

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT H. MEIBAUER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Karlee Meibauer: This begins an interview with Dr. Robert Henry Meibauer on October 27, 2004, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and I am Karlee Meibauer and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you, Dr. Meibauer, for coming today all that distance to be with us for this interview. To begin the interview, could you tell us where and when you were born?

Robert Meibauer: Certainly, I was born on Staten Island, New York, one of the boroughs that's the least populated, kind of a rural borough, in those days, and I was born in Staten Island Hospital, June 13, 1925.

SH: Thank you very much. What was your father's background? When and where he was born?

RM: Yes, my father was born in Brooklyn, New York. He was the son of a dentist who was an immigrant from Germany, and had five vaccinations because his father took him and his family to Germany quite often. Before World War II, my grandfather's brother warned him, Max his name was, to leave the country because war was imminent, that being World War I. So, they came back to America, they were just on a visit to Germany, and back to Brooklyn, where my grandfather had a dental practice. My father, then, took the ferry from 39th Street, Brooklyn, to Staten Island, to a German picnic, where my mother was serving, *Pfannkuchen* ... or German pancakes. That's how they met and later married. That was after World War I.

SH: Did they talk about any sort of anti-German sentiment during World War I?

BM: No, they absolutely were pro-German, because they hoped that the United States wouldn't get into the war, on either side of course, but they were not really pro-German, that is, that Germany would win the war. That's World War I, which I'm talking about.

SH: Can you tell me about your father, was he also a dentist?

BM: Yes, he was, until licensing came in. He was unable to graduate from dental school, because he had helped a fellow student on an exam. He was afraid that his father would absolutely disown him, so he ran away from home in his senior year, went to Bridgeport, practiced dentistry, no less. [laughter] My grandmother went to the dean of the Dental School, NYU, and pleaded his case. The dean said, "Yes, bring Robert back, he's a good student, he made a mistake by helping another student, but we'll let him continue in school," but they couldn't find Robert. Robert left no forwarding address, he was afraid, and a year later he contacted home and it was too late, so he never did get his diploma from NYU. He then helped his brother, who was ten years younger, to get into dental school and he graduated in 1929, that was my father, Robert's brother, Conrad. So, I come from a long line of dentists. [laughter]

SH: What did your father do?

RM: He was a dental technician then, making dentures and fabricating porcelain jackets, and so on.

SH: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

RM: No, but she volunteered. She has many diplomas from the Red Cross during the war and OPA organization, [Office of Price Administration] that was.

SH: What is her family background?

RM: Her family background, both my mother and father were born in Germany and immigrated to this country, before the 1900s, and she was born in 1896, and graduated from high school, and then went to work with [the] telephone company for a short period, and then met and married my father and from then on she was a housewife.

SH: They lived most of the time then on Staten Island?

RM: On Staten Island, yes. I have a sister, who was a couple of years older, my sister was born in '23 and that was the little family that lived on Staten Island.

SH: Did your father attend Adelphi?

RM: Yes, he did and taught there. Because his German background, when he went to school in Germany, they insisted on Latin and Greek even, and he then was well-versed in that as his father was, too, and taught him a lot of it, and then, he became more or less a teacher at Adelphi in Latin and Greek, and then, went on to dental school from there. He, by the way, became well known as a dental historian. He's mentioned in his [*New York*] *Times* obituary, had him listed as one of the authorities of dental and medical history in the United States, especially. He had the largest private collection of dental antiquities and medical antiquities; and donated a lot of it to Smithsonian, where it was exhibited, and also a little museum on Staten Island. We had in our possession at one time letters from George Washington to his dentist; one acknowledging a repair that he had done when he was on campaign, up in Newburg. Another one when he was asking for the new impression material, Plaster of Paris, to take his impression, that was the second letter, and then, the third letter was from Martha Washington to this dentist, Dr. Greenwood, who was located in Manhattan, asking whether he could make her a set of teeth that were longer and wider and showed more, because the set she had been wearing didn't show at all and she'd like a new set. I had those three letters and they were part of my father's collection and, foolishly, I sold them, but that's okay ...

SH: It is true then that George Washington had wooden teeth?

RM: Yes, he had, not only wooden teeth, but a lead compound that was a lead-like metal, which was a heavy, but soft, lead-like material, the melting point of which was very low, so they could fabricate an arch of this metal; and into that arch they placed not only elk's teeth, which looked a lot like human teeth, and wooden teeth, that were painted white and they were upper and lower, attached with springs, so that the arches were the maxillary and the mandible would spread open, thereby, holding the upper up in his mouth and lower down against his mandible. But anyway, then, he had teeth carved in ivory that resembled human teeth, both the base of the denture and

the teeth were all one cut, carved out of one piece of ivory. Then, he had a set again of the lead-like metal, into which human teeth were inserted, donated by who knows who, probably extracted by the dentist. I don't know how he obtained them other than the dentist must have extracted them from former patients and they were inserted into the base, the lead-like metal base and that was another set that George [Washington] had. But every time they were put into his mouth; you could tell by some of the artist's renditions, the one artist that's on the three cent stamp, the purple one, where his mouth is absolutely as though he has cotton rolls in it, bulging and whatnot. He had a difficult time with his teeth in replacing them and was always inquiring about new methods and whatnot. Quite a history, of George's teeth.

SH: I didn't realize that Martha [Washington] also had ...

RM: Martha [Washington] had troubles, too, yes.

SH: Did you sell your collection to a collector or to an institution?

RM: It started out, my father and I worked together in Manhattan, when I got out of dental school. He had this laboratory going, and then, developed it into an office. So, I stepped right into a going practice. There was another dentist there that worked in the offices, and then, my father became interested, he was a philatelist and sold all his stamps in England, and had some contact over there scouting Europe and England for any dental and medical antiquities and thereby, paid for it with his large stamp collection. I mean, he had unbelievable amounts of very expensive United States stamps and British colonies, which were worth more in Great Britain than they were here. So, then with that, the monies of the sale of his stamp collection, he bought dental antiques and he had sent them here. I had nowhere to store them when he passed away. I put them into a storefront that his sister owned and it was robbed and all of these beautiful chests of instruments and surgical instruments and all kinds of nice prints. He had ... anything pertaining to the history of dentistry, oil paintings of dentistry or medicine, many of which were published, and first editions of all the writings on dentistry, just unbelievable, and then, it was, as I said somebody broke in and just took anything they wanted to and we found out who it was, but he had sold them to a dealer and the dealer didn't acknowledge it and it was a mixed-up mess. Then my father had said to me, "If you do sell it, sell it to a bookshop in Manhattan." I did that, he said, "You should get at least \$75,000.00," because he realized I wasn't too interested. I was a young guy out of dental school doing implants, in the early days, and involved with that; and [I] didn't show him much interest in the history of dentistry, which I regret now. Now, I wish I had it all, you know, [just] one of those things. But he said, "Get \$75,000.00 for it." Your father, Karlee [Karl Meibauer] was just a little boy, in the '60s. Because he [Robert Meibauer] passed away in '69, '59, I'm sorry, ... I did that, but this bookshop had moved from 11th Street, Manhattan, to Maryland, so I contacted them and they wanted the whole collection and I sold the letters separately to them for \$5000.00, which is, can you picture that, those were the days. So, I was happy with the \$80,000.00 and we took a little vacation, all the six children, so we had a good time.

SH: Good, I'm glad to hear that.

RM: But it's probably worth millions now, but everything else is the same way, inflation.

SH: What is your mother's family background?

RM: My mother's mother, it's interesting, was an excellent cook and worked for a rich family on Staten Island, in the estate and they then hired a coachman, my grandfather Henry Hoff, and the man to tend the horses. ... They met there at the estate and married and had five daughters and one son. My mother was in the middle somewhere and, as I said, worked for the telephone company, with her older sister [who] got that job for her in New York, and then, met my father at the German picnic. But I know all the schools she went to on Staten Island. When you're born and raised on Staten Island, it's like a small town, you know everything and everybody, you know. You can go back and see the old homesteads and whatnot, all within short distances, very nice place to grow up.

SH: Now, you were the oldest son?

RM: No, my sister was two years older, and she became a dental hygienist, out of Columbia University, following in the dental field [laughter] and when she was learning how to carve teeth, I was maybe fourteen, fifteen and she was eighteen, going to Columbia University. I watched how, my father would teach her and I would learn, too, so I was well-versed in all the phases of dentistry. When I was a teenager, ... he would take me to his lab when someone would go on vacation and I would try to take their place mixing the plaster and whatnot, and [it was] quite a production, not just one or two, but multiple cases and so when I got into dental school, this was all duck soup. That's an interesting story, too. Maybe we'll get into that later.

SH: Was it quite uncommon for a woman to go into dental hygiene like this, in those days?

RM: In those days it was, yes. Well, only women did it, yes. There weren't any male dental hygienists; they would go on, into dental school and, in fact, to pay for being a dental hygienist was very little compared to the work that she had to do and degrees she had to obtain. She went to two years of straight Columbia School of Dental Hygiene, and then, her first job, I'll never forget was \$12.00 a week, [laughter] but those were the days, you know, who made more than that? Nobody, that was in the '40s.

SH: You talked about Staten Island being almost like a rural community. What do you remember most as a young man, in grade school and what were some of your hobbies and activities that kept you busy?

RM: Yes, in grade school, of course, ... I still have as my patients, some of my kindergarten fellow students, [laughter] which is amazing, at least three or four of them, and we talk about the teachers of the time and the times we had, and then, on to a local high school, which again, I still have many friends and patients that went to school with me, because it was a very well knit type of community. They wouldn't travel to Manhattan to a dentist. They stayed locally, you know. So, it's a nice place, for that reason alone, that friends that you made when you were a little tot, five years old, you might still have when you're seventy, eighty.

SH: That's wonderful. Now, you talked about your father traveling to Germany often with his family, did you get to travel as well?

RM: No, not at all. The reason is interesting too. My grandfather was one of seven. We have that family tree, remember Karlee family tree? Anyway, he was one of seven children, his father in Germany was a judge and my grandfather was a lawyer, in Germany ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

RM: My grandfather was a lawyer in Germany and the son of a judge and got a young lady in trouble. This ... was unheard of, in those days. This was in the 1800s, a later part of the 1800s, so, he got shipped off to America, to avoid the responsibilities that he had created there. His father gave [him] such-and-such amount and said, "Now, you go to a professional school there, if you can." So, he landed in New York and within a half-hour, some con-artist, of some nature, had depleted him of all his funds [laughter] and he wandered around and there was a German settlement, they called it Germantown, up in 86th Street, Manhattan, got up there and made friends with some people, and then, got in touch with his father, who sent him more funds, and, finally, he went down to NYU Dental School, on 23rd Street and registered there. Being well educated in Germany, they accepted him, I don't know how [or] the details of it, but then he lived on 86th Street and met my grandmother. By the way, his name was Maximum and my grandmother's name was Minnie so they were called Minimum and Maximum. [laughter] By the time he was a senior, in dental school, he had had three children, including my father, and then, one more later, the uncle, and my grandfather then practiced in Brooklyn, which I had mentioned previously and they all lived and moved in Brooklyn.

SH: I wanted to know why you didn't travel as a child?

RM: Yes, oh, and every time an aunt or uncle died in Germany and they had many, many properties there, apartment buildings, and whatnot, he would get an inheritance, this is my grandfather, who by the way, disliked dentistry. He was not into it as much as his sons and me. But he would then accept the inheritance over there by, Aunts and Uncles pack up and all the furniture which would be out on the street in Brooklyn, furniture and all. [They would] go to Germany and spend his inheritance and that's how my father got educated there, in Berlin and in Lindau, which is down south Germany, on the border, on the Rhine, Lake Constance. So, my father was well rounded, but then when World War I [started, it] drove them all back to the United States, even though they were all born here, that is my father and his sisters and brother. Then, they stayed here until, of course, they established themselves there on Staten Island. At any rate, then came the Depression and my father practiced, as a dental technician, and that meant making dentures and teeth for the dentists. That was not a rewarding occupation, as compared to dentistry, so, we were rather poor and I can remember in the '30s, in '39 and so, we lost our house, which was quite a jolt, to not only me, but, certainly, my father and mother, and then, we moved to a rental, and then, things got better because my father established is laboratory, in Manhattan, right on (City Hall?) Park, [where] his brother now is a dentist, in [the] Woolworth Building. So, he did his work and there were the Park Row and the Tribune Building had about ten dentists in it, so, he became very busy and had three additional technicians

working for him. So, things were much better and also when I got out of dental school, of course, there it was and we [were] all quite well-to-do then, that was in the '50s.

SH: Were you involved in Boy Scouts or any youth organizations?

RM: Yes. In fact, the Boy Scouts meeting shack, was right next to my home, my backyard in fact, so I became a member of that early in life and the barn that we met in was another George Washington stop, they say, on Staten Island, called the Perrine House and every year they'd have a festival, festival of recreating that century, with costumes and wigs and horse and carriages and I was right next door to it all. It was quite thrilling and the Boy-Scout troop, of course, was right next to it, too, so there I was. Then, on to high school and when [I was] in high school the war came, December 7th, and we all listened to that on the radio about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and every fellow in [the] senior class wanted to get into the service, of course, *gung ho*, but my parents objected and when I had just about enough credits to graduate, I convinced them that I wanted to go into the Navy, otherwise I'd be drafted and I wanted to get into the dental field, the medical field, and my father said, "Okay, I'll sign, if you promise you'd go into the medical, that is, the hospital corpsman and on into the dental end of it, and get some correspondence courses." I needed history and one other of high school, then I had the diploma. While I was in Panama, in the hospital working, my mother was called and went on stage with the Class of 1946, and they awarded me a "war diploma," they called it, because I had all the regent's exams under my belt. I had passed all those, so they gave me the diploma, an academic diploma, no less, which got me into Wagner College pre-dental, when I got back.

KM: How did the Depression affect your family?

RM: Oh, very [much], as I said, we lost the house. I can remember going out and picking coal out of the ashes that were disposed of, in the fields. In other words, nobody had oil burners, we all had coal furnaces and you carried out your bucket of ashes into a field and dumped them. Then, the rain would wash away all the dust and, eventually, expose some black, unburned coal. Everybody was out there picking coal. So you'd bring in a basket, "Oh, mom, I got a whole basket of coal," and she'd give you a penny or two, [laughter] and you'd go get any candy, you know. You were rich when you had a penny. If you had a nickel, you're really rich, you know, [laughter] My grandmother and grandfather, he was retired then, but they always had a quarter to give me when I went there on Saturday, you know, that was heaven, [laughter] but money was so scarce. I can remember, you know, having very little to eat, everybody, not only our family, and you made do, and then, when the war came, it was booming, everybody made a lot of money then.

SH: To go back to the Depression, please talk a little bit about your life around the table so to speak. How involved was your family with the church?

RM: Oh, very much so. But I even miss, [from] what I know Karlee's family is much like ours was, her father and mother had formal sit around every night at supper, and that's what we did and some people are drifting away from that and I think that's part of a good family environment. At least you sit around the table and discuss, and not one watching television and this one running off. That was the time of day where you all could sit and say, "Hi, dad, hi,

mom.” You’d wait for him to get home and mom would go pick him up at the train station, and then, she’d have the supper ready, and so on. But it was kind of frugal, our meals, because we couldn’t have a roast or anything like that, it was unheard of, except maybe Sunday, you had a lucky break, you might have a chicken. Things were tough, they really were. Now, I’m talking about the ‘30s now. Before that, I don’t much remember. My first recollection I was about four or five years old, but in the ‘30s things were very difficult and, especially, when we got on to being ten and twelve, and realized, you know, same shoe, same suit, same knickers, same shirt. Mom would iron it up for the Sunday school and clean it up. ... These were your play clothes and these were your Sunday school clothes and that’s all you had, not much else. Our family was closely tied to the church. My mother was a staunch Lutheran, they were married in a Lutheran Church, even had German services, and English, and even though it was five miles from our home to that church, we would go on to the church every Sunday, by car. Our next door neighbor, she was my school teacher, no less, but they belong to the same church. So they were pretty well to do, because she was a school teacher and he had a nice job, too, in the insurance business and Mr. Carten, his name was, would drive in this new Buick, to Trinity Lutheran Church every Sunday, with his daughter and my sister and myself. I sat in the front seat, being the other male and that was a pleasure. I can remember his new 1938 Buick was a beauty, one of my favorite cars. [laughter]

SH: Was German spoken in the home? Did you learn to speak German?

RM: Yes, although, both my parents were born here, they, of course, learned it from their parents, both sides, mother and father on my mother’s and father’s side were born in Germany. So, German was there and their parents spoke it all the time, although they were well versed in English, too. But my parents, as I said, were both English and German and I picked up a smattering of it, so, it made it a little bit easier when I got to high school. I took four years of German and sailed right through and my father would teach me key words and I can still to this day, remember if the teacher said write a composition on “What you did this summer,” then, I would go on to say, “Well, I loved my summer vacation, but I still prefer the winter-time, then I can go “*schlittschulaufen*” that means ice skating, slide shoe running, is the translation, literally down. So, I always get back to *schlittschulaufen* and I’d always get a good laugh because I had that cold. I knew all about the ice and the snow and I could speak well about that, in the winter, but I didn’t like the summer too much. So, that was the big joke in the family, too. [laughter]

SH: Did your family ever talk about politics?

RM: Yes, in the beginning, I can remember I was a little embarrassed sometimes, because they were always, you know, being of German descent and whatnot, they leaned toward the German point of view. But, of course, they realize, too, that in the Second World War, the First World War, I wasn’t there, but I heard that, you know, they were treated badly, the Germans. The Kaiser was a good man and there were rural kingdoms and not democracies, anyway, in Europe, but the French were trying to, I was told, gain revenge for the war of 1870. My great-grandfather, my mother’s father, Otto, was a member of the Kaiser’s army that defeated the French in 1870. So then World War I, I was told, was simply the French revenge for the defeat of the French in 1870. You know the underlying forces, of course, the Prince [Archduke Franz Ferdinand] was shot in Austria and that was the initiation of the turmoil, but it was really that



they were trying to get their revenge, and then, Hitler tried to revenge the reparations, and whatnot, that the Germans were forced to pay in World War I. Everybody was starving in Germany, so he was their man. To rescue them from that, he did declare it all null and void, which was okay for the German people, but his theory on how to run a country was certainly not what we had hoped that would have been. [laughter] Well, as I said, they thought he was the man that was going to bring Germany back into the fold, but then when they realized that he was actually, the Nazi party was not what they had hoped it would be and they realized that the whole object of Hitler was to gain territory, which he called *Lebensraum*, which happens, in German means room “to live” and he would just take countries for that purpose, but he wanted to conquer all of Europe and wherever else. So, then they realized that was the case and, then, their hopes for Germany sort of fell short of their dream, and they sympathized more with the Allies, even though we weren’t at war at the time. Then came December 7th and, of course, with me kind of wanting to go into the service, they changed their thoughts completely. [laughter]

SH: Were you involved with any German American youth groups?

RM: No, not that. I can remember a cousin though that, we called him a cousin, but he wasn’t really, he was a friend of my mother’s mother, her daughter was married to a former U-Boat sailor in World War I. He lived and went to the same church and whatnot, lived in Stapleton, Staten Island and his son, George Burkett the name was, was affiliated with the Nazi youth group in New Jersey, and I can remember this woman didn’t drive, so she asked my mother to drive out there to this meeting. I can remember it was near Morristown, New Jersey, somewhere and this was probably ‘39 or so. My mother drove George Burkett, the little fellow and myself and his mother out to this *Bund* they called it, *Bund* meeting and I can remember seeing all these Nazi flags and parading around and I’m saying, “What’s all this?” and my mother explained it to me. But I wasn’t a part of it, nor she, but this fellow whose father was a U Boat sailor, they were involved with it for a while, not too much longer, because then when we went to war, that was all sort of quelled, you know, quieted down, this “sympathetic for Germany” business, the *Bund* that is.

SH: Before Pearl Harbor happened, were you in correspondence with your family in Germany?

RM: Yes, and even during and after. We sent packages over to them and the funny thing, I mentioned properties before and how they had many, many properties, rich aunts and uncles and whatnot, even to 1960, my sister and I suddenly got in the mail, checks from the sale of apartment buildings in Berlin and I figure, “How could that possibly be?” The war and the devastation and all of a sudden they still had by what rights, you know, who owned them? We couldn’t figure it all out, but, suddenly, I can remember getting a check for \$1500.00 as my share and we had many, many cousins, and whatnot, but it all dwindled down to little old me got \$1500.00 for the sale of apartments in 1960, I guess about ‘69, unbelievable.

SH: What about politics in the United States, was your family Democratic or Republican?

RM: No, they were staunch Republicans, all the way as far back as I can remember. I’m guessing now, that Roosevelt, they blamed him for getting us into the war against Germany,

which was not what they liked to see, and I can't remember before that, but then it was anti-Roosevelt, all the way, in my youth, yes, all the way.

SH: Even with the Depression and the fact that you lost your home, you didn't take part in any of the New Deal programs?

RM: No. Only during the war my mother and her sisters volunteered, as I mentioned before, for the Red Cross and blankets and whatnot for the troops. ... The rationing, the OPA ... we had Aunt Toni, my mother's sister, was in charge of the rationing of gasoline on Staten Island, and disbursed and granted A, B, and C stickers for your car and the little stamps that you had to have in order to buy a gallon of gas and she was straight and even under much pressure from her sisters and brother-in-laws wouldn't give one coupon of gasoline, not one, "Aunt Toni, please," "No way," that was it. [laughter]

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

RM: Yes, we were all at home and we weren't listening to the radio, but some neighbor said, "Listen to the radio, we're at war," and we all went in, I think it was after Sunday school, because we were at church really, and then, December 7th, of course, and it was so far away that, you know, you couldn't really feel that you were part of the whole thing. Then, the newspapers came, because there was no television, even the radio was sporadic, you know, as far as in the '30s, in depicting everything that you would like to see. We did have push button radio in '39, which was a big thing.

SH: Were you aware of anything going on in the Far East with Japan or was it just a total shock?

RM: No, nothing.

SH: You would have been a senior in high school.

RM: Yes, well, we heard about, you know, what they did with the Chinese and how they slaughtered them and a little bit about that and the sinking of the, [USS] *Panay*, one of our boats, on the Yangtze River, I don't remember. We had these little cards you got with bubble gum and the sinking of the [USS] *Panay*, whatever the ship was. They made a movie of it with Steve McQueen, anti-Japanese. In fact, early on as I can remember, it was a bubble gum cards that told us that.

SH: Can you explain a little about the bubble gum cards?

RM: The bubble gum cards, yes. Of course, they were certainly for our country and anything that happened in the Far East, or whatnot, war cards, I think they called them war cards, depicting, as I said, the bombings and the slaughter of the Japanese and cartoon drawings of bombs and fire and whatnot on the poor Chinese, you know, but other than that, as I said, the newspapers, our local paper didn't carry much concerning that. It wasn't a big story. Once in a while, we got the *Daily News* out of Manhattan, which was a thrill because that was all pictures, you didn't have to read much [laughter] and the *Daily Mirror* from Brooklyn.

SH: Now, what about the activities and the course of study in your high school, from your freshman to your twelfth grade, before Pearl Harbor? What was your main focus and what were you studying?

RM: Yes, in fact, I had to give a talk later on in the senior year. But before that, the object was to get an academic diploma, so that you qualified for continuing education, such as college. To get into any college, you had to have an academic diploma. That meant three years of a language, two years of a second language, two years of mathematics, two years of history, and other required courses in high school, gym, and whatnot ... English, of course, four years of that. Since, I had the German background I took three years of German, two years of Latin, and two years of math and had all the regents passed, that was in the sophomore year, no, junior year. So, when I was a senior, I didn't have to take any, oh, maybe the English, you had the two year English regents in New York, and then, I think, there was a four year regents, but they waived that, since I was in the service and that's how come I got an academic diploma, even though I didn't get a diploma, my mother did, which was very thrilling to me. [laughter]

SH: What was the speech that you were to give in high school?

RM: Yes, at the end in my senior year, they asked students how knew what they were attempting to do, like I can remember one of my cohorts from Dongan Hills Kindergarten, became a physician and I became a dentist, but early on we had decided that's what we wanted to do and he became an Island physician and gave a talk, on the stage, about what he needed to qualify to go on to medical school and I gave a talk on what I needed to get on to dental school.

SH: Were you talking to underclassmen?

RM: Yes, in an auditorium, to our fellow classmates and juniors, seniors and juniors.

SH: Were you involved in any sports or extra curricular activities?

RM: Yes, I did try football, early in high school, never played first team, but I tried, and then, football at college, too. One of the fellows that went to ...

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

KM: Side two, tape one.

SH: You were talking about Robert Loggia?

RM: Yes, the only claim to fame New Dorp High School had and, although, we did graduate the Molinaris, one of whom was Susan Molinari, who was a representative in Congress, and her father who was my classmate, we rode to college together in my car, was Robert Molinari, who became a borough president of Staten Island, and, I think, he was a congressman, too.

SH: What's the name of your high school.

RM: New Dorp High School and I had the thrill of tackling Robert Loggia because New Dorp High School came up to scrimmage Wagner College's team, which I was a member of, and he was a couple of years behind me, so they came up and he carried the ball and I had the pleasure of tackling him. [laughter] It never left my mind, whenever I see him on the screen, I said, "I got you once." Oh, then, coincidentally, I was up in Connecticut, just last year buying a car because my car broke down up there so my son-in-law took, Uncle Bob, took me to a Chrysler dealer and he picked out a car and I did and we got to talking about where I was from, "Oh, we have somebody from there, Robert Loggia." I wrote on my card "Hi, fellow," something silly, but I left my card for him to give to Robert Loggia, who lived in Saybrook, on the mouth of the Connecticut River, Old Saybrook.

SH: Did you get involved in any kind of chorus or any other extra curricular activities, school book, yearbook, paper?

RM: No, not in high school.

SH: Were you working after school as a young man in high school?

RM: No. Oh, well, yes, setting pins in a bowling alley was a big job. You made a quarter a line, or a game, I can't remember which, but it was hard work and a big thrill, you had twenty-five cents. You could make seventy-five cents, teams usually bowled three games, and then, you had seventy-five cents and they'd give you a quarter tip so now you had a dollar and in those days that was a lot of money.

SH: What did you do for fun? Did you go to the movies? What was the main activity?

RM: Fortunately, the little town we lived in was on a lake, or near a lake and they had a club, which the township, or the people of the town could join for a nominal fee and then have the rights to swim there; and you could boat there and swim and what not and my cousin, had a house on this lake. So, there was a boat and we lived across the street, not on the lake, but I was a member, or my family was a member of this Cameron Club and what more could a youngster want than being able to swim every afternoon and ice skate, *schlittschuhlaufen*, [laughter] every day by just walking across the street. It was great. It still is there and still has a swim club there and I practice quite near there and I drive by and reminisce, a nice town.

SH: Before we go back or step forward now into World War II ...

KM: Why did you choose the Navy?

RM: My uncle, the dentist, again, had a boat and part of Staten Island had a harbor, Great Kills harbor, and, as a teenager, he would take me to his boat and he had a little outboard and I'd ride around the harbor. That was a thrill and I had to polish the chrome for that, of course, but thirteen, fourteen-year-old, in a little boat, that was heaven. So, I was always interested in the water and, of course, I had to be Navy, and then, I had heard that the facilities in the Navy were much better than the army, which they certainly were, you always had a nice clean bunk, or

hammock. Even a hammock, but you didn't lay in the mud and the rain. I was interested being a pharmacist's mate, in the Navy, rather than a corpsman out in the field. I wanted to work in a hospital, in the dental office, so, that all persuaded me to and I had persuaded my father that I could volunteer to join the Navy before I was drafted, and then, have a choice of what branch I would like to get into, so, he condescended and signed me up even though I didn't have the diploma.

SH: Where did you go to enlist?

RM: Yes, in the lower part of Manhattan, Battery Park, was a naval enlistment booth, actually was, and I went there and signed up. Then was sent to, from the Battery in Manhattan, a week or two later they told me to report, and I was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, which was a training boot camp for the Navy, and while there filling out a lot questionnaires, questions that pertained to medicine or dentistry, oh, yes, "Would you prefer to treat a wounded person in an accident or shoot a gun at a deer?" you know, one of those questionnaires and I always said, "I'd like to help the wounded or the hurt person and whatnot." I knew what to say, in other words, and I got myself into the hospital corps and I was sent to hospital corps school in Norfolk, Virginia, for a few months, and then, a Catholic boy took me to Mass every Sunday, I befriended him and he was from Brooklyn. He said, "Let's go in and pray that we get sent to Brooklyn Naval Hospital." So, I did, and I was, and I was convinced that the prayer did it. [laughter] But anyway then they sent me to Brooklyn Naval Hospital, there I went to the dental office to see if there was an opening and the captain, he was then a commander said, "Meibauer, did you have family that's in dentistry?" and I said, "Yes, Conrad." He said, "Uncle Connie." He was a classmate of Uncle Connie, in 1929. So, he took me under his wing and really trained me very well. In fact, thirty-five millimeter photography was just coming into vogue, and he showed me how to use his camera. He was the only one in the hospital that had one, and sent me to all of the departments that requested photos of medical cases, which included the morgue with open bodies, and here I am seventeen years old photographing corpses and whatnot in the morgue, and I had it early, nothing squeamish from then on. So, then as it happened, you know the story of me almost going to D-Day because ...

SH: We need to put that on the tape.

RM: So, Doctor Wall, Sammy Wall, then came to me one day and said, "Robert, I hate to tell you but ..."

SH: Now, this is the commander?

RM: This is the commander in the dental office in Brooklyn Naval Hospital. By the way, this is a hop-skip and a jump, this ferry ride to Staten Island, that was my hometown, which was very nice to spend the war there, [laughter] and learning what I wanted to do, and then, of course, all that. He was a surgeon and treated difficult cases and fractures and injuries and everything pertaining to war injuries in Brooklyn Naval Hospital, that came back off the ships, and whatnot. So, I saw everything and anything pertaining ...

SH: Don't move ahead till you tell us more about what you did.

RM: I saw things unheard of in normal dentistry, you know.

SH: Were they coming in by ship?

RM: Yes, you know.

SH: The crossings from in the Atlantic and things like that?

RM: Yes, and even in that shipyard, in Brooklyn, where cable whiplash, I remember one case [where] a cable snapped and took a fellow's jaw right off, you know, and you don't see that in a dental office. But I saw surgery that was unheard of, even in dental school, and later on, when I attended hospitals I never saw anything like the surgery I saw around Dr. Wall. There was [the] worst, worst injuries, terrible stuff. Anyway, then, he came to me one day and said, "Robert, since you're the last one, the lowest member of our group here in the dental office, I have to send you, they're asking for men to be trained out in Long Island," and he didn't tell me for what, but, "Okay, sorry to leave," and we got sent out there, along with a fellow from my hometown, back in PS 11 again, Robert Redgate I said, "Oh, we're going out to Lido Beach." "Yes," and he was in a different department, he was in X-Ray at the hospital, but I only saw him on occasion, but he was another fellow that I played with, fellow Scout, in fact, twelve year old. So, Robert Redgate and I went out to Lido Beach, Long Island and in the back of Lido Beach was a canal where they trained us on landing barges for the invasion, for D-Day in France. We didn't know that at the time, but they handed us helmets, rifles, full packs, and red crosses, for our armbands, but, "What were we doing with a gun in our hands?" We were corpsmen, but they insisted that you may have to defend yourself on the beaches, so they gave us full battle regalia and trained us then on these landing barges behind Lido Beach. In fact, there's a museum over there and a dental laboratory man told me, "Oh, go over there, you'll see the history of that," because I explained to him that I was over there and he lived there. So, anyway getting back to the story. They trained us for the landing at D-Day. I was in group Foxy 29, whatever that meant, but my friend, Robert Redgate went on and I didn't because I was home on leave over the weekend, took sick, my mother called the base, "What should we do? He has got a high fever and can hardly move." "Call your local doctor, and then, have the doctor give us a note when he's ready to return." So, we called old Dr. Worthen and he made house calls, in those days they made house calls, and he said, "No, you got to keep him in bed." No penicillin or anything was available, you just lived with this fever, or disease, whatever it was, until it reduced and you're all set and walking around and I went back to the base a week later, with my note from Dr. Worthen and they said, "Okay, report to Hut 12," I'll never forget it. Went over to Hut 12, "Where's my unit?" "Oh, they left." I was heart broken, because there went Robert Redgate and all my buddies and they had been shipped overseas. So, there was no following, or catching up, or anything like that in those days. They sent me over to be reassigned and the reassignment was Panama, which is a whole other story, but that's where I met my wife, and so on. But Robert Redgate after the war my wife and I, this was '46, looked him up and sure enough, he was back and he told my wife and I all about his experiences over there. The landing craft that he was on hit a mine. They were in the second wave going into the beach, and he doesn't remember anything after that. He was picked out of the water by a destroyer escort. ... He was in the hospital, has plates in his head, his legs, and whatnot, he was the only survivor. That means I

would have been gone. Just a stroke of luck, and he then returned and my wife and I talked to him in Staten Island and I say, "How could I possibly have been so lucky?" But he was the only one that lived [from] our little landing barge.

KM: Did any of your friends serve in the Navy with you?

RM: Yes, two classmates, one, of which Uncle Bobby worked for, an electrician, he joined the Navy, became a submariner, and he served in the Pacific. He was my close friend in high school, Frank Mulvihill and his father was an electrical contractor in Staten Island. Did a lot of work for the city schools, and Frank became a millionaire after the war, and he just passed away a couple of years ago, and he took my son under his wing and my son became the foreman for the tunnel, water tunnel on Roosevelt Island, which is a big contracting job and Frank Mulvihill's company had the electrical contract for that, and my son, therefore, was the foreman in that job. So, one hand washed the other. Another friend, a close friend, who still comes to me as a patient was Everett Casazza and he served in the Navy as a radio operator on a PBY out of South America, to keep the U-boats away from the Canal Zone. So, every time he comes in I say, "I remember the Morse code from Boy Scouts," because he was a Boy Scout, too, in that same little Troop 35 and he can't remember the Morse code, and he was a radio operator, and I quiz him every time. [laughter] "How do you ever remember that?" Anyway, that's Everett Casazza, they were both Navy men, we all joined at the same time. Frank Mulvihill's mother went on stage with my mother to get the war diploma because we both got out early and Frank didn't quite get a, what was it, he got a general diploma as opposed to an academic, because he didn't have the regents and that was that.

KM: What was the typical training that you had within the Navy besides the whole medical training?

RM: In the Navy, well, the first part of the Navy was boot camp, which was the usual, marching, drills, and whatnot and I lucked out there, because I was kind of tall and the chief, the first day, was asked to pick out flag bearers and he said, "You, you and you," and I happened to be chosen and I carried the American flag. So, instead of doing what they called "happy hour," running and exercising endlessly, I had to go over and prepare the flag and whatnot, for the parade every morning, you know, I was out of happy hour, what luck that was. [laughter] I didn't realize it at that time, and then, another fellow, another Staten Islander, he was chosen; he carried the battalion flag, his name was Jack Murray and he lived in Tottenville, Staten Island and after a few months in the Navy I inquired, I was on leave and went out to Tottenville to see I could get in touch with him and his mother told me he went into what they called the Armed Guard, which was gunnery on the merchant ships, which was totally unprotected except for the gun bow and aft. He was one of them and was lost at sea, my good friend Jack Murray, who I befriended in boot camp, not an old friend, you know, how those things are. So, I lost him and one of our neighbors, early on, was a Air Force tail gunner, he was a little fellow, more a friend of my cousin, Bud, who was a doctor, but Jim Healey went early into the Army Air Force and was a tail gunner on a B-24 and was lost over Europe quickly, you know, and he had seven or eight brothers after him and they all belonged to that swim club, that's how we know each other. One of my close, close friends, who then became a lawyer later, and was my very close friend all through teenage and college, and then, Grandma [Robert's wife, Connie] and his wife became

very close and their children all became very close like, your father [Karl Meibauer] and aunts and whatnot all played with these little guys of Larry O'Neil, who was in the Battle of the Bulge. ... He was the only member of our group, he was a year older, that had a car because his father was in construction and well-to-do, so he had a '38 Plymouth convertible, this was before we all went in to the service. He was a good driver and they let him drive a jeep in the army. In the Battle of the Bulge, his little unit ran out of ammunition. So, Larry O'Neil then had to get in his jeep, and they were surrounded, and go across this ridge to get some more ammunition. So, he did that and the machine gun was trailing him as he was driving a hundred miles an hour, as fast as he could, and, now, the big thing is get the ammunition and drive back. You had to be a hero. He was. He drove back and got a Bronze Star with cluster.

KM: When you missed the mission that went off to D-Day, were you kind of relieved that you didn't go?

RM: No, no, you were heart-broken. You lost your unit, you know, it was like you're in a class, let's say, all through grammar school, you're with your class, and all of a sudden, they're gone and you're left standing at the dock, you know that's terrible. You didn't know what [or] where you were going. They didn't tell you where you're going and it didn't matter, everybody was gung ho, if they told you to take that gun and land on this island, you did that. That's what it was all about, unfortunately.

KM: When did you find out you were going to Panama?

RM: Then, they assigned me and I had increased in rank, one rank, I became a hospital corpsman first-class and two other men were assigned to go to Panama, too, so they gave me all the papers for the three of us and put us on a train to Norfolk, where we would get a ship, that's another story in itself. We get to Norfolk and hand in the papers and now you were assigned. This was what they call a receiving base, sent out to a bedding, in a barracks and you waited until they called you for the assignment, "Okay, you're ready to go to Panama." I waited and waited, and befriended a girl that worked at the PX at the hospital next door, where another Staten Islander was stationed. So he introduced me to her and I fell in love and her sister was married to a fellow that was on the ship, I think, it was the *Guadalcanal*. It was a converted aircraft carrier running up and down the Atlantic Coast and he said, "Oh, I'll get you on my ship." Now, I'm waiting for my orders to go to Panama for at least six months, having the time of my life. Panama, that's where I knew I was going, but I never got off, so he called over to the receiving station to get me on his ship, the *Guadalcanal*, so that I could stay in Norfolk, with my love, I even forget her name, that's typical, and when they called over they said, "We have no record of Meibauer." He says, "What do you mean, he's here, he's stationed here, look around." They called, in fact, my folder was jammed in the back of the file. I'd still be there, isn't that something. [laughter] So, now they found me and two days later I was on the way to Panama, no waiting on that ship. So, then we get to Panama, met another fellow from ...

SH: How did you get to Panama, which ship?

RM: On a ship, on the transport, an AKA they called it. Anyway, I get off the ship in Panama and there's another Staten Islander again, who belonged to that same swim club Ross Carr his



name was, "What are you doing here?" Well, anyway there I was, but he was assigned to the Coco Solo Sub Base and I was Coco Solo Naval Hospital. Now, the Panama story. At the Coco Solo Naval Hospital, there was a local fellow, in other words he was a "zonie," they called them, his father worked for the government on the Canal Zone. He got drafted into the Navy. He got assigned to Coco Solo Naval Hospital, Bobby Sullivan, he worked as a librarian in the hospital, that's not a corpsman, a scribe he was. I, by the way, then, they had a dental assistant there, so I couldn't get into the dental department, but I got assigned to the commissary department. That gave me access to vehicles, because I had to go out and get supplies to feed the hospital. So, I was better off there, than the dental office. I could get any vehicle I wanted, and at any time of the day, so, he said, "Would you help me get a pickup and come out, my father married a woman from the States and her daughter and they're coming down on a plane in Panama City?" I said, "Sure, Bobby, hop in the truck," and off we went and I get to the airport and there's this lovely young lady, gets off the plane, seventeen years old, Grandma. [Fay "Connie" Meibauer] [laughter] So, I was right in and working in the commissary, there were three of us, one, again I met later on, I'll tell that story, but we decided that we want ...

SH: I want to hear about how you got their household goods and the people from the plane.

RM: You know, this is not at all according to the Navy rules and regulations. [laughter] You don't go picking up people at the airport, transporting their baggage, but, anyway, then, I was introduced to Connie, and, you know, very nice and friendly. We certainly didn't realize we [were] ever going to get married, but then one thing led to the other and I would, I now knew his family, Robert Sullivan's family, and his mother and I, Grandma Lina and I hit it off more than Connie, the daughter, and I, because she thought I was so great to come and get her and I was trying to say that we build ourselves up by throwing cartoons of canned goods and hundred pound bags of sugar and hauling ice, three-hundred pound cubes of ice, so we were very muscular and handling her baggage was like nothing to me, you know, I was ... an Adonis to my mother-in-law. "Oh, he's such a nice boy," you know, and I was polite, you know, I never said a bad word, never cursed and knew how to act, my family taught me that. So, I was a star in her eyes, more so than her daughter, but then when I got to dating her daughter, since I had access to the vehicles, again, I would pick my future wife up at school, in a bus, and all her friends, [laughter] the Navy bus and I'm riding through town one day and it was similar to Louisiana, where you had the balconies all hanging over the street and I took the corner a little too sharp and took a balcony with me [laughter] and I never reported it and got away with it. I don't know how. [laughter] Another time we picnicked out on the beaches, outside limits of the town, and I would take a bus and we'd all get in the bus and couples, we'd picnic, and out on one of these forays, I lost my ID, wallet, and everything. So, I get a call from the captain one morning, that is the captain of the hospital, he said, "Robert, how come your ID was found out on such and such a beach?" I said, "I had no idea." "What do you mean you have no idea? How could it possibly get there." Anyway, I got two weeks, confined to quarters, for that little foray, but they never really knew what I did. [laughter] I was terrible, even in the Navy I did my little tricks, and then, on top of that, being in the commissary, I had access to any kind of food I wanted, so comes Christmas or Thanksgiving, I remember the turkeys came in cases, four in a case, twenty-five pounders and the butcher was my big buddy, he was a Chinese butcher and he was a nice fellow. "Robert, you want the fillet on this side of beef? Here's this and here's a nice cut for you," and I take it out to Connie's mother and we got Sunday dinner. Then, I was very bad and I'd always

have eggs, bacon, whatnot, fillet mignons available to eat right out in the chow hall, a separate table even. The cooks would always take care of me, because I take care of them. Funny thing, those poor souls, they were so poor and the pay was so little, so these people that worked in the commissary, they would have an inspection of the bus, when they transported them back into town and if they knew that was coming, as the bus was driving down this road to the gate, things would come flying out of the windows that they were pilfering, to take home to their starving families, really and I would always tell them,” inspection.”

SH: Tell us what a typical day was like when you were doing your job?

RM: What we were assigned to do was to order, first of all, the cook would set a menu, and then, we'd have to go over the menu. The commissary officer, who was Art, he was a lieutenant, would approve it and say, “Okay, see if we have case of peas and two cases of this,” and whatever and if we didn't, then we'd have to order it. ... All the dry goods came out of a special place in Khartoum, and then, the dairy products were another place, and ice, and so on, and we'd store all in these buildings adjacent to the real jungle of Panama, and they would always become infested with scorpions and boa constrictors and whatnot. I'll tell you that story, but, anyway, if we needed a case of such-and-such, say, tomatoes, we'd go out and you couldn't just grab that case, what you had to do was kick the pile, to scatter the scorpions, and then, flip it down, let it drop on the concrete floor, so they'd all get out of there, then it was safe to pick them up and over where the sugar was, on the sill of 2x4s, on the sill of the external wall, would lay the boa constrictors, who were after the rats, who were after the sugar and flour. So you always had to be careful over there. But we liked the boa constrictors, because they kept the rats away, crazy place. But then we'd bring all the stores from these various areas into the kitchen commissary and the cooks would then have a chance to get into a room about this size and pick out what they needed. We had to keep that place stocked, and so on, that was my job.

SH: Did you have men who worked under you?

RM: No, there were three of us together and as we increased in rank, when I became a second class pharmacist mate, and one was a third class and the other was a hospital corpsman so I was the head rank of that little group, and, therefore, I could call, more or less, what was going on.

SH: Where were they from?

EM: One was from Hoboken, New Jersey and the other was from Bronx, in fact. He later became a letter carrier, the one from the Bronx. He then married and moved to New Jersey, and then, he decided in the '70s to look up Meibauer, who he knew was going to be a dentist, he thought, and he looked in [the] Staten Island phonebook under dentists and there I was and he was shocked and he came to me for his dental work and his wife and his stepson. ... I still see them to this day, his stepson, the rest passed away.

SH: Did you ever keep in contact with the guy from Hoboken?

RM: No, no. I never got in contact with him, but fellow, Frank, did and he told me when he passed away, but I never got in touch with him.

SH: Who was primarily being treated in this hospital?

RM: Basically, all the people that couldn't be cared for on the ships that were going through the Canal and also badly wounded from the South Pacific. They were coming back through to go to the Eastern Shore, but if they couldn't or weren't able to be cared for on the ship, they would drop them off, you know, emergency cases, and then the local diseases and whatnot, took their toll, too, very little of that, though. But one case that stands out in my mind was an English carrier, dropped off a sailor, aircraft carriers have elevators that moved from one deck to the other in three seconds, they say, and the sirens go off, "Beep, beep, beep," and you don't go near that platform, which is raising and lowering planes. But he thought he could make it, so he jumped to try to get on to the platform that was descending, the thing went so fast. He was in the air all the way down, landed on his two feet and shoved both his heels up into his shins, broke both shins, and they dropped him off at our hospital. Now, in those days, they had been playing with external splitting, because I can remember the first thing you had casts on, plaster casts, but the wounds got infected so they had to take the casts off to treat the wounds, in the shins, both shins and one of the treatments, because they had a lot of dead skin, and whatnot. We were just getting penicillin, they applied maggots to the wound to eat the dead tissues, which they do nowadays, I think, I heard, but, anyway, that was a terrible thing for an eighteen-year-old to see. This fellow was a typical happy-go-lucky Englishman and he was determined to get out and have his whatever, was it scotch, or what he drank, but there was a little town in the jungle, a couple of miles from the hospital, and he'd get up at night with these two casts and crutches and venture out to this little native bar in Cativa, I remember the name of the town, a native town. He'd get sloshed and then, come back and his cast would be like mush, from the damp jungle and he'd be waving in the breeze. "Where were you last night?" I can't remember his name, nice fellow though, typical Englishman. "I had good time," whatever he'd say, you know, and I'd say, "I think you did," and then they decided to use external splints, so they put these rods out, this is all out of [the] body, not in the bone, from his knee to his ankle, let's say, and then the rod would stabilize the shin and, hopefully, everything would be stabilized and healed. But the pins where they were inserted into the bones at either end of the status splint, it was called, would get infected, so I'd have to inject the new drug, penicillin, into these areas, to counteract the infection. This is before I got into the commissary, by the way. I lucked out and got into the commissary, but I was on the ward, traumatic injury ward, and I would have to give the shots of this new penicillin, which I had to mix. It was powder and liquid, and then, oil, which was very painful to inject, especially IM, intramuscularly, so then, they came out with procaine penicillin, which was an anesthetic and that was a little easier to tolerate. So, I saw the initial stages of penicillin. What we had before was sulfur, which we dust the open wounds with, and then, sulfur pills, too, but then, it became apparent that, it was against gram positive like venereal diseases. Oh, that was a big help, because a lot of the servicemen were involved with venereal diseases. So, [I] saw the advent of that and later on, of course, was well versed in the use of it in dental school and dental injuries, and so on.

SH: How long were you involved in the traumatic injury before you went into the commissary in Panama?

RM: Oh, about a year. I was down there for two-and-a-half years, so about a year of it was [traumatic injury]. One assignment, when I first got there, was venereal disease. I talked about that ward, and the job was to not only give the injections of this new penicillin, but also to run cultures. So we would take a culture and then stain it, and then, examine it under the microscope and look for the gonococci and that was, you know, as an eighteen year old that was being well educated in bacteriology and staining, and so on, which helped me later on in my profession. When I got into histology and bacteriology in dental school, I would say, "Oh, gram stain." ... Well, anyway, getting back to Panama, then at the end of my tour of duty, or close to it, I didn't know you had to have so many points to be told that you're going back to be discharged and I was little short. I think it was something like twenty-five points you had to have, you added up years and where you were, and so on, and you got these points and I was short of it so Connie and I decided, after courting her for two years now, that we'd get married and we did and I got my orders and they called me on my honeymoon that, "Your orders are in." "Oh, really?" So, they transported Connie and I on the same ship, another troop transport, back to New York and that was nice going to New York and we didn't know where though, and she slept forward, with the women, and I slept aft, with the men and since, I was so well versed in the dental line, I went to the dental office immediately and told them, "You know, I work here and, you know, that fellow, you know, Dr. So and So," and they gave me a key to the dental office. So, Connie and I would meet in the dental office and I can remember off Cape Hatteras, coming back, thirty-foot waves and we're both looking out the porthole, getting sick on our honeymoon. That was something, but, at least, we had a place to meet, and then, we're pulling into New York harbor and I'm saying, "I can't believe it, we're docking in my hometown," and my father got somehow got word of what ship I was on, I sent them the word of the ship, so he looked to where it was going to dock and it was in Tompkinsville, Staten Island, which is about two miles from where I lived. So, he's down at the end of the dock waving at Connie and I coming home from Panama.

SH: You had gotten married in Panama?

RM: In Panama, in the naval chapel, yes. We had to cutout from the wedding ceremonies and she didn't have a white gown, or anything, and I was in my uniform and the naval chaplain married us. The best man was my friend, sounds like he fouled up, but Paul Haber, from Brooklyn, and her [maid-of-honor] Gerri Bloehme, was a classmate of hers at, she went to Gatun High School in Panama that was run by the government, and then, off we came.

SH: After you married, how long were you in Panama before you were sent back to New York?

RM: After the marriage, just a week or so, we were on our honeymoon when I got my orders.

SH: Where would somebody go to honeymoon in Panama?

RM: We went to a, that's a story, went to a beautiful beach on the Pacific side. All of our stay in Panama, her father was stationed in the Canal at Gatun Locks, which was the first lock in from the Atlantic side. ... We honeymooned on the Pacific side, at a beautiful beach north of the Canal and we're in this lovely little cottage, right out of the movie *On the Beach*, and then, pulled back the blanket, there's a scorpion. [laughter] So, we had a lot of fun with that, of course. We hardly wanted to get into bed. Connie was in the water and I'm on the shore

walking along, and conversing back and forth, and I looked beyond her and there's a shark fin, instead of being a hero and running in and rescuing her, "Con, Con, there's a shark behind you, get in here." She yelled at me a little bit. [laughter] Those were the days, but, anyway.

KM: How often were you able to remain in contact with your family when you were in Panama? Did you have a lot of letters?

RM: Fortunately, it was all letters and, once in a while, a phone call, but I was a bad letter writer and to this day I am, so my poor father and mother suffered, but they knew how bad I was and once in a while, I'd get off a letter and apologize. "Just send a card once in a while." "Okay," but anyway, they knew I was safe and sound. I wasn't on the front or in danger, or whatnot, you know.

SH: Was Panama considered part of the war zone?

RM: Yes, there was always the possibility, in fact, later on, I see on History Channel, that the Japs were planning to send a new submarine over there that could launch missiles into the Canal because if they destroyed one lock, that meant that all the transportation ...

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

KM: This continues an interview with Dr. Robert Henry Meibauer, Karlee Meibauer and Sandra Stewart Holyoak on October 27, 2004, in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

SH: Please continue.

RM: Yes, I was talking about the Jap potential for bombing and destroying a lock and that would put the whole Canal out of commission. So, it was well protected, both by heavy guns, well, they called them railroad guns, that were mounted in the Canal Zone, on both sides, the Atlantic and the Pacific side. Then, we had air bases both Naval and Army air bases that had interceptors and fighter planes, and so on, anti-sub planes. I saw an early P-38, we were thrilled when that screeched over us one day, the new plane P-38, and then, they had troops, Army troops stationed there and Air Corps. ... Ours was Coco Solo Naval Station and there was a large sub base, which protected the waters on both sides of the Canal with submarines. ... Grandpa Pete, who was Grandma's [Connie Meibauer] stepfather, Mr. Sullivan, Peter Sullivan, was in charge of the aids to navigation approaches to the Canal, in the Atlantic side. That was his duty, to go out and retrieve a buoy, and then recondition and replace it with one they had reconditioned, and so on, and make sure that all the lights, and whatnot, aids to navigation they called it. That was Grandpa Pete's job, but he worked for the government, on the Canal Zone and they got good pay.

KM: Did you have to prepare at all to enter into the Pacific? Was there any chance that you would have to go overseas in the Pacific for the invasion of Japan?

RM: No, never. The only time I saw the Pacific was when Connie and I were on that honeymoon and once we went on a little weekend over to the Pacific side, to look at the old ruins

of Panama City, where Henry Morgan and his group of whatever they were, Englishmen they were supposed to be, and pirates, and whatnot, all that era. [It] was very interesting, the ruins of Panama City. Interestingly enough, and everybody knows it now, but I never realized that to go through from the Atlantic to the Pacific, you're traveling southeast instead of west. If you come in the Atlantic side, the Panama Canal runs southeast from there to get into the Pacific, which is a nice point.

SH: You were in the Navy hospital, but you were not just treating Navy personnel or were you?

RM: Yes, mostly all Navy and foreign Navy, because they had army hospitals too, August Hospital and I forget the names of the other ones, but large hospitals.

SH: When you would go out for an evening of recreation, did you interact with any of the other services?

RM: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Were there any tensions?

RM: Oh, constant battles, yes. I can remember one major battle. There was this popular nightclub that was frequented by the Navy, my hospital, and the Air Corps and one evening, oh, the dentist's daughter, she was a friend of my wife's, went to high school with her, and she was a beautiful, little blond girl and the Air Corps tried to cut in on one of my friends, cut in and dance with this gorgeous little girl; and he came back to the table and I said, "Why did you let him do that for?" He said, "Well, what am I going to do?" I said, "You don't let the Air Corps cut in on your girlfriend." So, I went over and cut right back in on this guy and the fight was on, which was into the men's room, and I can remember the door opening and not only were we a little intoxicated, to say the least, but we were a bloody mess. My uniform, I had whites on, and I was holding the man's head in my arm and the blood from his nose was just saturating my white uniform, and somebody yelled in, "Shore Patrol is coming." So they let him go and ran out the door and everybody in my group ran out onto the street and we hailed a *carameta*, that was a horse drawn wagon. It was like something in the movies. [laughter] In fact, I went over the wall of this restaurant, I didn't go down to the door, like something out of a movie, really. Into this *carameta*, "Where do you want to go?" "Take us to a bar and grill somewhere," so he took us to this backstreet bar and in I went with this terrible uniform and the fellow looked at me and said, "Oh, boy, you go in the men's room and clean up and I'll give you a shirt and whatnot." So, I did that. Now, [we] get to talking to the owner of the place, he's from Brooklyn, New York, befriended him, the piano player, all of us now were sitting there. I think there were about ten of us, not less than that, and, "Oh, thank you so much, we'll be back" and I did. I sent everybody from the hospital to this little bar. He was so grateful that when Connie and I were married, he sent champagne to us. [laughter] I can't think of his name, but, anyway, we were there every weekend and we had the microphone and the pianist would play the songs we wanted, and we danced and [drank] beer and whatnot, so we had our own little nightclub. [laughter]

SH: What kind of interaction did you have with the Panamanians?

RM: Very good, very good, they were nice people, for the most part, and they were subjugated, they felt, by the Americans, because, actually, they were, the low-lives of America could go down there and be the kings, in the small pond of Panama, you know. They were the Americans and they could hire a woman to work for them for \$5.00 a week, you know, or get a guy to do any menial job, for very little money, so they were subjugated and I always felt that in my heart, they were, but we had a lot of them working in the commissary and I befriended many of them, you know, nice people, clean living for the most part, poor though. What did they have? They had two industries, one was a beer company, Cerveza, they called it and the other was a mattress company and that were the two industries, beer and a mattress, that's all they needed. [laughter]

SH: Did you live in the barracks, in the compound where the hospital was?

RM: Yes. No, we lived in hotel [is] what it was exactly. When you got to be of a certain rank you had a room with one of the fellows with a private shower and all. When I became a pharmacist second class I had that privilege, but it was like a hotel with a recreation room with pool table and Ping Pong table and badminton court in the backyard, all screened in, and balconies and whatnot. To continue that story of the bar fight, Connie called her mother, because I couldn't go in through the gate in this condition and it was after hours anyway, so we called her mother to come pick us up in the car, which she did, and I said, "Well, don't go to the gate, drop me off before the gate and I'll cut through, behind into the barracks," and I didn't remember the swamp I had to go through to get up the hill to my quarters and added to all the blood was this gooey, swampy muck all over me. I was a sight to behold. [laughter] When I got to my fellow sailors they said, "What did you do?" It was hard to explain, but I didn't get caught, not by the SPs [Shore Patrols] or the guy at the gate, but I was a rascal, to say the least. [laughter]

SH: How often did the Shore Patrol have to bring people to the hospital?

RM: Not too often, they had, it depended on where you were stationed. Most of the crowd of sailors walking the streets in this little town of Colon were from the air station and the sub-base. The hospital corpsmen didn't carouse too much, you know, and the doctors certainly didn't and the nurses. We had our own little recreation. It's right on the hospital grounds because it was about ten miles in, we were on the Trans-isthmian Highway, which connected the West and East. But it wasn't easy to get into town and once you missed the bus, you were stranded, that's why we called Connie's mother. That same car, every year, we were now married and living in our little house in (Grasmire?) with the lake, and all that, and they came up for a visit from Panama with that same car and I can remember driving it down to be serviced that night at my friends gas station and he opened the trunk and it was loaded with cockroaches and those palmetto bugs and whatnot, "Where is this car from?" I said, "Panama," "Oh, my God, and I'm working on it," terrible things.

SH: Had they driven from there?

RM: No, on boat. Transported on boat, yes. No, they had two ships that service the government people and docked at 23rd Street, Manhattan, beautiful ships. So, all the people that worked for

the government then were entitled to get leave on these ships and get transported back to New York.

SH: How much information did you have of what was going on both in the European Theater and the Pacific?

RM: Oh, no, we had all the news there, in Panama, then late in the war, we were all at the radio all the time, no television, of course, but we knew everything that was going on, because everybody passing through would tell us, "Oh, we took this island, oh, we took that." One fellow that was stationed with me was what they call a Fleet Marine, a corpsman with the Fleet Marine and he went in with the landing on Midway, no, it was Iwo Jima he was in and he told me all the details of the landing and what he saw, you know, it was terrible, slaughter.

SH: Was there any chance that you would be prepared for the invasion of Japan that was being planned?

RM: No, luckily, no. Once you were established there, at the hospital, they were reluctant to break in new people for your job, even though you were such a rascal, so to speak, but they didn't know that. I did my duty, they had all the food they needed and I had all I needed.  
[laughter]

KM: Is there anything else that you want to talk about in Panama?

RM: No, only that it was like living in a resort area. It was. Golf, by the way, I didn't mention that. Your grandmother belonged to a golf club at Camp David and she loved that game and I did, too, and so, I got the chance to golf there and one hole you had to, if you drove into where the snakes was sunning themselves, you just forgot that ball. [laughter] You waited, they'd be out there in droves and, once, Grandpa Pete, I forgot that, rode over a boa constrictor that wrapped around his axle and tire and stopped the car it was so huge. I'm talking like twelve foot, big heavy weight, but they never came near the people, or hurt them. The only danger was maybe scorpion bites; you'd have a few of those.

SH: What was the treatment for that?

RM: Yes, not much, except, you know, draining and soaking, and whatnot. They had anti-venom, but I wasn't involved with that. The doctors knew all that, but they tell me do this or do that.

SH: What about malaria?

RM: That was well controlled, you know, everything was screened in down there and they controlled the mosquito population very well, and they had the quinine available all the time, that was an ancient treatment for it, they had better than that later. I forget what it was, though.

SH: Atabrine?



RM: Yes, but that was all wiped out, by the time I got there. Who was the general that solved that, [Walter] Reed, one of those generals.

SH: How big a facility, how many bed hospital was it?

RM: We were a five-hundred bed hospital, which was quite large, set right in the middle of a jungle.

SH: Were any dependents, well, obviously, your mother-in-law was there, but how common was that to have dependents in Panama?

RM: The naval officers couldn't bring their dependents, wives or families there, and we had naval nurses there, too, which were in charge of the wards. We were under their supervision, the corpsmen we called ourselves, hospital corpsmen, pharmacist's mates, but the Canal Zone workers, was totally different. They, like my wife's mother and stepfather lived in a town, in a house provided by the government, lovely, two bedrooms, living room, all screened in, very nice facilities they had.

SH: He worked for the US government.

RM: For the government, not the Navy. The son was in the Navy, stationed with me, that's how I met my wife.

SH: When you came back with Connie, even though you got to travel in the same ship and you explained some of the stories there, was everyone on this ship coming from the Panama Canal Zone?

RM: No, this was strictly Navy personnel, from the Canal Zone, from various bases, that their duty time is up and they were being discharged.

SH: What year was this?

RM: This was 1946. I think, I went down there in '44, and then, from there I was sent to Long Beach, again, yes, Long Beach, for discharge on Long Island, not Lido. Lido is right next door, it's the naval hospital out there, I can't think of it, but anyway, that's where I went to be discharged, and then, home, right in my backyard, again.

SH: When you were in the Panama Canal Zone and you heard about the first atomic bomb being dropped, what did you know? Did you understand what magnitude was that?

RM: Yes, because it really was publicized, you know, all over down there. Why we dropped that bomb and it's going to be the end, and then, when we heard that they surrendered, you know, celebration time and that meant, soon we'll be home, you know.

SH: Was there any celebration when the war ended in Europe?

RM: Not too much, not too much. We were happy that it was over there, you know.

SH: What kind of celebration took place in Panama when the war ended in Japan?

RM: Well, people were out in the streets you know, in the Zone.

SH: What did you do?

RM: Well, we paraded around, and caroused, and, drank and, yes, waved the flags and you know. We did a lot of that. It was a nice little town to celebrate [in] and because every other store was a bar, you know, and the sailors love to drink. [laughter] Of course, all we knew was beer, we didn't drink hard liquor, eighteen-year-olds weren't into that yet.

SH: Had you taken any leaves and come back to the States?

RM: No, you couldn't do that unless it was emergency. They wouldn't pay for transportation from there, just like being in a foreign country; you don't suddenly say, "I want to go home for a week," you know.

SH: I just want to make sure.

RM: Yes, you couldn't do that, but it was so pleasant there, you know, I mean, you're away from everything, you never heard a gun, or anything go off, nothing. A plane would fly overhead and you do, "Wow, there goes one."

SH: What about when Franklin Roosevelt died? What was the reaction then?

RM: Yes, we were all, you know, pretty sad.

SH: Were you confident in Harry Truman?

RM: Yes. Well, the war was going so well, you know, it was certain that we were going to win, certainly we're going to win the war, there was no doubt in our minds, you know. Especially when Europe was on the brink and the Russians were approaching Berlin, and all that, I don't know when Roosevelt died, about that time that he did, then, Truman took on the Pacific and had his little bout with MacArthur and whatnot. But we knew all that was going on. We were all for MacArthur, by the way, not Truman. [laughter] I don't know why, because he was a general and he was in the service and he knew what was going on, we thought. [laughter]

SH: Did you entertain the thought of staying in the reserves when you came back?

RM: Yes, but only for a short time and I was thankful later that I didn't, because it would have meant that I would have to leave my family for Korea, for instance, which my cousin, by the way, did. He was two years older than me and was in medical school and in the ROTC, which was Reserve Officers' Training Corps; and his schooling was paid for by the government, but then he was obligated to serve. When the war had ended, by the time he got out of medical

school, so when the Korean War came, he was called and was a MASH doctor, same as the MASH program on TV; and he lived through all that. Another close friend of mine from Staten Island, was a MASH doctor, too, and they met over there, didn't know each other, but realized, "Oh, you know Robert Meibauer?" "Yes, he's my cousin." "Oh, why he's my friend," you know, we're mutual friendship there, but they were both in the MASH tents operating. My cousin then went on to teach in Albany Medical School and my friend, Peter Timpone, a physician built the building which I now am practicing in.

SH: In your pre-interview survey you had mentioned there was someone in your family who was a Navy nurse who was on a ship ...

RM: Oh, yes. Early in the war, one of the first group of nurses sent to Europe, this is my mother's sister's daughter, her name was Shirley Ralph, was a nurse and a group of eleven of them were torpedoed off the coast of England, or Ireland, and rescued, and then she was stationed in England, and one of the wounded on that same ship had the same name Ralph and she married Ralph and remained a Ralph. [laughter] He was a soldier on [the] transport on his way to Europe and she was an army nurse, but this was all published. I have pictures of it from the newspaper my sister had saved. "Nurses rescued from sunken ship," and whatnot. Shirley Ralph.

SH: When you came back, you used the GI Bill then to go to college or to dental school.

RM: Yes, that was wonderful.

SH: Where did you go to school?

RM: Three years of it was used up in pre-med, pre-dent, at Wagner College on Staten Island where I met Robert Loggia, as I told you, I knew him from New Dorp High School, too, and then, three of the four years of dental school were paid by the GI Bill. ... We all lived together, my sister and her husband who, was in the same place in dental school. She talked [him] into being a dentist, he became an oral surgeon. She was a hygienist, my father was a dental technician, my uncle was a dentist, my grandfather was a dentist, we are a lot of dentists. [laughter] Anyway, there we were living together and going to college and last year we had, I had no job, I had \$93.00 a month coming in for our subsistence and he paid the last year. But by that time, all the instruments, books everything was paid for, so all it was, was the tuition, bare tuition and nothing else, very little, so I really got a full education from my doing nothing in the service.

SH: What about your wife, did she work or go back to school?

RM: No, she had children right away. [laughter] Oh, by the way, she left this local high school in Panama as a senior and we were married, and off we went, but she didn't graduate with that class. So, she went to, she needed two credits, so she went to a high school in Staten Island and got a diploma, at Staten Island Academy, and then stopped her education there and worked in the library at our church school, and then was a librarian, even to the day she couldn't work anymore, down in our local town, in Tinton Falls. Yes, but she loved the library and books and

whatnot and did that all her life, along with being a mother, but once they got off to school, down to the library she'd go.

SH: You had six children.

RM: Yes, and eighteen grandchildren and ten great grandchildren.

SH: This is a great family history. In closing, are there any questions that we forgot to ask that you would like to answer?

KM: How were you feeling after the war ended being of German descent?

RM: Affiliated with Germans, yes, well, you know ...

KM: Or even during the war?

RM: During the war, you know, you make or people ... were aware that you had German background, which sometimes, but they never got obstinate, they would just joke about it more or less, "Oh, you Kraut, what are you?" you know, that kind of business. But you never took it to heart and it really never came, you know, with any malice. You just laughed it off and you call them a dirty, whatever, Pole or Guinea or whatever. Guinea, Italian, you know, but it was that way.

SH: In looking back, how do you think World War II impacted the man you are now?

RM: Well, I really don't think, except the fact that it turned me, I was a very bad boy in high school. In fact, I didn't tell you that part of my story, I should though maybe. I tell it to your father once in a while, but I didn't want to tell them because I didn't want them to follow in my footsteps, but I was one of those boys that was very well adapted at class work. I never took a book home. I never had a notebook to speak of, just rustled the papers, never read a book for a book report, never did anything that was required in that line and could always pass the tests and the regents and so on. But I wasn't a bad boy, in the sense that I was always very polite, in fact, an English teacher was a member of the garden club with my mother and she said, "That Robert, why doesn't he apply himself? He could do so much better and he's such a good boy." I was a good boy, but I was a devil at heart. I mean, anything that I could get away with I did. For instance, along with some other silly things, like breaking the Latin teacher's window with a stickball bat, that was an accident though, I let go and she looked out and said, "Oh, Robert," and then, the boy I mentioned, Mulvihill, the electrician millionaire, later and we left the school together. He left when I left, but under different circumstances. I was on the phone and he pulled me out of the booth and the phone came with me, they didn't like that, and then, I was on the marshall post in, very bored, so I jumped up and hit the fire alarm three times and the whole first floor walked out and, of course, they realized where it came from, but they could never prove it. "Robert, you did it." "No, no." Then the straw that broke the camel's back, my girlfriend and I and another couple, walked up to this Lighthouse Hill, which was the big lover's paradise up on top of Richmond Hill, four days, straight out of high school. I wrote all the excuse notes, tried to hide my handwriting and the next thing I knew it is to the principal,

“Robert, turn in your books.” That was the end of that. So, I went home and I was like, “Oh, my father, what’s he going to say?” So, I went on to a private school, St. Peter’s, to take the two courses I needed, which was history and I forget what else, and then, I was in the midst of gaining my diploma there, when I convinced them, “I’m not for school, I got to get in the Navy, everybody is going,” and then, my father signed for me. But he, you know, his heart was broken, because he thought I’ll never be a dentist and how I made it, I don’t know myself. But once I got married, and having seen all that in the service, yes, it did influence me, because meeting Dr. Wall and having all that experience in the dental field so early. Oh, by the way, I was cleaning teeth at that age, because a corpsman’s job in a dental office was to, the basic, we’d clean and chart and x-ray and the follow-up to that story is, I finally got to dental school and who is the professor in charge of radiology? That Captain Sam Wall. “Meibauer, what are you doing here?” “I’m in, Dr. Sam.” “Oh, do you remember everything I taught you?” I said, “I certainly do.” He said, “You’re exempt from this course.” He said, “If I get a special case I’ll call you.” “I can’t believe it, Dr. Wall, are you sure?” He said, “Do you remember how to take x-rays and mount them?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Do you know how to read them?” I said, “Yes.” “Okay.” He calls me down and who do I have to x-ray? Shelly Winters, as a nice little teenage movie star. She came there for some special treatment, or something, and Sam called me down as a freshman, “Take her x-rays.” [laughter] That was a story, too. Oh, my, some of the stories. Then in dental school, I was so well versed in all of life, as I mentioned, I could carve teeth before I was twenty, you know, my father taught my sister and me. He carved the teeth for the models that were given to the dental schools to copy as illustrations of the tooth forms. My father carved those originally. He was an artist and he passed a little on to me. I could carve teeth behind my back, I really could, and when the exams came and they hand me the block of wax and I’m sitting there, I could do that, and then, I’d get fifteen of them passed to me to do, for my fraternity brothers. “Do this for me, just touch it up a little,” and then, at the end the professor said to me, “Meibauer, how many teeth did you carve today?” [laughter] He was wise to it, you know. Then, I had the laboratory available to me, my father’s, and we would have to do a special procedure for the State Board, which was to make what we called base plates and so I thought, “That’s an easy thing and it’s not part of the curriculum,” I thought, “I’ll make the base plates for \$3.00 a piece and spread the word.” Okay, so, I told a lot of students and ninety base plates I made in my father’s lab, which I could knock out in nothing flat, but it helped Connie and I with our kids, and you know, big story, you buy little clothes for them, and so on, and my father said, “No, you keep the money,” because we all lived and he supported all of us. But, anyway, now came time, the bookstore complained to the head of prosthetic department that they weren’t selling the acrylic, that’s stuff that the base plates were made of, and all. “We had ninety sets left. How come they’re not getting it?” Uncle George, was my fraternity brother’s uncle was the head of the prosthetics department, the professor, Uncle George, rather Joe McCarthy was my close friend and fraternity brother and he said to his Uncle George innocently, “Oh, Ben,” that’s me, a nickname, “Meibauer made them.” “What?” Oh, I almost was thrown out of school because I was doing, you know, and I thought it was just nothing. “No, that’s part of it, they got to learn how to make this and that,” and I just looked because it was for the State Board exam, you know, I thought that’s totally not part of the curriculum, but it was they said and so I almost was thrown out for that, for the dean didn’t like it either you know, and the bookstore man was stuck with ninety pounds of acrylic plastic [laughter] and I made a little money. But one thing I know happened, I didn’t win the prosthetic prize because of that. Joe, the nephew did and he couldn’t do anything too mechanically, but I know I lost the prize,

because I cheated so to speak, but whenever they had a special case there, too, they would call me. "Can you make up a case?" Now it took a year, full senior year, to make one set of dentures because it was try it and look and call the professor and let him okay it and sign it off and whatnot. Yes, it is. It's just true.

SH: Please, continue with the story.

RM: It was downtown in Manhattan, my father worked as a dental technician, made the dentures, and so on, for a dentist. The dentist administered gas. It was early in the years, when they had to mix the chemicals in a tank, and then, this was behind the screen, and then, the hose was passed over with the mask over the top of the screen to the dentist. My father would mix chemicals, put a hood over the, like a fish tank chamber, and the nitrous oxide would come through the hose and the dentist would administer it, as the surgeon, and then, rendered the patient unconscious. He would pull a teeth and that was that. Well, the patient didn't come to, after the surgery. So, my father, being the young assistant really, was summoned by the dentist, "Robert, get over here and help me carry this patient downstairs." My father didn't understand what was going on, but the dentist didn't want the patient to die in his office, because that would be the end of the doctor's practice, but he was, instead of doing the right thing and calling an ambulance or something, the Doctor just made my father and himself, they carried him down and put him in the vestibule at the bottom of the stairs and went home. Heard nothing, my father goes back the next day, nothing is wrong and everything is nice and quiet, and then, the patient comes back and says to the dentist and said, "Boy, I don't even remember leaving here." [laughter] It was better than that, somehow I can't think of the right words, but as though it never happened and they were both so relieved, both my father and the dentist. "I don't even remember leaving here." [laughter]

SH: You are still practicing and your father was so versed in dental history, what do you think is the best or the greatest improvement in dental practice or the biggest detriment?

RM: Well, I think in 1952, the first hi-speed hand piece, the drill was given to the dentists and I happen to be lucky enough to live on Staten Island, again, where it was developed in the factory. SS White, and one of the engineers on the project was a friend of my father's and myself, Mr. Whitlinger, and he presented me with one before it was even on the market and so I played around with it and oh, enjoyed it so much. But never really used it on a patient, but would drill teeth in my hand, because you had to have it set up, the air compressor and the whatnot that drove this high speed air hand piece and that would do like a hundred-thousand revolutions and it was very little torque. So they had to paint the tooth with it so that you didn't rapidly enter the pulp chamber, you know, by just grinding too fast, and then, it had to be water-cooled and when you first had one in your hand, that's a dentist, I mean, it was just so amazing. Because before that, you had to use slow, belt driven drills and [it] will take a long time and it would be frictional and abundance of heat to the tooth and now you could do everything in one fell swoop, grind the whole tooth down in a matter of minutes, where it took fifteen minutes for one tooth. So, that was the greatest advance in my day, I think. We had all the anesthetics were good back to the days of my father having to mix the chemicals, my grandfather had to mix the chemicals of Novocain, in fact, and use needles over and over again and reorder, autoclave them, or boil them, they did in those days and they'd break off because of all the use, and then, you had to

retrieve them out of tissue. It was a big mess. Then came the age of disposables, where one use needle and you threw it away, so everything was so easy and, I think, the high speed hand piece and disposable syringes of Novocain were a big improvement in dentistry. That's about it.

SH: Great. Well, thank you so much for taking time and coming all this way. It's really been a pleasure; it's been great to have such wonderful story-teller and thank you, Karlee.

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

Reviewed by Karlee Meibauer 11/29/04

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 12/2/04

Reviewed by Robert H. Meibauer 2/1/05