

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER H. LOHMANN, SR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Walter H. Lohmann, Sr., on March 8, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick with Kurt Piehler and ...

Richard Fluegel: Rich Fluegel.

KP: And I guess I'd like to begin by asking a few questions about your parents and where you grew up in.

Walter H. Lohmann: Yes.

KP: You were born in Hoboken?

WL: Correct.

KP: And did your parents live in the German section of Hoboken?

WL: They tell me, at that time, Hoboken was a very heavily German community. I remember my parents went to a church that had the sermon in German. That was not so when I came along. But it was a German area.

KP: Your parents were Dutch Reformed?

WL: Yes.

KP: Was that something that had been a tradition in their family or was that something they came to because of the community or the location?

WL: I'm very hazy on my background. My father was an orphan. His mother had died in childbirth and his grandmother raised him. His father went off and remarried and was kind of lost in antiquity. But, as long as I can remember, they were involved in the Dutch Reformed Church.

KP: Your father was an orphan. Was he raised in an orphanage?

WL: No. His mother was dead and the other was not involved in rearing him.

KP: So, who raised him?

WL: His grandmother raised him. He was never involved in the service. Came World War I, I think, my oldest brother had been born, and he was not taken in. But his three kids made up for it. All three of them were in the service.

KP: Your parents, how did they meet?

WL: My mother had been to secretarial school, which, I hear, was quite an education at that time. Neither one went to high school. And they met, somehow, in connection with my father's early work.

KP: Your father worked for PSE&G?

WL: Public Service. He went with them, soon after they were formed actually.

KP: Public Service was a major force in New Jersey.

WL: Yes.

KP: Especially in the northern part of the state.

WL: Tom McCarter was the founder. And I later went with Public Service myself.

KP: Do you know how he got the job?

WL: No. He, too, had gone to business school and he started as a stenographer, which was common in those days. When I went with the company, many of the so-called "secretaries" were male. And that's what he was, and [he] worked his way up to a management position.

KP: So, your father had fairly steady work through much of his career?

WL: Yes. Yes, we, I lived through the Depression without suffering, really. He always had job. He took a cut in pay.

KP: Okay.

WL: Fifteen percent, as I remember him telling me. But, I never suffered during the Depression.

KP: So, even though he took a pay cut, he had steady work?

WL: Yes. Yes.

KP: He didn't go down to one or two days a week?

WL: No, no, no. In those days, they were working six days a week, as a matter-of-fact.

KP: So, you would only see your father, in terms of work, on Sunday?

WL: Sunday, yes. Yes.

KP: How did he like working for Public Service?

WL: How did he like it?

KP: Yes, how did he like it?

WL: He really loved Public Service, and it kind of rubbed off on me. It was a paternalistic company in those days. That's not true in today's corporate world. I just retired in 1988, but the company had just begun to change drastically, as far as paternalism goes. It was a great company to, it was a family company, to work for.

KP: So, it was very much part of the pattern for you to work for Public Service, in that sense?

WL: Yes. Yes. I don't think that would have happened today.

KP: Yes.

WL: [In] today's world. But, yes, I had good feelings for it, as a kid, growing up, and ended up spending almost forty years there myself.

KP: So, your family has a long history there?

WL: Yes.

KP: When did your father start in Public Service?

WL: Gee, I think it was around 1908. I may be off a year or two. But the company was founded a couple of years before that, by Tom McCarter.

RF: I believe it was 1903.

WL: Was it 1903?

RF: Yes.

WL: Yes. He was, I think, in his thirties, Tom McCarter pulled together this operation. [He] did a fantastic job.

KP: After your parents got married, did your mother work outside the house?

WL: No. No, she, as I guess was common in those days, she became a housewife and raised three kids.

KP: Was she active in any organizations when you were growing up?

WL: She was active in the church and she was also active in the Eastern Star, the Masonic female branch.

KP: Was your father a Mason?

WL: Yes. Yes, he was.

KP: You were born in Hoboken, but you went to school in Weehawken.

WL: We moved to Weehawken, I think, [when] I was like a year old, maybe.

KP: So, you had very little connection to Hoboken?

WL: Very little connection with Hoboken. I was raised in Weehawken. I have fond memories of Weehawken. That's where I left to come to Rutgers, as a matter-of-fact.

KP: What are some of your fondest memories of Weehawken?

WL: Well, we grew up with the town. We saw the Lincoln Tunnel being built. The first tunnel buses, I remember, were a big, exciting thing in those days. Instead of taking the ferry over to New York, [you took a bus]. But it was a good place to be raised as a kid.

KP: What was Weehawken like before the tunnel? It must have been a much quieter place.

WL: Yes. It made a big difference. Gradually, over the years, the traffic and tunnel buses became tremendous. The first fare, I remember, was fifteen cents, to get to New York from Weehawken. But it was an event, when a tunnel bus passed by. But then, gradually, there'd be hundreds of them in a day.

KP: Do you remember your first ride through the tunnel?

WL: Yes. In 1937, the tunnel opened and I was in school. I forget what grade I was in, but we marched through the tunnel with the school kids. We marched halfway through, and the New York kids marched the other way, and we met and had a little celebration. But that was a big event.

KP: What about the people in your neighborhood? Where were they from and how long had they lived in Weehawken?

WL: It was a very stable neighborhood. They were a lot of different ethnic groups. There were a lot of immigrants, a lot of Germans, and a heavy Jewish population. Frictions began to show up. I didn't know what was happening at the time, but I remember one of my buddies suddenly showed

up in a Hitler Youth Organization uniform. I later found that he was involved in the Fritz Kuhn operation. I think it was in New York. But he had a "Sam Brown" belt on. Gee, we kind of envied him, not knowing, having any idea, what it was all about. And then, I can remember stories of Jewish émigrés from Germany coming over, with nothing in their hands but cameras and things like that, that they could sell and get started. But, looking back, you could see the frictions of the war starting.

KP: And this was in the '30s?

WL: In the '30s, late '30s, yes.

RF: I read that there was a large pro-Nazi parade in Weehawken in 1935.

WL: I don't remember a parade, but there could very well be. You began to see these uniforms then. As kids, we began to look on the Germans as the bad guys, even though I was German. But rumors went around that the janitor of the apartment house had a shooting gallery in his basement, and we used to sneak in and try to listen. We never did hear anything like that. But there was a lot of Bund activity and a lot of uneasiness among the population.

KP: Bund activity in Weehawken itself?

WL: Yes. I think they belonged to the New York/Fritz Kuhn operation. They used to go to Camp (Nordland?), I think it was. And as I say, at first, the kids envied them. They had these exciting things happening to them. But then we began to realize that something was wrong.

KP: How did your parents feel about what was going with the Bund and with Germany?

WL: My father was always a very, I guess you'd call him a "hawk," today. He was [a] very patriotic kind of an individual, even though he was never in the service. He signed my enlistment papers, I still have a copy of them at home, with no hesitation, and my mother did, too. They were obviously concerned. I don't know if you have children, but I often thought how tough it must have been for my mother, having three kids overseas at one time. I was in the Pacific, and my one brother was involved in the Bulge, and another one in Germany somewhere. But he was very patriotic.

RF: Did your parents have any mixed feelings due to their German heritage?

WL: I never heard that reflected, no. But friends of mine, I had a friend named [John F.] Schwanhausser, Rutgers graduate, Chi Psi. He was very German. He spoke German. And he was in the thick of the fighting in Germany, and I asked him if he had any qualms. In effect, he was shooting at, maybe, his relatives. And he said he never did. He just went back, as a matter-of-fact, to re-tour his battle area.

RF: Could you sense any animosity from your neighbors?

WL: No. Not really. But, I guess we were naïve, maybe, in those days. I never felt any racial or ethnic frictions at all as a kid. When I got in the Navy, I saw and felt some frictions between the Southerners and the Northerners. All white, but there was definite friction. I remember fellows from Alabama and Georgia really giving us a hard time on occasion, and vice versa. It was a little shocking to me to see that.

KP: Did you speak German?

WL: No. Just a word or two. It stopped at my oldest brother. My mother and father spoke German.

KP: But it didn't penetrate down to you?

WL: No, just a word or two. There was an unusual incident in Weehawken, it just occurs to me. It must have been in '36, '37, '38, somewhere, maybe, maybe before. The Japanese fleet made a visit to New York Harbor. I don't know if you ever caught up with that, and I don't remember what ships they were. But the Japanese sailors flocked into Weehawken. They bused them over. And I can remember them knocking at, we lived on Boulevard East, on the river, knocking on our door. They couldn't speak any English, and they wanted to use the bathroom. And it was really something to see these hundreds of Japanese sailors in white uniforms. That was a big spectacle. Their ships were out in the harbor.

KP: You must have reflected on that when you were out in the Pacific.

WL: Yes. Yes. Very definitely. In that time period, too, I had a distant cousin who was in the Navy. He was a lieutenant, senior grade, as I recall. And he took me to the Brooklyn Navy Yard when I was a little kid, to see the *Honolulu* launched, the cruiser *Honolulu*. And that was spectacular, to see a big ship launched. He took me on board a submarine and a destroyer. That really sparked my Navy interest. And I saw the *Honolulu*, years and years later, after it had been hit with a torpedo. I think it was in Pearl Harbor, after the hit, and I just happened to see it, and that struck me as kind of strange.

RF: Ironical?

WL: Yes, ironical.

KP: So, you had an early interest in the Navy?

WL: Yes, very much so. Another family relative, Bobby Wilson, had gone in the Navy out of high school. This was, he must have gone in '39. He was a career Navy man at the time of Pearl Harbor, and he was sunk on the submarine *Perch* and the whole crew was captured. I don't know if you

ever researched anything like that. The entire crew survived, they were taken to various prison camps, and he ended up dying a day or two after he was liberated. He never got back. But he was an inspiration to me. We had a picture of him in our yearbook, I remember.

KP: What was your high school like and how good was it?

WL: Weehawken High was small. My recollection, we had about six hundred students, maybe, tops. It was a new school, built during the Depression by the PWA, and spanking new. I thought I had a good background for Rutgers. It was heavy in math. It was a good school. [It had] mostly female teachers at that time, a bunch of New Englanders.

KP: So, a lot of emphasis on grammar?

WL: We had terrific English teachers, yes, and a good language [department]. In those days, I took Latin. I guess I had two years of Latin, then French. It was good preparation for Rutgers.

KP: Roughly how many went on to college?

WL: Gee, I'd be guessing, but a relatively small percentage. Nothing like today, I don't think. Money was an object, even though college was very cheap. I don't know, my father paid the tuition, but the GI Bill, when I got out, was only giving us, I think, \$500 a year, something like that. And that, plus fifty dollars a month or something like that. I mean, that carried me through. I had to work a little bit. I'd say a small percentage went to college.

KP: What was the expectation for college in your family? Was it expected that you and your brothers would go?

WL: Always, yes. My parents never had. My oldest brother, they kind of pushed, and he went one term and quit. But my second brother did graduate from NYU and I graduated from Rutgers.

RF: What made you decide on Rutgers?

WL: That always amazes me. My father, in his naïveté, gave me the choice of three schools: Stevens, Columbia, and Rutgers. Columbia and Stevens, I would have had to live home and commute, and my brother had done that to NYU and hated it. So, I picked Rutgers because I could live away from home. It was ridiculous, wasn't it? But that was it.

KP: Do you know why your father decided on those three schools?

WL: I think Rutgers was well-known in the state, and the other two were close by. Stevens was right in Hoboken. In those days, you had to take an entrance exam, as I recall, for each college. They didn't have SATs. I remember, specifically, going to Stevens and Rutgers, taking an entrance exam, different exams.

KP: Did you play any sports in high school?

WL: Just intramural. Weehawken had a terrific basketball team, and I was never good enough. We were state champions, but basketball was a big sport. We had no football. At Rutgers, believe it or not, I went out. When I got here, it was [during] the war years, there really wasn't much of a team. They played Fort Monmouth, I think, and some of the army. Harry Rockefeller was coaching.

KP: Yes.

WL: And a friend of mine and I went out for a while. We got our heads knocked off. Stopped it. At that time, when I started Rutgers, people were leaving like flies to go in. The college had taken over Alpha Kappa Pi house and some other places. We lived as a dorm. And every week, there'd be new draft notices [that would] come in. Our population would drop to, literally next to nothing, and I decided to enlist, which I did, in the Navy. And, very strange, they, I don't recall even asking for it, but they allowed me to finish the college year. We were on the quarterly system.

RF: Right.

WL: I started college that Monday after I graduated from high school. And by May, I had finished three quarters, or a full college year, before they took me.

RF: You were a mechanical engineering major.

WL: I was mechanical, right.

RF: Was that due to your father's PSE&G influence?

WL: No, I don't know how that [worked]. He was not an engineer, he was an office person. I just felt [that] I had a bent for engineering. And that isn't passed down. My son, who I kind of wanted to be an engineer, he's a lawyer. No, I was the only engineer in the family. I never regretted it.

RF: You just felt you had a certain aptitude for it?

WL: And I think I got a very good education at Rutgers here, you know?

KP: What did your family think of Roosevelt? You were Republicans.

WL: The first, I can remember, you know how they used to have Presidential buttons?

KP: Yes.

WL: I can remember Hoover buttons. My father was a staunch Republican. I can remember Hoover buttons vividly, and Landon buttons even more vividly, 'cause they had a daisy, a felt daisy with a pin on it. It was Kansas, I guess. But he was a staunch Republican.

KP: Throughout the '30s?

WL: Throughout, yes. I can remember him, even back then, not exactly complaining, but commenting on how his taxes kept going up. I remember when I came back and had the GI Bill, and I was raving [about] how great the GI Bill was, and it was, and he was saying that, well, he's paying for it in his taxes." Which was true, too.

KP: You've commented that Rutgers was a very strange place during that time, that there was a lot of flux, with people constantly leaving. How much of a college experience did you think you were getting? Did it live up to your expectations, or what did you notice that was different?

WL: I had always had an idealized feeling of what college was like, and Rutgers came close to being [that]. It was small, fairly compact campus. But I did get the feeling, and even more so later, looking back, that we had missed out on a lot because of the war years. A lot of the classrooms were temporary buildings, they built trailers and structures like that. But it was a very small. I liked it. And yet, in engineering and with a quarterly system, it was all work and very little play. One of the reasons I dropped out of football [was because of] practice every night. You'd be exhausted and you'd have to study, and [I] just couldn't handle it with everything we had to do.

KP: I've read that there was a real notion that you should prepare as much as you can, because you are likely to go into war, so that people took ROTC more seriously.

WL: By all means, yes. And the Army units were here, the ASTP. Years later, I got in the navy V-12 unit, which was similar, after I got back from overseas. But it was definitely a war atmosphere, and the ROTC was active, and everybody was gung ho. I can even remember the commanding officer's name. It was a Major McCready. We used to march from gym, the old gym, up to Buccleuch Park, heavy drill, and you were pretty well-prepared with the basics when you went in.

KP: Had you any interest in joining the Army after being in ROTC?

WL: I always wanted the Navy.

KP: Really?

WL: I always had an interest. I went, as a matter-of-fact, when I took my first physical, I kept telling myself, "If I can't pass the navy physical, I'm going to try the Coast Guard. If I can't get in the Coast Guard, I'm going to go in the Merchant Marine." I wanted to go to sea. It was kind of a kid's dream, I guess. And I passed the physical and I was thrilled. They said Navy or Marines, [that] I could have gone into, and I picked the Navy.

KP: You said you had a very romantic notion of the sea. This was partly from family and friends.

WL: Yes.

KP: But did you have any other interests that were that strong?

WL: I remember reading, two years before, "The Mast," as a kid. Is it Henry Dana?

KP: Yes.

WL: And that stuck with me. I'm still a buff on ships. And I loved every minute of sea duty.

KP: It lived up to so many of your expectations?

WL: Oh, yes, it really did. It was a thrill to get on board ship.

KP: Did you have any contact with the ASTP people? I've read they were very separate with their specialized training.

WL: Yes. There was almost zero contact. As I recall, you rarely had one in your class. I think they used to, they would march to classes in groups. You had very little contact. You kind of envied them. This was a little ridiculous, too, I guess, but they had sharp uniforms and we had raggedy, ROTC World War I stuff. And you kind of admired them, but we were separate. They ate, they got their meals paid for. They had everything paid for, [and we were] kind of a little jealous, maybe. But as it turned out, and I later knew a number of fellows in it, the ASTP, many of them, it was disbanded, and they needed infantrymen. And they shipped them, by the thousands, into the infantry, and they went overseas very quickly.

KP: I've interviewed people from your class, from '49, and that, in fact, happened to them.

WL: Yes.

KP: They were in ASTP programs at other places and, all of a sudden, they were shipped to the infantry.

WL: Yep. The Navy, I don't think, did that. I think the Navy, I got in V-12 very late, but I know people who went through all of their undergraduate work in V-12.

KP: Most people, especially from the Class of '42, have a distinct memory of chapel and Dean Metzger.

WL: Yes, chapel was a requirement, and I was brought up as a church-going young man and I

never resented it in any way. I think it was Tuesdays [when] you had to go. You had a chapel card, and I forget how they used to punch it, at chapel I think. Any you had to have, I think you were allowed to cut a small number. But it was very boring. The chapel was beautiful. The nicest part was the singing. What was his name? The musical director at Rutgers?

KP: Oh, Soup Walter.

WL: Soup Walter used to lead the singing, and he was good. And Dean Metzger used to give a little, very dry, sermon. But there was never any resentment of it. It was another load on your back, to have to run over to chapel and fit it in with everything else.

KP: So, it sounds like engineering was demanding.

WL: Very demanding, especially with a quarterly system. I remember, we had almost all eight o'clock classes, and they had classes on Saturday, [in] my recollection, at least one year, from eight to noon. And at noontime, I'd rush out and hitchhike home to Hudson County, or take a train if I had the money. It was very demanding, yes. The junior year, I think we had five laboratories: electrical, hydraulic, strength and materials. I don't even remember them all, but that meant a lab report, generally, every week or two. And there was no such thing as a computer. I had a typewriter. But, it was demanding, time wise.

KP: Did you have any hope that you could finish out your college career during the war or did you want to enlist?

WL: I was anxious to get as much college in as I could. If I had my choice, I would have rather been born a couple of years earlier. I never got my commission, and it's a regret I have in my life, to this day. I was on the way. I could have gotten it after I got out. And then I decided to get married, so I never ... I passed the physical, I passed the mental exam they gave, and I just never sent all the papers through. But many of my friends had graduated from college and went in with a commission. I wanted to be a Navy pilot and I flunked the depth perception [test]. I tried desperately to get in the Navy air program. But they used to use the depth perception test, with the silver sticks. Now they have it completely different. And I always did badly on it. And they were right, I have bad depth perception. But I used to envy these pilots. They were as young as I was. We used to pick them up when they would make a crash landing in the sea. And I always envied them when we picked them up. I'd think, "Gee, wouldn't it be great to be one of them." They were young, ensigns, and maybe nineteen, twenty tops.

KP: Was your interest in naval aviation sparked by the war?

WL: Yes, it was glamorized, the wings of gold, and so forth. But had I, if I had another life to live, it would be in a Navy career. I recognize [that] there's all kinds of disadvantages to that. I don't know, maybe you were in the Navy. Were you?

KP: No. No, I wasn't.

WL: But I would have loved, a friend of mine [who] I met in V-12, did stay in the Navy and he's just retiring from the staff at Annapolis. He got involved in the phys. ed. end, in the middle of his career. I think he got out of the Navy as a commander, and stayed at Annapolis.

KP: One final question about Weehawken. What was the impact of Pearl Harbor on your town, especially with the number of Nazi sympathizers there?

WL: I can remember, it was a Sunday. My recollection is [that] it was in the afternoon sometime. I may have the time off. But I was reading the funny papers. Everybody remembers where [they were]. And I had a radio in my room. That was a big thing, to have my own radio. And it was a shocking kind of [thing], you know. It didn't mean an awful lot. But it was a very shocking thing as a kid, and my parents were distraught. I never knew how mothers felt until [afterwards.] I went in the Navy and I was thrilled to get in the Navy, and I went to torpedo school [and] I was thrilled to get in that. And I asked for a destroyer. I was out in California, and here, I see my name on the list for the USS *Black*. I was elated, and I called my mother up from San Francisco and, thrilled, I'm telling her, "Gee I got destroyer duty. We're going overseas," and she cried. And I'll never forget that.

KP: You didn't realize how upset she was?

WL: No. I couldn't understand. "What was she crying about?" Now I understand. It was a shocking thing to have Pearl Harbor come.

KP: What about your high school community? What happened to some of the Bund people?

WL: You know that they didn't walk around in uniforms anymore. There was a little bit of ostracizing. I remember, this one kid that I first saw in uniform. We used to kind of ostracize him. And he was an innocent kid. His parents probably had been born in Germany. But there was a lot of activity overnight. I was an air raid warden courier. We were issued helmets, the old World War I type. We had blackout drills. You knew there was a war on.

KP: What about blackouts in the harbor?

WL: I don't know whether the blackouts did include New York, as I recall. I remember being out on the Boulevard during the blackout. It was a weird feeling. Another sign we quickly saw, it was ridiculous in a way, but they had an armed army guard guarding the Lincoln Tunnel. And as kids, we used to flock around him and want to see his rifle and all this. But, I mean, he was totally helpless as far as, he was stationed up on the cliffs, looking down at the tunnel approach, with a Springfield rifle. But he was there twenty-four hours a day.

KP: How long did they keep a guard there?

WL: I don't remember. He was there, probably, when I left. But that was direct contact with somebody in the Army. Then, the draft began to hit families. My oldest brother was drafted. I used to go down to watch the guys leave. At the high school, the buses would pull up, and the draftees would [get on], a sad looking bunch, looking back. I can remember one guy didn't show up. His mother wouldn't let him go. They owned a candy store a couple of blocks away and she just wouldn't let him go. And they sent the police down and he was embarrassed, but they picked him up. But my brother went in, I think in '41. He ended up being in four or five years. Then, my second brother went in, so you knew there was a war on. Ration stamps were in for shoes, meat, butter.

KP: Was there any black market in Weehawken?

WL: There was black market. It bothered me, and years later I asked my mother about it. My mother, all of a sudden, was able to get butter. And this was not like my father. He was kind of a straight arrow. But there was a friend of my mother's who was able to get butter. I have no idea what she paid for it, but it was black market. And I remember asking her about it, after the war. Looking back, I always thought he might have been in the Mafia or something, but he got her butter. There was black market. But there were also hardships. You wore your shoes thin. They'd have holes in them before you got them replaced. My brother used to come home from leave in the Army, and they'd give him special gasoline coupons. I forget how much you could, but a ridiculously small amount, couple of gallons. But he was so annoyed because he said they were burning gasoline to keep warm, out on (Cadre?), down in Georgia somewhere. So, there were ironies.

KP: What was it like to be in the Navy? Did it live up to your expectations when you first entered? You enlisted in Newark and then where did you go?

WL: Boot camp. I had no idea where I was going. Boot camp was in Maryland. Perryville, Maryland. It's no longer a boot camp. I went out of my way to go down there after the war. I think it's a shopping center now. But we went by train. It was tough. The first couple of nights were very lonely. I remember my first Navy meal. I wondered, "Jesus, is it going to be like this?" Believe it or not, breakfast was hot dogs, boiled hot dogs. But that wasn't typical. We ate well. After a week or two, you quickly [got acclimated]. Boot camp was very well run to acclimate you as a young kid. They handled it very well, I thought.

KP: In what ways? What was so good about it?

WL: You were kept occupied, really occupied, with elementary but constructive things. I mean, knot tying classes, first aid classes, seamanship, and drill. And you were kept so fully occupied, you were exhausted at the end of the day. I think taps was nine-thirty, and you got up at like five in the morning, something like that. And you were going every minute. And it was a thrill to go home on boot leave, in uniform, for the first time.

KP: You only had one leave from boot camp?

WL: I had very little leave in the Navy, yes. In fact, that's the only leave I remember. I think I had five days. And you must have looked [like] a mess, because you got a boot haircut. They practically shaved your head. After that, I went to torpedo school, which was very well-run also. I still have notes. They took a green kid, eighteen, nineteen, most of us, and in three or four months, you could do everything there was to be done on a torpedo. Dismantle a gyroscope almost blindfolded, put it back together again. Navy did [a] very good training job in those days, and I suspect they still do.

RF: Was torpedo school something that you chose to do or is that something you were assigned to?

WL: A friend of mine had gone to torpedo school, a high school buddy, and he came home, and I wanted to get on a destroyer. I didn't want submarines. That was kind of odd. The Navy tried to push us into submarines. They built submarines on the Great Lakes, I understand. And in torpedo school, in Chicago, we went on board a submarine, to convince us how great submarine duty was. And I did not want it, and didn't take it.

KP: Why not?

WL: Claustrophobic. The old World War II subs were really tough. And I've since known people who served in submarine duty. It was very rough duty, very rough.

KP: There's not a lot of space, even on a regular ship.

WL: Even on a nuclear sub, there's not a lot.

KP: But even on the surface ships. I've been on a destroyer.

WL: Oh, yes, they're small.

KP: I was surprised how little space there is, even for the captain.

WL: Oh, our bunk room, in a room like this, we would have fifteen people sleeping. Our bunks were three high, and everything you owned was in there with you. We had a small compartment to keep the gear in. But submarine duty was not for me. You almost never saw daylight in combat. Very unhealthy life. They would surface at night, typically, to charge their batteries, and stay submerged practically all day long. You very seldom even got out on deck. They'd give a couple of guys a turn at getting out on deck. A friend of mine was engineering officer on one. It's rough duty.

KP: Who were your instructors at boot camp?

WL: They called them athletic officers ... they were petty officers. That was interesting, too; they were typically only a third class petty officer and they had an athletic "A" specialist. I suspect they were maybe ex-football players or something; they were very athletically inclined. In torpedo school, you had some contact with officers, very little. It was mainly second and first class torpedomen, and chiefs that taught.

KP: How long did boot camp last? And how long was torpedo school?

WL: Boot camp was roughly six, seven weeks. Torpedo school was roughly three, four months. Very concentrated. Torpedo school was very interesting, as a college kid.

KP: When you came to boot camp, you had mentioned that there was a re-fighting of the Civil War. Did that take place at boot camp or did that come later?

WL: No, that was in boot camp and torpedo school, yes. There was a Southern group, and the further south they went, the tougher they were to deal with. Alabama, I can remember, particularly. But once you got on board ship, you were very united.

KP: Did everyone know how to read in boot camp?

WL: I never saw any evidence otherwise. One thing that did strike you, when you got on ship. I was in the Navy when they made the first black commissioned officers. But when I first went in, the only black you ever saw was a mess steward. They were the officers' stewards, and they were totally segregated, even on a little ship like a destroyer. It was really awful. There was a little, below-decks cabin that, maybe there were three or four of them, they lived down there. And you knew their names and you saw them, but they were ...

KP: You didn't have contact with any of them?

WL: No. No, they were strictly the waiters for the officers.

KP: What about in battle?

WL: They had battle stations and they had the toughest battle stations. They were down in the five-inch gun, you had a ready room with ammunition, right below the gun. Then, you had a, I forget what they used to call it, another ammunition handling room down below that, way down in the bowels of the ship. Horrible place to be, because you could hear the shooting, [but] you never knew what was happening. But that's, generally, where they were. It took nothing but brute strength to handle five-inch shells. They weighed fifty-four pounds. But that was their battle station.

KP: Why was that the worse place to be when you're in battle? Was it important to know what was going on?

WL: Very much so, yes. The engine room gangs, too. We used to feel sorry for them, and they were not happy. They never had any idea what was happening. We had mostly air attacks. Five-inch guns would go off first, naturally. Then, the 40-millimeter and then the 20-millimeter. And they would hear this step-down. When the 20-millimeter went off, they knew something was in close.

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

WL: But when you were out on deck, it made a big difference, because in the heat of battle, there was no fear. The fear came after and before.

KP: In battle, you were just so concerned about what you had to do.

WL: I was a loader on a 40-millimeter gun. It's located right here, as a matter-of-fact. That was a twin 40-millimeter gun. I was between two five-inch guns. And when they went off, it felt like somebody slapping you in the face, literally. The air pressure. And the only ear protection [you had,] you kept cotton, that you'd carry in a matchbox, and you'd stick that in your ears. And, before your gun went off, you had to get hold of your ears, too, even though you had a helmet on. It was awkward. But, once your gun began to go off, you were loading it. You had no idea of time. I can remember one incident, the plane had gone over and we were firing full steam. We had clips of four [that] we were dropping, almost as fast as you could drop them. And immediately after the action, I pulled out a cigarette. I smoked then. And I went to strike a match. And we had an ensign on our gun director, and he slapped the match out of my hand. The wing of a plane apparently had hit the bow of the ship, and we were flooded with gasoline. I didn't even know it. And there were pieces of aluminum, which we made belt buckle ornaments out of. But the gasoline had just flown back along the ship, and our gun was flooded with it. I immediately knew. You could smell it. But that was a weird feeling.

KP: So, your Ensign did some very quick thinking then?

WL: He probably saved a disaster. My clothes were soaked with gasoline.

RF: But you didn't even realize this?

WL: Had no realization. You know, we wore work gloves [for] loading, and it may not be noticeable, but this pinky is bigger than this one. After one action, my hand felt wet and I took my glove off, and my hand was covered with blood. And I figured, "My God, what's happened?" I had gotten my pinky caught in the loading mechanism. It was a minor injury. I keep telling people I should have gotten the Purple Heart. They put a couple of stitches in. It was just a pinky, but it bled a lot. And I didn't even know that happened. They patched you up in minutes and you were back. But your mind was totally occupied.

KP: Did you ever see fellow sailors or officers that would freeze in combat situations?

WL: There was one, we had one fellow on board who they took off. And the story was they gave him a, what'd they call it, Section W or something. Discharge. He [had] a nervous problem in storms. He used to tie himself somewhere out on deck. Lash him[self]. He was afraid of being swept overboard. I never saw anybody freeze. I guess with youth, you weren't really smart enough to freeze. But we had good officers. In a bad storm, we had a loose fire hose up on the foreword deck, flopping around. And this Lieutenant went up, with an enlisted man, to try to lash it down. And he got a broken leg out of it. They dragged him back. And it was a heroic thing to do really, to risk his neck. And they did get the thing lashed down.

KP: How many of your officers went to the Naval Academy?

WL: Annapolis. Not many. The captain was Annapolis, the exec was Annapolis, maybe one or two others. Most of them were ...

KP: Naval Reserve.

WL: Naval Reserve. Young. And boy, I envied them.

KP: It sounds like you would have liked to have been an officer.

WL: Oh, I used to talk to them in the off-duty times, and they encouraged me, and I finally did get in V-12. We had a couple of, what were they called, "mustangs," who had been enlisted men and worked their way up. They were tough, good officers. We did have an executive officer once, talk about freezing in combat. I had almost forgotten it. He used to twist his buttons off. I wasn't on the bridge, but we had a first class torpedoman who was stationed on the bridge, in general quarters. And he used to tell us about this guy. And he was finally taken off the ship and replaced with a warrant officer as executive officer. This fellow had come to us from another ship. Evidently he had been through a lot, but he used to get very nervous in general quarters. Our Captain was like John Wayne. Unbelievable.

KP: Nothing would shake him?

WL: Nothing. And I was a manager with Public Service. I often thought of how good a manager he was. In the middle of general quarters, once things settled down a little, he would walk around the whole ship and just, you know, pass, "How you doing? Everything okay?" And, it just felt good to see him. And then he'd go back up [to] the bridge. And we were flagship of the destroyer division. We had a four-striper, division commander on board. And our captain would always volunteer for the worst assignments. I don't know if he was looking for medals or what. We got up one morning and we were steaming like crazy, and we were away from the fleet. And word quickly got around that we were after a Japanese cruiser task force. And here we were, six destroyers, and that was scary. We never found cruisers. We did, I have it as an anecdotal memory, we did find a

coastal tanker, off the coast of Japan, that we sunk. That was an embarrassment. We got up there and this thing came out. It was a little, almost a riverboat. Low in the water, you could see people scrambling around on deck. And we started to fire with our five-inch guns, and [it] didn't come near the thing. There were splashes all over. Finally, our division commander had every ship stop firing, and we fired one at a time, so we could see where our shells were landing. And we did, then, hit him. But we must have fired fifty rounds without hitting him.

KP: What was the range?

WL: I'm going by memory, but it couldn't have been less than a mile off. He was a sitting duck. It was almost, well, I guess it was cruel in a way, except it was wartime. But, when we did hit him, he went up in a huge black explosion.

KP: And did the crew get off?

WL: I don't think so. We didn't stay to find out. We were right off the coast of Japan at the time.

KP: And this was in 1945?

WL: This was '45, before the Okinawa invasion. We were involved in bombarding Okinawa with the old battleships that had survived Pearl Harbor. And we bombarded with five-inch shells, too, for quite a long time. But then, after the invasion was over, we were off the coast of Japan, and in various operations. There was a battleship bombardment, maybe one of the last of World War II, I don't know. There was a steel city, Kamaishi. It was the only time I ever saw a sixteen-inch gun go off. We were with the *South Dakota*, the *New Jersey*, *North Carolina*, and the British *King George V*. It was a big fleet. We were detached from the main fleet and had gone up. And we bombarded all day long. We just cruised in circles around the battleships, didn't do anything.

KP: You were just screening then?

WL: Just screening. And it was like watching a movie. I remember, you could see the sixteen-inch shells going through the air. It was unbelievable. The muzzle velocity is slow enough, and they were firing at a range, around twenty miles, inland. I think their range was twenty-three miles, something like that. And the smoke and haze from their guns just filled the sky by the end of the day. It was really an experience.

KP: Going back a little bit. Where was torpedo school?

WL: In Great Lakes, Illinois. We had a dummy torpedo run, for example. We'd fire, it was a regulation set of tubes, and we would fire torpedoes with water in the warhead to give it weight, in a sawdust pit. We had an experience once. The sawdust was wet after a rain, and the torpedo skidded along at the end of the range and right through the wall of the signalman school, which was in a Quonset hut, down the road a ways.

KP: How long did you think the war was going to go on? Did you know you were going to the Pacific?

WL: You thought the war would last. This was '44, '45. We used to kid about coming back to Rutgers in '49, which seemed like forever away. You felt the war would last forever, you know?

KP: Because the war was beginning to end in 1944.

WL: Yes.

KP: But you didn't have that sense, at the time?

WL: Not at all. Not at all. As a matter-of-fact, there was talk of asking for landing party volunteers from the fleet. And that made people nervous, towards the landing on the Japan mainland. That would have been a horrible thing. I don't think I would have survived that.

KP: And this would be part of the Navy landing parties?

WL: They were looking for naval volunteers. Why? I have no idea. But, the Army took a beating at Okinawa. Unlike most of the Pacific, [where] the Marines took the heavy beating. But at Okinawa, the Army took a very heavy beating.

KP: Did your vessel transport any Army people at all?

WL: No, we screened. On the invasion day, it was a spectacular sight, to get up and see ships, as far as the eye could see. All kinds of ships, including the troop ships which landed. But they had heavy losses. General Buckner was killed at Okinawa, and the Japanese general was also killed. I don't know who took over for Buckner, but had we had to invade Japan, I just have a feeling we would have been in pretty rough shape, having just been through a couple of tough invasions, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. We would have combat-weary troops and I think it would have been very, very rough.

KP: After you finished torpedo school, you went out to Camp Shoemaker in California.

WL: That was the worst time in the Navy. It was in a so-called OGU, "outgoing unit," and it was awful. It was a mud hole, food was terrible, lines were long. You wanted to get on your ship, and it was a miserable couple of months.

KP: Because you were there for two months.

WL: Yep. We were waiting. Our ship was in dry dock. I didn't realize at the time, but it was going through a complete overhaul. It had just been through the Leyte invasion and was being

overhauled to go out again.

KP: When did you know you were going aboard your ship?

WL: In that time in Camp Shoemaker, like November, December.

KP: You got your assignment?

WL: Everyday, they'd post a new billing for crews.

KP: What did you do during those two months?

WL: They had work parties, which were miserable. No matter what your rate was, you dug ditches. It was a mess, dirty work.

KP: Did you get any leaves?

WL: No leave, no. No. That's where I called my mother from, I guess, when I was in that outgoing unit. We got liberty.

KP: Where would you go?

WL: San Francisco, Oakland. Then, once I got on the ship, the ship was still in dry dock and we lived on a barge. And we got liberty every day. We liked that.

RF: When you were in training, was there any sense of urgency that you felt, on the part of your instructors, that they had to get you through this and they had to get you out to the fighting?

WL: Yes. Yes, I would say so. The instructors, on the whole, had been people [who had] duty at sea. Yes, there was definitely an urgency to get out. When you think of the number of ships they were building. I think, at Okinawa alone, there were 325 ships damaged. That's a lot of ships and a lot of crews. A destroyer had three hundred and some men. Yes, they were pushing heavily to man ships.

RF: And then, when you finally set out to sea, what was your first action on your ship?

WL: The first action was getting seasick, actually. The first night out, we left San Francisco and went to San Diego on a shakedown, after the shipyard. And we hit a storm, and it was awful. I lost my shoe with a wave that came over while I was going up on watch, and it was a mess.

KP: So, you experienced a storm very early.

WL: Yes, yes. And that was scary. Storms at sea, they still scare me. But the first action, we were

heading out, I didn't know it at the time, towards Okinawa. We passed Iwo Jima and we passed Ulithi. And we went to general quarters at either dawn, or at night, it was dark I remember. And we had a radar contact, a so-called "bogey." And we fired five-inch guns. I was on the forty. We couldn't see anything that we were firing at. And the range must have been something in the order of five, six miles, and we saw a burst of flame. It was the first plane we shot down, and we didn't even see it, just saw the flame. It all seemed so easy. It was the first time I ever heard the guns go off, too.

RF: So, this was at night?

WL: It was either before dawn, or in the middle of the night, yes. We had this radar contact and went to first general quarters, first real general quarters.

KP: What went through your mind when you went to general quarters?

WL: You were uptight. The worst part was [waiting] until the action happened. You always had a radar contact, and the officer on our gun had earphones and contact with the bridge. And you'd be told you had a contact at thirty miles, twenty miles. We had a guy on the ship, who was on the 20-millimeter, who had eyes like an eagle and he was always the first to spot the actual plane. We knew where the bearing was, and he would spot a glint in the sky and yell, "There it is!" And, geez, we'd be looking, I couldn't see a thing. And then the five-inches would open up and you'd see it.

KP: You'd been trained to be part of a torpedo crew.

WL: We had surface battle stations, which we never had to use. In exercises, we did fire torpedoes, dummy torpedoes. But, I was on the torpedo tube for that.

KP: And then you were assigned to a gun.

WL: Yes, air station was a gun. And we had depth charge stations. Once, we dropped depth charges. Torpedomen handled depth charges. But ninety-nine percent of it was air.

KP: You showed us a Xerox picture of your torpedo crew.

WL: Yes. Somewhere in that list.

KP: I'd be curious to know something about them and their backgrounds.

WL: There it is there. Yes, they were a wild bunch.

KP: Where were they from?

WL: I was eighteen. There were three of us. We were kids. These three. Three innocent young

kids.

KP: And where were the three kids from?

WL: This guy was a farm kid. He had never been off the farm, very naive.

KP: From the Midwest?

WL: From the Midwest somewhere. This guy was from the city. He was kind of a city-slicker type. There was a fellow from California. A real gentleman, a nice, real nice guy. This fellow here was a first class torpedoman who had never graduated from high school, and in our library on board ship, we had boxes of books. I found a math book, and he and I used to sit on the deck, and I was tutoring him in algebra. And he wanted to get back and go to high school. This guy was from Yonkers. [This one was from] Jersey City. This fellow was an alcoholic. He used to drink shaving lotion on board ship, really a mess. The bulk of them were really good. This fellow is from Philadelphia, looked like a pirate. He used to wear a headband, had a beard. They were tough guys. This was in port in the Philippines. He's in uniform, in whites, 'cause he was on watch. The rest of us were in the work party. But they were from all over the country. I was the only college kid. They used to call me, "the college kid."

KP: Because of your time in college?

WL: Yep. Yes. And that was resented, when I first went on the ship.

KP: Really?

WL: Yes. They used to say, "How come you're not up on the bridge?" And that was difficult for a young guy.

KP: Why did they just think that you should naturally be on the bridge?

WL: You should be an officer. I mean, a lot of them, probably, barely got out of high school. Some of them didn't get out of high school. It was unusual to have an enlisted college kid.

KP: You said they were a tough lot. In what ways were they tough?

WL: Well, physically, they could handle themselves. That, remember, I was just about fresh out of high school, nineteen, and they were, the bulk of them, I guess, they must have been in their thirties.

KP: Were any of them career Navy people?

WL: One of them, the fellow in uniform, was going to stay in, he thought. There was a real camaraderie in the torpedo gang. It was fifteen or thirteen men, whatever it was. The gunner's

mates had their own crew, the deck gang. Very strong bonds. When I left the ship to go to V-12, it was after the invasion and all, some of the tough guys practically had tears in their eyes. They were all grouped on the rail watching me go off in a fifty foot motor launch. I was going back to V-12.

KP: So, they missed you?

WL: So, I could be on the bridge some day. And they really wished me well.

KP: Were you a bit surprised, because you said they were a tough lot.

WL: Yes. Yes, in that there was a real closeness. It was amazing.

KP: Life aboard ship is very close.

WL: Yes.

KP: I've seen a World War II destroyer and I can imagine the close quarters.

WL: Yes. Looking back, you wonder how you did it. The heads, for example, were two rows of wood seats, maybe twenty seats. I mean, no privacy. During the typhoon, a lot of people were sick and they crowded the head. And I had to get out of there. I wasn't sick, but I was beginning to feel funny. So, I wanted to open up a hatch to go to the torpedo shack, which was just across a little path, deck area. And it must have taken me twenty minutes, a half hour, to get over there. You'd open up the door a little and a wave would come over the ship and pour in. You'd fight your way over. When I got over there, it was away from the crowd. But you were crowded. I mean everything was, the mess hall ...

KP: How was the food?

WL: Overseas, bad. Everywhere else, good, in the Navy. We were getting food from the British ships. We got mutton, off Okinawa, to the point where you wouldn't even eat it anymore. And canned peas. For a long time I didn't eat canned peas.

KP: Because a lot of people said that when they were in the Navy, no matter where, they were they ate very well.

WL: Well, it was funny. On Easter Sunday, we had chicken. Whether it was frozen or what, I don't know. We had a chicken dinner, right on the day of the invasion. No matter where you were in the Navy, on a holiday, you got turkey or chicken. We were interrupted. We were at GQ and they let us break and go down to the mess hall, and you'd no sooner have your tray loaded, you'd go back to GQ. [To] make a long story short, we took the food up to General Quarters with us, in cups. You'd throw a chicken leg and ice cream in another cup. But the food was not, I had a lot of cavities in my teeth, when I got out. We made our own bread on board and we had bugs in the

flour, which you'd pick out and you'd have nothing left but a crust. The food was not good.

KP: What about the medical attention? Did you have a pharmacist's mate or a doctor?

WL: We had a first class pharmacist's mate, who was excellent. He stitched my finger. We had a doctor, who, we were told, was a psychiatrist, and he was useless. The first class pharmacist's mate carried the weight. When the *Black*, when the *Kidd* was hit, they did not ask for our doctor, their doctor, I guess, either needed help or was injured. They took a doctor from the *Hale*, another ship. But our doctor didn't do surgery or anything like that. He didn't seem to be accepted by the officers much, either. He kind of wandered around on his own.

KP: Did you know why?

WL: I don't know. He was just an oddball. And, thank God we had this first class pharmacist's mate. I wouldn't be surprised if he were a doctor today. He was excellent.

KP: What about chaplains? Did you ever see a chaplain when you were in the Navy?

WL: Very seldom. We went down to the Philippines for a while, and there was a destroyer tender. If you wanted to go to church, they told you to go over on this destroyer tender. But I, that was, we went over in a fifty foot motor launch and climbed a ladder to get on the ship. And they had, out on deck, a church service with a chaplain. It was nice. They had a portable organ and sang the Navy hymn and so forth. Came time to go back, we went back in dribs and drabs, and there was no ladder there, and this fifty foot motor launch is bobbing up and down. They had this crane hanging over the ship. The guy says, "Hang onto that, I'll lower you down." It had to be forty, fifty feet. I remember, terrified, hanging onto that ball and chain, and they'd lower it to this launch. And the launch, of course, was going up and down, and you're just going down. But that was the only chaplain I can remember.

KP: So, you had none aboard your destroyer?

WL: No. No. I don't think we had any in the division. Cruisers and battleships, I'm sure, had them.

KP: What did you do on your off duty hours? What did you and other members of the crew do?

WL: We did have books, and I did all the reading I could do. We'd write letters, get a haircut. We had no official barber. You'd sit on a bucket out on deck and we had a guy who used to cut hair. And we'd pay, he must have made some good money, I guess. I think we gave him a dollar, or something like that. But reading. I used to like [to read] at night, to get away from everybody. [I'd] go out on deck. There were no lights on deck, of course. It was a nice feeling to be out on [deck]. I still like that, at sea, at night.

KP: Because being on deck was one of the few places you could be alone.

WL: Yes. Yes, especially at night. If the weather was nice, you'd sleep out on deck sometimes. String a hammock underneath a gun mount. The officer's life wasn't much more comfortable then. I think that only the captain and the exec had a private office, a private room.

KP: And even that was not that luxurious.

WL: Very tiny. The captain's sea cabin was maybe half the size of this room, and in it, he had his bunk, his desk, his files, and so forth. But it was tight living.

KP: What about gambling?

WL: Yes. There was a lot of card playing. I never was a gambler, but there was a lot of card playing, on deck, most of it. I can remember money being blown overboard, and nobody gave a hoot. It just, money didn't count much. They tried to grab [it], but they couldn't. But there was gambling.

KP: And how did the officers look upon it?

WL: The officers stayed clear of the enlisted men, pretty much. You didn't, the officers on a destroyer were very busy, handling their bridge duties, officer of the day, junior officer of the day. I've since learned, you know, how much [they really did]. They had a tough job. Our gunnery officer, for example, was, in General Quarters, he would be the main director. And he'd be in charge of the firing of all five five-inch guns. He saved the ship, really. The officers were very busy, and you didn't see much of them, except the Captain.

KP: Who made it a point to be seen.

WL: Who made it a point to be seen every day. His name was King, and rumors had it that he was a relative of Admiral King. I doubt it, but he may have been.

KP: And he was an Annapolis man?

WL: He was Annapolis. I tried to find out once, how far he had gone. Next time I'm down [to] Annapolis, I'm going to try to look him up. I'd be surprised if he didn't make Admiral.

KP: Were there fights aboard ship or other problems? Discipline problems?

WL: There'd be short tempers from time to time. Yes. I never saw any outright fight. I did see a fight on a liberty launch, but there was beer involved, where a guy got knocked overboard. In fact, the shore patrol knocked him overboard, and the next launch picked him up. That was horrible duty, by the way. When you, in the Navy, when I was in, they didn't have regular shore patrol.

When we had liberty trains, going into Chicago, they'd pick every fiftieth guy, and give you a belt and an armband and a club, and you were shore patrol on the train going in and on the train coming back. And that was awful duty. I had it once.

KP: And what was so awful about it?

WL: Well, coming home at night, I mean, at the end of the weekend, we had a bunch of crazy guys who'd been drinking and there you would have fights break out. I think we used to get free train fare for being shore patrol. It was horrible. In the city, they had regular shore patrol, once you hit San Francisco.

KP: A lot of people who were in the Pacific had very fond memories of beer parties. Did your ship ever experience a beer party?

WL: Yes. To my amazement, I was very naive and innocent, I didn't even know we had beer on board. But we got to the Philippines and they announced a beer party. And they pulled, they had these cases of canned beer, and it was warm. It wasn't refrigerated, it was pretty bad. But we went ashore, no drinking, I never saw drinking on board ship, we went ashore to a beach and they gave you cans of warm beer. And they gave us steaks, that was one of my anecdotal memories. We had a cookout ashore, and we saw this native kid, a young boy. And we wanted him to climb a tree to get a coconut for us. And we offered him this steak, a big raw steak. And we, you know, I thought, "Boy he'd really go for that." He looked at it as if he'd never seen one before, and he probably hadn't, and had no interest in it at all. And we never got our coconut. I guess they ate fish. This was really in the jungles of the Philippines.

KP: Was that your only contact with people who lived in the Philippines?

WL: Yes. Yes. I forget how long we were there, but it was supposed to be liberty and relaxation. But it was hot, and [it] rained every afternoon and [it was] steamy hot.

KP: And you were living aboard the ship?

WL: We were living aboard the ship and went ashore, maybe once a day.

KP: And what did you do?

WL: It was a bad time. We just kind of hung around. We did a lot of painting on the ship. We painted our ship down to the water line, believe it or not, in the time I was on it. We put people over the side on boatswain's chairs. Our ship was spotless. It was beautiful, the navy blue gray. Dark blue on top, light on the sides.

KP: Did you have any Marines aboard your ship?

WL: No. No. Battleships did and carriers did. There's one incident, just shut me off anytime you want.

KP: Oh, no, no.

WL: There was one incident, when I got back. I was out of the Navy, maybe just a couple of weeks. And there, there was a movement going on to save the *Enterprise*, the carrier *Enterprise*, Halsey's carrier. And they were going to scrap it, and they wanted to save it as a memorial. And it was going badly, I think they finally saved the bridge section somewhere. But I was over in New York, for some reason, in the Wall Street area, walking along. I had contributed to this fund. Who do I bump into but Admiral Halsey. I mean, here I was, a kid seaman, and I recognized him instantly. He had a service ribbon, and I don't remember what it was. It was one of the Distinguished Service Cross or one of the top ribbons. He was a little guy. He had an overcoat on, a fedora. And I went up to him and I said, "Hello, Admiral." And he said, "Hello, son." I think I told him I served under him and he shook my hand, and off I went, but I was so thrilled. But the thing that hit me was, here, this crowd of people on Wall Street, walking, had no idea who this guy was, in civilian clothes. He was, he struck me as an old man.

KP: You probably had a far different image of him when you were serving under him?

WL: Yes. He didn't look like a tough old man. He looked just like an old man, a little, quiet old man.

KP: Your leave at the Philippines, was this before the Okinawa invasion?

WL: No, it was after.

KP: It was after?

WL: After, yes.

KP: When the *Black* traveled from San Francisco to the Philippines, did it stop in Hawaii at all?

WL: Yes. We stopped in Hawaii, and that was a thrill for me, seeing Pearl Harbor for the first time. Yes, we stopped at Pearl Harbor for a very short time. I never had any money in the Navy.

KP: Really?

WL: I had liberty at Pearl Harbor, and I can remember maybe having two dollars in my pocket or something, going around Honolulu. But I saw very little of it. But we stopped for a very short time.

KP: But you did walk around Honolulu?

WL: Yes. And that was enjoyable. I saw Waikiki Beach, which was not as nice as the Jersey Shore, actually.

KP: Growing up, did you have this certain image of Hawaii?

WL: Yes. Yes, idyllic I guess. Hawaii climate was delightful. Have you been to Hawaii?

RF: No.

WL: It was nice. I want to get out someday to see the Pearl Harbor Memorial, the *Arizona*.

KP: You haven't been back then?

WL: Never been back. And I didn't see any of the wreckage when I was out there, where we docked. I'm sorry I didn't get to see some of that. They tell me that's a moving memorial to see.

KP: After you left Hawaii, where did your ship connect with the task force?

WL: We left Hawaii, and you would pick up along the way. We're heading towards Okinawa, and we passed Iwo Jima. The Iwo Jima invasion, I guess, was over. I think that was, what, February 1st, or around the end of February. But the island, I think, was secure. But we began to pick up ships. Every day, there'd be more ships, tankers, and then cruisers, gradually battleships, carriers. By the time you got to Okinawa, as I said, that invasion day, when you got up that morning, you went out, it was just striking. It was very reassuring. I thought, "My God, we're invincible." Hundreds and hundreds of ships, as far as the eye could see, on the horizon. And all the ships you'd heard about. I mean battleships, carriers, the *Essex*, the *Enterprise*, the *Franklin*, and so forth.

KP: You had seen action at Ulithi, during an air strike.

WL: Just the air strike, yes.

KP: Had you been at all prepared for the kamikaze attacks?

WL: No. Not at all, no. And I don't think the Navy was. As I recall, the real quantity of kamikaze attacks happened at Okinawa. I guess there were scattered other [occasions]. And we also were told there were, I forget what they called them, they were torpedo boats, supposed suicide boats. And we had special lookouts. That was scary. The thought of being hit by a little [boat], you're right off shore and it would have been simple to get to us. But, no, the kamikazes were new. Our Navy air was unbelievable. They protected us. They flew from the carriers and they would shoot down, if, typically, in a strike, thirty, forty planes would come in, they'd probably shoot down three quarters of them, maybe even more. The destroyers on picket duty would shoot down, our ship shot down twelve in three months at Okinawa. And what got past the destroyers were into the main

fleet, and that's where they did there [business]. [They] went after the carriers, mainly.

RF: So, the main duty of your ship was to protect the rest of the fleet?

WL: Protect the carrier. Protect the carriers, particularly. The battleships had done their duty, and they were almost invulnerable, even [when] hit with a kamikaze. So, the Japanese soon discovered that, rather than risk their necks trying to get in to the carriers, they'd not risk their necks, but, they could do more damage by hitting the destroyers, which they did.

KP: So, the targets changed?

WL: The targets changed. And it became obvious. They came after us, they would all be trying to get over us, and we'd be firing at them.

KP: Then, it changed?

WL: Then, it changed, and they would come to you. And you'd get nervous. There was a plane, the F-4U Corsair. It was an American Marines carrier plane, with a "gull" wing. And it looked like a Jap plane. I forget what Japanese [plane]. But one Marine pilot, kidding around, buzzed our mast one time and we fired at him. [We] realized, as soon as we started firing, that he was our own.

KP: It was a pretty foolhardy thing for him to do.

WL: It was stupid to do. That caused a fuss in the division. They didn't do that again.

RF: My father had mentioned that, I'm not sure if [it was] his ship or one of the ships with him, shot down a US plane.

WL: I don't doubt it. We had one funny incident. Do you know what a PBY is? It's an antiquated sea plane.

KP: Yes.

WL: We got word, while we're off Okinawa, that this PBY, defenseless, was being followed by a Japanese plane. And he was coming in to us, so we expected him. And he came in low on the water, and behind him is a Jap plane. And the poor Jap pilot probably had no idea we were there. And this guy came in, and all of a sudden, we saw him and started to fire. We shot him down. And the PBY wiggled his wings and went up off. We saved his neck. And I often think what the Japanese pilot must have felt, [as he met] unexpectedly [with] six destroyers.

RF: When the kamikazes were coming at you, did they come in low or were they up in the clouds?

WL: Usually from the sun. When they got low, you would know they were in the final part of their

run, and that was very frightening. The only close call we had was that one. We were bombed once. That was embarrassing to me because I was on [lookout]. Lookout was very tedious, and they'd call people off their battle stations, if you had been there a long time, to relieve the lookouts. So, I was up on the bridge on lookout, with binoculars. And you'd go in sectors, arcs. And all I can remember, I didn't see this plane, I heard the plane before I saw it. And I can see the big meatballs on the wings. He somehow got through, and nobody saw him. Why radar didn't get him, I don't know. And he dropped a bomb. [This was] off Okinawa.

KP: So, there were still some traditional bombing attacks?

WL: Yes. Yes. And I can, I could see this bomb drop from the plane. It just, it landed in the water and exploded off our bow. Did no harm. And the captain calls me in, and, geez, I thought he was going to throw me overboard. I missed the plane, it came in from my sector. And he was so nice. He just said, "Lohmann, get back to your battle station." And I got off. They never asked me to be a lookout again. That was very stressful, that lookout.

KP: Especially during Okinawa.

WL: Yes. Staring, you know, through binoculars for a half-hour, maybe.

RF: But you weren't the only one that missed it. The entire fleet was there.

WL: No. We didn't get a shot off at it. To this day, I don't know whatever happened. And the plane got away. Once in a while, you'd hit a plane and it would start burning in flames, and the flames would go out, and he'd take off and get away. Japanese must have had it tough. Their losses were tremendous.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Walter Lohmann, Sr., on March 8, 1995, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, with Kurt Piehler and ...

RF: Richard Fluegel.

KP: What did you think of the Japanese during the war? Especially you had had some limited contact with them, you'd seen the sailors up close and they weren't as distant for some.

WL: But in my combat experience, you almost never saw the people you were killing. Once in a while, you could see a body in a plane, you know, as it got close. But it was very, almost unemotional. You didn't, unlike the Army infantry, I guess. But you did, you got so, I guess, you hated the Japs. We got word that there were two Japanese pilots that had parachuted, one time. This was off Okinawa. It was a beautiful day, I remember, and we were told to go out and pick

them up. When we got out there, as we were approaching, we had all kinds of feelings. "Geez are they ..." You heard stories of them shooting at you. And there were two bodies in the water. Turned out they were both dead. And their parachutes were floating. They had life belts on, very well-dressed. And we were told to pick them up. And we picked them up with hooks, grappling hooks, pulled them out of the water, laid them out on the deck. And I remember, the one fellow obviously had been burned. He had his goggles on, and his face was badly burned. And he, apparently, had been shot in the mouth. This was the only close-up of the enemy I'd seen. There was a hole, a bullet hole, through his cheeks, and he was badly burned. The other fellow, I couldn't, he looked in perfect shape. I couldn't imagine what was wrong with him. And you were kind of searching him, they took stuff off of him. They took knives. And then I looked, he was missing an arm. That sticks with me to this day, too.

KP: His arm had been severed?

WL: His arm, right at the shoulder, was gone. And he presumably bled to death. He must have been hit with anti-aircraft fire, just taken his arm off. And I guess they were in the same plane. I don't know. But they landed. And it sounds kind of macabre, but there was scavenging going on, cutting pieces of the uniforms off. And I can remember, this fellow had flight boots, they were very well-dressed, by the way, to my surprise. It was like summer uniforms, coveralls. And he had flight boots on, and I started to go for them, but I saw one was badly burned, or else I would have had a pair of souvenir flight boots. But they had both been through a mess. Whether a plane had shot them down or a ship, I don't know.

KP: Was that your only experience?

WL: It was the only time I, although, when we landed at Okinawa, there was some. You saw some sign of fatalities, casualties. After Okinawa was secured, when I flew back, I was to fly back to get in V-12. And I left the ship and landed at Okinawa, and I was hitchhiking to get to an airfield. I think it was (Yon-Ton?) airfield, they called it. And the desolation of Okinawa was really terrible, it was. I remember seeing a baby crawling, and the mother, apparently the mother, wondering around, dazed-like. I didn't have any children then, but later, when I did, I thought about this. The baby couldn't have been six months old, crawling in the dirt. They had nothing. The number I looked up, in Professor Chamber's text, the civilians lost 100,000 at Okinawa. And the Japanese, the troops, lost another 100,000. But it was desolation, just nothing moving except our own Army vehicles.

KP: It sounds like you had a real sense of what the fighting was like from that visit to Okinawa.

WL: Yes. Yes, that was very disturbing. I got on a plane there. It was weird. The Navy just dumped you off, and I was heading for a base at Farragut, Idaho. They didn't particularly tell you how to get there. You hitchhiked. You went to an airfield, and the Army Air Corps got us on a plane. I made it as far as Pearl Harbor. We stopped at Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Johnston Island, Guam. I got bounced by wounded at Pearl Harbor and took a ship back. And got paid. [I] had

some money in my hand for the first time in a year.

KP: You wouldn't get regular pay aboard the destroyer?

WL: No. No. They gave, as I recall, they gave you a partial payment, enough to buy toothpaste and candy and to gamble with. I don't remember how much it was, but it wasn't much. Maybe five dollars or something like that.

KP: You told us about the attack aimed at the *Black*, but ended up hitting ...

WL: Against the *Kidd*.

KP: ... hitting the *Kidd*.

WL: Yes.

KP: And you have very vivid memories of that.

WL: When you get a chance, you might be interested in reading the account. It's very accurate, to my memory. One of the things, when that happened, it was a ball of fire when the plane hit. And we all wondered, "What happened to the guy on my battle station?" And throughout the day, we were getting communication. But the guy in my very spot had nothing, had a broken arm. I was curious, you know, "Was he killed?" But thirty-eight were killed. The whole fire room crew was killed. And it doesn't make it clear in there, and I'm not sure, the Captain was either killed or wounded so badly he could no longer perform his duties. And a young Lieutenant took over, which really must have been an experience for him. They had to bury their men at sea. They were able to keep speed up, amazingly. They still had one fire room left and they kept up pretty good speed. After that happened, you were more conscious of where you were and what was going on around you.

KP: How long did you stay as part of the screen in the Okinawa invasion?

WL: Oh, you'd stay, you'd be away from the carriers for weeks on end. You'd fuel. You'd essentially go back. Sometimes a tanker would come out, sometimes you'd fuel, you'd go back and fuel from a carrier or a battleship. That was a treat, to fuel. We were at sea, by the way, 110 days on our ship. That was very unusual. All of the invasion plus. And we kept a full load of fuel up, by fueling almost every day. But when you went alongside a battleship or a carrier, they had oranges and stuff we didn't have. I can remember on the *North Carolina* once, they opened up crates of oranges, and they were throwing them like baseballs. And we, I ate a dozen oranges. They had ice cream, they would give us ice cream, big tubs of it. They lived, must have lived pretty well.

KP: What about your showers?

WL: Showers was tough. We had to make our own fresh water and you couldn't make enough fresh water to serve the crew. We used to have a lot of salt-water showers. And if it rained, you'd quick[ly] soap up and go out in the rain.

KP: So, you would even do that on a destroyer?

WL: Yes. Almost, rarely could you get a real fresh-water shower. And then, they were tough. You were supposed to just went down, turn it off, and lather up and rinse. Laundry was good. We had, I never had so many clean clothes. We had our own laundry.

KP: You mentioned that you got to know some of your officers. A lot of enlisted men have said that there was a real, almost insurmountable gap, between enlisted men and officers.

WL: But maybe because I had, I was the "college kid," but there was a Mr. Adams, an Ensign, I was particularly close with. I would meet him on deck and we'd talk college, and he encouraged me, you know, to go back. I don't recall whether he was an Annapolis man or not. But nobody worked harder on the ship than the officers. They were, especially under our Captain, they were ...

KP: It sounds like you have a very favorable impression of them, that they were very admirable figures.

WL: Yes.

KP: Because they do get a lot of privileges in the Navy, compared to the enlisted men.

WL: Oh, I'm sure [they] do. They, compared to enlisted men, they live like kings. They did have their own mess. They bought their own food in the Navy, and they did have some delicacies. I remember canned turkey, white meat. When we were loading stores, some of it would disappear in the enlisted man's mess. We'd drop it down an engine room hatch or something. They got canned fruit, a couple of little niceties, but not much more than we had. But the responsibility must have been tremendous. When you think that the ship is moving twenty-four hours a day, there's no time off, especially for the captain and the exec. He lived on the bridge. He had a cabin down below, about half the size of this. Then, he had a sea cabin, right up on the bridge, right in back of the wheelhouse.

KP: Yes, I've seen captains' sea cabin.

WL: Because we had a division commander on board, he had the big cabin, which was half the size of this. And our captain lived in the sea cabin. He lived on the bridge, literally, day and night.

KP: What did having the division commander aboard your ship do for the morale of the ship? Did that make things more tense?

WL: He was a, I said I respected the officers, our skipper was a Lieutenant Commander and then made Commander. The division commander was a four-striper, and it was a big deal to have a four-striper on a destroyer. But he was a weak. To me, he appeared weak. He drank, for one thing. In port, there was an incident where he was drunk, which really didn't go over well at all. And we got the feeling that our captain was running the division.

KP: Really?

WL: Yes. This four-striper had his own signalman aboard, and his own yeoman. That was his staff. Theoretically, he was running the division of ships. But he struck me as being a weak. Maybe he was a battle fatigue [case] or something, I don't know.

KP: You mentioned drinking twice. Except for the beer party, there wasn't much drinking. But when you were in ports of call, what was the level of alcohol consumption?

WL: There was a lot of drinking. I didn't, I guess, [this was the] first [time I] drank in my life. At Rutgers, there was very little drinking when I was here. I don't know what it's like now, but it was, it was very mild. But on liberty, you drank. Even if you didn't drink, you drank. I started drinking beer. But they quickly recovered. I mean, they, except for this one alcoholic we had, I never saw anybody, and also this four-striper, that, I'd say, [that] his duty was affected by alcohol. This alcoholic was a, happened to be a torpedoman. He was useless. He had the shakes. He was an older guy, too, compared to me. He was like thirty-five, I guess. But the Navy drank. I guess the Army did, too.

KP: You mentioned that you smoked. Did you smoke before the war?

WL: At Rutgers, I started to smoke. That's one of the, we weren't sin-free. Close to it. But I smoked a little bit, just fooling around. But in the Navy, overseas, cigarettes were a nickel a pack. And in San Francisco, you remember, you wouldn't remember the cigarette shortage. Cigarettes were a negotiable currency. You could go in a bar and drink all night on a pack of cigarettes.

RF: Really?

WL: You'd give a guy, a civilian, two or three cigarettes, and he'd buy you a drink. They were a nickel a pack. The civilians were waiting on line in San Francisco to get them. So, you smoked a lot. I was smoking two packs a day by the time I got back. Just nervous habit.

KP: Did you ever stop?

WL: Yes. In 1962 I quit completely.

KP: Was that the time of the Surgeon General's warning or before?

WL: No, I had a son who bugged me.

KP: Really?

WL: Yes. He bothered my conscience. I quit. Do you smoke?

RF: No.

WL: Yes, it's a bad habit. But almost everybody smoked on board ship.

KP: You mentioned two things. One was an inspection tour by Admiral King.

WL: At Ohio State, that was very odd, in the V-12 unit. We had, roughly, two hundred men, maybe, in the unit. And it was a great experience, great unit. Now, I was separate, like the ASTP was at Rutgers. And I was in that favored group, getting all my meals paid for, and free tuition, uniforms, and so forth. But King must have been in the area somewhere, and how they ever got him there, we had a four-striper in command, and he must have had some influence, 'cause he came in and inspected our unit. And I can remember, he was a five star admiral and there was gold up to his elbow. There was a two-inch stripe and, was it, four half-inch stripes, I guess. Rear admiral was one, you had three, you had four. And literally, he had gold up to his elbow. He gave us a quick inspection. Our skipper at Ohio State had been in command of landing craft at Normandy. He was a good man, interesting fellow, an old-time navy man, white hair. Maybe [he was] even brought back from retirement, I don't know, but he had a good reputation.

KP: You also mentioned that your life jacket sank.

WL: Yes.

KP: When you threw it overboard.

WL: We used to, on watch, one of my watches was in the ready room of a five-inch gun. And we used to sleep on watch. It was, one guy would stay awake with earphones on. And we'd get up like that in the general quarters, and you'd wait until your regular general quarters guy got there and you would run to your battle station. But we'd sleep on our life jackets as mattresses. And mine was very flat. They were kapok. And I began to wonder, "Is this thing any good?" And when the peace was declared, a couple of us threw the life jacket overboard and it went down like a rock. But they were the vests, the old kapok. I don't think they use kapok anymore. But my suspicions were correct.

KP: You also mentioned that you were involved in a near ramming incident.

WL: Yes, on the way to Okinawa, when all these ships were grouping. I didn't realize it at the

time, but night maneuvering is very hazardous. You make quick turns. It was after dark and we were just getting ready to hit the sack, to go to sleep. And the word came over the loudspeaker: "Close all watertight doors and compartments," in a panicky voice, from the bridge. And we panicked. As soon as you heard that, you knew something disastrous was going to happen. And, instead of closing all the hatches, everybody ran up on deck. And my bunk was under the stern of the ship, and I ran up the ladder and ran out on deck just in time to see this destroyer. I felt like I could have reached out and touched him. He tore across our fantail. He must have made a wrong turn in the dark, we were almost rammed. That was a very scary, your heart was beating and that. But the bridge reacted properly and gave a command to close all watertight doors. They expected a ramming.

KP: And, in fact, the crew could have seriously hurt the ship.

WL: Crew reacted badly, 'cause had we been rammed, we would have taken on water, certainly in that end of the ship.

KP: What happened after that incident? Was there any sort of disciplining of the crew?

WL: There was a lot of commotion on deck and I don't know that the captain even knew.

KP: Knew the full details?

WL: Everything happened so fast. That order was probably given by the officer of the deck, you know, totally on his own. It was all over like that, and we were okay.

KP: You went to the V-12 program. When did you get accepted for that program?

WL: When I was in high school, I wanted to be a pilot, and I flunked the depth perception. So, I took, I wanted to get in V-12 then, to get in surface [ships], and I flunked the eye test. Then, I went overseas, went through the whole combat. And the invasion was over and there was a notice up on the bulletin board that they were taking interviews for V-12 on board this tender. So, I figured, "Gee, I'll give it a try," not thinking there was a chance. And I went over on the tender and they gave you a complete physical. They had a doctor and hospital. And I passed the physical, I passed the eye test all of a sudden. I didn't wear glasses at that time. And things happened very fast. All of a sudden, they were telling me to pack my bags, they were shipping me back. I don't recall the dates offhand. It was October, I think. The typhoon, it was right after the typhoon, 'cause my orders were delayed by the typhoon. And I got back, I went to Ohio State, I got back to Ohio State after the term had started because I was late, with the typhoon, getting orders. Here's where the Navy did [a] nice thing. They shipped us to Farragut, Idaho, to give us some refresher training in math, and I thought that was fantastic. I had been away from school, I had finished one year, had been away for two years, two and a half years. And they gave you a very quick refresher in math, and then they shipped you to Ohio State. I finished one year there. The Navy was [a] good outfit in my books.

KP: Yes, you've hardly had any negative comments about the Navy.

WL: Very, very few.

KP: Did most of the crew feel as positively about their experience as you did?

WL: There was the usual griping, but I think they did. I mean, they would be, you were proud of your ship. On liberty, there was a lot of [that]. Because we were [on] the *Black*, a bunch of guys went off and got, I almost got a tattoo. I didn't get it, but a bunch of them got a big black leopard on their shoulder, to signify the *Black*. There was a definite ship spirit.

KP: How much do you think the captain and the officers had a role in that?

WL: I think [it was] tremendous. Looking, having served in management at Public Service, things happen from the top down. Without [a] doubt in my mind. If it's not happening on top, it's not going to happen. And there were other ships in our division that obviously were a mess. Sloppy. They were the butt of jokes.

KP: How could you tell they were sloppy?

WL: Just gear lying around. In dry dock, when we were alongside other ships, just sloppy gear lying around the ship. Our captain, evidently, had a great reputation, or they never would have had made him flagship of the division. But the officers meant a lot.

KP: What about the petty officers?

WL: The chiefs, they used to say in the Navy, run the Navy. And I guess they do. On our ship, our chief torpedoman wasn't too sharp, our first class ran the gang. We almost never saw the chief. The chiefs lived in their own quarters, ate in their own quarters. But we had good chiefs. The chiefs were, and the first class, generally, were good men. Advancement was very slow. I passed the test for third class torpedoman, which was the equivalent of buck sergeant in the army, I think, at the time. It's different now. But I was, I got into V-12 before I got it. You had to wait for a vacancy. When we went to the Philippines, I bumped into a torpedoman who wanted to swap with me. He wanted to go onboard ship, but the way I looked at that, [it meant I would have to go to] the islands, and I wanted nothing to do with that. But you had to have a vacancy to go somewhere. The senior petty officers were good.

KP: And you spent a year at Ohio State?

WL: Yes. That was in regular engineering school. And we were, unlike the Army, we were mixed in the classes. We did, besides all our regular schedule, which was heavy, we did double phys ed. We had to take double credits, and then we did our own phys ed. We had to work out every

morning, jogging, whatever.

KP: In the V-12 program, how many had been in the Navy already and how many were new?

WL: If you were an overseas veteran, you were rare in my unit. And we were the big deals, if you had service ribbons on. Out of two hundred men, I'm guessing, under fifty had been overseas. Most of them were fresh, new. And even though the war was trailing down, the Navy was still pouring men through officers' training. That was remarkable, when you think of what they taught a guy who'd never been on board a ship. Suddenly, he's an officer on a ship. It's really a responsibility.

KP: And you'd served on a ship, whereas many of them in the V-12 program hadn't been on a ship.

WL: The V-12, in addition to our regular courses, too, we had to take naval science courses. And I loved those. I took a gunnery course with heavy guns, sixteen-inch firing problems, and it was a good program, besides your regular engineering course.

RF: So, you had the duty on the ship, plus you also had the schooling at Rutgers.

WL: Plus a year of college, yes.

RF: So, that prepared you a lot for the V-12?

WL: Yes, very much so.

KP: What was the attrition rate like?

WL: I was only there a year and they broke up. By then, the war was absolutely over. They broke the unit up. And I had various choices. That was odd. I met a girl at Ohio State and that was my downfall. I ended up getting married. I wanted to stay, I seriously wanted to stay in the Navy, but she and my mother strongly ...

KP: Convinced you to leave?

WL: Convinced me not to [stay]. And I've regretted it, almost to this day. But we had an option to try for Annapolis, from the fleet. And I don't know how much of a chance we would have had. Or you could take a discharge, if you had points. And I had, do you know the point system? I had points. So, I was discharged as a V-12. When you got in V-12, no matter what your rate was, you went down to an AS V-12, apprentice seaman. Your pay was cut. This was kind of weird. You went down, I think, to fifty dollars a month, was it? Sixty-six, maybe. But you were AS V-12, and I was discharged as AS V-12.

KP: How did you like Ohio State?

WL: Yes. No comparison to Rutgers, in my naive mind, at the time, at least, anyway, scholastically. Rutgers was a much tougher school to me. Ohio State, you kind of sailed through that year, I thought, and I was in my second year. [It had] big classes, which I didn't like. You rarely had small [ones]. They were mostly lecture sessions with two hundred people or so.

KP: Even though you met your future wife there, you had no interest in finishing your education there?

WL: I could, I had that option. I was lucky, 'cause it was tough to get into schools for a while there. I don't know if you know the history, maybe, but schools didn't gear up immediately [for] all these veterans coming back. And I had a free-wheeling [time] at Rutgers, and I could have stayed at Ohio. I was very fortunate. I decided to go back to Rutgers.

RF: Going back to your last days in the Pacific, do you remember where you were when the bombs were dropped?

WL: Yes. We were at sea for both bombs, and for the surrender. And I think I've noted that we had an air attack after the, we got word that ... The bomb, we couldn't imagine what that was. Some, I guess they used the word "atom bomb," maybe, at that time, but we had no idea what an atom bomb was. We were also hearing the term "jet plane," and I couldn't fathom a plane without a propeller. But we heard that there had been some jet plane, Germany, I think, had some. But the bombs dropped, Roosevelt died, big events. And for every one of those events, it was a beautiful day at sea, and it was elating to think the war was going to be over. And then we got word that the Japanese had surrendered. Did I tell you [about] this matchbox with cotton in it for your ears, that you were never without? I threw mine overboard. I used to hate to stuff that cotton in my ears. And within, I don't know, an hour, we got a bogey on the radar. And it was some guy who didn't get the word, or didn't accept the surrender. And he came in and attacked us, and we shot him down. And we went to general quarters, and me without cotton in my ears. My hearing might be a little bad today from that, 'cause I remember trying to hold my ears and it was hopeless.

KP: And the noise was ...

WL: Oh, the noise was unbelievable. Loudest noise you could ever imagine. You couldn't describe the noise. Not only do you get the noise, you get all the vibration, the wind rush. You can feel it on the soles of your feet coming up through, [the] vibration from the ship. We used to break almost every light bulb on the ship, when we fired our five-inch guns. Routinely, you'd go around [and] replace light bulbs.

RF: Just from the vibrations?

WL: Yes. I can't imagine what sixteen-inch guns must do on a battleship. They do actually move the ship I understand, x distance.

RF: After the V-12 program, you came back to Rutgers. Did they give you any credit for your Navy service and for your V-12?

WL: Yes, I got, I did a strange thing. I wanted to get more liberal courses, and I took some history courses. I took geography, of all things, which I really enjoyed. And when I got back to Rutgers, I took a philosophy course under Mason Gross. He was fantastic.

KP: You're not the only one who's said how great Mason Gross was as a teacher.

WL: But, as an engineer, I really enjoyed these liberal courses. But they did accept, I guess, the bulk or all of my credits. But I had a lot of credits that didn't help me graduate Rutgers. I took art appreciation under Professor (Von Erfra?). Does that name mean anything? This used to be the Physics Building.

KP: Yes. Yes. And that's often what I use when giving directions.

WL: Professor (Lendel?), I think, was the physics professor here. There was an auditorium at this end. Is there still?

KP: That's still there. You could go up the stairs.

WL: That was a lecture hall. But Rutgers was different when I came back. It was a beehive. Where we were dwindling down when I left, now it was growing in leaps and bounds.

RF: And there were a lot of veterans at school.

WL: Oh, tremendous. It seems like they outnumbered the civilians. You saw, that was funny, you'd see more, a lot of uniforms on [campus]. I used to wear navy dungarees. I couldn't wear my navy blues. But my brother had been in the Army and he gave me a lot of clothes, and I lived through Rutgers wearing his Army clothes. But the campus was filled with veterans.

KP: You'd been at Rutgers, you'd been to Ohio State, and you're now back at Rutgers. What was it like to be with a lot of fellow veterans and also with teenagers?

WL: It was nice. Well, you weren't a kid anymore. That sounds corny, but you left a kid and you came back. You really, you weren't interested in some of the frivolities that [the kids were]. I never had joined a fraternity. I was going to pledge to Lambda Chi Alpha, but when I came back, I had lost all interest in fraternities. And I also ended up getting married in my junior year. That put a totally new ... I became a commuter then, which [was] a whole different life.

KP: Where did you live when you first came back?

WL: Pell Hall. The Quad, generally. When I started in '43, I was in Winants Hall. That was an experience. The building was falling apart. But the cafeteria was there, the bookstore was there, post office was there. That was Rutgers, practically.

RF: You had mentioned that when you were here in '43, you didn't feel that you really got the college experience.

WL: That's right, yes.

RF: And you got the same feeling after the war?

WL: Yes.

RF: Because you were older?

WL: And you weren't that much interested in it. I remember, you went to football games, but you didn't have quite the spirit that you would have had. But you did make close friends. I have friends that I see to this day, veterans that you became very close to. That was interesting. My oldest friends are two Navy men from V-12, and one Navy man I met back at Rutgers here [that] I see once, twice a year. All these, fifty years later, I never stopped to think about that.

KP: Did you ever stay in touch with the crew?

WL: No. That's a little disappointing. I belong to the Naval Institute and they get notices of reunions, and I keep looking for a reunion of the *Black*, and we've never had one. No, I lost complete [touch]. I met one of them once, the fellow from Jersey City, out on a construction job. I was an engineer on the job, and he was working for a contractor. And we had a nice, get-together. But no, I've never seen any [others].

KP: You'd gone to chapel under Dean Metzger. Did you go to chapel on your return?

WL: As I recall, it was no longer required. And I think the answer is no. I went to church. I remember going to the Reformed Church up here. I don't recall going to, I think there was no required chapel, as I recall. And Dean Metzger was gone. Dean Silver was here, I think.

KP: And there was a Dean Crosby.

WL: Yes. Yep. And the engineering dean was Dean Easton. I don't know if you remember him. Trying to think of the history prof's name. They had a great history department, I thought, when [I was here]. Can't think of his name. The History building was up.

KP: Yes. It actually remained the history building until 1982.

WL: Did it?

KP: Yes. And it came down here when they consolidated all the departments. But I know people still talk about being up there.

WL: American history was required. Is it now?

RF: If you're a history major.

WL: In engineering it was.

RF: If you're not a history major, then you can take it as an elective, but it's not required.

WL: Is that right?

KP: There are very few requirements.

WL: I took two terms of American history. I still have the textbooks and I still read them, believe it or not. I read them more now than I did then, probably.

RF: Did your participation in the war spur your interest in history?

WL: Yes. Yes. The history, there were two volumes by Holt. Does that mean anything to you?

KP: Oh, yes.

WL: They were pretty good texts, covered an awful lot of material in a few pages. Yes, it did spur my interest in history, you know. My son has inherited that interest, although he's never gone into the service.

KP: Is he interested in what happened to you during the war?

WL: Yes, very much so. And he's an attorney, he's totally unrelated to anything I ever did.

KP: You mentioned you were a member of the Naval Institute.

WL: Yes.

KP: But you never joined a veteran's organization?

WL: No. I, no, I didn't. I was married. I think, technically, once I belonged to the VFW, when I first came out. But I never really was active, and didn't keep it up. I guess they've done good work. I think the American Legion was quite instrumental in the GI Bill, wasn't it? I guess they do good

work. My son-in-law is a helicopter pilot in the Army now. He's just getting out. But the Army and Navy has changed so drastically. Have you been on any new ships?

KP: Yes.

WL: Gee, I can't get over it. The computers, everything is, I wouldn't know where to start on a ship today. Even the torpedoes don't look anything like they used to.

KP: I've been told that engineering was a very tough curriculum and it became tougher the further you went.

WL: Yes. Junior year was the toughest. And the flunk out rate, I don't know accurate statistics, but it was enormous. We lost a lot of people in freshman year. But the junior year was a killer. That's when we had all these heavy labs. There was a Professor (Bacha?) who taught Heat Power, which was a tough subject, heat transfer. And he used to give a quiz every day. It was nerve-racking to go in his class. But he was [good]. Boy, you learned Heat Power. But it was tough.

KP: I've also been told that there was a range in the quality of teachers. I've been told that there was a professor who sold copies of his notes.

WL: I never heard that, but some were bad. After the war, more [so]. I guess they got a lot of newer, younger instructors. I remember some, in Strength and Materials, we had one that was really bad. Before the war, you had a lot of contact with professors. But in general, the instruction, I thought, was good, with a few exceptions. Chemistry department was excellent. I took quite a chemistry log, too.

RF: You mentioned you had gotten married in '47 and started commuting to school?

WL: Yes.

RF: Where did you commute from?

WL: From East Orange. Looking back, that was, you wonder how you did that.

KP: That's a long commute, even now.

WL: I used to have to walk to a bus, take a bus to a trolley, a trolley to a train in Newark, and a train to New Brunswick, and then walk. It seemed like forever to travel. That was not fun.

KP: Why East Orange?

WL: I was able to get an apartment.

KP: You couldn't get anything closer?

WL: I could have gotten a trailer on campus here. I don't, I think my wife was not anxious for that. That was kind of tough living. You were out by the stadium.

KP: Those trailers were fairly spartan.

WL: Yes. I kind of wish I had tried that. It was very difficult to get an apartment, but I got a cheap, fifty dollar a month apartment at the time. It struck me as odd, coming in this morning, how quiet this campus looked. I got in a little early.

KP: Students aren't up until about eleven or so.

WL: No eight o'clock classes anymore?

RF: There are some, but people try to avoid them.

KP: Yes. And also, for some reason, Wednesday mornings are quiet. I can always get a space. I don't know why, either.

WL: When I took this military science course with John Chambers, I thoroughly enjoyed it. 'Cause I took all the tests and did very well, actually. But because I didn't have to do any of this, it was more enjoyable. But some things stood out between World War II and current times. They couldn't believe that a Springfield rifle had the range that it did. Compared to today's, what are they, M-16s, or 15s, whatever they are. And the old Springfield, actually, had a much greater range than the modern rifle. Bigger projectile too. But I felt like a Civil War veteran with this bunch.

KP: After Rutgers, you worked for PSE&G.

WL: Yes.

KP: How did that come about?

WL: My father had been there, and I had worked [there] one summer, while I was at Rutgers. And thoroughly enjoyed it, in a generating station. And I interviewed and was accepted. There were different times then, too. It was a totally different corporate world than today.

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

KP: [Had you considered] working anywhere else besides PSE&G?

WL: Yes. I took an interview with an Erie railroad and turned it [down]. I never liked drafting. I

didn't want to do drafting work. And [with] Public Service, you got right into engineering overnight, and supervisory work. And I once had an offer from the Hawaiian Electric Company, which I would have loved to have take[n], but my wife did not want. And they told us, when they interviewed me, that there was a high attrition rate. The wives would get stir crazy, at that time in Hawaii, in about two years. They'd want to get back to the mainland. They had a tough time keeping people. That's changed.

RF: I'm sure now, if people got a chance at Hawaii, they'd jump at it.

WL: Yes. They didn't manufacture anything on the island.

KP: Yes.

WL: Practically. Everything was imported, and you felt isolated I guess. But I didn't take it. Public Service treated me well. I stayed with them.

RF: Yes, I noticed that you did very well moving up through the corporate ladder, so to speak. You advanced pretty steadily.

WL: Always would like to go further. But yes, I had a very satisfying career.

KP: What were your proudest achievements at PSE&G?

WL: The development of the booming days of New Jersey industry, when we couldn't build construction fast enough. And I was in the underground. We got into a lot of new technology and 500,000 volt cable installations. Things that were unheard of. And it was a nice time to be around. You worked very hard, but [it was] very satisfying. My last assignment, I was in a strange situation. I was in our downsizing, which was a word you're well familiar with today. I ran our downsizing program. I was organizational design manager. And I eventually downsized myself. I had the opportunity to take an early retirement at sixty-three, which I did.

KP: When you say downsizing, you were literally shrinking the work force?

WL: Shrinking the work force, tremendously. We went from 14,000 some, down to 12,000 some, and they're heading for 10,000 now. This, at a time when the workload is increasing in work. Don't ask me how they're doing it. Automation. Computers. Middle management has almost disappeared because of the computer. Our CEO gets morning reports at home on the computer that he used to get in telephone calls from the generation superintendents and so forth.

KP: Which used to take several hours to do.

WL: Yep. He gets it in seconds, and gets better information, yes. That's it. Changing world, I don't have to tell you. And I predict you'll see as many changes as I saw.

RF: I'm sure.

WL: It's almost frightening.

KP: At PSE&G, how many veterans were there when you started?

WL: We were called cadet engineers at the time. There were twenty of us, and I'd say, probably eighteen were veteran, returning veterans. They kind of, and I guess it was good for the company, they got a more mature person. A high proportion of them had been commissioned officers and had personnel experience and so forth. Most of them were vets.

KP: You mentioned that you were very impressed by the management skill of your captain.

WL: Yes.

KP: Did you see that often at PSE&G? That type of leadership?

WL: Not now. Not in the early days. In the early days, it was the old school. The "do as I say and don't ask why." No, it changed drastically.

KP: What year did it change?

WL: In the very first five years or so, we took supervisory training courses, which were very crude and elementary. And you'd get back to your job and you'd try to use the information, and they'd laugh at you, the other supervisors and your boss. I'd say, in the '70s maybe, it began to change. Where they took, they gave more and more management training. For example, I got AMA training in New York, American Management Association. Excellent. I had a three-month course over there, intensive. And in the '80s, it was very strong. Now they've cleaned house of all of the old school.

KP: So, you think it's not simply rhetoric, the idea of greater spreading out of decision-making.

WL: No, it's more than [that]. For example, I was heavily involved [in span of control]. We used to have hundreds of assistant titles, one-on-ones. To my knowledge, there are none anymore. Span of control today, is typically seven, eight. Even the CEO has a span of control of seven or eight now. Maybe more in some cases. But there have been radical changes in management science, whatever you want to call it. To the extent that the old-style manager couldn't survive today. I was kind of in the middle.

KP: So, you could see how the two worlds worked?

WL: Yes. And I could see the advantages of it, and the disadvantages, too.

KP: What were the disadvantages?

WL: Well, morale is kind of a broad. The disadvantage [is that] you're no longer a paternalistic operation. There's no family feeling to it.

KP: Because even more people have authority and more responsibility?

WL: You have, responsibilities are much heavier. You're measuring productivity in almost everything. You never really measured much productivity, but that's being measured. So, it's a little more nerve-racking today. In my day, we started to measure how many feet of wire a lineman would pull in a day, and we'd compare one line gang with another, and it was competition. Now that's being done with top-level management, all levels of management. You have to produce.

KP: And PSE&G is a relatively regulated monopoly.

WL: The competition is fierce now, with the new power-wheeling government regulations and so forth. It's totally different. For example, I just read [about] the hotel chain that runs the places on the Turnpike.

KP: Yes.

WL: The restaurants. [They] just signed a gas contract with, I think it was Orange & Rockland or some outside-the-state gas company, to buy their gas, which they'll ship over PS lines. 'Cause we're in competition with the world today. Theoretically, California could come in and sell gas, if they could get it over here, or electric. It used to be monopolistic, but it's very competitive now.

KP: When your father was working for Public Service, they still had the Newark Transit.

WL: Yes.

KP: Streetcars and the bus lines.

WL: That was the reason, that was how PSE&G started originally.

KP: Yes.

WL: As a transit company.

KP: When was that shed? Do you have memories of that being shed from the company?

WL: Gee, I'm guessing, but maybe in the '60s. New Jersey Transit took it over. They tried to sell it for years and years. It got to be a losing proposition. In the very early days, my father used to tell

me a story. In a Hoboken sub-station, they fed the trolley cars. And if an operator saw a little old lady running for a trolley car and the trolley car started to go off, he would trip the circuit breaker so she could get the trolley car. And then he'd cut it in. But times have changed with that.

RF: You mentioned the management training. Did you have any specific electrical training at PSE&G?

WL: Yes. They encouraged graduate work, for one thing. I never got, I took some graduate courses, I never got my Masters. But we did. I took a highly technical General Electric course that lasted one day a week, for a year. It was on the Master's level. Yes, it was, they had a very good training situation, including down to the lowest-level worker. Line schools, splicing schools, sub-station mechanics. Some of the colleges have run a lot of these management [programs]. Michigan is famous for one. Rutgers probably does some now, too. I don't know.

KP: So, you were able to keep abreast of the changes in the technology from taking courses and from on-site training?

WL: Yes. And we worked closely with manufacturers in developing new [equipment]. As they developed equipment, we would be in with them on the ground floor. And spend a lot of time with them.

KP: Did you ever have any involvement with nuclear power?

WL: Personally, not on the nuclear end. One time, we were going to build an off-shore generating station. Remember that?

KP: Yes.

WL: I was involved in designing the cable that was going to run to it, which was kind of unique. It was going to be an undersea cable, and come up on to this floating barge. But the barge, of course, floated with the tide, and the cable arrangement had to be such that it was, like, on a pulley, which wasn't easy.

RF: Right.

WL: That's what was my only involvement.

KP: Do you think that project would have bankrupted the company?

WL: Probably. It was, the economics of it, it looked crazy. It got way out in left field. They had to do things like buy, I was going to say boats, it was almost ships, to get the crews out there. And they had to have a, run a steamship line to get that operation. It was, the economics of nuclear is tough enough, but adding that complication, it never flew. They did a lot of work on it.

KP: I remember them going in malls and trying to sell the idea to the public.

WL: Yes.

KP: So, it was a serious idea?

WL: Oh, yes, definitely. Yes. Westinghouse had a joint venture with some company that was building these barges in Florida, and they were going to float them up. It was kind of remarkable.

KP: None of your children ever served in the military?

WL: No.

KP: Do you have any disappointments at that?

WL: I encourage, if for no other reason, economics, I encouraged my son to [enlist]. He went to Cornell [as an] undergraduate, and he could have gotten in the V-12 program up there. And he wanted no part of it. And I didn't push him.

RF: And he was too young, at the time, to have to have been in Vietnam.

WL: Yes, he never was involved. And I'm happy over that. I look at it differently from, as parent.

RF: Right.

WL: As a kid. Totally differently. I would never want my child in combat.

KP: It sounds like now you really understand your parents.

WL: Yes.

KP: That they were putting on this brave front.

WL: Yep. Yep. Yes, I find things, every once in a while, now. I found some stuff among my father's [things]. He used to give blood. I'm surprised he could even walk around, he gave blood so often. But he would give it in the name of his kids, at blood drives. But he was giving it, you know, once a month or something like that, or even more frequently. And no, I wouldn't want to go through that. It was easier having been the guy there, than been the parent of the guy there.

RF: Worrying about your son over there.

WL: And Vietnam would have been a horror. It was a totally different ballgame.

KP: What about your brothers? Would you gathered together after the war? You all gathered, I imagine at family holidays.

WL: Yes. My one brother has passed away, but my other brother is still alive, yes.

KP: But, when you initially gathered, did you tell each other what had happened to each of you?

WL: Yes. Yes. Yes.

KP: And how were their experiences compared to yours?

WL: They had tougher duty than I, especially one, I had a brother [who was] captain in the field artillery in the Bulge. And he had a tough time. He was never wounded, fortunately, but he was a battery commander. His hearing has went, probably because of noise from, he was on 155-millimeter. But he can, he was telling me, he could remember firing directly at German tanks, direct fire with a 155-millimeter gun. He could see the tanks, which was very unusual. Normally, their firing arced.

RF: Right.

WL: Long-range. But, yes, they would. We had some interesting talks.

KP: And your other brother, where did he serve?

WL: He was a medic. He was the one that never wanted to go to college. And he was a medic, and for a while, was an operating room nurse, I guess you'd call him. He assisted in operations. Then, he went overseas and he was in what would be like a MASH unit, a field hospital of some kind, in Germany.

KP: And your brother who hadn't gone to college, he didn't use the GI Bill?

WL: Nope. No. My second brother had been, was a graduate.

KP: Yes.

WL: And he went in the Army as an enlisted man, and quickly went to officer's training. In six months, I think he was a Lieutenant. The Army did a, he was a Corporal, and all of a sudden, he's a Staff Sergeant, and then he's a Second Lieutenant. They zoomed him up.

KP: It strikes me that it was harder to get promoted in the Navy.

WL: Navy was slow, very slow moving. I think you've earned your money.

RF: You mentioned that you had run for town council in Cedar Grove?

WL: In Cedar Grove, yes. Lost by three votes.

RF: You lost by three votes.

WL: That was interesting.

RF: What made you decide to do that?

WL: I was very active in the town. I was on the Planning Board, and Public Service encouraged activity. I guess that probably sparked me. And they still do. I guess there's a political angle to it, too, but you'll find lot of Public Service people on councils, mayors.

KP: What was it like to run for office?

WL: I'd never do it again.

KP: Really?

WL: I look at these people who run for national office. It's man-killing. It's tough, just on a little local level. And heartbreaking, when you lose.

RF: Especially by three votes.

WL: Yes. Yes. We had a recount.

KP: What didn't you like about running for office?

WL: Well, the pressures are tremendous. I mean the time, it's a day and night situation. Ironically, had I been elected, I would have had to resign from office, 'cause Public Service transferred me from Essex County to Mercer County. It's funny how things work out. But running for election, it was not my meat.

KP: What were the big issues that were swirling around?

WL: High-rise apartments was the big one. They wanted to build [a] high-rise in the middle of town and we fought it successfully, and they didn't build them. So, they built them in Verona, right next door. We got all the disadvantages and none of the taxes.

KP: Oh, that's right.

WL: Yes. Alan Dumont lived in Cedar Grove. Remember the Dumont television?

KP: Yes.

WL: You don't remember? He went out of business. He built one of the first television sets, and he called them Dumont televisions. He had a piece of property he wanted to build on, and we wouldn't let him.

KP: Did you like anything about running for office?

WL: I liked the feeling that you had some control over your life. I mean, I was a taxpayer. I'm on the Board of Trustees of this adult community I live in now, for the same reason. You can affect your fate. But it's work, too.

KP: So, it sounds like you have a fair amount of respect for anyone who decides to run for office.

WL: Yes.

KP: In terms of just what they have to go through.

WL: Yep. It's almost hard. I just finished reading the book "Truman." Who was the historian that wrote it again?

KP: McCullough.

WL: McCullough. Have you read the book?

KP: No. No.

WL: It's a terrific, gives you a terrific flavor of what went on at high levels during the war. But it's, I can't fathom the man-killing responsibility that that job must have. I wonder how they sleep nights. I'm a fan of McCullough. He's writing a book on Jefferson and, is it Monroe? Or Madison? He's in the research for a new book. He's taking them as opposites.

KP: What did you think of Truman at the time?

WL: At the time, I was among the people who thought we was, you know, no good. He was a machine ...

KP: You were for Dewey in '48 election?

WL: I was for Dewey. The first election I think I voted in, was for Eisenhower. But, you know, when he fired MacArthur, I thought it was terrible. Now I can see it was a courageous move. I tell

you, I never appreciated where the military fits in with the United States until I took John Chambers' course. It was really an education. I never stopped to think about the subservience of the military to the civilians in the United States, and how important that is. And how close we come, once in a while, to changing it.

RF: Did you find it ironic how quickly the US turned against the Soviet Union?

WL: Yes. Yes, it made things seem very hopeless at the time. I was back at Rutgers, I guess, when the Korean [War started]. Well, I got out in '49. When did the Korean War start?

KP & RF: 1950.

WL: '50. But that, the Korean War was very, very troublesome. Had I gotten my commission, by the way, I would have gone back. Friends of mine did, were called back. And I was a little sorry I didn't, at the time. And yet, I was, I had a child and it was a little difficult. It was very troublesome, the whole Cold War years.

RF: And with Kennedy and the whole Cuba situation?

WL: That was frightening. And looking back in history on it, it's even more frightening. I think what's frightening most to me is, when things are happening, you never really know what's happening when it's happening. You study it ten years later, because of people like you. It's too bad we can't learn up front.

KP: Well, it's also been interesting to do this project, because there's a lot that doesn't make it into the official document.

WL: If everybody knew all the facts, on both sides, there probably never would be wars, right?

KP: Yes.

WL: I don't know.

KP: Have you ever reflected on how quickly reconciliation with Japan went? Has that ever surprised you?

WL: Yes. And I've always, in my mind, rightfully or wrongfully, credited MacArthur for his tremendous management style or whatever he had. Yes, it was incredible how they came back. And how relations, even though, you know, there's static today yet. Like the Enola Gay thing. But relations are remarkably good, I think.

RF: What about on a personal level?

WL: The animosity quickly fades, with me, anyway. Yes.

KP: So, you never had a problem buying a Japanese car or anything like that?

WL: No, I drive a Honda as a matter-of-fact. But I've been criticized by some of my friends. Every once in a while, you get a little bit of a tinge that. I got, I did, I must admit to being a little bit irked on some of the stands on the Enola Gay exhibit in the Smithsonian. I guess you read all about that?

RF: Right.

WL: I was a little upset. Some of the American media seemed to be rewriting history in my mind. We were certainly not sin free, but the Japanese certainly did commit a lot of atrocities knowingly, which I think they've admitted to. Haven't they now?

RF: And you thought that we were starting to try to make it a politically correct type of thing?

WL: Yes. Yes. The political correctness is very disturbing to me. We're doing something wrong, I think. Not that we shouldn't look at both sides of anything, but. It was bothersome to me that some Japanese group seemed to have heavy input on what the Enola Gay exhibit was going to be. And that, I thought, was outrageous. Any more than we should have input on the Hiroshima.

RF: Right.

WL: They have a monument of some kind. Yes. I may be in the minority. I'm convinced we saved lives, Japanese and American, in dropping the bomb. When you look at the casualties.

RF: Yes. Especially, like you mentioned, from your experience with the invasion of Okinawa.

WL: Yep.

RF: You had a sense that an invasion of mainland Japan would have been very disastrous?

WL: Unbelievable. In Professor Chambers' course, he hit [on] a lot of the casualties [the US suffered] in various steps of the islands. And if you could picture yourself, to take this little island you're going to lose 4,000 men. Next one, you're going to lose 3,000. It's petrifying. Iwo Jima recently, I think it was 4,000 marines killed. Desert Storm, we had what, ten or something like that?

RF: About thirty or forty.

WL: Thirty?

RF: And most of it by friendly fire, actually.

WL: Yes. I mean, that was bad enough. We've paid a heavy price.

KP: No, thank you. Is there anything we forgot to ask?

WL: No. No. And I don't envy your task.

RF: Oh, it's a learning experience.

WL: Are you a history major?

RF: Yes.

WL: Yes. My son was a history major. If I had another career to do, I think probably I'd be a history major.

KP: Well, you should probably take some more courses.

WL: I should, yes. Please, if you think of it, give John Chambers my [regards].

KP: Oh, I will.

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

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