

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT D. MACDOUGALL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: [This begins an interview with] Robert D. MacDougall on July 27, 1994 with Kurt Piehler and

Robert Lipschitz: Robert Lipschitz.

KP: ... I guess ... we'd like to begin with talking about your parents. And I guess with your father because your father went to Rutgers.

Robert MacDougall: Yes. He graduated from Rutgers in 1911. And my mother went to Bloomsburg Teacher's Normal School, she was a teacher. They got married in 1917.

KP: And your father ... Did your father ever tell you anything about Rutgers?

RM: No, he didn't. There was some scuttlebutt that he ... was in a hazing thing and pushed somebody off the Raritan Bridge or something like that. He was in the group that pushed somebody off the Raritan Bridge. And the guy drowned.

KP: Oh really?

RM: Yeah, he was, I think, I'm not sure, but I think he was discharged from the school for a year and then went back and graduated in 1911 as an Aggie.

KP: What did you hear about that rumor ...?

RM: Somehow it got around the Class of 1911 that Walter MacDougall was involved somehow.

KP: In the sense of innocence?

RM: Yes. Later my Dad worked for Atlantic County, N.J. in extension work. His job was ...

KP: County Extension Officer?

RM: Yes, he was the ... Atlantic County Vocational School Director, and the Vocation was the Agriculture. ... They set up a small farm in Hammonton, New Jersey, and then they started their family. ... He died in 1932 of septicemia. I was eleven years old. And my ... older brother was thirteen. My sister was six. So we continued to farm. My mother went back to teaching. ... We did everything on the farm from then on just about. We had some help from our friends and neighbors. ... It was hard work.

KP: How crucial was the farm in getting through the Great Depression?

RM: Well the farmers took it really on the nose, because they really had it tough. Well, we were selling a bushel of peaches for 50 cents. Now you can't buy two peaches for 50 cents. (Laughs.)

KP: So your farm was very much productive. You produced ... fruit for sale?

RM: Yes, fruit farm. Apples and peaches and cherries. I remember one day, my mother, after we were up at dawn and worked till after dark, figured out our income for the day, we made 50 cents that day. At least we didn't come out behind. (Laughs.)

KP: And your mother taught while you also had the farm ...?

RM: Yes.

KP: ... And she had left the work force when your father was alive?

RM: Yes, she was a housewife and mother ... after they got married and until my dad died. He was 41 years old.

KP: Where did your mother teach?

RM: She taught in a grammar school in Hammonton. And she finally gave up teaching when she was about 76 years old. She taught all that time. She saw ... to it the family was raised. She dedicated her life to her family and didn't remarry. ... She was a great woman. She was very British and bull headed as they come, but she stood for a lot of good things.

KP: When you said she was British, in what ways ...?

RM: Her folks came from England, and her two brothers were born in England. They emigrated here to Pennsylvania. And her father was a supervisor in the coal mines. ... He died before his family was raised also. They did pretty good, the youngest brother was only five years old when he died, and he was sort of a problem. But otherwise, they made out all right, as we did.

KP: How did your mother feel about the First World War? Did she ever have any thoughts on that that she expressed?

RM: No. They never discussed the First World War. My dad was an Aggie, and he was exempt because of his vocation, I guess. And they raised vegetables and things for the good of the cause.

KP: So your mother never expressed any sentiments for England or against England, or going into war or ...?

RM: No. My uncle, who was my ... mother's youngest brother, was in the Navy during World War I, and the only thing he talked about was surviving the flu epidemic.

KP: The 1919, yes?

RM: Yes, ... He didn't talk much about it either.

KP: Did you expect to become a farmer when you were in high school?

RM: Yes. I majored in dairy husbandry and got a B.S. degree in dairy husbandry in '42. And I expected to be a farmer, yes. And my brother majored in Ag research, and he got his pre-med requirements in through that course. After the war I went back and finished up pre-med requirements and got into medical school.

KP: But when you were going to Rutgers initially you didn't expect to become a doctor or ...?

RM: That's right.

KP: You expected to go back to the farm in a sense and ...

RM: Well, ... a fruit farmer at first, but I majored in dairy husbandry because I liked that check coming in, that milk check coming in every month. (laughs) Rather than waiting all year for crops to pay off.

KP: ... for your one big sale.

RM: Yes.

KP: Why did you come to Rutgers? Was it family ties?

RM: Well ... family ties and being a citizen of New Jersey. The tuition was lower, especially [the] Aggies. ... [At that time] the State supplemented the Aggie college. I had some good times at Rutgers although we had to work the farm and go to school. And it was probably too much for us. I didn't make such good grades and was tired a good bit of the time.

KP: When you say you had to work the farm, the farm in Hammonton?

RM: [Yes.]

KP: So where did you live? Did you ...

RM: We lived, my two brothers and I, lived in apartments in New Brunswick. Every year we'd get a new apartment. If we stayed up there, we'd keep the same apartment. We had about three apartments while we were up there. ... We cooked and did our housework for ourselves and did shopping and cooking and everything else that goes with it. So we went through school at a pretty good rate.

KP: But when would you go to work on the farm? On weekends?

RM: Yes.

KP: You'd go back and ...

RM: Yes. ... It's interesting. ... The local Buick Agency had a sort of a junk yard about a half mile from our farm. And he allowed us to go to the junk yard. And so we pulled out an old Model A Ford and made a truck out of it. ... When we went to school, we took the truck body off and put a roadster body on it and overhaul[ed] the engine. ... Soon after my dad died, the old tractor was about to give out, and we had a mechanic from the Ford Company come up on the farm and overhaul the tractor. We three boys stayed home for three days and helped him do it. And from then on we didn't have a mechanic on the farm after that. We did it all ourselves. We'd get this Model A Ford, and it lasted for a year, and then we got another one. It was a really sporty job and paid a 100 bucks for it and overhauled it, and it lasted two more years. ... Somewhere after my junior year, my oldest brother got a job at a local Ford Company up near New Brunswick (...?). (...?) in a town close by, and he was demonstrating and selling, and he got this, this '37 Ford convertible sedan at a good price. And we had to overhaul that and fix it up, and that lasted about four or five years. We did all the mechanic work on them. And the first one, we'd go up to New Brunswick on Sunday evening and try to study and go to school all week and come home on Friday night. And we'd usually have a flat tire, so we'd go to the junk yard and get another ... tire and put it on. It would last another trip. About every week we had a flat tire and had to go get another one from the junk yard. It was interesting that ... the '31 Ford Phaeton that we had, my brother had a wreck with it, and ... he was coming from the Ag Farm to the main campus and he hit this paint truck broadside and turned it over. And our poor old Ford was just about ruined, with the radiator and fenders and all that all bent back and everything. I got there in time ... to see the police towing it away. They towed it, and the police charged me, he said, "You've got three days to get that thing out of here." (Laughs.) So we went down to Burnett Street to the junk yard and for three bucks we bought a whole new front axle and wishbone and had it back on the road in three days. [We] took it home and painted it up and overhauled it. It was a good car, but when we sold it and bought the '37 Ford, we sold it for 65 bucks, and the guy paid us 25, and we never saw him after that. And now that same car is worth about twenty, 25 thousand dollars.

KP: It survived.

RM: Yeah.

KP: You mentioned that Professor Metzger was your favorite professor. What do you remember about him?

RM: Oh. He was a[n] Ag physiology professor in animal physiology and I found it most interesting work. And I got good grades in it. ... I loved it. It probably whetted my appetite for medicine.

KP: So your coming to medicine was partly a result of your agricultural training?

RM: Yes. I became interested in it very much. My brother had our family doctor as his role

model, you might call it. He decided he would follow that route. And then I [was] getting out of the service, I had to question what I was going to do. I was married when I got out of the service. I married in '45, and I had a choice of going back to farming, stay in flying, or go to medicine. So I was ferrying airplanes over to the West Coast from Floyd Bennett Field. And I had to stay in this little town one night, and I decided, well, I've got to make a decision. So I'm in this little flop house hotel, and I decided I needed help making the decision, so I prayed. And it came out loud and clear, to go into medicine. And it was amazing how that decision had come about and how it came to fruition. The doors just opened up. I made my application ... I didn't have my pre-med requirements in, and medical schools turned me down, except one, and that was Temple. And I went down to see Dean Parkinson. He said, "When you get your marks, bring them in." So I finished one semester at night school and day school. I was enrolled at Rutgers.

KP: So, you went back to Rutgers?

RM: Yes. And I brought my marks down to him. He said, "Well, when you get that organic chemistry mark, bring it down." And I didn't finish my organic chemistry until the day after medical school started, but he took me and I was the last one in that class. ... I did allright in medical school. I didn't take some courses I should have had ... previous to going to school, but I made it O.K. ... With the Lord's help I got into medicine.

KP: You mentioned this was a difficult choice. What were some of the pros and cons that were weighing you between flying and bringing you back to the farm?

RM: Well, I was a single engine pilot during the war. And single engine flying was iffy coming out of the war. You didn't know where you could be employed, what you could do, and there would probably be some lean years for a while. ... I didn't have any multi-engine training. ... If I had multi-engine training, I would have probably stayed in. Maybe I would have stayed in for airlines, to get a job with the airlines. Also I had a chance to stay with the Navy and go into their space program which was just starting at the time I came out. But I had already made a commitment to medicine. My oldest brother and I talked about teaming up together to go back into farming, but I had made the decision to go into medicine.

KP: And why do you think you were drawn to medicine? It was a difficult choice for you.

RM: That's a good question. I figured as I'd gone through the war and hadn't had any mishaps, I had a couple maybe, but nothing fatal. And I decided I was here for something better than just working for myself, so I decided in some way I should serve mankind. ... That's why I think that I prayed about how I would serve. And it came in clear that I would serve ...

KP: As a doctor.

RM: Yes.

KP: ... Just before we go to the war, when you were at Rutgers, where did you see the divisions

on the campus? ... You were in the Ag School when the Aggies were a bit different from Rutgers College or so I've been told.

RM: Yes. That's right. Aggies are a bunch of their own. (laughs) Oh yeah, I had some good friends. ... One of them ... lives in Chambersburg, and he was in the Navy. We joined the Navy together, and it was Aines Gruen and Pat Paterson and a couple others, and we just had a lot of fun whenever we could.

KP: So the Ag people really stayed close together?

RM: Yeah, pretty much. They had an Ag house for boys. They had a house on the farm for boys who were working their way through, and it was called the Alfalfa House. (laughs) We were good friends there, and we made good friends with them. We had fun, it was good clean fun too. Except one of the fellows was wild. He had a Model A Ford roadster like we did. Then he had a Plymouth roadster. He was going through the farm one evening and lost control going around a corner and went right through one of their ... Agrarian plots for golf course grass, and he went through the bush and over the plots. He was living on the farm. ... Professors knew that he was wild, and they went looking for him. ... He went home, and he took a flashlight and got out under his car and took all the leaves and branches and grass and everything off of his car. The next morning they came by looking for evidence that he had done it (laughs). He got out of that. ... We just had a lot of fun with our cars, and good times. We fixed each other's cars and helped each other out.

KP: So part of college for you was working on your car?

RM: Well, some of it, but it was a lot of work too. We had a good time going, but it was a lot of work, you know holding down the farm. I mean you picked your time, if you had a few minutes for fun, you took them.

KP: You entered the Marine Corps. I guess the first question is, had you thought of staying in Advanced R.O.T.C.? Had you applied or ...?

RM: No, but the war came on, and I felt I had to serve my country.

KP: ... When did you think war was coming?

RM: Well, I thought it was evident before Pearl Harbor, but after Pearl Harbor it was definite. That day, I can still remember it. I listened to it on the radio, and I said, "Boy, that's it. We're getting pulled in."

KP: Where were you when you heard the news?

RM: In the apartment studying.

KP: In New Brunswick.

RM: New Brunswick. ... Sunday afternoon. I think it was a Sunday. It shocked everybody that heard about it. ... What a sleazy trick it was for the Japanese to do that. So ... I kind of figured that we'd be in the war. So in January after Christmas vacation, I went to New York City and joined the ... Navy Air Corps and later took my commission in the Marines. I got back to school after I was accepted, I went to see Aines, and I said, "Guess what I just did?" And he had done the same thing two weeks before during his Christmas vacation, joined the Navy Air Corps. We were called at the same time. We were in the same battalion at Chapel Hill, preflight, and we went to Anacostia together. We went to Pensacola together. He took his commission in the Navy, and I took mine in the Marines. We separated. I went overseas, and he was due to go overseas at the end of the war. He was an instructor during most of the war. But I came back from overseas and got married on June 22nd and got into medical school, 1946. I said, "I've got to find Aines somewhere. I'll call his mother." So I called his mother in northern New Jersey somewhere. She said, "Well, he's in Philadelphia too. He's in veterinary school." So we got together. Come to find out he had gotten married [on] June 22, 1944. We married in 1945, same day. We've been good friends ever since. I just spent an afternoon with him.

KP: And he's living in Chambersburg now?

RM: [Yes.] Did he sign up?

KP: No, I haven't heard from him yet, but if you could drop him a line ... I'd like to interview him.

RM: His wife's not in too good health now. And he just had an infection that he has to take medicine for a couple years. But he's doing pretty good.

KP: You mentioned, did you have a choice between Marine Air and Navy Air? Why did you decide for Marine Corps Air?

RM: More activity. Going overseas and getting into the fray of things. I just wanted to get it over with, ... so I joined the Marines. It was a good choice.

KP: Now ... after you graduated where did you do your initial training?

RM: After graduation from Pensacola?

KP: No, from Rutgers.

RM: Oh, from Rutgers. Oh. Graduated in April I guess it was from Rutgers, and in May, about four weeks later I got called into the Navy and went to Chapel Hill, preflight. We were the First Battalion. They were going to make supermen out of the Navy flyers.

KP: When you say they make supermen, what was the training like?

RM: It was all kinds of training, physical activity. ... We did wrestling, boxing, and football, baseball, and then there was manual labor, cutting down trees, and cutting them up. We didn't have buzz saws in those days, or chain saws. We had axes and hand saws.

KP: Why were they having you cut down trees?

RM: They were expanding the playing fields.

KP: So they were using people in the training program to do that?

RM: Yes, plus learning Navy Regs and all that. ...When I was a kid, I got in a street fight one afternoon, and before I knew it I had two black eyes. So I took up boxing when I was down there. ... I went to the semi-finals in boxing.

KP: On the base?

RM: Yes. In Chapel Hill.

KP: How long was your training in Chapel Hill?

RM: Three months. ... Then my next place was Anacostia in Washington D.C., Anacostia I guess is Virginia. ... [I] spent three months there, and that's where I soloed.

KP: That's where you actually flew?

RM: Yeah. My first flight was at New Brunswick in a field ... across the river from New Brunswick, there was a small field there. I went up for a few minutes and that was my first flight.

KP: But that was before you were in the Navy?

RM: I may have been a junior or a sophomore at the time. But I was always interested in aviation.

KP: When you were growing up did you ...

RM: Ford tri-motors used to go over the farm from Atlantic City to Philadelphia. Sometimes they'd come over at two or three hundred feet, and I'd just run out and look at everyone of them. And barnstormers would come by with their bi-planes, and I'd follow them as much as I could.

KP: And do you remember Lindbergh's flight?

RM: Oh, yeah. He was my hero. 1927. I came home from the local country school and heard it on the radio. ... He was my hero. Boy, the man could cross the Atlantic Ocean in a single

engine airplane. He ... had to be something else. And he was. He was a great guy. And ... in Anacostia, we had open cockpit airplanes, we soloed in them. Then ... we went to Pensacola and got into larger planes with canopies [that] were enclosed. The Vultee Vibrator and the SNJ. And we learned more formation flying and acrobatics and gunnery and dive bombing and night flying. I got lost one night in an SNJ. We were on tactics. We were supposed to be north of Bronson field, and we were supposed to change leads every half hour. We were up there an hour and a half, and I was the third man to take the lead. ... It was time to go home, and I started heading south, and there was no field there. But what had happened was there was a big forest fire in the area and the smoke had sort of caused visibility to be real low. But we ... flew around and found another field and landed there to find out where I was and finally got back to Bronson at about twelve o'clock at night. The three of us got back okay. That was an experience I never forget -- night flying, single engine. ... And as soon as my wheels touched down, all the lights went out. The guys were waiting for that one guy to get back there. Turned out the taxi lights, everything off, secured the operation, right then and there. So I got my wings in April of '43 at Pensacola.

KP: Before you joined the Navy/Marine Corps, how far had you traveled? Had you traveled to Washington or to the South?

RM: I had been to New York, to Scranton, to Washington, not much further.

KP: ...no other place?

RM: No, that's about it. I had never been south of Washington or west of Scranton or north of New York City.

KP: What did you think of the South, that you now spent quite a bit of time in?

RM: Yeah, I married a southerner.

KP: Yeah in Morehead City. You met in Morehead City.

RM: Oh, I love the south. The northern people looked down their noses at the south there for a long time. Southern people are wonderful people. They're more loving, congenial. They're great people in the south. We thought it wasn't as advanced as the north, but it was. They have good, smart people down there.

KP: What else do you remember about your training? How good was your training, I should say. After you became a combat pilot you ...

RM: ...Training was an excellent training. ... I didn't get enough instruments, but I practiced them whenever I could. And it was excellent training. The Navy did an excellent job. ... From Pensacola I went to Daytona Beach in dive bombers. I learned how to dive bomb. I made some good scores down there, and we practiced carrier landings and field carrier landings. I finally checked out. After Daytona my dive bombing training was over. We went up to Great Lakes

and checked out carrier landings. ... I wasn't in the combat plane, I was in trainers, SNJs at the time. But they were taking these SNJs out and guys were making ten, twenty, 30 landings a day with those things and every day. They taught us when we're coming aboard a carrier, you never touch your brakes. When I came aboard after my second time and nothing happened. I was supposed to be stopping, and I was wondering what was going to happen. I was going over the side and pushed the right rudder, and it kept me from going over the side. Just about the time I figured, "I got to stop this plane." I hit the barrier and nosed over. What had happened, I caught the ... first cable and broke the hook. The hook broke. They hadn't been examining the hooks. ... "that's interesting." I was just getting it stopped when I hit the barrier and nosed over. ... They had facilities for taking care of those things, so they righted the plane and pushed it on a "T" ... at the side of the ship to keep it from interfering with further landings. They put a new prop on it, and the next guy who finished his ten landings, they took him out and told him to wait until that plane, my plane, was fixed and let me finish my landings and went on back to base and then went on leave. He didn't get back till that night. He was on the ship all day, and he finally took the plane off. It's interesting ... [because] nowadays the engine has to be completely overhauled if you have a sudden stop and all that. ... He took it off and had no problem. ... I guess it wasn't that badly damaged.

KP: Did you expect to go to the Pacific?

RM: Yes.

KP: And that was partly the draw of the Marine Corps that you would fight in the [Pacific]?

RM: Yes.

KP: Why the Pacific?

RM: I guess it was because the Navy and Marines were mostly engaged in the Pacific War rather than of the European theater. And that appealed to me. It was a good choice.

KP: In terms of your training when you were at the various sites, Chapel Hill and then Pensacola and Anacostia, where were most of your fellow classmates from? What parts of the country?

RM: They were from all over. ... In preflight, they had a bunch from Penn State and a bunch from New York. Penn Staters all stuck together. And then it came time to disseminate for training, flight training, and the Penn State group all stuck together and they said, "We want to go to Philadelphia to learn to fly." It's called E-Base, Elimination Base, I guess or Elementary Base. ... And they all stuck together and wanted to go to Philadelphia. They finally said to them, "You fellows all want to stick together?" "Yeah," they said unanimously. They wanted to stick together. "O.K., you're all going to Texas." (laughs) So I got where I wanted to go. I wanted to go to Anacostia, and they sent me there.

KP: Why Anacostia?

RM: It's closer to home. It's closer to New Jersey. ... It didn't help much. I didn't get home, but Washington was a nice place. When they finally gave us leave, we were flying seven days a week and no leave, and starting to break up a few airplanes, so they decided to give us a Saturday night in Washington. That was nice.

KP: Why? What do you remember about Saturday night in Washington?

RM: Wall to wall girls. (Laughs.) There were some nice gals down there, but I had decided that my wife was going to be my wife. ...

KP: Now how did you meet your wife?

RM: On the farm. I was working late one evening after finishing up at Rutgers in 1940 and the farm ... hadn't gotten it's spring plowing and brush moved and sprayed and fertilized I was working late getting caught up. ... I was on the tractor disking, and this friend of mine drove up in the back of the farm, and I was dirtier than a hog. ... He and his brother were in this '32 Chevy, and between them was this gorgeous redhead. ... She became my wife. ... We courted through letters and all that. When I'd get time, I went to see her. She came through Chapel Hill when I ... she was going to W.C. and graduated the same year I did. ... She came through Chapel Hill then stopped to see me. I went to see her where she was teaching after I got my wings. And before I left for overseas, I spent ... three or four days at her home with her parents. Almost got engaged then, but didn't.

KP: But you waited until ...?

RM: Till I got back from overseas after 39 missions. Got married in June '45. Came back from overseas in March.

KP: But you had thought of getting engaged before?

RM: Oh yeah. Those were some pretty good letters I wrote.

KP: Did you save any of your letters, your letters to each other?

RM: Yes, Amy saved them. I didn't save mine because ... there was a lot of stuff that you couldn't carry on the plane, and you had to be careful how much you carried. So I burned most of them. ... Amy kept some of my letters.

RL: When were you transferred to the Pacific? When did you actually go overseas?

RM: After I left Amy's home, I took the train to San Diego and then was sent to El Toro and joined a squadron. It was a dive bombing squadron. The VMSB 133 at El Toro. And we formed our squadron there. And then went overseas, first echelon to go overseas, ... shipped out in August 1943. ... Yeah, in August we shipped out to Johnston Island, from Pearl Harbor.

RL: And when you say shipped out, how did the squadron ...

RM: We went on a submarine tender. The first echelon did. I don't know how the second echelon came. I think there was a lot of freight that had to come with it. We didn't have planes at that time.

RL: So you initially went out as a unit without your planes?

RM: Yes.

RL: And your unit, who was it made out of? Were you all freshly minted pilots?

RM: Yes, there were some though that had been in the executive status. They were senior officers, major and lieutenant Colonel. And then there were some Captains who had ... also administration duties.

RL: Who had been in the Army before?

RM: ... been in the Marines before.

RL: Marines, excuse me.

RM: ... for some time. And most of us were shaved tail lieutenants just out of flight school and training. So we got to Pearl Harbor and then they split the squadron up. One went to Palmyra Island and the other went to Johnston Island. And I went to Johnston Island for six months on patrol duty.

KP: Now your squad, were any of them, ... the senior people in your squadron career Marines? Or were they all ...

RM: Yes. Our C.O., Colonel Brent, was an Annapolis graduate.

KP: And had been in the Marine Corps for how long?

RM: I guess twenty years.

KP: Twenty years

RM: He ... may have been 40 years old, 42, something like that, 45. ... He kept himself in good shape. He was a good C.O. He wasn't one of those guys that insisted, to muster every morning and all that. He did, when someone got into trouble, he'd take care of it.

KP: Why, what would be some of the troubles that people would get into?

RM: Well, some of the guys on our way out to ... Johnston Island and back to Pearl Harbor and then went on down to the combat zone. We had to pick up our planes at Espritu Santu, and some of the guys got drunk. And they got into fights, and one of the guys decked a lieutenant colonel. Col. Brent went to bat for them. Colonel was a good guy.

KP: How effective of a leader was he, in combat situations in deploying ...?

RM: ... He was more of, he graduated from Annapolis, a line officer and took up flying afterwards. He didn't have any combat experience. He just had rank. He may have not been in combat. No, I don't think he had any line officer duty on shipboard, and so he wasn't any more experienced at combat than we were. But he had the duty of leading it. However, as we got experienced, we first lieutenants lead some combat missions (...?). Some of them were led by a captain. One of the fellows that had joined before we had, he would be captain. He would lead once in a while. I led a few of them.

RL: So in other words, it's really the pilots in the air that are really in charge ...?

RM: Yes. At Johnston Island, half the pilots were at Johnston Island and the other half were at Palmyra. We decided we'd get a syllabus going and really fine-tune our dive bombing training. And really figured out a way to split the anti-aircraft fire, and all that as we were coming in from two different directions. And it proved a good method, however, the fellows in Palmyra ... weren't in on it. So it did form some trouble in getting it. ... I remember leading a flight, and we weren't suppose to break radio silence. And we had figured out ... as we were coming in on the target, we would divide in two sections. One fellow was flying behind me and underneath me. I broke off for my dive, and he said, "You almost dove right into my airplane." ... I was looking for him. I couldn't find him anywhere, but I had to get down on that target. So that was a sort of a close to him. ... So splitting the squadron and doing two different training or one training and no training, it was a little hairy and should not have happened.

RL: So splitting the squadron was not a good idea?

RM: Yeah, but they needed somebody to patrol submarines in and out of Johnston Island. And of course they needed dawn and dusk patrol to protect the island. ... We escorted subs out, over 50 miles out and brought them in when they were coming in. If a convoy was coming past, we'd go out and escort them.

KP: And would you ever see any action during these escort duties?

RM: No. We'd ... have a dawn take off and look around for oil slicks, and my gunner saw one oil slick, where a submarine probably was sitting watching us, but by the time you see an oil slick and no conning tower, you don't know where they are. So I didn't drop on that one. That's the only experience I had there.

KP: So in many ways, your patrolling duties around Hawaii were fairly routine?

RM: Yeah. ...It was interesting, one convoy came by late in the afternoon, almost dusk, and they had called a single engine escort, there were multi-engines on Johnston Island, one or two planes, and they called for the single engine to go out and escort the convoy. So the guys didn't like to fly at night, so another fellow and I volunteered, and we went out to escort this convoy. When it got too dark to see anything, we morse coded it with a light that we're leaving. Johnston Island was only a mile long and a quarter mile wide. And they had no lights. They couldn't have lights on at night, but we got back all right. (...?) The Navy taught us good navigation. So you go out, and you follow a convoy for so long, and you've got to figure where the wind is and everything else, how far you've traveled, and in what direction. Then you've got to figure heading back to base. And we had a plotting board right in the cockpit there, and we could figure this out.

KP: So you would figure your own courses?

RM: Yes.

KP: Which if you didn't do it right, you could ...

RM: Yes. If you were really off course, you would probably have to break radio silence. But we got back all right. That was an interesting experience. When we first got there, the planes were in such terrible shape. Taking off the first flight for dusk patrol, my engine was spitting and coughing and hissing, and it hadn't been run for a while. It just needed clearing out, so I took off with it splitting and cussing The engine finally smoothed down, and we ... went on our dusk patrol all right. That was two airplanes. Our C.O. was in one airplane. I was flying wing on him.

KP: What else do you remember from Hawaii?

RM: Hawaii?

KP: Yeah, what was your image of Hawaii before you had gotten out to Hawaii?

RM: Well, you know about Pearl Harbor and all the mischief they had done down there. And of course Waikiki was a very popular place, but I was disappointed. It wasn't anything as nice as those New Jersey shore places. They had to bring in sand to keep Waikiki sandy. And it was a small beach. It wasn't very wide. New Jersey had nicer beaches.

KP: Had you gotten into Honolulu at all on leave?

RM: Oh yeah. We'd get down to the beach and go to the Royal Hawaiian I wasn't a drinker or anything like that. I wasn't a carouser. But a lot of guys had picked up dates and etc.

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

RM: They figured the pilots needed R&R, rest and relaxation and sent us back to Pearl Harbor. I had a week of good times there with luau and dates and swimming But it was a nice R&R, but it wasn't as good as the one in Australia though. ... But the duty there at Johnston Island got a little boring after a while. For excitement, you'd go out and do your gunnery runs and bombing around and practice bombing runs and [things like that]. After a while for excitement, you'd come down from dawn patrol and buzz a field and do a slow roll with a depth charge underneath you. Just crazy things like that.

KP: So these thing were fairly dangerous, that you [did], some of the slow rolls on the deck?

RM: They're crazy. (laughs) After I got married I did a lot of high level flying.

KP: Your unit had ... a lot of service people, enlisted personnel to service the planes. What was the relationship? I mean there was obviously a difference between officers and enlisted men, but how cohesive was the unit?

RM: Each pilot had a gunner. My gunner's name was Al Sidwell. And he and I became real good friends. And we flew together a good bit on a good many missions and patrols and things. ... I keep in touch with him, and he ... lives in California. ... I saw him a couple of years ago at one of our reunions.

KP: So your squadron has periodic reunions?

RM: Yes. And the third one is coming up in February next year, in Pensacola. I hope to get down there.

KP: ... What rank was your gunner?

RM: What's that?

KP: What rank was he?

RM: Sergeant.

KP: So he was a Sergeant.

RM: Yes.

KP: What about the crew that serviced your plane?

RM: Oh, you had ordnance and crew chiefs and crew members of plane crew, and they would service the airplane. And there were parachute people. They had to examine your parachute once a month and repack that. It was a lot of work I think ... keeping an airplane in the air. I forget the number of men it took to keep an airplane in the air. I think it was something like

twenty or so. But nowadays there's maybe about a hundred people looking at the [plane] with all the technology and things, It's a lot more to keep a plane in the air now. But I think it took about twenty people to keep the plane in the air.

KP: ... What was your interaction with the people that actually serviced your plane? Did you talk to the mechanics?

RM: Oh yeah. After you get out on Johnston Island, you forget a lot of the G.I. stuff. And you'd talk with them and joke with them.

KP: So once you were on Johnston Island, you were very much on your own, the squadron?

RM: Pretty much, yeah. We got to know most of the guys. Of course ... we we were in officers' quarters we're in one part behind the ready room. And the enlisted men were on the other side of the Island, but in a five minute walk you could be at either place. One of the interesting things happened while at El Toro. I had just made friends with Dewey Bartlett. We went to a U.S.O. dance and there were these two good looking gals across the dance floor. I went over and introduced myself and brought them back over to where we were sitting, and we danced for the evening. And then a couple days later, I shipped out. ... About two weeks later Dewey Bartlett came over to Pearl and joined us in the squadron in the second echelon. ... He found me, and he said, "Mac, I think I did you some dirt. You know that blonde that you danced with all night?" I said, "Yeah, she was pretty." "I got engaged to her." (laughs) ... Ann was a good gal. He finally ended up as Governor of Oklahoma and Senator from Oklahoma in Washington D.C. He died of lung cancer about five or six years ago. His son came to one of our reunions. (...?) It was interesting, meeting Dewey's son. Dewey was a good pilot too. Some guys couldn't fly well, but he was a good pilot.

KP: So when you say some guys couldn't fly well, were some of them in your squadron? You don't have to name names.

RM: There were some guys with fine reasons for not going there. They'd drink too much, or I'd take their dawn patrol because they'd drunk less than eight hours before, during the evening. ... I remember one guy was flying wing on me, and he leaned it out so much that the thing backfired. He went home. Some guys ... weren't made for flying. They just took it up for the glamour of it I guess.

KP: So you were in one of the glamour ... areas of the military. Did you feel that?

RM: No, no. I just wanted to fly. I was happy flying. And whenever I could, I'd take somebody's flight, or I'd do a test hop for an engine hop and things like this. I flew as much as I could because I liked it. They wanted somebody to go up to altitude one evening on Johnston Island. I got up to 27,000 feet on oxygen for them to follow with their anti-aircraft lights and their guns and things. That was an interesting experience. I was up on oxygen ... during the daytime one-time. I wanted to see how high that airplane would go. I got up as high as I could on oxygen, and I turned it over on its back and went straight down, no flaps, clean. And my

altimeter was unwinding fast! So I thought, I better pull out of this thing! I'm going to hit the deck. So I pulled out ... at what I thought was about 7,000 or 8,000 [feet], and by the time I got back, at level flight again, I was going so fast that I couldn't hold the nose down. We got back up to 12,000 before I got down to speed. And I found out later that one of the guys had done that before, and he lost his tail surface. His tail surface just came off. He was going so fast, the plane couldn't take all that. So I was fortunate. I pulled out easy and didn't hull back By the time I got down, everything was still cold and fogged up. It was cold up there.

RL: How fast did you get? ...

RM: ... As I watched it unwind, the air speed indicator unwind, it unwound twice. So I must have been doing about 4,450 something like that, straight down, no dive flaps, Nothing. But after 12,000, I put the flaps down, and dove down there. And landed. They have dive flaps on those planes. When your in a dive, they keep you from going too fast, and you can control it better too. I couldn't control ... anything going that fast.

KP: You mentioned [that] part of your training at Hawaii, ... was trying to evade anti-aircraft fire. Was that your biggest concern, in terms of combat, the anti-aircraft?

RM: Yes, we didn't have many zero-fighter opposition or anything like that.

KP: But at that point in training you knew that the zeros were ...?

RM: The zeros were pretty much at Midway and places like that. The zeros were pretty well knocked out. The carriers were knocked out pretty much. ... They lost, (the Japs) most of their carriers early in the war.

KP: So your major thing was the anti-aircraft fire?

RM: Yeah, right. ... In the Luzon campaign we had a bomber ... [come] over one night, way up at altitude, and he dropped a couple of bombs on us, but he was a multi-engine, he was a bigger bomber. ... He got one of our airplanes. The bomb landed right on one of our airplanes, set a couple of fires and things, but that's about it.

KP: That was your only contact with an enemy plane?

RM: Yeah. I still think ... [that] if they'd had a plane ready, I could have gone up and gone after him, but they decided, heck safety, a better part of valor. (laughs)

KP: Now after doing your patrolling at Johnston Island, where were you sent to next?

RM: Well, we went to back to Pearl and rejoined ...

KP: Your squadron was reunited?

RM: Yeah, and went down to Espiritu Santo, in a converted carrier, loaded with airplanes. Slept on the deck, underneath a plane wing. It was too hot below and all that, so we got to Espiritu Santo, and we got all our airplanes. They were the latest SBD 6's. ... When the war started there were SBD 1's. The 6's had 1,200 horsepower, and they could carry a pretty big load. That was the best one they made. And from, Espiritu Santo we had to ferry over to Guadalcanal and then to Bougainville, which was my first tour of combat duty in Bougainville. Guadalcanal was .. about the end of it's campaign there in Guadalcanal when we got there. But a friend of mine who had joined the Navy before I had and was a Marine pilot, he was lost, I think, in that area there between Espiritu Santo and Guadalcanal. ...We flew through a front, led by an Air Force DC-3 ... C-48. And he got a little slower, getting through this front we were flying. You could just about see each plane. ... It was a real thick front. We couldn't get under it. We couldn't get over it, so we had to fly through it. He got pretty slow one time, and Dewey Bartlett was leading a group, and he nosed over, he thought he was going to spin in any minute. We thought we'd lost him. And that's how my friend probably, my high school friend, was lost in that area, because there are a lot of fronts there.

KP: ... When you say a front, was this a storm front?

RM: Yeah, and it was a thick one. We were down at 1,100 feet and couldn't get under it, and we went up to, I think, 14,000 to get over it and couldn't get over it. So we had to plunge on through it.

KP: Was bad weather ... just as much of a threat?

RM: At that time it was, yeah.

KP: At Bougainville?

RM: No, in Bougainville we had good weather.

KP: But in general when you were flying, that's what you ... were most concerned about was bad weather?

RM: Yea. And anti-aircraft.

KP: And anti-aircraft.

RM: Yep.

KP: How good was the meteorology predications?

RM: They were pretty good. The intelligence could have been a little bit better.

KP: When you say it could have been a little bit better, what was some of the ...?

RM: Well, some of, ... at Bougainville we were supposed hit Rabaul and the surrounding areas, and they told us where the Japs were. I dropped my bomb on an area that the only thing I could see were native huts. And that was supposed to have been our target. Maybe the Japs were in those. I don't know. But I figured, that's just one of them. Some of them we thought were not good missions.

KP: In terms of?

RM: The target. The target wasn't that valuable.

KP: Did you ever encounter more opposition that you thought in terms of some of the targets?

RM: No. Pulling out over Rabaul Bay one time, ... we had our machine-guns, 50 caliber machine-guns, right in the cockpit there. They tell you after you come out of your dive, you strafe on the way out. I was strafing, and they said, when you're finished strafing then open your breech a little bit. Leave it on safety. As I was coming out of my strafing run while we were in Rabaul Bay, all of a sudden BOOM! .. The plane filled up with smoke, and ... it was terrible. Boy, I thought, they've got me zeroed in. The engine was running, and I was down almost on the water. I opened the hatch to let the ... smoke out. Everything was running all right. The plane didn't seem to be damaged any. A few seconds later another one, BOOM! I'd better get out of here, and I started evasive tactics. ... Trying to get away ... from them, come to find out that the plane wasn't damaged, and the engine was running, so we went on back to Bougainville. And I came to find out a crack open in the breech allowed the shells that where in there to explode. And ruin my fifty caliber machine-guns. They had to replace those. We were firing right through the (propeller?). (...?) That gave me a few moments of excitement!

KP: If you had had to bail out, what would have happened do you think? Or what was the procedure? Let's say you had to bail out by (...?).

RM: If you had to bail out, they had ... PBYs in the area. They were called Dumbos. And they would pick you up.

KP: And did men in your squadron have to bail out?

RM: No. We had a couple of mishaps, one fellow on Johnston Island. We lost a man on Johnston Island. I don't know what happened to him. He had to ditch his airplane. ... They got him out. They picked him up. And I think there was a ... well yes, we did lose one, I think he dove in or something like that. ... One of the fellows escorting a sub out had finished; he had the squadron doctor in the back seat with him. Coming off the escort, he got down on the water, he and his wing man got down on the water, so they could get underneath the radar. And do some flat hating. And he got down too close. He hit the top of a wave with his prop and his prop went spinning off somewhere, and he had to ditch. He and the squadron doctor had to ditch.

KP: So the squadron doctor flew?

RM: Well he had to get flight time. He was the squadron doctor. ... He wasn't a pilot, but he had to do some flying, while he was getting the flight skins, they called it. ... We were on a combination hop over Pearl Harbor when we got back from Johnston Island on a Sunday afternoon. We were supposed to be making a run on a target over Pearl Harbor, and the fighter squadron was to train on intercepting a squadron bombing. This one young fellow in a F-4U came out from the states, and it was one of his first practices. He made a run on our squadron and came up underneath. I guess he blacked out and hit two airplanes right in mid-air. A big fire ball, and the two pilots got out. The gunners didn't get out. ... One fellow reached up to get the hatch open and got burned. He got out and the other fellow got out too, but the gunners didn't get out. ... It was a tragic afternoon. I was on leave. I was in Pearl Harbor. ... I was not on that flight, but they described it. One fellow got out, and he was swimming in the water and trying to keep afloat. ... And one of our fellow pilots circled down to where he was. And ... the pilot slowed the plane up and ... his gunner got out of his cockpit along the side of the airplane in flight, opened the hatch to get a raft out, and he dropped it to this guy. He should have gotten a medal for that. That's was a dangerous thing to do.

KP: That was extremely dangerous.

RM: Yeah, and ... Hassler, was in the water. He had to swim for this thing. ... He got to the thing, and he got ... the raft inflated. And all he could do was get into it. He was exhausted. He was there laying on this raft with hands and legs sticking out. And all of a sudden he looked out the side and there were sharks around. ... But those two guys got out of there. That was a mess. We lost two good airplanes and two good gunners.

KP: So, gunners and pilots were very close to each other?

RM: Oh, yes.

KP: You mentioned in terms of Rabaul that you were hitting what looked like native huts to you. How well could you see targets?

RM: Japs used camouflage. Well, up at altitude, you can't see them too well, but you know there is an area down there, and they tell you that's your target. And as you get closer, you can see what you are hitting.

KP: So you could see unlike high altitude bombers?

RM: You could see ... where your target was when you ... dove on it because they told you that's where the Japs were ... holed up. So we dove on it. And this one looked like it was some huts. They may have been filled with Japs, but I never did find out what the final score was on that.

KP: Would you have any discretion on where you would put your bombs, or did you get very clear, precise ... orders? How much ... command discretion did you have?

RM: Depends on your target. If you have moveable ships, like in Manila Bay, you can pick out a target. In our first hop, when we got to the Luzon campaign, there was a strike on Clark Field and there were a lot of targets there. And maybe a day or so later we had ... a mission to bomb Corregidor. ... It was near Clark Field. For two of us, our bombs didn't release, so we pulled out. One of the fellows was shot down on that mission. He tried to land on Clark Field, and he was killed. ... The two of us had to go back over the target and release our bombs the second time. ... Going over the target a second time, there was a little danger, but you could see the damage that the strike had done, the fires, and a lot of things were all messed up at Corregidor after we got done there.

KP: So when you say going over the second time was more dangerous, was it because the anti-aircraft fire was more organized?

RM: Probably, probably, but we went over it, and we dropped our bombs because I didn't want to land on our field with a bomb that had already been armed and everything and [was] ready to drop. ... If it dropped on the runway I couldn't disarm a bomb. It was armed already.

KP: So once you armed a bomb that was it?

RM: Yes, see it had to jettison somewhere, and of course [when] you're flying over friendly territory, you don't want to drop the bomb on anybody down there, so we went back over the target and dropped it on the target.

KP: ... How long were you engaged in an air campaign against Rabaul?

RM: Rabaul?

RM: I guess it was about eight weeks there. ... In August we left Pearl Harbor for Espiritu Santo and then got ... to Guadalcanal then to Bougainville. We flew missions in October and November and then in December, we moved to Green Island. And then on up to Luzon. We flew 72 airplanes, single engine airplanes on a lead plane from Green Island-Bougainville area to Luzon campaign which took 26 hours flying over water. We landed at New Guinea and then at Palau and on up to Leyte and then on up to Luzon. And all those planes made all over water flight[s] without a mishap, until about one of the last guys landing at Luzon. He had one wheel down. And they had a makeshift tower there, and they kept calling, "You have one wheel down. Take a wave off. You have one wheel down." He hit on that one wheel and bounced off. The other wheel came down, and that was the only mishap we had. He landed safely.

KP: Oh, he did manage to land safely?

RM: As he hit on that one wheel, the other wheel came down. It was a hard landing. He bounced up. The other wheel came down, and he landed okay. That's the only thing that was even a near mishap of all that over water flying with all those airplanes.

KP: And how would you refuel? ...

RM: Well, ... we had ten hours of fuel aboard with dux tanks and everything. We ... had jetisonable tanks in the bomb racks, and we could get rid of them whenever we needed to or wanted to. We'd empty those first and then go onto to what the plane had ordinarily. So, we had ten hours of fuel. One of those tanks was about six hours. Then we landed in Leyte and got refueled. That Leyte was a mess when we got there. They had airplanes all over the place. The strip was right next to the water on the beach, and if a plane came in, and it was shot up or the plane ... went off the end of the runway or just was in an accident or whatever it was --they'd just bulldoze it right into the sea. There were good airplanes laying all over the place and in the water and everything. Oh man! What a waste.

KP: So in a sense, ... the Marines and the Navy had the luxury of ditching planes that a few years earlier in the war they might have gotten salvaged?

RM: No. It wasn't a luxury. It was a necessity. You had to get those planes down. If he was on the runway, they'd just take a bulldozer and push him off [to] get him out of the way, allowing other planes to land. It looked like a junk heap. ...

KP: You were based at Leyte for ...

RM: Just staging through for fuel.

KP: For fuel.

RM: We were there for just a couple of hours, for something to eat and fuel.

KP: And then you moved onto ...

RM: Luzon.

KP: Luzon. And that was the campaign against Manila and Clark field?

RM: Yes. We were keeping MacArthur's left flank neutralized. Towards the end, we were supporting their army, and we were doing close air support. We did a pretty good job. The army didn't trust us at first, but they found the Marines could hit their targets. They called them in whenever they could.

KP: So you were doing combat close air support?

RM: Yes.

KP: ... How did your unit receive ... its orders, its missions?

RM: Well, intelligence would brief you on the flight, on the mission that you had, and tell you where Then they had ... field watchers, and there they could see the operation. And then they would see our hit. One of my ... missions was to bomb a cave there. The Japs were in this big cave and they were ... holding up the Americans on their way to Manila from Lingayen Gulf. ... I found this cave, and this watcher was watching the bombs as they went in. I still think that it was my bomb that went right into that cave because I was number four to dive, and that was the one that went right into the middle of that cave. So, I had a good mission. One of the other fellows said it was his, so I just never thought it was his. ... Okay, I didn't care whose it is. We just got the job done. Another interesting hop was, Manila was being bombarded at night. They had a mortar pool north of Manila, and they were bringing out these mortars at night and lobbing mortars into Manila, and causing all kinds of havoc. And they wanted us to find that mortar pool and knock it out. Well, a couple days before this hop, they decided that Lt. MacDougall had to have his wisdom teeth pulled. Right in the middle of combat in this rice patty. .. He was a major or a captain, or a full lieutenant. He out ranked me, and I couldn't stop him. So we are in this tent and seated all around this tent and this rice patty, were guys watching, waiting their turn. And there he is, with ... [these] antique instruments ..., literally with a hammer and chisel, chiseling my wisdom teeth ... out of my lower jaw. He finally got them out after a couple hours. I had a sore jaw, but I couldn't get my mouth open the next day. Then I was ... told to lead this hop down to this mortar pool, find this mortar pool and bomb it. So we were up at 12,000 feet, and I couldn't find it, but I could talk. I told the fellows, "Wait up here. I'm going down to see if I can find that target." So I dove down, and it was a beautiful day with a lot of puffy clouds and with a lot of small hills around the place down there. And I was down there for about a half an hour and getting sicker and sicker, ... from the previous work on my jaw and the rough air. I was getting air sick. And just ... after I found the target, I told Sidwell, "Close your hatch, I'm going throw it over the side." I barfed over the side of the airplane, and I couldn't get my mouth open. So, it was terrible, a terrible scene. But I went back up to 12,000 and joined the guys. And we went down and bombed the area. Two days later the fires were still burning. So it was a successful hop.

KP: Removing your wisdom teeth, why?

RM: I don't know why they wanted to do that.

KP: ... You hadn't complained about them?

RM: Nothing. It was just a dumb thing. I heard of some other fellow, a general in the European War, right in the middle of combat, went to see the doctor about something on his skin. And he said, "That's a dangerous skin lesion. We've got to take that off." So, in the middle of combat, they remove this thing that could have waited for six months or a year. My teeth didn't need extraction either. So these things do happen.

KP: During the Luzon campaign, how long were you in the Philippines?

RM: A total of about, let's see, ... from January to March, from early January to about the middle of March.

KP: And did you have any contact with the Filipino population while you were there ...?

RM: Well, not personally, no. They had cockfights and things like that. We would watch them. And some of the fellows brought some of their cocks, and they raised them, and they fought against the Filipino cocks. ... MacArthur said, "Filipinos can travel through camp and everywhere else." He said. "It was their land, and you weren't to stop them from coming in." So there were no guards around or anything. ... Of course, the guys had to take showers, and they had to take them out in the open. There were only men there, and the Filipinos would come by and look, stare. And the water that was drained away from the shower was drained into a big hole. And their water buffalo would get down in that drain water, and stay in there to get cool. It was interesting. We had rice patty landing fields, they'd bulldoze these rice patties and lay marston mats for runways. It was an interesting experience.

KP: Any other memories of your Luzon campaign?

RM: Well, I was waiting for, my replacement had come in, so I was just waiting for transportation, and we were eating C rations which were meager, and I was losing weight. ... And every time I'd go out of the tent to see what kind of an air transport plane that was coming over, I would get dizzy looking up. I got tired of waiting and I volunteered for a hop. And it was one of the worst hops I had ever been on, for anti-aircraft. We ran into some awful anti-aircraft, I said to myself, "You dumb bunny! You volunteered for, you didn't have to go. What are you doing up here?" (laughs)

KP: Where was the hop to?

RM: It was in northern Luzon. It was almost at the tip of northern Luzon, and it was a three hour mission, or better I guess, three and half hours.

KP: ... How did you try to evade anti-aircraft fire and how successful were you? You mentioned that was a real emphasis on your training.

RM: Well you use evasive tactics ... because you could. The big bombers over Germany had to stay on course, and they couldn't use evasive tactics. But we would use evasive tactics, and when you get near your target, you nose over and dive down on your target. And so evasive tactics were what we use against the anti-aircraft fire.

KP: Did you feel more comfortable in the smaller planes than in those small bombers? Would you have preferred to be in a large bomber?

RM: Talking to a good friend of mine, who was B-17 pilot, yes, I think I had a better deal than he did. He got shot down finally, and he saw many of his friends, and other airplanes get shot

out of the sky. Done by the anti-aircraft and ... the jets. The Germans had the first jets, and they could see them as a dot in the sky. In a few seconds they were flying through the formation, got the lead plane, and then they'd have to land. They were only twenty minute up in flight. He saw many shot down. He was second in command on a lot of the missions, not the lead plane, he'd get shot down by these guys right away. He was a young man. He was only twenty years old, and he was leading a whole flight of B-17s across the Atlantic. ... He went into combat fatigue, and he finally was shot down at the end of the war. (...?) He had broken his hip and never knew it. He really had it rough. And a lot of those guys had it rougher than we had.

KP: ... In an article about you, it mentioned that you had supported beach landings in Luzon. ...

RM: No. MacArthur had landed on the beach ...

KP: Oh, okay.

RM: ... there and had his picture taken and all that. ... He was in his campaign, and in his drive towards Manila needed air support. And we gave him air support.

KP: So it was after he had been inland that you provided this?

RM: Yes. His campaign was approaching Manila when we got there. We bombed some of the ships in Manila Harbor because they had ... guns on them still firing and they were making it hard. So we had a couple of missions bombing those derelict ships with their guns on them. We ran into some flack there, but

KP: You mentioned to Tom Kindre once, that ... at one point, you had a close call closer to the ground with a guy who attacked you with a knife who was drunk. Is that while you were in the military?

RM: No.

KP: Oh, okay.

RM: No, that's after I started practice here in town.

KP: Oh, okay.

RM: ... I came back and got married in June of '45. And finished up my pre-med courses in '46. I went through medical school, interned and went into practice in '51. And I was making all kinds of calls, police calls, emergency calls, etc. I got into one of my patient's home, the son-in-law was having a fight with her daughter, and they called me down there to treat the daughter. And while I was there, the son-in-law tried to get in and bang the door down. So as I was leaving, ... I told him, "The family doesn't want you in." And I said, "Please leave. You're drunk." And he came towards me like he was attacking. Well, anyhow it turned out that I gave him one to the jaw, and I gave him a couple judo shots to the neck. And he went down. Then he

pulled a knife and tried to come in the window, and he cut the screen. By that time the police were on their way.

KP: You mentioned that you went on leave in Australia. How did that leave come about?

RM: That's an interesting story too. They gave you a week R&R in Australia to pilots and gunners for their combat duty.

KP: This was after?

RM: This was in Bougainville.

KP: Bougainville?

RM: Yes. And my gunner came to my tent the night before, and he says, "Lieutenant, do you have any cigarettes to take down there?" because the Aussies like our cigarettes. And I said, "Yeah, ... I've got a couple cartons up on that orange crate up there." And he says, "I'll get some cigarettes for you." So the next day I got on the plane and was heading for Australia, and the gunner came over to me, and he said, "There's your cigarettes lieutenant." In the center between the bench seats on each side of the airplane was baggage, and one of them was a big parachute or bag, and it was full of cigarette cartons. And he must have had 50, 60 cartons in there, maybe more. And it happened to be a Sunday. We got into Australia, and there were no custom officials there. But I wasn't on the ground more than half an hour when someone, an Aussie came up [to me and asked], "Got any cigarettes, yank?" I said, "Yeah." I showed him where they were, and he took them off, and he gave me for each carton a bottle of hooch. I ... guess it was boot leg stuff. Well anyhow it had a white horse label on it. And we filled that parachute bag with all this hooch and got back to Bougainville. I said, "Sidwell, you got those cigarettes for me. ... Now you get rid of that hooch." I said, "I'll give you half of it," He sold it off for 55 dollars a bottle. The Army was on Bougainville there too. He said, one of the Army boys came by and he said, "Sidwell, I only got 40 bucks," He says, "How about a bottle of hooch?" He said, "This is no five and dime shove off." It's 55 bucks a bottle. So I sent my share home, and I put my sister through college with it. College wasn't very expensive in those days. I think I got, I don't know how much I made, I guess it was ... 1,500, 1,600 dollars.

KP: Is there anything else that struck you about Australia? You had mentioned earlier that the women were very attractive.

RM: Yeah, I met a nice girl over there, and my friend (Grif?) and I palled around together. And .. we had some good times together. He was married ..., and I was sort of engaged. So it was just a nice time. We just had a nice time. They were very friendly.

KP: Did the language strike you as funny at all?

RM: A little bit.

KP: Yeah I remember someone at one the class meetings, we were talking about how the Australian women had different terms that meant different things. I think the term "knocked up" or something was a term which has completely different connotations for Australian women than for American women.

RM: Yeah, I just liked their accent and things. I had a very nice time. Their morals were somewhat loose over there. I remember one of our fellows, was due to catch the plane to come back, and he made acquaintance with this gal and he went to her home. And he said, "As we were getting in her bedroom," he said, "I'm a little worried about this. I got to get up and make that six o'clock plane." She said, "That's all right. Me father will wake you up." And he did. So, that's about ... what the yanks ran into down there.

KP: You had completed your 38 missions, so you were going home before the war actually ended. Was that ...?

RM: The Iwo Jima campaign was about the start of that time.

KP: So you didn't participate in that campaign?

RM: No. No, I didn't.

KP: Now when you went in, ... was there a set number of missions you had to do? Was there a magic number and then you went home or?

RM: No, not really. Some of the fellows left the squadron and went home on leave when we left Bougainville. And didn't get in the Luzon campaign. And I guess ... some of the fellows who wanted to go could sign up to go home. And those who wanted to stay with the squadron, stayed and went to Luzon. I was one of the fellows that stayed. Most of the fellows stayed. Some of the fellows didn't want to go home yet.

KP: Why did you decide to go home, was there a, had you had enough?

RM: Well, they had replacements for me. They sent replacements.

KP: So they were telling you it was time to go home.

RM: Yeah. That's interesting, you had to find your own way home from Luzon. Hitchhike in other words. ... We had to find either air travel or ship travel. And some of the fellows had to come home by ship. It took them a month you know.

KP: How did you make it?

RM: I hung around the airfield until I found a ride and then hitchhiked. One general had ... a four engine plane, and I had learned that he was going back to Pearl Harbor, and I stayed around

until I got on board. And we slept on the floor in sleeping bags, whatever way you could. It was a cargo, well I guess cargo, no I think it was a Liberator. And we slept in the bomb area back to Pearl [Harbor]. Then I got another hop to San Francisco from Pearl. So, it was a hitchhiking ride.

KP: Had you thought of staying in the military?

RM: Not very much. No. ... They asked us to join before, they wanted us to join ...

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

KP: This is a continuation of an interview with Robert D. MacDougall on July 27, 1994 in York, Pennsylvania with Kurt Piehler and

RL: Robert Lipschitz.

KP: ... So you had mentioned that everyone had gotten the talk, and that someone said, I don't know if we had gotten that on the last tape. What did he say, the individual after he heard this talk about staying in the regulars at Floyd Bennett Field?

RM: Oh, ... During the question and answer, the first question was after all this spiel about joining the regulars, the first question was, "Where do I sign to get out of here?" The guys weren't impressed about staying in, about as much impressed as I was. And so we opted ... to get out. ... I had chosen to go into medicine. But in medical school, it was interesting, they came to us from the space program when we were the seniors. They wanted us to join the space program. And there was an old Dr. Greishiemer, female M.D. She taught us physiology. And she was, I guess, about to retire, soon to retire, but she was great. She was a great teacher. You know what she said? She said, "Boy if I were young like you guys, like you young men are," she said, "I'd be in that space program." And she was 60 years old, quite a forward thinking gal.

KP: Did any one think of joining the space program ...?

RM: I don't think any of them did. No. We were [as] poor as church mice and wanted to get on with ... our training ... and get our practice started.

KP: Before ... leaving the war and talking a little about the postwar, I guess there are a few other questions I had. One question is what did you think of the enemy? ... Obviously, they're out to kill you, and you're out to kill them in a sense, but ...

RM: What did I feel about them? At that time, I had the odd sense of doing away with as many as I could. I thought they were a bunch of knuckle heads and should loose the war definitely. And they did.

KP: ... Did you have any contact with any Japanese POWs?

RM: No.

KP: No, so the Japanese ... were very distant in a sense that you dropped bombs on them.

RM: Right. ... I remember going over some targets, and we'd get a lot of small arms fire when we were down low strafing.

KP: Did you actually see people on the ground when you dived?

RM: Yeah, but the Japs were very clever. You know, they were holed up somewhere. They wouldn't be standing right in a hole, or if they were in a house somewhere, they'd be standing behind the window or something like that. You could see their guns going off, but you couldn't see the Jap, so you'd fire where you'd see the guns going off. You'd strafe that. They were pretty smart.

KP: So they were a tough adversary?

RM: Yes.

KP: You left the military, and went to medical school. How crucial was the GI Bill?

RM: Very. I wouldn't have gone into medical school if I hadn't had the GI Bill. I couldn't afford it. But that was one of the reasons why I went into medicine, because I could get the GI Bill.

KP: The GI Bill was really one of the deciding factors.

RM: ... That was one thing that ... allowed me to make a second choice on a vocation. ... And if I hadn't had that chance, I'd probably stick with farming.

KP: Did becoming a doctor change your view on the war and the experiences you had? ...

RM: Not really. The thing that really changed my feeling about the war was when I became [a] Christian. ... I felt how horrible war is, and how inhumane war is. And wondering about how many people I was responsible for killing. For a lot of us, I think if even Hitler, as bad as he was, he'd have done himself in sooner or later, but he'd taken a lot of other people with him I guess. He wouldn't have lasted long. ... It's terrible the way wars get started. Even what we're seeing today.

RM: During the war itself had you attended religious services at all?

RM: Yeah, my friend Grif and I would have rather gone on a hop than go to church or something like that. But he made me get up on Sundays and go with him. He was a Southern Baptist, and he was a great influence, and I'm thankful for my friendship with him. He died a

couple of years ago of cancer. But he flew with me. Most of the time [he] flew wing with me. In fact one of the times we were up coming back from Rabaul, and I guess he wanted to see how close we could fly together. We lost our wing tip lights, hit them wing to wing. Got too close and knocked our wing tip lights off. But he was a great friend.

KP: Now ... you went to medical school after the war. How did your education compare to your actual practice? What did you learn in medical school and what did medical school fail to teach you?

RM: I went to Temple Medical School, and I thought it was a great education. There were a lot of things I learned here though at York as an intern. And the one thing they didn't teach us, and probably wasn't that important as it is now, is the business part of practice. Because you've got so many government regulations, insurance things, and so many things to learn about that you didn't get taught in medical school at that time that are more important now. ... What I did was get myself an accountant to help me that way. In the end, I finally got a business advisor, and that was a great step, and that's why I could retire as well as I've retired now, because of my business advisor. I'd rather practice medicine and take care of patients.

KP: You've mentioned that medicine has changed quite a bit.

RM: Yes.

KP: ... One question I had on medicine, had you thought of a specializing? You became a general practitioner, but had you thought of following a specialty?

RM: No, I felt that I could serve best as a general practitioner and family physician. And it proved to be very satisfactory. At first I was quite busy getting started. I was here by myself, and I was taking police calls, emergency calls and taking calls for other doctors at night. I was getting up, maybe ... [one] to three times a night, and getting dressed to go out and do house calls at night. I think I made as high as twenty house calls a day. At the end of my practice, I was making maybe one house call a month. Things changed.

KP: Why did the house calls decline?

RM: Well most people had better transportation. Cars were heated and they'd bring their family to the doctor's office. ... Well, when I got here a lot of people expected house calls when somebody got sick. They wouldn't take a baby out with a fever, but with the heated cars, ... they [could] take them out and bring them to the office. I could see maybe four or five or six patients while I'd be making one house call. So it was more efficacious to have them come to the office. I could see more people.

KP: So going on a house call was a lot of work, to troop from house to house, and find the house and ...

RM: Yes. It was interesting, some of those row houses, you'd go into a building that had three

or four apartments in them, in a street where they had a lot of row houses. And you go up to the top floor and see a patient and on the way down, they'd catch you coming down, and you'd go see three or four more while you are at that house. It was a time when house calls were four dollars and an office call was three dollars. By the end the first year, I had ... 5,000 dollars sitting out on the books that I could never collect. But I was delivering babies, and doing minor surgery in the office, and was the company doctor for (Farquar?) and finally at Caterpillar, I was their doctor for seventeen years. I'd go down there [to the] plant every day. In the morning, my brother Howard joined me. ... I started out in '51, and he joined me in ... February of '53. ... It's been quite a nice arrangement. It's been a nice practice. I thought that I wanted to [continue] until I was 70, and I made it to 70 with a cancer operation in between there and all that, but it's been a good life. Medicine has changed. Yeah, there was a lot of things that they relied on the doctors for, and he was next to God. And he knew all the answers, but now the information has been disseminated and the patients are more educated. And that's a good thing.

KP: So you've found that when you were in the '50s, even though you in some ways knew less because you hadn't been as experienced, your patients still viewed you as the doctor who knew everything?

RM: Yes, but the patients are able to do a lot for themselves, i.e. preventive medicine. The education has been a good thing for the people.

KP: So a patient is more likely now than say in the '50s to ask you why you are prescribing a certain thing or ask you why did you come up with this conclusion?

RM: Yeah. In the '50s, penicillin was just coming in the fore, and if a doctor wasn't careful, ...[a patient would] come in with a cold, and say, "I need a shot of penicillin doc." And if you felt it was necessary, you'd give it to him, but if you felt it was not necessary, you better be careful that you didn't give it to him because medicines are dangerous things. ... But it was a transition in medicine. Some of it's good; some of it's horrible.

KP: What are the good parts and what are the bad parts?

RM: The good are the new medications out, the antibiotics that save more lives, the newer antibiotics, and the ongoing development of new drugs is good. ... The only thing we had for arthritis was aspirin. And the only thing we had for nervous disorders was phenobarbital and their derivatives. Penicillin ... did a great thing to stop rheumatic heart disease and scarlet fever and arthritis.

KP: So you remember these diseases when they were still common, scarlet fever, rheumatic?

RM: You had to routinely quarantine a house if you treated scarlet fever. But scarlet rash with penicillin would be gone in 24-36 hours, so they'd drop the quarantine for scarlet fever. ... A lot of things changed for the better.

KP: Do you think patients get better care now then they did when you first started, simply because of the knowledge you have and the tools that you have to work with?

RM: Yes, yes I do think they get better treatment. There is more surgery. Now they can do a lot more for heart disease and heart troubles, with surgery, and the bypass operation and the open heart surgery has done a great thing now. And microsurgery for eyes and ears and things like that. ... They can get better treatment now yes, much better. Surgery has improved. Anesthesia, has improved so much. Family doctors have more education, and more at their finger tips that they can help patients, preventively for one thing, and minor ills for another. Your best medical buck now is your family doctor. Instead of going to a specialist, if I've got a bellyache, I'll go to the internist who specializes in the abdomen. A lot of times a family doctor can take care of those things. However insurance has gotten so bad. I used to do repairs, and I even did vasectomies in my office. But insurance got so bad, you had to give them up because you couldn't get remunerated enough to pay for your insurance. So my malpractice bill for a year was a 135 dollars when I started. When I left it was over 7,000 dollars. So malpractice suits have changed things a good bit. Some of it's for good, and some of it's for the good of the lawyers only.

KP: Is there anything you would like to say, on the terms of the war, your prewar, or even medicine, that ...

RM: You mean a final ...

KP: Anything that I forgot to ask about?

RM: A final pearl?

KP: Yeah.

RM: I think I might say this, ... that I think is one of the most valuable things that I could give to posterity. Faith. In my own case, my father died when I was eleven years old. Depression, farm, four kids, and why [was] my father allowed to be taken at that time? ... And it was a tragedy, but when you look back on it and see what's happened in the mean time, and you see [that] the Lord has been in on what's happened since that time. Three of we boys were at war, came back from war, all of us without injuries. Two of us went into medicine. My older brother was in the Department of Agriculture in Washington at an important job. My sister married well, and she had a nice family. We've all had good families. And I think ... with tragedies that have happened, if you pray about it and wait on the Lord, He'll take care of it. And my example that I just gave I think is a good example for others to take heed and listen to and be encouraged by. I guess that's one thing that I liked to end with. Thank You.

KP: ... Thank you very much.

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