

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CALVIN H. MORTON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Carmen Godwin: This begins an interview with Calvin Morton, on the 29th of December 1997 in Ponte Vedra, Florida with Carmen Godwin. I guess I want to start out by asking you about your parents. They were both born in Newark?

Calvin Morton: Yes.

CG: How far back does your family go in the United States?

CM: Two grandmothers and one grandfather were born in this country, and my other grandfather was born in England. And then after that, it's all European.

CG: Your father, did he ever mention what his childhood was like growing up in Newark?

CM: Briefly, not very much, little anecdotes, but that's about it. He didn't discuss it too much.

CG: What kind of work did he do growing up?

CM: He left school after the eighth grade and went to pattern-maker school, which he didn't like very much. These are woodworking-type things where you make a pattern and then they cut things out of metal and so forth. He didn't care too much for that, so he went into sales, retail sales. During the Depression he did some painting and paper-hanging. It always seemed that our house was being papered and painted. That's about it. He talked a lot about riding bicycles. He loved to ride bicycles when he was young, and he would ride with a pack of guys over to New York and back from Newark. They would ride to Brooklyn and back on a Sunday.

CG: On their bicycles ... (laughs) Did he always work in Newark?

CM: Yes. He worked temporarily once up in Englewood, New Jersey, but it was always in Newark and New York.

CG: And in the city?

CM: In the city, yes.

CG: He was in the Army from 1917 to 1918?

CM: Yes.

CG: Did he ever talk about his service in the war?

CM: Oh, sure, all the time. He actually saw no combat. He was in the ground troops of the Air Corps. He helped set up set up airfields during World War I. I often asked him what he remembers most about World War I. He said that after getting off the troop transport in Cherbourg, he remembers the sound on the cobblestone of the hobnailed boots of the all these troops marching up the street to get on transportation to go into inland France. That's what he remembers a lot.

CG: So he was in France?

CM: Yes.

CG: The whole time he was there he was in France?

CM: No, ... he helped set up Kelly Field in Texas as a matter-of-fact.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: And my son just lives a few miles from Kelly Field now. It's kind of a full circle.

CG: So he wasn't involved in combat. Being a veteran, do you remember how your father reacted to the coming of World War II?

CM: Yes, he was of course shocked like we were with the attack on Pearl Harbor, but he supported it a hundred percent. "Get those damn Japs," and things like that. He was very very supportive of the war. He was quite active in the American Legion, too, between wars. So he was a very active veteran.

CG: That's something I wanted to ask you about. Was he in any veteran's organizations?

CM: Yes, the American Legion, very active. During the Depression, the American Legion in East Orange, New Jersey, became a more or less social activity for the veterans, as well as a lobby organization as it was for years.

CG: You mentioned about Pearl Harbor, the surprise of Pearl Harbor. How aware were you that there was going to be a war?

CM: I was aware that we were going to be in it. I expected us to go to the support of England, who was of course on the ropes at that time, but I didn't expect anything with the Japanese.

CG: So your whole family was pretty much surprised at Pearl Harbor?

CM: Surprised and shocked, I imagine.

CG: And your mother, she was also raised in Newark.

CM: Yes.

CG: Did she work all her life?

CM: She worked before she was married in New York for J.R. Wood & Sons. They make art carved rings, diamond rings, engagement rings and jewelry. And then when I was born she quit

work, and she did not go to work again until I guess the late thirties, early forties. She worked for Kresle's. Kresle's was a big department store in Newark, on the corner of Raymond Boulevard and Broad Street. She did work, if you want to call it that, during the Depression. My father was out of jobs quite frequently, and he set up an egg route to deliver eggs to homes. After we got involved with lend-lease in the late thirties, he went to work on the Brooklyn docks as a checker, and my mother took over the egg route. I would help her on weekends deliver these eggs. I can remember people complaining because the fact that we had just raised the price from thirty-four to thirty-five cents a dozen.

CG: (laughs) So, she pretty much quit working to raise you?

CM: Yes.

CG: How did the Depression affect your family and you, and your friends?

CM: People were always out of work. We lived just inside the Bloomfield-Newark line. I could always tell when my father had a job that day. If he found a job, he'd walk home fast. I'd be playing in the street and if he walked home slowly, I know he didn't find any work that day. He went from job to job. He was primarily in sales of wallpaper and paint, and also as a painter and paper hanger. But I could always tell whether he had a job or not. The neighborhood was generally hard hit by the Depression. I got this same question from my grandson, who was doing a paper for high school, and I compared what we had during the Depression to what we had during World War II. We suffered more privations during World War II for gas and things like that than during the Depression. We always had enough to eat. We had to move out of our house and move into my aunt and uncle's, and then later on with my grandmother and grandfather, because we couldn't afford to keep our house. We rented it out, but later we moved back in.

CG: When did you rent it out?

CM: We rented it out in the mid-thirties. I grew up in an unusual circumstance. We lived in this house and my grandmother and grandfather lived next door, and my aunt and uncle lived next door to them. So we lived first with my grandmother and grandfather, and then with my aunt and uncle.

CG: So it wasn't that big of a move? (laughs)

CM: (laughs) No it wasn't really. I remember the cars. There were always cars with dents, one headlight out, smoking. People couldn't get their cars repaired as easily as you can today. Most of them didn't have insurance. It was just a tough time. But, I never suffered at Christmas time, I was an only child and I had no cousins and several aunts and uncles, so I really made out.

CG: (laughs) How important do you think your mother's income was to your family?

CM: It helped get us the niceties, the little extras, but by that time my father had found work on the docks and was able to bring home sufficient income.

CG: Was she also responsible for mainly taking care of you and the household?

CM: Yes.

CG: What kind of work did she do?

CM: She was a secretary, and she became assistant office manager at Kresle's in their accounts payable department.

CG: And your parents, did they ever tell you how they met?

CM: They lived close to one another in Newark growing up. Their families had mutual friends. I don't recall the exact day or how they met. My mother was eighteen at the time, and my father was twenty-eight. He asked for her hand and my grandfather said, "No, you'll have to wait until she's twenty."

CG: (laughs) He did wait?

CM: He did wait, and they were married a month after she was twenty.

CG: (laughs) How long was it before they had you?

CM: Three years.

CG: Was there ever a problem with their ethnicity and their marriage?

CM: No.

CG: Newark seemed like it had a very diverse ...

CM: Well, Newark was very homogeneous back in the early part of the century, except in the down-neck section. You had ethnic. You had Italians live in one place and Irish lived in another. ... They had no problem there, no.

CG: How important was your education to your parents?

CM: Extremely important. I was the first one in my family to graduate from high school. So they emphasized it. I had a distant uncle who had gone to college. And they said, "Boy, you've got to go, because we don't want you to go through what your father went through during the Depression." So it was very important to them. It was pounded into me.

CG: So in high school it was important that you made good grades?

CM: Yes. My father kept telling me, “This is the happiest time of your life,” because he had never gone to high school. I kept telling myself, “If this is the happiest time of my life, it’s going downhill from here.” (laughing)

CG: So really you think it was more important to them because they realized how hard their lives had been?

CM: Yes.

CG: I was wondering, have you ever heard of “the Four Corners” in Newark?

CM: Broad and Market Street?

CG: I think so.

CM: Yes, sure.

CG: (laughs) I was just reading about Newark, and it said that it was the third busiest traffic center in the United States.

CM: Really?

CG: Yes.

CM: I wouldn’t be surprised, but I’m surprised that it’s in Newark right now.

CG: How ethnically diverse would you describe the schools that you went to?

CM: I would say that between five and ten percent black. I went to schools in Bloomfield and high school I would say it was about five. There was a large Italian and Polish population in the school.

CG: Was there a big Jewish community?

CM: No, it was a very small Jewish community. I would say minuscule almost.

CG: What high school did you attend?

CM: Bloomfield High.

CG: Well, Newark school system is known for being one of the best in the country...

CM: Now?

CG: Now.

CM: My goodness.

CG: How would you describe growing up, your education? Did you feel like you were getting a better education than most?

CM: Well I didn't go to Newark schools so I can't say.

CG: Right, well, I mean that area.

CM: I thought I got an excellent education, it was superb. I have nothing but good to say about my grammar school and high school. I had some excellent teachers.

CG: Do you remember any that really made an impression on you?

CM: Yes, Miss. Beatty, who I had in high school for tenth grade English. When you got out of her class you knew how to parse a sentence, and you knew how to write a story. You also knew your grammar backwards and forwards. I remember her a lot. She was very very strict but very very good.

CG: Were you involved in any sports in high school?

CM: No. I always worked after school, so I never really got involved in sports at all.

CG: What did you do?

CM: I worked as an office boy. I worked for Kresle's as a stock boy, I worked for Hahnes Department Store. Is Hahnes still there in Newark by the way?

CG: I'm not sure, I don't really go into Newark that much. (laughs)

CM: I don't blame you. I also worked for Kresle's as a messenger, picking up special orders from the New York garment district, like a wedding gown. Somebody would order a wedding gown and I would be sent over to pick it up.

CG: Was your money your own, or did you share it?

CM: Oh, my money was my own. I was saving it. It was all my own.

CG: Did you have a bank account or something that you kept it in?

CM: Yes. I did.

CG: (laughs) You wrote on your survey that you were involved in band?

CM: Yes.

CG: In high school? What instrument did you play?

CM: Clarinet.

CG: Really? Did you play it throughout high school?

CM: Yes.

CG: Would you describe yourself as good?

CM: No. I was mediocre.

CG: (laughing) Were you also part of the chorus?

CM: No.

CG: Were there any other activities that you did?

CM: I was in the Latin club and what they called the Chef's Club.

CG: What was that?

CM: Well, the home economics teacher taught it, and she wanted to get some boys interested in cooking. So instead of calling it cooking she called it the Chef's Club so all the guys flocked into it.

CG: (laughing) What a good idea!

CM: Hi-Y was another organization.

CG: What is that?

CM: It's a branch of the YMCA, for boys in high school.

CG: And they would do different activities?

CM: Yes.

CG: Did you always live in Bloomfield, or was there a point when you moved from Newark?

CM: I always lived in Bloomfield. We had just about a three to four months hiatus when my father got a job up in Englewood, but then we moved back when he lost it. So, I would say that I lived in Bloomfield until I got married.

CG: I read a little bit about Bloomfield, and it said that there were two railroad lines with a lot of factories.

CM: Yes.

CG: How important were those factories to the city as far as economically?

CM: That would be hard to say because it was a bedroom community primarily. Most of the people worked in New York or Newark. It was like Glen Ridge or Montclair. I would say they did provide some employment, but I wouldn't say that they were that important. When I was growing up I really wasn't that interested in that.

CG: Do you remember anything about the Bloomfield College and Seminary?

CM: The only thing that I remember about Bloomfield College and Seminary was that my doctor's mother was a secretary over there. That's all I remember about it.

CG: What about the Davis House? Does that sound familiar to you?

CM: No.

CG: No? I was just curious because it said that it was founded in the sixteen-hundreds. And it was a really old house in that area. So I didn't know if maybe you knew some history about it.

CM: No, I don't know anything about it.

CG: Your parents, they were both Protestant?

CM: Yes. Presbyterian.

CG: Presbyterian. Did you go to church often when you were growing up?

CM: Yes.

CG: You did?

CM: Yes. Sunday school, the whole bit right on through.

CG: Really?

CM: Yes.

CG: I also wanted to ask you, what made the decision for you to go to Rutgers?

CM: It was close. It was cheap. When I first went, I went right after high school, before I went into the service, and it was reasonable. It was a state school, that's about it.

CG: Did you apply to any other schools?

CM: Yes, but I don't recall. I really don't recall where I did.

CG: The first time that you went before you entered the service, did you have some type of financial help?

CM: My parents.

CG: Your parents.

CM: My parents provided some of my spending money. They allotted me seven dollars a week. They also paid my tuition.

CG: Which is probably a lot more back then than it sounds like now?

CM: I was glad to get it.

CG: What were your plans for the future when you entered college? Did you know what you wanted to be?

CM: My parents wanted me to be an engineer, and I started out an engineering major, and I was glad I did because I used the knowledge in the Navy when I went in. But afterwards I came back from the Navy, as a sophomore and I took one more year of engineering and I said, "This is not for me." I found it very difficult, so I decided that I would like to teach history. I then became a history and political science major.

CG: But when you originally entered it was engineering?

CM: It was in engineering.

CM: And the reason for that is that I got pushed into that by my parents because the only person who had a job during the Depression was my uncle, who I had previously mentioned, who had been an engineer in the town of Bloomfield as a matter-of-fact.

CG: How did you become involved in fraternity life?

CM: When I went in July of 1944, I took an accelerated year. I was looking for a place to stay, the army had taken over, most of the dorms for the A-12 program. And so I found a place to stay at the DKE House. They were just renting out the rooms because they had few brothers. Many were in the service. So, they rented out about ten of their rooms and I got one of them. I was asked to pledge later on.

CG: So they rented out their rooms to people who weren't in the fraternity?

CM: Oh, yes. A lot of the fraternities did that.

CG: Because of the housing shortage?

CM: The housing shortage, and the brother shortage. There weren't that many because the army had taken it over.

CG: So, before you went into the service and went to Rutgers, you weren't part of a fraternity?

CM: Yes, I was living at the DKE house, and I pledged later on in the year.

CG: What type of hazing or initiation did you have to go through?

CM: It was awful. (laughs) I would never do it again. No. (laughs) I didn't sleep for a week. There were about ten in our pledge class, and we had all kinds of menial duties and humiliating things. One of the brothers was a heavy smoker, and he wanted Lucky Strikes, so it was the pledge's job to dig up Lucky Strikes somewhere in New Brunswick. It was quite a thing, you'd be out all hours of the day or night trying to find those Lucky Strikes during a wartime cigarette shortage.

CG: Did you ever have to do anything humiliating, in front of people?

CM: Oh, you had to act out certain things. It was nothing, just silly things. It was nothing obscene. You had to do a war dance, and you had to recite this and you had recite that. You had to know the chapters in date order all through the country. I can still do it.

CG: Oh, wow.

CM: I understand the house is now closed. We're going to reopen it eventually.

CG: Did you participate when other people were pledging? What type of initiations did you make them do?

CM: When we got back from service, many of your veterans were returning, and they weren't about to put up with that. So the type of hazing we did was to assign them tasks like painting the halls of the house or cleaning the carpets, and other household chores, that were more constructive than anything else. We did a few silly things, but it wasn't nearly what it was when I went in.

CG: Wow, that's interesting.

CM: Yes, it was very constructive pledging.

CG: What was fraternity life like? I mean the brotherhood. I'm not part of that so I wouldn't understand, but is there a special closeness between you and your brothers?

CM: I think so. I mean I still have contact with some of my fraternity brothers that were in my wedding. I think one of the things that I always thank the DKE's for was when I was a freshman. It was a terrific adjustment going from high school to college. And one thing I remember most is about being locked in my room after supper for two hours of studying and a brother would check on you to make sure that you were hitting the books. So that got me through my freshman year. And they were very helpful in assisting you with your studies. So I can say nothing but good about it.

CG: Wow. Because I guess you get the idea that fraternity life is all fun?

CM: No, they were pretty serious, and you had to maintain a certain grade average.

CG: Oh, okay. Do you remember anything about the annual Harmon Trophy? It was given out. I saw one displayed. It was for most school spirit. It was a sign that they would put out, each fraternity.

CM: Vaguely, but I couldn't even comment on it.

CG: (laughs) The reason I ask is because in your senior yearbook there was a sign on under yours that said, "Keep the Cannon." And I wondered if you knew what that meant?

CM: I think that would involve the Lafayette-Lehigh-Rutgers rivalry, where you got a cannon, if you beat the other two. I'm very vague on that.

CG: You were involved in track?

CM: Yes.

CG: The first year, how did that come about?

CM: My father was a track man. I was not built for football and I had no baseball skills, but I did like to run. So I got on the team there, I guess when I got back. I didn't do it during my freshman year. It was when I got back, I ran the 220. It was very interesting. I can remember competing with Camp Kilmer. Does that ring a bell?

CG: Oh, yes. (laughing)

CM: They sent over a team, one of the runners over there was Barney Yule, who had won all kinds of college scholarships, and he ran against me. I thought I was standing still, he just went by me like a breeze. (laughing)

CG: (laughing) So you didn't get back involved in track when you came back to Rutgers?

CM: No, that's when I did get involved in track, when I came back.

CG: Oh okay.

CM: I'm sorry I wasn't clear on that, but I did get involved when I came back and I ran through my sophomore year. When I switched majors, I was too busy catching up, so I didn't have time for that.

CG: Were you involved in any other sports?

CM: No.

CG: I wanted to ask you what you thought of the chapel on campus, the requirements of attending chapel?

CM: I didn't think one way or the other. I forget if it was compulsory or not, maybe it was, you would know more about that. But I just took it as if it was another class you had to go to. It was just part of the student activities. So I had no problem with it.

CG: Did you take the mandatory ROTC?

CM: Yes, I did.

CG: What did you have, one year of it?

CM: Yes, and then, I think, I took it when I came back as a sophomore and that was it.

CG: Did people pretty much just do it, or would they complain a lot about having to take the ROTC?

CM: Some did. I found it a little boring at times, especially the classroom work because the colonel teaching it wasn't that good. But, I found it very helpful when I got into boot camp, so I can say I have no bad feelings towards it. Let's put it that way. I think that it's, well, I'm prejudice because my son went thorough ROTC in his college and taught ROTC as a colonel, so I'm all for it. I think it's a great thing.

CG: Right. But it wasn't mandatory for him?

CM: No, no.

CG: Did you work while you were attending Rutgers, before you went into the service?

CM: Not before I went in the service. It was after I got out that I worked. The university had various odd jobs that you could do. I remember the field-house was full of war surplus equipment, and the equipment was available to anyone that wanted it, so I would help fill those orders. I worked at the DKE house waiting on tables and helping out in the kitchen. Things had gotten a little easier because the GI Bill helped.

CG: How much do you think the GI Bill helped you towards your education?

CM: Oh, it was wonderful. I think my parents could have helped me with what I had saved, but it would have been rough. I was able to finish half of my graduate school on the GI Bill so it took me on through there.

CG: So you went to graduate school on it also?

CM: Yes. I went to graduate school at night, and worked during the day, so I accumulated enough during my first half of graduate school to pay for my second half when my GI Bill ran out.

CG: What did they pay for?

CM: They paid for your tuition and they gave you seventy or eighty dollars a month for room and board, as I remember. And the DKE house was very cooperative on that, and they would set your monthly room and board to just what the GI Bill paid for.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: So, it was very helpful.

CG: How did you feel about leaving Rutgers to go into the service?

CM: I think at the time the general feeling was you wanted to go, and I went in on a special situation. The draft was still on. I got my draft notice about a month after I became eighteen. I became eighteen in December, and I was in the navy by February. But they had a deal at the time. It was called the Eddy test and if you took this and passed it you were guaranteed to go into the navy and also into their electronics program as a seaman first class. Well, I took the Eddy test and it was simple because I had a year of electrical engineering, so I passed it.

CG: Right. What was your first impression of the navy?

CM: It's interesting. We left on a train out of new Penn Station in Newark to go to Great Lakes, and it was a civilian train. It wasn't a troop train as such. There were three others with me going to Great Lakes. We sat on that train for a day and a half in one of the coaches getting out there, because every time a troop train or a freight train passed we were pulled over to the side. So it took us about a day and a half to get there. We left at night and we got there at night. We got to Great Lakes and we got off and they said, "have you had anything to eat?" and I said, "No" ...

“well we’ll take you over to the mess hall.” So we got to the mess hall, and I walked up about ten stairs, and I had these three guys with me who I had spent a full day on a train talking with and exchanging ideas. The guide turned to me and said, “no you go in there and you guys”, meaning the other three, “go down there.” They were black, so they had to eat in a separate mess hall. Since I had gone to integrated schools and integrated cafeterias, I said, “Hey wait a minute.” Then I found out later that the navy would only have them as mess cooks or menial jobs. We had one black in my electronics school. I think they made a special exception because he was an honors graduate from MIT.

CG: (laughing) What about aboard the ships? Were there ever any blacks aboard the ship?

CM: Yes there were blacks, but they were mess cooks.

CG: And stewards?

CM: And stewards, yes.

CG: Well, the navy is known for its cleanliness.

CM: Yes.

CG: What was your impression, compared to the other services, of the navy?

CM: I wasn’t that familiar with the other services...

CG: Oh.

CM: Yes, the ship was very clean, except one time. I’m going to have to digress a little bit. We were aboard an electronics ship this was when I got to sea, after the war and went to Bikini. We would set up our target ship and then we were evacuated on a troop ship, which was filthy and toilet facilities were absolutely horrible. I wouldn’t even begin to describe them to you. I didn’t like it very much, and when I got back aboard my own ship it was very nice and clean. We went ashore in Eniwetok to dismantle some electronic equipment after the tests and there were some army guys living there in a tent with a lister bag. Are you familiar with those?

CG: No.

CM: They were a big canvas bags that hung on tripods and the evaporation of the water through the canvas cools the water. I got back aboard ship to my hot shower and my water cooler, and I said, “Boy, I’m glad.” I did get aboard a British ship which I thought was very dirty, compared to our ship, but they had been at war for six years or so.

CG: What about the food? Did you think the food was pretty good?

CM: The powdered milk at that time left a lot to be desired. I never drank coffee until I went into the navy and that's when I started on coffee because the powdered milk was so bad. Otherwise, as far as quantity and quality, it was just great. Their soups were excellent.

CG: A lot of men talk about beginning to smoke in their service, did you smoke at all?

CM: No. In fact I traded the cigarettes in the packs for extra food because other guys wanted them. I tried smoking in college and it didn't do a thing for me.

CG: So you would trade your cigarettes?

CM: Yes

CG: That's great.

CM: For extra food.

CG: (laughing) You went to basic training at Great Lakes.

CM: Yes.

CG: Had you ever done much traveling outside of New Jersey before that time?

CM: No. No, not at all. Outside of going to New York and Washington I had never been outside of New Jersey.

CG: What was your impression of that area and the people that lived there?

CM: In the Chicago area?

CG: Yes.

CM: I loved it. They were very good to us. Chicago was known as a serviceman's town. Interesting thing came up, after I finished boot camp, they had a basic radio tech school. I was a radio tech, a radar tech, and it was at Wright Junior College in Chicago. And the navy had taken over that college. It was a junior college, and we lived in the gym. We had bunks in the gym and lockers, and we went to classes, and it came up when this recent brouhaha on this fellow that was buried in Arlington.

CG: Oh, yes, right.

CM: And they said, "No, he was in Wright Junior College at that time." Well, I was there at that time; I don't remember any civilians being there at all. And they said they had records of him being there, but the navy had taken it over.

CG: They had pretty much converted it?

CM: Yes. So unless he was taking a class I don't know about, it was all navy.

CG: Well, that's interesting.

CM: Yes.

CG: So, you pretty much chose the navy so that you could do the electronics?

CM: Well, I wanted the navy anyway.

CG: You wanted the navy?

CM: Yes, I wanted the navy, and I used the electronics as a means of getting in.

CG: Right. Why the navy?

CM: I've always been fascinated with ships and sea. In fact the last eight years I've been going to sea on navy ships. I wrote my Master's thesis on the navy. I've always liked it. And I thought it was a little cleaner, better food, and no mud.

CG: (laughing) Right.

CM: Just sharks (laughing) Could we take a quick break?

CG: Oh sure.

[Break in tape for unknown period]

CM: I was treated very well. It was just a pleasant experience, but it did kind of crystallize my thinking as to the need for an education. I saw how limited people were that didn't have a college degree. It was for me.

CG: Did you feel like there was a big difference between the officers and the enlisted men?

CM: Sure, sure.

CG: What kinds of differences were there?

CM: Level of intelligence, maturity, the way they handled the men.

CG: Did they get a lot of extra perks for being officers?

CM: I couldn't attest to that. I could attest to it more now, than I could then, because I do live with the officers now when I go aboard ship.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: So, you got better quarters. I mean we slept in bunks five high, and the heads were nothing to brag about (laughs). They were crowded, but the officers were more isolated.

CG: I wanted to ask you, did you feel like the training you received prepared you for your service well?

CM: Oh, yes.

CG: Yes?

CM: Yes, they gave you excellent training. Very good schools.

CG: At one point, you had written down that you were in Gulfport, Mississippi. At what point were you there?

CM: After I left Wright Junior College I went to what they called the advanced level electronics school and that was in Gulfport. I was in Chicago in the winter time and Gulfport, Mississippi in the summer time.

CG: Oh, no. (laughing)

CM: Didn't work out too well.

CG: What did you think of the people in Mississippi?

CM: Well, let's put it this way, I had been used to the people in Chicago. They would just bring you into their homes. Churches would have dinners. Mississippi, where we were, had the air force base, Kessler Air Force Base in Biloxi, which was just a few miles away. Gulfport, prior to the time we were there was primarily Seabees. They're a pretty rough and ready bunch (laughs). So, when the ETs came down, the electronic technicians, the people were used to the Seabees and they cast a very jaundice eye towards us. They had a fine USO in Gulfport, but that's about it. I think it's because it was a very small area with a lot of servicemen.

CG: (laughs) Had you ever been aboard a vessel before you entered the navy?

CM: Only when they were in harbor. I remember my parents taking me over to see a battleship in New York when I was a kid. But I had never been at sea, in fact I became very seasick the first day out. I don't know whether you read about the Alcatraz riots in 1946. We left from Alameda, California, and sailed past this just a few days after the riots. We could still see the black smoke marks after we got to sea, and your mind was taken off the riots, I became very

seasick. We got to Hawaii and I became seasick again. I found it was just the first day out, and then I was all right. Now when I go to sea, I don't get seasick at all.

CG: (laughs) That's interesting. So, the USS *Avery Island*, that was the first?

CM: That was the first and only. I mean I had had temporary duty, when I would be evacuated from Bikini. They would put me on a ship for a couple of days, but the *Avery Island* was the only ship I served on.

CG: Oh, okay. What was the *Bladen*?

CM: The *Bladen* was one of the transports, that was the target ship. It was anchored in the lagoon and our job was to go aboard and make sure all of the electronic gear was working. They would evacuate us to a transport ship, not the *Avery Island*, and then they would set off the bomb and then we went back in to check the electronic equipment again to see what damage was done, file a damage report, and repair what we could.

CG: You would check the equipment and they would take you off the ship?

CM: Yes.

CG: How long after the bomb was dropped did they wait until you ...

CM: A day or so.

CG: A day or so?

CM: Yes.

CG: Did they use any safety equipment?

CM: The only thing that they had were Geiger counters. I think what caught the navy flatfooted was the degree of residual radiation when we returned. The *Bladen* was about a mile and a half from the explosion. Sodium is an element easily made radioactive. When the sea water evaporated, it left all this sodium chloride on you and it was of course radioactive. So we would have to take showers and get rid of our clothes. When got back aboard the *Bladen*, we had to dump all the food overboard, about ten thousand dollars worth of meat at a time when civilians were on meat rationing. I think they were, I don't know. And we existed on C-rations until they could bring regular food aboard.

CG: So you actually ate the food, did you eat the rations that were aboard when the bomb went off?

CM: No.

CG: No, you threw all that off?

CM: No, we brought the C-rations with us back to the ship.

CG: Oh okay. I kind of want to go back. The *Avery Island*, was that a small ship comparatively?

CM: It was ten thousand tons, it was an electronics repair ship.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: It was about the size of about a liberty ship. I don't know if you're familiar with that or not.

CG: No.

CM: Small freighters. I have a picture of it here I'll show you later.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: It was devoted strictly to electronics repair. When we went out we had a lot of civilians aboard like RCA engineers and a photographer from *Life* magazine.

CG: Oh really.

CM: It was also devoted to test monitoring electronic equipment, all the gauges and meters we had set up on various islands around there to test for radioactivity and explosion forces and so forth.

CG: What type of service did you do before the joint task force on the *Avery Island*?

CM: I was still in navy school. I had gone from Gulfport to Navy Pier to finish out my electronics school, and we were about a month from finishing and they needed electronic technicians. The war was over, they needed electronic by the dozens at Bikini and they said, "Okay if you guys volunteer, we'll give you a graduation certificate, give you a promotion to third class and let you go." So we left right from school to go there.

CG: That's interesting. Do you remember the name of your captain? Or what he was like?

CM: I remember the name of the captain, Mewhinney. Very remote. I rarely saw him.

CG: He mainly talked to the officers?

CM: Yes.

CG: I've heard of men aboard ship having to take salt water showers, did you ever have to do that?

CM: No, no, I never had to do that.

CG: (laughs) No?

CM: No, I never did, we always had enough fresh water. Yes, it was a quick shower but that was it. We never had a freshwater problem.

CG: Right. Did you ever go into port while you were out?

CM: The only port we were into was Honolulu, and we stopped there briefly to pick up some people and supplies. Then we went right to Bikini, anchored in the lagoon, did our tests, and then came right back into San Francisco.

CG: So there wasn't a lot of free time to go check things out. (laughing)

CM: No. There was in Honolulu because we were there for about two weeks, but that was about it.

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

CG: What about gambling and card playing to pass time?

CM: There was card playing, but not gambling. You know, when you're at sea they'd play pinochle or cribbage or something similar. I didn't see much of it.

CG: More just to pass the time?

CM: Yes.

CG: Did you ever have any interaction with marines? Well, you said you had that one with the army people. Was that the only ...

CM: We had some army people aboard, some photographic technicians, some electronic technicians. They were nice guys. We got along fine, yes.

CG: Right. You always hear about the turmoil between the ...

CM: No, no, there was none of that. We were all busy; we had jobs to do.

CG: I know you participated in the testing afterwards, but what was your reaction to the bomb on Hiroshima?

CM: My reaction to the bomb was “Thank God we didn’t have to invade,” because one of the problems that the navy had at that phase of the war was the kamikaze attacks. Kamikazes would hit the top of the ship and that’s where our radio and radar facilities were. We were losing radio techs like mad and I know that if we invaded they would have more kamikazes. So I think when I heard about the bomb I thought, “Oh boy, maybe this is it.” We were still in school in Gulfport and I said, “Boy I’m not looking forward to that.” I was looking forward to going to sea; I enjoyed that, but not invading the islands. One day the navy lost three thousand sailors at Okinawa, and not a ship was sunk. It was just these bombs crashing into the ship's superstructure. You didn’t ask, but I think the A-bomb was a good decision. That’s the only decision that could have been made.

CG: So it was more relief, than anything.

CM: Yes, yes. It was funny. We got the news, and then I knew I had a final exam the next day and all we were thinking about was that final exam. (laughing)

CG: Right. (laughs) Was it kind of hard to contemplate something that big?

CM: Not at all.

CG: No?

CM: No. We got limited news on it and, but then later on, it was just a big explosion, that’s all. It was hard to contemplate when I saw one go off, but I could understand that.

CG: Well, what did you think when they asked you to be a part of the testing? What was your first reaction? Do you remember how you felt?

CM: When do I leave? When do I leave? (laughs) I was anxious to do something. You know I had been at school for about a year. I was getting tired of it.

CG: Was the military pretty clear about what you’d be doing and what would happen before you went?

CM: You mean about the bomb going off?

CG: Right.

CM: No. We knew the bomb test was there and we kind of trusted the navy to watch out for you. That they would take precautions and so forth. However, they hadn’t fully realized the extent of the residual radioactivity. I understand there have been some claims filed by guys that were aboard the *Avery Island* that had gone in and served target ships, but I don’t know what became of it at all.

CG: You had mentioned that there were reporters there that attended?

CM: Yes, oh, yes.

CG: What other types of people were there? Was it all branches of the service, and...

CM: Well, that's the reason it was called Joint Task Force One, the Army, and the Navy, and the Marines. You mean aboard my ship?

CG: Well, I just meant people that you might have seen, or you knew that were there.

CM: No, I knew that there were reporters covering it, and we would get the *Honolulu Advertiser*, which was their main paper. Every other day the planes would fly it in, and we would get write ups there, all kinds of scary stories in other words, but we saw no reason to be alarmed.

CG: Were you there when they took the people off the island?

CM: No.

CG: Was that before?

CM: Yes, that was long before.

CG: (laughs) Did you ever hear anything about that?

CM: You mean what happened to them?

CG: Right.

CM: Well, I've seen a few TV specials, but ...

CG: Oh, but at the time you didn't know anything about that?

CM: No, no, not at all.

CG: Did you feel at all that there might have been a race with the Soviets, as if the tension there was making the tests happen?

CM: No, this was '46. The Cold War hadn't fully come to fruition yet.

CG: So, it's easier to look back now and see something like that.

CM: Yes, I think that it was more tense in Germany than where we were.

CG: How many ships and men do you recall being there?

CM: ... I'd say about a hundred.

CG: Really?

CM: Yes.

CG: Ships?

CM: Yes.

CG: Wow.

CM: That's about the best estimate. There seemed like a hundred to me.

CG: Right.

CM: I could give you the exact number, I ...

CG: There were a lot of people, though ...

CM: There were a lot of people, yes.

CG: ... involved in it.

CM: A lot of people. We had one death in the whole thing. Some jerk drained the alcohol out of a torpedo and drank it.

CG: (laughing) You're kidding me?

CM: They used to take the alcohol out of the torpedoes and put it in a jar and put fruit juice in and let it age for a while. He drank it all and died.

CG: (laughs) Are you serious?

CM: That was the only fatality or injury that we had.

CG: That's crazy.

CM: Brains!

CG: As far as the target ships are concerned, I've read a little bit about... they had American ships, but they also had Japanese and...

CM: They had Japanese. You could spot the Japanese because of the screwed up conning towers that they had on them. They had the *Prinz Eugen*, the German ship, which is absolutely

the most beautiful ship that I've ever seen, and another German ship there. I forget which one it was. The ships were primarily Japanese and our own.

CG: Was there more enthusiasm when the Japanese ships were destroyed, or was it kind of ...

CM: No. We were more looking at it clinically. What was the difference here and the damage there? What type of ship got damaged? That's about it.

CG: Right. What really did you find out, as far as the test that you did? Did you find a significant damage to what you were doing?

CM: No, surprisingly enough, no. The only thing I found was a cracked meter. We had the analog meters. We didn't have the digital, and it was a cracked glass on the meter. That's all. All the gear worked fine. We did have certain paint on the ship that was exposed to the air blasts that were slightly seared. Our biggest problem was they took the electronic area, the radio and radar shacks, and locked up live mice and pigs and rabbits there. So after being in a closed room for two days in the tropics, it was quite ripe. Quite ripe.

CG: Did they do that aboard the *Bladen*?

CM: Yes.

CG: So this was to test the effects on live ...

CM: On life, yes, exactly.

CG: Were they destroyed? Were the animals pretty much ...

CM: They took them off the ship. No, the animals came through it okay. I don't know whether the radioactivity affected them later on or not, because that takes time to develop, but they took them off the ship. ...

CG: I wanted to ask you, do you remember seeing the bomb go off?

CM: Yes, I do. On the air blast we hid our eyes. We had to turn our eyes away because they didn't have enough red goggles to go around. (laughs) So the peasants hid their eyes. And then on the underwater blast, which was the second one, Test Baker. I'll never forget it. You looked at it, and you could hear the countdown, "10-9-8," and all of the sudden it was as if somebody took a big paintbrush and went swoosh like this in a white streak across from the ground to the sky. And then it was obliterated with all of this steam and smoke. And then the steam came away, and there was this tremendous column of water, a very high column of water, about a block in diameter it looked to me. And it was just water (laughs), and then it came down. I have a picture. I'll show you. The water kept falling down. It was just unbelievable to see. I could never forget the swoosh across the sky.

CG: The first one, after you uncovered your eyes were you able to see the ...

CM: We were able to see the cloud going up, the mushroom cloud. And then I'll never forget, it got this high, or up several thousand feet, and then a cap of ice crystals started to form. It made a cap over it. It was something.

CG: (laughs) So you went on. How long were you on the ship afterward? When you went back on?

CM: You mean on the *Bladen*?

CG: To test the equipment.

CM: About a week, that was all. And then we went back aboard the *Avery Island* and took off for the states.

CG: So that was it, those two bombs.

CM: Two bombs, yes.

CG: How effective do you think the Geiger counters were as far as measuring the ...

CM: They were crude but effective I think. I think they did not give as accurate readings as a dosimeter would give. It's a film-like thing. Nobody here knows what that is.

CG: What's that?

CM: It's what x-ray technicians wear. It's a little badge that registers the exposure to certain types of rays. We had none of that. The Geiger counters were rather crude, but they could detect radioactivity.

CG: Did you have to wear masks or anything like that?

CM: No.

CG: No.

CM: Our biggest problem was residual radioactivity on our clothes.

CG: What exactly does that mean?

CM: Well, the salt dried on our clothes, and the sodium was radioactive, so we had to get rid of some of our clothes. I kept a jacket, a foul weather jacket. I shouldn't have but I put it in the bottom of my sea bag and brought it home. It's still up in the attic. (laughs)

CG: (laughing) Well, maybe it's all worn off by now.

CM: I think it has.

CG: So you said that some of the men had sent in claims, but did you know anyone who had any health problems?

CM: No.

CG: Do you remember anything about decontamination of the ships?

CM: I remember half-baked efforts at decontamination. You know usually when you decontaminate a ship you just pump salt water all over it. We couldn't pump any of the water over it, so they had to use fresh water. They would bring a ship along side that had water and spray, but it wasn't that much.

CG: Do you think that they used any of those ships? Did they use any of them after?

CM: No, they were all old ships ready to retire. On the *Bladen*, they got the engines going, we got underway and we cruised around the lagoon just to show it would work. And then I don't know what happened to it. It's been decommissioned.

CG: Right. So you did drive it around? It was still functioning?

CM: Yes. Oh, very much so.

CG: Did you ever think of the navy as a career?

CM: No, no. I was too anxious to get back and finish my education. By the time I got finished, I wanted to get back and get my degree. And I've had mixed emotions. You know, if I'd stayed in I could have retired at thirty-eight, and that would have been it, but I'm glad that I did what I did.

CG: Right. Is there anything else about your service that you want to, that stuck out in your mind? That was interesting to you?

CM: I think that I enjoyed being at sea. It was very good, and I think I enjoyed the camaraderie that I had. I made some good friends. Of course, I lost touch with them shortly thereafter. But I think that the affect of the service on me was the affect on most people. It tended to focus them on where they wanted to go, and what they wanted to do. I mean how much do you know when you're eighteen? I think this tended to focus you and mature you. It gave you a direction and exposed you to various facets of life.

CG: It's funny that you mention that because I read something that Rutgers was saying in one of their papers. How they felt that these men that were coming back from the service were so much more mature.

CM: Yes, that was one of the reasons we stopped hazing at the DKE house. (laughing) These guys aren't going to stand for it. I wouldn't have stood for it. (laughing)

CG: Was there a big difference between the veterans and the non-veterans?

CM: It developed later on. As you started getting young guys coming out of school in '46 and '47, coming in as freshmen, it was a big difference. And yet some of the veterans came back, they were in their late twenties. You got little freshmen coming in at eighteen. (laughs) You know these guys, a lot of them were married and living across the street, across the river. There was a name for that campus. They were living with a wife and maybe two kids.

CG: Right. I read something about that place where they would have the children. There were special living arrangements for married men and their families on campus.

CM: Yes, yes. It was very tough. You'd walk down College Avenue and it was all surplus. Guys were wearing surplus uniforms, pea coats and khaki coats. And these guys that were on the GI Bill with a family had it very, very tough, especially if their wives couldn't work because they were pregnant or had to take care of kids. And there weren't that many jobs for women then. I felt sorry for a lot of them because it was a tough, tough struggle.

CG: Did you feel like it was harder for you when you came back?

CM: That's a good question. I don't think so. It was hard for me to become adjusted the first six months to campus life again. The way it worked, I was discharged from the Brooklyn Navy Yard at ten in the morning, and I was in class by that afternoon. Hopped the Pennsylvania Railroad and got down to class. That's just that way it was. I found the adjustment from navy life to civilian life a little difficult, but it fell into place.

CG: Especially so quickly. I could see how that could be even more difficult?

CM: Yes.

CG: You were discharged in Brooklyn?

CM: Yes.

CG: Do you remember how your homecoming was with your family or friends?

CM: Oh, well, they were glad to see me. I found out my girlfriend from high school married another guy. That's interesting, we had our fiftieth high school reunion, and she didn't make it. I had her address, and I wrote her a note saying, "you missed a great party. I'm glad you're still

alive and kicking.” She wrote me back and said, “I’m glad you’re still alive and kicking.” She enclosed a picture of her and her family. She’s got four kids. I wouldn’t have recognized her if she walked in the front door.

CG: She changed that much?

CM: Yes.

CG: So, she had already married?

CM: Yes, yes.

CG: Were you devastated or ...

CM: Yes. But I couldn’t have even thought about marriage at that time, because I still had my school to do.

CG: Right, and that was your most important, first priority.

CM: Yes.

CG: You received several medals?

CM: No, just the World War II Medal. I had three I think: the Asian-Pacific Area, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Good Conduct medal. Those were the three medals I got.

CG: Did you have a lot of pride over those medals, or was that just ...

CM: I would have had a lot more pride if I had done something important to accomplish them, but they were kind of awarded routinely for being there. Being in the service, being in the Pacific, minding the rules, which I do anyway.

CG: Do you wish that you could have been part of the combat.

CM: I would have like to have seen it. I would have liked to have seen some of it just to see what it was like. The closest I got to combat was eight years ago, when I was on a destroyer between Lebanon and Cyprus, we were patrolling there during Desert Shield, to protect against missiles. That’s the closest I ever got. And later on when I left, when the hot war started over there, they did fire some missiles at Baghdad.

CG: But at that point there was nothing?

CM: No, no.

CG: Back to the veterans and non-veterans, do you think that there was a hard split? People sticking together, or that new freshmen class coming in?

CM: I think there was a split. I think there was just a difference in values and experience. Just as there would be any split between an eighteen year-old and a twenty year-old. Veterans' priorities were to get through and the guys coming in wanted to have a good time. You know how they are. I think there was a split there.

CG: Did you see a big change in the atmosphere of the college? Before you left, obviously there were people that were coming back from the service before you left, but did you see a big difference in the atmosphere?

CM: Yes, because the army had left the campus, it was back to a normal college life. And there was more fun going on than during the war. When the war was on, those that were there were waiting to go in the service, usually, and they were on an accelerated program which we went to school full days, five days, six days a week. I got a full year credit in six months, so it was rather grueling, but when we came back, there was a little more time for fun.

CG: Were there any programs for the veterans at the college? Guidance help, or where they came together?

CM: Yes, yes. The guidance department I don't know what they call it now, they offered testing, as to vocational testing as to what you were fit for.

CG: Were there programs offered for veterans to get together?

CM: No. Not that I recall.

CG: So you were still in the fraternity house when you went back?

CM: Yes, yes.

CG: Were you involved in any other campus organizations?

CM: I was in the history club, track, and that's about it.

CG: What was involved in the history club at that time, what would you do?

CM: Well, we would meet, and have speakers talk to us.

CG: And did you find a love for history at that point when you switched over?

CM: I've always been interested in history and I was ... still floundering around for a vocation. I thought that I'd like to teach history, and as it did fifty years later come to fruition.

CG: Yes. (laughs) You had mentioned in your survey that your favorite professor was Richard McCormick.

CM: Yes.

CG: Can you tell me anything about him. (laughs)

CM: Oh, I remember I got into a bruhaha with him one day. He had written a book called *Cockpit of the Revolution*, about the American Revolution. I think that he was involved in it or he edited it. And as you know, he was a New Jersey history buff. I wrote a paper saying, "In the revolution, there was a lot else going on besides New Jersey." He took me apart, and he did a very thorough job, but I remember him as a very dramatic teacher. He would say, "Hey, look out there. The British came under that tree, and they came through here and down College Avenue, and so on." It was very, very effective. In fact, when I teach my classes, I use a lot of his techniques.

CG: To keep the attention.

CM: Yes, yes. A lot of his techniques. He's still around. He's still flopping around.

CG: Really?

CM: Yes. He still is. In fact he was in the latest Rutgers alumni monthly as accepting an award for some guy who graduated in 1816. He's quite a man.

CG: And he taught history?

CM: Yes. He taught me a course in New Jersey history, and then another history course I took. He was very, very effective. And then there was another, John George, who was an economics professor, or political science, and he was as far left as you could possibly get. And he would teach, and he would give all his views, and he ran for Congress one time while I was there. He lost, and I remember him saying to a friend of mine who was sitting next to me, "Yes I lost, and Joe, I lost in your district. I lost by one vote." And he said, "Yes, but Prof, if I had could vote you'd have lost by two." (laughing) He was well remembered.

CG: I know Dean Metzger was someone who had a great deal of contact with the students. Did you ever have any dealings with him or any other deans?

CM: I remember Dean Crosby, Howard Crosby. I remember Robert Clothier was the president at the time.

CG: Did you ever have any dealings with any of the deans that were memorable?

CM: All I remember is that we were in a protest going down College Avenue over some minuscule thing involving football tickets. We're walking down, and Howard Crosby was trying to stop us. He had his hand out and somebody bit the finger. (laughs)  
Oh, now, that's all I remember. (laughs) But no I never had much to do with deans.

CG: (laughing) It sounds familiar because I remember reading something about a football game where they couldn't get everyone into the stadium, and there was a protest. I remember reading about it.

CM: This was a couple of days prior. It was a very idiotic, sophomoric thing to do, which only college students would be involved in.

CG: You were involved in the FWA project. Does that sound familiar? I thought I read that on your survey?

CM: No.

CG: Oh, okay. (laughs) You were saying that you were affected by the housing shortage on campus?

CM: Well, that's why I went into the DKE house.

CG: Were there a lot of friends of yours that did the same types of things, like get into a fraternity house when they weren't really a brother?

CM: A couple went in the Beta house.

CG: Did they usually pledge afterwards?

CM: Not necessarily, no. In fact, my roommate in the DKE house later pledged DU. Guys here became more friendly with the DU house.

CG: From reading the school newspapers, the *Targum*, reading through them, you can see how important football was to the students and college life. Did you usually go to all the football games?

CM: You bet! I loved them. I loved them. Such a pretty time of the year in New Jersey, October and early November. And I remember we beat Princeton in 1948.

CG: Everybody remembers that. (laughs)

CM: Yes.

CG: So, you would say that probably the most important things were the fraternity and football?

CM: Football wasn't that big a part of my life. I would say that fraternity life and school, yes. Football was something you did. You went to the game on weekends.

CG: Do you still keep up with football, with how Rutgers is doing?

CM: Oh.

CG: (laughs) Not too great?

CM: No. Well, you know it's a funny thing. We had an alumni meeting down here. They were trying to start an alumni chapter, and the fellow, the alumni secretary, was talking about "you know we've got this football team" and "you know we're recruiting this guy." And my interest was "well, what are our students' SATs. Yes, what are the SATs coming in?"

CG: Well everybody has their priorities right? (laughs) Oh, I also wanted to ask you. did you ever go to any of the dances?

CM: I think I went to one, we usually had dances at the fraternity house.

CG: Did NJC women ever come?

CM: Oh, yes. I was dating NJC women.

CG: I was always kind of curious, at that time, what the relationship between NJC women and the Rutgers men was?

CM: We dated, you know, a couple of guys married a girl.

CG: So you did date them?

CM: Oh, yes, quite. I was limited in funds, so my dating was pretty well restricted.

CG: Yes. (laughs) I do. I wanted to ask you some questions about when you met your wife.

CM: Okay.

CG: And how did that happen?

CM: I can give you the exact place, the National Newark and Essex building down on Broad Street in Newark. This was 1950, I was going to a Young Republicans of Essex County meeting. I was representing Bloomfield. I walked into the lobby to get an elevator and I saw this beautiful blond who wasn't quite sure where she was going. I said, "Can I help you?" She said, "Yes. I'm going to this Republicans meeting ... " I said, "I'm going there too. Come on." And that was it.

CG: What was the meeting for?

CM: Young Republicans of Essex County. We often kid that she's voted Democratic ever since. (laughs)

CG: And so then you were married a year later?

CM: No, this was in February of 1950. I was still going to graduate school, still working, and then I went to another meeting. I had seen her first in 1950 at a meeting. I thought she was the best looking girl I'd ever seen. And then we went to this meeting in March or April, and that's when I talked to her, and formally met her.

CG: So, you went to graduate school right after you finished your bachelor's degree?

CM: Yes. I finished my bachelor's degree in September and I started graduate school. It was late September and I started in October at graduate school.

CG: At NYU?

CM: Yes.

CG: I've always heard that it's a really tough school to get into?

CM: It was. Well, I don't know about getting in. They let me in. Like Groucho Marx said, "I wouldn't want to be in any club that let me in." But it was tough. It was a good school. One of my professors had good contacts internationally, and at that time the Dutch were getting kicked out of Indonesia. And we had that problem, he said, "Oh, don't worry." He'd get the ambassador from the United Nations from Indonesia and the one from France, or the Netherlands, and bring them in for class. So, we had good exposure.

CG: That's awesome. And when did you graduate from NYU?

CM: 1950. I did it in a year. I went to school Monday nights, Wednesday nights, Thursday nights, Friday nights, and Saturday mornings.

CG: Wow. (laughs) Did you work during that time?

CM: I worked during the day, and went to school at night.

CG: Oh, that must have been tough.

CM: Yes, it was. Well, it was tough, but I was living at home so I didn't have any rent to pay or anything like that.

CG: Right.

CM: It was tough. I lost fifteen pounds. I wish I could go back. (laughs) And then Sundays I would spend at the New York City library doing research on my papers.

CG: Right. And you said you wrote your thesis on the navy?

CM: Yes. I wrote it on the navy from 1880 to 1890. There was quite an authoritative piece that came out in the 1890's by Alfred Thayer Mahan, on the history of seapower. He was, and they gave him the credit as, the father of new navy. I was saying, "Hey, go back to 1880. We were trying to build a navy then and he just came along." That was my essential theme in my thesis.

CG: So you still have a passion for the navy?

CM: You bet.

CG: (laughs) Your wife graduated from high school in '44?

CM: Yes.

CG: Do you know how she became involved in the Cadet Nurse Corps?

CM: Yes, yes. She wound up there the same way I did. (laughs) She was recruited. She went to Fitken Hospital, which is now Jersey Shore Medical Center in Neptune, down near Asbury Park. They paid her fifteen dollars a month and paid her tuition. Then, she had to sign up for the duration. When she graduated, she had to enter either the army or the navy as a nurse.

CG: It was known that she was going to do some type of service for them?

CM: Yes.

CG: Afterwards?

CM: Yes, but of course the war was over in '47 so she didn't have to. Incidentally, can I go back to my high school days?

CG: Sure, yes.

CM: The casualty rate for my high school class was five percent. Five percent of them were killed in the war.

CG: Wow.

CM: Yes, and consider that we were about half boys and half girls. It's ten percent of the guys that were killed. But anyway, my wife went into nursing. In fact, we're going up next May.

They're closing down the school, the nursing school, and so all the alumni are going back for one last get-together.

CG: Did she always want to be a nurse?

CM: Yes, always. In fact, she's still working. She works for Baptist Saint Vincent's on what they call a PRN basis. When she's needed she goes in and works. They have a program, a service called Health Link, where if you're sick and you want to know what kind of doctor to go to, or what's wrong with you, she'll take those calls.

CG: Oh, I've heard of that.

CM: Yes, she loves it.

CG: Oh, that's great. (laughs) I don't know if you know this or not but do you think that patriotism might have affected her decision to enter the service?

CM: Oh, yes, sure, sure. Absolutely. Patriotism was uniform at that time. It was the thing to do when you still had feelings for your country, as I still do.

CG: There wasn't a lot of protest about what was happening. We were going to do it and that was all.

CM: No, there was no protest, very few protests.

CG: Was the hospital where she was trained, the one you said they were closing down, a civilian school or military?

CM: It was civilian school. Fitken, Ann May School of Nursing was attached to Fitken Hospital which later became Jersey Shore Medical Center. It's a large complex and now they're just shutting down the nursing school.

CG: Were military hospitals set up where they were trained?

CM: No, no.

CG: I read somewhere that married nurses were assured employment. In many other jobs, married women weren't always preferred especially if they had children. Do you know if that was the case for her?

CM: No, I can't say, Carmen, on that. I know if you got married they'd kick you out of the program. In fact, one of her classmates, who was at the head of the class, a straight A average, got married and had to resign in her senior year.

CG: So she was finished with her program by the time that you met her?

CM: Yes, she had been out and practicing for about three years.

CG: So there wasn't a problem with you getting married? (laughs)

CM: No, just get me out of graduate school. Let me get a job.

CG: (laughs) So you graduated as a history major?

CM: Yes.

CG: Yet, you went to work for Prudential?

CM: Yes. When I got out of graduate school, I applied to several colleges for teaching instructorship, and the best offer I could get was about forty-five dollars a week. And I thought, "I want to get married and I can't do that on that money." So I went down to Rutgers. (I always thank Rutgers for this.) They had a job placement for alumni. They said, "Prudential is looking for people." So I went up and took their test, and they offered me fifty dollars a week. So I took it.

CG: And what did you do ?

CM: I went into their Home Office Training program, where they put you from place to place. They gave you five different functions over the year, ten weeks a piece, and I ended up in their claims department, which I enjoyed very much.

CG: So you filed claims?

CM: No, I would approve them. Pay them. Investigate them. I later went out in the field as a claim manager to investigate and set up group claim programs for the various employers. Then I went into that group pension department, shortly thereafter that, and that's where I spent most of my career.

CG: Did you do certain types of insurance?

CM: We weren't involved in insurance at all, as far as claims are concerned. It was primarily group insurance. And then in pensions, I was setting up pension plans for companies. I didn't get into individual insurance at all. And then later on, it broke off and became Prudential Asset Management Company, and we managed assets of pension plans.

CG: I've been told that Prudential was a very paternalistic type of company? Did you get that feeling?

CM: Oh, yes. It was a great place; they took care of you. If you worked hard, and did a good job, you were assured of a job. You had to keep your nose clean and work hard. Now, it's not

that way. As at any company, it's not that way. I feel for people your age coming into the work force. It's tough.

CG: Is Prudential still the same?

CM: No.

CG: Well, you worked there for quite a while.

CM: Thirty-six years.

CG: Did you see a big change in the industry?

CM: I saw a big change in the industry as far as products, availability of products and services was concerned. That's the main change.

CG: You mean more availability?

CM: More availability and more services. For instance, when I started in the pension department we were merely setting up small plans or doing various types of annuity work. Then we got into, in the late 60s and early 70s in the straight investment of pension moneys. In other words, we'd go to large companies and say, "Look. We can manage a portion of your pension assets, and we can do this better compared to the other guy." That's where we were, and then they broke it off and it became Prudential Asset Management Company. It was a subsidiary.

CG: And that's why you were still working there?

CM: Yes.

CG: It seems from what I've read that Prudential was a huge asset to New Jersey and Newark.

CM: You bet. It still is.

CG: Did it seem like a huge portion of the population was of that area was employed by Prudential?

CM: Most of them. When I went to work for them, most of them came from Kearny and Arlington, and Irvington, and in that area, but not Newark itself.

CG: No?

CM: Not Newark itself.

CG: Why is that I wonder?

CM: I think it was availability of the type of person that you wanted to hire. I don't think there was any racial involvement at all. People would bring their kids, or their nephews, and it was just a family type thing. It fed on itself.

CG: What was the decision to change jobs after being there for thirty-six years?

CM: I retired. I retired twelve years ago. (laughing)

CG: (laughing) Well, but then you started teaching.

CM: Yes.

CG: How did that come about?

CM: Well, I'm quite active in the Navy League here. (laughs)

CG: Yes. (laughs)

CM: And one day, a recruiter from this program called "Program Afloat for College Education," dropped some leaflets off at the Navy League and said, "We need instructors to go aboard ship and teach classes, while the ship is at sea. The guys earn college credits, for those classes." So, I passed it to my wife, as we were at a Navy League dinner. She looked at it, "Hey, that looks pretty good." I said, "You don't mind me being gone for two months?" She said, "Wait a minute. Let me see that."

CG: When the navy asked you to start working for them on the ships, is that when you moved to Florida?

CM: No, I had been here in Florida for two years since I retired.

CG: What made you decide to move to Florida?

CM: We had lived here during my career with Prudential for many years off and on.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: I'd been in and out, in and out. We had a lot of friends here, and we loved it. We loved this area. It's the greatest spot.

CG: It's beautiful.

CM: Well, you know. You lived here.

CG: (laughs) Yes.

CM: About a year before I retired, we bought this house. I lived at the Jersey shore for a year in a condo, and then came down here.

CG: And that's when you got the opportunity with the navy?

CM: Yes, about two years after I'd been here.

CG: At the same time was that when you started at FCCJ.

CM: No, I did FCCJ and UNF between shots.

CG: Okay, while you were on shore. (laughs)

CM: (laughs) While I was on shore, yes. I found that when you go on board ship you teach five days a week and it's over in two months. Here when you're in semester at UNF, it goes on and on and on, and I didn't like that, so I just dropped that and went back to strictly navy teaching.

CG: I was kind of curious because you had written that you were an adjunct, so I didn't know... I guess I was kind of thinking that... I didn't know if that was a choice of yours, but it was a choice because you enjoyed being on the navy ships.

CM: Yes. I was hired for a semester, and then they would ask me to go again.

CG: And did you teach political science?

CM: History.

CG: I think that's a great opportunity that they gave to the men on the ships.

CM: Oh, yes. A lot of fellows have earned their degrees.

CG: Yes, aboard the ship.

CM: Yes, yes.

CG: Did they have all kinds of subjects and teachers there?

CM: Yes, if you have ten guys that want to take a course, and it's in the curriculum. For example, I work for Central Texas College, who is a navy contractor. If they can get together ten guys that want a class, and it's in the curriculum, they'll fly an instructor out. Usually, I'll teach four classes.

CG: That's great.

CM: Yes, it is. It really is. It's something that I'll never forget.

CG: You had said that your father had moved to Jacksonville? Did he move to Jacksonville to be closer to you?

CM: My father moved to Atlanta. We lived in Atlanta right after my mother died, and then he had a fall and became disabled, I think it was Alzheimer's, I'm not quite sure. But he had a stroke. I told him not to move to Atlanta because I was subject to transfer, and I had been transferred down here. So then he had the stroke, and then we brought him down to Jacksonville, where he died in a nursing home after a year.

CG: But he was close to you here?

CM: No, he stayed in Atlanta. He was living in a retirement community.

CG: So, how long do you think you'll keep this up?

CM: I think next year will be my last.

CG: Really?

CM: Yes. I've been doing it for nine years now.

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

CM: But on the smaller ships they're using computers now. They're using computer courses on the frigate-type ships where there's not a enough room for instructors to live.

CG: Really?

CM: Yes. They're using computer-type courses now.

CG: That's not the same, in terms of an education.

CM: No. Guys will tend to put off their lessons. There's not that day to day hammering with somebody looking after them.

CG: Right, right.

CM: It's interesting though. You're in bed at one o'clock in the morning and one of your students gets off watch and says, "Mr. Morton, I have a question for you." You go to the bathroom, and there's one of your students mopping the floor. He wants to talk about something.

CG: (laughing) You can't get away from them?

CM: I've had wonderful experiences. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

CG: Again, where did you say that you might be going?

CM: The ship is leaving in May or June from San Francisco, or rather San Diego, and it's going to Hawaii, Japan, Singapore, and the Persian Gulf. I will pick it up on one of those legs. The commander of the task force was my captain aboard one of those ships. He also happens to be the son of my tennis partner. I have it made.

CG: Did you ever feel like it was kind of risky? Being on board during the operations, like Desert Shield, and then in Bosnia?

CM: No. Those ships are so capable of taking care of themselves and I didn't feel at all in any type of physical danger.

CG: The ship that you were aboard during Desert Shield... what were they there to do?

CM: They were there to patrol the area between Cyprus and Lebanon, in the little narrows there. And if any shooting started, they would send missiles out. They did after I left them, out to Baghdad.

CG: Okay. What about during Bosnia?

CM: During Bosnia, that was on the *Barry*. We manned a blockade there and intercepted ships that were trying to run the blockade.

CG: How did you feel about our involvement in those two operations?

CM: We definitely should have been involved in Desert Shield. We should have been there to handle that, but on the Bosnian involvement I'm not too sure. I think that's an ongoing thing. It's going to keep on going. You've got these tribal factions in there that just will never settle. They've been fighting for a thousand years. They're going to fight for another thousand years. On Albania, I don't know. I don't know.

CG: I also wanted to ask you, I guess since there was so much controversy during Vietnam, what your thoughts about Vietnam were?

CM: Well, we were part of the South Eastern Asian Treaty Organization which was a flimsy type thing. Nothing compared to NATO. We didn't let South Vietnam hold elections to decide whether they wanted to unite or not. We stopped that right cold, and that was part of our policy of containment that had been going on through the Cold War. I think, I think we should have cut our losses and gotten out about two years before we did.

CG: As a World War II veteran, did you feel that it was a bad thing? That it was the opposite what you had done in the service?

CM: No, I strongly believed that at the time we went in, Carmen, that we should have gone in. But I thought that when the South Vietnamese were incapable of handling in the corrupt regime, we should have cut our losses and gotten out.

CG: Right.

CM: We should have been there, but we should have cut our losses and gotten out.

CG: Before?

CM: I think that we should have gotten out by '68, '69. I think Johnson didn't really want to continue that. He just didn't know how to get out of it. It was a sorry thing. It was our policy of containment that we were doing. We'd run containment successfully during the Cold War, but this was different. I'm sorry we got involved. My son was drafted and ...

CG: Oh, really?

CM: And that was when he was in college in ROTC, and he had draft number fourteen. That was pretty low, and they gave him a deferment because he was in ROTC. When the war was over, they said, "Okay, you don't have to go in if you don't want to." But he said, "No, I'm going in." So he spent twenty years in the army. He just retired.

CG: Do you think that that might have had something to do with you, and his feelings towards you because you had served?

CM: No, he was always gung ho.

CG: (laughing) Did he get his bachelor's degree?

CM: Yes. He went to Davidson, Davidson College. He got his bachelor's. Then he taught military science at North Georgia College, and he got his masters there.

CG: And then he went into the service?

CM: No, he was in the service. He taught military history.

CG: That's great. Do you belong to any veteran's organizations?

CM: No, I did belong to the American Legion for a while, but I lost interest.

CG: Yes. But you did belong to them?

CM: Yes I did it after I got out, when I was single.

CG: Yes. (laughs)

CM: I did.

CG: I wanted to ask you about is your children. You have three, right?

CM: Right.

CG: How important was it to you that your children get an education?

CM: Vital, it wasn't important. There was just no question about it.

CG: They were going to college?

CM: They were going to college period. I told them that I would pay for four years after they got out of high school. So that if they took a couple of years off, they'd get two years. If they took a year off, they'd get three years. Right out of high school, they'd get all four years. So, they all went.

CG: They all went right off after high school?

CM: Yes.

CG: And so Calvin Jr., he went into the the army.

CM: Yes, he graduated from Davidson, went in the army, and he's retired now.

CG: And Lee Ann, what does she do?

CM: Lee Ann went to Auburn, and now she's living here. She's divorced with two children.

CG: And she lives in Ponte Vedra?

CM: Right across the street, yes.

CG: Oh, really, (laughs) and what does she do for a living?

CM: She works for the bank right up the corner.

CG: And then the other is Carol Lynn. Is she the one who is in ...

CM: New Zealand.

CG: New Zealand. What does she do there?

CM: She married a New Zealander.

CG: Really?

CM: Yes. She went to the University of North Carolina, and he was up on a Rotary scholarship. They met and then became engaged.

CG: How did she get to Queen's College? How did she get involved in that? Was it just something that she wanted to do?

CM: In Britain? She was going for her masters, which she got there.

CG: But I mean to go overseas to go to college?

CM: Her husband was stationed in London as a correspondent for TV New Zealand.

CG: So she got her degree over there while he was stationed there?

CM: Yes. They're now back in Auckland, permanently.

CG: Oh, that's great, do you have any grandchildren?

CM: Eight.

CG: How many to each?

CM: Well, my son has twins, my daughter living here has two, two boys, and my daughter in New Zealand has twins, twin girls, plus another girl and a boy.

CG: That's great.

CM: In fact, those are the twins there.

CG: Oh, that's a beautiful picture. That's them?

CM: That's them.

CG: Oh, what is that book?

CM: It's an Anne Geddes, have you ever seen Anne Geddes?

CG: Yes.

CM: There they are.

CG: Oh, so she took the photograph of them?

CM: No, Anne Geddes did.

CG: That's what I mean.

CM: Yes. She wanted babies for this baby book. She saw the twins and ...

CG: That is just awesome.

CM: That's an enlargement there.

CG: Oh, I'll have to get this. I know someone in these pictures. I've always thought her pictures were great.

CM: I don't know whether they're in print. They're two years old now. They were only a couple of months there.

CG: Right. Oh, that's so interesting. (laughs)

CM: I've never seen them, so I'm anxious to see them.

CG: How did she meet them, or how did she get the babies to do the photographs?

CM: Anne Geddes is from New Zealand.

CG: Oh.

CM: She's from that area, Australia, New Zealand.

CG: That's awesome. (laughs) So your son, did he ever get called to service after the service?

CM: No. He spent twenty years in the army then retired.

CG: Oh, okay.

CM: He retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1995.

CG: Was he involved in Desert Shield?

CM: No, no. He was heavily involved in the Cold War in Germany, but there was no shooting there.

CG: Right.

CM: But outside of that, no. Thank God.

CG: Yes. So, how did you feel about Jacksonville getting a new football team? (laughs)

CM: Well I liked it.

CG: Are you as crazy as everybody else about it?

CM: I like to watch, I'm not that crazy about it. I think it's a good team, it's nice for the city, and I hope it continues.

CG: Right.

CM: I hope.

CG: I think it's good for the city.

CM: I hope. A lot of people that had those three-year tickets, when they had to buy those three-year tickets that are now not renewing.

CG: Oh, really.

CM: I know several people here who are not.

CG: So, is there anything else you think you might want to discuss?

CM: Oh, you've done a very good job, Carmen. I'm amazed at the number of questions you came up with. You went back far, and I thought about the Depression and my parents.

CG: I guess for that, that's more important for people of my generation who just don't know.

CM: Yes.

CG: You know.

CM: Yes. It was an interesting time. I'm glad I lived through it, but I wouldn't do it again.

CG: Right.

CM: I'm glad I had the opportunity to serve in World War II. I think that accounts for the difference in my generation than say your generation, or the one before yours, that got involved in Vietnam. My first contact with the government was the navy, and then you get its very gung ho, patriotic feeling. And then a lot of people their first contact with the government was Vietnam, and Vietnam was a different ball game.

CG: Right.

CM: So I can see the difference in that, in terms of generation to generation. I understand that.

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

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