RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD S. PASTERNAK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
MAY 12, 2009

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on May 12, 2009, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Donald S. Pasternak, who has come to us via Florida. I thank you so much for making time today to talk with me. Just for the record, Mr. Pasternak, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Donald S. Pasternak: Yes, I was born in New York City, actually in the Bronx, which I guess is part of New York City. [laughter] Sometimes, I wonder, and that was on April 17, 1933.

SH: All right. To begin, let us talk a little bit about your family background, starting with your father, his name, where he was from and his family's background.

DP: My father was also born in New York. He was one of ten children. One of his sisters died of tuberculosis in her twenties, so, there were nine children who grew to adulthood and had families of their own, and my father was one of three boys, the middle son, and then, he had six sisters.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue.

DP: All right. My father was a very frustrated man. He wanted to go into medicine, be a doctor, and his father insisted that he drop out of school in the ninth grade and go to work. They were of very meager means. They lived in a coldwater flat in Lower Manhattan, on the Lower East Side, and I think that he never got over the bitterness he felt at having to do that.

SH: Where was his family from? Were they immigrants? I wonder, because a lot of immigrants lived in that area.

DP: Well, not exactly. I tried to check at Ellis Island and there's no record of them, because they arrived in the United States from Budapest, Hungary, probably somewhere just after the [American] Civil War. So, … it's very difficult to trace just when they came in. However, my grandmother and grandfather were married in 1895 and my grandmother came to the United States as a young girl. My grandfather, I believe, was born here, and I only know that because I saw an invitation for their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, dated 1920. My father was born in 1906 and I believe that, … after 1895, my grandmother just produced a child every year. [laughter]

SH: She was a busy woman.

DP: She was a very busy woman. I think somebody asked her, one time, why she had so many children and she responded, "Well, I don't know. It just seemed to happen every year." [laughter]

SH: Do you know what your grandfather did for a living?

DP: Yes, he manufactured men's vests, of all things, and in some place in Manhattan, and I assume that my father went to work for them, or for him. … Then, they moved to the Bronx and that's where my father met my mother, while the family was living in the Bronx, which, at that time, was not nearly the decrepit borough that it currently is. [laughter]

SH: Can you tell me about your mother's background?

DP: My mother, a very interesting woman, her father had married her mother, I'm not sure just when, but she was born in 1910 and her mother died shortly after she was born. … I'm not sure under what circumstances, whether it was from childbirth or something else, but my grandfather remarried and the woman he remarried was not interested in childrearing. So, my grandfather, who was a man of means, put my mother in an orphanage, somewhere around Pleasantville, New York, in Westchester County, and she stayed in that orphanage until she was sixteen years old, when my grandfather's cousin went and retrieved her and brought her to the Bronx to live with her, and her husband and her son. So, my mother did not have an easy life and, when she finally screwed up enough courage to go and see her father, he was not at home. He spent most of his days at his stockbroker [business]. He owned real estate in Manhattan, several apartment houses, and so, when she went to the residence, his wife opened the door, saw my mother standing there. Now, my mother was a beautiful redhead and, evidently, her mother had been so as well. So, she took one look at my mother and said, "You must be Joe's kid." That was the kind greeting she received. She tried to establish a relationship with her father. … I know that when my parents were married, he gave her a sumptuous wedding, trying to make up for the egregious act that he had performed, [laughter] and, as a result, my mother really didn't know how to keep a house, how to cook. None of these things were ingrained in her, because she was growing up in this orphanage. So, as a result, she was a bad cook, she was terrible, and she had no imagination when it came to food. So, it was during the [Great] Depression when I was born, and my father had just lost his job and, though we always struggled financially, we never wanted from a roof over our head or food on the table, but it was very limited fare. … It wasn't until I got into the Navy [that] I found out something about other foods that are available to people, I mean. [laughter]

SH: Did your mother and father ever talk about how they met in the Bronx?

DP: I knew how they met only indirectly, because they didn't like to talk about their background. I didn't know about the story about my mother until I was an adult, married with two children of my own, when I found out the truth about my grandfather, and then, I refused to speak to him up until the day he died. They met because my mother became very friendly with my father's sister, also named Evelyn. They're both named Evelyn. … That's how they met and they were married in 1930.

SH: When you found out about your mother, did she talk about what the orphanage experience had been like?

DP: Never, never would discuss it, with me or my sister. I have a younger sister. They did not like to talk about their past. It was a big mystery. When I started writing my book, I had a great deal of difficulty in coming up with the facts of my family's life, and I spoke to older cousins

who were still around, all my aunts and uncles had long since died, and I didn't come up with a lot of information.

SH: Did your mother's father have extended family, or the mother who had died?

DP: No, they never had children. He never had a child with his second wife and he had a small family of cousins, one of whom was the woman who brought my mother out of the orphanage.

SH: Okay, that was what I had wondered.

DP: Yes.

SH: Did your mother talk at all about how his cousin treated her?

DP: Only that she was happy there, that her son became like a brother to her, … but, unfortunately, he died of a heart attack when he was, like, forty. So, she really didn't have any family, because her father was really not a father to her.

SH: Was her education basically limited to the orphanage?

DP: No. … She finished high school in the Bronx. She became a secretary, and a very good one. She could type over a hundred words a minute and take shorthand and she worked for the Woolworth Company, in the Woolworth Building in Lower Manhattan, which, at that time, was the tallest building in the world, and it's a beautiful building, if you've ever been there. [Editor's Note: The F.W. Woolworth Company operated a chain of five-and-dime stores in the United States.]

SH: It is. I have not been inside.

DP: It's Art Deco. I had an opportunity, many years later, to do some business with the Woolworth Company, when they were developing Woolco Discount Department Stores, [a division of the Woolworth Company which operated discount department stores beginning in 1962]. … I met with their architectural department in that building and it was breathtaking. Even the elevators were gorgeous. It was so beautifully decorated and it was an extraordinary building. If you're just down in … Lower Manhattan, just go into that building. It's worth it.

SH: I will take your recommendation and visit it. That is wonderful.

DP: Okay.

SH: To focus on your childhood, can you talk about some of your earlier memories?

DP: Yes. My memories were that my family moved out of New York, due to necessity, because my father had lost his job, and we ended up in Plainfield, New Jersey, when I was three, and we lived in an apartment house. It was like a "railroad" flat. There were two bedrooms, [one of which] my sister and I shared, an eat-in kitchen, no laundry facilities. My mother washed on a

washboard. … We were on the first floor and she had a clothesline, she hung her clothes out, and we lived a very quiet existence. … Going out to dinner was unheard of; we couldn't afford to do that. My father worked six days a week, my mother worked as a secretary … for the Plainfield Police Department, and so, when I would come home from school, I would be on my own, pretty much.

SH: What job was your father able to find then?

DP: He ended up … as the manager of the shoe department of Rosenbaum's Department Store. He had gotten a job with Miles Shoes. [Editor's Note: Miles Shoes was a shoe company that operated on the East Coast and peaked in popularity during World War II.] His brother-in-law had been a national sales manager of a children's shoe company and my father was their Eastern district sales manager. … When the Depression came, he lost his job, but he knew the shoe business and he ended up in Plainfield, managing, first, the Miles Shoe Store and, finally, at the department store, but they didn't pay him very much and he worked long hours, and he was kind of beaten down by life. I can even recall, at their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, my sister and I gave them a party, and they were old. I mean, they were only in their forties, but they were old, very different from my experience.

SH: You talked about the sumptuous wedding that your grandfather gave for your mother.

DP: Yes.

SH: Was that something that your mother talked about?

DP: Never. I only found out about it indirectly. They didn't tell me anything.

SH: Okay, I was just curious.

DP: I took my father on a business trip, after my mother died and he was not well, and he had never traveled much around the [nation], anywhere. They had taken one vacation to Hawaii, but, otherwise, he had seen very little of the United States and never been anywhere. … I took an extended business trip that started in New Jersey; the most westerly point was South Dakota. We stopped in Chicago. My son was a student at Northwestern University. We visited him. We were in Iowa. He [his father] saw the Mississippi for the first time. We were in Milwaukee, we were in Toledo, Ohio, and Cleveland, and he saw a lot of the country he had never seen before. … I thought this would be an opportunity to ask him some facts about his younger life; didn't want to talk about it. He did tell me that his brothers and he and his father, every Saturday night, would go to the baths and they would spend the night there. They would take a [bath], they would clean themselves up and they would eat there and they would sleep there, … but he never mentioned what my grandmother and her six daughters did, and this bothered the hell out of me. If the men [laughter] were getting a bath every Saturday night, what were the poor women doing? So, finally, one of my older cousins, who's living in Santa Rosa, California, told me he was aware that the women would bathe in a tub. They would heat water in the apartment and that's how they maintained some kind of sanitation, and the apartment had no plumbing facilities, so, there was an outhouse. It was not an easy life. [laughter]

SH: What a great story, though.

DP: Yes, interesting.

SH: How much younger is your sister than you?

DP: She's three-and-a-half … years younger than I, and my mother was very disappointed when I was a boy. She only wanted a daughter.

SH: Really? [laughter]

DP: And the only reason they had another child was because I was a boy, [laughter] and she didn't really want a boy and she didn't know what to do with me, and that never changed over all our relationship, through all these years. [laughter] My sister was the apple of her eye. They were so close. It was beautiful to watch, and even though I knew that I was a fifth wheel, it really didn't bother me. [laughter] They were happy and I had to find my own way, which I did.

SH: You talked about coming home from school and being pretty much on your own. Was that from the very beginning, first grade on?

DP: Yes, pretty much. …

SH: What was your sister doing during the day, if she was three-and-a-half years younger?

DP: Right. She had pretty much the same experiences I did, and she got into her share of trouble. [laughter]

SH: That is good.

DP: Yes, although I would always get blamed for it, because my sister was perfect [laughter] in every way and [they felt], "I was older," and, "I should know better." So, anyway, it always came down on me, … even when she pulled a fire alarm and created all kinds of havoc, because the fire engine had an accident on the way to the non-existent fire, and, immediately, they blamed me for it, naturally. [laughter] … Even though I protested my innocence, it fell on deaf ears until my sister confessed.

SH: She did confess.

DP: Finally, she got me off the hook, yes.

SH: Thank heavens for it.

DP: It was embarrassing, because my father was a volunteer fireman during the war. He was too old for the draft, so, he would go down to the firehouse and spend nights there and go to

fires, and I would get on the fire truck during the Fourth of July parade, which was very exciting for me.

SH: I bet, I bet.

DP: Yes, that was very, very exciting.

SH: Can you talk a little bit about the activities that you were involved in, or some that your family participated in? You talked about the volunteer fire department.

DP: … Yes, well, my parents both worked. I loved sports and I played baseball every place, every lot, that I could and I spent all my free time, when the weather was warm, in [playing baseball].

SH: You stayed in Plainfield.

DP: Yes, that's right, and the big social event was, once a month, my father's family would all meet at my grandmother's, … apartment, in the Bronx, and she was actually living with her youngest daughter. … We would go up there one Sunday every month, and, of course, it was chaos. We had this two-bedroom apartment and nine children and their spouses and their children all descend on this one apartment. … They were always fighting and there was a lot of dissension, because my father and his offspring, or his siblings, were supporting my grandmother and grandfather. … So, the question was, "How much could each of them afford?" and it was always this going on, back and forth, but I have very fond memories of it, because the food was great. My grandmother was a great cook. I wish my mother had learned something from her [laughter] and the smells emanating from the apartment were wonderful and she had, in the kitchen, bottles up on the wall, like dispensers, with all different colored fluids, green, blue, red, black, and they were all to be used as syrups to make your own sodas. She had these seltzer bottles and you would take a seltzer bottle, you'd fill up a glass, I always liked red, make your own soda. I thought that was the greatest thing since sliced bread. I loved it, [laughter] and then, we would get in the car and we would drive back to New Jersey, and it was a long ride. … They were way up in the northeast section of the Bronx and it would take two hours each way and … my sister and I would get in the back of the car under a blanket, because the heater never worked. … We would listen to Jack Benny and all these wonderful programs on the radio in the car and our social life was basically that one Sunday a month up in the Bronx.

SH: Were you involved with the synagogue at all? Were you practicing?

DP: Well, my parents were not religious at all. I mean, we were [Jewish], we knew that we were Jewish, but, for some reason, maybe pressure from the family, they decided that I should have a Jewish education and be *bar mitzvah*-ed. Well, they enrolled me in a Plainfield Hebrew institute, which was a rickety, old building in the poor end of town, and most of the poor Jewish kids went there and it was very arduous. They picked you up at school at three o'clock, in a station wagon that had fumes in it. At four o'clock, when you arrived, you were sick from the fumes. Then, you had two hours of classes, and then, another hour ride in that damned thing. It was murder, Monday through Thursday.

SH: My word.

DP: And then, Saturday, I'd have to walk to the synagogue, which was, like, three miles, couldn't ride or anything, there was nothing to ride on anyway, [laughter] and go to these interminable services and I hated it, and the teachers used a lot of physical violence on the students. They would whack you pretty good. You know, they had these pointers and they'd point to the Hebrew letters on the wall and, if you weren't paying attention, they'd whack you, and I hated it. … There's this one woman, Mrs. Katz, I hated her with a passion, and so, in the second year, I started drawing pictures of her and she caught one of my pictures, which was not very flattering, and she grabbed me by the ear, pulled me out of my chair, dragged me into the principal's office, said, "Look what this little wretch has drawn." Because there should be no mistake, I had written "Mrs. Katz" underneath the picture. [laughter] So, they didn't see any humor in any of this and I was expelled. So, I said, "Okay, that's all right with me." So, I got home that night and I told my folks that I wouldn't be going back there anymore, they had expelled me, and I really didn't get any reaction. They took the news very quietly and I, very happily, after school, went and played and did all these good things. Two weeks later, my father announced at dinner that they had agreed to take me back, conditionally, like a probationary period, and I said, and I don't know how I screwed up the courage to say this, but I said, "I don't care what you do to me, I will never step foot in that place again." I didn't know what was going to happen. Well, nothing happened and I kept playing after school. [laughter] Two weeks later, my father came home and said, "I have enrolled you in the Reformed temple. You only have to go Tuesdays and Thursdays, you have to go to Sunday school and they don't use corporal punishment." So, I said, "I'll give it a shot." [laughter]

SH: Nice compromise.

DP: Yes. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay. How was the Reformed temple Hebrew school?

DP: It was interesting, because I was now going to Hebrew school with children of affluent families, who were merchants, physicians, lawyers, and so forth. So, whereas I was associating with all the poor kids, recent kids of immigration to [the United States], I saw a different lifestyle that I was not used to and it was very enlightening and I liked it, as much as I could like it. [laughter] … In 1946, I was *bar mitzvah*-[ed] and the rabbi decided to retire, and I always thought that I had something to do with that, and his replacement *bar mitzvah*-ed my oldest son, and then, he retired, and I really think there's something going on there. [laughter] We had a very negative force in that temple, but, in any event, in 1946, in May, I was *bar mitzvah*-[ed], and then, my father announced that we were moving, that he and another merchant in town had decided to open a shoe store; wasn't exactly a shoe store. They were going to take a concession in a new department store in Long Branch, New Jersey, down the [Jersey] Shore, and he announced that we were going to move down the Shore, and then, move we did. … So, Thanksgiving that year, we moved to Long Branch and it was a whole learning experience for

me, meeting new kids. It's kind of scary when you move in the eighth grade, yes, but I enjoyed my years there. I met wonderful friends and loved the seashore and enjoyed my years [there]. My father, however, did not have a successful business and he had to go out of business the year I was graduating high school. So, financial conditions being what they were, any thought of college for me was out of the question, and my father wasn't really very supportive in my going to college, either. I think it was some of the resentment he held for not being able to further his education. So, I was faced with a dilemma as to what I should do and the Korean War had started and I decided that, if I went into service, I'd be able to get the GI Bill and get on to college.

SH: Where had you learned about the GI Bill? Was it something you learned about prior to graduation?

DP: … Yes, well, you know, the GI Bill in World War II, or after it, had really transformed the country. It may be the single largest influence on American society, in my opinion. It was a remarkable, forward-looking step. … Although I was never crazy about the American Legion, I learned that they were very instrumental in getting this through Congress, which always changed my thoughts about the American Legion, although I never joined a veterans' organization, and, with a war going on, I was quite certain, from reading and knowing what the mood of the Congress was, that they would reinstate the GI Bill. So, my father suggested, I said, "I want to join the Air Force," and he said, "No, flying's dangerous. Join the Navy." So, I wanted to please him. I joined the Navy, and then, I applied for Naval Aviation. [laughter]

SH: Before we get to that, I would like to back up and ask you a few more questions about your growing up years.

DP: Yes, sure.

SH: First of all, in Plainfield, you talked about your father being a volunteer fireman and your mother working for the police department.

DP: Right.

SH: Were they politically active at all?

DP: Yes. My father was a Democratic committeeman in Plainfield during that time. My mother worked as a volunteer at Camp Kilmer during the war, at the USO there, and, yes, they were very social-minded people.

SH: Do you remember when the news came out about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

DP: Oh, I remember it very well.

SH: Because you were at that age.

DP: That's right. It was 1941 and I was eight years old and I remember it very distinctly, hearing the broadcast, as I can remember distinctly hearing the news of FDR's death. …

SH: Do you?

DP: Oh, yes.

SH: What was the reaction within your school, your friends or the community to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

DP: Well, we knew something terrible had happened. Even as an eight-year-old, I understood that, you know. We were aware of what was going on in Europe, in the war there, and, now, we were in it up to our eyeballs and we had had a devastating defeat at Pearl Harbor and it was going to be a long, hard climb out of that hole, … but there was very fervent patriotism. I can't recall another time [like that], except maybe, you know, when I enlisted in the service, part of it was out of patriotism. I loved my country.

SH: That was what I wanted to see, if that was part of it.

DP: Yes.

SH: As a young man in school, do you remember the war bond drives?

DP: Oh, I knitted.

SH: Did you really?

DP: Yes, everybody had to learn to knit and we'd knit these squares that were sewed together for blankets and I would even take the knitting home. … I collected scrap iron. I never had any money and you could turn stuff in and get a few bucks, and I was always looking for scrap iron, anything that was recyclable. You could take the fat from the kitchen and turn that in, and my mother used to save the drippings from whatever she cooked and we'd turn that in, everyone. … I couldn't buy savings bonds, so, I bought savings stamps with that, and I'd get enough so that I could turn it in for a bond. Everybody was doing that.

SH: Was it part of a current events assignment or a part of the curriculum to talk about how the war was going?

DP: No, but we had air raid drills.

SH: Did you?

DP: And we would get in the hall and huddle for a period of time. So, we knew that this was for real, very [much so]. I remember that vividly, and there were air raid wardens, and, when the sirens went out, you had to get into your apartment and, at night, all shades were drawn, so [that] no lights could be seen. We painted half of the lights on our cars, which made driving at night

very difficult, [laughter] and everybody was completely taken up with the war effort, [in] every way.

SH: Did you have a Victory garden? Was that possible?

DP: We did. It was a community [garden]. There were two apartment houses and there was a vacant lot next to it, and the men developed it and I would work in the garden. … We grew a lot of our own fruits and vegetables, absolutely. There wasn't anything that wasn't touched.

SH: Was there any activity that you remember your father being involved in? You spoke about your mother being involved in the USO.

DP: Yes. Well, he was at the firehouse often, because firemen of age were all in the service, and so, they needed older men to cover for them. So, he spent quite a bit of time there.

SH: Did he talk about how that impacted his business, because shoes were rationed?

DP: Yes, they were rationed. That's correct. It didn't seem to affect business in any way that I could tell. He wasn't making much money, and he never did. [laughter] So, that never changed. We continued to live a very, very quiet existence, although I would get maps. … All the news with the battles that were going on in Europe, … on the Russian Front, I would have maps and I would be drawing all of the [battle lines].

SH: Really?

DP: Yes, and my cousin, who was in one of those photographs, was in Mark Clark's army in Italy, 1943, and I started writing to him, … because I figured he didn't know what was going on. [Editor's Note: General Mark Clark commanded the US Fifth Army in Italy.] I'd give him the standings of the National and American Leagues. [laughter] What did I know? He probably knew them better than I did. … I would decorate the envelopes for this V-mail [Victory mail] and I would show American planes shooting down German planes [laughter] and the FBI thought it might be some kind of a code. So, they came to visit us, to see what this was all about, see if there was a subversive at our house sending codes to Italy, but, when they found out that it was just an eleven-year-old trying to help the war effort, they didn't pursue it any further, but it was funny. The FBI actually did come and check me out.

SH: That is a great story, thank you. I am so glad I asked.

DP: Yes, yes.

SH: Are there others, before I ask about the death of Franklin Roosevelt, any reactions?

DP: Oh, the reaction was devastating. I was listening to the radio. It was April 12th, I remember it very well, 1945, and it was a cold day and I wasn't out playing. I was listening to my serials, you know, the children's serials, *Tom Mix* [*Ralston Straight Shooters*] and *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy* and *Hop Harrigan* and all these silly programs that I would

listen to. … They broke in, it was maybe four-thirty in the afternoon, five o'clock, I'm not sure, to say that all regular broadcasting would cease because the President has died, and I ran out into the street and there were some people, neighbors, and I said, "The President's died. The President," and they said, "Shut up, kid, what do you know?" and I was aghast that they wouldn't believe me. … I kept screaming, "The President's dead. The President's dead," and then, when my father walked home from work, I ran to him to tell him and, of course, by that time, everybody knew and it was devastating news. It really was.

SH: Was there any commemoration at school, that you remember?

DP: No, I can't recall anything. I remember that my teacher was a Republican, an arch Republican, and she kind of was happy that he died. [laughter] Really, I mean, it's true. I can recall Mrs. Pilger and … I can recall the posters for Thomas Dewey, in 1944, against FDR.

SH: In the classroom?

DP: Yes, and her husband was a sales manager for Hires Root Beer and she had all these Hire's posters, different things, and she was distraught when FDR was reelected in '44 and she was very happy when he died. Well, you'd be surprised, a lot of people were.

SH: Were there any discussions in your family about their confidence, or lack thereof, in the new President, Harry Truman?

DP: … I never was able to discuss that. Events moved so rapidly, and then, the atomic bomb was dropped and that, I couldn't even understand what it was, but things … were moving so rapidly and it seemed like Truman really had control of the situation.

SH: Yes, because, a month later, the War in Europe ends.

DP: Yes, that ends in May.

SH: Was that something that was discussed in school at all?

DP: No, but there was a lot of celebrating.

SH: Was there?

DP: But, of course, as … the news of the Holocaust came through, and so many people that I knew in the Jewish community had families over there that were wiped out, it was very sobering, because the ghastliness of it became apparent, because, during the war, you just didn't hear about that.

SH: That was what I wanted to ask. Was this something that was known?

DP: No, this was a secret.

SH: You did not find out until the war ended.

DP: That's right. It wasn't until after the war and Eisenhower released all the photographs and the reports that we realized the immense disaster that had occurred. …

SH: Did you have any extended family in Europe that you were aware of?

DP: No. They were all gone.

SH: Did you ever experience any anti-Semitism as a young boy?

DP: Oh, tremendous. I was in fights all the time, [had] rocks thrown at me.

SH: In Plainfield?

DP: In Plainfield, oh, yes. … The German-American *Bund* used to light fires up on the hills over in Watchung and we could see the fires from there and I had to fight for my life. … I was in a school with only a few Jewish kids and I was small and I was always fighting. [Editor's Note: The German-American *Bund* was an organization of German-American citizens that supported Nazi ideals prior to World War II.]

SH: What was the name of the school that you went to?

DP: I started in Bryant School and they closed that and built a new school, Barlow School, and then, that only went up to the sixth grade, and then, seventh and eighth, I was in Emerson. Emerson was on the east end of town, mostly Italians living there, a few black people, but mostly Italians. … Really, I had a tough time. I went to High Holy services in Plainfield and rocks came crashing through the window. … I was fighting for my life all the time. [laughter] It was very hard.

SH: Did you belong to any organizations, like Boy Scouts, or anything like that?

DP: Yes, I was a Boy Scout. I was a Cub Scout, and then, a Boy Scout, but, again, I joined the Boy Scout troop in the Jewish community center, and, when you had a "2" on your arm, for Troop 2, they knew you were Jewish, and we were fighting all the time. There was a Methodist church across the street and they had a Boy Scout troop there and we were in snowball fights with them and fights, rock throwing. It was a rough time. [laughter] I was walking home from school with a neighbor girl, [who] was a year older than I. She got hit in the forehead with a rock and I was throwing the rocks back at the kids, and I had fistfights. I had just all kinds of things going on, all the time.

SH: In the apartment building where you lived, was there any problem there?

DP: No. There were a lot of Jewish people in the apartment, but, in the surrounding streets and such, there was a lot of anti-Semitism. It was very rampant. …

SH: Emerson, you said, was an integrated school.

DP: Yes. There was … never segregated schools in Plainfield, and I had some good friends who were black, who went to school with me. One of them was Tom Campbell, Tommy Campbell, … ended up playing football at the University of Indiana. His brother, Milton, ended up winning the gold medal at the Olympics, in the decathlon. He was a hell of a nice guy. We were good friends, and then, Louie Molnar was the toughest kid in school. He was Hungarian. … Louie, for some reason, didn't like everybody trying to beat me up, [laughter] and he was a tough guy, so, he said, "Leave that kid alone." … I was a good athlete, and we'd go out in the yard and play ball and they would never let me play. So, Louie said, "Let the kid play," and I'd get up there and hit the ball. So, Louie was my champion. … Many years later, I went to Merrill Radio in Plainfield, to get my car radio fixed, and there's Louie Molnar working there, as a technician, and, now, I was as tall and heavy as he, because he stopped growing and I continued, and I warmly embraced him.

SH: That is great. That is a great story, thank you.

DP: Yes. [laughter]

SH: When you went to Long Branch, you talked about how difficult that was, to make that move as a young teenager. Did you get involved in things there?

DP: Yes, I did. In fact, it was a wonderful experience. When I was in the eighth grade, they had a drama club, and I wasn't particularly interested in drama, but the drama club consisted of twelve girls, not a boy in the thing. [laughter] I said, "You know, that's the kind of club I'm interested in," because I was girl crazy. So, I joined the drama club. My buddies said, "What are you doing that for?" I said, "I got my reasons." So, we go to the drama club. All of a sudden, the teacher says, "Next Wednesday, we're going into New York, to see a show." "Okay." So, 1947, we, the twelve girls and I and the teacher, get on the bus to New York and we get there, we go out to lunch at Toffinetti's, which is no longer there, and we walk over to the Majestic Theater. … We're in the last row of the second balcony, and that's a big theater.

SH: It is.

DP: And we see John Raitt and Jan Clayton in; what's the show? Rodgers and Hammerstein, *Carousel*. … I sat up there in the balcony, crying like a baby, terribly moved by this experience, and I was hooked. The theater became a love of mine and we continued to go to the theater frequently. I saw Katharine Hepburn on Broadway, in *As You Like It*. I saw so many shows and I just became an advocate of the theater, which has stayed with me all my life.

SH: Wonderful. Did this theater group that you belonged to in Long Branch go to New York again?

DP: Yes, we continued to go once a month, into New York, to see a show. It was fantastic. I loved it, and then, there was another club, and I experienced ballet, which has been a lifelong love of mine. Now that I'm not living here [New Jersey] anymore, I subscribe to the Miami City

Ballet, which is a wonderful company, run by Edward Villella, who was such a great star. … I saw dance so often in New York and … I was exposed to opera and classical music, and these have all become great loves of my life. I teach an opera course in Florida now.

SH: Do you really?

DP: Yes, for my community. I present an opera every Wednesday night. I give a talk to explain it, and then, we have a DVD, in our clubhouse, and we show an opera every Wednesday night.

SH: I need to join your class. [laughter]

DP: I'd love to have you, just come on down.

SH: Before we start talking in depth about Long Branch, I wanted to ask you about the end of the war. What was the celebration like in Plainfield?

DP: Well, I can't really answer that, because my parents decided to spend a couple of bucks and sent me to Boy Scout camp in Glen Gardner, New Jersey. … It was a horrible experience, because I had this "2" on my arm and guys kept wanting to beat me up, because I had a "2" on my arm. [laughter] So, they moved me out of the village where Troop 2 was and they put me in a different village where there were no Jews. … I lived in a tent with this other kid and we became fast friends, because he didn't know I was Jewish, and then, when he found out … and his father came to pick him up that Sunday, he said, "Dad, what you told me about Jews is all wrong. Don's a Jew. He's a nice guy." His father said, "Don't you ever talk to him again." That was the attitude, but it was that week that Japan surrendered. So, the camp director called everybody out and said, "The war is over. Go back to your bunk." So, I never experienced the jubilation of the end of the war. I missed out. [laughter] I was really annoyed, too. I imagine it was quite a celebration.

SH: You talked about the GI Bill. Did you see a lot of people coming back from World War II and taking advantage of the GI Bill?

DP: Oh, absolutely. I knew many people who had come back, were in college, had graduated from college, all as a result of the GI Bill.

SH: Did your cousin take advantage of that?

DP: Yes, as a matter-of-fact, several of my cousins went to college as a result of that, who would never have gone otherwise, yes.

SH: That too must have had some impact on you recognizing the benefits of the GI Bill.

DP: I didn't need any support for that. I had very clear ideas on what I wanted to do with my life, and it included higher education. … I didn't care what I had to do. By hook or by crook, I was going to get there. So, I took advanced courses with USAFI, Armed Force Institute, I took

college courses while I was in the Navy. I went through the library on the base and I read everything that wasn't nailed down, and I was educating myself.

SH: When you were in high school in Long Branch, were there any mentors that you remember?

DP: Yes, with Mrs. Goldstein. [laughter] She was also my advisor and she pulled me into her office, when I was a junior, and she said, "I don't know what I'm going to do with you." I said, "What?" She said, "We just got your scores back, you know, and you're in the ninety-ninth percentile and you're a low 'B' student. I said, 'What the hell are you doing?'" I said, "Well, I'm more interested in girls and sports than school." She said, "Well, it's time to change. I want you on the honor roll, and you'd better get to work." So, I did and I ended up in the honor society and in the honor roll. … I did just what she told me to do.

SH: Did your sister make that move to Long Branch?

DP: Yes, and I resented the fact that my parents discouraged her from taking a college prep course. They insisted she take a secretarial course, and that infuriated me. … She would do anything my parents said, and so, she never went to college, and it upset me enormously.

SH: You talked about being involved in sports. Were you on the sports teams in Long Branch?

DP: Yes, I was on the baseball team. …

SH: Did you have afterschool jobs?

DP: Oh, sure, I needed it.

SH: What did you do?

DP: I worked in the shoe store for my father, sold shoes, Thursday nights and Saturdays, but I never had any money. So, I was in an auto accident. We're coming back from a football game. I was on a truck. It tipped over. I broke my jaw. I was in the hospital. So, I had to get all kinds of reconstructive surgery, and my father said, "We can't pay for this, so, I'm going to take the eleven dollars a week that I pay you for working in the store and I'm going to pay it to the dentist for the next two years." So, I didn't have any money. [laughter] So, I had to resort to whatever I could, and Long Branch had a West End [neighborhood], where well-to-do people vacationed over the summer, and they had some very exclusive swim clubs there. … So, my buddies would sneak me in and we would have gin rummy and poker games in the cabanas, and I would win enough money, playing cards, to support myself. [laughter] That's how I did it. You know, you've got to do what you've got to do.

SH: It was fun, right?

DP: It wasn't fun; it was work.

SH: Was it?

DP: Oh, yes. I will never play cards for money, although I'm a very good card player, because, then, it's work. I will not do it. … In Florida, we have a rummy game every afternoon at the pool. The loser gets to wear a hat with an "L" on it; no money's exchanged. I will not gamble. I love to go to the races. I'll bet on the horses, because, then, … that's a different animal, but I won't play cards for money. [laughter]

SH: What else did you do in Long Branch over the summers?

DP: I worked.

SH: You worked for your dad. Would you have to work more than just Thursday and Saturday?

DP: Oh, no, I worked full-time. One summer, I worked in the department store's fur vault, and that was an adventure, because it was freezing cold in there and you had to climb up on these racks and bring these fur coats down. So, you had to learn to tell fur by feel, because you couldn't see up there. It was dark.

SH: Oh, my.

DP: And I swung around like a monkey on these bars, retrieving fur coats or putting them up there, did that for a whole summer. I did whatever I had to do. You know, you just do what you got to do. [laughter]

SH: What was the name of the department store?

DP: Vogel's Department Store, no longer there.

SH: You said you were girl crazy.

DP: Oh, God, yes.

SH: In the West End that you talked about, were there many girls there?

DP: Yes, there were girls there and I was chasing them as best I could. Yes, that was a passion of mine, chasing girls. I never quite got over it. [laughter]

SH: Could you tell me about your favorite subjects in school?

DP: I was good at everything, really. I was an excellent math student. I loved English. I loved to write. There was nothing I didn't like.

SH: Did anyone suggest that you take the exam for the State Scholarship?

DP: No. The assistant principal, a guy by the name of Melvin Rawn, had gone to Colgate and he wanted me to go to Colgate. … When the various schools came to college night, or whatever

you want to call it, he made sure that I sat down with the Colgate people, and I really wanted to go to Colgate, and I sat down with the Rutgers people, too. My father said, "Forget this stuff. Come on, this is a pipe dream," but, yes, I sat down with Colgate and with Rutgers that night.

SH: Before you graduated from high school, you were already planning on joining the military.

DP: Yes.

SH: How did you find out that the Korean War had broken out? What grade were you in?

DP: I'm a junior in high school.

SH: Just finishing your junior year, right?

DP: Yes. Well, you just had to read the newspapers and … watch TV and listen to the radio. We were in a war again. …

SH: Did you have television at that point?

DP: My father, … our first television set, we got in 1950, when I was a junior. I was spellbound by it.

SH: Were you?

DP: Yes. Everybody had a TV but me, [laughter] and, all of a sudden, we had a TV, because the guy next-door had an appliance store and they did some kind of swap. I don't know how many shoes he got or whatever it was, but we ended up with this Motorola sixteen-inch, black-and-white television, and that was really something.

SH: You talked about your love for opera and the theater, but were there places for you to perform?

DP: … I acted, yes. I was in several amateur productions. I was in *My Sister Eileen* and I was one of the Portuguese sailors and I did whatever I could, but I was interested in the theater. I had a good singing voice, I loved to sing, and I pursued all of that. I sang in school and I was always very interested in that and I became fascinated with classical music and became a student of it, really, and, by the time I got to Rutgers, I could really go to music classes here and really enjoyed them. …

SH: What did you think when the Korean War broke out?

DP: I said, "Uh-oh, here we go again, and I'm going to be in it this time. My dad missed the Second World War, but … this war is my war," and friends who were just a year older than I were already being drafted. … I have flat feet and I said, "The Army … and I are not going to get along with my flat feet," and that's when my father suggested that my thoughts of the Air Force were inappropriate, I should think about the Navy, and I enlisted in the Navy.

SH: Did the recruiter come to school or did you go to the recruiter?

DP: No, I went to the recruiting office.

SH: At that point, did you know you would be in Naval Aviation?

DP: No, but there was another fellow I knew who was enlisting who was very keen on naval aviation and he said, "[When] we get down there to boot camp, we're going to get into Naval Aviation."

SH: Was it because of your proximity to Lakehurst, New Jersey?

DP: No, I'd always been interested in flying. …

SH: What do you think made you interested in flying?

DP: It's, I guess, adventure in my soul and the fact that, in my short life, I had experienced very little [adventure]. I hadn't been to any place but New York and New Jersey, I hadn't seen the world, I hadn't seen much of anything. [laughter]

SH: I just wondered whether it was the figure of the fliers from World War II or Charles Lindbergh that inspired you.

DP: No, it certainly wasn't Lindbergh. [laughter] No, it was just the romance of flying.

SH: There were these wonderful posters of the airmen and I thought that could have something to do with it.

DP: Oh, absolutely, and this was before the jet age. There were no jet planes then, yes.

SH: When you enlisted, how much time was there between your enlistment and when you had to report for duty?

DP: I enlisted on the basis that I could report after my graduation.

SH: You went, actually, before graduation.

DP: Yes, I went before graduation. That's right.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You graduated in May of 1951.

DP: June.

SH: June 1951, okay.

DP: And, on the 12th of June, I went to the recruiting office. They put me on a train. We went to Philadelphia, had a physical, was sworn in. I had anticipated going to Great Lakes or San Diego, but they'd opened a new training station in Bainbridge, Maryland, put me on a train and there I went.

SH: This was brand-new, the reopening of Bainbridge, correct?

DP: Yes, it had been opened in the Second World War and closed, and then, reopened when the Korean War started.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You mentioned that it had been reopened. Please, continue telling me about the station in Bainbridge being reopened.

DP: Yes. I ended up in Bainbridge, which is on the Susquehanna River, not that far. … They checked me in, put me in a barracks, and then, the process began, chopping off all my hair [laughter] and getting used to Navy life. …

SH: Was your friend who enlisted at the same time as you still with you at that point?

DP: No.

SH: No? Okay.

DP: No.

SH: You lost him.

DP: I lost him in the shuffle. … The guy's name was Burkein, who was a first class petty officer, who was our company commander; he made it very clear that he hated Jews. I said, "Oh, boy, here we go again." [laughter] … At that time, the dog tags had your religion on them. So, I said, "Well, it's going to be a rough time," but he didn't realize I was Jewish, fortunately for me, but two other guys, from Brooklyn, had Jewish names and they were from Brooklyn, so, right away, he knew they were Jews, and he made their lives hell. It was just awful. Every latrine that had to be scrubbed, every rotten job, he'd pick these two guys. … I really felt so bad for them, and I knew that if I opened my mouth, there'd just be three of us instead of two. [laughter] So, I kept my mouth shut and I had no particular problems. … Then, they give you an examination that's really an IQ test, I guess, more than anything, and, at that time, the Navy asked your religion on all the forms. So, I put down Jewish, and I'm sitting next to this kid from Brooklyn and he looks over and he says, "Hey, you're Jewish?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Why isn't he beating your chops like he's beating ours?" I said, "Because he doesn't know, and let's keep it that way." [laughter]

SH: Oh, my.

DP: So, anyway, I got very high marks on the test. …

SH: Where was the company commander from?

DP: He was from Tennessee, and I don't know what his first name [was]. He only used initials. I think it's O.J. (Burkett?) … or Burkein, and I don't know what O.J. stands for. It doesn't stand for orange juice. [laughter] I don't know, … and he spoke with this Tennessee drawl. He was a real Southerner.

SH: Were there others in the company who were also anti-Semitic, or was it just him?

DP: He was the biggest problem. I never had any real problem with some of the other guys. …

SH: Were they from all over the country, mostly?

DP: No. Mostly, they were from the Pennsylvania/New Jersey area, but we had some Southerners, too. I got to know a kid from Georgia and he hated Yankees. He didn't [care] if you were Jewish or not, he hated you, and we kind of developed a friendship. … I asked him, "Why are you so very much in a state of anger when it comes to anyone north of the Mason-Dixon Line?" He said, "There's a very good reason." He said, "My great-granddaddy's farm was in the path of Sherman's March to the Sea and they destroyed the farm, burned the farmhouse down, destroyed the crops and moved on, and that's in our family and we're not going to forget that for a long time." … As it is, I've just been reading Doris Kearns Goodwin's book on Lincoln [*Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (2005)] and I just went through a section this morning where she describes how the scars are still open from that march of Sherman to the sea. So, that was kind of interesting. [Editor's Note: Union General William T. Sherman's March to the Sea occurred during the American Civil War. After taking Atlanta, Georgia, General Sherman decided to march his forces to Savannah, Georgia, and destroy every building, crop and livestock in his path.]

SH: You actually experienced this.

DP: Yes, I did, but my bunkmate was a Pennsylvania Dutchman, Jacob Lutz, German. … We had a twelve-hour pass and he took me to his farmhouse, out in the Pennsylvania Dutch Country, and I never ate food like that. I didn't know what I was eating. It was so rich and delicious, but I didn't know what it was, [laughter] because, again, my diet had been very, very limited in what my mother offered at our table.

SH: You thought the Navy food was good compared to yours.

DP: Oh, it was.

SH: Now, you have had the Pennsylvania Dutch cooking.

DP: The Navy food was very good, particularly in my later naval air stations that I stayed at. The food was good.

SH: That was top of the heap when it comes to food.

DP: Yes, they are, yes, except for the submarines. I've been there, too.

SH: Have you?

DP: Yes.

SH: You did well on this exam. Was boot camp six weeks at this time?

DP: No, it was twelve weeks, I believe, at that time, twelve-week boot camp, and, at six weeks, they had a visitors day. My parents drove down from Jersey.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes, visited me, in my little sailor suit. My mother looked at me and she cried. I had lost weight, and I was skinny to begin with. [laughter] … After twelve weeks, you were off to assignment and I requested airman preparatory school and, with my marks, they said, "Fine."

SH: Did you hope you were going to fly? Was that what you originally wanted?

DP: Yes, absolutely.

SH: Okay.

DP: So, they put me on a train and they sent me to Jacksonville, Florida, and I was very, very upset. There was a young, bright African-American who was in our company, who wanted to be a yeoman. A yeoman's like a secretary, and they sent him to steward school, and it upset me so. He was in tears. So, Truman may have officially desegregated the service, but the Navy was not desegregated at that time, and it infuriated me. [Editor's Note: President Harry S. Truman officially desegregated the US Armed Forces in 1948 with Executive Order 9981, but *de facto* segregation persisted in some areas for years afterwards.] My social conscience was raised. You know, I'm being picked on as a Jew; here's this poor kid, he doesn't even stand a chance.

SH: Where was he from? Was he from New Jersey?

DP: He was from somewhere in Pennsylvania, eastern Pennsylvania, nice boy, bright. Then, we get on a train at Jacksonville and I see [the] "Jim Crow" South along the tracks, the poor blacks living in abject squalor and poverty. Oh, that really upset me. So, my social conscience is getting raised and raised and raised. I'm outraged at that, and, now, I'm …

SH: What about the train that you took down?

DP: It was a troop train. In fact, they put me in for KP [kitchen patrol] duty. I peeled a whole bunch of potatoes on that train, [laughter] because it was an overnight train. It was a Pullman train. … As we came through the South and I saw all these hovels along the tracks, I was so upset, and that always stayed with me, a sense of social justice.

SH: Where would they stop the train? Was it a nonstop train?

DP: It didn't stop. It just kept going, but you could just look out the window and just see the squalor and the poverty of these black people living by the tracks, mile after mile, through the Carolinas, through Georgia and into Florida. It's just horrendous.

SH: What did they have you do in Jacksonville?

DP: I went to school.

SH: On the base?

DP: We were at the naval air station and they had airman preparatory school, which was eight weeks of evaluation as to what your talents are. … It was a refresher course in mathematics. We studied courses in aerodynamics, science, a whole variety of things. … You got graded, just like [when] you went to school, and it was just like school. You went to class, eight to four, and then, you marched back to your barracks and that was it. … They introduced you to the various ratings that are available in aviation, and I was interested in electronics. So, I applied for aviation electronics school.

SH: You decided not to try to be a pilot.

DP: Well, a pilot, I couldn't be, because I was an enlisted man and there was no way I could be a pilot, but I could be a crew member, and that's where I was headed.

SH: They would only take people who had a college education as pilots.

DP: Yes, that's correct, and they went to Pensacola for pilot training

SH: Okay.

DP: But, all of the other supporting characters in aviation are trained in their specific pursuits or skills.

SH: You must have scored really well to be able to choose your job.

DP: I did, absolutely.

SH: Can you talk about that?

DP: Yes. Well, I was brighter than most of the guys. What can I tell you? [laughter] …

SH: Why did you pick electronics then? If you had first pick, what made you choose that?

DP: Yes. Well, you know, I was not interested in being a mechanic. I wasn't interested in being a metalsmith. I wasn't interested in being a radioman, although I ended up being capable on the radio, encoding and whatever. I wasn't interested in meteorology. I wasn't interested in being an air controller. So, I just kind of gravitated to electronics.

SH: Electronics was not a new area, but was it growing rapidly in those days?

DP: Well, now, your aircraft had radar on it, it had a lot of sophisticated equipment, and it was an integral part of flying.

SH: Especially coming out of World War II.

DP: … Oh, yes. Pilots were dependent upon, in the planes I flew, they were dependent upon me to tell them how to get to where they wanted to go, either spotting a target or whatever else was required, operating the radar. So, I chose electronics and we got on a train, a bunch of us, and we went to Memphis, or, actually, Millington, Tennessee, which is a Naval Air technical training center. … It's a huge complex of different schools for different training pursuits, and I went to electronics school for seven months, eight hours a day, five days a week.

SH: At the Navy training center?

DP: At the naval training center.

SH: Were all of your instructors in the military?

DP: Yes, and … that's the first time we were subjected to or came in contact with Marines, because Marines also flew, and so, the guys who were going to support Marine Aviation were being trained there and it was a joke, because they were always [less proficient]; the most stupid guys in the class were always Marines. [laughter] I hate to knock the Marines, but what a bunch of jerks they were. I wouldn't be a Marine pilot, because you've got these idiots trying to take care of their planes. [laughter]

SH: What was the nickname for the Marines?

DP: Oh, "jarheads," probably. … There were a few others, but "jarheads" will suffice, and it was funny, because, no matter what class [you] went to, there'd be maybe sixty sailors and three Marines and the three Marines would be the three most stupid guys in the class, right at the bottom. … It was predictable, no matter what class you went to. It was amazing. [laughter]

SH: Was there any camaraderie between you guys, helping each other get through the classes?

DP: Oh, no; amongst the sailors, but not the Marines. They were helpless and hopeless. I don't know how they got through, but, yes, we worked with one another and I became a pusher in my

dormitory. So, I was in charge of keeping the place clean. I had an office, guys reported to me, and I started to take a leadership role even then. … That was an interesting experience. I met and got to know a lot of guys. There was a fellow from Oklahoma by the name of Manning, and, when he found out I was Jewish, he didn't believe it, and I said, "Well, why don't you believe it?" He says, "Because you don't have horns in your head." I said, "You've got to be kidding." He said, "No, that's what I was told." I said, "Well, don't believe everything you're told," and we became good friends, but it was interesting. I never really ran into anti-Semitism in the Navy, except with stuff like that. …

SH: It got better after boot camp.

DP: Yes. Oh, yes, … and, as I got through aviation, there were more intelligent people involved and the whole stratum improved, from an intellectual point of view.

SH: Despite the fact that school was so intense, were you able to get off the base at all in Tennessee?

DP: Oh, sure, absolutely, and Jacksonville as well. One of my friends was Dave Passarell. Dave was from Penn Yan, New York, on the Finger Lakes, [a region of New York], and Vinnie Paradiso, an Italian from Newark, New Jersey, was my other buddy. Why? Because my name is P-A-S, he's P-A-R, he's P-A-S, we were always together. [laughter]

SH: Right.

DP: Well, Dave Passarell had a '35 Ford Coupe, with a rumble seat, and the three of us would get in that, on a weekend, and we would drive all over Florida. We went to Silver Springs, we went to the University of Florida and saw a football game, we raided orange groves; we did everything we could think of. [laughter] We had a good time, and then, in Memphis, I started going to the Jewish community center, because, … every Sunday night, they had free dinners, home-cooked dinners, for the servicemen, and then, you could meet all the local girls, and I ended up with a girlfriend. She was a lovely girl. She was a senior in high school and she ended up going to Washington University in St. Louis, very nice girl, Ellen Bass, and [the people] really made you feel at home and comfortable, and we went to [the theater]. There was theater in Memphis. We went to [the] theater, went to concerts. We did all kinds of stuff. We had a good time.

SH: Were there activities sponsored by the Navy on base for you?

DP: … Yes, there was. Arthur Godfrey came, good, old Arthur Godfrey. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Arthur Godfrey was a radio and television personality during the 1950s who advocated for the development of American airpower.] One of the things we had to do was build a radio from scratch, and, when it was all complete, you turned it on and you hoped to hear Arthur Godfrey's voice in the morning. … When you heard him speak out of your radio, you knew that was good stuff, and then, all of a sudden, they announced he's coming to the base with his whole troupe. So, I said, "I'm not going to go see Arthur Godfrey." (Guy?) says, "Come on, let's go, let's go." I said, "We're going to be sitting so far back you won't [see anything]." He says, "Come on, let's

go." So, against my will, two other guys and I go over. We go up to the window and they all had tickets in Row YY, okay. So, you're going to go through A through Z, then, AA to ZZ. You can imagine. [laughter] It was a great, big theater, but, geez, I mean, we'll get a nosebleed back there. [laughter] So, we take these YY tickets and we walk in. There's no YY; the last row is XX. There's not even a row here for us. [laughter] They said, "Oh, no, we set up a separate row in the front," in front of all the admirals and everything. [laughter] So, here it was, [we] the sailors go sitting down and all the brass on the base is sitting right behind us. So, Godfrey comes out and he looks at me, he says, "What are you doing there?" It was so funny. I said, "Beats the hell out of me," and we sat in the front row for his show. [laughter]

SH: You had to behave yourself though, right? [laughter]

DP: Yes. Well, we always behaved ourselves. We were good kids, but, besides that, there was movies on the base. You could go to the movies for a dime, and it was the time of the Hollywood musicals, which I still love and [I am] still a buff, and I can recall going to see *Singing in the Rain,* in 1952, at the seven o'clock show. I loved it so much, I went to the nine o'clock showing, saw it again, but, besides the movies and the fact that there was plenty of athletics involved, most of the entertainment we looked for was in town. Memphis was [lively]; we went to Beale Street and we listened to jazz. [Editor's Note: Beale Street features a long row of clubs, bars and other musical venues that figure prominently into the development of jazz, the blues and rock-and-roll.] A buddy of mine was a big jazz aficionado and we took in a lot of jazz. We went to concerts. We did everything. We had a good time.

SH: That is good. You were not just confined to the base.

DP: Yes.

SH: Where were you sent after your time in Memphis?

DP: Well, after you graduate, they pull you into a room with all the graduates and they have all the billets [work assignments] that are available to you on the wall and the people are called in order of their marks. So, the top of the class gets to pick from anything out there. I was, like, third in the class, out of, I don't know, five hundred, six hundred guys, … but you've got to make your mind up right away, and I'm looking up there in the board and my name's coming up and I don't know. … "Where am I going to go?" and I see, "HU-2, Helicopter Squadron 2, Lakehurst, New Jersey." So, there was another something in Port Washington, New York, but I didn't know where that was. [laughter] I might have taken it if I knew it was on Long Island, but, at the time, I didn't know. So, I said, "I'll go to HU-2," and it turns out that three other Jersey boys also picked HU-2. So, they give us two weeks' leave, give us our orders, give us some money to get to Lakehurst, and off we go. We show up in Lakehurst, the four of us, and the squadron is grounded, because they've been, helicopters have been, falling into the sea, over in Korea. They were there to pick up flyers that are shot down and they're going down. So, they grounded the entire fleet of Piasecki helicopters and we had nothing to do, sat there bored out of our minds. So, a month later, we get orders to go to Fleet Sonar School in Key West, Florida, the naval station.

SH: While you were on leave, after being assigned to Lakehurst, did you go home?

DP: Yes.

SH: What was the reception like when you came back?

DP: I was not a happy camper. My family was living in Plainfield, again, in a two-bedroom apartment. So, when I came home, my sister, who was now an adolescent, [had the room]. I didn't have a room to sleep in. I was sleeping on the couch. I hated where they were living. I was in a foul humor. I couldn't wait to get back to the base. My father drove me back. I didn't even talk to him the whole way, I was so angry with him. We did not have a good relationship. [laughter] So, one of the guys, Charlie Zanes, was married and he had a car, and so, we decided we would drive to Key West with him and share the expenses. The Navy was giving us mileage anyway, so, we were in good shape. So, the four of us met at Lakehurst and we got in Charlie's car and we had, like, ten days to report to Key West. So, we drove; it was before the Interstate highways, you know. It was a long, hard ride and it was summertime. It was July, hot as hell, and, finally, we got to Florida, and we stopped at Daytona Beach. We went swimming, and then, we got in the car and we ended up in Miami Beach. We stayed at a motel there, which was nice, and we ended up in Key West, Florida, and we reported [in]. By that time, we had taken competitive examinations for promotion; we had already earned our third stripe when we got out of airmen's prep school. So, I had three green stripes on my arm, and, when I got to sonar school, I found out I'd been promoted to third class petty officer, which exempted me from a lot of garbage work that these poor schleppers have to do. [laughter] So, we went to sonar school, and there were twelve of us, all "Airdales" [naval aviators], who were being exposed to sonar, because they were developing sonar buoys and airborne detection of submarines and that's what we were there to learn about.

SH: This was brand-new.

DP: Yes, it really was. The sonar that most of the students were learning about was shipboard sonar. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue. You were talking about how there were just twelve of you "Airdales" at the Fleet Sonar School.

DP: Yes, there were twelve of us … Airdales, all in this class to discover the science of sound and how it would pertain to … two devices, dipping sonar, which is a helicopter dropping a listening device, and which is passive, and sonar buoys, which are dropped in patterns, again, listening, and so, we had to learn all about acoustics, and it was an interesting course. There were twelve of us, as I said, and we bonded immediately, because all the other people involved were not Airdales and we were kind of segregated. … They felt that it would be important for us to understand what a submarine goes through, in terms of trying to evade detection, and, also, to be on a ship that's trying to pursue submarines. So, in the middle of the course, we went [to sea]. The naval station had several submarines there and I boarded the [USS] *Sea Dog* [(SS-401)] and

we went on a voyage. … I had never been on a submarine before, so, it was very exciting, never conceived it as being dangerous in any way, and we went out to sea, maybe into the Caribbean some thirty miles or so, and then, we submerged. … I was told, this is before atomic submarines, that, "The fumes are going to bother you. Don't rub your eyes." So, the fumes bothered me and I rubbed my eyes and that was the way it was all the whole tour. I was brought up to the command center. The Captain gave me control of the sub. I took her down, I did all the things. It was fun. It was like [being] a kid with a new toy, [laughter] and then, lunchtime, we had an elegant lunch served on fine china, really, a wonderful meal, which is one of the perks that submariners have. … We could hear the ships pursuing us and, whenever they would get close, they would drop a depth charge, which did not explode, but made a loud noise. So, we knew that, had it been a depth charge, we'd have been hit, and we would hear these noises outside the boat. It was all very exciting and I did that for several days, and then, we went out on a destroyer and we went submarine hunting, and that was very interesting, too.

SH: When you were on the destroyer, were you hunting for the *Sea Dog*?

DP: Yes, exactly, and there were some other subs, too, and, again, I was in CIC, control [combat] information center, right at the center of all the activity that was going on, in terms of where the ship was going, what it was doing, and that was great fun, enjoyed that thoroughly. Then, back in school, we decided that we would have a thirteenth member of our team. So, we started; we fudged the papers before the teacher came in. We put a thirteenth member on the log, and we named him "Charlie P. Coats," and we turned in exams for him for at least two weeks before the teacher caught on, and he had a big laugh over it. "Charlie P. Coat," actually, but it was P. C-O-A-T. [laughter]

SH: Named after the famous pea coat that the Navy wears, right?

DP: That's correct, and I did have a pea coat, although it wasn't appropriate, in Florida, to be wearing it.

SH: I was just going to say, you probably never used it out there.

DP: No, I never used it, and, after twelve weeks, we got our assignment, and it was to go to an experimental squadron not far from the naval station in Key West, just up the road. On Boca Chica Key, there's a big naval air station and one of the squadrons there was VX-1, or Air DEVRON-1, [two designations for the same squadron], which is an experimental squadron. … I was assigned to that squadron, and that squadron's function was to evaluate new electronics equipment for the Navy prior to its purchase for the fleet. So, all of a sudden, I found myself in a very responsible position. Within six months, I was in charge of a whole radar group and, of course, I started flying immediately, and somewhere along [the line], I guess it was in Memphis that I learned how to send and receive code, at twenty words a minute, and so, I could act as a radio operator as well as radar operator. …

SH: May I ask how big the crew was?

DP: It was generally a crew of seven, depending upon the mission. We could have a bombardier, a pilot and a copilot, radar operator, MAD operator, which is magnetic airborne detection, and a crew chief, which was always a chief mechanic. That was his plane and he would sit behind the pilots and, if anything went wrong, he was there to hopefully fix it. … We flew mostly P2Vs, P2V-5s, and they were long-range patrol bombers with huge 4250-horsepower Pratt & Whitney engines. This is before jets, and we could fly maybe 150 knots, but we could go forever. … You could fly through a hurricane in this plane, … and we did.

SH: Did you really?

DP: Oh, yes, really did, and so, … I familiarized myself with the equipment, and learning to not only operate it, but to run missions, bombing missions. Dry Tortugas is an island thirty miles west of Key West, where there was a federal prison, where Dr. [Samuel] Mudd was imprisoned after he was convicted of assisting in the assassination of Lincoln. … He was eventually pardoned because of all of the good work he did for the prisoners as a doctor there, and the expression, "Your name is mud," comes from that, and [television broadcaster and journalist] Roger Mudd … is a descendant of his. So, we would take bombing runs on Dry Tortugas at night. I would vector in the pilot, tell him when to drop the bombs, all that kind of stuff, and then, the Navy decided that they would experimentally try a new radar that was developed by Hazeltine Corp. … So, they took one of our planes and they flew it to the Johnsville Naval Air Development Center in Johnsville, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia, and then, they sent me, and I worked with the engineers at Johnsville, installing this in our plane. …

SH: Is that near Willow Grove?

DP: Yes. I stayed at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station while I was working at Johnsville. I would get a bus over there every day and I was there for two months and they installed this piece of equipment and they taught me everything about it and how to maintain it, and I was the only person in the US Naval Air Force who knew anything about this equipment. … They stuck me back in the plane and we flew back to Key West and I taught my crew everything about the equipment, and then, the Navy started installing it in other P2V squadrons. … The CIA was having a quarantine of Guatemala, because they were sponsoring a coup, and there were standing orders to sink any Russian ships that would approach the Guatemalan Coast, because the Cold War was really heating up. … [Editor's Note: Mr. Pasternak is referring to the events culminating in the CIA-backed *coup d'état* of Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán in 1954.]

SH: This would have been in about 1953.

DP: Yes, that's right, and they brought in a squadron from Jacksonville Naval Air Station to patrol the coast of Guatemala from the Key West Naval Air Station, which was the closest to Guatemala. … I was just about to leave for a heavy date in Miami Beach on a Friday afternoon when the Skipper called me in, said, "One of the planes is down from the squadron up in Jacksonville. They don't know how to fix the damn thing. So, you can't go anywhere until that plane's in the air." [laughter] So, I grabbed two of my guys and we went out and we got that plane in the air in a hurry, because we didn't want to miss our dates. [laughter] … Then, things

became even more interesting when the Navy was interested in installing ground position indicators in their aircraft, which was an accessory to radar, and what it did was, the center of the radar scope would remain fixed and, as you flew, the ground position indicator would show you just where you were over the ground. … One piece of equipment that they installed in one of our planes was made by the Sperry Division of Rand and the other piece of equipment was by an unknown company in the Bronx called Loral Electronics, and I was first given the responsibility of evaluating the Sperry equipment and I thought it was horrendous. It was so poorly designed. It used mechanical devices that were so complicated and so intricate that no one would ever be able to repair them. The Loral equipment was all electronic modules, weighed a fraction of what the Sperry equipment did. So, I was working with the president of Loral. He came down to Florida, he stayed at the hotel there and we worked every day on his equipment and, after an evaluation of about six months, I recommended that the Navy not buy the Sperry equipment and purchase the Loral equipment. This created a furor at Sperry, and they were located in Long Island City in New York. So, they flew me up to Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, had a limousine pick me up. I'm a little sailor here, you know. Yes, I'd been promoted; I think … I was a first class petty officer now. So, I'm still just a kid, twenty years old, and they take me over to the Sperry headquarters. They give me a very elaborate lunch, and then, we walk into this huge conference room, with all these engineers and executives. … They asked me what I don't like about their equipment, and I proceeded to tell them, at great length, and they just sat there glumly listening to what I said, and they couldn't refute anything. So, they just said, "Thank you very much; your limousine's waiting," went back to Floyd Bennett Field, flew back to Key West. Now, Loral, which is this unknown company, gets a twenty-million-dollar contract, which was their start. They're now one of the biggest defense suppliers; I got them their start in life.

SH: They owe it all to you.

DP: Well, kind of, and the president of the company said, when I got out of service, he wanted me to go to work for him. I said, "Well, I'm going to college and I'm going to get a degree in engineering and, if you still want to talk to me after those four years are over, I'll be glad to talk to you," and he thanked me very much.

SH: That is a wonderful story, because you were able to interact with both of the presidents of these two competing companies. Was that the only piece of equipment that you evaluated?

DP: No, I evaluated several more, but those two are the more memorable ones, because of all the machinations that went on, and, of course, I loved being at the naval air station in Key West. A friend of mine, whom I had met in Memphis and ended up in the same squadron, he was … the guy that introduced me to jazz on Beale Street, well, he was also into classical music. … The base provided us with a suite, it's the best word to describe it, a couple of rooms with some couches, and we set up the "Almost Southernmost Music Appreciation Club," because we weren't sure that we were the southernmost, because somebody down the road in Key West might have done this [also]. … We started collecting records and playing classical music in the evenings and invited others to it, and we really had a great time. [laughter]

SH: You did not broadcast this at all.

DP: No, but the word got around and other people who were music lovers came over and would spend the evening listening to music with us, and, as we kept buying records at the naval exchange, our collection grew and grew and grew, and we had a very sizable musical collection by the time we were done. That was really great.

SH: That is a great story.

DP: Yes.

SH: What other activities kept you busy in Key West?

DP: I was on the tennis team, the squadron tennis team. That was great fun. I was on the squadron softball team.

SH: Were you competing along the Keys?

DP: Within all the naval facilities. There were so many naval facilities at that time. The naval station was huge and, at that time, they were servicing the Cuban Navy.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes. The Cuban Navy would bring their ships in for drydock, and they would all be maintained at the naval station in Key West. So, there were always a lot of Cuban ships in, there were all kinds of United States warships and, since there was no fresh water in Key West, they had vessels just … tending with water for everybody.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes. There's no fresh water in Key West. [If] you'd drill a well, you get saltwater. … [The] Navy built a pipeline from the mainland in Florida and that was the only source of fresh water on the Keys, and so, the civilians only had water certain times of the day, while the naval bases had water continuously. … I think they're desalinating water now and it's a better situation, but, at the time, it was very isolated. It had one radio station; there was no television. There were more Cuban stations on the radio than there were American.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes. … There was just one local AM station in Key West, that was it, and so, you were isolated. The world was out there, you know. *I Love Lucy*, we didn't know about *I Love Lucy*; there was no such thing. [laughter]

SH: What kind of security clearances did you have, based on your specialty?

DP: I had secret security clearance, and had it been required, I'm sure I would have gotten further clearances.

SH: There was no problem with you interacting with the Cuban sailors, or was there any interaction?

DP: There wasn't interaction with the Cuban sailors. However, we had ships that, every weekend, would go to Havana and, if you wanted to take a liberty for a weekend to Havana, it was very easy to do.

SH: Did you do that?

DP: I did, I did, and this was a wide-open, crazy place in 1953 and '54. This was with [President Fulgencio] Batista in charge, [American organized crime figure] Meyer Lansky running the gambling operations there. It was a wild place.

SH: Were you given any advisories?

DP: No, not really, "Go have a good time." We always managed to do that. It was fun. …

SH: There would be a ship to take you down, then, sit there and wait to bring you back.

DP: Yes.

SH: That is amazing.

DP: Yes. The patrol boats went in. … I'd go halfway out on a destroyer escort, and then, I'd switch over to the smaller ship that would go into Cuba.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes, transfer on a rope, from one ship to the other.

SH: Really? Did you?

DP: Yes. I was fearless. We did things that were crazy, didn't even think anything [of it].

SH: I never thought of the Navy actually transferring you off of one ship to another to go to Cuba on leave.

DP: Oh, yes, to go to Cuba, yes, absolutely, and then, the [USS] *Nautilus* [(SSN-571)] was sent on its first maneuvers, in 1953, off Bermuda and here was a submarine that was now very fast, didn't have snorkels, very difficult to pursue. … So, they sent the same squadron from Jacksonville to maneuver with the *Nautilus* in Bermuda, and … it was a total failure.

SH: Were you on the planes that were trying to find her?

DP: Well, not originally, but, when the squadron from Jacksonville didn't know what the hell they were doing, they said, "Well, let's go to the experts," and we had three P2Vs in our squadron. We flew to Bermuda. I'd never been there before. It's very interesting, and we maneuvered with the *Nautilus* and we were able to develop some techniques where we could actually hunt her down.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes. It's interesting.

SH: Did you get to go onboard the *Nautilus*?

DP: No, no, not at all, never even saw the ship, only flew over it.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes. It was always under[water]. I don't think it ever came up. [laughter]

SH: Was not supposed to. [laughter] That is very interesting.

DP: But, at the same time, there were a lot of Russian submarines in the area and I was pulled out of bed on a Saturday night and said to get … out to P2V #27, "We're going submarine hunting." I said, "What?" "Yes." So, I got on the plane and they had armed it with bombs and depth charges and two pilots and a crew chief and the bombardier. They were all waiting for me and I got on the plane. They pulled me out of bed at eleven o'clock at night, because I was on duty that night.

SH: These were Russian subs checking out the *Nautilus*.

DP: … Well, I'm not sure, but it was a Russian sub and we were told to sink it and it was in international waters.

SH: This was in 1953.

DP: '53, '54, in there, and so, we take off into the night, and, when we get anywhere near where the coordinates were, he tells me to put the radar on and look for a snorkel. … Sure enough, fifty miles away, I find a snorkel on my radar, and so, he says "Okay, we're going in." So, we're in international waters; we're going in to sink a submarine? Maybe you'd better check with me first. So, I'm waiting for somebody to say, "Abort," or, "Do something," and we're bearing in on this thing. He drops the plane down to fifty feet above the water and he's telling the bombardier to get ready to drop bombs. So, I said, "You know, the German soldiers, they obeyed orders even when they were immoral." I said, "This is an immoral act. I will not participate." I veered the plane off course. They never saw the submarine. The submarine dived. When they heard those big engines go over fifty yards off to their starboard side, down they went and we never found him. … He made us fly around all night long, looking for that snorkel, which was no

longer there, but I was not going to kill a bunch of guys that [were] in international water; better check with me first. I wouldn't do it.

SH: Were they aware that you had done this?

DP: No, I never told anybody. They could've probably court-martialed me. I didn't say anything to anybody, "Oh, I'm sorry we missed it." I didn't tell that story until many, many years later.

SH: I was just going to say, how long did it take you to tell that story?

DP: Many, many years before I told that story.

SH: That is an incredible story. Very few people would even be aware of the trouble going on in Guatemala. Was this about the same time?

DP: Yes. All that, Dulles … and the CIA were really *gung ho* and they were really fighting this Cold War in every way they could. … [Editor's Note: John Foster Dulles was President Eisenhower's Secretary of State from 1953 through 1959.]

SH: As a sailor, you really understood what the Cold War was?

DP: Oh, I certainly did, absolutely, and then, we had an opportunity to go home for a weekend. One of the pilots needed more flying time and he asked for volunteers. We were going to fly to … Willow Grove, PA, and I said, "Yes, I can get home pretty good from that." "The only problem is the hurricane, right between us and Willow Grove." So, what do we care? We get in the plane, we drive right through this hurricane, blowing all over the sky, but this plane could take anything.

SH: Really?

DP: They were using it for "hurricane hunters" at the time. We'd go right into the eye of the storm, then, it's nice and calm, right through the wall into it again. We were bouncing all [over]. It doesn't mean a thing, "We're going home." [laughter] We get to Willow Grove. They said, "You can't land here. The field's closed. We've flown all the planes out of here." Well, the pilot says, "I'm coming in. I don't care what you say," and we land. They wouldn't let us stay.

SH: Really?

DP: No, really, they made us get out of there. So, where are we going to go? I don't know, somewhere there isn't a hurricane. [laughter] So, we flew to an Air Force base in Pittsburgh and we spent the night at this Air Force base, and then, the pilot says, "Where do you want to go tomorrow?" So, one of the guys said, "I've never been to Dallas. Let's go to Dallas." "Okay." So, we go to Dallas. We spend a day in Dallas, fly back to Key West, like nothing. I mean, crazy things that we did, with no fear of anything. You were young and fearless and nothing could possibly happen to you.

SH: Had you been keeping track of how the hostilities were playing out in Korea? Was that something that was on your mind?

DP: Oh, well, in '53, they signed the Armistice. So, we knew that that phase of the situation was over, but, at that point, I was so involved with the Atlantic Fleet and what was going on in antisubmarine warfare that the war really became remote.

SH: Okay, that was what I thought.

DP: Yes.

SH: I think that that happens very often, especially because you were working with new technology, which would really be your focus.

DP: Yes, it really was and it was fascinating work. I loved what I was doing and I had far more responsibility than any twenty-year-old kid should have, but I accepted it, and I did my job and I thought I did it pretty well.

SH: How much did you hear about Communism and the "red scare?" Was that something that you were aware of?

DP: Yes, that was going on at the same time, you know. I followed the [Senator Joseph] McCarthy hearings and it infuriated me. All of my feelings about social justice were further infuriated by all of that business and I was very keenly aware of what was going on, absolutely, and very dead-set against it, … but I voted for Eisenhower. He was a hero.

SH: That is true, but you talked about patriotism as part of the reason why you joined the Navy.

DP: Absolutely.

SH: There was this sense of patriotism. Did you see the Communists as the enemy, or, specifically, the Russians? Who were the …

DP: Who were the bad guys? There were a lot of bad guys, but certainly the Russians. It was such a corrupted society and all of the atrocities that came out about what Stalin had done and all the millions [he killed]. …

SH: Was that coming out?

DP: Oh, yes, that was Khrushchev in '53 and, when Stalin died, the same day [Russian composer, pianist and conductor Sergei] Prokofiev died, by the way … [Editor's Note: Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union from 1953 through 1964, worked to de-Stalinize the Soviet Union, culminating in the "Secret Speech" of February 1956, in which he criticized the crimes of Joseph Stalin and his underlings.]

SH: Yes, that is true. I did not realize.

DP: And he gave Prokofiev a very hard time, which I also was angry with him about. [laughter] The atrocity; he killed so many people, as many as the Nazis did. It was just horrendous and the regime was so corrupt there and the people were living in such poor conditions, that everything that they did, despoiling the land and just everything that I believed in, they were against. So, yes, they were definitely the enemy, no question, but I wasn't going to sink one of their ships.

SH: That is one of the things that I wondered, because of the rating that you had and the security level that went with it, and your knowledge of who the enemy was and purported to be at that point, but, yet, you still found the injustice of McCarthy's witch hunt.

DP: Oh, absolutely, it was infuriating.

SH: As a young man, were there other political issues that you were aware of?

DP: Well, yes, the Civil Rights issue was a [key issue]. I was living in the South and, you know, when we would go up to Miami Beach, blacks had to be off, off by dark. You couldn't be on Miami Beach if your skin was black.

SH: Really?

DP: They could work there during the day, you could be a maid, but, come sunset, you'd better be off that island.

SH: I did not know that.

DP: Yes, and we used to go to Miami Beach a lot, because there was a sign put up on a bulletin board from a hotel and it said, "Sailors welcome, in season," that's winter, "two dollars a night, off season, a dollar a night," that's for the room. You could have two guys, three guys, for a buck, but it was across the street from another hotel they owned called the President Madison, which its clientele was mostly young working women, and they wanted sailors to come up and go across the street and entertain the ladies. So, we used to go up there and we'd stay at the Copley Plaza and we'd walk across the street to the President Madison, and we did that a lot. … So, we spent a lot of time in Miami Beach as a result and one of the things that annoyed me tremendously was how blacks were treated. They were not allowed … in that city.

SH: You talked about the injustice faced by the young man who wanted to be a yeoman coming out of boot camp.

DP: Yes.

SH: What about on the airbases where you were stationed in-between?

DP: There were no blacks. It was segregated. I know, in Memphis, we would take a bus, which was a city bus, into the city, about twenty miles from the base to the bus. … If there was a black

woman standing, I'd insist she take my seat and they weren't allowed to sit in the front of the bus. I said, "Screw that, sit down." It just infuriated me, the way blacks were treated, drove me nuts, maybe because I'd seen prejudice when I was young and I knew what it was to be picked on for no good reason; at least I didn't think there was a good reason. [laughter]

SH: You previously discussed the plan that you had in motion. You told the president of Loral that you would see him in four years and see where you fit in.

DP: … That's correct.

SH: When did you start deciding to make applications for colleges?

DP: Oh, very early.

SH: Did you?

DP: I wrote to Rutgers in 1953, got an application when I … went home on leave. I came to the admissions office, formally submitted my application. …

SH: Were you looking at other institutions, as well as Rutgers University?

DP: No.

SH: Why did you pick just Rutgers then?

DP: Because that's what I could afford, just that simple. My family was in Plainfield; I could commute to school. The tuition was two hundred dollars a semester and my GI Bill gave me, I think, eleven hundred dollars a year. So, it meant I could pay my tuition, buy my books, pay my fees and still have a few bucks left over. So, if I got a job, which I did, I could work and I could get through school.

SH: Did you ever entertain the idea of staying in the military?

DP: No, although I was asked, repeatedly, to do so, and my mother suggested I stay in the military. [laughter]

SH: Your mother?

DP: Yes. I said, "Are you sure I'm your kid?" I said, "that you don't have any more confidence in me than that?" [laughter] but … it never was a choice for me. I knew what I wanted to do.

SH: Okay, that was what I wondered, because they probably offered you incentives.

DP: They offered me incentives, money and all kinds of stuff, and I had advanced much further than anyone else of my age group. I was a first class petty officer and you don't find first class petty officers who have been in the Navy for three years. It just doesn't happen.

SH: That is what I would have guessed. Did they offer you the chief's hat?

DP: Well, … you couldn't be a chief until you're in for six years, and I wasn't going to be around for six years; four was enough.

SH: Then, you would have to stay in for a certain period after you became chief, right?

DP: Yes, that's right. …

SH: Did you ever think of trying to apply for Officer Candidate School?

DP: It occurred to me, but, then, I decided I really didn't want a military career and that I was very happy doing what I was doing. I thought I was doing a good job for my country and for me and I was very satisfied with that.

SH: Before you got out of the Navy, did you know that you were accepted at Rutgers?

DP: Yes, I was accepted at Rutgers before I ever left Key West, in June of … 1955, right.

SH: What did you do between June and September?

DP: I came home. My parents had now moved into a three-bedroom house, so, I had a room of my own, and I went to work. I went down to the unemployment office and I worked in a factory until I started school. I was always working.

SH: Were you working at a factory in Plainfield?

DP: Yes.

SH: Had you saved money?

DP: Oh, yes. I sent home money religiously. I skimped and saved and my father opened a bank account for me and I came home with a few thousand dollars in the bank, went out and bought a car, … a second-hand car, but it was a car. So, I could get around, get back and forth to school, and then, I met my wife.

SH: Where did you meet your wife?

DP: Oh, yes. Well, my wife … had just graduated from Syracuse [University] and had taken a teaching job in Plainfield and my mother had a good friend who owned a dress shop and, sometimes, she would go down on Thursday nights, … [to assist her friend as a salesperson]. … My wife walked in with her father and my mother waited on her and got into a conversation, and she said, "Gee, I have a nice son you might like to meet." [laughter] … Phyllis gave her her telephone number and she brought it home, gave it to me. I [said], "Get out of here. What are you, out of your mind? It's the last thing I need." She badgered me, oh, it was merciless. She

wouldn't leave me alone. So, [I said], "All right, I'll call her." So, I got on the phone and I called her and we were on the phone for a long time, really chatted, and I really liked her and I asked her out for a date, the following Saturday night. So, I took her out and we went out for dinner and dancing, and I just thought she was the greatest thing I'd ever seen, fell in love immediately. So, I got home that night …

SH: Where was she from originally?

DP: She was living in Middlesex, [New Jersey], but she was teaching in Plainfield. So, my parents were still up when I came in, and they said, "[Did] you have a nice time?" I said, "Yes, I'm going to marry her." They said, "Come on." Well, I did. I did marry her.

SH: How long did you wait before you got married?

DP: … I gave her a ring in November and we were married the following June, the end of my freshman year.

SH: You are a man who knows exactly what you want. [laughter]

DP: Yes, I knew what I wanted and I went after it.

SH: That is great.

DP: Yes. We were married forty-three years, until she died of breast cancer.

SH: I am so sorry.

DP: Yes.

SH: What did she teach?

DP: Well, she taught grade school, second grade, and, eventually, she was teaching fourth grade, but she really wanted to do more. So, she came back to Rutgers and got her master's in American history studies, and then, she was working on her PhD and the Vietnamese War came along. … She realized she wouldn't be able to get a college teaching job that would allow us to stay where we were, because I'd started a business. So, she went to law school and she graduated from Rutgers Law in Newark, became a very successful attorney, worked for one of the most prestigious firms in the state, until she got sick.

SH: Wonderful story, though.

DP: Yes.

SH: Did you have children?

DP: Oh, yes, plenty of them. We have three sons and a daughter, and I now have twelve grandchildren.

SH: Congratulations.

DP: Thank you, and my wife, I remarried four years ago, was a widow. Her husband graduated from Rutgers.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes, Class of '52, and he was also in the military, but he died of leukemia in 2000 and we met in 2003, I think it was, and we got married in 2004, … maybe I'm a year off, something like that. [laughter] She expanded my family greatly, by providing me another son, Jay, her two daughters, Ellen and Leslie, and three additional grandchildren.

SH: We will let you change that, so that you are not in trouble.

DP: Yes, right, kind of like that. Our fifth wedding anniversary is coming up, June 6th, D-Day, easy to remember.

SH: Did you do that on purpose?

DP: Yes.

SH: Did you meet her in Florida?

DP: No, I met her on the Internet. We're modern age.

SH: I was just going to say.

DP: I use Yahoo for my mail and I'm just sitting there, feeling sorry for myself, and I clicked on Yahoo personals and there she was. So, I sent her an email, and then, I didn't hear from her. I forgot all about it and, a couple of months later, she called me. She'd been so nervous [that] I might be an axe murderer. [laughter] So, we hit it off right away.

SH: I am so glad for you. That is wonderful.

DP: Yes.

SH: I would like to go back now and talk about Rutgers.

DP: Sure.

SH: You said that you had been here before, while you were in the military and, actually, in high school.

DP: Yes.

SH: Walk me through what it was like to come back to Rutgers. Now, you were in the second round of GI Bill veterans coming in.

DP: Yes, and there were a lot of GIs in my class. The Class of '59, … probably, a third of it was GIs, at least.

SH: Were they really?

DP: Yes, there were a lot, and, as I had chosen engineering, even more so in the engineering curriculum, maybe as much as forty, forty-five percent of the engineering students were veterans.

SH: You were not an old man, but older compared to the other fifty percent of students on campus with you.

DP: No, I'm twenty-two now, as opposed to the eighteen-year-olds, who I looked at as "kids," because they were. I had been through an awful lot and I had grown up and I knew what I wanted to do with my life. So, I was here with a purpose and I was going to milk this place dry. [laughter] There wasn't anything that I didn't want to accomplish that I didn't [do]. Because I was an engineer, I objected to the time that was taken from me for humanities. So, the first thing I did was, I went to Dean [Cornelius Brett] Boocock, who was Dean of Men, there were no women here then, and I said, "Dean, I have to take phys ed with these eighteen-year-old kids. Three times a week, I've got to go in and kick a soccer ball. I'd rather take a course in music or art. I think GIs should be exempted." Boocock looked at me, he said, "You're right. As of now, GIs are exempted from phys ed." So, now, I had three hours. I didn't have to take ROTC, so, now, I had three more hours. So, I signed up for every music, literature, philosophy [course]; I was taking twenty-four credits a semester, thinking nothing of it. This is in an engineering program. I had a lab three to six hours every afternoon. I didn't care. My first class was at eight [AM], I got home at seven o'clock at night. It was exhilarating. I was into all the things I always wanted to learn about. I took American literature; I took all kinds of courses that engineers don't take. I was just like a sponge, sopping it all up, and I prepared myself well, for all the reading that I had done while I was in the service, and I just loved it. It was just a great experience.

SH: Did you get involved with anything on campus, any activities?

DP: Yes, absolutely. I was president of the Ceramics Club, because I became a ceramics engineer. I was a feature editor of the *Rutgers Engineer* magazine. I wrote for it. In fact, … I believe it doesn't exist any longer, but I was a feature editor and I would often write reviews, book reviews. *Dr. Zhivago* [by Boris Pasternak] had just been translated into English and published here. I wrote a review of it, for the *Rutgers Engineer*; after all, "Pasternak reviewing Pasternak," why not?

SH: I was just going to say.

DP: Absolutely. I wrote technical articles on new advances in ceramics. I was very active.

SH: What about Dean Elmer C. Easton? Did you have any interaction with him?

DP: I had some. He was kind of standoffish, but I was very close to the director of the School of Ceramics, Dr. [John] Koenig. We were a very close-knit family in the Ceramics Department and that was my home away from home, and Dr. Koenig was a great father figure for me, that I really needed, because I'd never really had a father figure, not that my father wasn't there, but he wasn't there for me.

SH: Education-wise, this is a wonderful substitute.

DP: Yes, he was, and he was a warm, loving, caring man and he helped me in so many ways. My wife became pregnant at the end of my junior year, and the school was not going to allow her to teach once she began to show. That's the way it was then.

SH: Right.

DP: So, I went to Dr. Koenig. I said, "Dr. Koenig, I have a problem, financially, because my wife isn't going to be able to work." He said, "Well, you know, veterans are not given scholarships, because of the GI Bill." I said, "I know." He said, "I'm going to get you an industrial scholarship, even though you're not supposed to get one," and he did.

SH: Really?

DP: Yes, paid for my whole senior year.

SH: Wonderful.

DP: Yes, fantastic.

SH: What was the scholarship?

DP: Pennsylvania Glass Sand Merit Scholarship, that's what it was, paid all my books, fees and tuitions for the entire senior year, and that was a big help.

SH: My word.

DP: Yes.

SH: What did you do in the summers?

DP: I worked.

SH: Where did you work? Was it ceramic engineering-type work or something else?

DP: … Yes, the first two summers, I worked at Gulton Industries, on a job that had been gotten for me by the Ceramics Department. They're in Metuchen, New Jersey, and they were producing ceramic capacitors, and I worked in the quality control laboratory. In the third year, in-between my junior and senior years, there was a recession, 1958, and Gulton was laying off. They couldn't hire me back. So, Dr. Koenig, my "father," gave me a job working in the ceramic laboratory, doing research for him, at a dollar an hour for forty hours a week, and then, he gave me a second job of tutoring his daughter. His wife had gone to a private school in Ohio. They were from Ohio. He … originally ran the ceramics school at Ohio State and his daughter had failed the entrance examination, based on her mathematic inabilities. So, he hired me to go tutor her at his home, until she could pass the test, at three bucks an hour. That was big-time money then, and I tutored her that summer and she got into school, and, between working in the lab and the tutoring, we got through the summer.

SH: At the end of your freshman year, after you had married, where did you live?

DP: Yes. We took an apartment in Plainfield and I commuted to school with a fellow classmate who was also married, a vet, living in Plainfield, Don Doty [Donald J. Doty]. Don's passed away. I miss him.

SH: For the record, you are here at Rutgers to celebrate your fiftieth reunion.

DP: Yes. The only down part is to look at the list of all the guys that are gone, and it's much too long. Some good friends are on it and, when I saw Don's name on it, it really grabbed me.

SH: You continued to live in this apartment in Plainfield all four years.

DP: When … [Allan] was born, in 1959, we moved to a two-bedroom, but we stayed in the [garden] apartment … . I took a job with a company in New York City that was involved in manufacturing ceramic electronic materials, it was right down my alley, and became a sales engineer for them, and, in … 1961, bought our first home in North Plainfield. …

SH: Did you use the GI Bill benefit to purchase your home?

DP: Yes, I did, absolutely, and we had another son. … [To] sort of keep busy, I enrolled at NYU [New York University] in the Fall of 1959 to get an MBA. I went to school at night, for six years, to get my MBA, because I knew what I wanted to do and I was going to do it, no matter what. … Because of that, I received a management offer in Illinois and I moved my family to suburban Chicago, 1963, and we were out there for a couple years. I had a very interesting experience and, eventually, came back, started my own business, developed the technology myself, built a factory, got a couple investors and I went into business manufacturing architectural exterior cladding. …

SH: Where were you living when you came back that time?

DP: We bought a house in Plainfield, and then, eventually, moved to Watchung, where my family really grew up. We were in Watchung for many years and, [when] I started, the first

factory was in Plainfield. We outgrew that, we moved to South Plainfield, into twenty-two thousand square feet. Then, we outgrew that. We moved back to Plainfield, in the old Mack Truck facility, because I had fifty thousand square feet, and just kept growing and growing. …

SH: I guess you never needed to call the president of Loral.

DP: No, and he didn't call me, either. It's a two-way street, you know. [laughter]

SH: What other stories would you like to put on tape, that perhaps I have not asked about, because I have no point of reference here?

DP: Well, just that I am completely beholden to this university for everything it's done for me. I can never really pay it back. It's a debt that it'll always be there. I am forever grateful for what Rutgers has done for me. I love the school and I'm beholden to it.

SH: I thank you and I encourage you to add vignettes and things like that when you get a copy of your transcript down the road.

DP: Oh, I'm sure there are. I've left out a lot. …

SH: Thank you.

DP: Oh, you're very welcome. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: In trying to say goodbye, we started talking again about Rutgers and your experiences of being in the Ceramics Department. The curriculum was tight, but, then, you were also allowed to take a lot of humanities courses. You talked about visiting the Music Department.

DP: It was a third home for me. The ceramic building was my [second home].

SH: Where was the ceramic building at that time?

DP: The ceramic building was on George Street, it's now the Graduate School of Social Work, and it's just behind what was the engineering building, but it was right here on the College Avenue Campus. … The music house was this wonderful house, is what it was, I don't know if it's still there, but it was a very congenial spot, not only to go and listen to music, but to converse with the professors. [F. Austin] "Soup" Walter was a very special guy. Everybody loved him, including me. Even though I didn't sing in his chorus, many of my classmates did and he was just a joy. I had took classes with him, and then, Dr. [Howard] McKinney, who retired while I was here …

SH: Did he?

DP: Yes, he and Dr. [Donald] McGinn, from the English Department, and the gentleman, I don't recall who was in charge, head of the Art Department, they gave a course for seniors called *Art, Music and Literature from the Seventeenth Century*, and it was held in the music building and it was the only class that I ever attended with Douglass students, because it was such a unique course and Douglass offered nothing like this, that girls from Douglass came and sat [in]. It was the only class I ever had with women, which was very diverting. It was distracting, is a better word, because some of them were quite pretty, but the course itself was the best course I ever took in my life, and it was taught so well, by three gentlemen who knew their subjects so well, and I was totally caught up in it. Last year, I was asked to give a lecture series at my community in Florida, and I, in miniature, gave the course that I'd had at Rutgers, in 1959, based on those three gentlemen. I still have Dr. McGinn's book, which is called *Literature as a Fine Art*, I have Dr. McKinney's book, *Music in History*, and I have the art book as well that I had for that course. I've kept those books all these years and I still refer to them and I used them in preparing a lecture series for my community in Florida, based upon that course, which had such an impact on my life.

SH: That is a wonderful story.

DP: … I only hope that that course is still given here. I can only hope. [laughter]

SH: Tell me about the other activities that you were involved in here at Rutgers. Especially after your freshman year, how involved did you get with these activities?

DP: Well, my freshman year was a very traumatic time for me. First of all, I'd been away from school for four years and I had to relearn how to study. Secondly, I had all kinds of personal problems that involved the fact that I had fallen in love and that my wife's father had suffered a massive coronary and it wasn't sure whether he would live or die. … He asked me to, he had a retail store, hardware and houseware, … go to the store after school every day and stay there until nine o'clock at night to oversee things. … It was just absolutely madness, and this went on all through November and December of 1955, when I was struggling with the calculus, I was struggling with physics, and, all of a sudden, I had all these other personal burdens. It was really a trial for me, and I knew if I could get through that first semester, I'd be okay, and I ended up graduating *cum laude.*

SH: Congratulations.

DP: But, it was a long climb up … to get to that. I just missed *magna* and, during that time, it was extremely difficult for me and was the most trying part of my college experience. After that, my father-in-law recuperated, I kind of got a hold of things. I loved my English course with Dr. Main and I got a couple of "1s" from him, which, now, they're "4s." I guess they flip-flopped everything. [laughter] I had another Pasternak in our class, Tom Pasternak, who is also deceased, unfortunately. Tom, the last I heard, was a Professor of English at North Carolina State, and he's passed away, but Tom and I were in the same English class. … I was surprised when I got a "2" on my report card, or whatever it is, when Dr. Main assured me that I was his best student, I was going to get a "1." So, I went up to Dr. Main and I said, "Dr. Main, why did you give me a '2?'" He said, "I didn't give you a '2,' I gave you a '1.'" I showed him the report,

and he said, "Oh, my God, I gave your '1' to Tom Pasternak, to the wrong Pasternak." So, Tom came up to me, a couple of days later, "What did you do to me? You took away my '1.'" So, that was an interesting sideline. I loved the course with Dr. Main and we studied *Dante's Inferno*. We read it, and my wife kind of got into it, and we would review the quatrains at home. … It was a recent translation by John Ciardi, who, at that time, was in the English Department here, and it was a brilliant rendition of the *Inferno*. I loved reading it and I can remember the first quatrain. … It describes all these people walking into the gates of hell and … the sign says, "Despair ye all who enter here," and the point is that they were walking in of their own accord. There wasn't anybody pushing them and we had to analyze each quatrain that way, really dig into it, and I just loved it and my wife and I had such a good time with that course, I cannot tell you. [laughter]

SH: That is great.

DP: Yes.

SH: Was mandatory chapel still going on at this point?

DP: No, there was no mandatory chapel.

SH: What about an initiation for freshmen?

DP: Well, I ignored that. They wanted you to wear beanies and do silly things. I said, "Are you kidding me?"

SH: Did you ever think of joining a fraternity?

DP: No. First of all, I was engaged, and then, married; secondly, fraternities were too silly. They went through all these silly initiations. I thought it was all ridiculous. Now, my brother-in-law, this is my future brother-in-law, was here at Rutgers, he graduated in 1956, and he was in a fraternity and he invited me over for lunches occasionally. It was all very nice, but it was not for me.

SH: What was his last name?

DP: Greenwood, Sandy Greenwood. He died at forty-three of melanoma, left my sister a young widow, unfortunately. So, there's Rutgers connections all through, my wife's husband.

SH: You talked about your sister not being allowed to go to college; I was curious when you said brother-in-law. I did not know whether it was your wife's brother or not.

DP: … Right. She was a secretary at Bell Laboratories and she met Sandy and they were married a few months after Phyllis and I were, and our first children were born two weeks apart, but, unfortunately, he lived much too short a life.

SH: You talked a bit about being a freshman. What about football?

DP: Oh, I went to the football games. It was a lousy team, but it didn't bother me. It was still fun to do on a Saturday afternoon, loved to go to football games, and I did.

SH: You had been involved in sports and had been very athletic in the past.

DP: Oh, yes, and I loved football. I love college football.

SH: Were there other sports that you had attended, as a spectator, here at Rutgers, or participated in?

DP: Yes, we used to go to basketball games. Originally, it was tough to do, in the old gym. It only seated twenty-eight hundred, but, after they moved over the river, we would attend basketball games and, even after I graduated, we would buy season tickets to the football games.

SH: Did you?

DP: Oh, yes, we went to many, many [games]. My kids became Rutgers fans, even though they didn't go to Rutgers. My oldest boy went to George Washington [University], my second son went to Brown [University] and my third to Northwestern [University], but the Brown son, who lives here in Jersey, can't root for Brown; I mean, that's ridiculous. So, he became a big Rutgers fan and he'll often come to the games with me.

SH: That is great.

DP: And my oldest son is in construction, helped build the new stadium.

SH: Did he really?

DP: Yes, he did. He did a lot of the façade work on it.

SH: The youngest, what does he do?

DP: The youngest is a management consultant with Bain and Company, the largest international consulting company in the world. He's a partner in that and he's based in Chicago.

SH: You had four boys.

DP: Three boys and a daughter.

SH: Okay, I missed one there.

DP: I haven't talked about my daughter, because that's more painful. We adopted her. She was from Vietnam and we were very much opposed to the war and we got involved with an organization called Friends of the Children of Viet Nam. … Many of the people in the organization had brought children from these orphanages we were supporting to this country and

we brought Bonnie here, and she did not have a happy life here. She was scarred from her early years and it's just been a disaster for her, and very painful for my wife and me.

SH: I am sorry.

DP: Yes. … It's a common occurrence with some of these kids, who were so scarred by their early years of deprivation that they really can't function very well here.

SH: Going back to your time at Rutgers, you talked about the administration and the change; how did that affect the students?

DP: Yes. I don't think that it affected the students very much

SH: It was Lewis Webster Jones, and then, Mason Gross. [Editor's Note: Dr. Lewis Webster Jones served as President of Rutgers University from 1951 to 1958. Dr. Mason Gross served as President from 1959 to 1971.]

DP: It was Jones, and then, Mason Gross, and you could feel that the University was growing. Our class, the entire freshman class, was nine hundred people, nine hundred men, boys, to be more appropriate, and, when I look at the size of the class of incoming freshmen, it's mind-boggling. … It's not the same place, nor should it be, but it was a small school. Everybody knew everybody. There was a feeling of being home here, that probably is lost because of the size of the place now.

SH: How was Mason Gross perceived?

DP: I think he was perceived; well, first of all, he was a television personality, and my [current] wife had actually been on the Herb Shriner show. [Editor's Note: Mr. Pasternak is probably referring the *Two For The Money*, an early 1950s game show hosted by Herb Shriner on which Mason Gross appeared as a judge, although Shriner did follow that show with *The Herb Shriner Show*, a talk/variety show.]

SH: Really?

DP: Honest to goodness. She had been invited to the show when Mason Gross was the arbiter of facts, and she had just married Bert, who was a Rutgers grad, and she had grown up in New Brunswick, on Rutgers Street, and, lo and behold, she gets on the Herb Shriner show, she meets Mason Gross. That was our family's first introduction to Mason Gross. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever have any interaction with him or the administration?

DP: No, but I did with Ed Bloustein, [Rutgers University President from 1971 to 1989]. I absolutely adored him. He was a very special person to me. I got to know him well. … After I was out of school twenty years, the Class of '59 did not have a class agent and John Pearson [of the Rutgers University Foundation], he pounced on me. He snuck up from behind, grabbed me,

and, before I knew it, I was a class agent, and so, as such, I started becoming involved in alumni affairs, which I have [kept up]. I'm still my class agent. …

SH: Really?

DP: Yes, even to this day.

SH: Thirty years later.

DP: Thirty years later, but … we didn't even have class officers then, we just had an agent, and that was only to try and collect money. … We did the phone-a-thon then, which was done by graduates at the time, and so, that got me introduced to the Foundation, and, later, to Ed Bloustein. I had dinner with him on several occasions. I just thought he did a wonderful job for the University. He was a great asset and a great loss when he died. It affected me personally. I really loved the guy.

SH: I have only heard wonderful things about him from everybody.

DP: Yes, and he was so approachable.

SH: That he would go sit and have coffee with the students.

DP: Oh, yes, he was just a regular guy. … I can recall, at a football game, where his seat was in the shade, mine was in the sun, and it was a hot day and he waved over to me. He said, "Come over here. It's cool over here in the shade," but that was Ed. He would do that, just a regular guy and a bright and interesting man and I think he did wonderful things for the University.

SH: Is there anything else that we should put on tape at this time?

DP: I'll probably think of a dozen things [later on]. …

SH: Do jot them down and we will talk then.

DP: But, I'm looking forward to my fiftieth reunion. That's quite a milestone in my life and fifty years went by very quickly, … full of momentous happenings and not so momentous, good times and bad, but I'm here. I'm still here. [laughter]

SH: I thank you so much.

DP: You're very welcome.

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

Reviewed by Morgan Biloholowski 2/1/10
Reviewed by Mary Greene 2/1/10
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/22/10
Reviewed by Donald Pasternak 2/27/10