school. He went to Tufts. The youngest one, he came home and he went to Northeastern and my brother next to me, he was in the Philippines when the war was over, and then, he came home. That was it, and like I said, nobody got a scratch, even though my brother was buried in a foxhole, my oldest one, he wrote my mother a big long tale that I said, "You know, what's the benefit of you selling her all this? She can't help you any." But I wouldn't tell her anything.

SH: Did you think about using your GI Bill benefits to go to college?

PG: Oh, yes. I always wanted to go to school because, you know, Latin School only had one course, college course, that was it. I was the only guy in my class who didn't go to college. I graduated with Leonard Bernstein [Editors Note: Famous Composer], he was in my class and Theodore White [Editors Note: Famous Author] was a couple of years ahead of me and a lot of famous people went there. So, anyway, when I went back in the Navy, when I was going to retire, I say, "I'm going back to school when I get out." At the time I was getting ready to get out, the Navy was looking to train their own engineers and they were looking for recent high school graduates. So, I went down to the Civil Service and asked them, "Is this open to anybody?" He says, "Why?" I say, "Well, you're looking for recent high school graduates, but I'm a high school graduate, but not recent." "No, you can take the exam if you wanted." So, I took the exam and I got picked. So, they sent me to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and at first, it was a cooperative engineering course, the first and last year was a scholarship and the middle years you paid for the three middle. So, I get over there and they said, "You don't need to take college algebra. You can start with calculus if you want to because according to your test," which was my first mistake. I should have taken college algebra. So, anyway, the mid-term grades, I get

three Fs and I say, "I'm ready to give up. This is too much." "No, just take your time and do it." So, anyway, I got four Ds and a C, and then, the next semester I did better, and so, I was taking nineteen credits, five credits of math, four for physics, four for chemistry, then descriptive geometry, I think, was three, and then, I had English, then I had twenty-six hours altogether because we had three labs. So, here I'm not even working. I got the GI Bill, \$160.00 month, and I didn't need it to pay the tuition, so, I went down to the VA and I told them, you know, I say, "I'm getting my tuition paid by the Navy Department and I'm getting \$160.00 from you for the same thing." He said, "Don't worry about it." Later on, they passed a law to change that. So, the first year we went to school full-time. The second year we worked at the navy yard half a day and half a day at school. We're still taking thirteen credits a half a day and that was still taking math and physics and chemistry. I'm taking those three subjects, so, it got it was just too much. I had three kids I was raising and it got to be too big a load and I got my index down too low. I get a little below 2.0, so, they say, "We're going to have to let you go." So, I left and I went to Queens College at night. I got a job with IBM and I went to Queens College at night, and then, the job moved to New Jersey. So, that's when I came to Rutgers and I lost a lot of credits. I lost about thirty-seven credits, because I didn't have good enough grades. So, when I started here, I went to the University College, and then, I finally finished, and then, Kean College, now a university, they had a program where you could get a masters degree and a teaching certificate. So, I went there and I got that. So, when I reached the age of sixty, IBM said I could retire with a pension. So, I say, "That's good." So, I went got a job teaching. So, the first year they sent [me to teach] eighth grade in East Brunswick. It was a disaster. I did everything wrong, you know, the first week if you don't get them squared away, you're through. Well, I found that out to my sorrow. So, came March of the following year after I started the principal says, "I'm going to have to let you go," you know, and all that such. He said, "The best thing you should do is resign, so [that] you don't have a black mark on your record." So, I said, "I'm not worried about my record. At this age, I said if you don't want me, you fire me and I'll draw unemployment." So, I drew unemployment all summer and I got a job teaching high school in St. John Vianney in Holmdel. So, I spent four years there and the priest didn't like me. I didn't like him either, so, he said "You know, you're sixth-five now you should retire." I said, "You gave me tenure, you have got to fire me." I said, "You can't fire me." So, this went on for about two months, back and forth, and I saw this, one of the teachers in charge of the union, I said, "I don't need this aggravation. He doesn't want me to hold on, I'll leave." So, I left. That summer Holt, Rinehart and Winston were advertising for editors to review some math books. So, I went over there for an interview and I said, "I only want to work three days a week because I don't want to ride the bus five days a week." So, he said, "Well, we can't you use you." So, three weeks later he called me back and he says, "I got another job, you want it, five days?" I said, "All right, I'll take it." So, what they did was they put programs into math books written for kids, for the first grade to the eighth grade, and we reviewed the programs [to] make sure they worked. So, the spring of that year, the following year, they said, "Well, the book is published now, we'll have to let you go." I said, "It's all right." So, that summer Kean had advertised in the paper looking for adjuncts. So, I went up there, I got the job five minutes after I was up there. So, they said, "We don't pay very much." I said, "I'm not worried about that." So, I spent eighteen years there. And this year they didn't send me a contract in August and because they revised the curriculum, but, you know, algebra is algebra, so, what we were teaching mostly was remedial math. I couldn't believe it, that one course was sixth grade arithmetic, percentages, fractions and decimals and another one was pre-algebra, and then, I tried

the pre-calculus, because it's a real college course. So, we were only allowed two courses to teach, and so, they didn't send me a contract this summer, so, I called up and I got the math secretary and she says, "We didn't send you a contract," so, I found out because they revised the curriculum and they decided they didn't want me. So, I knew the vice president for academic affairs, I know her very well, so, I called her up and she bucked me back to the head of the department and he called me. He apologized profusely because he said that I had open heart surgery this summer, and everything got screwed up and all that, so, I put in for retirement and unemployment also.

SH: Well, I'm glad you're free to sit here for the interview.

PG: But, you know, I said to him, I said, "You know, I was here eighteen years. At least you could have done was sent me something during the summer saying you weren't going to offer me a contract, which I could accept that, but here, I have to find out second hand from the math secretary," and he said, "Well, I'm sorry for this," and he gave me a big long song and dance. So, I sent an email to the union correspondent and she says, "They didn't give me one either," but, you know, I felt I should quit on my own, if I want to quit, you know.

SH: Just to go back a little bit and talk about World War II and your brothers all being involved and the fact that you all came home without a scratch. What was it like to come back; You were in the Pacific when the war in Europe ended, were you not?

PG: Yes.

SH: How soon did you find out, when did you really feel the war was already over and it was just a matter of time ...

PG: We knew that, you know, they brought Russia in at that time, you know, when the war in Europe was over and Russia had nothing to lose by coming in there and we knew that we had to invade Japan because they would never quit. So, we knew that just because it was over in Europe that it didn't mean too much to us, being in the Pacific, and so, the plans were to invade Japan and if they hadn't dropped the atomic bomb, we would have invaded it. But, you know, we had raids on Tokyo that were just as bad as that atomic bomb. We put six hundred B29s up and they just incinerated Tokyo, but they would never quit. The atomic bomb was the thing that made them quit. See, we built an airfield in Saipan in four months. They just took a mountain right out, leveled it off. I mean, amazing, how much construction you can do when money is no object and men is no object, you know. You get all the men you want and all the money you want, so, you go. You know, the war is what took us out of the Depression. That thing would have gone on forever, probably.

SH: What about when you went into Hokkaido? Did you see any of the devastation in Tokyo?

PG: No, I never got off. I never set foot in Japan until...I was on a ship based in Pearl Harbor, that we went over on during the Korean War, I was over there, but I never set foot in Japan before that. When they surrendered on the *Missouri* we were in San Francisco.

SH: Right, you were loading.

PG: Yes, we were loading troops up.

SH: Tell me about where you were when the Korean War broke out and what you were assigned to do?

PG: I was assigned, in 1949 I went to Great Lakes to train recruits and I was there from 1949, March of '49 until December '52, I was there, and then, I was assigned to the *Radford* with its base in Pearl Harbor. We had twelve destroyers there, and so, I got there right around Christmas, in 1952, and then, a few months later, the four of our ships, four out of the twelve ships, four of them were always over there in what they call WestPac, and so, I went over there. I made two trips over there while I was on that ship and when I left that ship the war was supposed to be over, I left that ship in June 1955, and then, I went back to school in Washington, and then, I was assigned to an East Coast destroyer. Went to the Mediterranean and I was over in the Mediterranean for about six months. Then, I came back and that summer they sent us down to Jacksonville to chase the *Forrestal*, and then, we were supposed to stay in Norfolk all summer and, I'll never forget it, they said we got to go down to, when the British and the French went into the Suez, they sent us out, nineteen destroyers and the *Coral Sea* and if Russia had come in, we were supposed to go off the top of Europe and attack Russia. We had atomic bombs on the carrier.

SH: Really?

PG: Yes, and Russia knew we were out there, but they didn't know where we were. We went around in circles, around the Azores, for a week, and then, finally Russia decided not to go in there. So, they sent us in, for Lisbon and what happened was it really fouled everything up in Norfolk. All the ships were gone and like my wife, she used to get an allotment from me, and then, I used to send, every two weeks I got paid, I used to send part of that to her. Well, she didn't get that either because no mail was allowed to leave, nothing coming in, and so, then we came back, and then, I went up to Washington and I said, "I got to have shore leave or otherwise I'll get a divorce." So, they sent me back to Great Lakes and I stayed there a year-and-a-half and I retired.

SH: Where did you meet your wife?

PG: In New York, at the World's Fair.

SH: In '39?

PG: Yes, her mother picked me up. Her mother was only nineteen when my wife was born, so, when my wife was sixteen and I was twenty, her mother was about thirty-five. They came to visit the ship when the World's Fair was going on, and so, that's when I met her. We didn't get married for ten years after that, though. [We] got married in 1949. We got married in St. Albans Naval Hospital by a Navy chaplain. That was a whole mix up, with religion, and everything else. So, I said the best way to do this, we'd get a chaplain to marry us. He was a

Methodist minister. I have three children. My oldest one is an Episcopal priest by the name of Goldberg, and my youngest one; I insisted that he go to college when he gets out of high school. He wanted to go in the Navy. So, I says, "You're going to college." So, he went to Virginia Tech and he was going to be a chemical engineer and I went down and tutored him in his first year in math and I say, "You better change your major, because you'll never make the math." So, he changed his major to English, and then, he finished the first year, the second year he went, they were on quarters, he went one quarter and said, "I'm going in the Navy." I say, "We paid for the next quarter," so, he went, came home in March and he went in the Navy. He spent four years in the Navy and he went back to school and he graduated in 1980, he went back in the Navy again and he retired. He got two masters degrees while he was in the Navy, and then, was studying for his PhD and he is teaching in, he loves Virginia down there, he's teaching in, I forget the name of that, River Community, some River Community College in Dublin, Virginia...

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

RG: This continues an interview with Philip I. Goldberg on Monday September 16, 2002.

SH: You were telling us about your children...

PG: Yes, I have three. I have, my oldest one is an Episcopal Priest. He has a parish down in Vero Beach, in Florida, and he's a graduate of St. John's University and the seminary, at that time the seminary was on the grounds of the University of Pennsylvania. My daughter, Linda Marie, lives with me, she's a hairdresser and my wife died on April 11th and she's buried in Arlington National Cemetery. It's ironic because my name is on the gravestone and here I am.

SH: Can you explain how that works?

PG: Well, if you retire from the service with twenty years of service or more or you have a Medal of Honor, which I don't have, you're eligible to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. So, when my wife died, I brought all my discharges to the funeral home and the funeral director made all the arrangements. He faxed all my discharges down to the cemetery and they set a date. She died on April 11th and they said, "She'll be buried on May 1st." So, they kept her at the funeral home 'til May 1st then they drove her down in a hearse, and we drove down and they had quite a ceremony.

SH: You will be able to be buried there as well?

PG: It's my grave. We both go in the same grave, that's the way it works and at the same time they were burying a Marine general and they had a band, and drum corps and the whole bit, a firing squad. The wife doesn't get all that stuff, but she did have six sailors carry her, carried the casket from the hearse over to the grave, and my son did the burial ceremony, and we sat in chairs just like you see in the movies, but she doesn't get a flag. I'll get a flag, but she doesn't get that.

SH: I wanted to ask about how the Vietnam War and all of that impacted someone like yourself who was at that point working, but not in the military? You had sons that were eligible?

PG: Yes. Well, my oldest son was, being a student, he was exempt from the draft, so, he didn't go to the Vietnam War. My youngest one, he was in actually, the thing was over in 1975, so, he was in the service at that time, but, see, he got the benefits from that Vietnam War to go to school. But as far as I was concerned I thought when they had that Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, I thought that wasn't true because, but Lyndon Johnson got into the war and he couldn't figure out how to get out of it, but I never approved of it.

SH: What was your favorite type of ship to serve on?

PG: Well, the *Radford* was a destroyer; I thought that was the happiest ship I was on. In fact I'm going to a reunion there October 3rd 'til 6th in St. Louis. See, four of the ships I was on have reunions, but I don't go to the *Brooklyn* anymore because most of the people I want to see are no longer here, because when I went on that ship, I was nineteen years old and a lot of people there were much older than me, not much, but older and now, if they're still alive, they'd be in their nineties. So, most of the people I want to see aren't there, so, I don't go to that one. I want to tell you a good story about shipmates. I belong to the Naval Memorial in Washington, DC and they have records of all the people who want to be in there, they have a website and you can punch in a person's name once you get on the website and a picture will come up, if they had their picture taken. So, I was playing with the computer one day and I looked up this guy and I got this guy's picture who was on, the pilot, with me and I hadn't seen him since 1943. So, I wrote to the Memorial and asked them if this person was still alive, and they said, "Write him a letter and send it to us and we'll forward it to him." So, they forwarded the letter to him and the next I know I got a phone call from him. I hadn't seen him in fifty-nine years, and I knew his wife, and this other guy was on the ship, they married sisters and he died last year. He's buried up in Fort Rosencrans, in San Diego. Anyway, he said he's coming to New York in August to a fiftieth anniversary for his wife's brother, and so, they came and I met them. We went out to lunch, and then, they wanted to go to St. Patrick's Cathedral, so, we went in there and we were together for about three or four hours, and then, they went back to Queens and I went home. I just called him up the other day to see how he was. He lives in California, about a hundred miles east of Sacramento. See, the relationship you make in the service, they're for life. My kids, two of my kids' godfathers are Navy men and, in fact, one of them named one of his daughters after my daughter, same name, but it's really something, and then, my daughter couldn't get over the fact that he called after all these years.

SH: Where was your family living, where were they all home-ported? Where did your kids go to school?

PG: Well, my oldest one started school at Bolling Field in the kindergarten, no, no, in kindergarten in Hawaii. That's right. Then, I got transferred to, I went to school in Washington four times, the Gunner's Mate School, they call it the "College of Hydraulic Knowledge", but anyway, periodically, you have to go there to keep up with all the weapons and everything. So, he went to kindergarten in Honolulu, and then, I was transferred to Washington, so, then he went to first grade in Bolling Field, in Washington. (I put him in there and I say he's coming up in

twenty weeks; I'm only here for twenty weeks of school.) It was a permanent change of station. We had an apartment and everything else and she says, "How come?" I said, "Well, I have to get transferred." So, I was transferred to the *Leary* in Norfolk. So, he went to the second grade in Norfolk, and then, I was transferred to Great Lakes. He went to the third grade in Great Lakes, and then, that's when I retired, so, we came home, and he went to the fourth grade in New York. My daughter had never been in school either at that time, so, when I got to come home to New York, she went in the first grade and the youngest one went in the kindergarten and I went to Pratt Institute. We all started school on the same day. Then, we lived in New York for four years and I was transferred to New Jersey for IBM, so, he went to the eighth grade at which is now Old Bridge High School, but used to be Madison High School. So, they all graduated from Madison High School, and then, he went to St. John's University and my daughter went to hair dressing school, she's a hair dresser, and the youngest one he went to Virginia Tech.

RG: I was just wondering how you thought the Korean War compared to World War II?

PG: The Korean War was the greatest peace time training the Navy ever had... because nobody ever attacked us, at least not on my ship. There may have been some incidents, but there were no naval engagements with Korea. We used to fire at, you know, bombard the beach sometimes, but nobody ever fired back at us. What we used to do is we'd get in close and draw fire a little bit from them, nothing ever seems to come close to us, and then, the battleships would shoot over our heads. I never set foot in Korea. We used to go up, what they call "on the line," we used to go up for thirty-five days, all the destroyers would go with the battleship and I don't think we ever operated with any carriers... Did you see the "Bridges of Toko-Ri"; they used to take off from Japan, and come home at night, you know, the Air Force. Oh, yes.

SH: Any other questions?

RG: Okinawa and Iwo Jima were both pretty experiences and I was just wondering how they, if they really were what you expected going into them, with your training, were you prepared for the real combat experience that you had there?

PG: Say that again.

RG: I was wondering if you feel that your training really prepared you for Okinawa and Iwo Jima and the other experiences you had with battles?

PG: Yes.

RG: Do you think your training prepared you with what you expected?

PG: Oh, yes. Well, you know, we knew what was going to happen because we were trained. The Navy trained a lot before they ever went to these things like we trained for Iwo Jima, at Saipan. We'd put the boats out, they would go out, and then, circle around and make mock invasions. Yes, they always train. The Navy always trains for everything. They're constantly training. They never sit, the only time they sit next to the dock is, if when they went for overhaul or in the Navy Yard, or something like that, but, otherwise, they're constantly training. When I

was in Pearl Harbor we used to go out every morning and come back every night. We practiced with submarines. The submarines would go out, we'd run on them, and they'd send up a flare that we did this and did that, and we'd throw hand grenades in the water, not real ones, they were smoke grenades or something. They're always training. They have fire drills, abandon ship drills, all the time. You have to keep them alert and trained, otherwise, you know, it's useless. So, they're constantly training. They just fired the skipper of the *Kitty Hawk* because he didn't keep the ship up to snuff, training and everything. I get the *Navy Times* every week and the crew was going ashore and getting in all kinds of trouble. See, they're based in Japan and, you know, "the ugly American." Americans think everybody is stupid because they don't speak English and they look down on foreigners, some of them. They have their biases. They were brought up on it, and so, it's hard to get away from it. When I was training recruits, this is in 1952, I picked a black kid to be my acting chief petty officer. See, every recruit company has an acting chief petty officer. You pick one of the recruits. I picked this kid because he had been in college for three years. He was big and he would intimidate them and that's what you needed, and so, I got all kinds of flak from some of these other chiefs. "What are you doing, picking this guy?" "None of your business, I picked him because I think he's the best. I don't care what color he is, that's his business."

SH: Are there other incidents with the integration of the troops?

PG: Oh, yes. Well, when Harry Truman integrated the Armed Forces in 1948, I was on the *Saipan* and they gave me this kid that says, "You got to berth this kid." I said, "He's not one of my rate," you know. Well, put him up. I said, "all right." So, I say, "Put him in a bunk." So, this kid from Boston says "You're not sleeping next to me." I said, "I don't care where you sleep. He's sleeping there, you can do what you want." Then I had a black kid working for me and I had a Mexican on the destroyer and this black kid was picking on the Mexican. I stopped that, and then, this guy was always hollering race every time, so, I said to him, "Let's get rid of this guy." He says, "How can we do that?" I say, "Make a request to send him to school in Washington. When he gets there, they'll bust him." He was just a reverse racist, you know, he hated everybody, and then, we had a second class bosin's mate on there, who intimidated the chief bosin's mate, and he was afraid of him, but, you know, I never had any trouble with him and I treated him as equals. They worked for me. They're just as good as anybody else. See, the Navy was, they were very biased. The Navy years ago used to be anti-Semitic, too. I don't know, I never noticed it that much, but I read a thing by Lehman who used to be Secretary of the Navy and he said it was in the '30s.

SH: Did you, personally, ever experience anti-Semitism?

PG: No. I had a fight with (Hyatt?). Nobody bothered me too much because I was loud and I'd fight. When they recognized Israel in 1948, just before that, this guy, we were in the mess on a carrier, big table about twenty people sitting there with all kinds of food on the table and everything else. This guy made a remark I thought was anti-Semitic, I jumped right off the table after him, the stuff was going everywhere, and so, the chief pharmacist mate grabbed my wrist, like this and he says "Let me take your pulse." He laughed. I said. So, then this guy says, "I didn't mean anything." I say, "You said it. Whether you meant it or not you said it and there was no reason for you to say that. So, our friendship is over." But, I never had too much trouble

with that. They used to laugh, you know, my wife, was down at a department store in Waukegan one day...buying something and she signed her name on a credit slip and the guy said, "Oh, I never saw you at the synagogue." She says, "I don't go to the synagogue. My husband may, but I'm not Jewish." Oh, we have those here... You know, some people have a chip on their shoulder, waiting for somebody to say something, but it never bothered me that way. If they don't like me, that's it too bad.

SH: Thank you. Anything else?

SH: Well, then I'll ask you, Mr. Goldberg, are there any questions we forgot to ask? You said that your son had helped you come up with a list of things that you should talk about, can you think of anything?

PG: I think I got them all...

SH: Did we cover the list pretty well?

PG: I think I did. Yes, I think so, yes.

SH: Well, I want to thank you very much for taking time and for coming down, and then, putting on this record.

PG: Okay. Fine. Thank you.

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

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