RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN LEVIN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on June 5, 2002 with Mr. Julian Levin in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Sandra Stewart Holyoak and …

Rupali Parikh: Rupali Parikh.

SH: To begin the interview, Mr. Levin, I'd like to thank you for making the drive down here today to sit for the interview. Please, tell me about your father.

Julian Levin: My father was born in the United States. He was born in 1898 in New York City, and he passed away in 1963.

SH: Can you tell me what he did and what his educational background was?

JL: Well, he had a high school education. He was in World War I. He served in France. He was wounded … in World War I. … Then he went into, he worked at Macy's, in the furniture department, for several years, and then he became … active in the building business with his brothers. They built garden apartments and houses in New Jersey.

SH: Did they move from New York to New Jersey?

JL: I believe so, yes. They moved from New York City into Jersey sometime in his younger days. I'm not sure exactly when.

SH: Had his father been a contractor, or where did his experience come from?

JL: No, his father was, I believe, was in the lumber business, and eventually, he moved down to Lakewood and lived in Lakewood on a farm [for] most of his adult years with one of his daughters and her husband.

SH: It's interesting that he would go from New York to Lakewood. Can you tell me about your father's military career? Did he speak of what it was like in World War I?

JL: Not too often. He had a Purple Heart. He was in the [Meuse]-Argonne, and rumor has it, or folk stories has it, that he was the first Jewish boy to volunteer in New York City. Whether that's true, I have no idea. … He was a volunteer.

SH: Did he have a lot of brothers and sisters?

JL: He had two brothers and a sister.

SH: Were they part of an extended family that you knew when you were growing up?

JL: Well, my aunt, who had the farm in Lakewood, we used to go visit her quite a bit. She lived there with her husband and my grandfather and grandmother, and his two brothers were in the building business and we saw them on occasion. We weren't [very] close. ...

SH: Tell me about your mother, please.

JL: My mother was born in the same year as my father, I believe, 1898, and, I believe, she was born in Newark and she married my father right after the war and she had three brothers and a sister and she was a housewife for just about all her life.

SH: So she married your father right out of high school. Did she go to college?

JL: No. She met my father before the war, I believe.

SH: Did they ever talk about how they met?

JL: If they did, I don't recall. I don't recall. My sister might know, but I don't recall.

SH: Well, tell me about your family then. Where do you fit? Do you have brothers and sisters? I understand you have a sister.

JL: I have one sister who is three and a half years younger than I am, and she's married. She has two children.

SH: Where were you born and when?

JL: I was born in Newark in 1924, May 6.

SH: So your mother and father, did they meet in New York and come to Jersey? Do you know?

JL: I believe so, yes.

SH: So they hadn't been in New Jersey too long when you were born.

JL: I don't know. I really couldn't say, but I was born in 1924. They were married in 1919, I think, so it couldn't have been too long.

SH: Can you tell me what your earliest memories of growing up are?

JL: I think my early memories are when we lived in East Orange. We moved to East Orange when I was, I don't know, three or four years old. That's where my sister was born. So I suppose that's my earliest memories. At least, they were in East Orange.

SH: You started your elementary school then in East Orange.

JL: Yes, I did.

SH: Did you live in East Orange all of the time?

[tape paused]

SH: In East Orange, when did you start school?

JL: I must have started school in 1929, I guess, 1930.

SH: What do you remember about the Depression?

JL: I don't. I remember that we never, I, as a child, never realized there was a Depression. My parents weren't wealthy, far from it, but I never felt deprived.

SH: Do you know if your father was able to continue working?

JL: My father worked in Macy's, at that time. My grandparents and my aunt lived with us, and I didn't realize it, at the time, of course, but they had a pretty tough time, but I wasn't aware of it. I was not aware of it.

SH: For some people, that's exactly how they remember the Depression. All of a sudden, their family members were living with them.

JL: As a matter-of-fact, I found out later that my grandparents actually owned the house we lived in.

SH: Oh, really?

JL: I didn't know that at first, at the time, but I was never aware of any deprivations.

SH: As a young man, were you involved in Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts?

JL: No.

SH: Was your family involved in the synagogue at all?

JL: Well, when we moved to Hillside, yes. We were only in East Orange until I was about seven or eight. As a matter-of-fact, we did belong to a synagogue in East Orange, now that I recall. When we moved to Hillside, that's where I really spent most of my growing up years.

SH: So you really started in maybe the second or third grade then.

JL: I think I was in third grade, when we moved to Hillside.

SH: What was it like to move? Do you remember?

JL: No, I really don't.

SH: Was it exciting?

JL: No, I really have very little recollection of our moving.

SH: Did your grandparents come with you?

JL: My grandmother had passed away by then, and my grandfather came with us, and he and I shared a room until he died.

SH: So this was your mother's father.

JL: My mother's father.

SH: Did your mother's sister continue to live with you?

JL: She did.

SH: That's interesting to have that many generations of the family living together.

JL: Oh, in those days, I don't think it was that unusual.

SH: Really?

JL: My aunt was a hunchback, a cripple. I mean, she could get around, do everything, but she did most of the cooking, and she lived with us until she died.

SH: Did your mother work outside of the home?

JL: No, my mother never worked. She may have worked a couple of weeks, but she never worked at all.

SH: Tell me what it was like to go to school in Hillside. Were there certain subjects that you really liked?

JL: I was always interested in history, political science, liberal arts, reading. I read a lot.

SH: Were you involved in any sports or after-school activities?

JL: Well, not sports per se, but we played a lot afterwards, you know. I had a group of friends in Hillside and we used to …

SH: Was this a very family-oriented neighborhood?

JL: Yeah, it was pretty family oriented. They were all single homes.

SH: When you moved to Hillside, was your father still working for Macy's?

JL: No, he was working for his brothers then.

SH: He'd gone to work for his brothers then.

JL: He had gone to work for his brothers by then in the building business.

SH: So this would have been in the early '30s when you moved to Hillside.

JL: I believe so, yes.

SH: Can you tell me about being in junior high school and then where you went to high school?

JL: I went all through the Hillside school system, junior high, high school in Hillside.

SH: Was it a good school?

JL: Yes, I think so, at the time, and I had good teachers. I had one teacher who I maintained a very close relationship with until last year when she died. She died at ninety-eight. She was my Latin teacher.

SH: Latin.

JL: My wife and my sister, we were very close to her all these years.

SH: So your wife knew her, as well.

JL: Oh, yes, after we married, she knew her.

SH: That's wonderful. Other than the Latin teacher, who were some of your memorable teachers in high school?

JL: She was so far above everybody else that I think she outshone everybody, and she was my most memorable teacher by far.

SH: Were you involved in any sort of musical activities or clubs?

JL: I belonged to a few clubs, chess club, photography club, I think. I was not that active in high school.

SH: Did you have to work at any after-school job?

JL: No.

SH: What kind of political discussions went on in your household?

JL: My parents were very, my father and mother, they were political, but most of my political discussions were with my Latin teacher.

SH: Really?

JL: Well, that's why she was a very unusual person, and we used to stay after school, the whole class, and she would carry on discussions with [us]. This was, of course, during World War II, or just before the beginning of World War II.

SH: What were the discussions about?

JL: Well, she was very pro-British, and we talked about intervention, and, of course, in those days, there was the big isolationist sentiment in the United States. This was about '39, '40, and we were carrying on these discussions.

SH: Did she talk about Hitler and his rise to power?

JL: Oh, of course. She was German, too. She was very much aware.

SH: Was she?

JL: … She was very much aware.

SH: Were you aware of any Bund activities in the Hillside area?

JL: Any Bund? … Well, in Irvington there were. It was really the center of the Bund. I'm not sure that I was aware of it, at that time, but it was there. … Of course, we had anti-Semitism in Hillside.

SH: Really? Did you experience it first-hand?

JL: I did occasionally, you know, in school.

SH: What would happen to you?

JL: They used to beat us up sometimes, you know, get into fights. Nothing like today with guns or anything, but, you know, remarks made, just generally speaking, but it was not too pervasive.

SH: These discussion groups that your Latin teacher had after school, were they geared towards all of the kids, anybody who wanted to stay, or just to those in her class?

JL: My recollection is that it was just the ones who wanted to stay. Nobody was forced to stay. It certainly was not part of the school program. It was just something she did, and I guess anybody could stop in. I don't recall. It may have been my last class of the day, and it just ran over.

SH: Did you take any of these discussions home to your family?

JL: Oh, I believe I did, yes. We discussed it quite often, especially since my father was a veteran of World War I.

SH: What about Franklin Delano Roosevelt's programs? What did your family think of them?

JL: They were very pro-Roosevelt and very pro-anything that he was for. … They were very, very pro-Roosevelt, my parents. They were lifelong Democrats, and we still are.

SH: Did your father talk at all about any of the union organizing that was going on in New Jersey?

JL: Unions? No.

SH: I just wondered if he was involved with any unions, because he was a builder.

JL: No, no.

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

JL: Well, I guess I always …

SH: It was expected.

JL: It was expected, yeah.

SH: Did you apply for any of the state scholarships?

JL: I don't recall. I don't think so.

SH: When you first decided to go to college, did you apply only to Rutgers, or did you go to other universities and look around?

JL: We never looked around, but I think I applied to one or two other universities. I don't recall what they were at this time, where they were, but I think it was pretty well set that I was going to go to Rutgers.

SH: Did you come down and tour the campus or get interviewed?

JL: Yes, but I don't recall the interview.

SH: What did you think you wanted to major in?

JL: I wanted to be a lawyer.

SH: Did you? What year did you enter Rutgers?

JL: I saw it in 1941.

SH: September of 1941. Tell us what it was like to be on campus, and then we'll proceed into the attack on Pearl Harbor.

JL: Well, in 1941, I think there were about 1,500 students at Rutgers, maybe 1,600, and, of course, Pearl Harbor was just a couple of months away, and it was a very war-oriented campus.

SH: Was it really, even before the war?

JL: I believe so. The draft had already started. … My main recollection is that all the freshman had to wear the beanies and white socks, and if an upperclassman whistled, we had to start running. Oh, we had to carry market bags with us, with our books in them, and if they blew the whistle, we had to start running [and] we had to stay on certain paths.

SH: Oh, really?

JL: That's my recollection of being a freshman at Rutgers.

SH: Where were you housed, when you first came to Rutgers?

JL: I lived on Somerset Street in a private home, in my freshman year, and then I moved into, I became, I belonged to Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity.

SH: Was that your sophomore year?

JL: My sophomore year, and I moved into the fraternity house. That was on Easton Avenue … during the war, and when I came back from service, I lived in Ford Hall.

SH: Was ROTC mandatory?

JL: Yes, it was.

SH: So you were part of that.

JL: I think it was mandatory for your freshman year. I'm not sure about the sophomore year, but it was mandatory, yes.

SH: What about chapel? I know that there was mandatory chapel.

JL: There was.

SH: What do you remember about that?

JL: Well, I remember that we had to attend chapel so many times a semester, and it was mandatory, not every Sunday, but there were, I don't know, maybe six Sundays or eight

Sundays, and we had to attend. Whether you were Jewish, or Christian, or whatever, you had to attend.

SH: Some of the speakers weren't religiously oriented, correct?

JL: I don't recall. I probably slept through most of them.

SH: You had to sit alphabetically and by class, right?

JL: I just don't remember.

SH: Did they take attendance?

JL: Oh, yeah.

SH: Did you ever have any meetings or discussions with Dean Metzger?

JL: I don't recall any one-to-ones with Dean Metzger. ...

SH: President Clothier?

JL: I don't think so.

SH: Can you tell me who your roommates were on Somerset Street?

JL: Well, on Somerset Street, I don't remember his name. I never got to know him very well, and after the first year, I think, he dropped out of school. I don't recall. … When I lived in the fraternity, my roommate was a fraternity brother, Sander Weinstein, who was killed during the war. He was killed in battle, and that was at the fraternity house. Then I lived in Highland Park for a little while, also. … At Ford Hall, my roommate was my friend from high school, Jerry Grunt.

SH: Oh, really? Tell me about the activities that were going on for freshmen in Rutgers that first year. What were some of the social activities or sports? Did you go to football games?

JL: Yeah, we did. We went to the football games, went to the basketball games, and they had intramural sports and they had clubs. Of course, it was nothing like it is today.

SH: Where were you and what do you remember about Pearl Harbor?

JL: I remember that very, very vividly. I was down at Lakeland at my aunt and uncle's farm, and we were watching a Giant's football game. Of course, it was December, and we were listening to it on the radio, not watching, I'm sorry, we were listening to it on the radio, and the news came across of Pearl Harbor being bombed. That's how I remember it very well.

SH: Did you, at that time, know where Pearl Harbor was?

JL: I have no idea, probably not.

SH: Some men have told us that they had to go to an atlas.

JL: Yeah, probably not.

SH: What was your family's reaction?

JL: Shock and horror. I guess I seem to remember that I said to myself, "Well, I guess I'll be in the Army pretty soon."

SH: Did you come back to campus right away? Did you continue with your regular classes?

JL: No, we came back. This was in December … and I had started in September. I was a freshman.

SH: So you came back to campus that weekend.

JL: I went back to school, and I finished my sophomore year.

SH: Do you remember the next day when President Clothier gathered everybody at Kirkpatrick Chapel? Do you remember that discussion?

JL: Yes, I have a faint recollection of it, but I don't recall his exact words.

SH: Did you notice that men were already signing up or enlisting right away?

JL: I don't recall.

SH: Do you remember anyone being against the war and demonstrating?

JL: You mean after Pearl Harbor?

SH: Before Pearl Harbor.

JL: Oh, sure.

SH: Really?

JL: Sure, you know the isolationist sentiment was very strong in the United States.

SH: Was it here on campus?

JL: Oh, sure.

SH: Really?

JL: They had chapters; they had America First. I'm sure you've heard about America First. The Senate of the United States … had many isolationists, Burton K. Wheeler and people like that … Lindberg, Charles Lindberg, was one of the foremost opponents of war intervention.

SH: Before Pearl Harbor, what were the big headlines that you remember?

JL: Before Pearl Harbor? Well, I think that World War II started in 1939, the invasion of France, the Battle of Great Britain …

SH: Did you go to movies and things like that? Did you get a lot of your news from newsreels, or was it just from the newspapers?

JL: We'd get a lot from the newsreels in the movies.

SH: … The second half of your freshman year, you said you really didn't notice your class size change.

JL: Well, I think our population dropped off, because a lot of the men enlisted, and I guess some of the ROTC was called up. Some of the boys were in the enlisted Reserve, so they were called up right away.

SH: Did it change your focus on school at all to see all these men go off to war?

JL: I don't think so.

SH: What about after that first semester, after Pearl Harbor, which would have been the second semester of your freshman year, what did you do that summer?

JL: That summer, I worked in an A&P in Hillside. I worked as a stock boy. You know, it was a neighborhood store. It wasn't a supermarket. That's what I did the summer of my freshman year.

SH: When did you pledge?

JL: I pledged my fraternity as a sophomore.

SH: So when you came back your sophomore year, you went back to Somerset Street.

JL: No, I lived in the fraternity house even as a pledge.

SH: Oh, really?

JL: Yes, yes. I lived in the fraternity house for one year, as a sophomore.

SH: You took the second year of ROTC, as a sophomore. Is that correct?

JL: I think so. If it was mandatory, I took it. If it wasn't, I didn't take it.

SH: You had already signed up for the draft.

JL: Oh, yes.

SH: Was that before you came to Rutgers or during your freshman year?

JL: I don't recall. I think you had to sign up when you were eighteen. I don't recall when I signed up.

SH: When did you get your draft notice?

JL: Well, I got my notice, I believe, during my sophomore year. At that time, you could get a deferment until the semester was over. So, I believe, I got my draft notice sometime around maybe January or February, and I got a deferment until May … and I went in right away after that.

SH: You said your roommate was lost during the war. Was he on basically the same time frame as you were?

JL: He was a little younger than I, and, I think, he enlisted.

SH: Did he?

JL: Yes.

SH: How did you hear that he had been lost?

JL: When did I find out? I think I found out when I got a letter from one of my fraternity brothers, when I was overseas.

SH: So you were already overseas.

JL: They had notified me, and he had told me about a couple of our fraternity brothers that had been lost during the war.

SH: Originally, you would have been the Class of '45.

JL: That's correct.

SH: When you enlisted in the spring of '43, did you think of enlisting in something besides the Army?

JL: I didn't enlist. I was drafted.

SH: Had you thought of trying to enlist, rather than being drafted?

JL: No, I never thought of enlisting.

SH: Tell me about what happened. This was at the end of your sophomore year. Where did you go? How did your induction begin?

JL: I guess I went home. For how long, I don't recall, but I was, I might have gotten my draft notice. You see, I think in those days, when you got your deferment, you already were told when to report. … If you were deferred in January until the semester was [over, you] already had [been told] a day to [report]. I may have even been in the Army, at the time. I'd been sworn in before.

SH: Did you report to Fort Dix?

JL: Yes, I did.

SH: What was that like?

JL: I was only there three or four days. It was more indoctrination.

SH: What were you assigned to, and where did you go from there?

JL: After Fort Dix, I went to Fort McClellan for basic training. That's in Alabama, and I spent thirteen or seventeen weeks there, basic training, and then I went, oh, I was in the ASTP program. I don't know if you …

SH: Well, tell me about that.

JL: Well, the ASTP was a program that college students could enroll in, when they were in the Army. You enrolled in that before you were drafted or enlisted. It had two branches, the engineering and foreign service. The engineering branch was where you were trained to be engineers and eventually go overseas. The Foreign Service was basically for occupation duty after the war was over, and you were being trained there in foreign languages and to be part of the occupation forces. I enrolled in it, thinking that if I were accepted, I would be in the Foreign Service program, but as will happen in the Army, they assigned me to engineering.

SH: A man who liked history and political science.

JL: Yeah … I didn't have the slightest idea. So after I finished my basic training at Fort McClellan, they shipped me out to the Citadel.

SH: Oh, down in South Carolina.

JL: Down in South Carolina, in an engineering program, and I kept telling them, "No, I'm not supposed to be in here," but that's where I wound up. … I was there for three months, and I don't know how I didn't flunk out, because I had no knowledge of the courses that we were supposed to be taking, but I lasted for three months. … Then, I believe, the war in Europe got very heavy. I think it was during the Battle of the Bulge, and they discontinued the program, so then we all went our own way.

SH: Tell me what it was like for a young man from Hillside, New Jersey to suddenly be in the Deep South.

JL: Well, I was sheltered there. I was at the Citadel with, I guess, ninety-nine percent of the other soldiers were from the North. … Charleston was a pretty cosmopolitan city, and I don't think we had, we never wandered far.

SH: Did you get to do any sightseeing in Charleston?

JL: Well, I knew Charleston. Yeah, I knew Charleston.

SH: As a young man, had you done any traveling before you were in the Army? Did your family take vacations?

JL: We took vacations, but we never traveled overseas, or anything like that, no. We went to Asbury Park and Bradley Beach and Atlantic City. That was about it.

SH: Some people talked about how it was their first really long train ride.

JL: It was probably mine, probably was, yeah.

SH: They talked about getting into Washington, DC and being totally amazed at the war effort and all the activities going on.

JL: Well, I took a very long train ride. … I don't know if I'm getting ahead of myself …

SH: Go ahead, please.

JL: I took a very long train ride … when I was shipped overseas. I went from Newark to California.

SH: Well, we'll talk about that in a minute. At the Citadel, the courses were very strenuous, and, as you said, it was in subject area that you weren't really familiar with. Were there a lot of people helping each other out?

JL: I was very fortunate that when I first got there, I met a friend of mine from Hillside High School, and we kind of bumped into each other and we roomed together. … He was an engineering major, so he kind of helped me along, you know. I would never have gotten through

the second semester, if they had continued the program. [laughter] That, I can assure you, but he helped me along.

SH: What about the drill sergeants in basic training? Were they tough?

JL: They were mean.

SH: How did they, the cadre, treat you?

JL: Well, they were very tough. I remember, if you sat there and [were] listening to a lecture on whatever, and if you dozed off a little, they'd walk around with a long cane, and you had these helmet liners on, and they'd rap you over the head. You know, they'd rap you over the head. They were all raw-boned Southerners, six-foot-six, regular Army, and, I guess, they did their job pretty well, though.

SH: Did you feel well trained at the time?

JL: In retrospect, there were times when you used to laugh about them. They were not educated. We were all … young college kids there, and we used to, I suppose, make fun of them, but in retrospect, as I look back, they did a pretty good job.

SH: You talked a little bit about anti-Semitism at Hillside. How was it in the Army?

JL: Well, I did experience some anti-Semitism in the Army, but it was to be expected. I did overseas. When I was overseas, I experienced some anti-Semitism, but nothing that was so obtrusive that I couldn't handle it. I wouldn't say it was a major factor, no.

RP: Was it like the teasing in high school, or was it more severe overseas?

JL: I would say it was less, yes.

SH: Tell us about the ASTP program when it broke up. How much notice did you have?

JL: My recollection is that during the Battle of the Bulge, when the war was intensifying in Europe, this was … the end of '43, beginning of '44, that they needed manpower, and they just broke up the program. We were notified, and then we were assigned to, you know, we were all sent our own way.

SH: How much time was there between the notice that ASTP was ending and when you found yourself heading to your new assignment?

JL: Oh, right away, but I didn't go overseas right away. I don't know how it happened, but I wound up, again, in basic training in the artillery. [laughter]

SH: Where was this?

JL: This was in Camp Rucker, Alabama. I went through another basic training, and before I finished that, I was shipped overseas.

SH: Really?

JL: Yeah.

SH: Knowing about the Battle of the Bulge, did you expect to go to Europe?

JL: I had no idea. I really didn't know.

SH: Tell us about your artillery training, how extensive that was and what you were trained to do.

JL: I was trained to be a forward observer or a, I don't remember the word. We used to have to plot the bridge for the artillery. In other words, when they fired, they had to know where they were shooting at, and we would. I was a forward observer for a while, and then at times, I was back with the artillery. … Now that I remember, though, I didn't go into the artillery. I was an MP. Now thinking about it, it comes back to me. I was trained in the artillery, but when I was shipped overseas, I don't know if I'm getting ahead of myself, I was in the MPs, and then I went back to the artillery.

SH: When you were at Camp Rucker, when you were there for your training in the artillery, were your instructors older? What kinds of experiences did they have? Were you aware of their backgrounds?

JL: No, but they were all older. They were all older.

SH: Regular Army?

JL: Some were regular Army. Some had already been in combat and [had] come back.

SH: Did they talk about it at all?

JL: They did.

SH: Do you remember any stories they told you?

JL: I don't recall that, no.

SH: What did you do for recreation, before you went overseas?

JL: You mean at Camp Rucker? We had a PX, and that's about all we did, because these camps were in the middle of nowhere. We used to call home. I remember … every Sunday morning lining up in the telephone booth to call home. … When I was at Fort McClellan, I visited a friend of my father's, who was with him in World War I, and they were also at Fort McClellan,

and he married a southern girl and settled in Alabama. So I visited their home a couple of times, but other than that, not much.

SH: You were on base most of the time, so there was really no interaction with the civilians.

JL: No, very little, if any. Well, Fort McClellan was in Anniston. We didn't get very many passes. We were in basic training, and I recall going in once or twice, but there was nothing there.

SH: Not much in Charleston either?

JL: Well, Charleston was when I was at the Citadel. Yeah, there was a lot in Charleston. Charleston was a great city.

SH: Because there were so many different …

JL: In Charleston …

SH: The Navy was such a big thing. Was there any friction between the services?

JL: I don't recall any. I'm sure there was, but I don't recall any, no.

SH: You were going to say something about Charleston.

JL: Well, in Charleston, I went to Jewish services. I met a very young girl, whose family lived in Charleston, and she showed me around for about seven or eight weeks while I was still there, and we became very friendly. A very funny thing happened. After the war, I was working for my uncle and my father, managing some apartments in Union, and in she walks. She had married a man from New Jersey, and they had settled in New Jersey, and here she comes. It was just like a bolt out of the blue.

SH: Had you kept in contact at all?

JL: No.

SH: Did you get a leave to come home, before you went to your next assignment?

JL: From the Citadel? I don't remember. From the Citadel, I went to Camp Rucker. I don't remember if I came home. I probably did.

SH: You said your training was cut short at Camp Rucker. Did you come home from Camp Rucker, before you went overseas?

JL: There, I got four or five days … and then they gave me a ticket. I traveled by myself …

SH: From Newark or New York?

JL: … To San Francisco. That's where I joined up with the troops.

SH: Who were you assigned to, at that point?

JL: I wasn't assigned to anybody that I know of, and we got on the boat …

SH: Do you know what the name of the ship was?

JL: … Oh, it was a, no, I really don't recall. It was a troopship, you know. It was a troopship, but I don't recall the name.

SH: Did you get seasick?

JL: No, I never did.

SH: You're one of the lucky ones.

JL: No, I was. No, I never did.

SH: Where were you to go from San Francisco then?

JL: From San Francisco, we landed for a few days in Fiji, and then from Fiji, I became a replacement for the 37th Infantry Division … They dropped me off at Bougainville, up in the Solomon Islands, and that's where I joined the outfit that I stayed with for the rest the war.

SH: What did you do in Bougainville?

JL: I was assigned to the MPs on Bougainville, but I think right after that, they realized I was in the wrong end, and they reassigned me to the field artillery.

SH: Tell me what it was like to be in the South Pacific. Did you stop in Hawaii on your way over?

JL: No.

SH: You went straight to Fiji.

JL: I went to Fiji, and then I went to Bougainville.

SH: What did you do while you were onboard ship?

JL: I read a lot, swabbed decks, did KP, slept a lot, played cards, shot crap, you know.

SH: Did you make any money?

JL: I don't recall. Money didn't mean very much to us in those days. I wasn't married. I had no real responsibilities. But that was about what we did. It was a long trip.

SH: It must have been boring.

JL: You know, it was very boring.

SH: Did they keep you busy drilling?

JL: Yeah … we had ship drills, and things like that, but I don't think so.

SH: Were you traveling in a convoy?

JL: We were in a convoy.

SH: What was that like?

JL: A lot of ships.

SH: Any incidents that you remember?

JL: No. We used to have these, you know, drills, but I don't recall any, no.

SH: How soon did you know what you were going to be doing?

JL: Not until we got there.

SH: Tell me what it looked like and what you remember.

JL: About Bougainville? Jungle. You have to remember that when I got there, the fighting in Bougainville was just about over, if not over, so it was very boring. There was nothing to do at all. I remembered snakes. I remember that you had to take your shoes inside your tent, not to leave them outside at night, because if you left them outside, scorpions [and] God knows what [else] would be inside your shoes. It rained all the time.

SH: What training did you have to prepare you for living in the tropics like that?

JL: We didn't have any drills.

SH: Really? There were no cautionary …

JL: Oh, we took Atabrine.

SH: You started right away?

JL: Oh, yeah. We would take it before, I think, when we got on the ship.

SH: Did you turn orange?

JL: Yes, yellow, orange, we did.

SH: What kind of medical facilities and mail service did you have?

JL: Well, the mail facilities were good. We used to get letters from home. … We sent letters home, and we used to have V-mail. I'm sure you've seen that. I used to write a letter and I used to condense it to save space. … My mother, of course, was a typical mother who was very worried, so I used to write her letters, and I never, I always crossed over whatever it was. I never really told her. I said, "Everything is great," you know.

SH: What did you do as an MP?

JL: I don't think I ever actually served as an MP. We were on Bougainville. The fighting had ended, and we were just sitting there, waiting to be shipped some place else. … I was in the MPs, but we didn't do anything. I remember going to the division library almost every other day and getting out a book and reading it.

SH: Really?

JL: That's about all we did on Bougainville, because, as I say, there was no more fighting.

SH: How many troops were there?

JL: A lot. My whole division was there, I guess. I don't exactly recall, but I'm sure they were.

SH: How long did it take you to make friends?

JL: I didn't make too many friends, when I was in Bougainville, that I recall.

SH: Do you remember how long you were on Bougainville?

JL: Well, I could go backwards. I was on Bougainville, say, I went overseas in, I wasn't there very long. I would say maybe a month or two, at the most.

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

SH: Tell me where you went from Bougainville.

JL: Well, from Bougainville, we were loaded on troopships, and we went in for the invasion of Luzon Island in the Philippines.

SH: What were your specific duties?

JL: By that time, I had been reassigned to the field artillery. I was in the field artillery then …

SH: What did you see when you got to Luzon?

JL: Well, while we were on the ship, I contacted dengue fever, which is like malaria, but it's not a disease that comes back. In other words, you got it once, and that's the end of it. So I had dengue fever, and I had dengue fever, actually, when we invaded Luzon.

SH: Oh, really? Were you in the action?

JL: Well, I was in the first or second wave, I don't recall, but when we got on the island, we found that there was no opposition. The Japanese had withdrawn, so we really had no opposition.

SH: What was the landing like?

JL: We had to go down the rope ladders and get into, I guess they were called, the LCIs, Landing Craft, Infantry. We dropped into them, and they would take us into the island. We had to wade through water, because they couldn't go right up to the beach, but that was how we got there.

SH: What were you told to do next, since there was no opposition?

JL: They just put us back into our various commands, and we started advancing on Manila. That was the objective … the city of Manila.

SH: When did you start receiving treatment for the fever?

JL: I think I started receiving treatment [when] I was … shipboard, but it dissipated, and I was weak but okay.

SH: Tell us about how you progressed to Manila.

JL: Well, the first thing that happened to me … was my dog. I found a dog.

SH: Really? Where was the dog?

JL: Well, the dog was wounded. She was a fox terrier and she was about six months old and she belonged, I believe, to a Japanese officer who had been killed in action, and I took the dog …

SH: Where did you find it?

JL: She was just wandering around on the beach. I took the dog, and she got medical treatment from our corpsman, and I took her with me, and one thing led to another, and she stayed with me for the rest of the war.

SH: Where did you carry her?

JL: I don't recall the details, but she was very well trained. … She would follow me and she would go out on patrol with us, occasionally. She was a very well trained dog.

SH: What did you call her? What did you name her?

JL: I named her Aparri, which was the name of a town in the Philippines that was supposedly one of our objectives. That's what I named her, and it's a long story, but she came home with me.

SH: Really?

JL: Oh, yeah. She came home with me and lived with us seven or eight years, after we got back to the United States.

SH: What did your commander think of the fact you had this dog? Were they aware of it?

JL: Oh, sure. They were aware of [her]. She became like a mascot …

SH: Really?

JL: … Of our battery. She became like a mascot, and she came with us all the way through the battle of Manila and the end of the war. Now, I mean, I don't know how far you want me to go into this dog story, but it's a very interesting story.

SH: Please, tell us.

JL: While we were in Manila, after the war ended, we were stationed in Manila for several weeks before we got shipped out. She disappeared, and I thought, "Well, that's the end of my dog." About three weeks later, she came back, all bedraggled and pregnant. So we delivered five or six puppies in Manila, and we gave them to various people. I know this is hard to believe, but it's the truth, as best I remember. Now it was time to go home, and I get down to the boat with the dog, and, "You can't take the dog on the boat." That's what they told me. I said, "Well, I'm not going home." So my lieutenant, who was a very, very nice man, I don't recall his name, he said, "Look, put the dog in a barracks bag." She was very well trained. I mean, if I told her to sit in the corner, she'd sit in the corner. [The lieutenant said,] "Walk on the boat with her. What are they going to do to her?" So I did that. I stuffed her in a barracks bag, swung her over my shoulder, and I walked on the ship with her. Now, as we got out to the ocean, and I 'fessed up, "Here's the dog." Well, you know, they were very angry, but they allowed me to keep the dog. … We got to San Francisco, and I had a special, little place where I kept Aparri, and we all got there safely. … The first day I was in San Francisco, we were at Camp Stoneman. We were going by train back to New Jersey and to be discharged. They told me that under no circumstances could I take the dog on the troop train with me, because there was no room for her, [and] there were no baggage cars. It was out of the question. … I called up my parents

[and] told them I had a dog. I got a pass, and I went to the carpenter's shop, and they made me a crate with a trapdoor. I bought food and some water, and I sent her home Railway Express.

SH: No kidding?

JL: I did. Remember Railway Express? I sent her home railway express, and the dog, Aparri, got home before I did. She got home before I did, and they took care of her. My parents and my sister and my aunt took care of her until I got home.

RP: When did you get home?

JL: I got home on February 21 or 22 of 1946.

SH: Really? That is a super story.

JL: Oh, yeah. I mean, they'd tell you about Aparri. My wife knew her.

SH: Really?

JL: We were married, [and] Aparri was still alive.

SH: Let's back up a little bit. When you were on Luzon and heading towards Manila, what was it like? Tell us about what your jobs were and what a typical day was like.

JL: I don't recall too much about it, to be very honest with you. We had very little resistance, as we advanced towards Manila, and don't forget, I was in the artillery, so I was not in the infantry, and we would just advance. We used to have to spot the guns each day, if they were going to be used, and targets, but artillery was very minimally used in the jungle …

SH: How did you get the artillery through the jungle?

JL: Well, there were roads, you know. It wasn't complete jungle. There were roads, and we didn't have the big artillery that they had in Europe. I think this was 75-mm or 155s, I don't recall. … It was pretty boring actually. … We used to eat coconuts, drink coconut juice, eat bananas, and we got to Manila. It took us about a month, I think.

SH: How did you find Manila?

JL: Well, Manila was a, you know, very large city. We of the 37th Division were one of the first into Manila. I saw General MacArthur there.

SH: Did you?

JL: Well, I got a little ...

SH: Well, tell us about that.

JL: We were crossing the Pasig River, which was the river outside of Manila, and he was crossing it also, about half a mile down the river from us, and so I said, "They have MacArthur there," because they had all the flags and everything. A couple of shells landed in the water, and his boat turned around and went right back. That was my only glimpse of General MacArthur. But we had some, you know, pretty rough combat in Manila.

SH: Was it still heavily defended at that point?

JL: Yeah, Manila was two cities. They had the old, walled city of Intramuros, which was the original Manila. That's where the Japanese were holed up. That was where their final resistance was. So there was pretty bitter fighting in Manila.

SH: What did you do as an artilleryman?

JL: We would bomb them, you know, fire on them, and we had some scrapes, but, again, we were, I'd say, one step removed from hand-to-hand combat. We were there [and] shot our guns, shot our rifles. We had men wounded and killed, like I got a very slight wound. I had a very interesting [experience]. I had a very slight shrapnel wound on my right wrist, and it was so slight, it was just like a little cut, that they sent me to the Filipino doctor, because we had so many casualties that our medics were too [busy to care for minor wounds]. So I went to this Filipino doctor, and he bandaged it up for me. … I became very friendly with him after the war, and I used to visit him and his family.

SH: Were they here in New Jersey?

JL: No, no, in Manila. I was stationed in Manila after the war, and I visited him and his family.

SH: Tell me what you saw of Filipinos and how they were living.

JL: Lovely people. I love them.

SH: What kind of devastation did you see?

JL: A lot of devastation. The city was pretty well bombed-out. There was a lot of poverty.

SH: Where were the civilians, as you were advancing? Did you see them as you went?

JL: Oh, yeah. We saw them as we went through the different villages. Oh, sure. But, as I said, there was very little combat. In my recollection, there was very little combat between landing on Lingayen Gulf and getting to Manila. Ninety percent of our combat was in Manila.

SH: Did any of your people interact with them? Was there anyway that you could aid them?

JL: Oh, yeah. Well, we did. We gave them food, gave them medicine, gave them cigarettes. I remember that very distinctly. They were wonderful people.

SH: Were you told not to fraternize with them?

JL: No. I don't believe we were told one way or the other. In Manila, we fraternized quite a bit, as a matter-of-fact. After the war ended, we used to have dances with them. Of course, they were all chaperoned.

SH: Tell us about that.

JL: It took about a month [to get to Manila].

RP: How long did it take to secure Manila?

JL: That was in February, and we were in Manila for a while. Then we, after the fighting was over in Manila, we left Manila. We went to Baguio, which is the summer capital of Manila, and we captured Baguio. We went up there, yeah. When the war ended, I was in Baguio. When the war ended, [I have a] very interesting story. I don't know if I'm being too long winded or not. You're going to edit this, are you not? I was sitting in a foxhole in Baguio, doing sentry duty. This must have been in August, and I was sitting there. … We had a series of communications between the various posts, where you would tap your fingernail on the phone to get somebody's attention. You didn't want to speak out. The phone taps, and I picked it up and I forget the exact conversation, but somebody said to me, "Did you hear? They just dropped the bomb on Japan which is the equivalent of 10,000 tons of TNT." That was the atom bomb. I remember that very well, when I found out about that. That was when they bombed Hiroshima.

SH: You had already taken and secured Baguio.

JL: We were on sentry duty, but we were still fighting.

SH: Tell us what happened after that.

JL: The end of the war was just a few days later, after … they dropped the second atom bomb on Nagasaki. I guess, it was a couple of weeks later.

SH: Were you still fighting in Baguio?

JL: We were still in Baguio, scattered fighting, and as a matter-of-fact, I believe we had a little combat after the war was over, because there were scattered pockets of Japanese who hadn't received word.

SH: How did they get the word?

JL: We dropped leaflets, I think, radio, because some of them were cut off from any communications. So we dropped leaflets when the war was over and brought their officers in. I have a picture at home someplace of a Japanese colonel or general surrendering.

SH: Really?

JL: Yeah, I have it someplace.

SH: Were you there for the photograph?

JL: Yeah, I took the photograph.

SH: Really? Tell us that story.

JL: I don't remember. All I remember is I took the pictures.

SH: There was still fighting even after you knew the surrender had taken place. Were you still as careful?

JL: I believe so. It didn't last very long, maybe a week.

SH: How did they surrender? There has been talk about how unwilling they were to even surrender after the surrender.

JL: I don't recall that they were unwilling where we were.

SH: What did you do with the prisoners?

JL: They put them in stockades, in prisoner of war camps, and eventually shipped them home to Japan. As a matter-of-fact, I remember vaguely being on guard duty at some of these stockades, after the war was over, guarding some of the prisoners. They were pretty docile. They didn't give us any trouble.

SH: How did the Filipino people treat them?

JL: I don't think they had too much of an interaction with them.

SH: Were the Filipinos there working?

JL: I have no knowledge of that.

SH: Did you ever come into any contact with any of the other services?

JL: Other divisions.

SH: What about the Navy or Marines?

JL: No, we had the Marines, and, of course, while we were on the ship, we came in contact with the Navy.

SH: Was your troopship Navy-manned?

JL: They were all Navy men, yes.

SH: Was it a merchant marine ship?

JL: No, it was Navy.

SH: Had you any contact with USO shows, or the Red Cross, or anything like that?

JL: I remember vaguely a USO show in Manila. We never had any on the frontlines, when we were in combat … I know we had none. I recall a few more in Manila, (Joey Brown?). Remember him? He was there, but not while we were in combat.

SH: What did soldiers think about MacArthur?

JL: He was not well thought of, whether rightfully or wrongfully, I couldn't say, but he was not well thought of. They used to call him "Dugout Doug."

SH: Do you remember where you were when you knew that FDR had died?

JL: Yes, I do.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about that?

JL: I certainly can. FDR died on April 9, and we were, let's see, he died in April of '45, right? Okay, we were still in the jungles, I think, Luzon Island, and my division was an Ohio National Guard Division, originally, and most of the men in this division were from Ohio, except for us, who were replacements, and were very conservative in their political thinking. … I recall when FDR died, as much as I hate to say it, there were celebrations, not everybody, but many of them celebrated.

SH: What was the thinking about how Truman would be able to handle the presidency?

JL: I remember a letter I wrote home to my parents, and I said that, "I really feel for the future of the world with Truman as president," and I was very wrong. I was proven wrong, but we didn't have too much confidence in Truman. … He rose to the occasion.

SH: Tell me about how victory in Europe was relayed to you in the jungles. Were there any celebrations, or was there relief?

JL: We felt that was pretty much the beginning of the end.

SH: Really?

JL: When V-E Day [occurred], yeah, we thought that was pretty much [the end].

SH: Why did you think it was the end? Did you think there would be more men and materiel for you?

JL: Oh, sure, sure. Some of them did actually get transferred from Europe to Asia, [but] not too many, because the war was [continued for] only a few months afterwards. We knew it was over, that it was going to be over, we were going to win the war. Our main objective, at that time, was in protecting ourselves.

SH: When did you really have that sense that you were going to win?

JL: I think always. I don't think there was any question.

SH: Do you have any questions before we go on?

RP: Did everybody have the same beliefs, that the US was always going to win?

JL: I think so.

RP: Why?

JL: Why? We had the preponderance of materiel. We were winning the battles, Saipan, Tarawa, all these, and we were right on the edge. Of course, we also knew that we would suffer a lot of casualties, because we had been briefed, or our officers had been briefed, on the invasion of Japan.

SH: When did you realize that even though the war was over in Europe that you were still focusing on the invasion of Japan?

JL: … We were briefed on that. We were supposed to invade Japan, I believe, in the late fall of 1945, and we were briefed on it. We knew it was going to happen, and we knew that our division was going to be one of the divisions going in someplace. So we were not at all unhappy when they dropped the bomb, even though in retrospect, it might have been the wrong thing to do.

SH: How often did you receive replacements in your division? You were a replacement. How often did you have to replace men? Was it continuously happening?

JL: I believe when I became a replacement that pretty well stopped. We got some more, but, you know, they had done the bulk of the fighting before I got there, and in Manila, we suffered casualties, a lot of casualties, and we got replacements there. But by then, the war was approaching its end.

SH: You talked about being part of the Ohio National Guard.

JL: Yes.

SH: Compare your training to the training these men had. Could you see a difference?

JL: Well, they were older than I was, because they had been in the Guard before the war, and so they must have been, you know, here I was twenty-one, and they must have been twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, and they had been through a lot of combat before I got to them. So they kind of looked down on replacements, for instance.

SH: Did they?

JL: You know, they had been through a lot, and they kind of looked down [on us], not that they treated us badly.

SH: How many replacements were there within your immediate unit?

JL: I would say a lot. A lot of us were replacements. There were not so many of the original 37th Division. A lot of men got wounded, killed, or some had been sent home.

SH: Did you ever think of volunteering or asking to be sent to OCS?

JL: I believe I applied for OCS, when I was in the States. I was not accepted. I never pursued it very much.

SH: Tell us what it was like to be part of the occupation forces in Manila, what a typical day was like.

JL: Yeah, I was there from the end of the war until February of the following year, when I was sent home. So I was there for, I guess, about six months. … The reason we were there so long is because they didn't have enough transportation to get everybody home. So the men with the most points, they had a point system, were sent home first, and you took your turn. So I was there for about six months, and I used to visit my friends at the hospital quite a bit, this doctor I met, and I was there quite often with them and his friends. The rest of it, we used to go into town, and they used to have dances for us with the Filipino girls, who were very, very well chaperoned. You have no idea. [laughter]

SH: Tell us what it was like.

JL: Oh, it was like living in the nineteenth century. I mean, these were the upper class of Manila, and they all had a lot of Spanish blood and they had Spanish customs. … We used to go to these dances, and they used to come with their, I think you call them, (*duenas*?), or chaperones. We would dance with them, but … we never took them home or anything.

SH: What else did you do?

JL: I don't recall much else. I mean, we used to go into town. They had USOs there, and we'd walk around and we'd buy things, and, as I say, I was very active with my friend the doctor.

SH: What was your official military duty, at that point?

JL: We just sat on our butts.

SH: You didn't have to get things ready to go home.

JL: We did absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing. I remember being assigned to the office a couple of times to file papers, and things like that, but it was just busy-work to keep us occupied until [we went home]. If they had had enough ships, we all would have gone out right away.

SH: What about coming back to school? When did you start formalizing those kinds of plans?

JL: Well, I got back in February of [1946], and I came back the next semester.

SH: So you came back in the fall then.

JL: I came back …

SH: In the fall of '46.

JL: No, no, I came back in February. I must have gone to summer school. I went to summer school, and then I had one more year and then I graduated.

SH: So you went at an accelerated rate.

JL: … When I was in Bougainville, I think it was in Bougainville, we got a lot of free time. I took some correspondence courses, and I got credit for them when I came back to Rutgers. So that kind of eliminated almost a full semester, so I was able to accelerate my graduation.

SH: Did you ever run into any other Rutgers men when you were in the Philippines?

JL: Of course, I ran into Stan Klion.

SH: Did you really?

JL: Of course.

SH: Well, tell us about that.

JL: Stan Klion was a colonel …

SH: I want to hear your story.

JL: Well, Stan Klion was a colonel in the, I believe, in the Finance Corps, and he was stationed in Manila after the war. I went to a Rutgers meeting there, a Rutgers meeting …

SH: Really? Well, tell us about that.

JL: They had a …

SH: How did you find out about it?

JL: It was in the paper, the *Daily Pacific*, which was the equivalent of the *Stars and Stripes*, and there was a big notice about the Rutgers meeting, and naturally I went. … I saw several people there that I knew from college, but I bumped into Stan Klion, who was a fraternity brother of mine. He was older than I was, and I met Stan. Of course, I didn't know Buddy [Barton Klion], at that time.

SH: Who else do you recall meeting?

JL: I don't recall. Nobody in particular, but I do remember Stan Klion was there.

SH: What did you do at the Rutgers gathering in Manila?

JL: Well, I'll tell you what we did. … I know what I did with Stan Klion. We talked about our house that burned down, where three people were killed. ...

SH: Could you tell us what happened?

JL: We had a fraternity house on River Road, I think, and they had a fire. … It was after a party and … two girls and a boy were killed, I'm not sure, and Buddy was in the school at that time. It was in the *Daily Pacific*, so Stan Klion and I talked about that.

SH: It's amazing that you would get together.

JL: Yeah, it was funny. … Then I met another friend of mine there, Abner Golieb [RC '46]. We're trying to get him to come down and give you an interview. I didn't meet him, but I [realized], actually, that after the war, that we had passed on the way. We were at the same place at the same time, but we didn't know it at that time.

SH: I've actually seen a photograph of one Rutgers gathering in Manila, and I just wondered if you were a part of that group.

JL: I have never seen that. I have no idea.

SH: Oh, I'll see if I could find it. Was there more than one Rutgers meeting?

JL: I only recall that one time. For most of the time, we'd just sit in our barracks, our tents, and play cards, or whatever.

SH: I wondered if after having gotten together the one time if you tried to do it again.

JL: No. Well, Stan was a colonel. I was an enlisted man, and, you know, we really didn't travel in the same circles. But, no, I saw him there.

SH: You said you didn't do much in the occupational duty.

JL: Pretty much. Actually, it wasn't an occupation duty, because this was a friendly country. … We really didn't have an occupation duty.

SH: Were you doing anything to help the Filipino people rebuild?

JL: Not at that time. It was much too early in the game to do that.

SH: What about black marketing?

JL: Yeah, there was black marketing.

SH: Were you aware of it?

JL: I was aware of it. I didn't get involved in it. They used to have a big, big, big black market, [and] I'm not talking about food. I'm talking about, I remember on Rizal Avenue, which was the main street in Manila, there were miles and miles of vehicles stored, brand new, never used, trucks, command cars, jeeps, all sorts of vehicles. There must have been thousands of them. That all kind of dwindled down after a while. I think they were being sold on the black market, but it was just rumor. We never got involved in it, but, yeah, there was a big black market.

SH: Did anybody sell their cigarettes or their booze?

JL: Sure. I used to give mine away, because, at that time, I didn't smoke. I used to give mine away.

SH: Did you ever think you were going to go home tomorrow and they'd say, "Nope, not enough room?"

JL: It was a very stressful type of thing, because there were always big headlines in the paper about this. … Of course, I had the dog and I was worried about whether I was going to be able to take her home with me, and it was a very stressful time for us, if I recall … There were a lot of demonstrations, "Get more ships out," blah, blah, you know, "Get us out of here."

SH: How did soldiers demonstrate?

JL: Well, I don't recall if we demonstrated, but we would march up and down the street, perhaps, with signs. We couldn't do much of anything, because we were subject to [punishment], not like the demonstrations that you recall.

SH: Did you participate in some of these?

JL: I don't recall. I know I was very anxious to get home, because I wanted to go back to school. As a matter-of-fact, I had the opportunity to go into Japan on occupation duty. I would have had to sign up for a year, but I turned it down, because I wanted to go home.

SH: Did they try to get you to stay in?

JL: Well, not really, not while we were there. When we were discharged, they tried to get us to stay in.

SH: Did they?

JL: Well, they asked you to sign up for the enlisted Reserve, which none of us did. I didn't sign up. It would have wound up a career, if I did.

SH: What about the GI Bill? When were you first aware of that and the fact that you'd be eligible for it?

JL: I guess, after I got home …

SH: What do you remember about your troopship ride back to the States?

JL: The United States? Well, I remember there was a lot of gambling going on. Everybody had a lot of pay, because we hadn't been paid in months. We all had a lot of money, like paper money. There was a lot of gambling. That's what I remember. Of course, I had the dog, so I had special quarters.

SH: Oh, they gave you special quarters.

JL: Oh, yes. They gave me an area on the ship about as large as this room, which was off limits to everybody else, and I used to stay up there with my dog. … My friends would come up and visit me and we'd sunbathe, and it was like a cruise. We played cards …

SH: Did you know of any other dogs that were brought back?

JL: I think there was one other on the boat with me.

SH: Really?

JL: I don't know what happened to them, but there was one other dog on the boat. In Europe, from what I understand, they had a program where you could bring your pets back with you. In the Pacific, they had nothing like that.

SH: I wondered about quarantines. Did they ever talk about that?

JL: Oh, yes. My dog was supposed to be in quarantine for two weeks, and I signed a paper telling them that I would agree to leave her in quarantine. … As we approached the United States, my captain came up to me [and] he said, "Listen, Levin, if you leave that dog in quarantine, you're never going to see her again." He said, "If I were you, I'd smuggle her off the boat," which is what I did. That's when I took her down to the shop and had her shipped home. So I never went through with the quarantine. As soon as I got off the boat, I called my parents up, "Here I am, dog, okay." Either that day or the next day, I went down to this shop, the carpenter shop, and they made a crate for her, and I shipped her home.

SH: Did your family know about the dog before?

JL: Oh, yes. I had called them. I had written them. I think we were allowed one phone call, after the war was over, from the Philippines.

SH: Oh, really?

JL: I believe so, yes, and they knew that she was with me.

SH: Did your parents save any of the letters you wrote them?

JL: I have them at home. … I have some of them at home. My mother saved a lot of stuff.

SH: Good for her. What was the train ride like across the country?

JL: It was very boring. Again, we had to sit up the whole time, no sleeping cars. We slept on the seat. We played cards all the way across. For five days, we played nothing but cards. It was hot and boring. That's all I can remember.

SH: Where did you go when you got back?

JL: Well, we went to Fort Dix …

SH: Fort Dix first?

JL: … So that we could be discharged. I was there for three days, I think, or four days.

SH: Then you just came up to Newark.

JL: Well, my father picked me up at Fort Dix.

SH: Oh, did he?

JL: Yes.

SH: That's good. Tell us about your reunion. What was it like to come home?

JL: Well, it was in the winter, and I was very anxious to get home, because other than just wanting to get home, it was my parent's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, and I just made it back the day of, or the day before. They had a big party, of course, the next night. It was their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, so I got home for that. … It was strange, of course. The weather was cold. I hadn't been in a cold climate for a couple of years, and a lot of my friends were coming home at the same time, or were home already, and I was getting ready to go back to Rutgers.

SH: What were your parents involved in, as far as the war effort?

JL: My parents? My father was an ambulance driver, in case they had bombings. He did a lot of that. I don't know that my mother did anything. I don't recall whether she was involved in the war effort or not. I think she worked for a little while, but not very much. My father was pretty much involved in veteran's affairs, because he was a veteran of World War I.

SH: Did he talk at all about how he was worried about you?

JL: My mother was the worrier in our family, as most mothers are.

SH: Did your sister talk about what it was like for her? What did she do while you were gone?

JL: She was in high school.

SH: She would have just been graduated.

JL: She was in high school, and she went pretty much about her life. Of course, they had rations, you know, rationing of a box of sugar and coffee and gasoline, and, you know, things like that. I don't think they suffered any great deprivations.

SH: How did the war affect your father's work?

JL: I believe that what happened was about a year before the war ended, they set up building programs, so my uncles and my father were very busy building apartments. This was supposed to be for war veterans and factory workers. At the time, only they were qualified. So they were pretty busy.

SH: I wondered if that had impacted their business.

JL: No, they were pretty busy.

SH: Did you think of going right to work, or did you always know you'd go back to school?

JL: Oh, no, I was going to go back to school.

SH: Did you change your major at all, when you came back?

JL: No.

SH: Talk a little bit about what it was like to come back to Rutgers as a veteran.

JL: Well, it was bittersweet, because I had lost some friends during the war. My roommate had been killed. My very best friends had been killed during the war.

SH: From Hillside or from Rutgers?

JL: No, no, they were from Rutgers. My roommate at Rutgers, and they were from my fraternity. … It was different, because we weren't kids anymore. We were men. We couldn't put up with any of this nonsense about hazing, and this and that. That was very juvenile for us. That's when all the hazing and all that stuff went out, because the veterans wouldn't stand for that stuff. So it was a different world, where everybody was more serious.

SH: You talked about your fraternity house burning down.

JL: It burned down while I was overseas, and, I believe, don't tell Buddy I told you, they were put on probation for a year. So when we came back from service, we didn't really have a fraternity. I lived in Ford Hall.

SH: You said you lived in Highland Park.

JL: … I think I lived in Ford Hall when I first came back, during the summer, summer session, and then four or five of us took a room in a boardinghouse on Adelaide Avenue [in Highland Park]. We lived on Adelaide Avenue, and that's where I lived before I graduated.

SH: Did you?

JL: Yes.

SH: Who were your roommates at Adelaide Avenue?

JL: I lived with Marv Bierenbaum, who was a fraternity brother. I lived with … Mel Rosenstein, a fraternity brother. Bob Steck was there, and Lenny Feinberg. That's about it, maybe one or two others that I don't recall.

SH: Who was the cook?

JL: We didn't cook. We went out to eat.

SH: Every night?

JL: Well, we did some cooking. We just had a room.

SH: Did you get involved with activities here on campus?

JL: Not too much.

SH: When you were talking about Rutgers before the war, you didn't tell us anything about NJC.

JL: Well, NJC was NJC. It was a very strictly-run school, and I remember that if you dated a girl from NJC, on a Saturday night, you had to go to the early show, because she had to be in her room before the late show was over. Oh, yeah. … They used to ring a gong on NJC campus, I'm not sure, I think, at eleven o'clock, and if you were on the corner with an NJC undergraduate and that gong went off, well, off she would go.

RP: Did they check them in every night?

JL: You had to check out and check in, absolutely. I think their curfew was at ten o'clock on weekdays, and I think they were only permitted certain weekend passes. You know, it was pretty strictly run.

SH: What about military balls and the sophomore ball and different things like that? Did that still go on after the war?

JL: I don't recall. I don't recall every time I went to one.

SH: What was your major?

JL: Political science.

SH: You stayed right with that. Were you still thinking of going to law school?

JL: I did go to law school.

SH: I know. I was building the story here.

JL: Yes, I was thinking about it, yes.

SH: Where did you think you'd want to go?

JL: I'd applied to NYU and Cornell Law School. I was accepted at both, and I wound up at Cornell.

SH: Did you? So you graduated in the spring of '47.

JL: Spring of '47.

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

SH: This is tape two, side one of an interview with Mr. Julian Levin. Tell us, again, about how you went to law school at Cornell.

JL: I applied for law school and I was accepted at Cornell, and in that fall, I attended Cornell.

SH: What did you do for the summer in between?

JL: Good question. I don't recall.

SH: Who was your favorite professor at Rutgers?

JL: I don't think I had one.

SH: Was there anyone that you found most distasteful?

JL: No.

SH: Or a subject?

JL: No. I had an accounting professor who I liked, but I don't remember his name. I had Professor [Mark] Heald, who taught history. He was pretty good.

SH: I just wondered if there was one that you really liked.

JL: I had nobody else, nobody that was outstanding.

SH: Did you and other veterans serve as mentors to these eighteen-year-olds in your fraternity, or did you just let them do their thing and you went your own separate ways?

JL: You mean when we were back at Rutgers? We didn't serve as mentors. As a matter-of-fact, I remember having a, not an extreme, but we really didn't, we weren't too nice to them, in many cases. People like Buddy, we kind of resented them a little. I mean, I became friendly with them, obviously, but at that time, there was like a chasm between the returning veterans and the high school kids, children, boys, who were coming to school.

SH: What about the veterans themselves? Did you talk amongst yourselves about your experiences?

JL: I believe so.

SH: You did?

JL: Yeah. We were two groups, don't forget, when we came down here, two very distinct groups. There was Buddy's group, and there was my group. … We all belonged to the same fraternity, but we were different. It took a while for us to accept one another.

SH: Did the veterans talk about the war with each other, or did they just put their heads down and go right to work?

JL: We talked about it with each other, but we really didn't talk about it with the others. … Yeah, there wasn't much talk about it.

SH: If you were having a conversation with another veteran about the war when a non-veteran walked in, would you just stop talking?

JL: Stop, yeah. I mean, we just didn't discuss it with them. Buddy and I always kid each other … I was very hostile to him when I came back. He said, "Very hostile." I'd say, "No." But there was that gap.

SH: What about law school at Cornell? Was it the same thing, or were most of the people in your class veterans?

JL: They were veterans, yeah.

SH: How did the professors treat veterans in their classrooms, both at Rutgers and at Cornell?

JL: I don't recall that they treated them any differently than they did people. Don't forget, there were people who weren't eligible for service. I don't think they treated them any differently. They may have a little more compassion. I remember professors telling us that, you know, "You have a paper to do, take your time. You were in the war. You're not used to coming to class." But I don't remember anything particularly different.

SH: When did you meet Mrs. Levin?

JL: I met Mrs. Levin in 1947, '48. She was from Elizabeth and I met her through a series of blind dates, and she was dating somebody else from our fraternity. That's how I met her.

SH: You met her here on campus.

JL: No, no. Her best friend's brother was a fraternity brother of mine, Teddy Blau. He was a fraternity brother and … through the connection, we all got together. … He married one of them. He married Florence, and I married Muriel. They were from Elizabeth. She had just graduated high school.

SH: Did she go onto college?

JL: She was self-educated. After our children were born and [were] going to school, she went to night school, and she went to Kean College, Montclair State, and she got a degree in education.

SH: How long was it from the time you met Mrs. Levin until you married her?

JL: I believe it was maybe a year, a year and a half. As I said, she was dating one of my other friends, before we started dating. That was the best thing that ever happened to me.

SH: So this was a long commute from Cornell back to Elizabeth.

JL: I don't think I dated her when I was at Cornell. I think it was after Cornell that I started dating her. I didn't date her at Cornell. It was after I left Cornell that I started dating her.

SH: Where did you practice law, after you finished your law degree?

JL: I never got a law degree.

SH: Tell us that story.

JL: I only lasted one year. … Maybe I couldn't study. Maybe I wasn't ready for it, but I lasted one year at law school, and I left. … Then I went to work for my father and my uncles.

SH: You're not the first veteran to tell us that it was just too difficult to come back to civilian …

JL: I regret it to this day. … My wife always wanted me to go back after we were married, but I never did.

SH: What did you do for your father and your uncles?

JL: I worked with the buildings. They had all these apartments, [and] I managed them, in Union.

SH: Do you have children?

JL: I have two children. They are both single. My son was married and divorced. My daughter never married.

SH: What is your passion now, Mr. Levin?

JL: My passion? My wife is my passion. She is. I mean, I can't describe her. If you lined up 10,000 women, I couldn't have picked a better one.

SH: That's incredible.

JL: No, it's not incredible if you know my wife.

SH: How do you think the war impacted the man we're interviewing today?

JL: The what?

SH: How do you think the war made the man we're interviewing today?

JL: I grew up. I was a kid when I went into the Army and, when I got out, I was a man. I mean, I have to say I learned what life is like. I was with people that I had never [had contact with before]. … I came from a middle-class, Jewish background. Most of my friends were Jewish. We were very parochial. … When I went into the Army, I was with people from all over the country, uneducated. I remember when we were at Fort McClellan, we were, there were men from Tennessee and Kentucky, and I think they'd never seen urinals. So you really became a little more sophisticated.

SH: Are there any other stories that you would like to tell us?

JL: I don't think so, except, you know, I have my dog story. I told you that.

SH: You said that the dog stayed with you even after you were married.

JL: Oh, yes, she lived with us. Muriel knew her.

SH: Do you know what happened to the pups?

JL: I really don't.

SH: Did you keep in contact with anybody that you served with overseas?

JL: No, I did not.

SH: Did you join any organizations?

JL: No, I did not. I never joined any veterans organizations.

SH: You didn't sign up for the active Reserves. Therefore, you were protected from Korea. During Korea, did you, at any time, wish you were back in the military?

JL: Oh, no, never.

SH: Some men we've interviewed have said that they had one pang of guilt, and then that was it. It went away. What did you think of the Vietnam War?

JL: I was against it from day one, violently against it.

SH: Have you stayed active politically?

JL: … I am a political person, but I'm very left leaning. Some of my views are rather radical, but, no, the Vietnam War was, to me, a disaster.

SH: All right, well, I thank you for taking time to do this interview.

JL: You're quite welcome.

SH: Thank you, Rupali.

RP: Thank you.

JL: Rupali, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 9/10/02
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 9/15/02
Reviewed by Julian Levin 1/8/03