RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER W. PERKINS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on April 18, 2008, in Copley, Ohio, with Walter W. Perkins and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you so much, Mr. Perkins, for having me here in your home. To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Walter Perkins: I was born in Linden, New Jersey, December 7, 1919.

SH: Let us begin by talking about your father; what was his name and his background?

WP: Stanley J. Perkins. He was born in Lee, Pennsylvania. Let's see, I have it right here. [Editor's Note: Mr. Perkins checks his notes.] He was born [in] 1892, of a family that I really never knew too well, [but] I think could have been immigrants from Poland.

SH: What was the industry in Lee, Pennsylvania? Do you know what the family did?

WP: I have absolutely no idea. I have no idea why they left Lee, Pennsylvania, and wound up in Linden, New Jersey. [laughter]

SH: The whole family moved with your father.

WP: As far as I know, yes, yes. His parents had a home there in Linden and [he had a] brother and sister in Linden, [as well as] another sister who I always associate with Brooklyn. Dad went to school there in Lee. As far as I know, he did not finish high school, although I think he had a normal boyhood for that time. … I remember him talking about playing baseball, and so forth, but the rest of it is really a blank. They wound up in Linden and he went on to improve himself, you know, [through] self study. I think he wound up with, let's say, the equivalent of a high school diploma. Somewhere along the line, he became a toolmaker, and I don't know where he served that apprenticeship. I sort of remember that he worked for M. W. Kellogg. … He commuted, so, he wasn't a toolmaker there. He worked for Sinclair Oil Refining Company, down in Tremley Point, New Jersey, that part of Linden. Somewhere along the line, he wound up being the superintendent, plant superintendent, of the Lidgerwood Hoist Company, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. … That was prior to the Depression and through a good part of the Depression. Then, I think he was just overwhelmed by the responsibility of that job and he, believe it or not, went back to being a toolmaker for awhile, and then, was invited to Waterbury, Connecticut, to be plant manager of the Waterbury Tool Company. [laughter] We first lived on DeWitt Street in Linden, in a two-family house, for about six years, had a sister there. I think we were both born in that house, not a hospital. Dad bought a lot … more or less cattycorner from where we were born, designed a house, put it up there. … That's where we lived until he died, and my mother moved out of there, eventually, and we sold the house.

SH: That must have been some undertaking, to design and build your own house.

WP: He had a very practical, engineering-type mind, and how he developed these talents, you know, that took him from being a toolmaker to being the boss of toolmakers, [I do not know]. The result of his abilities and being in demand meant that he worked through most of the Depression. The only time [his employment was interrupted] was when he quit the Lidgerwood job to take that respite as a toolmaker. I think it was with Singer Sewing Machine Company.

Our neighbors didn't seem to be too hurt by the Depression, that I know of. Dad did help a couple of people. Having an income and [with] people needing work, he had things done around the house. I recall, I guess it would be one of the things of the time, one of our neighbors was an active carpenter in the union and he did a job for Dad and said, "Please, don't tell the union. I need the money." [laughter] … We didn't own a car until about 1928, maybe. Then, we bought one of those first Fords, the kind [where] they said, "Henry made a lady out of Lizzie," and he had someone build the garage for that car, so, in a way, you know, he helped. Now, where do we go from there?

SH: Let us talk about your mother. What was her name and what do you know about her background?

WP: It was Laura Sterling Gourley, and I think her mother was a Denny. … Unlike my father's folks, the Dennys came over in the … 1700s. I think somebody said one of them may have come over with William Penn. So, they seemed to be located, as I knew them, just barely, … in Philadelphia. She was born in Woodbury, New Jersey, in … 1897.

SH: Her family, as you said, had all been here for a very long time.

WP: Yes. Mother was invited to join the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution], as was my sister. Neither of them did, but …

SH: Why did they choose not to? Did they say?

WP: My mother never did. My sister, can't call her a rebel, but she was very independent and it was about the time that Marian Anderson was rejected. Do you remember that, or heard of it? where … she was to sing and they walked out on her, refused to let her sing, something like that, got Eleanor Roosevelt all upset, too. Well, that affected my sister. So, I think it wasn't snobbishness; it was a matter of ideals, I think. [Editor's Note: In 1939, African-American singer Marian Anderson was barred from performing in Constitution Hall, a Washington, DC, venue owned by the DAR, due to a "white performers only" policy. The incident sparked a public outrage and led Eleanor Roosevelt and thousands of other DAR members to resign from the organization.]

SH: Wonderful. What was your father's religious background?

WP: Well, that family was Catholic. So, Mother married him; she's Protestant.

SH: Oh, she was.

WP: Yes.

SH: I saw on the pre-interview survey form where you wrote that she was from a Scottish-Huguenot background. I assumed that she was Protestant.

WP: Yes, belonged to the Linden Dutch Reformed Church. … They were married by a priest, but not in a Catholic, or not a formal Catholic ceremony, and then, at that point, my dad was breaking away from the Church. … For a few years when I was a youngster, he was fairly active and I was going to the Catholic church and studying the Catechism, and so forth, but, a few years later, it wasn't appealing to me and he gave us, my sister and I, permission to drop out. …

SH: There must have been interesting conversations around the dinner table. What about politics? Did your mother and father agree in their political views?

WP: Dad was fairly active, behind the scenes, in politics. He was one of those who, I don't know whether, [he] could have brought the Democratic Party into Linden, but certainly strengthened it. … He knew all of the people he should know, including Governor [Harold G.] Hoffman, [Governor of New Jersey from 1935 to 1938], who was governor at the time. So, no, he was probably, I don't know, a strategist, guide, consultant. I can remember people from the party meeting at the house and talking about this and that.

SH: Was your mother a Democrat as well, do you think?

WP: I presume she was.

SH: Was your sister older or younger than you?

WP: About a year-and-a-quarter younger or so.

SH: You had just one sister.

WP: Yes, Irene. … Dad had an artistic bent. He could draw. He loved to read. We both inherited the reading. My sister inherited, to a greater extent than his, the artistic aspect. She became a competent artist, and even had one or two showings. She wrote poetry. [laughter] … I was the one that got to college. She got there later, on her own, and I think got a teaching degree.

SH: Where did she go to college?

WP: It was somewhere in New York State. I couldn't [say]. She left home before I did, and, you know, we were never that close. She and I had different points of view on a number of things. [laughter]

SH: What was it like to grow up in Linden as a young boy? What were some of the activities you remember?

WP: Well, there were a number of kids about my own age. There were empty lots. You know, people weren't building houses then, or [were] holding back on building. So, there was a corner lot about, oh, four or five hundred feet away from us. … The kids would gather there, play baseball, play football. We roamed around a bit, got into a bit of trouble, this way or that way. [laughter]

SH: How mixed was your neighborhood? Were the kids the sons and daughters of immigrants?

WP: Well, they could have been immigrants there. There were several Polish families. We had a corner store, I think might have had German ownership there, at one time or other. We had a neighbor who owned a delicatessen in Linden, best potato salad I've ever had. [laughter] They were German. People across the street were German; there were quite a few German families, as I think of it now. One of my friends' fathers actually was in the First World War and a German soldier. Their next-door neighbors were immigrant Scots.

SH: Was there any German-American *Bund* [a pro-Nazi organization] activity?

WP: Any what?

SH: *Bund*, B-U-N-D.

WP: Oh, not that I'm aware of. … The publicized activity was to the north, up near the state line, I think, between New Jersey and New York. I don't recall any strong Nazi feeling, pro-Nazi feeling. Linden had a number of Italians and there might have been some pro-Mussolinis, [Americans in favor of Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini]. I was acquainted with a broad swath of people. [I] went to Number One Grade School and [the] kids were from sort of a broad, but defined, area. It had a playground, spent a lot of summer days on that playground. That was a program to get kids off the street. At other times, kids would gather around a house and we'd run around the house, play tag and the usual things that kept kids going, the obvious things, and there were a few things we did that [our] parents never knew about. [laughter]

SH: What was the most daring thing you ever did as a young boy?

WP: Well, the thing I still shudder about was, … I was a teenager, and that was up in Connecticut. I was always a bit older for my age. When we moved to Connecticut, I got friendly with three fellows. … They were already out of high school, working, but they'd take me on their adventures, and, one day, we went into an abandoned iron mine, [laughter] pitch-black. I still shudder over that. Nobody knew where we were. … I climbed trees when I was a younger kid, played football without any equipment. That was pretty daring, I guess. [laughter]

SH: Did you belong to the Boy Scouts or any church groups?

WP: I started out with the Indian Guides, [a YMCA-sponsored parent/child group], didn't last too long with them, visited a Boy Scout troop … that was connected with the Methodist church in Linden, but wound up going to Troop 34 in Linden, affiliated with the Dutch Reformed Church. [I] didn't get very far, but made a number of trips with them, you know, enjoyed it, but I guess not enough to stay with it, although I went back later as an assistant Scoutmaster. …

SH: If they let you back, then, it was okay.

WP: Yes, I wound up with fifty-five years of association with the Boy Scouts.

SH: Wow, that is impressive.

WP: … During the war, you know, some of the Scout leaders were drafted and I wasn't yet drafted and they pulled me into the Scout troop, … again, Troop 34, and stayed there until I was drafted, and then, after the war, I came back and got into Scouting again, and then, picked it up out here in Akron, [Ohio].

SH: Did your father serve in World War I?

WP: He was in the New Jersey State Guard. His brother, Walter, for whom I'm named, wound up as a sergeant in the Army and was killed in France, just about a month before the Armistice. [Editor's Note: The Armistice between the Allies and Germany in World War I was declared November 11, 1918.] I never got to know Uncle Walter. Dad never mentioned much about being in the State Guard, but, one time, when I was doing my "bad boy" act and searching through old trunks in the house, [laughter] I came across parts of the uniform and an ammunition belt, and then, in one of the closets in the house was an old rifle, looked very much like the kind that was used in the Civil War. [laughter] That's what he was issued, and my son has that now, the rifle and the bayonet, but, you know, we didn't talk all that much in the family. My sister and I are just now trying to retrieve some of what we remember between the two of us.

SH: That is good. You said your sister left Linden. Did she leave Linden completely, or just home?

WP: No, she moved into New York. Somewhere along the line, she got married. We didn't even know about that. [laughter]

SH: She was independent.

WP: She and my father didn't get along too well. Dad was rather demanding and my sister had her own ideas. She was more of a radical thinker than I was, and I think, you know, there was just a difference of philosophies there. [laughter]

SH: We did not talk about how many brothers and sisters your mother had. Was her family home in Woodbury?

WP: I think [the] fundamental family was in Philadelphia. Her father, as far as I know, when they were in Woodbury, was an undertaker. That's before, I think, they had to go to school, and so forth, and they moved out of Woodbury. … My mother had one sister and one brother, my Uncle Elwood, he told me, as a kid, how he drove their horse-pulled wagon, with the family furniture and whatnot, out of Woodbury. [laughter] I presumed going to Linden, and then, I remember my grandfather, this is Grandfather Gourley, who would come around collecting insurance payments. I forget what type of policy they called it, but you paid your premium by the week or the month. … He worked for John Hancock [Insurance Company] and, at that time, John Hancock published these little historical books. [Are you] familiar with those? So, I had a whole … stack, got some of my history lesson, out of that, and then, he wound up back in New

Brunswick, [New Jersey], about two or three blocks from Rutgers [University]. [laughter] So, we used to visit there, holidays, Thanksgivings. Sometimes, I'd wander around New Brunswick, around the campus, before I really knew what college was all about, just as a kid. … Then, my mother's sister, Mildred, was married in New Brunswick, as far as I can recall, she married an engineer, … Carl Carrigan, a graduate of Lafayette [University], who became prominent in the aviation business. … They wound up in Farmingdale, Long Island. Uncle Carl was a preeminent metallurgist in the aircraft industry, … worked in New Jersey there, in Fair Lawn, for awhile, with … Wright Aircraft, [the Curtiss-Wright Corporation], and then, with Ranger Aircraft [Engines Division of Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corporation], over in Farmingdale.

SH: Had your mother gone to college?

WP: No. I'm not even sure if she finished high school. I know she was knowledgeable. She used to tell me things that I had no idea that she knew. [laughter] She was basically a homemaker, active in the PTA, played what was the equivalent of bridge, euchre or whist, and she was on the election boards, I remember that, good cook.

SH: Did anyone play a musical instrument in your family?

WP: Mother played the piano very well, had a beautiful voice. Dad had a good, average male voice. He played ragtime piano and that was one of the family pastimes. Either Dad or Mother would get on the piano and the kids and neighbors and family would get around and sing. He had several music books and Mother featured that magazine called *Etude*, … that had classical music, and we had some single sheets. I was trying to think of some of the names. Some of the songs wouldn't play today, because they had such racial or ethnic overtones, you know.

SH: Really?

WP: "So, somebody Brown, how you gonna pay the rent when the man comes around?" [(*Rufus Rastus Johnson Brown) What You Going to Do When the Rent Comes 'Round?*] and *Who Threw the Overalls In Mrs. Murphy's Chowder?* that was one of the songs. [laughter] … Then, in 1927, when [Charles] Lindbergh flew across the ocean, the *New York Journal*, I think it was, published a song called *Lucky Lindy*. So, we had a copy of that and we'd sing, and so, Lindbergh was kind of a big influence in my time. I read his book, "we," I, followed his progress as best I could, until he went sort of pro-Nazi. … There were those family good times.

SH: When the family moved to Connecticut, how tough was that? You were just a sophomore in high school, if I understand the math right here.

WP: [laughter] You know, I'd spent six years in Number One Grade School, and you went through with the same class from year to year and you developed a cadre of friends, then, went to junior high school, grade seven and eight. Well, there, you were broken up and, in fact, you were sort of classified according to, I guess, your IQ or some qualifying test, and so, some of your good friends who weren't good students wound up down here, at 7-A-7 or so, and some of the better students were in grade 7-A-1. … So, you expanded and, because of that grading

system, you got to know a bunch of smarter people, or maybe, if you're on the other end, a bunch of dumber people. [laughter]

SH: I am assuming you were in 7-A-1.

WP: Yes. So was my sister, a year later, and I was selected as a street crossing guard, had a police badge, to steer kids across the street, wasn't that much traffic then. [laughter] Fact was, some of the traffic was horse-drawn.

SH: Really?

WP: And then, inside the building, we'd get to open the door for the kids to come in when it was time … for them to enter, and then, we were also hall monitors as kids went from one class to another. So, I was on the side of the law then, I guess. [laughter]

SH: You have been on both sides; is that what you are trying to tell me?

WP: Well, I was never arrested. [laughter] Actually, I was never in trouble with the law, but some of my school friends were. One of my uncles was a Linden police officer.

SH: This is good, for the record. Did you have afterschool or summer jobs?

WP: No. That's one of the things I can't figure out. I was never successful in getting [work]. I mean, I'd do odd jobs for people, run errands and things of that sort, [laughter] … even through college. Of course, through college was the Depression and jobs were pretty hard to come by, but, despite my dad's connections, I never [had a steady job], except once. [laughter] So, I'd just pick up a quarter here or a dime there. My senior year in high school, I did have an afterschool job. I taught myself how to typewrite and that got me into a mill supply house. [laughter] So, I'd be typing records and whatnot, and then, [I] worked full-time through that summer before I went off to college. That was up in Waterbury. So, yes, leaving Linden was pretty tough. Now, I'm out of junior high school, I'm in Linden High School. I was class president in junior high, and now having to get established with [new people]. Now, people were, … in the junior high, coming from all over town, and so, your acquaintances expanded again, and [I was] getting active in club work and the out-of-class activities, French club, I guess, and science club. … Then, in there, I was trying to make the football team, made the squad at the junior high school and made the "bone crushers" in high school; [laughter] that should be the other way around, "crushed bones." [laughter] We were just the cannon fodder, and, again, because of the Depression, wore raggedy, old uniforms and sweaty, old helmets. … When I went up to Waterbury, I was mentally cold; you just go one day and you're faced with a whole bunch of … people that you never met before. Fortunately, they were pretty good people and [I] never really had any problems with hazing, or anything like that, in any of the schools I went to. … Waterbury had three high schools, one for, basically, college preparation, one for commercial and one was vocational, and Dad entered us in the college-bound. So, again, [we] met a bunch of nice kids, intelligent kids, but they'd all had their gangs, their groups. I was invited into something called the HiY, high school groups sponsored or connected with the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], and our Beta HiY chapter was a bunch of good fellows. We'd

meet once a week, I think, and there was an adult who supervised us, arranged programs, and then, you had access to the YMCA facilities. So, often times, on my way home, I'd stop in and pull weights or something of that sort. … Waterbury was a rather nice town. It was the brass capital of the world, you know. So, there were several large factories that were working there, through the Depression, making, among other things, devices for cosmetics; your lipstick holders and whatnot were turned there. …

SH: You said brass, right?

WP: Yes. … Scoville Brass Company, that was the biggest one, and there was another one. I think the going wage rate couldn't have been more than fifty cents an hour.

SH: Did you know anyone, of your friends, either in Linden or in Waterbury, that had family working for the WPA [Works Progress Administration] or in the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps?

WP: Oddly, no.

SH: Did you see any of the WPA projects taking place in either of those towns?

WP: Oh, we saw people working, [laughter] or, most of the time, they weren't, but they'd be standing there with their brooms or shovels or whatnot, not to say that [they did not work]. They did a lot of good work, … but they'd be defamed, really. Oh, I can tell you I saw Hoovervilles. You know what they are?

SH: Please, tell me.

WP: Essentially, the ones I remember were near the Newark Airport, which, you know, at that time, was just a little jerkwater. It was a busy airport, but, by today's standards, just piddling, but there were these cartons and whatnot, just paper shacks. … I don't know what year that would be, early '30s, I guess.

SH: Probably before you went to Connecticut.

WP: Yes.

SH: You went to Connecticut in …

WP: '35, was it?

SH: Yes, so, it was prior to that, in the early 1930s.

WP: I guess, I think we were probably driving over to Long Island to see my aunt, because we'd get over there now and then. When my grandparents quit hosting Thanksgiving, my aunt picked it up from them. But, people could have been really hurting around us, but nothing that was obvious. A man that lived directly behind us was an upholsterer and I do remember that he was

reduced to making little hot pads, and so forth, and trying to sell them for fifteen cents. I think Mother bought a couple.

SH: Did hobos ever come to your house, looking for work or food?

WP: Yes, yes. We had some people. I think maybe we even had a mark on the sidewalk that was supposed to say that, "This is a hospitable family." Not too many, but, yes, Mother would make a sandwich or so. Now that you mention it, when Dad got this car, I don't know why he thought it needed a blanket, but, in the wintertime, he'd put an old overcoat on the hood of the car. … One day, somebody came by and asked if they could have the overcoat. … It was still, maybe, '33, no, '32, something, a man, I guess you'd call him Dad's boss, at the Lidgerwood Company, stopped one day and left off two rabbits. [laughter] His son was taking care of the rabbits and Mr. McClain, apparently, didn't want the rabbits around anymore. So, being Dad's boss, we got the rabbits. [laughter] We had the cage in our backyard. Actually, we had a grape arbor and we'd put the cage under the arbor, and, one morning, [when we] went out, one of the rabbits was gone; just have to assume that it was somebody's dinner. So, then, we decided that … the other rabbit's going to be somebody's target, too. So, … I talked my seventh grade homeroom teacher [in]to taking that rabbit. [laughter] I brought it to school, left it in the principal's office. She took him home. I think the rabbit thrived. So, a little before that, yes, it was when we still had the two rabbits, one got out of its cage. … I guess maybe we were letting it run and, somehow, our dog Spot got in the yard and he chased that rabbit around, around, around. It actually squealed, and … Spotty corralled it and got to the poor rabbit and its left hind leg was broken. [laughter] Dad took it to the vet and he put a cast on it. [laughter]

SH: You were meant to preserve that poor rabbit's life. Did you have other pets, besides your dog and the rabbits?

WP: No, not in Linden. We acquired one in Waterbury, a little fellow. He was killed while I was at the University of Virginia. … He was buddies with a great, big police dog, this little fellow, and I think the police dog led him across the street at the wrong time. … So, I just heard about that through the mail. Then, we had another dog after that, back in Linden, and I think that was probably the last one. Then, my folks were getting to the point where they really didn't need one.

SH: How long were your parents in Waterbury? Did you move back after you graduated? I know you came to Rutgers at that point, but did the whole family come back to New Jersey?

WP: I'd say two-and-a-half to three years. My parents returned to New Jersey, but my sister stayed with friends in order to graduate from high school there. From Waterbury, I matriculated at the University of Virginia. I hadn't been thinking too much about where to go and a friend from Linden, my best friend … of those years, was putting in for Virginia and he said, "Why not you?" and the folks said, "Okay." So, we both were accepted, and I guess it was maybe midway into that year that Dad was transferred from Waterbury back to the Sperry Company, which is the parent of Waterbury Tool, and so, I left Waterbury to go to college, but I returned from college back to Linden. [laughter] … Our house had been rented, so, they just took it back again

and [lived there] while I was at Virginia, which I enjoyed. I still think of it nicely, but it wasn't quite for me. …

SH: What was your major when you matriculated at Virginia?

WP: It was chemistry, and I knew I wasn't going to get to graduate school, so, I asked the professor in charge of the department, what kind of a future did I have in chemistry without a post-graduate degree? He said, "Well, you'll probably be an analytical chemist," just a routine [chemist], and that didn't appeal to me. … I don't know [if] I was getting homesick, or something of the sort, but I really didn't want to go back, even though they offered me a scholarship, believe it or not, the only time I made the dean's list. [laughter] I did make the dean's list there.

SH: That is good. Did your friend stay? Did he continue on at Virginia?

WP: Yes, he stayed for two more years. He was in pre-med. In those days, I guess you didn't have to finish the full four years to enter med school. So, he went on to, I think, the University of Maryland, eventually became a surgeon. We stayed in touch through the years. … Eventually, he moved to Indiana. … I was godparent to their first child, and there's another tragedy; that boy committed suicide. So, we've had the ups and the downs here. Why he committed suicide, I don't know. …

SH: When you went to Waterbury, did you continue being active, such as trying out for football? What were your activities at Waterbury? What kind of guidance did you get from the faculty there?

WP: It was an excellent faculty. I'd say I got good teaching. I probably belonged to a school club, but I think my chief activity was a sort of semi-scholastic HiY thing. I thought about going out for football; when I found out where I lived and where the practice field was, no way. [laughter] … We lived in a great, old colonial-type house up there in Waterbury. It was owned by an ex-mayor of Waterbury and it came with about, oh, I want to say ten acres, mostly hillside, but there was a longitudinal stretch that went well away from the house and that way we found out that it was sort of a playground for the neighborhood. … About midway down, halfway up this adjacent hill, was a big tree, and from this tree was a rope, and, every so often, you'd look over there and there'd be six or eight kids waiting to swing on this rope. Then, one day, the rope broke, and I guess that gave me my first entrée, as I ran over and rendered first aid. [laughter] … I guess it was the same evening, I looked out there and there were three or four neighborhood men with a saw and they cut the tree down. [laughter] I don't know whether they talked to the mayor about that or not, Mayor [Francis P.] Guilfoile.

SH: Down came the tree.

WP: Wanted to make sure that nobody else was going to fall off of that tree. [laughter] So, I think I got to know a few of the kids then, and then, going from the house, there was a store two or three blocks away, [I would] take care of a lot of the grocery shopping. I guess I met some of the kids while walking back and forth there. Then, one day, I'm, I guess, standing at the front

door, just looking out at the road, and two young ladies walked by, and then, they suddenly turned around, walked back, came up the steps, introduced themselves. They were from a neighborhood church and invited us to join the young people's group, and that really became a focal point, a minister's daughter and a friend. The minister's daughter and my sister became excellent friends. But, throughout that, we met kids from that general neighborhood. … That was a Depression experience, because the church was an old, big, two-storey house, and right next to it was a finished, brick, traditional church building and they had run out of money, couldn't finish the interior. So, they bought or rented this house. The nave of the church, [if] you [can] call it that, was the parlor, at one time, and the upstairs, classrooms … had been bedrooms and whatnot, and, for the two years that we lived there, that was the church, West Hill Methodist Episcopal Church, where Reverend Shinn and Mrs. Shinn presided. They had three kids. As I said, my sister became very friendly with Jeannette Shinn.

Then, this longitudinal land plot I mentioned, it wasn't wide enough to make a good baseball field, but we played baseball there. Maybe we played some football. I don't recall, but baseball for sure, and we had enough kids that we formed a neighborhood baseball team and we did play other teams. We were invited by the Waterbury YMCA to come out to their camp and play against camp teams. So, there was that kind of connection, and then, these three older fellows that I mentioned earlier, they would include me in on a lot of their activities. They were eighteen, nineteen, twenty, maybe, all working and all driving their own cars, but we'd get together and we'd go bowling or go to the movies together. It was all good, clean fun, except for that iron mine, and another cave we went into, somewhere up near the Massachusetts border. [laughter] These are things I didn't want to do, but peer pressure, whatever.

SH: Were they looking for anything in particular or just looking?

WP: No, just curious; Scotty Gardner, Andy Wylie, Bill Olander, all gone now. I was in touch with two of them, up until the time that they died. So, [I] made good friends along the way, wherever we were. Just those two years in Connecticut and I'm still hearing from one of the gals, never dated her, I mean, we're just good friends, but, now, she is a grandmother, all kinds of grandchildren. [laughter]

SH: When it came time to talk about college and where you were going to go, were there any other schools on your list, other than the University of Virginia?

WP: I really can't think of any. Jeannette Shinn was going to the University of Connecticut at Storrs, and one of the other older gals was going to another college, but they never really talked about it. … I don't know … why I wasn't thinking more seriously of it, and, if it hadn't been for Lloyd, back there in Linden, [laughter] I might still be wondering where to go. I had hopes of going to Annapolis, the Naval Academy. … If we had stayed in Linden, I might have had a chance, because Dad had those political contacts. So, when we moved out of the state, then, of course, that was not worth a darn, and then, my eyes went bad, and so, I don't know. I really had no applications in any other place, don't know what I wanted to do. [laughter]

SH: When you decided that you were not going back to the University of Virginia, would that have been at the spring of 1938?

WP: Yes. …

SH: What did you do when you came back to Linden? Did you have a job?

WP: No. Like we said earlier, I tried. I interviewed at places like Merck, but, really, the only kind of jobs they were offering was, you go down to the gate in the backyard and the first guys when they opened the gate [and] looked at got the jobs. … After I got into ceramics, at Rutgers, I was interviewed for a summer job and I blew the interview; I know that. One of my classmates got it. So, again, it was just what I could pick up.

SH: When did you make the decision to apply to Rutgers?

WP: It was probably in the Spring of '38. So, I sent away … for a catalog and went through it and ceramics sort of leaped out at me. So, I pursued it further and, when I got back to New Jersey, I began to dig deeper.

SH: You had done this in Virginia. You had looked at the catalog in Virginia.

WP: … Yes. … Virginia was beginning to lose its attraction for me. … It was a challenging school, had the honor system, and I made … the freshman baseball team there, but there was just something. I think that all these classmates had off campus friends, they were not staying at college on weekends, and so forth; I was lonely.

SH: This was in Charlottesville.

WP: Yes, lovely place. The fellows we lived with all seemed to have other contacts. … Even my roommate, Lloyd, [who] was from Linden, he seemed to be disappearing on weekends. … Eric Bancroft, [the] fellow who drew that picture over there on the wall, he'd go to dances at the nearby Virginia schools. He had some contacts and Bill Hicks was the other fellow. He came from Alexandria, Virginia, which was sixty miles or so up the road, and so, I spent a lot of weekends by myself. [laughter]

SH: Making the dean's list.

WP: And I always think with pleasure, and a little chagrin, about the baseball team. … I was a walk-on. I'd never pitched for anybody, just neighborhood, never owned a pair of spikes, never owned a baseball cap. [laughter] I went to the gym and tried out and was selected for the pitching staff, and then, I found out the only reason I did make it was because somebody who had been pre-ordained to be on the team had muffed it scholastically, and I got his uniform, but I never pitched in a game, just batting practice. … I did make trips with the team, got to several different colleges, Washington and Lee among them. So, I had that experience, which I still treasure, but, then, at the end of the year, this always, still, gripes me, at the end of the year, [there was] going to be the team picture. So, I show up, go in, going to put the uniform on. The coach said, "No;" the fellow who hadn't made the team because of scholastics showed up and put the uniform on, and he had his picture taken with the team and I didn't. [laughter]

SH: Handwriting was on the wall; I think you needed to leave.

WP: Yes, that bothered me, and I coined the phrase, "The walk-on walked off." But, it was like my friend, my roommate, Lloyd, that he had played varsity on the Linden High School team. He went out for the Virginia team. [laughter] No way; it was all pre-selected. Every freshman, you know, they'd been scouted out. I think two of the fellows that were on the baseball team wound up in the majors, but I could keep them from hitting. [laughter] No, it was time for me to leave, really, sort of psychologically. So, then, I went and was interviewed, by Dr. [George H.] Brown, at Rutgers, and was accepted, with conditions, as I'd missed freshman required classes. RU didn't give me credit for the baseball time at Virginia, so, I was obliged to take ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], and then, plus, the full sophomore curriculum. That put me under considerable pressure. So, I didn't do as well at Rutgers as I did at Virginia. [laughter] That was odd, too. You know, Virginia had a passing grade of seventy-five and Rutgers was, I think, the equivalent of sixty-five, at the time, and I was having a harder time making those sixty-fives than I'd had at Virginia making the seventy-fives. Of course, I had to do better than seventy-five to make the dean's list, but I did have a seventy-five at Virginia, too, just lucky to get it. [laughter] Now, where were we?

SH: You said you interviewed with Dr. Brown. When did you interview?

WP: I went in early summer. The ceramics building houses something else now, but I remember being in a classroom and seeing the ceramic formulas, as opposed to [chemistry], because they were spread out and shown as oxides. Yes, that was a bit different than what I was used to seeing in chemistry classes, but I was impressed by the layout, and Rutgers then looked like a typical college. It has changed a lot since I've been there, and it was homier, and near home and a little less expensive.

SH: Where were you housed that first year?

WP: In Virginia?

SH: No, at Rutgers.

WP: It was a private home on College Avenue. I think it was right next to the DU House, [Delta Upsilon Fraternity], if you know where that is. It was up near, was it Ford Hall? up towards that end. … It was, I'm guessing, owned by a widow lady, just put some money down and find out who I was going to live with when the school year started. The living quarters at Virginia, though, they were exquisite. … We had two-room suites, one study room and one bedroom, and a bathroom that you shared [with] two guys in the adjoining suite. So, if you got along, you had a four-room spread, even had fireplaces in there. It was sort of a quadrangle. I do remember, we overlooked, we were sort of on a rise, the law school building was over there and, often times, we'd see Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr.'s convertible in front.

SH: Really?

WP: Never saw him, but the car was there. I don't think he lived on campus.

SH: How did you know it was his car?

WP: Well, the word gets around. …

SH: Did it have "FDR Jr." plates?

WP: No, I don't think so. [laughter] In those days, there weren't that many cars around, either, you know.

SH: In the house on College Avenue, did you have roommates? Were there other guys, like yourself, renting?

WP: Yes, there were three or four of us. … We're all strangers, might have been four, and, you know, I honestly can't recall whether we had separate rooms or whether we shared rooms or not. We didn't get along with the landlady. We weren't too rambunctious, but we were kids. I had a ping-pong ball and, having been a pitcher, said, "Let's play baseball with the ping-pong ball." So, we'd scoot the ball around and maybe get a little twist on it, and somebody'd be there with a paper, swat it, and Mrs. Whatever-Her-Name-Was would yell up and tell us to stop, and we'd ignore her. [laughter]

SH: Were they also sophomores or freshmen or upperclassmen?

WP: Two of them had to be sophomores, because we became fraternity brothers and graduated at the same time. One of them wanted to be a lawyer and Mrs. So-and-So was about to throw him out. He was going to give me a chattel mortgage, so that his property would be protected if she threw him out. … He's the one that got me out of there, because he was walking down College Avenue one day and I guess somebody invited him into the Kappa Sig House. … Through him, I got an invitation and I think, I don't know for sure whether Roy got an invitation then or not, because it took him a couple of years to make up his mind. So, I left the rooming house before the term was up and moved into the fraternity house.

SH: Do you remember your roommates' names?

WP: Well, one was Roy Anderson. He comes along later in the story, but Irv, Irv Johnstone. Irv was the one who was the would-be lawyer, and became one, I think. … Another fellow, I just lost track of; all I remember is, he had a cousin who played football for the University of Pennsylvania, who came and visited one time. Roy never lived in the fraternity house, Irv did, and, as I said, it was through Irv that I got this invitation and became, eventually, a pledge.

SH: Was there another one? Were there four of you?

WP: That's all I can put together.

SH: When you came to Rutgers as a transfer student, you said that you had to take ROTC. Did you take ROTC at the University of Virginia as well?

WP: No, no. In those days, ROTC was a requirement at Rutgers, unless you had a good excuse, I guess, but, coming in as a sophomore, I didn't think I would have to, and I don't know whether it was because I didn't get credit, scholastic credit, for the term I played baseball that they were having me make it up that way.

SH: I think ROTC was mandatory for two years.

WP: Yes.

SH: Freshman and sophomore year.

WP: Yes.

SH: Were there other organizations or other social activities that you participated in, like the Soph Hop?

WP: No, I couldn't dance very well, never went to one of the school dances, went to the fraternity dances, but, of course, joined the ceramic club. I can't think of [anything else]. That reminds me, going back to UVA--non-dancers could, at proms, sit down in the gym balcony and listen to the famed bands. Also, in that same gym, a different activity--intercollegiate boxing championships. One of the most impressive boxers was Glenn Howatt, representing Rutgers. To my surprise, he turned out to be a ceramics major, whom I met after my transfer.

SH: Did you have mandatory chapel when you were there?

WP: Yes, yes. Somehow, they kept track of us. So, we had to show our name or sign a stub or something, and we had to go to that. I know that, from some of the interviews you've done, that you always ask the question about Dean Metzger, and, as far as I know, I never met the Dean, never had any connection with the Dean, never had any connection with any of the administration.

SH: I guess that is good. That meant you stayed out of trouble.

WP: I guess it did. …

SH: Did you go to the football games?

WP: Oh, yes. I don't think I ever missed a home game and, in fact, in my ignorance, I almost got my head knocked off at one of them. [laughter] … That year, they were still playing at Nielson Field and one of … my housemates and I went together, maybe the first game of the year. It was against New York University, NYU, and they beat Rutgers. Now, in my two or three weeks there, I'd become a rabid Rutgers supporter. So, I dashed out to one of the goal posts, presumably to protect it from the predators from NYU, and I started pulling people off it.

[laughter] The next thing I knew, my arms are being held behind me and somebody's standing there with a clenched fist and about to hit me in the jaw, and my housemate, Roy, stepped in and said, "No, he's one of us." [laughter]

SH: They did not identify you yet as a Rutgers man.

WP: I didn't have a hat [on] or a uniform or red or black. … I had become absorbed enough to [react]. I saw these people milling around and I think … the goal posts are wavering a bit, so, I thought, "This is the NYU crowd." … If it hadn't been for Roy, I'd have probably had false teeth. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever find out who was about to clobber you?

WP: No. Roy seemed to know him. So, Roy had to be a sophomore. … Roy was a brilliant guy and was a very personable guy, too. So, I think he was well-known around and he was my savior that day. [laughter] …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: During the break, you were talking about Lindbergh and the zeppelins, [airships created by Count Ferdinand Von Zeppelin].

WP: Well, just things that were of paramount interest … in that time, [and] knowing that there was this competition to get across the Atlantic, solo, and there was a, what? twenty-five-thousand-dollar prize, I think, for the first one to do it. … Lindbergh dealt with Ryan Aircraft Company, I think it was, and sort of designed this airplane that he couldn't see out of, took off from Long Island, I believe, and barely cleared the wires and [was] on his way, and then, the next thing we know, he's at, was it Le Bourget Field, or something like that? in Paris and [was] overwhelmed. They almost tore his airplane apart and the USA sent a Navy cruiser over to Europe to bring him back. … I guess there was one of these tickertape paper parades, and then, he flew around, goodwill trips, and so forth, and then, met, what's her name? Anne …

SH: Morrow?

WP: Morrow, yes, and I guess they did a lot of flying together and, by that time, I think, he was consulting, made enough money, somewhere or another, to buy that big house [in East Amwell, New Jersey]. … He was one of my idols at the time, until he got messed up with the Nazis, which changed my opinion, but I still respect him for all that he did. In that time, too, here in Akron, they were building dirigibles, the [USS] *Macon* [(ZRS-5)] and the [USS] *Akron* [(ZRS-4)], and we had taken from Germany, part of the reparations, one of their zeppelins, that became, was it the [USS] *Los Angeles* [(ZR-3)]? (I think the *Akron* and *Macon* had Lidgerwood-made trapeze hoists for handling aircraft built into them.)

SH: I think so.

WP: And then, the *Hindenburg*, [a German airship made famous by catching on fire and crashing at Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey in May 1937], would be flying into Lakehurst. … Where we lived, in Linden, it's along the shoreline, more or less, and just look out to the east and, there, you see these big … air vessels lumbering up. They were just typical of the time, but it was a mark of the time, and then, one day, we learned that the Burlington Railroad had developed a streamline train and they were going to run it on the Pennsylvania tracks. … We went over and stood along the railway and watched this streamline thing go by, the *Silver Streak* or whatever it was. Everything we did, we walked to, [laughter] but we thought those were things that [were special]. I can even remember somebody parachuting over pretty near our house, just [that] the people were doing that for kicks, and friends of mine were really into aviation, theoretically. … We did get over to Hadley Field, [in South Plainfield, New Jersey], a number of times. I even sat in an airplane that was there, wicker seats, and I guess that field was shut down after awhile. The airport was there, and then, people moved in and they said, "We don't want to live by an airport." [laughter] The airport lost.

SH: That is often the case.

WP: One of my classmates from Linden High took that CAP [Civil Air Patrol] program and, eventually, wound up to be a general in the Army, wasn't somebody that I knew, … named Davis. I think he was in our class, but I just didn't really know him, but people were getting started that way. One of the older fellows that I was friendly with in Linden, his father … ran the best butcher shop in town. They were Hungarians; you were asking about the … ethnicity of the neighborhood. He was into aviation to the point where he became an aircraft mechanic, went to Casey Jones Institute, over in New York. I don't know whether he ever became a flyer or not, but he was a mechanic. I don't … think he ever even got in the service, but those were some of the things that attracted us. …

SH: You mentioned that you were aware of when the Japanese invaded Manchuria, China. How did you get your news? Was it through school, current events, or newspapers at home?

WP: Well, we always took the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, which no longer exists, I'm told, and on Sundays, Dad took the *Herald Tribune* and the *New York Journal*, or *Journal American*. My father was always aware. He ate up the news, [laughter] and, somewhere in grade school, we had the opportunity to subscribe to a current events paper, and that was an enlightenment to me. I just enjoyed that. So, I don't know where I got the news from. It might have been just the radio. We always listened to Lowell Thomas, among others, and, speaking of the radio, going back to when I was really a kid, we had a crystal set and we'd tune in to, I think it was [Pittsburgh-based] KDKA, and you had one set of earphones and somebody would listen with one ear and the other would listen with the other ear. [laughter] I'm just trying to think of other sort of highlights of the [period].

SH: What about holidays? How did you spend the different holidays, whether it be Christmas or the Fourth of July or Memorial Day? Was it called that then? [Editor's Note: Memorial Day, a US Federal holiday celebrated on the last Monday of May to honor American war casualties, was originally called Decoration Day, but both names were used from the 1880s through World War II. In 1967, Memorial Day was legally declared the official name of the holiday.]

WP: Yes, I guess it was Decoration Day back then. Armistice Day became Veterans Day. Linden always had a parade on Decoration Day. I may have been in one of them; I don't know whether it was with the Boy Scouts or not. I know I was attending then. All these still, then, young fellows from World War I marched down the street with their anodized helmets, VFW and American Legion, and they had drum and bugle corps. … Decoration Day, there would, I know, definitely be a parade. July Fourth, I'm not sure. I know we would go to fireworks. Labor Day, often times, a picnic up to White House, New Jersey, on somebody's farm.

SH: Did you go to the shore?

WP: Yes. My Uncle Elwood, Mother's brother, had a cottage at Point Pleasant and we would drive down there, maybe just for the afternoon. Several years, Dad rented the place. It was just across the street from the Manasquan River. … Elwood had a rowboat. So, he could fish on the river, or even crab, which I also did when he let me take the boat out. There was Clark's Landing, had a merry-go-round and [was] about two miles or so from the beach. So, we used to drive down there frequently, and then, other times, we'd go to Asbury Park and swim in [the] Natatorium. Is that still there?

SH: I think they are trying to restore a lot of that.

WP: That was an indoor swimming pool, saltwater.

SH: I cannot say for sure.

WP: At that time, Asbury Park was a rather attractive place, and then, next to it was, what? Grove, something Grove.

SH: Ocean Grove?

WP: Ocean Grove, which was strictly bound by the blue laws, [religious laws regulating behavior]. … I don't think you could even park your car, on Sunday, in there. I used to walk down the boardwalk quite a bit. We rented a room or two, at Asbury Park, a couple of times. So, yes, [I] enjoyed the shore, and then, other friends, not high school, more or less from church, in later years, lived in Breton Woods, New Jersey, which, now, I think, may be called Brick. I can't find Breton Woods anymore. [laughter] They had a home there and the boys used to go down … and we'd spend weekends there, again. … Maybe it wasn't the Metedeconk, at Point Pleasant; [the] Metedeconk must have been there off of Breton Woods. [Editor's Note: Both towns are located on the Metedeconk River.] I sort of … drew a blank there, but we would go swimming and fishing and whatnot there. That's when I was a bit older, both before and after the war.

SH: Did you go to the movies?

WP: [laughter] Yes, [as] kids we did, the Plaza Theater, in Linden, Saturdays, only cost a nickel to get in, something like that, and maybe they'd … give you something every week, like, I

remember a kite one time and a candy bar another time. … We'd line up at the ticket booth before the theater was ever open and, about a half-hour later, the ticket seller, you could see her walking down the street towards [us]. [laughter] We were there, waiting for her. The serials, … I can't recall whether there was a piano player, whether we go back that far or not, but it … started before talkies, I forget, … Janet Gaynor, Wallace Beery, maybe, Marie Dressler, Charlie somebody. …

SH: Charlie Chaplin?

WP: Yes, he was one of them. I was thinking of one of the matinee idols, [Charles Farrell]. I think he was paired up with Janet Gaynor. Yes, we went, regardless of what the picture was. [laughter] … I got to be antipathetic to them, later on, hardly saw any in the '40s, until I got in the Navy, and then, I'd often go to the theater. …

SH: I want to talk a little bit more about your sophomore year at Rutgers and the curriculum. Was there a favorite professor? What do you remember? This would have been in 1938 and 1939.

WP: Well, Professor Brown taught the freshmen course that I was obliged to make up. There was a professor named [John R.] Kauffman, and [Laurence E.] Larry Kane, he's mentioned in some of your interviews. You interviewed a couple of friends of mine. There wasn't anyone really outstanding; Professor Morgan. No, I never was carried away with any one of the professors. I never was that motivated by any of them. Dr. Brown was a bit of a stodgy fellow, as was Professor Morgan. … He whistled a lot and one of my classmates used to say, "Music in the Morgan Manner," if you remember Russ Morgan, … or heard of Russ Morgan's band. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Big Band leader Russ Morgan hosted a radio program called *Music in the Morgan Manner*.]

SH: It was [Rutgers University's Eleventh President, Reverend Dr. William Henry Steele] Demarest who had the whistling …

WP: Oh, "Whistling Willie."

SH: You knew him as well.

WP: Yes, I knew of him. He'd talk to us, like, maybe [at] chapel, yes, "Whistling Willie." … Morgan, I guess he whistled tunes and he was a good professor. I think he took us on some of our fieldtrips.

SH: Where did the ceramicists go on fieldtrips?

WP: Well, we went to a refractories plant in Philadelphia. We went to an instrument plant in Philadelphia. We went to the plant [that] became my future employer, made chemical stoneware. That was just over in Keasbey, New Jersey. Where else did we go? Oh, yes, a tile plant and one producing terra cotta. … In those days, they were just day trips. I think, later on, they may have arranged for trips on a broader scope, like three or four days, something like that.

SH: Were there expositions that you were involved with?

WP: … [I recall] classmates that worked for DuPont at the World's Fair, Bob Owen among them. I think Bob, yes, I know, Bob mentioned it in his [interview].

SH: That is why I remembered to ask.

WP: … I don't remember whether we went over as a class or just on a personal basis, but I remember Bob working there and listening to his spiel. I read that he thought, this interested me, … that kept him from getting his Phi Beta Kappa key, because he had to spend more time at the fair than he could spare to put into his studies. His dad was a Phi Beta, and so, he wanted Bob to be one. He was a bright fellow, as you know, and I was in touch with Bob up until the week that he died.

SH: I still hear from his lovely wife, Mary Owen.

WP: … I just have a note from her. She's not inclined to write much anymore, must be pretty weak or pretty depressed, one or the other. You don't put that in your [letter].

SH: Were there other things that you got involved with at Rutgers that sophomore year?

WP: Well, there would mostly be the fraternity. I moved into the house and they put me in with two junior ceramics students, [J.] Talbot Smith and Bob Braid, got to know a number of new, nice guys. I became the pitcher for the fraternity softball team, did that all three years that I was on campus.

SH: Did you ever think of trying out for the team?

WP: The baseball team? Yes, I did, based on my Virginia experience, [laughter] I went to the gym and started throwing. In fact, there was another guy named Perkins who became a varsity pitcher. … My arm had just lost its zip. Softball, you go underhand, and then, if I had been picked, it wouldn't have worked, because we ceramists probably had the fullest class schedule of anyone on campus. Maybe there were others equal to us, but we had several classes every morning, and then, we had labs in the afternoons. … I know, at one point there, we were spending forty hours a week in classes and labs. … Trying to get off to a ball team practice and being forced to take the ROTC, that took precedence over my labs. I had to go to [them]. So, when the spring came and we were out marching again, [I would] put the uniform on and go out; well, in the meantime, there's a lab going on. If we got off of marching soon enough, [I would go] over and pick up what I could or come in another time, make it up. That was really, really tough. I can understand Bob saying, "I didn't make Phi Beta because I had to work for DuPont." I can hardly make a passing grade. [laughter]

SH: Did you get home to Linden very much that first year?

WP: Well, I stayed pretty much on campus, even though Linden was thirty minutes away or so, by train. … I didn't have a car, but, for some fraternity events, I would go home and borrow my father's car and take a date from Linden to the [fraternity] and drive her back home and take the train back to New Brunswick the next day. The momentous day when we beat Princeton, that was the inauguration of the new stadium, [the 1938 football game between Princeton and Rutgers]. I remember yelling my lungs out, hardly could talk, took the train home from the ballgame, picked up the car, picked up whoever I was dating and [went] back to the fraternity. [laughter]

SH: Thank heavens for youth, right?

WP: [laughter] And, sometimes, I'd stay on the weekend, the house would be deserted, and, again, it was sort of like Virginia in the springtime. I was on campus and nobody else was. [laughter]

SH: Were there activities for the fraternity? It seems like they went to the Poconos.

WP: To my recollection, we never did.

SH: You did not, okay.

WP: Maybe some of the guys did. Well, there were a few fellows that were better off financially. We never hurt financially, but we didn't swim in money.

SH: Did you have a housemother?

WP: No, we had a house brother. [laughter]

SH: Really?

WP: Yes. His name was Bill Overbay; he was about two or three years [older], must have been a graduate student, maybe. … We had a house cook and this fellow, a great fellow, his name--Chet Clark. The guys weren't too wild. We really didn't need a disciplinarian. There were a couple of hardnosed guys in the house that could keep things somewhat under control. I think you've heard of Vinnie Utz, [Rutgers College Class of 1942]. He was in the house. [laughter] He was a hard one to curb. Do they ever mention that Vinnie won a Silver Star in the war?

SH: Please, share any story you have.

WP: Well, we were in the same initiation class when hell week came. Now, we had a comparatively mild hell week. I understand that the year before was pretty bad and rather revolting, [laughter] but, being a ceramist, I was assigned to count the number of tile in the house, bathrooms and floors. [laughter] We had kind of a cupola in the front to the house. You had to go [up] two flights of stairs or so, then, it would look right out on College Avenue. … If you were in or near the house, at the hour, you had to run up those stairs and cuckoo out the hour. [laughter] That was one of the things we had to do. I guess there were cleanups. I got

paddled a few times, nothing severe, nothing too brutal. One fellow was kind enough to ask whether he could hit me. [laughter] Then, one of the brothers, Johnny Arthur, thought he could embarrass me and Bob Johnson by sending us to a house where several student nurses were living, and we were to go knock on the door and ask something about fallopian tubes. [laughter] Well, the girls were very friendly, wound up having a great time. [laughter] … I don't remember whether John was disappointed in the way it turned out or not, but I know, … instead of being embarrassed, we were introduced into some nurse-induced necking. We were grateful to the fraternity for that. Nothing ever came of it afterwards, … and then, a formal initiation, one person at a time. There were a number of us going through. We spent an afternoon playing bridge, waiting for our name to be called, and I think we had to dress in tuxes for that. [The] fraternity was a good experience. That was the house that was owned by the Johnson Family, at one time. [Editor's Note: The Johnson Family refers to the founders of the Johnson & Johnson Company, headquartered in New Brunswick, New Jersey.] Then, one year, [I] went back for a class reunion, found myself parking my car on where our meeting room used to be. They'd knocked the house down.

SH: That is what I had heard. It sounds like a lovely house, though.

WP: I may have a picture. Well, I don't have the album down here. It was a nice house, old-fashioned, but [nice], separate dining room, separate living room, and … a front parlor, where, on dance nights, the band would be and you'd dance there, and then, I don't know what happened, but, the next two years, I became a commuter. So, I was riding back and forth on the Pennsylvania Railroad. There were a number of Linden-ites that … had been doing that, too, there, and girls from NJC [New Jersey College for Women, now Rutgers University's Douglass Residential College]. … One of the people that's still active on campus, I see, by the alumni publication, George Claflen, [Rutgers College Class of 1942], I think he might have been one. His sister was, I believe, Jane; a fellow named Joe Leib and several others. We got to know the train schedules pretty well. Being home got me more involved with the church group, seeing I always went to church. … I guess, maybe, by that time, it was now the Linden Reformed Church, which had a pretty active youth group. I was, perhaps, one of the older people in that and got to be their president, and so, that took care of a lot of social activities. We'd have meetings, and then, there were fellows and gals that … we became more friendly with outside the youth fellowship activities.

SH: Did you stay active with the fraternity as well?

WP: Oh, yes, made all the meetings, made the parties, took care of any obligations that might have come up, you know, definitely made all the softball games. [laughter] … You had a place to go between classes or have lunch there, if you wanted to, or just pop off in somebody's room for awhile. … So, I made some really good friends, that I'm outliving, still hear, now and again, from one, Winfield Goulden.

SH: I have not interviewed him.

WP: No, he's out in California now. He made a bit of a name for himself in newspapers and advertising. He wrote for the *Targum* as a student journalist. In fact, I credit myself for getting him a column.

SH: How did you do that?

WP: Well, you know, in those days, popular music was Big Bands. We all listened to them, but we all had our own tastes. I was more Guy Lombardo and Win was highly Bunny Berigan, and he got me interested in the jazz bands, the Big Bands, Duke Ellington and [Benny] Goodman and [Tommy and/or Jimmy] Dorsey, Harry James and Artie Shaw, and so forth. So, I suggested to Win, this is my story, anyway, [laughter] that he write to RCA and offer himself as a record critic, and he did, which led to a column in the *Targum*. … The reason, I think, I was the one, the instigator, is because they answered him, but chided him for not having put his return address on his letter. [laughter] The only way they knew how to get him; he did put a return address in, I think, you know, the outside corner. [laughter] … So, I associate all of that with me getting him started. I don't think he remembers that, anyway. [laughter]

SH: You did not have to type it for him, did you?

WP: No, but he became, he's still interested with, [the music industry], and was managing a band made up of these *emeritus* bandsmen of our era that were still playing. We'd go off to some of the places where the bands played. … Frank Dailey's Meadowbrook was one of them, and hotels in New York. That was a big part of our lives, the disc jockeys, Martin Block's *Make-Believe Ballroom*, and, in the war, station WOV became "WOV for Victory," but, any time of the day, almost, you could tune in and get a band from somewhere, and radio was so important there, the comedians of the day and you'd get some good other music, too, martial band music, symphonic music, classical music. …

SH: Many of those artists came to campus as well, right?

WP: Yes. Now, you got Big Bands, of course, for the four big dances. I don't remember that we had too many of [the] brightest luminaries. I remember, we had some big names on campus, Herbert Hoover, [Thirty-First President of the United States], for one, Wendell Willkie, [Republican nominee in the 1940 Presidential election], for another. Somebody gave us a talk on agronomy, but I can't tell you [who]. [laughter] Those were compulsory affairs. You had to attend, to listen to Herbert Hoover or Willkie, and there were a couple others that they lined up like that. …

SH: I did not realize that Hoover continued speaking after his Presidency.

WP: He was there. Funny, I just finished a book called *Five Days in Philadelphia* [by Charles Peters], which is about Willkie being nominated and Roosevelt's nomination for a third term, and Herbert Hoover is mentioned quite a bit in there, being a hidebound isolationist and opposed to Willkie. So, he was still active then. Of course, that was another thing, that Herbert Hoover was saddled with the Depression, and then, Franklin Roosevelt coming along and at least inspiring people, still, I guess, questionable, how truly effective his actions were or whether it was just the

normal course of events that brought us back out, but, hence, that term, "Hooverville," you know, and, "A chicken in every pot," [a slogan associated with Herbert Hoover's 1928 Presidential campaign].

SH: Do you remember any incidents that came up around when Adolf Hitler moved into Poland in 1939? Was it ever discussed on campus? [Editor's Note: Interviewer is referring to the invasion of Poland by Adolf Hitler's Germany on September 1, 1939, initiating World War II.]

WP: Not much with the people that I knew. No, I think, in one of your interviews, you asked whether there were peace demonstrations, or something like that. I never attended any, but I think there were some and I think some of them were put together by a student named Joe Siry, S-I-R-Y. … I think he was a classmate.

SH: I believe so.

WP: … In the fraternity house, several of the guys were four-year ROTC, on their way to commissions. I guess we were wishing it hadn't happened and, you know, our futures were on the line, and there was the talk, of what became a reality, in 1940, the draft.

SH: You would have been old enough at that point, too.

WP: It was anybody over eighteen, wasn't it? [Editor's Note: The draft was originally for twenty-one to thirty-year-olds; the age range was later changed to eighteen to forty-five.] I don't think they took you out of college at that point.

SH: No, but you had to register, I think.

WP: Yes, we were registered, and then, December 7, 1941, came along.

SH: What do you remember about that? We know it is your birthday as well. [laughter]

WP: Well, I remember it quite vividly, but, see, I had …

SH: You had graduated in May.

WP: Yes, and, a couple of weeks later, I took a train to Cincinnati, found my way to Hartwell, Ohio, [a section of Cincinnati], lucked into a rooming house. I went in cold, didn't even know where I was going to stay, and, as the sun was setting and [with] me walking around blindly, I saw this sign, "Rooms." [laughter] So, I moved in and, that weekend, started working for this Cambridge Tile Company out there. … Shall we go into that story?

SH: Sure, unless you want to say something about your graduation or your senior year at Rutgers. Is there anything we did not cover?

WP: Well, let's see, senior year, I knew I was going to graduate. I got a job interview, and this might be significant, with this tile company out here in Ohio, and I was offered the job. … I

wasn't sure I wanted to go out to Ohio. So, I asked Professor Brown whether there were other interviews available. [He said], "Oh, no, you've had your one."

SH: Everybody gets one. [laughter]

WP: And I went around a couple of places in the area, but there was nothing doing. So, I went to Ohio. So, that was another experience. Oh, I enjoyed my graduation week. I went back on campus, the house was open, did all the foolish things, I guess, you do and attended [graduation], had to wear a cap and gown. Some of the family came and bought me a drink and dinner. … Going back a bit, I became a sort of playwright for the ceramic club in my senior year. … The class was given the task of setting up some kind of program for an evening, the December meeting of the ceramic club. So, I wrote a sort of a silly group of poems, kind of satirizing the industry and the school, and each of my classmates was assigned a verse and each memorized their piece, and so, the twelve of us made this presentation.

SH: Do you still have a copy of it?

WP: Yes. [laughter] Very rough; I never smoothed it out at all, but I did come across it. I remember the school secretary, Emma Nawrot, coming out and calling, "Author, Author." [laughter] I'd had inclinations to be a writer, or something of that sort, at one time. I think I was a little mismatched for … the profession I got into; should have been an English teacher. I used to write poetry and try and write short stories. I'm not very good at it, kind of cringe when I see them now, [laughter] and then, after you get into industry, you know, you quit reading fiction, you quit this and that, and you're trying to stay abreast of technical developments. …

SH: Did you have a mug at the Corner Tavern, [a New Brunswick bar]?

WP: Yes. Bill Bauer, I think that was his idea, wasn't it?

SH: I do not know. I have gone there with students.

WP: Are the mugs still there?

SH: I have not taken the students back for a couple of years, but they were there a couple of years ago.

WP: That was Bill Bauer's idea.

SH: Was it, to hang them there?

WP: Yes. He was the class next to us, 1942, but he had the idea that the Class of '41 was stodgy and he was going to liven things up and one of the things was to have these mugs. So, [at] one of the class reunions, I did see my mug. …

SH: He did it for the Classes of 1941 and 1942.

WP: I don't know whether he did it for '42. You have to ask him.

SH: I will. I will see him at Reunion Weekend, when they dedicate the World War II Memorial Plaza.

WP: If you do, say hello for me.

SH: I will.

WP: I sent him a note, several years ago, on some momentous occasion, I forget what it was, but he became quite successful, a general in the Army [US Air Force] and donor of athletic facilities, or something of that sort. [Editor's Note: The Bauer Track and Field Complex on Rutgers' Livingston Campus is named for Dr. & Mrs. William Bauer.] I can remember Bill with his accordion. He was quite proficient with that. Does he ever play it? …

SH: Not that I know of.

WP: This is back after the war now, when I started going to Ceramics Society meetings. Rutgers would have a dinner for its graduates and friends and, for several years, Bill would be in there, playing his accordion, the Rutgers songs. …

SH: I will have to ask him about that.

WP: We didn't know the people in the other classes very well. There were a few that, one way or another, we got [close with], and Bill was one of those, … with the personality that he had, and so forth, that I could say that I knew, and I guess we had some contact after the war. … Class of '42 came back, a number of them, for their doctorates, the GI Bill. [Editor's Note: The 1944 GI Bill of Rights provided World War II veterans with numerous benefits, including education benefits.] Those of us … [who] graduated in '41, we had our degree and, some of us, our careers started. So, back to Cincinnati in 1941; in a couple of weeks, I found a church. You know, I always found a church, and one of the young men said, "The house I'm living in has an empty room and [would] get you out of that rooming house." So, I moved in with him and met the elderly couple that were renting out [rooms], [to] help support themselves, which was a great improvement for me. I think I paid them nine dollars a week for room and board, but, of course, you measure that against the fact I was probably making thirty-five dollars a week, [laughter] but that thirty-five dollars went pretty far. I even bought a war bond every month. These people were named Crone and he was retired and drank beer, but they were nice people and she cooked well. … His hobby was raising homing pigeons. We ate some of them.

SH: You were going to tell me what you remembered about December 7th. You were in Cincinnati then, at that point.

WP: Yes. Well, somewhere, I'm going to say late October, early November, my draft number came up, and I had registered here in New Jersey. … I had to transfer that. So, one day, I have to mount a bus and go over to Fort Thomas, Kentucky, and be subject to the draft … pre-induction examination. … At that point, I couldn't live without wearing glasses, and there was

this young, I think, I still think of him as a punk, who was probably drafted against his will, and he did not believe that I could not see without my glasses. [laughter] … He tried everything in the book to catch me and I think they even called me back to that examination station; … in other words, [I] progressed to another station, called me back. At any rate, I'm told that I passed and I say, "Okay, I'm going to be inducted. Can I go back to New Jersey and be inducted from there?" "Yes, okay." So, I guess I was going to be leaving in mid-December and on December 7, 1941, I decide to take one last look at downtown Cincinnati. So, I catch the bus and ride down and wander around … down on the levee and [I was] snapping pictures here and there, probably looking like a suspicious agent, [laughter] and I just heard somebody say, "Did you hear the news?" and the guy says, "Yes," and he didn't say what the news was, but I knew it wasn't good. So, I went back to the Crones' house and there Harry was, on the radio, and we're getting all this horrific news that the fleet's been sunk and the Japanese are knocking on the door to [the] Panama Canal and Ensign Somebody has just flown his plane down the stack of a Japanese [ship]. [I] forget that fellow's name, and I don't know whether he ever existed, but this was our first hero and he sunk a Japanese ship off the Pacific Coast. … Immediately, his son was getting an appointment to Annapolis. [laughter] Whether he really existed or not, I don't know, but there were just all these stories coming in. [Editor's Note: Mr. Perkins is referring the story of Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr., a B-17 pilot who was killed on December 10, 1941, after attacking a Japanese cruiser.] Nobody knew what was happening, except it wasn't good, but I just remember being on the banks of the Ohio River and just overhearing these people. So, I was alone when I got the news, and then, I sat with Harry for awhile. I don't know whether he offered me a beer or not. He used to buy it by the gallon, walk up to the bar with his gallon container. [laughter] So, that brought me back to New Jersey and I'm ready to be inducted and the local draft boards say, "We can't induct you. You've got an incomplete physical," and this guy out in Fort Thomas had never put down my eye reading and they said, "It's incomplete. You've got to go back for another physical." Well, they recognized the fact I couldn't see. [laughter]

SH: You did not have to go back to Kentucky.

WP: No, no. I went to Newark. So, then, I was classified 2-B, I guess it is. … Now, I'm in New Jersey, I'm 2-B, which means I'm liable, at anytime, to be called up, I don't have a job. [laughter] So, somehow, I get a lead to the Aluminum Company of America, over in Garwood, New Jersey, and I become an analytical chemist, analyzing aluminum alloys, and that lasted for awhile. Now, my father, we didn't get this far with him did we? has become, oh, what would he be? a supervisor of vocational training for war workers, or something of that nature. He was now part of the New Jersey Department of Education. …

SH: Was this to train people to work in the plants and things like that?

WP: Yes. So, he visits plants, I guess to find out their needs, and so forth, and, by good chance, he visits the General Ceramics Company in Keasbey, New Jersey, and they need a ceramist. [laughter] So, I went over and interviewed and got the job. Well, now, the draft board calls me back, and I guess I failed again. Then, the next time they called me back, the company says, "You're now too important … to us," and they got me a deferment.

SH: What year would this have been, still in 1942?

WP: It would be '42 and later, and then, I got a couple more deferments. It was getting [to be] against my will, … because I was trying to volunteer, behind the company's back, but, every time, my eyes got in the way. …

SH: Were you trying to join the Navy? I know that was where you ultimately wound up, but was it just the Navy?

WP: Well, I tried the Marine Corps, [laughter] and I tried the Navy. I actually had some friends in recruiting in the Navy and I was really hoping for a commission and, between the poor acuity and color blindness, the Navy wanted no part of me. … [I] didn't volunteer for the Army, [laughter] but I don't know why I volunteered for the Marine Corps. … Eventually, when a call came up for another pre-induction consideration, I went to our company management and said, "Not this time. I've got to get in," and, at that point, Selective Service had become less selective, lowered their physical standards. [laughter] I do remember this clearly; I got to the eye test again and the fellow says, "What do you see down there?" I say, "Honestly, I can't see it." He says, "It's an 'E' and you're in." [laughter]

SH: Oh, dear, I have heard of people memorizing the chart, but I have never heard of anybody being helped with the chart.

WP: And then, I don't know what had happened, but, the next thing I know, I'm being asked, "Which branch of the service do you want to be in?" and, the Navy had opened up, I said, "The Navy." So, that's how I got into the Navy. [laughter]

SH: To back up, is it a whole year that has gone by? When did you go in?

WP: Well, this was about early Spring of '44.

SH: Actually, almost two years had gone by. You wrote on your pre-interview survey about looking physically fit, a perfect specimen of a young man. Were you ever subjected to any sort of prejudice?

WP: No, not really, but you could sense it, or at least I imagined I could sense it, and I think there must have been some comment around, because, when I went through the induction that got me in, they had me take a special test and sent me home again until they could grade the test, and passing it meant I was going one place, failing it meant I was going another place. …

SH: You took this test in Newark.

WP: At the induction center. One of the Navy staff there, they'd seen that I was a college graduate, and so, they had better things to offer [us]. Several of us took this, I think it was called the Eddy test. [Editor's Note: The Eddy test was used to find men suitable for naval radar training in World War II.] So, I'm back home. But, what makes me think that people were kind of talking about this guy [Walt Perkins] was that my mother had a blue star flag [a service flag] ready to put up. [laughter]

SH: Someone had given it to her.

WP: … I don't know whether that or if she bought it, but she was prepared, but, in that interim period, civilian to sailor, one of the things that I thought … was what might distinguish my wartime life from that of a lot of the other deferred guys, is …

SH: An air raid warden?

WP: Yes, that.

SH: Civil Defense?

WP: Civil Defense, that's the term I'm looking for. They had a poison gas decontamination group being formed, and I thought, "Well, you know, I've had some chemistry and whatnot." So, I became a member of that and whenever there was an air raid drill, [I would] run up to the athletic field, where the lockers were, and put on my rubber uniform, gas mask and go off to someplace where they'd say, "Somebody spilled some poison gas." [laughter] So, I was in Civil Defense, and then, I joined the New Jersey State Guard. So, I was in uniform. … That was at, maybe, a July Fourth parade. The Guard had a recruiting tent, and so, I signed up, and so, became a member of [the] detachment at the Elizabeth Armory. We drilled once a week and we had one or two field operations where we simulated combat. I suspect I'm the only member of the class that ever joined the State Guard. [laughter] I do have an honorable discharge.

SH: You said your father had also been a member of the Guard.

WP: Yes, World War I.

SH: Were you commuting to Keasbey?

WP: Well, that's another aspect of the war situation. Yes, I started commuting, which was a bitch, take a train to Perth Amboy or take a train to Metuchen, and then, you become dependent on busses. I did that for a little bit. The company was bringing in a bunch of people from New York City. They'd once had an office in New York. Now, they brought them all out to Keasbey. So, they had to commute by Pennsylvania Railroad and the company had a van that picked these people up, [laughter] and I tried to get on it; no dice. No dice, "This only seats so many people and there's no seat for you;" [laughter] but the chief salesman and the chief engineer both lived in Elizabeth and they approached me to be a rider with them. They were driving in, sharing, swapping cars each week, and they needed me as much as I needed them, … because another rider meant more gas allowance for them. So, I used to walk over from our house, four or five blocks, and meet them on Route 27 and drive in with them and ride out with them. Then, if I came in to work on weekends, I'd borrow my father's car, because, with his gas card, he had an unlimited gas ration, an "S." I even got the car, now and again, for a date, but you had to be careful about that sort of thing, of course, and then, getting replacement tires was not easy. … These two men were my saviors, really. I don't think I could have continued. That commuting would have been awful. …

SH: What other effects did your mother and father and you experience? You talked about your father having the "S," but that did not apply to things like sugar.

WP: No, you had a ration book, dependant on how many in the family, I guess it was, and then, I think there were times, if you were friendly enough with a merchant, that they'd slip things through … and not take a ration [coupon]. Sometimes, that happened with meat. So, we were never without food, and I don't think we really suffered any lack of variety. The "S" card was issued because Dad's job required him to drive all over the state.

SH: Did your mother talk about knitting or making bandages? Did she do anything like that through the church?

WP: No, I don't recall that.

SH: Did your sister ever talk about what she was going through in New York then? Were you in contact with her then?

WP: No. [At] that time, she had her own life over there, and, I suspect, involved some art classes. …

SH: Had her husband been drafted?

WP: [laughter] I couldn't even tell you that. I sort of doubt it, but I don't even know when I met her husband. It was a wedding that we were told about, and I don't know. …

SH: When you came back home after taking the Eddy test, your family, obviously, was shocked to see that you were back again.

WP: Yes. [laughter]

SH: How did you explain it to them, or did you know what to tell them?

WP: Well, I knew what to tell them was, "I'm going. Never fear," [laughter] but all the guys that I went to Newark with, that selected the Navy, wound up in Maryland somewhere. I was the only one … of that group that passed the test, and I was sent to Great Lakes, and then, I went to school in South Chicago. Then, I wound up at radio school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Now, I'm still considered limited duty, because of my eyes. The Navy had a classification for that. So, I didn't have to worry, really, about going to sea. After Wisconsin, they sent me to Corpus Christi, Texas, where I had a sheltered war.

SH: Was this an air station in Corpus Christi?

WP: Yes, naval air station. …

SH: You had a regular boot camp, like everybody else, in Great Lakes.

WP: Yes.

SH: What time of the year was that then?

WP: That was the spring of '44.

SH: Spring of 1944 or spring of 1945?

WP: '44. I would like to think, realistically, that ours was not a regular boot camp, because, if it was, there were an awful lot of fellows that were unprepared for what was to come. [laughter]

SH: Was this just for men who had passed the Eddy test?

WP: No, but I think there was probably a bunch of guys in our boot division who were scheduled for different schools. Some, I think, were would-be pilots who had washed out. We weren't scheduled for the fleet or [to be] deck swabbies, at least not immediately. I guess a lot of it depended on the tests you passed, and I think they had shortened the duration of boot camps. We had a company CO [commanding officer], a second class petty officer, who wasn't very bright. We did go to classes. … We had to show that we could swim, we could jump off a deck. We had one hour of shooting, I think. Identification classes where you were supposed to learn the profile of enemy airplanes and enemy war vessels, but I seem to remember that we did a lot of time just marching. We did some construction work. I remember pushing a wheelbarrow. … Well, they did show us a simulated antiaircraft gun, maybe, and we all stood by and they showed us the routine and gave us the telephonic equipment and that lasted a half-hour or so. [laughter] It's really ridiculous, but one of the things I do remember that was warlike is, after boot camp, I was in … what's called an outgoing unit. … You moved out of boot camp and into a more permanent part of the base, given a temporary desk job. I was doing a lot of paperwork. One night, just walking in the area, all of sudden, all hell broke loose. They apparently had this simulated side, let's say of an aircraft carrier, with all the weapons, and they were teaching the prospective crew members of these ships how to really shoot. The sky was just full of incendiary light and the backlash, you could feel it a hundred feet away. … So, somebody was getting some realistic training. [laughter]

SH: You expected yours to happen any day, right?

WP: Yes, just waiting for shipping out orders. … This rig above was on Lake Michigan, so, I guess they cleared all the boat traffic out there, [laughter] and there was an aircraft carrier on the lake. I saw it from a distance, being used to teach would-be pilots how to land at sea. I think it was that they'd get an old steamboat and put a flat deck on it and these fellows are learning how to land and take off of [it]. So, my boot camp wasn't bad. … Of course, we got sick, like everybody else did, but the stay at the University of Wisconsin was quite pleasant. … It turned out there was a fellow fraternity brother, … a graduate of Wisconsin and resident of Madison, who had let it be known, in the fraternity magazine, that if any brothers from any other schools came there, let him know. So, I made a good friend. I had a place to go on weekends. … I

should say, when we were bussed to the induction center in Newark, that was my first command. The draft board gave me all the papers for the group, my first command.

SH: This is in Newark.

WP: No, this is leaving from Linden, going to Newark. The draft board gave me the papers for all the guys that were going over. …

SH: From Linden to …

WP: Newark. So, I was the nominal boss on the bus. [laughter] …

SH: Thank heavens for that one year of ROTC. [laughter]

WP: Or because I knew the chairman of the board. My second command was after I was informed that I'd passed the Eddy test. Now, they're sending me to Great Lakes. See, I'm a contingent of one, but, now, they give me two black young men. Now, here's where some of the, what will I say? the state of thinking at that time [comes in]. Ordinarily, if I was traveling by myself, I'd have gotten a ticket on a Pullman, [a sleeper car]. Given the two colored men, I rode regular passenger, because they weren't going to give the two colored fellows Pullman tickets. They were two nice fellows. We got along nicely.

SH: They were from New Jersey as well.

WP: Yes, they were from Roselle, [New Jersey]. They were going; credit the Navy with this, at least, they were sending these two fellows to machinery school, they're not sending them to cooks school, … but I had their papers, and credit the Pullman [Company], or whoever ran the dining cars, there was no problem bringing the two guys in and we didn't have to eat restricted. They opened the menu for us. It was very good that way, but those were my first two commands and the third command was, at Wisconsin, we were broken up into sections and each group had its own commander, right out of the ranks, you know. …

SH: Were the Navy personnel in dorms at the University of Wisconsin?

WP: Yes. In fact, we were living in the stadium itself, the first four or five weeks. … I have snapshots of my laundry hanging out there on the seats. [laughter]

SH: Did they have tents set up for you in the stadium?

WP: No, no, we were in the, I think it was training or uniform changing rooms. …

SH: Really?

WP: Yes, right within the structure, walk out, near the steps, and the seats were right there, walk out, look down, there's the gridiron. Then, from there, we went on to dorms. So, I was in

command of that group, until they broke us up and sent us off to our assignments. After that, I had no commands. [laughter]

SH: Were you able to take any of them to the fraternity house or would it just be you who would go to the fraternity house?

WP: … No, not the fraternity house, [the] fraternity brother's home.

SH: Oh, his house. I misunderstood. I thought you were going to the fraternity house at the University of Wisconsin.

WP: No, I never went there. I passed by, inclined once, … thought about going up. …

SH: It was to the gentleman's home that the invitation was extended. I misunderstood.

WP: Yes. He was chief engineer or chief chemist of Rayovac Battery, and he, his wife and her mother [lived there]. Then, they had a son somewhere in the service, but I'd get invited over there rather frequently, or I could invite myself. … Grandma Thumb, she was in her seventies, but she still smoked like she was in her twenties. I'd get to pay my way by bringing cartons of cigarettes, you know, [laughter] and I got invited into their clubhouse a couple of times, sat on the veranda and had a country club drink. I stayed in touch with them for a number of years afterwards, too.

SH: How disciplined was it for you at the University of Wisconsin, while you were in class? Was it difficult? Was it strict?

WP: Well, we were being taught. We were students and … some of the classes were given by Navy personnel, and you behaved, and you needed to be attentive. There was another coincidence there. The first few weeks, the class was run by somebody who had been in Linden High School a year or two ahead of me, a fellow named Rube something. … He'd been an amateur radioman, a ham at school, and here he was, now, working for the Navy, teaching radio skills.

SH: He was a civilian.

WP: Yes.

SH: Teaching in that position.

WP: And I recognized him and I went up one time and said, "Aren't you Rube So-and-So?" and he said he was, and I said, "I'm from Linden," and he said, "So what?" [laughter]

SH: So much for camaraderie.

WP: Never bothered him again. [laughter] …

SH: Where did you think you would be sent next? Were you aware that you would not have to go onboard a submarine or a battleship or anything like that?

WP: No, I really had no idea, except I knew it was not going to be a ship. You just finished up and wait for your orders. … We were a mixed group and some of the fellows I was with went immediately to what they called the amphibs, the amphibious fleet, the LSTs, [landing ship tanks], LSMs, [landing ship medium], and they were the guys that got shot at. I just knew, probably knew, that I was going to a base, but I didn't know where. It could have been anywhere in the country and, as things worked out, I only had a few days to get from Madison, [Wisconsin], down to Corpus Christi, [Texas]. … I was able to have a layover in Cincinnati and I stayed with the people that I had roomed with before.

SH: You were traveling by train.

WP: Yes. That was about the only way you could get around. … The train went through Cincinnati, and a young lady from this youth group in Linden was now in the Navy, a WAVE, not too far away from Cincinnati. So, she came into town and had a room at one of the hotels and I had my room back there in Hartwell. Well, we'd get together during the day, eat at the USO [United Service Organizations], walk and talk a lot, then, we went on to our bases. … She was assigned to service in Washington, DC, met her husband there. … She became part of the Marshall Family, the Reverend [Peter] Marshall who was Senate Chaplain, at one time, yes, Myrt Marshall. [laughter] No, we didn't have anything really going. It was just [that we were] good friends, but it was a break. She could get a few days off and I had that little time. Being a serviceman on leave, I was able to get rations. So, I paid my way with the Crones by going to their local ration board and getting ration tickets, and I also brought a carton of cigarettes, just like they did in Europe, you know, you paid your way with cigarettes. [laughter]

SH: Did you try to get a commission in the Navy after you were inducted?

WP: No. It was getting pretty late in the war.

SH: Did you follow the war, how it was progressing both in Europe and in the Pacific?

WP: I can't say that I did intently. There was the movie news and a base newspaper.

SH: Were you writing to anyone that was away?

WP: Yes. This classmate, Win Goulden, I had mentioned earlier. … He wound up being one of the glider pilots that flew in on or near D-Day. He'd be a good guy to interview, you know, if he wouldn't be in California. I don't have pictures of him. I recently sent him the pictures that I had. I was hearing from [Robert] Owen now and then. I know we stayed in touch and I had some pictures of him. I don't think he ever really needed to carry a rifle, but he had some pictures taken, showing himself that way from somewhere in the South Pacific area. … He was a degaussing expert. A friend from Linden, who didn't see combat, but was flying DC-3s [a Douglas transport aircraft], hither and thither, wrote frequently, and there were several others. I was a prolific letter writer in my time. … Well, I've sent some back to the guys that wrote them.

Did you ever hear of Bob Buttle? He was one of my ceramic classmates. He wound up in China, I think maybe some sort of communications or intelligence job.

SH: Did you send information to the *Rutgers Alumni Monthly*? Did you communicate with Rutgers at all?

WP: I don't think I did. I don't know when I joined the alumni association. … I know I joined the Ceramics Society in 1942. I may have joined the alumni association in those pre-induction years. Somewhere along the line, I remember sending ten dollars in. [laughter]

SH: When you arrived at Corpus Christi, was it what you expected? Did you know what to expect?

WP: No, but I found it to be one hellish big place. [laughter] It had two main gates, north gate and south gate, and busses that ran right into the base. I reported in there a bit late in the day, went to where somebody I was supposed to see was and he found me a bunk. I learned the next day that they had more people with my training there than they needed, so, instead of being assigned something permanent, the bunch of us that arrived at that time wound up doing odd jobs, sent here, sent there. Some days, we were walking around a table, collating papers, other days, working in the tool crib. A week or two later, they opened up an experimental radar site and that's where I wound up, until they closed it out. …

SH: Why did they close it? Do you know?

WP: Well, I guess it really wasn't serving too much of a purpose. … We're getting on towards the end of the war and we had these great, big radar antennae and no targets. I think they were primarily Army gear. … Corpus [Christi] had been, basically, a training station and they probably brought in this radar to further train pilot graduates. … They'd run maneuvers and our officers, who were at the screens, were … radioing to "our" pilots, alerting them to "bogies," who were the other guys. … They were positioning them to attack the "bogies." So, it was training. A lot of the time, we enlisted men didn't have that much to do but just be there. When they closed that off, some of us went to transmitters. … Then, as the war was closing down, some of the older hands at transmitters were getting discharged, … so, we were putting in longer shifts. … It was good duty nevertheless. Then, if you got tired of the base, you could always, when off duty, go in town. It was right on Corpus Christi Bay. It's a nice area. In fact, the base itself was right on the bay, … some of it quite cultivated and formal, though where our radar was, I could say that that was simulating Pacific foreign duty, because it was Texas, subtropical, and it was restricted. You had to pass through a Marine guard to get where we were, and there's just nothing much in there. There were ammunition storage bunkers. You could see these things with the rounded roofs. … I don't know what they had in there, but they didn't want you fooling around. I got my one war wound in there. I went swimming. [laughter]

SH: In the bay?

WP: It was right off where we had our radar. … I got stung by one of these big jellyfish, my war wound. [laughter]

SH: That is painful.

WP: It was, and I didn't dare go to sick bay, "What were you doing swimming?" you know, have to account for it. So, I went to the movies instead. [laughter] … One of the interesting things, nothing to do with the war, they had this big theater on base, just like a professional theater, and, one day, they had a hypnotist, and I'd never believed his skill. He called for volunteers and some went forward to the stage. Then, he says, "I will now try and get a few more," and he actually hypnotized people from the audience, like you're sitting here, and then, he called them forward and these people got out of their seats and walked up. … Then, he puts them through some ungainly things, like he'd say, "You're hot," and they'd start to take their clothes off, "You're cold." I never would have believed that. [laughter]

SH: Was that part of the USO?

WP: Yes. … They brought in song-and-dance men. Bob Hope was there and [you] couldn't get near the theater that night. [Editor's Note: Bob Hope was a comedian and actor known for entertaining the US Armed Forces while with USO tours.]

SH: Really?

WP: No. We listened to him on the radio.

SH: The way the base was setup, was it divided between the pilots and the airplanes themselves, and then, your radar station? Did you intermingle? Was it just US Navy?

WP: Yes. There was sort of a barracks area and we were fortunate enough to live in barracks that had been used by the air cadets. … They'd shut down most of that kind of training. So, instead of being in these big, wide-open barracks, we were … subdivided into smaller rooms. So, it's eight, ten or twelve of us, instead of fifty or a hundred of us, and we were fairly close to the administration building. That's where the communications department was and all of this was part of communications. … Then, across from where we lived was an athletic area, basketball hoops and some weights, a pool. … We used it for swimming, but it also had been used for pilot training. There was a slide with a mockup of an airplane and they'd put a student in there, slide him down and simulate a water landing, but those guys were gone, and then, farther off were the bachelor officers' quarters. Beyond that was a chapel. There were a number of mess halls. There was an enlisted men's social hall, where they did actually sell beer, if you wanted it, and there was a; what did they call them, the equivalent of a store or post?

SH: A PX?

WP: Yes, post exchange, and there were a number of hangars, remotely far off, and there was an active squadron of PBYs [PBY Catalinas] and PBMs [PBM Mariners]. They were both amphibious and, since we were on the water, they were mostly [in the] water. Our lead enlisted man at the radar had what they call "(skins?)." So, he got to fly four hours a month. … That

added seventy-five dollars or so to his pay, for just [going up]. I said, "Can I get up there? Let me take your place." "No." [laughter]

SH: Did you ever get up?

WP: No. My first flight was on leaving Corpus Christi.

SH: Really? You were able to fly home.

WP: My friend Jere's father ran a haberdashery shop in what was then Houston's best hotel and we'd gone into Houston a couple of times. I'd met the family and we arranged, without meaning to do anything about it, that he was going to hire me, so, I didn't have to go out on the draft train or whatever. … The Navy paid me for the rail fare that I would have had to spend anyway and I spent that on an air flight, because, at that silly time in my life, I said, "I'll probably never get to fly again." [laughter]

SH: Knowing what you did later, that is really funny. You got down to Corpus Christi in the Winter of 1944, you said.

SH: What was your job specifically in Corpus Christi?

WP: Well, the first was just helping out, as we talked earlier.

SH: Were you a radioman?

WP: … Well, my training was as a radioman, but I never got to use it, and so, I guess I was a radar technician, because we had to learn how radar worked. I had to be cleared. They told me, later, FBI agents were going through Linden, inquiring about me. So, I had to be cleared for at least "secret," [the right to view materials classified as "secret"]. So, I was just a seaman, first class, and, while we were still on radar, they opened up exams for third class petty officer ratings, and so, while I was still with the radar group, I took … these tests and passed and got to be an aviation electronic technician's mate, third class, AETM, 3/C, and then, from there, that was my rate, even though, then, I was working with transmitters. I had to learn transmitters and the only time I ever used Morse code was in the … transmitter building, when there was a breakdown in communications arrangements and I had to clear this airplane that was flying overhead and I had about four words to send out and my hand was shaking. [laughter]

SH: Not sure what the message said.

WP: Our transmitter building was considered vital, always had to go through a couple of Marines at the door. Then, the war was brought home a bit to us, because they had a bunch of POWs [prisoners of war] on base and these guys were out there picking up cigarette butts and whatnot, a big "POW" stenciled on their backs.

SH: Were they Italian or German?

WP: I think they were German. You couldn't get close to them. … I only carried a gun maybe three, four days in my whole career. We sent the radar equipment from our remote atoll back to main base [laughter] to be painted and upgraded. … So, each of us, in our turn, had to guard the equipment, and so, they gave us a thirty-eight-caliber pistol and they didn't say, "You pull the trigger to shoot it," or anything. [laughter]

SH: You had never fired one.

WP: Never fired one, and I'm sitting there one evening and four guys in a jeep come tearing through and I don't know who they are. I reach for my [gun] and they say, "Show your hands." … It was shore patrol, checking out the equipment. [laughter] Fortunately, they didn't shoot, but we were told, "Guard the equipment. Walk your post in a military manner." [laughter]

SH: How did the people around Corpus Christi treat enlisted men like yourself, where there were sailors and soldiers?

WP: You know, I was only familiar with a few. I answered the telephone one time in the barracks and this voice says, "Hello, barracks," or something like that, and the next thing I know, I'm talking to another girl. It turned out, later, [to be] the telephone operator was this second girl's friend, so, she's just calling up our barracks and puts her friend on. Well, I wound up with a date, and that led to some social Sunday gatherings.

SH: It worked.

WP: … That first phone call led to being invited to someone's house on Sundays, playing bridge. I remember listening to the radio while I was there and the *Ozzie Nelson Show* [*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*] was on, Ozzie Nelson, a Rutgers alumnus. There was one other civilian I met. I had a Navy friend who had met an engineer. Corpus was, you know, a big oil and chemical town and this man had said, "If you ever want an hour off the base, give me a call," but my friend never did anything. So, I talked him into it one time. So, we did get to this man's house and he was very friendly. … He was interested in learning about ceramics. So, those people I met were friendly. The people in Chicago, in the Great Lakes area, and so forth, were outwardly friendly, but I think they were getting more indifferent, but the city itself, you couldn't ask for more. Did people ever mention that?

SH: No. You hear about where people seemed overrun or you hear where people ask if there was anybody who wants to come for Sunday dinner. You get the two.

WP: … I did, once, call for a Sunday dinner, and got to spend a weekend with a family who I had slightly known in New Jersey. In Chicago, you rode the busses for free, go to the USO and get a ticket to any theater in town, go to this USO and get a hamburger or a hotdog, go to another USO, put a mattress on the floor, sleep there at night, spend the weekend, depending on the type of liberty pass that was issued.

SH: This is in Chicago.

WP: Yes. So, that way, officially, I say, and I suspect that, by the time I was there, the civilians were tired of service people, but I never tested that, except this one time that I just mentioned, and that happened to be a family that was from New Jersey. He was a store manager and had been promoted to Chicago. So, I was in company with their daughter for a weekend. As I recall, we played some tennis and went to a Cubs game at Wrigley Field.

SH: Were there other instances where you got off the base in any of these places? When you were in Corpus Christi, you talked about going to Houston a few times, because there was another person stationed with you from that area.

WP: On one trip to Houston, we visited the San Jacinto Memorial area. … Four of us went to San Antonio. One of our friends had been a taxi driver in San Francisco and, when he went home on leave, he came back with his car, a fellow named Burchfield. He was an older man who used to wear his wedding ring around his neck. [laughter] You have a car, well, you're going to get … a lot of favors. …

SH: Did he make a lot of money?

WP: No, I don't think he sold it for transportation, but I do think he met more than one other guy's wife, but the four of us went to San Antonio for a weekend, saw … what is it, the Rose River? I visited the Alamo. Then, these other two young friends, Jere and Frank, … they talked me into going to Mexico. We hitchhiked down to …

SH: Juarez?

WP: No, we went well into Mexico. I think we crossed the border at Laredo. Now, why can't I think of the name? Ah--Monterrey. We got a couple of rides so far down, on small trucks, I guess, just Texas farm hands who saw uniforms, would be friendly, take us as far as twenty miles before they had to turn off. [laughter] … Then, this big car screeched to a halt, an elderly man got out, "Where you fellows going?" "Monterrey." He says, "That's where we're going. Pile in." His wife is shaking her head, "No. Who are we picking up, these three hoodlums?" and he says, "No, they're going with us," and that was still well above the border; okay, now, what's the river down there?

SH: Rio Grande?

WP: Rio Grande. You're talking to an eighty-eight-year-old man here. [laughter] We stopped for lunch there. He let us get back in the car, drove us all the way down, dropped us off at a hotel, took us to church the next day. Jere was Catholic and Frank and I Protestant. We met the US consul. We took part in a Mexican tradition of, Sunday mornings, walking around the square, girls going one way, boys going the other way. Then, the custom was, if a girl saw someone she was interested in, didn't have to know him, she'd throw a token down. So, I'm walking around, a token lands at my feet. I pick it up and walk around and find out the gal. She says, "Not you; him." [laughter]

SH: She was not a pitcher.

WP: … This was one of my eighteen, nineteen-year-old friends. Then, we got into a little bit of difficulty. There was an older Mexican; maybe he remembered the Mexican-American War. He was bumming cigarettes. We were smokers then, and Frank got tired of it and said, "Vamoose." Well, that got a few of those people aroused and it was starting to get just a little tricky. So, we left. [laughter]

SH: Sounds like a good thing.

WP: Then, we spent four or five days there. One day, we went into a drugstore for something, and I don't know just how this happened, but I think the druggist had two or three daughters, must have been thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old, but they were intrigued by these sailors. We had to shoo them off and, one night, we're out walking. We hear these young girl voices calling out, "*Marinero, marinero*," looking for the sailors. [laughter] … You know, Texas was sort of a dry state. You could buy liquor, but you couldn't buy a drink and we weren't heavy drinkers then, but, when we're down in Monterrey, let's have a cocktail. We're in this hotel and they have a little bar where you could get a mixed drink. So, the three of us are sitting there, drinking, and we're joined by a suave, young Mexican. So, we buy him drinks, margaritas, or something like that, and, finally, we get tired and Frank and I say, "Let's go to bed." … This guy says, "Oh, I can take you around." Frank and [I] say, "We're going to bed." Jere says, "I'll go with you." Well, when we wake up the next morning, Jere hasn't shown up and we've got to catch a bus to get out of here and we're running out of money, and it turns out Jere had made the tour. I don't know just what he got into, but, on the way back, this fellow says, "That's a nice watch you're wearing. Can I see it?" Jere pulls his watch off and, when he gets back to the hotel, he doesn't have a watch, nor the money he had gotten by wire from his father. We report that to the police and the officer says, "How stupid can you be? Who was [he], the name?" "Roberto, Robert Roberto," or something like that. It's like John Jones, you know. [laughter] So, they took the message and we caught our bus. We had enough money for tickets, but, before we got home, back to Corpus [Christi], we were trading postage stamps for hamburgers. Believe it or not, maybe a month, six weeks, [later], something like that, Jere gets a call from a government office in Corpus and they said, "We have something for you." … His watch came back. … The police caught this guy.

SH: Unbelievable.

WP: And that the police would do that in Mexico. [laughter]

SH: That they caught him. Did he get the right watch back?

WP: Yes! He was really sick about the loss. … It was a graduation present from his father. He was probably, what? two years or less out of high school and that was interesting to me, in that I said, "Here I am, a college graduate, and I've got two or three years of working experience and I'm comfortably palling around with these kids that are just out of high school."

SH: That is where they put you.

WP: But, as I say, I'm still corresponding with one of them. He's eighty-three years old now, went on to get his doctor's degree at Michigan State, and retired as a social studies professor.

SH: When the war officially ends in Europe, was there any kind of celebration at Corpus Christi?

WP: No; maybe in town.

SH: Was there one when the war ended in Japan, when the war was officially over?

WP: Nothing that involved us enlisted people, anyway.

SH: Did they make an official announcement?

WP: No, not that I'm aware of.

SH: When were you discharged? They talk about the point system. Did that apply to someone on limited service like yourself?

WP: Oh, yes. I did have an advantage there, being as old as I was, because you got points for age. [laughter]

SH: Did you? That played into it then.

WP: Yes. … Well, we were sweating that out, you know. My company wanted me back. They tried to get me out.

SH: This is the one in Keasbey.

WP: In Keasbey, yes, and I was ready to get out. The Navy wanted to keep you. They were actually soliciting your continued service.

SH: Really?

WP: Because everybody wanted to get out, you know. They even put up offers that people like me could go to sea, and I said to myself, "Hell no." [laughter]

SH: Not now.

WP: Not now, no. We had to go to some other camp to be discharged and, while I was in these last days, feeling a little more flip, [I] started wearing my round hat back a little bit, you know, a rakish angle. … [I was] walking along the base and a car pulls up and a voice yells, "Hey, sailor." I go over and salute. It was the commander of the base. He says, "You're out of uniform," because my hat is not square. He says, "Go and report yourself to the master at arms." Would you believe that? I said, "Yes, sir," and I waited for his car to disappear and I went the other way. [laughter] Fortunately, they didn't send out the SPs [shore patrol] to look for me.

SH: When would this have been? Would this be July, August or September?

WP: June, I think it was.

SH: Of 1945?

WP: '46.

SH: 1946. It is a whole year later.

WP: Yes. See, I was in for, what? '44 to '46, two years, two months or four months, something like that. No, I know I was well aware of the A-bombings and that scared me. …

SH: Did you understand what it was? Some people say they only knew that it was a big and powerful bomb. They had no concept of what happened or what was used to make the bomb.

WP: I had a vague idea. Of course, that was all classified, but, prior to the war, *Collier's* [*Weekly* magazine] had run an article, that apparently slipped through the censors, describing the potential and I had read that. So, I was a little bit aware of atomic energy, but I was still pretty well ignorant. … I had one leave, I guess, after the bombs dropped, before I was discharged, and [I recall] asking civilian engineers that I knew … what it was all about and they weren't all that sure, either, but, yes, we were aware of that. The Navy got a bit more formal after the war had ended. We had to march more and we mustered more and things like that.

SH: What were you doing after the war? Did your responsibilities change?

WP: Well, we just had to keep the transmitter department going and we got a couple of friendly officers. I guess one was a survivor of the Bataan [Death] March. I still have a couple of poems upstairs that he wrote. I wish I knew how to find him. He's probably dead now, but I don't know whether he was on Corregidor or Bataan, but he was part of that group. …

SH: Do you remember his name?

WP: I have his name. He was a chief, a non-commissioned officer, great fellow, and the officer, lieutenant, in charge of the building, he says, "When no one is around, call me Charlie." [laughter] I have pictures of him somewhere. … I'd love to pass those poems on. One, I think, was called, "The Corregidor Stare." They should be of value to somebody, and I tried to locate this man, through my limited computer skills, and I couldn't do it.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: What else did you do to while away the time? How long did you think that you were going to have to stay in the military?

WP: Well, I knew it was getting to an end, as you followed the points card. [laughter] We did some strange things there.

SH: You said your company was trying to help you as well.

WP: Well, yes, that was hopeless. I wasn't encouraging them to do that, either. … There was a sort of recreation place near our barracks that you could go [to] and I guess we played some chess there. Remembering back to Waterbury, Connecticut, when one night, we had a session that wound up convincing me that ESP [extrasensory perception] was a tangible, identifiable phenomena, … I recalled that and I told my buddies about it. … So, we spent some time trying to visualize a subject's … ideas, delineations. I actually sent a letter to a researcher named Rhine, Dr. [J. B.] Rhine, at Duke University, who had written a book on ESP, … turned out to be a statistical study. … He sent me a deck of his cards, which I seem to have lost. He designed cards with different symbols on them and he would set people in rooms and somebody would be looking and somebody would be receiving. Now, the success of those wasn't very great, but, statistically, it showed that something happened. Well, I can testify that something did happen as we looked at these cards or else when … somebody would visualize something else and the rest of us … would come up with something. It might not be a star, but we've seen a triangle or something. So, we did things like that to pass time. [laughter] I guess we listened to the radio, now and again, or else just shoot the breeze.

SH: You talked about the Navy becoming more formal, more marching. Was it also now a training facility, or were they just keeping the men busy until they got out?

WP: It was becoming more operational. As we're closing down, I think, we eventually got moved out of our sort of plush barracks, … and they got more careful about feeding you. We used to sneak in an extra meal, and then, we got instructions that you ate breakfast, you ate supper, you ate lunch, but you didn't eat in-between on the Navy. [laughter] The budgets were just limiting. It was still the old Navy, these older guys, that your hat wasn't on straight. [laughter] … It wasn't all that severe. We didn't have to march at attention. … One of the things I liked to do, on occasion, deliberately sought it out, [I] would make a sort of late trip to the mess hall, just about the time they blew colors, and it just sort of thrilled me to stand there and salute the flag as it came down. I didn't do that every night, but, you know, it was a good feeling; at least you felt like you were in the Navy. [laughter] So, basically, those were good years and I missed the worst of the war, I'd be the first to admit. I lost a few friends. … [To] get back to Vinnie Utz, didn't he lose his arm? He did lose an arm. I wrote him right after I read of that. That's the last I was in touch with Vinnie. So, where do you want to go from here?

SH: How did you finally get out of the Navy and where did you go? Can you briefly tell me about your career? I wanted to know, did your father's job end?

WP: Oh, no. When the need for training war workers stopped, the state had him become supervisor of private school vocational training. So, he ended his career keeping the private schools honest, traveled the state as he did in the previous job, too. I don't know all the schools. I know there was a lapidary school, [there] was a watchmaker school. Oh, there must have been,

you know, tens of them, if not hundreds of them, and his job was to be sure that they obeyed the rules. There was a lot of GI Bill money, I think, at that time.

SH: Did they qualify for the GI Bill as well?

WP: Yes, if they had proven their ability to teach and make sure that they were giving what the government expected of them. It was a responsible job and my dad was respected for that. The school people actually gave him a farewell banquet and I have an engraved gold watch that they gave him.

SH: Wonderful.

WP: But, I know there were times when he had to dress people down and make sure that they were doing what they were expected to do. He didn't take any bribes, [laughter] and he tried hard to avoid gifts. … I remember being home one night when there was a knock on the door and [I] went out and [there was] nobody in sight, just a basket full of exquisite liquors, somebody just dropped off and ran, you know. It's the only way Dad would take it. He's not going to throw it away. I guess … that clock came from … one of his admirers.

SH: Wow, that is beautiful.

WP: That's an Atmos clock. I don't know just how that came, but somebody was appreciative enough. … I don't know whether it was a group thing, or I forget whether it's engraved or not, doesn't work anymore. …

SH: It is gorgeous anyway.

WP: Isn't it?

SH: Big, brass and gold.

WP: So, he retired from the New Jersey State Department of Education, a man with a high school degree, and, after that, he was called on to offer training courses himself. … I know he gave courses to Post Office people and also to people who work for the Port Authority, or whatever [the organization is] that manages the bridges, and so forth. (My sister reminds me that he actually lectured at Rutgers.) These were things he put together during the war, when he was training people for war work. He developed courses and designed tools or things that they could make while learning the techniques. I still have a few of those around. I don't know how he did it. You know, he had talents that I never got. I wonder, "Whose son am I?" [laughter]

SH: When did you come back to New Jersey? Did you come back to Keasbey?

WP: Yes, I took a week or so off from the Navy and went back to work.

SH: You said you flew home.

WP: Yes, … flew out of Houston, probably landed in New Orleans, Charleston, West Virginia, somewhere else. … I think it was a DC-4, landed at Newark Airport, when all the airport building was this round thing, wearing civilian clothes, with my "ruptured duck" in the lapel. My family met me there, and then, I guess one of the first things I wanted to do after that was buy a car.

SH: Had you been saving your money?

WP: I had saved some. I didn't spend much in the Navy. Let's see, I went in as a seaman, first class, so, I was getting sixty-six dollars a month, not spending much. Then, when I got to be a third class, that went up to, what? seventy-eight [dollars] or so. So, I saved some money and I was buying war bonds in the Navy, too. [laughter] … My sister had a friend, over in New York State, that had a car. I bought it sight unseen and paid six hundred dollars for it. I remember, it's a hunk of junk, but it did run and I got it registered, fortunately, and I put my name in for a Chevy. You know, that line was so long and, if you didn't pay under the counter, you weren't going to advance very far. So, I wound up buying a Kaiser, cost twenty-four hundred dollars. That's the only car I ever bought on credit, [laughter] and I had to sneak the old Dodge in. They gave me an allowance on it. They didn't check it very thoroughly. I don't think they ever sold it off the lot. … The Kaiser, it wasn't a great car. It was a four-cylinder and it knocked at fifty miles an hour, but it was a good-looking car. So, I got back to work and stayed there for six years. After that, this company made what was known as chemical stoneware. At that time, the plastics that you know now and the good metals, the alloys, weren't all that available, so, the chemical industry was really dependent on what we were making. Consequently, any order that we took during the war had to have a priority, just like a steel mill. These orders would come in from different chemical companies and [with a] different degree of priority. Everything was handmade, more or less. We had these great, big kilns, bigger than this room, firing, storage pots, filters, piping, valves, and then, need for our products was less urgent after the war. Now and again, [I would] have to run around to a company to explain why something broke. [laughter] … So, I was the chief ceramist, and then, I became the plant superintendent and I wasn't happy at that job, just not my cup of tea. So, I entered the job market. … When I let Dr. [John] Koenig, who was now the head of the Rutgers Ceramic Department, know I was looking, he put me in touch with the US Stoneware Company. That got me a few good nights in New York City, because they had a New York vice-president of sales who would invite me over there, so [that] he could size me up, and so, got into a few nightclubs and other things, that you're being treated rather well. Then, I came out here without ever seeing the plant, drove out, found a motel for the night. The company arranged for me to room at the University Club, and I lived there for five years, had a good time in Akron and enjoyed living at the University Club. It was something like living in a fraternity house, with more adult people. … A judge lived there, a prosecuting attorney lived there, fellows from the rubber companies, the electric company. Guys that were just in for some training with the rubber companies, they'd come in and stay for a week, two weeks, a month, [then] go. … That led to a trip to Bermuda with two of my club friends, and that's where I met my wife.

SH: Was she living in Bermuda?

WP: No, she was there on a cruise, or did she fly in that time? Oh, yes, she flew in that time from Montreal, Canada. She'd been there once before on a cruise. We were properly introduced by the social director of the Elbow Beach Hotel, spent … no more than three days together, and then, … I don't know what to attribute it to, but, all of a sudden, opportunities were opening up to me to go to Canada. I was invited to deliver a technical paper. … This New York vice-president, he wanted to get me married. We had a business show up there, at one of the hotels. Instead of sending up one of his salesmen, he sent me. I spent a week there, working the show, even though the show wasn't very successful. He sent people back home, kept me there, and I'd see Betty every night. Then, US Stoneware bought a little company in Schenectady, New York, and I was put in charge of liaison between Akron and that, and I had a sales route tacked on to it. So, I'd go up to Schenectady every so often; well, Montreal is not so far from there. It all worked out like that. … Was somebody sitting up there on my shoulder?

SH: That is cool.

WP: It is, it really is. … After awhile, that business thing dried up. Of course, by then, we were married. … We'd married in Montreal.

SH: What year was that?

WP: 1956. I was a late bloomer. [laughter] … We had pleasant times up there. We struck it well. …

SH: Was she a professional woman?

WP: Legal secretary. … She worked for one of the big insurance companies.

SH: Did you move down here in 1956?

WP: Yes. We took this house over. … This room we are sitting in was a porch, her idea to enclose it and make it a [room]. … She came down one week and she house shopped. We had a salesman who had talked … the company into transferring him to California. He owned this place. He wanted to sell it desperately. [laughter] He invited us over one night and fed us too many martinis and we agreed to the sale. I don't know whether I'd [have] done it if I was sober. [laughter]

SH: When you got out of the Navy, you did not stay in the Reserves.

WP: No, fortunately.

SH: Yes, I just wanted to make sure.

WP: Because Korea came up, and one of my buddies from the Wisconsin stint, lived in Staten Island, he [had] joined the Reserves and he was called up for Korea. … I had thought about it, you know, … fortunately, no.

SH: You stayed with the same company and retired.

WP: Well, I came out here with the US Stoneware Company, which was privately owned by a man here in Akron. Eventually, he felt he had to sell. So, he sold it to the Norton Company, which was big in refractories [materials that resist high temperatures] and abrasives [materials used to finish or shape material], and they took over. That changed the whole working atmosphere, because, at US Stoneware, I wore many hats. Of course, when you get in with a bigger company, they've got their own people, and so, you get more isolated. I still ran the laboratory, but I didn't do the traveling that [I] used to do, but I still represented our division, our old company, here, with the American Ceramic Society (ACS) and … the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM). So, I had a lot of outside experience with those groups. I became an officer of the Whiteware Division of the ACS and, eventually, served as a vice-president of the Ceramic Society itself and I was chairman of several ASTM main or sub-committees. So, that was a good experience and exposure, had a lot of fun out of it, too, because there were conventions with their social affairs. … Then, I retired from the Norton Company. Later on, Norton was bought by a French company called Saint-Gobain, which is one of the largest, if not the largest, glass manufacturer in the world. They have been … observing all the previous retirement agreements that were made. I have to be very grateful to the Saint-Gobain organization. …

SH: Before we end the interview, I see that you very dutifully have taken a lot of notes prior to our meeting. If we did not cover something, please do put it on the tape.

WP: Okay. Well, Larry Kane was a different personality, in that he got friendly with students.

SH: This was a ceramic professor at Rutgers.

WP: Yes. He [taught] glazing technology. One of your earlier interviews had noted that he was an alcoholic, but we would go bowling with him and out drinking with him, and he had this big smile, … one of those kind of people you'd … remember for just being a nice person.

SH: You also talked about life in Linden, with the vegetable deliveries, and there was a tower.

WP: In the early 1930s, most all elements of aviation were rudimentary. A big step forward was the erection of beacon towers that aided night flying pilots to their destinations. Linden had one located near the Pennsylvania Railroad right of way. I guess it was follow the tracks by day and the rotating light at night. Well, in my early days, Linden was small enough that the fire alarm signals were big metal rings, hung on chains, with a hammer nearby so that you could bang on them in an emergency. … The sidewalks used to be cleared of snow by horse-drawn plows. Mother used to buy vegetables from a Mr. Wolf, who had a horse-drawn wagon and tied the horse to a maple tree in front of our house, to my father's detestation. He ate the leaves off the tree. … It was years before we had a refrigerator, so, you bought ice by size and the iceman gave you a card with different numbers on it and, according to that number, you got the size. So, those were the days when we had to be aware of melting ice and get the pan out of the icebox. Our kitchen stove … had a wood burning compartment, as well as a gas [hookup], and we were getting our gas, originally, from the City of Elizabeth. It was coal gas, and then, eventually, they

came by and sold us natural gas. That was just what was normal for the time, if we're going back; some of this is in the 1920s, of course.

SH: I think those are stories that, unless someone went through old photographs, they would not realize that someone in this day and age would even remember having been a part of that.

WP: Yes, particularly in the industrial East.

SH: Yes. We have this perception that everyone had indoor plumbing and everything worked fine. I think there was an incident in 1939 …

WP: Oh, my first year at Rutgers, it was early fall, a tremendous hurricane went through the East Coast, wiped out part of New England and Long Island, and, I remember, I was in a mechanical drawing laboratory at Rutgers that afternoon and came out and noticed the campus was just littered and wondered what the dickens had happened, and then, heard about this storm that had swept through. There was a story about a man who bought a barometer in New York City and took it back to the store and said, … "This isn't working. It's just reading too low." It was just registering this hurricane that was going to come through. [laughter]

SH: A little a head of time, oh, my word. Are there any other things in your notes to discuss?

WP: Oh, I was just remembering Bill Tranavitch, who was the great football player of the time. I remember seeing him on campus.

SH: He really was a star, had star power, from what I hear.

WP: Yes, right. Yes, he was, what? leading college scorer or leading yard gainer, and then, … in that time was the year of the Martian scare, with Orson Welles. [Editor's Note: Orson Welles broadcast an adaptation of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, set partially in Central New Jersey, on the radio on Halloween eve of 1938. Many listeners believed the Earth was being attacked by extraterrestrials.]

SH: Did you hear that on the radio?

WP: I was studying. I learned about it the next day. … One of the things I had noted that Linden, at one time, housed a little factory that made Christie war tanks.

SH: What is a Christie war tank?

WP: Well, it was a vehicle intended for … wars, designed by a man named Christie, who was quite prominent in, I guess, armored vehicles. … Just about six blocks away from where we lived was this factory that was making these rubber-tired tanks and some of them ran in the patriotic day parades and got national publicity for awhile. It was like armored vehicles that could run over rough terrain at high speeds and outdo these cumbersome treaded tanks that were then prominent. So, that was something that Linden had. … We, as kids, would climb up to

look through windows and watch them make the tanks. [Editor's Note: J. Walter Christie's US Wheel Track Layer Corporation was located in Linden.]

SH: There was no security involved in this.

WP: Not at that time. [laughter]

SH: Thank you so much for sharing all these memories with me. If there is anything that we have forgotten to add to this interview, we can note it in the transcript. Again, my thanks to both you and Mrs. Perkins for your hospitality. I enjoyed it immensely. Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Jessica Smith 2/18/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/18/09
Reviewed by Walter Perkins 2/25/09