

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULES L. PLANGERE, JR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Jules L. Plangere, Jr., on June 13, 2003 in Spring Lake, New Jersey with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Jared Kosch: Jared Kosch.

SI: Mr. Plangere, thank you very much for having us down here today and giving us your time.

Jules Plangere, Jr.: My pleasure.

SI: To begin, could you tell us a little bit about your father and his family background?

JP: My father was born in Staten Island and then grew up in Lakewood, New Jersey. He attended local schools and then went to Mt. Hermon Prep School in Massachusetts. He served in World War I in a medical detachment in Europe. When he returned from the war, he and my mother moved to Spring Lake. They married just before he went into the service. My father took a job as a gardener with a family named Maloney. The Maloney family owned a large estate on Morris Avenue in town. I now live on part of the block that was the site of the original estate. My father was a great salt and freshwater fisherman. He died at age seventy-eight.

SI: What do you know about his parents and family? Did they have a family trade in Staten Island?

JP: My grandfather was a chef, born in Belgium, and trained in England, before coming to the United States. He secured a job as a chef and then as a maitre d' at Delmonico's Restaurant in downtown New York City. One day, when trying to catch a trolley to get to the dock to catch the ferry to Staten Island, he slipped and fell under the wheels of the trolley. He lost a leg and ended up with a wooden leg. That ended his career in New York. He then secured a job as a private chef for a wealthy family in Lakewood, New Jersey. My grandmother was Swiss. My grandparents were married in New York City in a French Episcopal church.

SI: So, your father was living in the Lakewood area when he went into the service?

JP: That's right.

SI: And that's how he met your mother?

JP: Yes. They lived on the same street—about eight houses apart—and they went to high school together.

SI: Did he ever talk about his time in the service? Why he joined—was he drafted or did he enlist?

JP: He enlisted and needed his parents' consent. I think he was seventeen or going on eighteen. He was assigned to a medical detachment. After basic training, the unit shipped to Europe as the 165th Ambulance Company of the 117th Sanitary Train of the 42nd Rainbow Division.

Strangely enough, there is a military history that connects the Plangere and Wallhauser (my wife's maiden name) families and includes my career as a journalist—and it dates back to World War I. The Plangere-Wallhauser connection began when I would hear my father occasionally speak of Captain Wallhauser. I met Jane Wallhauser in high school, but, because there was an age difference, we didn't socialize. The connection was made subsequent to my first wife's death and Jane's divorce. We dated and one of my first questions was—"Did your father serve in a medical detachment in World War I?" The answer—"Yes." Bingo. The same Captain Wallhauser. Jane's cousin, also named Henry Wallhauser, after his uncle, was a newspaper reporter for the old *Newark News*. He has written and had published by the New Jersey Historical Society the history of the 165th Ambulance Company, called "Doctors, Chauffeurs and Soldiers: The First New Jersey Ambulance Company in World War I," [*New Jersey History*, Spring/Summer 2001, No. 1]. The career connection was made when I returned from World War II and sought career advice from one of my father's friends who also served in the same ambulance company—James Forsyth. Mr. Forsyth was a bank president in Asbury Park with offices next door to the *Asbury Park Press*. Mr. Forsyth secured an interview for me with the then publisher of the *Press*, Wayne D. McMurray—and the rest is history.

SI: Now your mother's family—could you tell us a little bit about them?

JP: My mother's parents were Scottish—born in Inverness with the name Davidson. My mother was named Jesse and she was the youngest of three sisters and one brother. Her father was a stonemason employed to help construct the Jay Gould estate in Lakewood at the turn of the century—now Georgian Court University.

SI: What can you tell me about growing up in Spring Lake in the 1920s and 1930s?

JP: A nice little sleepy town along the Atlantic Ocean—a summer resort in those days. There were more summer residents than year-rounders. It was and is a beautiful town with outstanding amenities, including a library, community center with small theatre, a grammar school, several parks, and two lakes. The man who owned the estate where my father worked was named Martin Maloney. Mr. Maloney made his fortune in gas and oil in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and those were the days with no income tax. He built a mansion that rivaled the Vanderbilts' and the Morgans' and he had a duplicate estate in Stuart, Florida. My father and mother and I spent one winter living in the mansion—for the security of the property. The mansion was torn down in the mid-'50s and the land sold off into building lots. There now are eight homes on the block, including this property. Incidentally, I grew up on this same street—two blocks west. The eight-foot wrought iron fence that encloses the block is deed restricted and has to be maintained by each property owner and there also remains a reflecting pool and some masonry decorations on an adjoining property dating back to the estate days.

SI: How large was the staff of the estate?

JP: A cook, butler, several maids, and my father's grounds crew, which numbered three or four depending on the time of year. Mr. Maloney had a real estate company that owned twenty or thirty private homes in town that were summer rentals. My father's crew also was responsible

for maintaining these cottages in addition to the estate.

SI: Can you tell us about your education in Spring Lake— where you went to elementary school, high school, and what your interests were?

JP: I mentioned that I went to the town grammar school—Class of '35. There were thirty in the class—nine girls and twenty-one boys—and there are still some of us alive. In those days, children had the option of going to one of three high schools—Asbury Park, Manasquan or Neptune. Asbury Park had the best sports teams and was the largest high school and thus most of the male students gravitated toward Asbury. Because I played tennis, basketball, and some football, I went to Asbury Park. I commuted to the high school by train. The train station in town was about three blocks from home, so, I walked to the station every morning at about 7:30 and caught a train called "The Broker." This train took all of the Wall Streeters into Manhattan. I got off at the North Asbury station and walked a block to the high school. It was great going but bad coming home, particularly if you played sports after school. I either walked or hitched a ride on many days during my high school career.

SI: What were your classmates like? Were their families tied into the resort nature of the Jersey Shore?

JP: No. Most of the grammar and high school classmates' parents worked locally year-round.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect both your family and the Spring Lake area?

JP: It had some little effect. The wealthy families who summered in Spring Lake—the Maloneys, Robelings, Fricks and the Cheeseboroughs among others—for the most part, fortunately, escaped the Depression. My father had a full-time job and a house provided by the Maloneys. We were a working-class family and no poorer during the Depression than we were either before or after.

JK: Did this hurt the resort aspect of the area?

JP: Yes, it did.

JK: Did the Depression change the face of the town a little bit because it was so resort oriented?

JP: Yes. After World War II, a lot of families who used to summer here became full-time residents. Spring Lake gradually became a year-round community. The large estates, for the most part, were demolished, as second and third generations did not want what their parents and grandparents had.

JK: When you were in high school, even in elementary school, did you feel like you were going to be college bound at some time in your life?

JP: I hoped to be, yes, but, did I have a career path mapped out? No. I was the first generation on both sides of the family to go to college. My father went to prep school after high school

simply because his parents thought he needed more guidance and discipline. As I said before, he attended Mt. Hermon Prep in Massachusetts. I started at Rutgers in the Ag School—kind of following in my father's gardening footsteps. I switched to the general ed in the second year.

SI: Just to go back to your father and his military service. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a lot of debate about veterans of World War I and how they were treated in the Bonus Marches. Did your father ever talk about that or was he active at all in veteran's affairs?

JP: My father was not a joiner. I think he did join a reserve unit for a year or two that met in Red Bank. I can remember him saying, "They are nothing but drunken brawls. I don't need that."

SI: In the 1930s—from, say, 1933 on—were you or your family aware of what was going on in Europe with Hitler and events in Asia? Was that ever discussed?

JP: As a high school student, I didn't have a clue. With a fifty-year career in the media business, I hate to admit that the only thing I read in the newspapers were the sports pages. As far as Hitler and what was going on in Europe, I had other things on my mind—like girls and sports.

SI: Were there isolationist feelings in your family?

JP: No. The families on both sides had roots in Europe, so they weren't isolationists.

SI: Did your parents ever discuss how they felt politically—whether they were Democrats or Republicans or how they felt about Franklin Roosevelt, for example?

JP: I think my father voted for Franklin Roosevelt, but they weren't politically active. I think I heard my father say, "Enough is enough, we don't need another king. FDR has done enough for us, let's move on."

SI: Did you work at all when you were in high school?

JP: Oh, yes. I was thirteen when I delivered meat on my bicycle for the local meat market and then, when I was fourteen, I took a job as a locker boy at the bathing pavilion in town. I eventually became manager of the North End Pavilion in the summer while attending college.

JK: To go back a little bit, when you were thinking about Rutgers, was Rutgers the only school in your mind?

JP: There were two other places. I had a math teacher in high school—my favorite teacher—whose husband was an Annapolis grad. She kept trying to persuade me to apply for entrance to the Academy. Then, there was a coach in high school who was also the athletic director and was a graduate of the University of Maine. He kept promoting his alma mater. I received the Rutgers Cup as the outstanding senior and that sealed the decision.

JK: So, athletics was obviously a big part of your life as a teenager. What schools did you compete against? Did you do a lot of traveling to play?

JP: Asbury Park was a Group IV school—the largest division based on total enrollment. We competed against the likes of Bloomfield, Irvington, Perth Amboy and New Brunswick. I ended up as the captain of the tennis team and co-captain of the basketball team. Our basketball team went to the semi-finals of the state tournament. We lost to West New York High School. They had a center who was about six-foot-ten and we could not guard him. He ended up playing in the pro league after college.

SI: Out of your graduating class, do you know if a lot of your fellow graduates went on to college or was it rare?

JP: As a guess—I'd say at least sixty percent went to college. In those days, Asbury Park High School had a good ranking and you could get into college without taking an entrance exam. The minority population was about fifteen to twenty percent and a good number went on to college.

SI: What was your moving into Rutgers like—your first days?

JP: Intimidating. As a boy from a small town, I probably had only been to New York City two or three times in my life. I moved into a dormitory in the quadrangle on College Avenue and, fortunately for me, I had a senior for a roommate—Sam Sagoria—who was the editor of the *Targum*. I joined a fraternity in my second year but still lived in the dorm. The fraternity was Delta Phi on Union Street. I had a couple of friends who were members and that is how I ended up being pledged to Delta Phi. I really didn't have the money to belong to a fraternity, so, I waited on tables and did a few other odd jobs to support myself as a fraternity brother.

JK: How did you get to the Ag School every day?

JP: I walked across town every morning for classes and back in the afternoon.

SI: Was it a challenge or was it an easy transition, academically, going from Asbury Park High School to Rutgers?

JP: A challenge, a real challenge, because, although I was a fair student, I had spent a lot of time on extracurricular activities and not enough time cracking the books.

SI: Were you enrolled in a specific course at the Ag College?

JP: No, we had basic ag courses the first year. I thought I wanted to be a landscape architect.

SI: Some people have noted that there was a kind of division between the Rutgers College on College Avenue and the folks at the College of Agriculture—a social and physical difference. Did you notice that?

JP: Not really. I lived on College Avenue and my social activities were geared to Rutgers College and not the Ag School.

SI: Did you have any freshman hazing—first as a freshman and then as a fraternity member?

JP: Not as a college freshman, other than having to wear a beanie, but as a fraternity member, yes. We had a tough hazing. We had to do pushups until, in my case, I couldn't raise my arms above my head, and our brothers took us out in Middlesex County—in the woods—and dumped us. We had to walk back to the house.

JK: Did you continue to play sports at Rutgers?

JP: No. I played some tennis as a freshman, but not on a team. I went out for the freshman basketball team—practiced with the team but didn't play. That ended my sports career at Rutgers. However, I'm still playing tennis in the senior circuit nationally and, incidentally, I'm running a senior tournament next week at the Spring Lake Bath & Tennis Club for 65s, 70s, 75s and 80s. We usually get seventy to eighty old timers.

SI: Do you remember the administrators and do any of the professors stand out in your memory? Do you remember President Clothier and/or Dean Metzger? Did you have any contact with them?

JP: Yes. I remember Dean Metzger, because he was in charge of fraternity protocol, I think. He visited fraternity houses and, unfortunately, our house was put on social probation at the end of my freshman year. I met Dr. Clothier later in life through my boss, Wayne McMurray, who was a friend of Dr. Clothier's.

SI: Do you remember having mandatory chapel?

JP: Yes. Without fail--on Sunday morning.

SI: Did you have speakers then or was it just information?

JP: I can't remember, to tell the truth. I do remember going to chapel on December 7th and then going back to the fraternity house for lunch and hearing the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

SI: Do you remember a Quaker protest that day at the Chapel?

JP: No.

SI: I think Norman Thomas might have been the speaker that day.

JP: I have no recollection of the service.

SI: How did you and your fraternity brothers and the campus in general react to the news of the bombing?

JP: There were strong feelings. A few of my fraternity brothers left after the Christmas holiday and went into the service. Others, including me, waited until after the spring semester to join up.

SI: As a fraternity member, did you have a lot of social activities—like dances and house parties?

JP: To the limit. That is why we ended up on social probation. My first wife was attending Skidmore College and I would invite her down for a dance and she would reciprocate by inviting me and a fraternity brother—who had a car—to drive to Saratoga Springs for a weekend event.

SI: It seems to me that a lot of campus life centered around fraternity life. They controlled activities like the *Targum*, choral groups, and sports teams.

JP: You are on target. I guess this is understandable—compatible interests always seem to bring people together.

SI: Shortly before you entered Rutgers, the war erupted in Europe. Was the war discussed at all on campus? Were sides forming between isolationists and interventionists?

JP: There were some discussions but not nearly as many as have developed since World War II, the Korean War and particularly the war in Vietnam. I was a non-participant in those discussions; I was more worried about trying to get by in school.

SI: You were also in the ROTC for two years.

JP: Yes.

SI: What was that like?

JP: Good, I enjoyed it. I liked the discipline and, as a result, when I enlisted and took a couple of tests, I qualified for OCS. I took my basic training at Fort Eustis, which was next to Williamsburg, Virginia. I attended OCS at Camp Davis on the coast in North Carolina. I received my commission as an antiaircraft artillery officer and was assigned to Camp Stewart, now called Fort Stewart, in Georgia.

JK: Could you talk a little bit about your decision to join the Army?

JP: I knew I wanted to go into the service because most of my friends were volunteering. I think we all felt we had a patriotic mission. I came home after enlisting and told my parents, got married, and eventually went to OCS. My wife lived with her parents and then came to



Spring Lake and lived with my parents. After I got out of OCS, she followed me to Camp Stewart where we rented a room from a tech sergeant and his wife (they were from Atlantic City). I was part of a cadre that trained three antiaircraft outfits for thirteen weeks each, only to see the enlisted men in the first two units sent to the infantry. They kept the cadre of officers and non-coms and sent us another batch of recruits to train. We finally shipped out to the Pacific with the third group. That is the battalion in this picture on the wall... (reference to a picture in the home).

SI: How did you feel about the units being broken up and you remaining to train other units? Did you want to go overseas?

JP: It was very frustrating. We all wanted to go.

SI: How did your parents react to the news that you had enlisted?

JP: I think they were upset, but I followed in my father's footsteps. He enlisted and got married and then went into training.

SI: Was it a shock to go from civilian life to the military? You mentioned that you had been familiar with the discipline of the military from your ROTC training.

JP: No, not for me. As a matter-of-fact, we ate better than our parents back home. I became the mess officer for my unit at Camp Stewart and went into Savannah every week with a truck to buy fresh beef and fresh fish. We ate and drank like kings. It was a shock to come "home" to rationing of both gas and food.

SI: Were there any rumors about German saboteurs or submarines?

JP: Yes, rumors—but nothing substantive.

SI: Going to basic training in Fort Eustis—what was that like—was it intensive training? How did you adapt to it?

JP: Yes, it was rigorous. We did a twenty-mile hike with full field pack at least three times a week. We marched from Eustis to Yorktown and back—about twenty miles—and then did close order drills for several hours.

SI: Were the people in your training unit from all over the country?

JP: Yes.

SI: How was that for you—I mean—you said you had grown up fairly isolated?

JP: It was interesting—particularly when I got out of OCS. I ended up with a first sergeant who had more time in the military than I had on Earth. He had a Southern drawl and was a tough so-and-so. My first introduction to him went as follows: "Jules Plangere—that name sounds

familiar—oh, yes, I remember, I knew a girl in the red light district in New Orleans with the name Plangere." I paused for a minute and said to myself, "How am I going to put up with this?" I took a deep breath and said, "Oh, yes, I think she probably knew your mother." We got along fairly well after that.

SI: A lot of guys in your situation—"ninety-day wonders," I think you were called—have said that they learned as much from their sergeants as they did at OCS.

JP: Absolutely. Don't get too brave and don't get too far out on a limb, and make sure that you check what you are going to do with your first sergeant first. We also had a company commander who was a West Pointer. He gave us the rules of the road and helped shape us after OCS.

SI: How intense was OCS? They were trying to teach you how to be an officer in three months.

JP: Very intense. A lot of bookwork and then gunnery practice almost every day off the beach. For the first month or so, we fired at nothing in particular—just the routine of loading, aiming, and firing. Then, they would fly a plane towing a long cloth sleeve which became our target. Fortunately, we never shot down the plane but neither did we hit the target that often.

SI: Was there a high washout rate at OCS?

JP: No. We lost perhaps ten percent.

SI: Were most of the men like you, from college?

JP: Yes.

SI: I know OCS was one of the few places where there was some integration. Were there any African-American soldiers in your group?

JP: Yes. However, I didn't serve with any.

SI: What was it like serving in the South and/or serving with Southerners? People tell us stories about re-fighting the Civil War.

JP: There were very few problems. Camp Stewart was out in the boonies and, thus, we were isolated. Savannah, our weekend destination, presented a challenge because we had Navy, Marine and Air Force bases close by and there were occasional confrontations. The De Soto Hotel was the favorite watering hole. There was a large bar in the basement. After a couple of drinks and dinner, went back on the bus to camp--that was the weekend routine.

JK: How did the people of Savannah treat the servicemen?

JP: Very well. The commanding officer of our battalion married a girl whose father was one of the leading citizens of the city. The name was Bull—and there is a Bull Street in Savannah.

This relationship helped cement the ties between natives and servicemen.

SI: As an officer in Camp Stewart, what was the officer culture like? How did you get along with other officers and how strict was the officer/enlisted man relationship enforced?

JP: Rather strict. Our commanding officer was from a National Guard unit in New York City—the 69th Regiment—I think it was called the "Silk Stocking" Regiment. As a commanding officer, he was an A—hole and, in fact, was court-martialed and demoted from colonel to captain and transferred. An example of his leadership is best documented by our summer field maneuvers. We would be in the field for several days with only C rations and one canteen of water. The Colonel would appear with his Dalmatian dog. The dog would get fresh cuts of meat (that I had brought from Savannah) to eat and a helmet full of water to drink daily while we stood by with our tongues hanging out. Fortunately, his conduct was recognized and his replacement was an excellent officer.

SI: In your experience, was the Army fairly good at recognizing problems like that and dealing with them?

JP: In my very limited experience, I'd say the Army was average and the example I cited, obviously, stands out in my mind.

SI: Were there many regular Army men and reservists in your outfit or were most of them draftees and OCS grads?

JP: There were a handful of regulars and reservists.

SI: What were your thoughts when you heard that you were shipping out?

JP: It was great. We, obviously, didn't know where we were going, but we were ready to move. We boarded a troop train in Savannah and ended up in Seattle, Washington. It was a six-night, seven-day trip. We stopped every day and got off to do calisthenics and, in addition, we often had to pull off on a siding to let a freight train go by. I ended up as the mess officer on the train, which had its pluses, because the kitchen car had the only shower on the train. The kitchen staff, including me, got to take showers. It was a constant battle to get everyone fed. The breakfast line would end about the time lunch started and lunch would end about the time dinner was being served. As a side note to the train trip—one of our rest stops was in Missoula, Montana. I had a distant relative living in Missoula and, when the Red Cross ladies came to serve us coffee and doughnuts, I asked if they knew anyone with the name Pulsifer. Oh, yes, they did. I asked them to tell the Pulsifer family in New Jersey that a fellow named Plangere had stopped in Missoula and was headed for the Pacific.

JK: What happened when you got to Seattle?

JP: We spent about a week there and finally boarded a Dutch freighter with guns, ammunition and vehicles in the forward hold. Our first stop was Hawaii and then we met a convoy and went to Ulithi. After several more stops, we finally reached our destination—Ie Shima—a small

island next to Okinawa. The noted war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, was killed on Ie Shima about a week before we went ashore. I ended up with a gun platoon protecting a fighter airstrip and, about a month later, we moved to Okinawa to protect a fighter strip near Buckner Bay.

JK: When you stopped in Hawaii, did you go ashore?

JP: Oh, yes. We even went bathing on Waikiki Beach. The only drawback was, we did close order drill going to the beach and then back to the ship.

JK: Was the damage from December 7th still fairly visible?

JP: Yes. We could see it in the distance.

JK: There has always been the question about the people in the United States not being told how bad Pearl Harbor really was. Did they keep information from you?

JP: I don't remember. They obviously weren't doing any tours.

JK: You went over as a battalion. What was it like on the freighter? Was it very packed?

JP: Packed, yes. Cramped, yes. Half of the men slept up on deck when the weather permitted. I shared a stateroom and it was so small that when you had a lifejacket on, you couldn't get through the door broad shouldered. Two bunks. It wasn't a cruise ship, for sure.

JK: Were there any submarine alerts?

JP: Not that I recall. This was a big armada and well patrolled.

JK: Did you get seasick at all?

JP: No. I was too busy as a mess officer. Oh, yes—I ended up once again as a mess officer.

SI: How long did it take the fleet to get to Ie Shima and was the fighting over when you got there?

JP: It must have been almost three weeks and the fighting was in the last stages by the time we got ashore. The ship took a Kamikaze hit on the forward deck after the troops got ashore but before our equipment was unloaded. We were on the beach for a week-and-a-half until they were able to repair the ship and deliver our equipment. After we moved to Okinawa, where the fighting also was winding down, the Japs did drop a few bombs near us, trying to damage the airstrip. That is as close as we got to real combat.

JK: Along with yours, how many ships were there and was it a lone Kamikaze hit?

JP: There were probably a dozen transport ships and some Navy warships patrolling. Other

ships were hit. The destroyer that took the most Kamikaze hits in World War II was right off Okinawa. We could see it with smoke pouring out and the stern of the ship under water. It looked as if it would sink at any moment. Incidentally, that destroyer is now on display in Charleston Harbor in South Carolina. There is an interesting naval display of ships in the harbor.

SI: How much of a shock was it to see a plane deliberately fly into its target?

JP: A shock. At first, you thought the plane had been hit and was out of control, but then we realized that this was a deliberate attempt by the Japanese to destroy the US fleet. It now reminds me of watching the 9/11 attacks in New York.

SI: How did the men react to this and finally being in the field?

JP: They took it in stride. They went through their routines every day and watched our planes taking off and landing.

SI: Would you interact with the pilots?

JP: No. We had contact with a few of the ground crews. As a matter-of-fact, there was a friend from Spring Lake who was a Marine fighter pilot flying from the fighter strip at the time and not until we returned home and compared notes did we discover the fact that we were both at the same place at the same time. However, there was a Navy communications officer from home on the strip at the time that did make contact. He arrived at my command post and yelled, "Is there a guy named Plangere here?" He had a quart of scotch in hand, which we polished off, and then, as an air raid siren sounded, we somehow managed to fall into a foxhole.

SI: Did you happen to run into any Rutgers men while you were overseas in the service?

JP: No, not that I recall.

SI: Judging from these pictures you have, life in the field was pretty basic and not many creature comforts.

JP: Very basic, until we went to Korea after V-J Day.

SI: Tell us what happened after V-J Day.

JP: Our outfit didn't have enough points to get home, so we volunteered to go to Korea to provide the housekeeping details for the military government units being sent to Seoul by the US and Russia to oversee the division of the country—at the 38th Parallel— if you remember. I became the billeting officer (housing), my buddy became the transportation officer, and a third officer provided food service. Being in need of an interpreter, I secured the services of a man named Park—Park in Korea is like Smith in the US. Mr. Park was a graduate engineer from Georgia Tech and spoke English as well as I did. With his help, we recruited a crew of carpenters, electricians,

and plumbers to rehab two old hotels in downtown Seoul. We ended living in the hotels and providing lodging, food and transportation for the Americans, Russians and the Red Cross. I had my own personal jeep to tool around the city. In conversation with Mr. Park one day, he advised me that the residence of the president of the Bank of Japan—the largest bank in Korea—had been abandoned after the Koreans deported the Japanese president. "I think it should be preserved and perhaps you and your buddies should take it over and move in," Mr. Park suggested. After inspecting the beautiful home on a hill overlooking the city, the decision was easy. We moved in. We lived like kings for about eight months until we completed our tour of duty and headed home.

JK: Just to go back a little bit. I just want to clarify the time period. When you eventually made your way to Okinawa, had the island already been secured? Can you give a time frame?

JP: Our arrival at Ie Shima and then to Okinawa probably was in early May of '45. The Marines and Army troops were still cleaning out the Japanese from the caves in the northern part of the islands and our pilots were flying missions off the fighter strips with bomb loads under their wings—fighter planes turned into bombers for short missions to aid the ground troops.

SI: You provided antiaircraft protection.

JP: Yes.

SI: Were there very many Japanese aircraft coming in at that time?

JP: Very few. I can recall maybe one or two planes where we actually had to fire our guns.

SI: Did you have any interaction with the natives on the islands?

JP: No.

SI: When you lost your driver to a sniper, was that the only casualty you had?

JP: Yes. It was a shock and word spread quickly among our guys. It reminded us that we were in harm's way—not that we needed a reminder.

SI: Before V-J Day, what were you expecting to happen next? Were you told you would be part of the invasion of Japan?

JP: Not really. The troops in the field usually are the last to hear.

SI: Were you still stationed on Okinawa when the Typhoon of 1945 hit?

JP: Yes. This is an interesting story. We were on board an LST in Buckner Bay waiting for a medical detachment to come aboard when the word came to put out to sea and ride out the storm. As you know, an LST is a flat-bottomed ship built to carry tanks and not too many troops. We sailed almost to China riding out the storm. Three days without sleep as we all

held on. Everyone on board was sure the ship was going to capsize. The typhoon in the China Sea was our "battle." Buckner Bay was a disaster area when we returned, there were ships driven up on the beaches and sunken ships in the harbor.

SI: When you were stationed in Seoul, was it a divided city?

JP: There was no division at that time. The division came after the deliberations between the American and Russian missions took place in Seoul.

SI: Did you interact with any members of the Russian mission?

JP: Yes, because they were housed in the same hotels and we also fed them and provided transportation. There weren't many that spoke English.

SI: A few people that I have spoken to who were on occupation duty in Korea said Korea was bleak. You mentioned your interpreter, Mr. Park, and I'm wondering if through him you got a sense about what was going on?

JP: Yes, Korea was bleak. The Japanese had starved the Koreans to support their war effort and virtually anything of value had been removed by the Japanese. The Korean people were resilient, however, and, in the spring of '46, things began to improve. In fact, the horse racetrack on the outskirts of the city reopened. I have some pictures in the house showing my fellow officers and me at the track with our Army-issue binoculars around our necks—"a day at the races," and Mr. Park provided good insight about the country and its people, including inviting me to his home for dinner. Raw fish dipped in raw egg is a staple with the Koreans. It took a lot of doing for me to swallow this meal. The only saving grace was the warm cups of Sake served with the dinner.

SI: Were there problems early on with outbreaks of disease or cholera?

JP: Not that I was aware of.

SI: How did you take what you saw of Korea and the nation's culture?

JP: Primitive at that time, but there had been a thriving culture at one time. The Japanese dominance, as I said before, had stripped the country and put its people into virtual slavery, but they have made great strides since the Korean War. As a sidelight, I have two Korean granddaughters—one twelve and the other eleven—who were brought to the US as babies. They are bright, well adjusted girls. I have thought several times about taking them back to their homeland, because I would like to go back and see Okinawa and Seoul. There are second thoughts—and time could be running out for such an adventure for me.

SI: How did you and your men, at this time, view the Japanese as an enemy?

JP: With hatred. We would have killed them without any compunction. It became a savage culture.

JK: Can you remember the day that you found out that you would be leaving Korea for the States?

JP: Not the day—but the spring of '46. However, I had thoughts about staying in the service. A regular Army colonel—a West Pointer—had taken a liking to me and suggested I should consider staying in. The hitch was I would have to stay in Korea. When I called home to ask my wife if she and our son would like to come to Korea, I got a short answer—"Are you crazy? Get home." That ended any thoughts of a military career.

SI: It must have been pretty difficult being separated from your family, particularly with a young son.

JP: Yes, a lot of letter writing.

SI: Was there any kind of period of adjustment with your son?

JP: Yes. He didn't know who I was. He was kind of standoffish the first few months and then, when he saw that my wife and me were sleeping together, he decided I must be part of the family.

SI: When you got out of the service, you basically went right into the job-training program. Did you ever give any thoughts about going back to school or going back to Rutgers?

JP: Yes, but I had a family to support. Rutgers was forty miles away. I didn't own a car. After I landed the job at the *Press*, I did take some courses at NYU and at Wharton and the newspaper industry provided courses, which I took.

SI: What about your newspaper career?

JP: I'm obviously prejudiced, but I think it is an interesting story to tell. It begins with the original publisher of the *Press*—an Iowa farm boy named J. Lyle Kinmonth who came east to attend the Wharton School after graduating the University of Iowa. He had an uncle in Asbury Park who had taken over a then weekly newspaper at about that time. The uncle persuaded the nephew to come to Asbury Park in the summer to operate the newspaper instead of going home to Iowa. The rest is history. Mr. Kinmonth bought the paper from his uncle and eventually converted it to a daily. Having no children, he willed the paper to his two chief lieutenants, Wayne McMurray and Ernest Lass. Fortunately for me, my mentor, Mr. McMurray, had no children and although he had a nephew named after him, the nephew had no interest in entering the newspaper business. He was an engineer born, brought up and living in California. Mr. McMurray informed me of his intention of leaving me his half of the newspaper some time in the Sixties, after I had worked for the *Press* about twenty years in various positions. At the time of his decision, I was serving as production manager and secretary of the corporation. When Mr. McMurray passed away in 1974, I inherited his half of Asbury Park Press, Inc.



SI: I just want to ask you a few more questions about the *Asbury Park Press*. It really grew from just a local paper to—what is it—the third largest in New Jersey?

JP: The second largest.

SI: What was the process of expanding?

JP: Internal growth at first. When I began in 1947, I think the Sunday circulation was about fourteen thousand and the daily circulation was larger. We, meaning all of the owners through the years, plowed money back into the product. The owners were working owners and, fortunately, they didn't have to support dozens of relatives who wanted dividends out of the business. Success comes from knowing where you came from, knowing what you want to do, having a game plan, and then carrying it out. Treat your employees fairly and with respect. I was a disciple of Peter Drucker's management style—"management by walking around." That meant getting out of my office and talking to fellow workers, asking questions, getting answers, and implementing changes, and, of equal importance, as I constantly reminded my compatriots, being in the right place at the right time does make a difference. We were there, and we did make a difference in all of the communities we served.

SI: The other day in class, we had a discussion about modern journalism and the media and the separation between the corporate side of the business and the journalists. In your experience, was it ever a problem separating the need to make a profit with journalistic integrity?

JP: Not in our company and that has something to do with being a private company. There were no shareholders to satisfy other than ourselves and we were owner operators who came from modest backgrounds, but probably the most important point to be made is the culture fostered throughout the history of the *Press*. The presentation of a balanced news report without fear or favor—with "opinion" restricted to the "editorial" pages. There is a problem in the media today, however, with overzealous crusading. We have gone from war mongering Hearst to principled Kinmonth to biased Sulzberger. What has happened at the *New York Times* is a disaster for the long held principle of unbiased "news" reporting.

SI: Do you want to say anything about your involvement as an alumnus at Rutgers?

JP: I have been involved with education for a long while—from having an inquisitive mind to fostering our business. As a newspaper publisher, I had an ulterior business motive. I wanted a literate public—able to read newspapers. On the personal side, I have been a trustee of Monmouth University since 1969 and served as the chairman of the board for several years. Over the years there, I have supported scholarships, a chair in history, and the Plangere Communications Center. I didn't become involved at Rutgers until the Class of '44 approached its fiftieth anniversary. Although I was a member of the '44 class, I left Rutgers for the service in '42, as I said previously, and never returned to complete my college education. Part of my involvement with Rutgers had to do with several friendships with Rutgers alums and an Asbury Park High School guidance counselor. The friends got me to Rutgers football games. The guidance counselor got me into giving scholarships to Asbury High School grads. Asbury is my

alma mater and sorely in need of help. I took a remedial English course at Rutgers as a freshman—the best thing I did in college—and that lead eventually to my support for the Plangere Writing and Speaking Center at Rutgers.

SI: This has prompted a question. Do you think—in terms of reporters and people running newspapers—that college is the training ground or is it more organic with people working their way through the paper?

JP: There is no substitute for education. This does not mean, however, that I am a strong supporter of journalism degrees. I have always taken the position that I would rather have someone with a broad educational background—liberal arts with an emphasis on English composition—than a narrow focus. This position of mine is for those focused on general reporting and editorial management. There, obviously, is a place for specialists—business, government, law, and architecture—to name several.

SI: Is there anything you would like to add for the record?

JP: As a journalist would say—"End of story."

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Reviewed by Ashley Perri 11/4/03

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 12/26/03

Reviewed by Jules Plangere, Jr. 6/04 and 7/26/04