

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT A. GREACEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEWED CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Mr. Greacen, I would like to thank you for letting us come to your home, and do an interview here, and be a part of our project. First of all, I would like you to ask you where you were born and if you could then tell us about your father, mother, and grandparents.

Robert Greacen: I was born in Pasadena, California, June 14, 1919. My father was a regular Army officer, and it was just after World War I, and he was being reassigned to Rutgers College in New Brunswick, to be the Professor of Military Science and Tactics. Rutgers was a land grant college and all freshman and sophomores were in the ROTC. Then, two years advanced for certain ones after that. ... My mother stayed in California with her mother and father, until I came along, with my sister, and we moved three or four months after I was born to New Brunswick.

SH: Where was your father born?

RG: New York City.

SH: How did he become a regular Army officer?

RG: He always wanted to be an Army officer and he couldn't get an appointment to West Point, because of his father's politics; he was a Republican in a Democrat district. But, he went to college, studying civil engineering and was working as a surveyor. He heard about examinations you could take for a direct commission. He studied [and] was accepted in the regular Army in 1908.

SH: Where had he gone to study?

RG: Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts.

SH: Did he have any other siblings that were part of the armed forces?

RG: No. He had four brothers and a sister. ... Two of his brothers were lawyers, one was a civil engineer.

SH: Where was your mother born?

RG: My mother was born in Missouri, and her parents moved to California when she was a young girl, and she went away to schools, but, my mom and father met at a house party, which Army people used to have. ... My father was stationed in Fort Niagara in New York, near Buffalo, and my mother was invited to a house party up there over the holidays. They met, then, my father went off to the Philippines for three years, and they were more or less engaged, and they were married in 1912, ... [when he] came back.

SH: Why was your mother's family in Missouri?

RG: Well, her grandfather had migrated there, I don't know, in the 1830s or '40s. ... They were very successful, prominent farmers, and her great-grandfather founded of the first bank in the county where they lived. They had thirteen children, they didn't all survive to maturity, but, each of the children, my grandmother being the youngest, ... received a farm where they could make their livings, I guess they did very well, and moved to California.

SH: Which part of Missouri?

RG: Near Kansas City, a little town of Platte City.

SH: When did they move to California and what was the reason for that?

RG: He, more or less, retired and he wanted to sell the farm and get out from under that. My grandfather had also been a very successful, early photographer. They traveled all around a lot. He took pictures and he made a good living from his photography. He supplied photographs to a lot of writers and people who wrote of travels.

SH: What was the family name?

RG: Mason.

SH: Mason.

RG: My mother was Emily Mason.

SH: Where did your mother study?

RG: Well, she went to schools in France as a young girl.

SH: That is amazing.

RG: She and her sister were schooled there for three years, the third time they were there. ... Then, she went to Converse College in South Carolina, Spartanburg, South Carolina. She didn't graduate.

SH: Was that uncommon for women in that generation to go to school?

RG: Not many went to college. It was a girls' school.

SSH: She went to France, though?

RG: They had traveled over there and liked it. Then, they went to school there.

SH: Then the whole family had traveled to Europe at that point.

RG: My mother was fluent in French.

SH: Were they just traveling to see the world or did your grandfather have business there?

RG: No. They just traveled for pleasure.

SH: How did your mother end up in Buffalo, from Converse, South Carolina?

RG: She was invited to a house party up there by some friend they had, who was a general in the Army.

SH: Your mother's family was not living in Buffalo?

RG: No, but, they were family friends ...

SH: I am just curious how your mother went from California to France, to Converse, to Buffalo.

RG: She moved around; they traveled.

SH: What did your father do in the Philippines?

RG: Since he was a civil engineer, he was an infantry officer, and almost all young officers were put on topographical surveying. He spent a lot of the time doing that up in the mountains, surveying all over the place. He was stationed for awhile at ... Baguio, which was a summer capital, and he was at Fort McKinley, and he got around to a lot of different islands.

Shaun Illingworth: Did your father do any civil engineering work for the Army in the United States?

RG: No. He was strictly an infantry officer.

SH: What orders did he have during the war?

RG: Well, during World War I, he didn't get overseas. He was just about to go in the war. He was a battalion commander in, I think it was, the First Army, ... before the war. You know, the Army was very small in those days. You had a [certain] regiment that you were in. ... Even though he went to the Philippines for a few years, he still was in his Twelfth Infantry Regiment. When my mother and father were married, they were stationed in Monterey, California, which was as nice a place as you could ever live. They loved it there. They were in Hawaii, stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, at the time of the outbreak. By that time, we went in [in] 1917, then, he came back and traveled the United States, had different parts of training, and was just about ready to move to France, and [then], the war ended.

SH: Your mother was able to follow him?

RG: She followed him [to] several places. They were in Ohio, they were somewhere in the State of Washington.

SH: Now, was your sister older or younger?

RG: She was five-and-a-half years older. She also did some graduate work at Rutgers.

SH: Was she also born in California?

RG: Same place. I was born in a hospital. She was born in my grandparent's home, in Sierra Madre.

SH: Is your sister still living?

RG: No, she died [in] about 1982, of cancer.

SH: After you were born and you moved to Rutgers, how long did your father serve?

RG: He'd been there since before I was born, the year before I was born. He was there [for] four years, which was the standard thing, and then, he was ordered to stay there for another four years. He was there [for] eight years. ... Then, he was retired from the Army, during the Coolidge Administration, and money was very tight. ... They slashed the budget from the Army, and he had an early retirement. He worked odd jobs, and then, he studied law at night, and then, took the bar.

SH: Did he do his studying here in New Jersey?

RG: Newark. He was at Newark Law School, which is now a part of Rutgers. It was not connected to Rutgers at that time.

SH: Did the family home remain in New Brunswick?

RG: Yeah, he commuted by train.

SH: After he was admitted to the bar, did he continue to live in New Brunswick?

RG: Yes. We lived in New Brunswick, College Avenue.

SH: So, you grew up right on New Brunswick.

RG: I grew up at 190 College Avenue, went to high school, I went to Rutgers Prep for awhile, and then, I graduated from New Brunswick High School and went to Rutgers.

SH: Why did you switch from the prep school to the high school?

RG: Well, I wasn't a very good student and money was very tight.

SH: Where did you attend elementary school?

RG: I went to Rutgers Elementary School from first grade through eighth, then, two years at the prep school.

SH: Did you have any favorite subjects or athletics in elementary and high school?

RG: Well, I liked history courses. I didn't like math. At Rutgers Prep, I played football [and] swimming.

SH: Did your sister also go to Rutgers Prep?

RG: She went to the same elementary school I went to, and then, the upper school was just boys. ... She went to the (Annabelle?) School, which was a private school in New Brunswick. It was very small. I think she was in the first class. It had been a school years before, it closed, and then, they reopened it, and she was in the first class. Then, she went to Vassar, from there.

SH: What did your mother do to entertain herself? Did she work outside [of] the home?

RG: No. She was ...

SH: ... Part of the faculty wives?

RG: There were faculty affairs, yes, there were, and she had a lot of things to do. She was active in church and active in a number of things.

SH: I understand that you went to church on College Avenue.

RG: Well, I was a little boy [when] it was at the corner of George and Albany, and then, they tore it down and built the one on College Avenue.

SH: While growing up, your sister was that much ahead of you. Did you ever have any teachers say, "Why aren't you like ... " [laughter]

RG: Oh, I probably did. We had some of the same teachers. Yeah, we did, in the elementary grades.

SH: Growing up at Rutgers, did you know the president of the University?

RG: Well, when I was a little boy, it was Dr. William H. S. Demarest. He was the president and we knew him very well. He went to our church, and then, he stepped down and remained as president of the seminary. ... It was Dr. Thomas, [who] was there for many years, and then, Dr. Robert C. Clothier was the president. The President's House, at that [time], well, there was no

President's House. ... The University rented the gray, stucco house on College Avenue, just next to the library. It's still there, gray stucco with the red tile roof.

SH: That's right.

RG: That was the President's House, and that's how their son and I became very good friends, and then, I think it was around 1939 or so that they bought the Nichols House across the river, which is now the President's House. They put the President over there, and then, the house that they had lived in became part of the Rutgers Elementary School.

SH: Really?

RG: Yeah. See, all of Rutgers Prep is now at the corner College Avenue and Hamilton Street. The building is still there and the dormitories were where the library is. They had these individual houses, there were four of them, those were the library's. ... They had a gym, which they tore down, right down at the end of Huntington Street, where that interchange is. The prep school gym was there. ... The place was about to fold up, and then, people got together to raise money and to relocate it to where they are now.

SH: Do you remember any of your childhood friends?

RG: Well, a lot of people were local friends. Going to a private school like I went to, everybody in the neighborhood went there. You'd walk to school together, just like you were in public school. You know, the college did not own everything up there. There were ... private homes where the Commons is. They were all private houses along College Avenue. ... The athletic field was in the back part of that lot, Nelson Field, and where the gymnasium is, the old gym, that was a brand new gym. That was built when I was a teenager.

SH: Really? Therefore, it was the new gym to you. [laughter]

RG: That was a new gym. It was a beautiful gym for a college of 1,200. It was wonderful.

SH: How did the Depression affect your father?

RG: They cut back. They pushed a lot of people out. ... I think ... my father was retired by that time, but, I remember stories that they would skip a month's pay.

SH: Really?

RG: They were getting eleven months pay, instead of twelve.

SI: During the Depression, was your father involved in or did he comment on the Bonus Army?

RG: Well, I ... [remember] hearing about it in the newspapers. People wanted a bonus, for being in the war. I don't think there'd ever been a promise of any bonus, that I know of, because everybody was hard up and they wanted some money.

SH: Your father, being in the military, was he retired?

RG: He retired in 1926.

SH: Therefore, he would already have finished his law degree by that time.

RG: No, no. He just started after that. Well, he didn't go right into law. He was working for a brokerage house in New Brunswick. At that age, I wasn't sure just what he did. I don't know whether it was stocks and bonds or insurance. ...

SH: Was it just automatic that you would attend Rutgers?

RG: Well, it wasn't automatic. I wanted to, growing up around there. ... I couldn't afford to go anywhere else. We didn't have enough money for that.

SH: Did you apply to any other schools?

RG: No, no.

SH: What was your major?

RG: Well, I thought I'd be like my sister. My sister majored in geology and that's what I wanted to do. So, I was what they called a math and natural science major, but, the math and the chemistry, I knew physics would come along nicely, that was not my area. So, I changed to business administration, and then, I dropped out, after two years, when my father died, and worked a year at Johnson & Johnson, and figured out how I could go back for a year. So, I went back for a year, and then, again, I left after that year. I left when I went into the service, in 1941. When I went back after the war, I thought of going to law school. ... I switched to political science [and] finished with that.

SH: Were you involved in athletics at the University?

RG: Well, I played lacrosse in my freshman year. I tried out for [the] swimming team, but, I didn't make it.

SI: Did you enjoy any of the sporting events while at school?

RG: Oh, sure. Back in those days, when you paid your tuition, you got a book of tickets, one through one hundred. They were for every home game, for all sports. Cost of it was worth nine dollars, every home game they had, basketball, swimming, wrestling, everything.

SI: Did you have any favorite sports?

RG: ... I liked football and basketball. I have a son who became a big time basketball player at Rutgers.

SI: You were at Rutgers in 1938. Did you see the famous Rutgers versus Princeton game?

RG: Yes. It was one of the biggest events of my life. Yeah, that was great, first time beating Princeton, since the original game. I enjoyed that game, really, and, during that game, really, I think back now, there were some of the original players of that game there.

SH: Really?

RG: Yeah. I think there were three or so, from 1869.

SH: Can you remember any of the events that happened on that famous day?

RG: Well, all the fraternities were decorated far beyond anything they had ever had before. There were parades and pep rallies every night for the last three or four nights. It was a very exciting occasion.

SH: Were you involved in a fraternity at that point?

RG: I was a Phi Gamma Delta, which my father had been at Worchester Tech.

SH: Really?

RG: Yea, and I have a son who's ... one at Denison.

SH: What was your initiation like in those years?

RG: We had "Hell Week," a whole week of fraternity, in burlap underwear, no sleep. It was fun.

SI: Where was the fraternity house? Did they have a house?

RG: They had a house. It was burned down during the war. ... There weren't many people in school, so, there was a financial burden to try carry a house. So, they rented it to the SAMs. ... At least with the rent coming in, they could hold on to it. Then, the war was over and they were ... getting ready to try to open the house again. SAMs had a party there, and they had a girl in the house, which was forbidden, and they had liquor. They had a fire and the girl was killed. The house burned down and it was underinsured. The fraternity had no money. Then, (Sy Johnson?), who was the head businessman at Rutgers, he was hard-hearted and he wanted his way. He wanted his way and he squeezed them into selling the house to the University, for far less than it was worth. They were able to rent a house after the war, ... [when] they came back.

SH: What was your viewpoint on mandatory chapel?

RG: You had to go to half your Sunday chapels, then, you had a weekly chapel, freshman [on] Monday, sophomores, it's Tuesday at noon, for about fifteen minutes. That was like an assembly. You might have a prayer in the beginning, but, it was where you got all your information. The Sunday chapels were [long]. Of course, everybody complained about them, but, they had fine speakers they brought in. I remember a Jewish rabbi who would come every year, who was one of the top ones from New York. He was a great speaker. A socialist, Norman Thomas, a frequent speaker. I can't think of any, well, a lot of people. So, they were very worthwhile. ...

SH: Was it the chapel where they had those wonderful classical music programs?

RG: I think that was up in the gym. They had chairs and a stage in the gym. ... They had the concert series there. It was a wonderful concert series.

SH: I heard one of the gentlemen from Rutgers ...

RG: Oh, yes. They were in the old gym. It was new then.

SH: The acoustics were better there.

RG: They were fine.

SI: I heard from a Rutgers gentleman that they would have class dinners. Did you have class dinners while you were in school for special events, like graduation?

RG: Oh, they were convocations for the whole school.

SI: Really?

RG: ... Maybe you were talking about a fraternity or something. No, they had these convocations for the community. I remember when Wendell Wilkie ran for president in 1940, a couple years before he became a hot candidate. He was a great speaker. He was there. Everybody had to go. They were frequent ... Classes were [usually] canceled. Then, ... they'd move the morning schedule to the afternoon and [have] half-hour classes, so everybody could come and hear whoever the speaker was. We had them frequently, maybe two or three times a school year; ... important people would come.

SH: Do you remember the convocation for the anniversary of the constitution during your time?

RG: ... You mean like in 1976?

SH: No, I can't remember what it was, but, I remember ...

RG: Oh, it seems ... we had some special thing going on in 1966, the two hundred years of the founding of the University, but, I don't remember what they were. They had special things going on, but, I didn't go up to any of them.

SI: I think what you were thinking about was in 1941.

SH: Really?

RG: In '41, the war was going on. I don't remember anything particularly going on in 1941.

SH: I thought there was a constitutional event at the University.

RG: There was a constitutional convention for the State of New Jersey's constitution in the summer of 1946. I started back to school in the summer session, and then, the school year, I graduated in '47, that summer of '46, [when] the constitutional convention was going on, because the state needed a new constitution. The other one was rather archaic. That was '46, while I was there.

SI: While you were attending Rutgers, where did you live?

RG: Well, I lived at my mother's house, 190 College Avenue. I was married and my wife and I, both, took over the third floor. [While] we were there, she went to work at the telephone company. We had a little girl that I would take care of in the afternoon. When we took her to nursery school, down on Union Street, every morning, "Push her down there." My wife would go on downtown to the telephone company and drop her off and I'd go to my first class.

SH: Was this after the war?

RG: '46.

SI: Where did you reside in 1937?

RG: At home.

SH: Did your mother rent out any of the rooms?

RG: She did during the war. Well, she did after my father passed away. She needed to make ends meet, so, she rented a couple of rooms to students. She thought that was the best deal. She had the summers to herself, and they were out during the school [day], and so, she did that for several years.

SH: Did you ever get to know any of the students that lived at your house?

RG: Oh, maybe a little bit, but, she did all during the war, when I wasn't there. I was away the whole time during the war.

SH: Upon your completion of two years of ROTC, did you then decide to join the Army?

RG: No. I didn't get back to school, so, I couldn't get in the advanced [class]. ... I was the one who wanted ... to go in the service anyway. I took the civilian pilot training that was offered at Rutgers, with the CAA, and then, I knew that's what I was going to do. So, I applied for the Army Air Force, which it was in those days, [and] the Naval Air Corps, both of them. The Army came through first, so, that was that.

SH: Where did you first report?

RG: Parks Air College in East St. Louis, Illinois, a civilian run school, but, I was enlisted. I was in and they had a contract for two-and-a-half months. I went to San Angelo, Texas, for basic [training], then, down to Houston for advanced. I graduated [on] April 1942.

SI: What initially attracted you to the Air Force?

RG: Well, ... I was always very attracted to it. That's what I wanted to do.

SI: Had you ever gone to airports, air shows, or other aviation related events as a child?

RG: Oh, I used to go to Hadley Airport, over in South Plainfield. That's where I did my flying with these two programs [that] I got through Rutgers. Did one in the summer of 1940, the other one was the second semester of '41.

SH: The first two years that you were at Rutgers in '35, '39 and '40 ...

RG: From '37 to '39.

SH: '37 to '39. [laughter] Was there any discussion of the Lend Lease Program and the events in Europe?

RG: Oh, sure. It was all sure big news in the papers everyday, no TV then, newspapers and radio.

SH: We talked about political affiliation ...

RG: Oh, we hoped [that] the war was going ... We knew we were going to be in it.

SH: Therefore, you were well informed of the events taking place overseas.

RG: Yeah, sure.

SH: We have talked to other veterans, and they informed us that they were totally unaware and surprised by the war.

RG: Oh, really? That is surprising, [that] they were uninformed.

SH: We get two totally different ...

RG: Really? That's strange.

SI: I have researched old issues of the *Targum* and read that they tried to bring in refugees from the war. The refugees, from, say, Poland and France, would stay with professors and others. Do you remember reading about this?

RG: I'm not sure about it. Well, I knew [that], before the war, there were refugees. But, it wasn't what it seemed like. ... They were all swarms of people, but people who had the money were getting out real fast and coming over here.

SH: We have also read that there were certain professors who would bring students from universities they were involved with in Europe. Were there any other foreign students, in any of your classes at that point?

RG: If there were, they were very few and far between.

SH: Really? Were there any exchange students?

RG: Oh, I remember Hanz Hyman, Jr. His father was a, I think, he was a, faculty member. He's just an isolated case.

SH: What did he teach?

RG: I don't know, probably economics.

SH: Who was your favorite professor, during your first two years?

RG: Oh, I just thought that Dr. Henry Van Mater, in the chemistry department, ... was just a wonderful person, and I can think of more if ... I know, when I went back after the war, there was a Dr. (Ethan?) [Lewis] Ellis, who taught political science, in the history department. He was wonderful, just great.

SH: When you left to finish your training in Texas, where did you go from there?

RG: Texas, Texas, and Texas. [laughter] No, when I graduated from Ellington Field, I went to a bombing school. [I] was a chauffeur for the fellers that were training at the bomb-site. So, they flew these practice missions, two or three everyday, out over the desert, not desert like the Sahara, but scrub mesquite. Fine, I was at Midland, Texas, for a year and a half. Then, I was in Big Spring for a while, doing the same thing. Then I got into the four engine B-17, [became] an

instructor and then the B-29s, and I went over a B-29 airplane commander. The war was getting close to being over, by the time I got over there.

SH: Really?

RG: Yeah.

SH: You were done and so early. [laughter]

RG: Yeah, I did.

SH: Were you already acquainted with Mrs. Greacen before the training?

RG: Yup. She was the Class of '43 at Douglass, then NJC. Met in May of '41.

SH: How did you meet her?

RG: Actually, I had gotten a date ... [Mr. Greacen and Sandra speak briefly about an occurrence in the room] We met over at ... Gibbons Campus. ... It was a military ball weekend and I wasn't going to the military ball. I had met a friend of mine from the fraternity house and he said, "Let's get you a date and we'll do something else tonight." So, I went over in the afternoon, met a girl that I was going to have a date with. Went over to get her, there was another girl [instead]. It was Barbara, my wife. I was always so thankful for that.

SH: [laughter] Did you ever meet the other woman?

RG: I don't think I ever saw her again. But something happened. She wasn't there, [but] Barbara was there. So.

SH: What did Barbara major in?

RG: She majored in art and home economics. Her father was a commercial artist, and successful, and he always thought that she would be [an artist], however, that talent skipped over a generation. One of my sons does exactly what his grandfather did, the same kind of thing.

SH: What part of New Jersey was she from?

RG: Rutherford, Bergen County. Rutherford High School, NJC.

SH: Did you marry before you finished your Texas, Texas, Texas?

RG: No, we were married during the war. I was in Texas and I was a first lieutenant. June of '43, [I] came back up [and] married in Rutherford. [I] took her back to Texas with me, for a year. And we had our little girl, in about a year, and then I started getting ready to go overseas. So, she went back to stay with her mother, 'til the war was over.

SH: How did she like Texas?

RG: Oh, she loved it. She was the adventurous type. She would like it anywhere.

SI: I have heard talk about how the early training was not very intense. It was just used to get your feet wet with the new types of aircraft. What was your impression of training?

RG: It wasn't like that at all.

SI: Really?

RG: No. They had ... the flying cadet program, during the war ... you'd go to pre-flight, and you'd take courses. Then, they'd test you out, to see if you could do spinning tests and things like that. A lot of ground school and other things ... but there was none of that, when I went. You enlisted and you went right to flying school, and it was very well run, very well regimented. You flew in the mornings, [then] you went to ground school in the afternoon one week. Then the next week would be reversed. You had periods, you took off on the hour, [then] you landed fifteen minutes later. Bing, bing, bing, bing. Everything well-organized, well run. Then you flew about sixty hours in primary. It was a wash out, about half of you made it. And then after that, you were in the second two phases, you were not very likely to wash out.

SI: Were your instructors civilian or military?

RG: In primary there were civilian instructors. In the basic and advanced they were all military.

SI: Would you say they were very experienced?

RG: Sure. There were some younger ones, but they were good. They had schools they had to go to, to learn the Army method of teaching flying.

SH: I understand that some of the aircraft, used during training, were fairly new at that time. Was that true in your case?

RG: Well, the primary trainers, were primary trainers. They were ... I don't know how new they were, but they were being made.

SI: You were an instructor later on, at similar bases. Did you see any positive progression in how flight was being instructed?

RG: I really, I can't answer your question, because I didn't go through flying school again. If I had gone back two years later and gone through the same program, [then] maybe I would have noticed it, changes in instruction. But, I didn't do that, nobody did. So.

SH: What happened to the men, who washed out during primary training?

RG: Early in the war, they had an option, they could get an honorable discharge and then go home. But, we had a draft going on and ... they would probably be drafted anyway. ... They could go try for a bombardier school, or navigator school, or some of the other things, there were options.

SH: Were there any people, associated with Rutgers, in these flight schools that you were aware of?

RG: Oh, there were a lot of them, lots and lots of them. But, I ran into some. There was one other Rutgers man in my class, in primary. His name was Lou (Nangeroni?), Class of '42. He's from Bound Brook. I knew his brother better than I knew him, but he was not there. But, when I got to advanced flying school, at Ellington Field, one of the brand new instructors there was a feller named Vic Aubrey, who was a fraternity brother from Rutgers, and I knew him. You'd bump into people all the time.

SH: What did you do for entertainment outside of the base?

RG: Go to the movies, go to town, get a meal and some beers. They had some live shows, down in the theater. Upstairs, a nice officers' club, you could play cards, drink beer, whatever you wanted to do.

SI: Was there any USO?

RG: Oh, there might have been when I was at Big Spring. We saw ... the Bob Hope Show come through Big Spring, a very brief version of the later big shows. They had an afternoon in the hanger, and Jerry Colonna and all that. I saw the Bob Hope Show a year later at Roswell, New Mexico and they had a broadcast from there. There was ... a weekly radio show, that was much bigger and had much more going on. It was a big event, a big party going on at the officers' club afterward, and they were all there.

SH: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

RG: It was Sunday morning and we had our graduation party, for primary flying school, the night before. ... My dear Barbara came out by train for it, and I had just put her on the train Sunday morning to get back to school, and I was going over to my instructor's house. He invited these other students, there were three of us, to come over and have lunch or something. ... He picked us up in front of the station, in St. Louis. He said, "By the way, the Japs just bombed Pearl Harbor," and by the next day war had been declared. We knew it was here.

SH: Did it change or speed up any of your training?

RG: Yes, it did. They ... I think, they cut a week off of my basic flying. I think, eventually, they cut either a week, or two, off each of the three stages. ... We probably would have graduated about May 15th, and [instead], we graduated at the end of April, April 29th. So, we shortened a

couple of weeks, and other class ... with all three steps, probably lost three weeks off the full program.

SH: Where did you go after completing flight school?

RG: Midland, Texas, that was the bombing school. Big Spring, was another one, and then I went to Roswell, New Mexico, for B-17 and later B-29 transition.

SH: People talk about close calls, or funny incidents, that they witnessed during flight. What were some of the more memorable incidents that occurred during your training?

RG: Well, we did an awful lot of flying at night, and out at these targets we were flying around ... you had to be alert. I know, one night you'd see all the lights from the airplanes, and you were on the alert all the time. I remember one time, we were at high altitude, must have been about 15,000 feet, circled the target, and I remember the first time I'd ever been flying, and I saw a shooting star go by. I went, "God." It really shook me up. Well, we had some crashes. We had some fatalities every now and then. [I] got more experience at flying. We did lots of flying.

SI: What was the range of some of the flights you piloted?

RG: Well, in these training flights were bombardiers, each flight lasted about an hour and a half. So, you were to fly to the target area, which was about thirty or forty minutes from base, so we'd fly three of those a night.

SH: Did you see how quickly the different training camps were being constructed?

RG: Well, they built them pretty quickly, because the ones built just before the war were these two story barracks, with asbestos, cement, shingles on the side, an A-shaped roof. ... The ones they built later on, were just wooden frames with black tar paper and nails holding them, and that was it, no siding, or anything over them. Inside ... walls separating rooms only went up half, maybe about six feet. Your only privacy was, about six feet down. They threw together these bases very quickly.

SH: Do you have any other memories of living in Texas and training in New Mexico?

RG: Well, I have fond memories of it. You forget the bad time, and remember the good times. I had a lot of fun, met a lot of nice people.

SH: Did you get a chance to speak with any Texans?

RG: Oh, sure. "You all come back, ya' hear." [laughter] Yeah, well, with that part of the country, I'm sure people are very happy down there. Unless you work there, there'd be absolutely no reason to live there, ever. But I have to leave it, dust storms in the spring, boy, they were fierce.

SH: How did the dust storms effect the flying?

RG: Well, I'm sure it didn't do the engines any good. And sometimes ... occasionally, it was just too much flying.

SH: Being a pilot, did you have any interaction with the ground crew that kept your planes going?

RG: No, they did it. You wrote down what was wrong with the airplane, when you came down, and they fixed. I often think, I owned a plane for about fifteen years, a military airplane. Then I was in the mechanic crew, and you sure learn a lot more about what goes on inside them, when you have to get it all fix yourself, than when you just lay down and it's taken care of. [laughter]

SH: [laughter] You begin to gain a higher respect for the ground crew?

RG: Yes, you do.

SH: When you were finished in New Mexico, where did you go?

RG: Well, then I went to Barksdale Field, in Louisiana, for my combat crew training, and from there to overseas.

SH: Did you go overseas with the same combat crew from training?

RG: I had a full crew that we went overseas with.

SH: Was Louisiana the first place you met your combat crew?

RG: Well, I guess so. I trained in Roswell, New Mexico, with my co-pilot and my flight engineer. Then, we went to Lincoln, Nebraska, where they made up the crew. And then, [we] went to combat crew training, gunners, and the whole works. Yes, that was the first place that I met them all.

SH: Were the members of the crew, from all over the country, or were they from certain areas?

RG: No, no, all over. The only time I was anyplace where, [everyone came from the same area, was when] I went to primary flying school. This was before they had preflight, where people got mixed up. Everybody was from New England and New York area, half were Dartmouth graduates, Cornell, Syracuse, Harvard, Yale, and the Northeast.

SH: Where was your co-pilot from?

RG: The state of Oregon. He had a Master's degree in forestry from Penn State, sharp guy.

SH: Do you remember where the other members of the crew were from?

RG: Oh, yeah. I remember them all, sure. Yeah, all of them. I had one of my central fire control, the main gunner, was from Madison, Wisconsin, and he visited me after the war. He came back to New Jersey. We had a nice time. The only one I ever saw again.

SH: Really?

RG: Yeah. Well, the flight engineer was from Glen Cove, New York. He was a wild Indian. He liked to drink a little too much.

SH: Was he an Indian?

RG: No, no. [laughter] He was a rough character, nice guy, good, pretty good, at what he did. And the others were from all over. My navigator was from, initially I think he was from, Long Island, but he ... lived up in the Buffalo area, went to college up there, [and] taught up there. His wife was from up there. And let's see, I forget where the others were from.

SH: How many of the different officers needed to have a college education? Was there not a division in the crews?

RG: On the B-29s, we had a pilot, and co-pilot, the engineer was enlisted, but on some crews, they were officers. The navigator and the radar officer, they were all officers. The gunners and the radio operator, they were all enlisted men.

SH: Did you stay together as a unit, or did you go your separate ways once you landed?

RG: The enlisted men went their way and the officers went their way. But, overseas, it wasn't like in the states. They lived the same way, just a couple of rows over.

SH: Really?

RG: Yeah, and the mess hall, you went in one side for the officers and the other side for enlisted men. We got the same food. [laughter]

SH: [laughter] Just that door, right?

RG: Yeah, and overseas, the enlisted men didn't have to worry about stripes, they didn't have to salute, ... they [all] wore T-shirts, no rank on it if they wanted, no problem. They wouldn't get away with that in the United States.

SH: How long were you in Louisiana?

RG: A couple of months.

SH: What kind of a contrast was, from New Mexico to Louisiana?

RG: When I left New Mexico and went to Shreveport, Louisiana, it was all the difference in the world. It seemed so good to get where there was green grass and things got pretty hot when we were there. But, it was a nice change.

SH: What time of the year, did you go to Europe?

RG: Didn't go to Europe, I went to the Pacific, in the late summer.

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RG: We swam at the beach regularly near our living area. I'd go there everyday, if we weren't doing anything. The only thing you had to wear were GI shoes, because the coral was so sharp. You walked on it, you'd tear your feet up. Swim with your shoes on.

SH: You went right from Louisiana to Saipan?

RG: No, Guam, spent a night in Guam. Got assigned from there.

SI: How did you get from Louisiana to Guam?

RG: We went to Kearny, Nebraska, and it was either, we take a new airplane over, or they'd fly us in a transport. So, we flew in a transport, two crews taken over, they didn't have enough airplanes.

SI: When did you get your airplane?

RG: Well, I didn't ever have my own airplane, but one I flew most of the time.

SI: What was the name of it?

RG: It was somebody else's, [he] had named, and flew it.

SH: What was its name?

RG: I don't even think it had a name. Names were ... When they first got over there, everybody had their big design splashed all over the airplanes ... and some general didn't like that, took them all off, and put the bomb wing logo on there, in a space [where] you could put the name. The name was unimportant then.

SH: Who was the commander of the crew you had?

RG: Well, the squadron commander. It was the brother of a Rutgers' graduate. He was from New Jersey. Boris Zubko, generally unliked, very much unliked.

SH: Was it because of incompetence or attitude?

RG: He was a despicable person. He had gone in early and I met him one time, at the Phi Gam house, at a brother's wedding. Had him around there one time, in his uniform. He had been in early. He was in that group that went in the Philippines, just when the war started, and they got down to Australia. So, he had quite a record. So, he was moved right along, and he was a squadron commander, lieutenant colonel squadron commander. But he was a terrible squadron commander. He was, in fact, he must have been pretty bad, [because] he made a career of it and retired twenty years later, as a lieutenant colonel.

SH: Oh.

RG: So, [laughter] that said something about him.

SH: How much mail did you get and were you hearing good things?

RG: Well, they had this V mail we heard about, but that was one of the processes. You just got regular mail, it was flown overseas, and you got it in a fairly decent time.

SH: Did you have all the supplies ...

RG: You might get two or three letters, from the same person, the same day. You know, it accumulated over a couple of weeks or so. The mail was good.

SH: Did you have good supplies for your missions, like ammunition?

RG: Oh, yeah, sure.

SH: There was no problem with that?

RG: No.

SI: How was the food?

RG: Food was not that great. It was all right when we flew on missions ... We read in one of the magazines how the B-29s had these little stoves on board. You'd serve hot food and all that, that was a lot of nonsense. They stuffed a couple of big paper bags, or boxes, I guess, cartons, that had in there a can of cooked turkey, you know, pieces, a loaf of bread, and some other things, some fruit, something to drink, but I can't remember what. So, it wasn't bad, but it wasn't very fancy.

SH: When you arrived in Saipan and started flying your missions, how long would these missions run?

RG: They were very long. They were fifteen hours, sixteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen hours, it took a long time.

SH: Did you have a good co-pilot? [laughter]

RG: Yeah, well, because you're on autopilot most of the time, anyway. Yup, I had a very good co-pilot. He was a good man.

SI: Were you flying single plane attacks or was it in formation?

RG: ... Since formation flying uses more fuel than just flying by yourself, any formation would be made up near Iwo Jima ... But they got away from the big formations and, really, just flew single ones, after the other cover the targets.

SI: What would be the range of targets assigned to you? Where would they send you? Would it be other islands?

RG: Oh, the first few missions, you had practice missions. You'd go up to some of the islands in the Marianas chain, or you'd go over to Marcus Island, what was the other one? Can't think of it, practice missions.

SH: Where were your targets, generally, when you started on your own?

RG: Well, at Osaka's arsenal and Kobe, towns all over Japan.

SI: Then you were attacking the mainland at that point?

RG: ... I didn't make very many missions, [because] I got over there real late. I only got there a few weeks before the war was over. ... Then I flew some of these prisoner of war missions, where they went into the intelligence and prison camps, where ... word was gotten to the prisoners to ... paint POW on the roofs of the buildings. ... We flew lots and lots of supplies, about four times, to drop supplies. So, that they had gotten canned goods and clothes, with these platforms, in the bomb bays, with parachutes, and dropped them over the camps. They'd all be running around down below, waiting for you.

SI: When you finished your mission and bombing runs, how would you know the effectiveness of it?

RG: The cameramen would take pictures ... We couldn't always see it. The cameramen would take spotting pictures, if they could get them. We'd turn around to get out of there, if you were in formation, because it takes time to get around. If you're individually you ...

SH: Was the cameraman on board your plane?

RG: You had cameras on every airplane, or the gunners would have the responsibility of taking pictures.

SI: Would you be able to see those pictures a few days later?

RG: We'd get prints. We'd see prints.

SI: Based on those prints, how effective were your missions?

RG: Well, varying amounts. I don't really remember that much, whether we really [were], how effective ours were. Actually, what they did after the war, they got people ... on the ground and they were the ones who wrote up all the effectiveness of the bombing.

SH: When you were flying these missions, how much resistance, I guess you would say, ground cover, or flak, or whatever was coming?

RG: The flak over Germany was formidable. The Japanese flack was not good at all. They had fighters, and the fighters gradually [vanished] by the time I got there. Their fighters were ineffective. Our fighters had just about gotten most of them early in the war. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I missed it. Earlier, when we started bombing in early 1945, they had tremendous winds, winter winds, over Japan and the bombing was very ineffective, and they were running out of gas ... They didn't have Iwo Jima and they were losing many, many crews because they were running out of gas. And then along in March the [war], everything changed, the extreme weather cleared up and they had Iwo Jima. They could land, get the rest of the way home, and from then on, it was pretty routine.

SH: What kind of damage did you see when you landed in Iwo Jima, and other places that had been under heavy fire?

RG: Well, all that flak, stuff you really, most of the Japs were dug in, there was still some there. We'd land. We couldn't hang around. They would land and gas us up and we'd get right out. They had fighters, see, all the fighters were based on Iwo Jima and they would join us for protection. It was a very active fighter base. Also, they had the big twin engines and night fighters, those P-61 Black Widows, they were based up there, too. The war, our war, changed once they had Iwo Jima.

SI: Did you always have missions with fighter coverage?

RG: Not at night. Most of the missions were getting to where they were at night.

SH: Did you ever have any naval targets, like Japanese shipping?

RG: No, but some of them, but not our group or our wing, ... did a lot of mining. A lot of B-29s mined all those inland seas. I don't know whether they were dropping on any of the ships, or not. I think they were not. The heavy bombers were not trying to bomb ships.

SH: Did you stay over there as part of the occupation forces after the war?

RG: I was there until December. Just waiting to get home. That's when a lot of us went traveling around, just sightseeing. I, think, I left on December 1st.

SH: Did you make it home in time for Christmas?

RG: I got to LA, Christmas Eve. I went on a ship that had to be, first I must have left around the fifteenth. We were fourteen days on a ship, and I got there in San Pedro, on the 24 of December and [then] they sent us over to Santa Ana Air Force Base, which ... had been a large classification center. Spent the night there, and then I called my aunt, who lived in LA and they said, "Come in for Christmas Day, we're having a big party." And these were the rich relatives of the family, they were very well off. So, I was there with them, and I took a friend with me. And [at] the same time, their son was a naval officer, and he was having Christmas with my mother, in New Brunswick. [laughter]

SH: [laughter] Well, that is good.

SI: I was wondering about your reactions to a few events during the war.

RG: Well, I was a cadet, I was down at Ellington Field, and about a couple of weeks before that, a whole flight of B-25s came through there. They were there a few hours. It was the first time that I'd ever been close to a B-25. And reading in the book, that (Wharton?) [wrote] where ... he tells about flying over, and starting in Ellington Field, and they were the ones before they went on the Tokyo road.

SI: I know a couple of weeks later, they informed them that during the raid, some flyers had been captured and executed. What was your reaction to that?

RG: Well, I don't know when we heard that. I can't remember when that news came out, whether it was right away, or sometime later, I don't remember. There's something I was going to say, I don't remember what it was.

SI: Was there ever a fear of what would happen if your plane were to go down?

RG: At that point, it was something that might happen, that's all. Something might happen like that.

SI: Did you ever receive any training on what to do if you had to crash?

RG: No.

SI: I read that during training they would take you out and throw you in a lake.

RG: We had none of that. We had special training. They couldn't train everybody that, to one shift, too much manpower to train everybody.

SH: Do you remember where you were when you heard that the war was over?

RG: I was in Saipan when I heard it was over. We had the initial order. Everybody celebrated. And then it wasn't. They flew another mission after that. I think ... there were two more missions. One, I think, was canceled, but there was one more mission, and then it was official, that they were going to sign, and, of course, the official signing was September 2nd, which was a couple of weeks later.

SH: Were you aware of any rumors about the A-bomb being dropped, or being manufactured?

RG: No, no. Rumors like that did not go around.

SH: The rumors did not spread?

RG: No. That was a big, deep, dark secret.

SH: You were really shocked to hear this?

RG: Very much so.

SH: Were you preparing for the invasion of Japan? You had been talking about ...

RG: No, but when I was over in Tinian, and there for a while, which was right next to Saipan, [there was] a big hospital. We used to go up in the hills and there was a big hospital built up there. Never used, never furnished, waiting, it was going to be a major place to bring the wounded back from Japan and treat them there.

SH: Really?

RG: No, there were things going on, and, I think, they said it was going to be in November.

SH: I did not know if you knew that you would have to stay longer, or if there were any ...

RG: No, that wouldn't have affected us.

SH: Did you ever have to fly any personnel, or was it strictly bombing runs?

RG: It was bombing runs. Oh, we did some search missions ... A transport plane was lost, somewhere between the Marianas and the Philippines. We went, I guess, three or four days in a row, flying patterns, looking for any debris. We saw lots of fifty-five gallon drums and an occasional squall, naval ship, or, I think, we lost some, many, on a search run.

SI: What was your opinion on different planes you saw and flew, like the B-25s?

RG: Well, I always wanted fly a B-25 and never did that. The B-29 was really a vastly superior aircraft. If you'd flown fifteen hours in a B-17, you'd been shot, more than not. But a B-29 was insulated, quiet, flew an altitude without heavy clothes on, without oxygen masks. It was a great airplane.

SH: On your missions did you ever have any peculiar incidences that were just bizarre?

RG: No, they were very boring.

SH: [laughter] Every now and again, we hear a story of survival using bubble gum and band aids.

RG: The maintenance was first class. When I was in training with B-29s, the maintenance was terrible. They were shipping all the good ones over to the islands. The maintenance was right on the button. First rate.

SI: We touched this subject before, but what kind of bond was formed between you and your crew?

RG: Well, we had a good bond, without anybody particularly working on it. It just worked out very well, yeah. We had, in our group, some people who had trouble with crew members. I didn't have any trouble. They were all good, all very different from each other.

SH: How many missions would you complete, on average, in a week?

RG: Maybe two, maybe, possibly, three missions a week.

SH: What did you do with the rest of the time? Did you keep active?

RG: Yeah. Play volleyball, go swimming, try to get a Jeep and go somewhere, if you could.

SH: Did you ever travel to another island just to have fun?

RG: Well, they began to do that when the war was over. I never did. You had to learn the ropes, or know somebody where you could get a ride, somehow. We didn't have any, the Marine Corps supplied the transportation, inner islands transportation.

SI: When we interviewed people, from the European theater, there is a lot of talk about easy access to alcohol and, I guess, other vices. Was there any kind of activity like that in the other islands?

RG: They had USO shows over there. They had movies. We had a movie every night, outside. If it rained, you're out of luck.

SI: Was there a lot of card playing and other things of that nature?

RG: Oh, sure. We had an officers' club. We used to have a band come to our officers' club on Tinian, [they] came several times a week. I don't know whether you remember the names of the old jazz stars, Jack T. Garden. Jack Teagarden, Jr., had a band. It was a very good band. They were good and they played every night.

SH: How big was your base? How many men and women?

RG: No nurses, no women, there were no hospitals in the group. There was a hospital you could go to, [but] I never went to it. ... I can't tell you how many men were in a squadron. We were in, each squadron had its own headquarters, its own mess, mess hall, and other things. But, you were close to the other squadrons in the same group. It would be a group, and then, you could walk over to the other squadrons.

SI: Was there any inter-service contact, like contact with the Navy, Army guys?

RG: We used to have contact with the Seabees all the time. The Seabees were wonderful at scrounging things. They'd come around peddling things for liquor. "You got ... any," I can't think of what you wanted, let's see, "a toaster or anything?" The Seabees get it for you. All you had to do was give them a couple of bottles of liquor. Somebody had traded something with the Seabees, for a great big box full of matches, you know, the old-style kitchen matches in a box? I mean, we were the only people that had matches, and we would trade matches for things.
[laughter]

SH: [laughter] The barter system was alive and thriving.

RG: Yeah.

SH: How did the climate affect the living situation at the base?

RG: Yeah, things get a little green. We had one typhoon that came through and it was a mess. Yeah, it took a while to dry out from that. But, really, the climate over there was pretty good. It wasn't like down in New Guinea, or where it was all hot and humid. This was kind of like, probably, a little hotter than Hawaii, but a beautiful breeze and nice warm ...

SH: Did you get to do any kind of exploring around the island and learn about the tropics?

RG: Oh, we'd go up and find the caves where the Marines used the flame-throwers against the Japanese, and find things up there. There were still Japanese hiding out.

SH: Really?

RG: Yeah.

SH: Did you have to go with someone else?

RG: Well, there weren't many women over there, but if you had a date, which I never had, I was married anyway, if you had a date, you would take a gal to somewhere, to some other party, or something, you had to be armed. You carried your pistol.

SI: Were there any natives, at this point, on any of the islands?

RG: Yeah, there were two kinds of natives. There were the Chimorros, which were like the real natives. ... You'd be on one of the roads, [and] off the side of the road there'd be one of these fellows, with a water buffalo and a plow, plowing and planting the rice. ... Then, you had the ones that the Japanese brought, the Koreans and the Okinawans, to work the sugar mills and the sugar cane fields before the war, and they were there, too. They were not really natives, but they had been there a long time, and they had a camp set up for themselves. There were men that came out and they looked like Japanese soldiers, in these funny, old uniforms with sneakers with a thumb. Did you ever see sneakers, with a place for your big toe, separate like a glove, like a mitten? They wore them and these little, funny looking, little, Japanese soldier hats. They were all wearing the hats. "Hey, you Japanese?" "Oh, no, no, me not no Japanese, me Okinawan." "Yeah, you're Japanese, and Japanese are no good." "Oh, no, no, me not, me Okinawan. Me Okinawan. Me Okinawan." They would pick [up] the trash, not their trash, they were our trash men.

SI: Were there any incidents where people would think that someone was Japanese, and take action?

RG: I never heard anything like that, no.

SI: The Army kept, these Koreans and Okinawans, basically doing the same jobs they were doing?

RG: Well, they put them in a camp, where they would be protected, and they were free to come and go, but that's where they lived. I don't know what they were doing after the war. I guess, they would be part of the population there today, I don't know. But they were not, they were not the enemy.

SI: What kind of attitude did you have, and what kind of attitudes was the Army trying to instill in everyone that you know of?

RG: I don't know that they were trying to instill anything, really. The Japanese were our enemy. They were very good, tough.

SH: Having enlisted early and knowing the situation in Europe and Pearl Harbor, did you visualize the European enemy different than you did the Japanese?

RG: Not really. We knew a lot more about the Europeans.

SI: While you were in the Pacific, did you feel that you were fighting the war that no one cared too much about, when compared to the European front?

RG: I wasn't there then. They might have very well felt that. By the time we were there, that was a very, big, important moment, because the war in Europe was over, that's where the big effort was. They weren't lacking anything by that time.

SH: You came back to the States on Christmas Eve in 1946.

RG: '45.

SH: '45, I jumped a year, my mistake. So, how long did it take you? Then, you flew back?

RG: No, I got a train.

SH: How long did that train take?

RG: Four or five days, I guess. We wound up in Newark, in the station, and they put us on another train to go to Fort Monmouth. I got discharged down there. Some of them went to Fort Dix, I went to Fort Monmouth, why? I don't know.

SH: Had your wife been able to come to meet you in Newark?

RG: I called her when I got to the station. I called her and she got in the car, her mother's car, and came down to see me for fifteen minutes. [laughter] Then, I saw her a couple of days later.

SH: You were discharged, but did you end your service or did you stay in the Reserves?

RG: Well, I stayed in the Reserves. ... I really had wanted to stay in the service and get a regular commission. But, my wife said, "No, please don't." When I would go to ... a separation center at Fort Monmouth, if I wanted to stay, I was told I would have [had to] stayed in. Well, I wanted to get a regular commission, and that didn't matter whether you were in, or out, and I did take exams for that while I was at Rutgers and I was accepted in ... September, I think it was 1947, after I graduated. ... I'd been out long enough by then, I don't go back. Barbara, did not want me to go back. So, I acceded her wishes and for quite a few years, I regretted that I hadn't gone back. But, I don't anymore. I'm glad I got out.

SH: You mentioned that you had your own plane.

RG: Oh, I had an AT-6, which was an advanced trainer, a single engine, called the Texan. I had bought that, I bought another one, not the same thing, in 1963. I had it a couple of years, three years, and then I sold it. Then, I bought one in nineteen, an AT-6, in 1967, and I had it until 1979. When I got to be sixty, maybe I better hang it up, quit while I was ahead.

SH: I was just going to say, did you?

RG: I sold it for a lot more than I paid for it.

SH: Did you continue to fly, from the time you got out of the war?

RG: No, I flew when I was in the reserves. When I was going to Rutgers in 1946-47, you'd go up to Newark and just check out an airplane, and go somewhere. ... Then, I went to Cleveland, worked for a company out there, while I was gone, they restructured the whole thing. I came back, and I couldn't get back in to the flying. I stayed in the non-flying [reserves], just to get my time in.

SH: How long did you stay in the Reserves?

RG: I had my time in 1966. I had twenty-five years, counting my active duty, then I got out. I didn't get a thing but, when you're sixty, when I was sixty, I started getting a small pension, and privileges, commissary, medical.

SH: Was there any danger that you could be called back in during the Korean War?

RG: Oh, there were calls for Korea, I knew people who were called. I was never called. With three kids, I wasn't going to volunteer.

SH: You had a daughter when you went to the Pacific, and when you came back?

RG: I had my oldest [son, who] was born on September 1947. He graduated from Rutgers in '69. He was one of the big time basketball players up there.

SH: Did you enjoy going to the games and watching him play?

RG: Oh, loved it. Loved it. We went to every home game and a lot of the away games.

SH: You were living here in New Brunswick, and you would go up to Rutgers, in Newark?

RG: Yeah, my mother died in 1955 and we sold the house. I lived in Merchantville and drove to New Brunswick.

SH: When you came back to the University, how did your military experience change the kind of a student you were compared to the one that left?

RG: A much better student when I went back, much better.

SH: You changed your major. Do you think that helped?

RG: Yeah. Well, I was interested in the course that I took. Well, I just worked harder, and I had a brilliant wife that'd coach me, and drill me, and quiz me, before I'd take exams, a great help. It really helped me.

SH: Where did you do your advanced degree training? Did you stay at Rutgers?

RG: Well, I don't have any advanced degree.

SH: I thought you went onto law school. You were interested in law.

RG: No, I was interested in it, but, I figured at the end of a year and a half back in school, studying to me was a real chore, and I didn't think that I would make it through law school. That's not for me.

SH: What did you do then?

RG: Well, I became a salesman, my career as a salesman. I worked for a paint company in Cleveland, for five and a half years. Then, I got into the raw material end of it, coatings business, and I worked for a little company that became Unocal-Petrochemical Group. Worked for them in Philadelphia and I was the mid-Atlantic regional manager ...

SH: Did your wife's family live close, nearby?

RG: They lived in Rutherford and then he retired and they bought a house, sold the house in Rutherford, and moved to Fair Haven, over near Red Bank, which from here is a long, diagonal, way across New Jersey. ... They both died in 1962.

SH: You said that your son had his grandfather's artistic gift.

RG: Well, my son, Charlie, lives in Tampa and he's a self-employed commercial artist, ideas. I don't think he's making a fortune, but he's doing very well, very creative.

SH: I just wondered if his grandfather had been around to influence him at all?

RG: No, ... he died in 1962, and Charlie was only twelve or thirteen years old. But, he was very innovative, very creative, and Charlie's following in that same routine.

SH: Which is the son that is the basketball star?

RG: That's Bob, Jr. He lives in Easton.

SH: What does he do?

RG: He's a teacher. He coached for many years, but, he got tired of high school coaching. [It] got to be a chore, with every kid's parents thinking they know more about basketball than he did,

and then they want to run the team. After making it twelve or thirteen years, he said, "I don't need that nonsense." So, he quit. He enjoys teaching and he has brilliant children, great kids.

SH: Are any of them going to go to Rutgers?

RG: Well, the oldest boy went to Boston U. He lives in San Francisco and works in the computer industry, and the daughter graduated from Gettysburg. She's in Connecticut and married, my first grandchild to be married. She teaches and has a Masters, their youngest boy has just finished his third year in the University of Massachusetts with a 4.0 average, and he has honors in English, German. He spent a semester in Germany. Bright kids. Their mother is a very intelligent gal. She's a Mount Holyoke graduate and a microbiologist.

SH: You have a daughter, also, that ...

RG: My oldest daughter lives up near Buffalo, eastern New York. She has two kids, both with Masters' degrees. ... Their daughter is being married next month. She'll be thirty. And Charlie, [lives] in Florida, has a boy and a girl, younger. My daughter, Anne, the little one, lives down at Barnegat Light, where I have my summer home. She has an adopted daughter.

SH: When you came back that last year, you were on the GI Bill?

RG: Yes.

SH: Did you use any of your other GI benefits?

RG: Well, when I went to work for this (Tremco?) Manufacturing Company in Cleveland, they had a training program and they milked the GI Bill for a little bit, too. In other words, they paid me a very low salary, and the rest was made up by the GI Bill. That's always kind of irritated me.

SH: We have heard there were people that took advantage of the GI Bill. Were you able to buy your home, with a VA loan at all?

RG: No, fortunately being a pilot, and flying pay, and overseas pay, and a wonderful wife, who saved the money I sent home, we had a little nest egg. When we bought our first house, we were able to put five thousand dollars down in 1949. That was a conventional FHA mortgage.

SI: Did you join any veterans associations after the war?

RG: I belong to the American Legion, but I've never been to a meeting in thirty years.

SI: Really.

RG: I send my money in each year for the magazine, but I don't participate.

SH: Knowing you and your father's military careers, what did you think of the Vietnam War?

RG: Well, I always felt that, you know, we're fighting communists. So, that's why we get all this money sent over here, to paint us out as being very bad, very terrible. You don't hear all that clamor now, because we're not fighting communists. Communists poured millions of dollars into propaganda over here. It swayed, turned a lot of people's heads. I think history will bear that out.

SI: Was your oldest son in the Army?

RG: Well, he was. He was drafted. He graduated from Rutgers in '69. He was drafted by the Milwaukee Bucks and he was very anxious to play pro basketball, and he was drafted in the Army. ... They called him up for his first physical when we were living in Merchantville. ... He went on to Milwaukee and their training program in the fall. ... The Milwaukee Bucks helped get him into the Wisconsin National Guard. So, he was playing the first season, he was drafted the same year as Lou Alcindor, and he had to quit basketball to go in for the six months training. But, he couldn't stall that. So, he spent six months in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, but then, they sent him up to Fort Dix, which is not far from here. So, he came back to finish up there, and then he was in the reserves for five-and-a-half years, which he had to do to fulfill his obligation. So, he did that and after he left [for] Milwaukee, where he had a couple of years, two-and-a-half years, and they cut him. He was up in Lehigh Valley and he was in the Allentown National Guard, up there to put his time in.

SH: Looking back on your career, Rutgers, and everything, do you have any thoughts that you would like to share with the tape before we conclude the interview?

RG: I was very happy going to Rutgers and I consider myself a Loyal Son.

SH: We saw you marching in the alumni parade carrying the flag all by yourself this year.

RG: ... I was very happy in the service. I forget the bad times. I was very happy in the Air Force, an Air Force pilot, that was like the height of my ambition.

SI: I just have one more question, I understand that you once were a township committeeman. What got you interested in politics?

RG: Somebody asked me to please, well, I belonged to the Republican Club in Morristown, and somebody said, "We need a committeeman in your district. A committeeman, you know, you're a challenger at the polls, and not a great deal of authority, or anything else. I enjoyed meeting a lot of people that way.

SH: Have you ever thought more about getting active in politics?

RG: At my age, no, that was as active.

SH: Well, before.

RG: No. No.

SH: I was just wondering, if you ever served on school boards?

RG: No. My wife, Barbara, was on the school board in Merchantville, for about ten years.

SH: All right. Do you have any other questions, Shaun?

SI: No.

SH: Well, thank you, Mr. Greacen.

RG: Okay. Well ...

SH: Very much.

RG: Sorry, I didn't get ...

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Reviewed by Fidel Malpica 3/7/01

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 4/26/01

Reviewed by Robert Greacen 5/01