

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES F. RICHARDS

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 the second interview with James Franklin Richards in Andover, New Jersey, on February 4, 2008, with Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Mrs. Richards in attendance. Again, I thank you both for having me here today. To begin the interview, Mr. Richards, you finished the last session by telling us about an experience you had in the decompression chamber during training. Would you please continue?

James Franklin Richards: When we started to depressurize, ... something went wrong and we began to build pressure very rapidly. I grabbed my nose and started blowing, but I couldn't keep up with the pressure. So, when we did open the chamber, there was a doctor and a couple of assistants waiting outside. The doctor that was with us inside was in pretty rough shape. So, they hauled him off to the dispensary and, when the doctor examined my ears, he said they were both okay and they would equalize in pressure ... over time. So, I went on to my barracks. The pain kept intensifying, and so, around midnight or so, I went to the dispensary and the doctor that was on duty explained to me that the body would secrete fluid into the inner ear to balance the pressure, and then, in time, it would reabsorb the fluid, and he kept me there until this occurred.

SH: How long did that take?

JR: Oh, another hour or so.

SH: Really?

JR: Yes, ... if I had waited a little while longer I would have had some relief. Some of the fellows ... having bad trouble were carried off to the dispensary or somewhere else for other treatment. But, when we had finished our training, and this was at the last, we were free to do whatever we wanted to do while we were waiting on orders.

SH: Where were you training at this point?

JR: Las Vegas, Nevada.

SH: Okay, thank you.

JR: And all we had to do was read the bulletin board every day and comply with whatever order we received there. So, one day, my name appeared on the board, along with a bunch of others, we were to report to the Sergeant Major at a particular time in full dress. So, when we did get to the Sergeant Major's office, there was fifteen of us and he explained that the Frontier Hotel had invited the top-scoring gunners from the three different disciplines ... for a banquet, I was first in shotgun, ... but there were five of us in the shotgun discipline, and five in ground-to-ground and five in air-to-air. So, there's fifteen of us, and they hauled us off to the Frontier Hotel and, in the lobby, we were met by a hostess and here were a group of WACs, also waiting. So, she would grab a GI and grab a WAC and that would be your date for the evening. I explained then, to the girl that was introduced to me, that I didn't drink, I didn't gamble and I didn't dance. She said, "That's no problem at all." She was a grand girl. ... So, after the meal, they highlighted each fellow in turn and told about him and introduced him to the other diners, in a very large dining room. ... We were arranged on a table, on a dais-like, ... and spotlighted. ...

SH: Who was in attendance at this dinner besides those of you from the base?

JF: Oh, the people who would be at the hotel, or at the Frontier's gambling hall.

SH: Just regular ...

JF: Customers, yes.

SH: I thought maybe it was a military banquet.

JF: Oh, no, just the regular customers. We were the only military there, in that sense, yes, there probably was a bunch of others there--customers. She went off to enjoy herself, as best she could, and I wandered about the place. ... By eleven o'clock, I was waiting in the [lobby] for transportation, and she was in very high spirits, said she'd had a very fine evening. So, we got back to the barracks. It wasn't but a day or two later that we got our orders, we were to report to the relocation center in San Francisco, via our induction center, our place of induction. So, I had a delay en route of twenty-some days, to get from Las Vegas to San Antonio to San Francisco, seemed a little odd, but that's the way they had it arranged. [laughter] So, I got to San Antonio and I stayed there a few days, visiting with my mother and kin, and I gave each one of them a silver dollar, a token of Las Vegas. ... It didn't matter if you went to the PX [post exchange] or wherever, you were going to get some change back with silver dollars in it, I'd throw these in my footlocker, because you're out of dress with a bulging pocket. I had a good supply of silver dollars. I gave all my family and my kin at least one silver dollar, and then, I went on to Lordsburg, [New Mexico], my stepmother had something going all the time while I was there.

...

SH: Was it to honor you?

JR: ... With me, yes, because I was home. They'd have parties every night. I put up with this for several days. She would have invited someone for me, as a date, for that evening, and the next evening, it'd be someone else and so forth. She's kind of stirring me around, to see if I find one, I guess. Well, on this particular day, why, the party was going to be at her sister's house. ... She asked me then, she said, "Well, who should I ask for you, Frank?" and she listed, gave off a name that she had had all ready before, and I said, "Why not Pat Recer?" Pat was our next-door neighbor at one time. At this time, they had bought a house a couple of houses up the way, and she said, "Okay." So, that evening, Pat was my date, and, for the rest of the days I was there, Pat was my date, day and night. [laughter]

Pat Richards: Well.

JR: Day and evening. [laughter]

PR: Let's get that straight.

JR: Yes, sorry about that. ...

SH: Had you maintained a correspondence or a friendship with Pat while you were in the military, before this point?

JR: ... No, not up to this point, I went back to San Francisco, and it was Christmas Eve, or something, when I got there. The rest of the fellows weren't there, but I ... didn't want to be AWOL [absent without leave], and so, I had left [early]. I could have stayed two or three days more, because the other fellows showed up two or three days late. Nothing was ever said about it. We were assigned to crews. That's why we were there, to make up crews, and I was assigned to Lieutenant Smith's Crew. In making the assignments, they started at the "Z" end of the alphabet and, by the time they got down to the "R"s, they had already filled all the flight positions; ... how about that?

PR: Crews?

JR: No, the flight engineer ... positions, that was my qualification. So, I was assigned to ... Smith's Crew as aerial maintenance gunner, or flight maintenance gunner was the title, and I was in the waist of the aircraft, firing a waist gun. ... Stark, who was the flight engineer, was in the forward portion of the airplane. That gave us a mechanic on the front side of the bomb bay, and a mechanic on the other side of the bomb bay, which was working out pretty good, and we shipped off to Tonopah, Nevada, to begin phase training. ... When we arrived, it was after dark when the train stopped, and we look out and you can't see much of anything, ... except sand and a few buildings, we were at an old-fashioned-type train station building. When we got out, there were some trucks waiting for us. We couldn't make out much of anything, but it took a good little while, in the six-bys, [a six-by-six or two-and-a-half-ton truck], to get to the base at Tonopah. So, I'm not sure of the location, but I guess it was the end of the line, rail-wise, [laughter] and, when we got there, we drew our bedding and had some chow, and went off to bed. When we got to the barracks, this was a shambles. These were temporary, tarpaper-covered buildings, ... but you could hardly see the floor in the place. There had been one other crew made up at this base ahead of us, and they must have had a wild going away bash. On my bunk, there were three or four extra blankets, folded and all nice. On the floor, there was all manner of things, and several parachute silks, popped open over all this, and then, the fire extinguishers emptied over all that mess, and so, we scraped away as best we could to get to bed. Then, the next morning we were to clean up the place. There were heaters down the center aisle. There were just room for bunks and footlockers on either side, with this aisle down the middle, this was a kind of skinny building.

SH: How many to a building, about?

JR: I wouldn't hazard a guess.

SH: I just wondered if there were many.

JR: Oh, yes, there was a good bunch, yes, yes, ... we got the heaters going, got the place scrubbed down, and there were blankets, quite a lot of extra blankets. We didn't turn in any of the extra blankets. I kept two extra ones for myself, and there were three or four on my bed,

stacked up there, but I kept two of those, besides the two I was issued. So, I had four blankets, just in case, because this is wintertime in the Sierra Nevadas, and the other fellows, they did the same thing. ... So, we didn't turn in any of the blankets, but we turned in most of the other stuff that was recognizable. [laughter] ... That afternoon, the officer came around, and the Sergeant Major, to check and he gave us a very excellent rating. He said we did a very nice job and he said he thought that ours was the worst of the lot, barracks-wise. ...

SH: Made you feel good.

JR: Yes. [laughter] I don't know why; they put us [there]? Why didn't we get one of the clean ones? Then we began our training on a twenty-four hour schedule. Your day, your twenty-four hours, was planned each day and you would get six to eight hours sleep time, sometime or other, and you would get ... class time and other instruction, calisthenics, all this sort of thing, but that was all planned. Sometimes, you would get sleep time; maybe just a little while later, you'd get another sleep time, [by] which they're trying to acquaint you with field conditions.

SH: I see, okay. Did it rotate? In your barracks, were the people there on your crew? How was your crew?

JR: ... Yes, there were six crewmembers and four officers, made ten for the flight, I mean, ten per aircraft. ... The six of us were in the same barracks, ... and there were other "sixes," other crews.

SH: Okay. Did the officers have much better accommodations? Did you ever see or know of it?

JR: Well, they didn't have to do the scrubbing, if there was any problem. [laughter] ...

SH: Who staffed the base there? Was it all military or were there civilians involved?

JR: It was military. There could have been civilians, and most likely were, employed for various things.

SH: It sounds like it was quite isolated.

JR: Oh, yes. Tonopah is out in the middle of nowhere. ... This is in a rather large valley and it was salt flats and very open and, in the main valley itself, well, you'd only see maybe shrubs or nothing.

SH: This is January of 1944.

PR: '3.

JR: '43.

SH: 1943, okay.

JR: Yes; no, yes, this would be January of '44.

SH: 1944.

JR: '44, yes; I went in in '43.

SH: That is what I thought, okay.

JR: In our bombing training, we had, usually, a series of three to five targets and the target would be a standard shack to start with. ... Later, it'd be ships' silhouettes, or a two or three-stack ship in plan form, and this was all just altitude bombing and the idea, in the training, was to make shorter runs, with more accuracy, of course, but striving towards a shorter and shorter bomb run. ... This was a very good idea. Later, we had air-to-ground firing. They would arrange the targets in a series for the gunners and you made the pass across the targets. ... This would be simulating a fighter pass with the stationary targets on the ground, which you went by, strafing. ... Then we would go out, after the targets, for bombing practice. We would make simulated missions. We would be up and down the California coast and we would camera bomb cities, dams, electrical works, this sort of thing. There were a lot of fighters stationed along there, too, and they would come up to intercept us and we would shoot them with cameras and they would shoot us with cameras. ... The one incident, I suppose, I should mention, [was] when we were given a pass, a five-day pass, because our pilot was under the weather, I decided to go see my girlfriend and I caught the magnesium concentrate, truck [for a] ride in Tonopah. Now, these were huge machines. They were strictly illegal, from the law standpoint, but, of course, the government had these specially built to haul magnesium concentrate to the processing plant in Las Vegas. ... The truck itself ... had a supercharged diesel engine, which was rather new at this time, and two hoppers on back, each hopper carrying thirty tons of concentrate. So, the payload is sixty tons. Now, we're getting into the law [where] that's illegal to have trucks [weighing] that much on the road. There were forty-two wheels on the ground.

SH: Forty-two.

JR: Forty-two wheels on the ground on this machine. The cab was very tall. When they came through a town, ... twenty miles an hour was the speed limit, I suppose in order to be able to stop in emergencies. At Tonopah, leaving the town, you have to go up a grade. So, he's way down in the gears and just crawling along. So, all you have to do is wait for the next one to come along ... on the hill. So, you walk along the side of the cab and ask him if you could get a ride, and they're very agreeable. He said, "Sure." So, I walk around in front of the truck, with it still [in motion]. They're not allowed to stop, except at the check stations. So, I walk around to the other side and there's a ladder and I climb up the ladder and opened the door and get inside, and there is a kitchen-type chair sitting in the corner of the very large cab, and so, I'm sitting down and this fellow begins telling me about his rig. He's apparently very proud of his job. They're very hand-selected, very picked people for this job, and he thought it was an honor to be able to drive one. So, we ... proceed on about twenty miles or so to Goldfield, Nevada. There was a check station there and he made a pit stop and got coffee and whatnot, while the crew checked over his rig. ...

SH: What were they checking for? Why?

JR: Checking? Oh, they checked the rig to be sure it's safe still. ... Well, at each station, wherever it would be, they would check the thing over to be sure everything's all right, and fluid levels and all this, and the driver would get a pit stop and a coffee and we proceeded. Well, that was sort of the apex of the mountain range that we were in, and so, now, we're going to go downhill towards Las Vegas. Well, right away, as we topped over a little rise, you could see a great distance. ... It was a bright moonlight night and you could see highway as far as your eye could see, all downhill. Well, as we started off down hill, ... there were three shift levers in the cab and this guy worked it as smooth as silk and, on my side, there was an electric speedometer, it went to eighty miles an hour. Well, very quickly, this went off scale and he kept just gearing up until he got top gear, and he explained then, and said, "We figure, along this stretch, we do about 108 miles an hour."

SH: Oh, my gosh, oh, my word.

JR: And we were on our way to Indian Springs, which is a hundred miles away, and, at times, you could see it in the moonlight, there are some lights there. I got to thinking then, the huge tonnage and at that velocity, whatever we met would be exploded, [laughter] ... but he was just as comfortable as he could be. ... When we got down to near Las Vegas, there was another checkpoint.

SH: This is the Indian Springs checkpoint.

JR: No, no, we went on past. Indian Springs ... is a little, small settlement in the desert.

SH: You did not have to stop there.

JR: No, no, but our next stop, just out of Las Vegas, had a checkpoint. So, I thanked the driver and caught the bus on into town, I could get the train to Lordsburg there. I had it all arranged. I'd have ... two or three days at Lordsburg before I ... had to catch the train to go back, and I already had all the tickets and everything arranged. Well, when I got ready to leave Lordsburg, the train that I was supposed to catch had problems down in the El Paso-Las ... Cruces area, so that there was nineteen hours delayed. Well, that didn't fit. When I did get back to Tonopah, at the gate, the MP takes me to see the commandant of students and he was ... speaking in his official tones. ... He said, "If you weren't on a crew, I'd have those stripes," and then, he said, "Report to the Sergeant Major and he'll give you an assignment as punishment." So, next morning, I report to the Sergeant Major and he said, "You fellows have really been working hard in your training," and ... he'd give me a crew, a detail to clean latrines or police the area or something. I'd get through with this and I'd report back to him and he'd say, ... "You look a little tired. Why don't you go sack out a little while? See me in the morning," and so, my crew, when they had come in then, they'd probably find me sacked out. I think they were getting a little jealous, but the week went by pretty well and we were back in the grace of everyone. ...

SH: He did not take your stripes.

JR: Oh, no, no.

SH: Okay.

JR: ... [Let us] see, anything that happened then ...

SH: Where did you get the idea to catch a ride with the truck?

JR: Oh, the fellows tell [you]. Yes, that was generally circulated. Yes, they'd get them. "You want to go to Las Vegas, why," ... and even the location where you're supposed to wait on the hill. "You wait on the hill and ...

SH: They all pass down. [laughter]

JR: Oh, yes, yes. ... I would imagine a truck wouldn't get by that point, probably, without a passenger.

SH: Traveling at or around a hundred miles-an-hour, sitting on a kitchen chair, no seatbelts.

JR: No seatbelt. No, you're wondering what's going to happen but it went off without incident. These fellows were masters ... at driving.

SH: Oh, my word. Having driven in the West, there is a lot of wildlife out there. I cannot imagine. That is quite an adventure. Where did you propose to this girlfriend? Had you done that yet?

JR: Not at that point.

SH: Okay.

JR: But, I did before I left Tonopah. I had called her and, of course, I'd visited with her, here at Lordsburg again. ... I let my heart be known and I told her that I wanted to marry her, but I was wanting to wait until she was of age. ... She was still in high school.

SH: Okay.

JR: And so, she was of the same mind and thought that it was best if we did wait until maybe even after ... I got back from the war. Then we had finished, our training ...

SH: About the training, which planes were you flying?

JR: B-24s.

SH: You were training on the B-24s at this point.

JR: Yes.

SH: Were there any incidents with the training while you were in this part of Nevada?

JR: You mean accident-like? ... We started with seventy-three crews in this phase training and, when we finished up, and I might be getting a little ahead of myself, when we finished up, there were sixty-three crews [that] had finished. It came out then that this was an order for sixty crews for England, for the European Theater, and, of course, that's why we were getting the cold-weather training, and so, there was three crews extra. Well, my pilot had pneumonia and ear problems and we missed a lot of our hours. So, the sixty crews with the highest hours [left]. That left three of us who hadn't made it, the three low crews, we moved into a barracks by ourselves when the new batch was coming in. So, we had a barracks to ourselves, just the three crews of us in the one barracks, ... but we went ahead training, with our regular schedule and everything, and, when we finished the training and was waiting for an assignment. When the assignment came through, for my crew, we were sent to California for relocation, or assignment. ... As it turned out, we were being sent over to the Pacific Theater. Of course, we didn't know that. We were just there for reassignment.

SH: Was it just the one crew that went, just your crew, or all three?

JR: ... I didn't see the other two crews anymore after I got to relocation. When we got there, ... all our gear was taken. We were given all brand-new gear, the very latest, and we were given a brand-new airplane, ... we made several fuel consumption runs, up and down the coast, with auto-lean carburetor jets. The originals were taped to the firewall near the "putt-putt," so that they could be replaced, because it's a long stretch for a B-24 to Hawaii, from San Francisco. ... We had our fuel consumption chart figured out pretty well, Kirk and I, and so, the day came that we were to go to the POE [port of embarkation], which was north of San Francisco, and we arrived there and were assigned barracks. Ours happened to be next-door to a bunch of Australians. That was a wild, noisy, hope-you-get-a-little-sleep area. ... The barracks were separated, somewhat, but, still, that was a loud bunch over there. [laughter] Well, we were delivered to our airplane, [along with] a bunch of boxes and some aluminum framework that, when it was assembled in the bomb bays, you could put cargo in the bays, on these racks. They fasten at the catwalk and at the sides, and one bay tank, in the left forward bay. So, we had three racks ... for freight, and so, with the other fellows helping and Kirk and I with the slide rule, why, we kept shifting. ... Every box had its weight ... stamped on it. So, we finally, after two or three days of this ... with the slide rule, you have a slide rule in the airplane for loading and, with the slide rule, we were just slightly [off], the center of gravity just slightly aft of the ideal. We were very well pleased. Well, the day came for us to leave. They wait on the weather and, when they get [ideal weather, we take off]. Of course, weather reporting then was not like today, but, when we were getting ready to leave, when we're just ready to fire up the engines, ... here comes a six-by and throws twenty bags full of mail in the waist hatch. Well, I hollered for help. ... I said, "Get it as far forward as you can. ... Pack the nose turret and the nose compartment," where the bombardier does his thing, "but get it all as far forward as you can." They hadn't packed it all off before we were airborne. They hadn't got it finished, yet. We went south and crossed the Golden Gate. That was Cappy's last checkpoint. ... On first fuel report, Cappy makes his first report on ETA arrival and whatnot to the pilot, and so Kirk or I have to make our fuel consumption report. Well, Cappy's didn't agree with ours. We were going to run out of fuel before we got to Cappy's ETA [Estimated Time of Arrival], but that was no problem, because, as

you progress, of course, you're using up all that weight and it goes farther and the airplane makes better speed per power setting as you get the tail lifted up. So, that was no problem. We were going to have fuel enough to get there. ... Cappy had his fixed point at the Golden Gate and he had a noonday fix, that was all until we get to Hawaii. As we're approaching Hawaii, the pilot, jesting with Cappy, says, "What's your ETA? Is it the edge of the field or the tower or what is it?" and Cappy said, "It's the tower." ... He was in jest, too, I'm sure, [laughter] but, so, I cracked the bay a little bit, so [that] I can see down, when we were in sight of [land]. That's when this conversation came up. We were in sight of Hickam Field and headed straight for it. Well, I was sighting down the bulkhead and, when the tower showed up, I tapped Stark and he tapped the co-pilot, who ... had his stopwatch. We were about a minute off of his ETA.

SH: Unbelievable.

JR: We all said we have a "navigator-plus." I mean, in fact, he had already earned the title, in training, "Dead-Eye" Capps. [laughter] ... When we got there, the airplane was taken away from us and I can see the reason. I guess they figured ... if we thought it was ours, we'd take better care in its preparation before we left stateside. So, that wasn't upsetting, really. ... We were assigned to Hickam Field. At Hickam Field, we were assigned some training. Then, we were sent to Wheeler Field, Wheeler Field/Schofield Barracks. This was a combination airfield and foot soldier, infantry, base, and, there, ... with our machine gun training and gunnery training, the first thing they did was the same thing ... that you had to pass back in Las Vegas. You, blindfolded, take your machine gun apart and you orderly stack everything out, you'll know where it's going to be, quickly put it back together. Then you step back from the bench and the instructor goes in and stirs it all up, and then, you put it back together. I guess they wanted to see if we still knew how, because we all passed that, of course, [laughter] and the training was to be navigation, bombing and gunnery, sort of ... simulated missions, and this went very well. The one thing that was a little disconcerting; the airplanes were fitted with three five-inch rocket tubes under each wing. Now, this is a B-24 bomber and, on the nose of the airplane, on the pilot's side, there was a set of iron sight rings. They're out on the nose and, inside, there was the regular optical sight, on a swinging arm, it could be used by either one of the pilots. We were getting a little queasy about that. I mean, that doesn't [make sense], dive-bombing or rockets with B-24s? [laughter] That's fighter jobs. Well, it turned out not to be quite as bad as it seemed like. The training area, the bombing range, was on Kaho'olawe. The only other use of that island had been for a leper colony, down on one end, but we had a bombing range and, off the coast, just off the coast of Kaho'olawe, there was a rock stuck up out of the sea. This was about four or five hundred feet long, probably thirty or forty feet into the air, just a ridge of rock, and that was to be a part of our targeting, too. Now, when we would make a mission, we would go camera bomb a LORAN navigation ship anchored somewhere, or an island, somewhere and we would camera bomb. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue. I am sorry.

JR: Wheeler Field was up in the middle of the pineapple fields. The pineapple fields are all around, and we were billeted in what the locals call the "stables." These were temporary

buildings and there was room on one side for six crew members, and another crew on the other side of the center of the place, and that's all there was to that building. There were no latrines or anything. Latrines were in the center of the cluster of these buildings. We drew our bedding and settled down in [there] for the night, ... but, during the night, everybody was up and clawing and scratching and flashing their flashlights. The place was crawling alive with bugs of every description. It seems ... the pineapple fields are sprayed regularly against insects and bugs. Well, the place they go then is on the airbase and the Schofield Barracks, because that's the only place that's clean, and so, ... it was horrible. I mean, it was just crawling alive with bugs. The next day, ... a couple of the fellows went to the quartermaster supply and asked if they couldn't have something to spray those bugs with. They gave a gallon of DDT, uncut, to each crew. Later, then, two of the other fellows would go and get their gallon. We wound up with six gallons. We put this in a tub, an ordinary washtub, undiluted. They told us where to get the kerosene and how to mix it properly, but we just used it straight, and everybody got a mop and you'd slop the mop and sling it everywhere, floors and as high as you could get. The building was closed in up about waist high and, from there on to the ceiling, which there was no ceiling in the building, but, from there to the top it was screen wire, just open building. ... That night, after we had got through with our mopping job, any time someone was up for a latrine call, he'd flashlight the place to see if the bugs were out, and we had a good, clean report the next day. So, we solved that problem pretty well. ... In our missions, maybe we'd have three or four points in the circuit, and, each time, we would camera bomb and this would give Cappy navigation practice and it gave (Dewey?) (bombardier) practice bombing, with cameras. When we got back, we would hit Kaho'olawe, live drop bombs, and the little rock off the end would be the target and this is where the rockets [came in]. So, at sixteen hundred feet, now, that's not thousand, that's sixteen hundred feet, we would make our initial point and dive on the target. ... We had a direct reading altimeter, which was a sort of radar-type thing, and, at fifty feet, indicated elevation, you make your approach, your final approach, on the target, which was this big rock. ... As Smitty would bring his sights to bear, he would fire the rockets and, when we could bring our guns to bear, we would be firing at the rock, and (Dewey?), the bombardier, has a little sight that they had issued him. ... It had a round handle and it had a little triangular thing here and it was on this mechanical [device], just a crosshair and post sight, and this was on a pendulum. He adjusts the angle, to start with, ... but, on the way in, then, it's just on a pendulum and he's looking at the sight and Smitty is fifty feet above the water, headed for the rock. When he gets there, at a predetermined point, Smitty pulls up, and then, (Dewey?), whenever he's [sure of] the right time, he has the salvo button in his other hand. He salvoes. That drops whatever ... [load] we had, which were test bombs, or practice bombs, and we would be firing all this while and, whenever he pulled up, your job was to get spun around and back on the target as soon as you could. So, that wasn't so bad. Of course, the rock wasn't shooting back at us. [laughter] ...

SH: You were on the waist gun, right?

JR: Oh, we didn't cover that, did we? In Tonopah; we're backing up, I guess. In Tonopah, ... we had some sandstorms, bad sandstorms. Well, when you'd come back to base, after you'd made your circuit around, if it was socked in, they would give us an alternate field somewhere in the area, hopefully, and you would go there and land until [it passed]. Sometimes, if it's blustery, especially, they would have you go down above the sand and wait for a clearing and come on in, quickly. On this particular occasion, we came in at altitude over the base, and it was clear over

the base. So, Smitty yelled back, on the intercom, and said, "Hold your nose," or, "Watch your ears," and he laid her (the B-24) on her side and slid down through the hole. A B-24 has a lot of side area. It's a big, deep body and, when you [come in], if [it is] on its side, it has quite a lot of drag. ... You can do a lot of maneuvering and not exceed ... the red line. Well, on this particular occasion, he yelled at us ... to watch our ears and he then made the maneuver. I kept blowing my nose right away, holding it to pump my ears up, and we got on the ground; Dimas, who was the ball-turret gunner, hadn't cleared his ears. He couldn't ... get them cleared. What he should have done was to call Smitty. Smitty would have went back up ... until his ears [were] okay and we'd do something else. Well, he hadn't done it. He said, "I thought it'd be okay." He ruptured both ear drums.

SH: That hurts.

JR: And so, he was taken off the crew, sent back some place in New York State, where they mend such things, and we were assigned Menzie. Menzie was a big Kansas boy, I mean a big Kansas boy. There's no way you could possibly get this kid in the ball turret. So, he and I then switched. He took the waist and I took the ball. The ball turret's what I had ... studied. Ball turrets and the upper, both, were computerized, Sperry, on the B-17, which is what we had in Las Vegas, and I was just back at home with the ball turret. I liked that.

SH: Okay.

JR: Yes, and so, ... when I went overseas, that was my position, the ball turret. Yes, I hadn't made that clear back there. ... Let's see, we were just off Kaho'olawe, weren't we?

SH: We were talking about how they pulled up.

JR: Yes.

SH: They did not shoot back; the rock did not shoot back. [laughter]

JR: Yes, the rock, it didn't shoot back. We were there for four weeks, training, and, when we were finishing up, we had swimming tests. On the infantry side of the base, there was this large swimming pool, which, to me, appeared to be like a long, wide irrigation ditch. It was a large pool, and it was about five feet depth of water, until you get down to one end and it goes to eighteen feet on that end, and there's this tower, a sixty-foot tower, on that end. In this swimming check, we had to swim across the canal, or the pool, and back. ... You had to be able to do that. If you ... weren't able to make it that far, you would come back and practice. That was no big problem. Then, you go to the other end of the pool where the tower is and, oh, while we were at the shallower end, they showed us how to take your pants off and tie knots in the legs, fling this above your head, get it filled with air, and that would be your buoyancy item, in an emergency.

SH: In theory.

JR: Oh, it worked fine.

SH: Did it?

JR: Oh, yes, it worked great.

SH: Okay.

JR: Yes, and for the next thing, we're back in full dress and fatigues, the whole bit, you know, ... to climb and to go off the tower, and they explained how to do this. He said to hold your hands out this way and your legs this way, not this way, but forward there, and your hands out here, and, when you hit the water, pump your hands down, said, "You won't go in very far," [from] sixty feet, and so, it came my turn. I'm up the ladder and there's a pretty good-sized platform. It sticks well out over the pool. ... There's an opening, on the pool side, and a good, sturdy-looking fellow on either side of the opening, just in case you need assistance in getting off the tower. ... So, with me, I just went, ... just walked right off, ... and did what I was supposed to do and, sure enough, when I hit the water, I didn't go under very far. ... The idea of that was ... in case you were being transported by boat and you had to abandon the ship, it's at least sixty feet from the deck to the water, on most ships; that's why [they had] the tower bit. Well, that went off real well. ... Anything else there that [you want to ask about]?

SH: Did all of your crew succeed?

JR: Oh, yes. No, nobody had any problem. Well, most of them were swimmers. Johnny Hawkins, the nose-gunner, was the armorer on our crew, and he had schooled in Miami Beach, Florida, at the university there. ... He was a powerful swimmer, a very powerful swimmer. I was probably one of the weakest in the swimming game, though I could swim that far then. [laughter] ...

SH: When you got into Schofield Barracks and Hickam Field, did you see any of the damage that had happened on December 7th?

JR: Oh, yes. ... From Wheeler Field, we went back to Hickam for further training. There were four barracks buildings, original. These were in the form of a cross, three stories and a basement. We were assigned the third floor on one of the buildings, and between where we were located and the center section, where the cross was, was the latrines for all the wings. Between where we were and the latrines, a Japanese bomb had gutted the building in that area, all the way to the basement. The walls were bulged out. ... They had patched the roof and they'd made catwalks across on each level to the latrine, across the opening, the big chasm there, ... [laughter] but the hangar buildings were all patched up, bullet holes patched and painted, ... but they apparently were going to just ... take those barracks down, and redo them or something, because they weren't worth saving.

SH: Did you get any leaves into Honolulu or down into Pearl Harbor?

JR: I was free at times. I mean, Johnny and I, the nose-gunner, he and I and Dubose, ... the radioman, we used to pal around and ... we used to go down to the docks. I saw the [USS]

Missouri, [(BB-63)] when it was in dry-dock to be repaired. It was there in dry-dock then. It'd been damaged pretty severely. ... We went to the submarine pens and, there, we're introduced to a young, he wasn't a real young fellow, a little guy, and he was something to do with the engineering, or he was a mechanic on the submarine, and [he] invited us to a day out with him. They had a brand-new U-boat, a (six hundred?)-class, and they were ... making the necessary tests, before they went on station with it. ... So, we went down and went with them this day. ... They were only going periscope depth on that day. He explained to us that when you're ... with your mother ship, you have free run of the mess. You can go to the mess any time and order what you want. So, that didn't sound bad, and he took us on a tour from end-to-end. We went from torpedo tubes to the engine compartment to the batteries. We were crawling. They had little aisle ways ... on the tops of the batteries, so [that] you could service them, and here we are, crawling down across all the batteries in there. This was a diesel-electric submarine, back then.

...

SH: Do you remember the name of it?

JR: No, I don't.

SH: Or the number?

JR: Don't remember that, but we had real nice chow then, but periscope depth was as far as they went that day to check things out. ... We got back into Pearl Harbor and he said, "You want to come along tomorrow?" He said, "You should come with us tomorrow. We make our final [dive]. We make our maximum dive, to test and see if it doesn't pop," [laughter] ... and we thought, "Well, no, we've had it pretty well, [with the] tour. We appreciate it," [laughter] but, while we were there, after we had come in that day, another boat came in, a U-boat, and it was rusted. ... The deck gun was all rusty looking and the deck itself was somewhat wrinkled. He said, "Oh, yes." ... "You go up and lay your fish [torpedos], and then, you go down on the bottom, and take your medicine, and you lay on the bottom then," and he said, "but they had been using the deck gun," I guess to finish off something that ... they didn't finish off while they were submerged. ... So, that didn't look too encouraging.

SH: You were not ready to change your mind about being in the Air Corps and go to submarines.

JR: Johnny and I both decided that if we had to go back again; ... mind you now, we haven't been in combat yet, but, after that, we thought, "Well, if we had to go back again, we would chose the submarine."

SH: Would you?

JR: You have a clean place to stay and you get showers and you get chow and you get the best of the menu in a submarine crew. ... That was our experience with the submarine. ... We had survival training at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and this was very interesting. ... They would show us what we could eat and what we shouldn't eat, if you were forced down

on an island that had vegetation, and, also, ... if the surf was breaking on rocks, you could survive on that rock, and the reason being was; what do they call that vegetable? It's a ...

SH: The coral?

JR: No, no, this is a plant. People plant it in their yards. How about that?

SH: In Hawaii, they plant it in their yards.

JR: People plant it here in their yards, also, especially in California. ... The stems are filled with water, very watery thing; ... anywhere there's a rock that gets some sunshine and there's surf to wet them, keep them wet, well, this stuff grows; portulaca.

SH: I have planted that, too.

JR: ... You can chew it, but you don't need to swallow the fiber so much, but, as long as you chew it and you get some fluid that way, ... it's all right. The fiber would probably help you, too, a little, ... far as bowels are concerned, but you could sustain yourself for some days ... on a rock-like that.

SH: Is this because the Bishop Museum had all the native plants growing in a yard?

JR: Oh, at, ... each day's session, they would have what you were going to run into ... for that particular day. They would have that already there. Someone had gathered that. So, you got to chew on the portulaca and whatnot. ... For ditching procedures, they transported us to Haleiwa, which was on the opposite side of the island from Honolulu. There was a rescue station there, air-sea rescue station. ... There were two rescue boats, and docks and facilities, and, nearby, they had made a ramp with a fuselage, B-24 fuselage. ... You get in, you take up ditching positions and they release this thing, and then, it goes down in the sea, and you pop the life rafts and the emergency supplies, and then, with the two rafts, we split up and half of us in one, half in the other. So, there was five in one and five in the other, and we had the one, only one, survival kit in the box, which ... is like a big trunk. ... When you pop the life raft, it's tethered to the ship, to the airplane. ... After you get in it, then, why, of course, you turn yourself loose. Well, we did and tied them together, so that here we are, with the ration box. ... It floats, too, and so, we're all tied together and here we are, sitting out in the middle of the lagoon, there is a beautiful harbor lagoon there at Haleiwa. ... The survival kit, you go through all the stuff in it. It has the instructions inside and one is the "Mae West," and everybody who knows about a Mae West, which was a radio, and you have an antenna and, to get the antenna in the air, you have inflators. This was like a Roman candle with a box on one end. ... It's what it reminded me of, and, on the end of the box, there's an opening at the bottom, ... taped over. You pull that off, put that end in the water and the balloon comes out the Roman candle end and is being inflated, and later, I thought, "Well, that's probably some kind of a hydrogen generator," and blows up the balloon, oh, a good-sized balloon.

SH: Really?

JR: And this carries the antenna up for your Mae West, so that when you crank the Mae West, you're sending out emergency signals.

SH: I thought a Mae West was the life vest. I did not realize it was a radio.

JR: Well, that's what we called it, but maybe; I never heard of the life vest being called a Mae West. ... The rations, we sampled all the rations and drank some of the water and whatnot in there. There was an emergency medical kit, too, and there's a tarp, yellow on one side and blue on the other, and this could be rigged as a shelter over each of the life rafts. ... You had poles and all to make a shelter over it, and catch rainwater also, for drinking, and you had a still to ... purify the saltwater. This is very slow. For five of you, you're going to have to ration water, ... but, if you supplement with rainwater, you can do pretty well. ... We were several hours out. ...

SH: Was the blue and the orange ...

JR: The yellow.

SH: The yellow, I am sorry.

JR: Yes. Well, the blue would be concealing.

SH: Okay.

JR: And the yellow would be a rescue signal.

SH: How much, rations, would you have had in this box?

JR: ... Considerable, really. Of course, there's a limit, ... and there's water, fresh water, besides [which] you have [the] ability to get water, ... but I don't know how many days, actually, if you followed the schedule. Of course, if it looks like you're going to be there a long time, you'll probably stretch it as much as you could then.

SH: Do they send a craft out to bring you back in from this training?

JR: No, we paddled back to the dock.

SH: Okay.

JR: ... Each one has two short paddles in it, each life raft, so that you can maneuver around.

SH: Was there anything like shark repellent in there?

JR: I don't recall. ... Back at Bernice P. Bishop, ... while we were there, they show you how to make shelters and how to catch fish and how to make animal traps and things of this nature. ... I bought, while I was there, an LC-14-B. This was a survival knife. Now, some of the elite troops got these issued, but, apparently, at the museum, they were able to buy some of these. ... They

cost about seven or eight dollars, and so, I bought one, but I was the only one on the crew that bought one.

SH: Really?

JR: Yes, and I thought I had a picture of one of them. But, they showed you how to make shelters and how to make, from palm fronds, shelters of them, showed you how to catch crabs; get a forked stick and you take one of the threads out of the center rib of a palm leaf. Just each individual little leaf, down in there, it's a rib there, and you'd open that up and there's several fibers that ... go the full length. You take one of these, tie it across a forked stick, so [that] you have a string here. Then, you go along the shore until you find a crab, and he's on the alert. His eyeballs are sticking way up here above his head. So, you touch below the eyeball with that thread and he grabs it. His eyes drive back. So, you pick him up with the stick and carry him to a boiling pot. So, that's how you can fetch crabs, [laughter] and we were taught how to make fish traps. We made fish traps from sticks. ... It was a very good class. I really enjoyed that.

SH: Was this taught by military personnel?

JR: No, by museum personnel.

SH: By museum personnel. Were they native Hawaiians?

JR: No, not necessarily. I'm trying to think of the fellow. He was a Doctor So-and-So of so-and-so, several of them were, but they ... belonged to the museum, ... they taught these classes.

SH: Did you tour the museum at all? Were the artifacts that they had there for you to see?

JR: You could have, yes. I don't know that you had enough free time for that, but you could have. ... [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: How long were you there in training in Hawaii?

JR: About sixty days total.

SH: What kind of interaction was there between the officers and the enlisted men at this point, and did it change over time, once you got into combat?

JR: Oh, no. ... When we first assembled as a crew, from that day forward, we fit like a glove, and the officers, the pilot was Smitty. Well, the co-pilot's name was Smith, also, but he was Bob Smith, ... because of the way they select. ... We were all a crew. That will come up later.

SH: All right.

JR: Some of that will. ... After we had finished there ... in Hickam, we were assigned to our squadron, which, with me, was the 26th Squadron of the 11th Bomb Group of the Seventh Air Force. We were sent to ReLoaLape Atoll to join our squadron, and this ... particular atoll is a pretty good-sized atoll, but the particular reef island, where ... the base was, was Kwajalein. Now, the whole atoll is called Kwajalein, but it's down at the end; it's sort of a diamond-shaped atoll, and it's down at this end. The crescent around this end is Kwajalein Island, though, now, of course, everything's called Kwajalein, and still, that's where the base is. On the other end, there was some elevation and fresh water. There was fresh water there and that's where the natives lived, ... who were originally from the island, and you could go there to trade with them. Every day, there was a landing craft that left from where we were and went all the way to the other end, would carry supplies up there ... that had been ordered, and then made the trip back. Now, this was seventy miles, in a landing craft, but you had a little while, while you were there, and so, they'll bring you back in the evening. Next day, they would make the trip again. Johnny and I went up one day, I wanted a cover for my bunk. ... You know these Southern-style hats, straw hats, ... and it's flat woven and the weave is flat, with about quarter-inch wide strips? Well, they would do with this, as big a mat as you wanted, and so, I went. That was what my objective was. I was going to get me something to cover, keep the dust off my bunk, because the island is pulverized coral, and it seems like a bunch of GIs pulverized it, and so, it's dusty. Well, I wanted a dust cover. ... I was directed to ask for a mat maker. So, I asked the guy for a mat. ... He wasn't a very big fellow, and so, he brings out a little mat, [I] said, "No, no, bigger, bigger," [laughter] and, finally, he brings out just exactly what I wanted. So, I asked him how much. "Five dollar," and I was pre-warned to bargain. ... "They're going to make a sale regardless." So, I told him, "Two dollars," and so, he counters and we counter and all. Finally, I reach an agreement, and I don't remember; I think I paid him two-seventy-five or three dollars, or something like that. ... So, after he got the money in his hand and I had the mat, he looks at his [payment], the money, and he jumps up and down, both feet at the same time, a little bit [and said], "Sucker, sucker, sucker."

SH: That was what he told you.

JR: [laughter] And so, I'm dying laughing. He'd have probably taken a dollar for it, if it came to that.

SH: They just did not tell you what kind of a good bargain you could drive.

JR: Right. ... We made windmills to do our laundry. You'd take a five-gallon GI can, this is a square tin can, and you cut the top out and you fix your windmill, you have plenty of material, like boards, boxes, everywhere. So, you make your windmill, with an offset and a stick and a cross, on the bottom of the stick, in the bucket, there's always a breeze off the sea. So, you see these things lined up all along on the shore. ...

SH: Like a box.

JR: Yes, like an old fashioned churn to wash your clothes. That was pretty good. ...

SH: Was it difficult to adjust to the heat?

JR: Didn't seem to be, really. We didn't wear heavy clothing. ... That'll come up in a little while, too. ... From Kwajalein, we made our first mission, it was (Jaluit?). ...

SH: Where was it?

JR: Well, the island was one of the bypassed islands. To keep them from being operational, there were airplanes there every day, carrying some kind of delay fused bombs [to] not only keep them stressed out, but to keep the airfields or airstrip inoperable. ... We made one of these trips and we made another trip to Wake Island, which was a bypassed island at this time. As I remember, our target was Peacock Point. They had two runways, across like this, and that's where we were to lay our "eggs." You have one with a one-tenth-second delay and that's to give you a photographic proof that you made the mission, so that you get counted for it. The rest of them were delays up to thirty-six hours or so.

SH: Really?

JR: Yes. You just want something popping all the time on the runways, to keep them inoperative, to keep the guys on alert, not sleeping much, stressed out.

SH: These are still occupied by the Japanese.

JR: At this time, oh, yes, yes. ... No landing had ever been made there or anything. It'd just been bombed out and bypassed, and that was Wake Island. Of course, there was a skirmish there, yes, but it was still [in enemy hands]. The Japanese were in possession of the island.

SH: Okay, all right.

JR: Yes, they took it, as a conquest for the Japanese, but we kept them awake and the runways messed up. So, at these places, we never did get any fighter interception at all but we did get some flak, but by the third or fourth trip, Truk was the target. By now, they had taken the island of Eniwetok. You probably see that in the news, ... and the Navy was making that into a supply base. ... Aircraft carriers could come there to replenish their airplane supply and ships of the line could get supplies. Well, by going to Eniwetok, ... we could top off our tanks at Eniwetok and go on to Truk, carry a full load, come back to Eniwetok, pick up gas and go home.

SH: Where was your home base?

JR: Kwajalein. When we got back from the, I think it was the first trip to Truk, the fourth trip we made, and when we got back to base, there's a little bit of news awaiting us. When we first joined the squadron, we were to make thirty missions and re-cycle to the States. When we came back this time, we were to make thirty-five missions, which meant we were in the hole a little. [laughter] ... Well, we didn't mind. I mean, the pressure in Europe was really escalating at this time. ... Truk became our primary target and when we got back ... on the eighth or ninth mission that we'd made, when we got back that time, it was forty. So, we're still in the hole, and morale was sagging a little about this time and we had difficulty keeping a positive attitude.

Each squadron flew ten aircraft in a box-stagger formation, and it was doing something to keep ten aircraft flyable. Sometimes, you could maybe borrow one from another squadron, in order to make up, because the pressure in Europe was pretty heavy and we weren't getting airplanes or much to fix them with. [laughter]

SH: Really?

JR: ... [Truk] is the largest atoll in the Pacific, and this was heavily fortified by the Japanese. There were islands in the lagoon, large islands in the lagoon, North Moen and Moen, and they had airfields on them. The big island had several airfields, some islands, North Moen, had two or three airfields. ... We had a reconnaissance [aircraft], F-5 reconnaissance. If this was, in the military, it would be a P-38, you know the configuration, two fuselages, and a pod for the pilot, and, [on] each fuselage, there was an engine. ... So, it's twin-engine, with a pod in the middle for the pilot. ... They had one model of this [that] was an F-5, and this was a reconnaissance aircraft, takes pictures and observes, too, and they have [them] fitted with ... extra gas tanks on the outside, and they had very good range. ... One of their chores was, if we were going to bomb some island tomorrow, today, they would fly all the way there and report on the weather, and then, next day, we would [attack]. ... That was our weather reporting system.

SH: Okay.

JR: We didn't have radar satellites. ... Now, we were hitting Truk, somebody there all the time, and one of my friends, after I was out of the service, he was a pilot on a B-24 in the southern group of the Seventh Air Force and he said, ... "Along about that time, too, Truk was our primary target." ... It wasn't just the 11th Bombardment Group in which we had three squadrons, and one that was in repair, but others, ... and the idea, as it turned out later, seemed to me, they were trying to make the Japanese think maybe ... that was going to be our next target, that we were going to land there. ... One day, the F-5 reported five ships headed for Truk Atoll, and so, they figured ... this was reinforcement troopships. ... This actually came off like they planned it, mostly. It doesn't always, [laughter] but there was one of the other crews from another group that was making an initial, a regular bomb run, like we always [did]. ... Then, the whole of the 11th, thirty aircraft, we were to go in under their blip, radar-wise, and they were throwing out extra heavy loads of WINDOW, little aluminum strips that confused the radar of the Japanese, and they were throwing out whole bunches of this. Well, they went in and we went in under this cover and, when we got there, there were no aircraft ... intercepting us, which we figured, "They had all hit the crew that went in before and were back on the ground for gas," ... There were three ships tied up at the docks and unloading, vehicles everywhere, people like ants all over the place, our loading was seventy-five-pound "daisy cutters," fragmentation, each of the thirty aircrafts were carrying four bundles of fragmentation bombs. I didn't fire a round, ... in or out. I never did fire a round that day. All I was doing was sitting there, getting my gut wrenched from the sight. The F-5 recon, intelligence, reported, after this ten thousand casualties, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued the 11th Bombardment Group a Presidential Citation for the slaughter.

SH: At this stage, where you are, in the ball turret, the elevation allows you to very clearly see what was going on below.

JR: Oh, I'm open. I can see more of what's going on below than almost anybody else on the airplane.

SH: You were low enough that you could see.

JR: I'm hanging out of the airplane.

SH: Right, I understand that.

JR: Yes, I'm not up. You see them in the [photographs]. They're just sticking out a little ways from a B-24; get in it, I turn it loose and it drops down out of the airplane, and I am looking around and it seems I am sitting on nothing. ... You have a very good view. You may not be able to see too well up through the formation, especially if you're ... on one of the lower sides. A box stagger has airplanes this way and airplanes this way, the idea being to bring more guns to bear, at any one time, on an incoming fighter.

SH: How was it if you were stacked on top of each other?

JR: We're not exactly on top of each other, but it's a staggered formation.

SH: Okay.

JR: And they call it boxed and there's some lower than others, flight-wise. ... You have three flights. We were flight leaders for B Flight and the tenth man is "Tail-End Charlie." ... He's the lowest man, ... filling in the gap at the back. That puts several more guns in that area and, usually, on most any approaching fighter, you could bring at least twelve guns to bear on it, probably, ... from any direction. That was the idea of the box stagger.

SH: Okay.

JR: ... One incident there, the fighters at Truk Island [were] precision fellows. These guys would give the Blue Angels [the US Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron], a run for their money. These fellows flew in pairs.

SH: This is the Japanese.

JR: [Yes], and this is the old "Zeke," which is what everybody thinks of as a Zero, airplane. That's what they were flying. ... On this particular day, ... the fighters were all leaving, they don't have much time, because of their fuel, but they were all leaving, and then, ... these two were called in at ten o'clock high, and so, here I am, going to wait for them, ... the Truk pilots were not real aggressive, normally. ... They'd break off about five hundred yards out then go back for another pass, but ... they wouldn't come into their own flak. ... They were all leaving, but these two were called in, high, ... and they didn't break off. They came right on in. Well, I was swinging around to be able to make my pass at them when the one exploded and here they are, swinging toward the rear. ... In order for them to ... keep their guns bearing, they have to

make a pass around you. Well, here they were, in a very awkward place, when that guy blew up. The other fellow was already in breakaway and he was rolling back trying to get his guns to bear, just like, "Hmm, that was automatic." That puts him in "dead man's alley." He's trying to overtake you and he's not that much faster than you. He's probably, maybe, 325 and you're, at this point, about 225. So, he's closing very slow. Well, he must keep rolling around to get his guns to bear and it never did blow up, but he broke off on one wing and in a very slow spiral. We were [at] about twenty thousand feet, ... and I couldn't take my eyes off of him. I watched until he hit the water. ... He just was committing suicide. ... There were at least a dozen guns on him, including mine. [laughter] In fact, that polished off my guns, the old guns, the old barrels I had, (in *Glenda B?*), and that finished them off.

SH: Really?

JR: Oh, yes, and we had already been warned that we were out of barrels and to take care of your barrels. So, here I am, sheepishly, I go ask for barrels and I get a lecture, "You'll just have to fly them." Well, I thought I had to have a plan. So, I figured, now, Eniwetok [was a] Navy restock place, and they had rows and rows of aircraft carrier planes and their TBF model had a mobile turret with a pair of fifty-calibers in it, and I said, "Well, when we get there; I'll leave my guns apart. When we land at Eniwetok, you fellows ... take care of the fuelling and I'm going to go get me a pair of barrels." There was a whole string of TBFs right where we were parked. So, I go to the first one, empty jackets, no barrels in them, just the jackets. ... That's the way they all were. Now, that isn't going to work, but, then, here's a Quonset hut, the armory. So, I thought, "Well, it's worth a try." So, I grabbed my barrels and headed off for the place and I get there and there's two fellows in behind the counter and I said, "Is there any way, ... anybody I can see, that would allow me to have a couple of barrels?" ... About that time, the other fellow put a pair of barrels on the counter, all nice and warm and cleaned up from their degumming, and this other guy said, "Well, I guess. Take these and take care of them," and I was puzzled, "But, how?" He said, "Oh, we saw you coming. We knew what your problem was." So, he threw the old ones in the pile behind me [laughter] and I had two new barrels. By the time they got through fueling, I had mine all in shape and back in the stowed position. [laughter] ...

SH: That was fortunate.

JR: Oh, yes, that worked out real well. Some other incidents; it was about this time that we moved to Guam from Kwajalein, and the ground crew, ... [the] ground personnel, had boxed up everything and loaded [it] on ships and depart[ed]. They left the air flight crews and the cook, with a few people to feed us, and so, ... while we were waiting, ... we kept making missions, so that there wouldn't be any break in that for the Japanese to see. ... In-between, ... we would "midnight requisition" a little here and there. One of the things they did, on the upper end of the island was a food lot, where they stored foodstuffs, quartermaster, and this was in rows of stuff tarped down against the weather. ... These fellows came back with a carton of six, about, oh, one-gallon-sized tins, of turkey, canned turkey, and so, "You'd better go get yours." They drew me a picture of the lot and where to go. I have no trouble getting by the perimeter guard. I don't think they were so inattentive; I think they were a little more merciful. ...

SH: I was going to ask; how do you get past your own people? [laughter]

JR: Yes, and, in the middle of it all, was a built-up machine gun nest but I don't imagine they would shoot anyone; I went down the row. Sure enough, here's the tarp ... [that has] been unpegged for a big, long place, and I lift the tarp and scoot under it and there's boxes. So, I get a box, get out and just go back the same way I came in and deposit this on the airplane. The next day, I guess it was about the next day that we were going to ship out, and so, that night we thought; ... they were building a new area and this turns out it was going to be ATC Headquarters, Air Transport Command. ... These buildings were GI specials, like in the States, two stories ... and painted even, indoor latrines, et cetera.

SH: Wow.

JR: They're a regular stateside-type thing, and so, one of the fellows said, "Well, they have mattresses, cots with mattresses." ... Everybody thought, "Well, it'd be nice to have a mattress." So, we went down and, sure enough, there was hardly any personnel there at all so we went into one of the barracks and here they were, laid out with a metal, regular metal, cot and mattress. So, everybody grabbed a mattress, rolled it up, put it on their shoulder and here we go, marching back; we were going back to our area. Here we are, going up the road, six of us, and each one with a roll, and we got up to turn into our area and lights flashed on, "Halt." The officer of the day was [there]. He asked where we were going; we said, "Oh, we're going just in here. That's where we sleep." He said, "Where did you get those?" So, we told him. He said, "Well, I think we should take them back." Oh, well, since he suggested it, we thought that'd be a good idea. [laughter] So, we turn around and go back and he goes along with [us], behind us, with the lights on, to see that we got there, just to escort us, you know. We get back and put ... the mattresses back in the building and ... he left then and we went back to the barracks, and, on the way back, we said, "You know, if we'd have gone directly over to the airplane," which was right close by, "instead of going back to the barracks with our mattress;" of course, we were going to want to sleep on them that night. [laughter] ... So, I didn't get a mattress.

SH: Good try, though.

JR: ... Now, the Marines were boxed up in a very small [area]. This island didn't have room to accommodate all the people that were there, really, but the Marines were down in this one area and this fellow from another crew said, "One of the tents on the perimeter there has cots, new cots," [laughter] and so, we thought that would be a pretty good idea, and so, we went down and, sure enough, the tents were so close together that the guide ropes were this way and that way, crossing in the middle. You couldn't get between.

SH: Like woven together, yes.

JR: You couldn't get between, but there was aisle ways between the tent rows, and we were on the outside. Well, that's the side where the guard was walking, this pathway. So, all you had to do was just get by that guard. ... We found the tent that had the back slit out of it, and so, you just go inside, and, sure enough, there's lots of [cots], just stacks on stacks. [laughter] It's pretty hollowed out. Of course, other people had been visiting.

SH: Obviously, with the back slit open on the tent. [laughter]

JR: And we got a cot, each one of us, and it turns out it's a brand-new cot, and so, we carried that back to the barracks. The barracks there were two-story, just very, very minimum. You get a pallet here and a pallet there and little space between, in order to save space, because space was precious. The day came that we were to leave, we ... [woke] up early and we'd been out all night, requisitioning and we're bleary-eyed. [laughter] So, I go to mess; ... we have a tent set-up, flaps out, temporary, kitchen set-up, and so, I go in with ... my mess gear and, on this side, he puts two eggs, looking at me, and, on that side, a piece of steak, almost as big as my hand. I didn't drop it, but I nearly did. [laughter]

SH: Almost fainted. [laughter]

JR: It seems there was a supply ship ... in the harbor and our "cookie," [cook], he was very enterprising. [laughter] ... Everybody got a beer ration every month and this came [in] six-square cartons. So, there's thirty-six bottles in a cardboard carton. These are short-neck bottles, and those who didn't want their ration, the cookie had a signup sheet and you'd sign that, the cookie would get your ration. So, he had some merchandise to trade with. [laughter] He could get just about anything he wanted and that's how he had done that. He had been down bargaining with some beer, [laughter] and so, we had a real good breakfast and then we go to the airplane. Now, the ground personnel, the skeleton bunch, they were going to be scattered out amongst us, too. So, we'd have an extra two or three onboard. Well, we get onboard and everything's all okay. So, I check out my turkey; I have six cans of preserved cheese. I don't think I'd have made a very good thief. [laughter]

SH: You did not get the mattress, you did not get the turkey, but you did get cheese and a cot; good eye.

JR: On the way to Guam, we passed the ships that were carrying the personnel and equipment and everything and we went on to land. When we got there, we were to land at Agana Airfield; ... this Japanese airfield is where we were to land. Well, when we got there, there had been no patch work done or anything, but, fortunately, ... the main stream of the runway wasn't that torn up. There's some big craters here and there, but ... everybody got down safe and we all lined up alongside. ... There was a cleared area there. Apparently, that was what ... the Japanese used it for, and we all strung out in along there, and this was just the 26th Squadron. The other squadrons had gone to Tinian and Saipan, and so, ... it was just our squadron that day, and we were waiting, waiting. Nobody was waiting for us. Some gunfire around, but, pretty soon, a halftrack comes up over the hill, from the other side of the runway, and comes across and the hatch opens. A guy sticks his head out and says, "There seems to be some question as to who's in charge of this airfield." Well, the putt-putts start up, all up and down the line, to give the turrets power, in case they need them and he said, "But, we'll have you out of here shortly." In just a little while, some six-bys began showing up and we all loaded up in the six-bys and, with a bulldozer in the lead, we headed off. ... It's raining like cats and dogs, and so, we're going along sort of a ridge and one of the six-bys slid off sideways in the mud. The bulldozer wallowed around through the brush and, hauling broadside, put it back up on the track, [laughter] and, after a little bit, they stopped the officer there, said, "You'll find your stakes over there, down in the

flats and up that rise." Now, we had been briefed before we left, ... and all military laid out in the demonstration, the announcer said, "Our assignment was J-8 stake," and so forth, all military fashion, laid out, and the officer said, "You'll find your stake over there." We went down out of the six-bys and we were submerged in the underbrush, [laughter] and so, we all started in that direction, and, pretty soon, somebody sang out with a stake number and pretty soon, somebody else; so, we kept going, and down in the flats, there was quite a little bit of wet, and so, we started up this little hill or rise, and I thought, "Well, that'd be all right. J-8's somewhere up there." Well, we finally found [the] J-8 stake and we began clearing around ... from our stake outward of the brush and stuff. We were there five days before the rest of the personnel ... got there, [laughter] off by ourselves. We had K rations and the cookie, as soon as we got there, he set up a tarp and a kitchen under it to feed us. So, we didn't have any problem there. We began clearing, then, kept on clearing. We cleared a space big enough that day for our cots. We each had a cot, courtesy of the Marines, [laughter] and so, I just put my cot up, and no blankets and stuff on it, and a mosquito net. When we did bed down for the night, ... there was some gunfire, but it wasn't bad that night.

SH: You do not have a tent or anything. You are just out in the open, okay.

JR: Well, we each had shelter halves and we had also appropriated extra shelter halves, back stateside, at Tonopah, [laughter] we had shelter halves.

SH: Okay.

JR: A number, and we ... were sewing the shelter halves together and we'd stretch a cord up and put the shelter halves, our big tarp now, over that and tie it down against the weather, and so, we had a place that was not raining in our face.

SH: That was what I was wondering, because you had said it was raining so badly there.

JR: Oh, yes, it was raining, and the next morning, when we get up ... my cot is laying in the mud. It had sunk. The legs had sunk down, [laughter] and so, that wasn't so good, but we kept clearing. ...

SH: You said you heard gunfire that first night as you were laying there.

JR: Oh, yes, every night, and the flares, when the gunfire would get heavier, we would look out and there's yellow flares and white flares in the air. It turns out the yellow ones belonged to the Japanese and the white ones belonged to the Americans, but they both, each one of them, gave off a lot of light, just lit up the whole sky and area and there was always two or three or four of these in the air at all times, all night long, and sporadic gunfire. ... Near our stake was a breadfruit tree, I mean, huge trunk, huge breadfruit tree, and those are very spreading trees, very spreading. ... There was also a clump of papaya. We left that, because it had papayas on it, and there was a tangerine [tree]. Between our stake and the breadfruit, it was loaded with green fruit, a good-sized tree.

SH: You had hope. [laughter]

JR: Yes, things were looking up. There was a stand of bamboo on off, and mostly just brush and weeds in-between. So, when we reached the bamboo, there was a dead ... Japanese soldier, and he wasn't bloated. I mean, he hadn't been dead too long. So, we could see some of those problems they had putting down those stakes. A burial detail dug a shallow [grave] and buried the fellow, the officers, they were all doing the same thing, clearing. ... When the ground personnel showed up, we had buried three Japanese soldiers that had perished in that area. ... I don't know if they were deserters or whatnot. When the ground personnel landed, finally, the place was cleared up in a hurry and they laid everything out military, so that our stake moved and it was right near the tangerine tree, and we also got a tent, pyramidal. ... So, we put ... the pole where the stake was and we set that up, and we tied the ropes from the edge of the tent, this is the roof of the tent, with a flap. We tied these flaps side walls so [that] they would drape out straight with the roof and secured them. We filled in the gaps at the corners with ... shelter halves, [laughter] and then, we thought about ... making a foxhole. Well, I hit rock, it wasn't very far down, but, [with] the mud I got out, I made a dike [laughter] out of the mud and the tarp came down over that and [I could] tie it down tight, so [that] it ... kept the water out. So, I have a dry foxhole, [laughter] kind of shallow, but, with the dike built up, it was accommodating. ...

SH: While you were laying there on your cot, listening to this gunfire, were you concerned that the Japanese were going to overrun your location? Were you protected? Did you think that?

JR: Why, that's always a possibility, yes.

SH: Would you have been safer sleeping on the plane? [laughter]

JR: Oh, well, there's some incidents [that] happened at the plane, too, on occasion. ... Ammunition came in wooden boxes. These are well-made wooden boxes, with box corners and boards about this thick and very nice wood. Inside this is a tin box and it has a pull strip on the top. So, you take the lid off of the ammunition box and you pull ... the strip off and you get the ammunition out. There was 250 rounds to the box and it's already belted. ... The used boxes, you keep piling up the empties, and so, ... there were lots of empty boxes. So, I would carry boxes to the tent and I'd set these up at the end of my cot, so that I'd have shelves. ... On each trip out, you received a box of ten-in-one rations, at least one; sometimes, you get two boxes of ten-in-one rations, and the leftovers, I would seal up, ... like leftover biscuits, and especially the fruits. ... In this ten-in-one, ... [there was] your main item, and this'd be dehydrated and you open it and you put this in the [kitchen]; in the waist. There is a kitchen in the B-24. This is a suitcase-type thing, fastens on to the side of the aircraft, plugs into the electrical system, and this has two deep-well cooker-type things and a small griddle, and do you remember hot chocolate cups like the chrome things you get at the drug store or ice cream parlor?

SH: Yes.

JR: Well, there's two of these that work on a twenty-eight-volt system. ... You can use them anywhere that there is a crew station. A crew station has an extra plug-in that you can put whatever you want. ... In every ten-in-one, there's a two-pound box of dried fruit, Del Monte, prunes, apricots, or dried apples, sometimes, but you can put those in a stew pot and revive them

to make them more edible, but whatever was left over of those I would bring back to the tent. Arming wires for the bombs came in round tins, and some larger tins and some smaller tins. Pat still has one of the smaller tins, she uses it for a button box. [laughter] ... The stuff that ... was still opened, I'd empty that into the tin, a sealed tin, it would seal to keep the varmints away, and it was readily opened. ... All the fellows, ... anytime they wanted something, they could get it there. [laughter] So, we had extra rations. ... I should tell an incident about this time, and that's the toads, regular, old toads. Now, these were not little toads, like you see around here. These were big toads.

SH: Like a foot across?

JR: They were; I'd imagine they weigh some two or three pounds. Anyway, these weren't miniatures, and that was the most welcome sight. Here they are, at one time, I counted as many as seven of them in the tent. It was still a dirt floor tent. Well, they're sitting there ...

SH: Eating the bugs.

JR: Yes. They were very welcome, [for insect suppression], and we also had GI rat traps. This is a rat trap about this big, like an old, conventional rat trap. It's about this big, has a chain and a stake, and the rats ... were not small. [laughter] We would monitor the traps that we had set. Sometimes, when it snapped, you'd want to be sure ... you get out of bed and make certain that the critter's dead, because he pulls the stake and drags the trap off out under the tent flap, [laughter] and you have to go looking for it. I mean, they were that much of a critter, the rats were, but those toads were really welcome. [laughter] Well, eventually, they began spraying DDT from a C-2 transport. That helped the bug situation tremendously.

SH: Were the bugs as bad on Guam as they had been in Hawaii?

JR: In that one [area in the] middle of the pineapple fields?

SH: Yes.

JR: No, we never did see it quite that bad, but the toads were really welcome. [laughter]

SH: I thought maybe you were going to tell me that you cooked one up, like you had as a child.

JR: [laughter] No, we didn't do that, but, getting to that, when I was a kid, at my dad's, why, we hunted deer every fall, and this [was when there was] no deep freeze, of course. ... The way that my stepmother would put up the meat was in big-mouthed mason jars, quart jars, ... she'd cook this in a gravy, put that in the jar, and process it, and, that way, in the wintertime ... or in the spring or summer, whenever, you could have venison in gravy. ... See, it was ... the year after my graduation that I was at my dad's, and we had three deer, and so, I stayed home, my brother and Dad went to work, ... and I helped my stepmother can deer, until we processed all of them. When I was ... stateside, she would send me goodie-bags all the time. ... She had one tin, especially, that she would bake a cake in that and ice it and it was self-packed, you might say, and so, wherever I was, we kids, we'd enjoy it, and their parents and others did the same thing

with them. ... She would put two of these quart mason jars in one of the regular, old GI shipping boxes, these were cardboard, one size only, ... but they'd fit in there with straw packed all around. I never did get a broken jar. ...

SH: That is amazing. Was this only in the States, or did she send them overseas?

JR: No, no. ... I was going to tell you there, like at Guam, receiving it; ... I never did get a bad one and she sent them regular. (Smokey Stover?) was one of our ground crew. Now, this was a Vermont kid and, of course, deer was part of his diet growing up, and all through the Depression years especially. The other fellows, they wouldn't even try it. They were mostly New Jersey, New Yorkers, but Smokey and I, ... would eat a whole quart jar, [laughter] we would do away with one every once in awhile and that went over real good. ... So, with that and the tins of ... dried fruits, we'd have fruit bars, chocolate fruit; the chocolate is, I think they called it preserved chocolate, or something. ... Even in the tropic heat, it's a bar, and it's rather dry on the outside, but it's pretty good, and you can even make a chocolate brownie out of it, ... with a little heat and moisture, and so, we had extra rations. In fact, [we] never did have a shortage of food.

SH: That is good.

JR: We always had food to eat in abundance. It wasn't doing all that much good. I mean, I went in at 152 pounds and, at this time, we're talking about 110, but you had plenty to fill your belly anytime you wanted, and mess was very stomach filling. It just didn't have the nutrients. ... They didn't have that all ironed out that well. [laughter] Hopefully, they do a better job now.

SH: Hopefully, hopefully.

JR: ... From Guam, our primary target was shipping and the Bonins, Iwo Jima, ... Haha Jima, Chichi Jima, these three particularly. Well, in order of their ascension, Iwo was here, Haha's here and Chichi's there. Chichi is a rather large island. Haha Jima is a little ridge sticking out of the sea, a mountain ridge. On the one side was mostly cliff, ... but there was no place to build an airfield, just this jungle ridge sticking up out of the ocean, and rivers coming down. Of course, there's forest and, in the tropics, there's rain, but this river came down on the cliff side. There was a rift in the mountain range where this river came down into a rather wide "V," where it joined the ocean. So, there was room for a dock and they could anchor sea-going vessels there. Chichi Jima [was] a big island, and on one side of the island, there is an airfield. There's only one airfield on Chichi, but there's a very large harbor area. ... The airfield is on one side of the harbor, submarine pens along one shore here and a lot of shipping activity, and that was one of our targets. There was not only the airfield, but the ships, and we'd drop thermal bombs, thermite, on the submarine pens. I don't know how effective that turned out or anything, but that was all reinforced concrete and I don't know how well the thermite did against that, but that's all we dropped, and we took ships at Chichi, besides the airfield. Sometimes, your mission would be the airfield, sometimes, because of the F-5, reconnaissance, [it] would be a ship or two that had just recently come there. ... At Iwo, which I made twenty-some-odd missions to Iwo, ... when we first saw Iwo, I have a picture of it, it's all forest, except for the Number One Airfield, Number Two Airfield, and they're building a Number Three Airfield when we first see it. Well,

in the course of time, one of our chores was to remove the forest. They didn't want to fight in a forest.

SH: Okay.

JR: So, we took a lot of gel [napalm] and, between all the different squadrons, by the time Iwo was [invaded], the landing, any pictures you see of that time, it's just a desolate-looking place. Yes, we made it look that way.

SH: Okay.

JR: That was all Koa wood forest. ... Koa wood is what they still make trinkets and stuff out of for the tourist trade. It's very nice wood, and, as a cooking fire, it'll turn into a bed of coals right away and, when it goes away, there'll be just a few little ashes left. It's lovely wood, but it made a lovely fire on Iwo. [laughter] ...

SH: How many months ahead of the invasion were you doing this?

JR: Oh, Iwo became our primary target, I would say, around September or October, and the landing was the 19th of February. ... Our missions were the airfields, other than the fire job.

SH: What kind of flak or fighter aircraft did you engage then, at this point?

JR: At Iwo was our introduction, at one point, to the "Rufe" [the Nakajima A6M2-N Navy Type 2]. Now, we called the regular Zero "Zeke," military designation, but the Rufe, in plan form, that is, you're looking down, you'd say, "Oh, that's a Thunderbird," [P-47 Thunderbolt], same elliptical wing, same size elliptical wing. In a broadside view, it's compatible, except it doesn't have a chin. On a Thunderbird, the oil cooler makes the front like this; there's an opening here for the oil cooler, but, on the Japanese, it's round. If he's coming head on at you, you'd recognize him in an instant. Otherwise, if it's a plan view you see, you might think, "That's a Thunderbird." I don't know if that's a deliberate thing or if they were just copying because of their experience in engaging the Thunderbird. ... It was a high-powered thing, like a Thunderbird, and mounted four twenty-millimeter cannons; I don't know if you know what fear really is.

SH: Not what you have gone through.

JR: Well, it's a sort of a red-hot/freezing sensation ... in your gut. That's what the sensation you get [is like] when you see a Rufe coming in and smoke rolling back over the wings from the twenty-millimeters. That's sort of what you feel, but you're on automatic, so, it doesn't matter what you feel, because you're on automatic. The training you've been receiving is all pointed towards your automatic reaction. You don't have time to think. It's an automatic thing. ...

SH: Were you still flying the same formation, the same box?

JR: Yes, oh, yes, same. Yes, that's very effective, was very effective then, and because, now, like in Europe, they flew in huge packs on a mission. Well, we were in small, concentrated

[flights], and we were, at most, probably, you would be the three squadrons and that brought more protection to us, by those stagger [formations]. They would have probably ... done the same thing in Europe, if they had smaller numbers to contend with, which we did, but, besides the Rufe, the next thing we ...

SH: Are you saying, "Root," R-O-O-T?

JR: R-U-F-E.

SH: R-U-F-E, Rufe, okay.

JR: Rufe, and besides the Rufe was the *kamikaze*. Now, the *kamikaze* aircraft, air-to-air, Japanese special, was a small thing, about sixteen feet wingspan. The nose of it was a submarine torpedo, warhead, and then, there was a little fuselage [that] went back, room enough for the operator ... in a semi-reclining position, his feet forward ... behind the warhead and his back is on a little incline so that his head is looking just over the fuselage. There's a small canopy here that his head sticks up in and that's part of the tailfin and, [in] the back of the fuselage, there's five rocket tubes stacked one above another. That's the way it ends. It's a very small thing, ... it's carried in the bomb racks under a regular fighter plane. You see, the Japanese fighters, ... the landing gear is here.

SH: Okay, right.

JR: So, they carried this thing in-between the gear. That's where [the] regular bomb racks are. When they're carrying bombs, they would be in the same racks that this thing is carried in. [Editor's Note: Mr. Richards seems to be describing the Ohka *kamikaze* aircraft.] Well, they'd release this high and frontal, so that they have the closing speed and they have the maneuverable ability to get to you. Well, when the ideal situation [unfolds], he comes in this way, into the formation, and here's you. ... At the last moment, he turns the wing vertical and anything that touches forward explodes it. ... The leading edge of the wing or the nose of the warhead will explode the thing. Well, that's to our advantage, really, and the idea of the rockets was intended, apparently, that if he ... made a pass and no connect, he could fire the rockets, go up and do it again, but I never saw that happen and they were very easy to explode. [As] long as you see them, there'd be enough guns on them that he explodes way out. That's the norm.

SH: Was the plane that released them also armed?

JR: Oh, yes. He'd be a regular fighter plane when he turned the guy loose, yes.

SH: Okay. He did not have to release him, and then, turn back. He came right on, too.

JR: Yes. It was just like he was carrying a bomb there; he drops the bomb. In fact, they used to throw bombs at us, the fighters did, ... some demolition bombs; that was beginning to get more serious and phosphorous bombs, which was their favorite, and I don't know, and they didn't tend to be of much [consequence]. I had one piece of a phosphorous one strike my sight glass. It's a round glass, about like this, and it's probably about this thick, laminated. ... It was a pretty long

piece of phosphorous and ... broken this way and it just fogged it up. ... You know how a match would make a sulfur-type [mark]?

SH: Yes.

JR: Yes. Well, that just smoked me up and I couldn't see.

SH: Oh, no. [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

JR: ... While we're with the *kamikaze* deal, there's some instances I need to relate. On a mission to Haha Jima, ... the reconnaissance had reported fair weather, and so, we were going for a ship that was tied up in the [harbor], unloading. So, when we got there, and from our planned initial point, we turned for the bomb run into the teeth of a ninety to a hundred mile-an-hour gale. Well, our bomb run's at 225 miles-an-hour. That's accelerating on a B-24. So, here we are, hanging. Well, the Japanese antiaircraft gunners are not anything to brag on, but, if you give them enough time, they'll cut fuse on you pretty close. Well, just before bombs away, our wingman, ... (Beershear?), took a direct hit in the bay and turned into a torch. Three men came out of the airplane. We were taught, if you had to bail out in that situation, do not open your chute until you get near the water. Japanese kind of like hanging targets. So, two of them did what they were supposed to do, but one of them, his chute opened just as he came out. Well, that gale wind was carrying him to sea. ... We were on the cliff side of the island and, from there several miles out, there's a ridge of coral that the waves'd break over, just rocks here and there, and this fellow was carried right near ... one pretty good-sized rock ... [outcropping]. ... So, we went down then, to reconnoiter and to throw him out a life raft and rations. When we got down, in our first pass, we located him and he was near ... where the waves were breaking on the rock. So, we went around and came back and toss him a raft and a ration box, and he said, later, he was just fixing to make a break for the raft when here comes "Dumbo." Now, I should tell you about Dumbo. Dumbo came in; well, when we were at Kwajalein, the Dumbo was [the] PB5Y-5, a twin-engine aircraft, and they would follow you on a mission, and, when you had one down, why, they would go down, pick him up and bring him back, ... but here, now, we were [flying] from Guam, they have Martin PBMs. This is a four-engine, big, very large profile, aircraft, and so, on our pass back around ... we were going to try to fly cover between him and the batteries on the shore; by the time we got around, they had already landed and was picking him up and taxiing for a takeoff.

SH: Wow.

JR: Dumbo, I guess, was one of the best morale builders that hit the Pacific.

SH: I bet.

JR: Because the fellows knew, "Why, he's right there." I saw them pick up a guy in the middle of the Truk Atoll one time.

SH: Really?

JR: Yes, it was a fighter. ... A P-38 lost a wing and the guy bailed out and Dumbo picked him up, right there.

SH: What about the other two men that you saw?

JR: ... They went into the jungle on top of the island, and I don't know what ever happened to them, but this fellow got back. ... Bereworth was our wingman, he was shipped back stateside. He was through with the war, but the next incident was due to the *kamikaze*. ... (Beershear?) and Bereworth were our wingmen and Bereworth was hit by a *kamikaze* and exploded ... at Iwo Jima, and it was the next mission, and so, we lost both our wingmen right away there, and we got replacements, ... with Bereworth, especially. The replacement [crew] was some Upstate New York boys, mostly, and they came into the squadron, saying, "Boy, I'm sure glad we [could] get here in time to make some of these 'milk runs' before we have to go to ... Tokyo." They were pretty starchy fellows. [laughter] Well, the very first trip out with them ... in our flight, and what happens? A *kamikaze*. Now, like I was telling you, they explode; as long as they're sighted, [if] you can see them, you're going to make them explode. I mean, it's just that easy to pop one. Well, this fellow came right in; it didn't pop. He made all the proper maneuvers. Here's your wing, so, at the last moment, he comes up this way. The wing penetrated the ... leading edge of the B-24 and the body part went up, over ... and out through the tails, taking the antennas with it.

SH: My word.

JR: It didn't pop. ... So, we flew cover for them and protection on the way home and, to start with, our radioman and their radioman were communicating with a flash gun, but they soon put out the trailing antenna, and so, we had radio communication and we told them that we would go by the ditching island, in case they needed it, this was [Farallon de] Pajaros and Pajaros was several islands. ... That's a group of little islands, but Pajaros itself is a cone, rising out of the sea, a live volcano, and, when we got there, the volcano is erupting and pouring lava down the [slopes], very spectacular. When this would hit the sea, it was just all steam and smoke, very spectacular. Well, they were doing all right by then. So, we went with them on back to Guam, and they were very somber, [laughter] and the one wing was still embedded in their airplane. ... Each one of them made themselves a wristband out of the metal and scratched in it the day, the occasion and all. ... I'm certainly glad that my introduction to my first flight against the enemy went off in a much more sedate manner than [theirs]. [laughter] So, we've lost those two wingmen and we're progressing towards a landing at Iwo. We continued pounding Iwo, somebody over there all the time, all through November. December 8th there--7th here, they celebrated with a combined naval bombardment and aircraft bombarding Iwo Jima. The cruisers and battlewagons laid off shore and shelled. ... This was sustained for the twenty-four-hour period.

SH: Wow.

JR: And that should have loosened things up a little bit, but, ... not long before the actual landing, why, the Seventh Air Force brass were going back to Hickam for the finalization of the landing and subsequent business.

SH: That was the landing for Iwo Jima.

JR: Iwo Jima, and ... we had converted a B-24 into a transport. This made runs almost daily, back and forth, to Honolulu, carrying people that were on rest leave ... and [for] other reasons. They were going in this airplane. ... They reported by radio that they were being attacked and that's the only communication that we had from them. So, they mounted a search for them and I flew one search mission. We didn't find anything, but they did eventually find the nose wheel floating, all the nose wheels were painted with a particular pattern, so [that] you could identify the airplane by the nose wheel, and so, they knew it was the same airplane. ... They later said that the Japanese pilot probably rammed them. It might have been from (Jaluit?). You heard me mention that name before, which we went near there on the flight back to Hawaii. ... They could have had a patched-up airplane in the woods that we wouldn't have seen, ... but, anyway, the brass went down, all of them, and I've felt since that, if they hadn't or that hadn't occurred, how much smoother [would it have gone], perhaps, since you would have had Air Force input in the landing, which they didn't have.

SH: I see.

JR: It might have went a whole lot better for the fellows on the ground. ...

SH: It is interesting that the plane had gone back and forth daily and never been attacked.

JR: Well, not nearly that, yes. I mean, it was just back and forth all this while.

SH: Well ...

JR: Oh, well, it made every one of us leery, because we knew there was a mole somewhere, had to be a mole somewhere.

SH: That is what I am asking.

JR: Yes, for them to know that the brass would be on that plane and make such an effort to put it down.

SH: Yes.

JR: Yes. That was a triumph, really, for the Japanese. It gave them a better advantage at Iwo.

SH: That is amazing. Who or what could have been the mole?

JR: The mole? I don't know, but there very apparently must be one, because that's all hush-hush secret stuff, that type of movements, you know. Yes, that's all well guarded, but, still, they knew.

SH: That time.

JR: They knew that time. That didn't help our morale, either.

SH: How did you recover then? Do they just promote men?

JR: Oh, well, they have others in command and some shipped in, of course. ...

SH: Was there any change in your pattern until that happened?

JR: Any change in our ...

SH: Any change to your daily routine until they were in place.

JR: No.

SH: Did you just keep doing what you were doing?

JR: Yes, and they later gave credit for that mission, though it was a volunteer mission. ...

SH: To go and look for the survivors, you mean?

JR: Making the search mission. ... Things were coming pretty well to a head here in December and January. Our target would be either Iwo Jima or Chichi Jima. ... They wanted to keep the Chichi Jima airfield inoperable, because ... they could ... re-supply Iwo, and we made missions to Chichi and some of these were night, mostly night missions.

SH: Were they?

JR: Just harassment, drop a bunch of small stuff that pops all the time. One thing I didn't mention, and that was when we were back in Hawaii, that was interesting, which I could insert here?

SH: Sure, please.

JR: When we're on rest leave, ... this was January, which is about the time we're speaking of now, that we had rest leave to go back to Hawaii, and so, we went on this airplane. This occurred before they were shot down, same airplane.

SH: Okay. Did you ever have the opportunity to go on leave?

JR: ... Yes, and eighteen days. Now, this went into January.

SH: Was this over Christmas or after that you went on leave in Hawaii?

JR: I would say it probably was at least around Christmas, or afterwards, Christmas, true, because I know I was there in January, because my wife-to-be's birthday is the 26th, and, when we got back, a little incident here, maybe, of some cultural interest. Our cook, he's a master sergeant, the one I was telling you about that was really looking after us guys. He had leave, first he'd had in two years, and so, he was going back on the aircraft with us. Well, when we got to Hickam Field, his wife and his children were waiting and she came to him. She was in her finest, and three children, all in their finest, and she came and bowed down to him. ... They made their greetings and she introduced each child separate to him, and the child would bow to him and they would exchange their greetings, and all through the three of them. ... Then, he introduced us to her and the children. She was a Japanese lady, and ... the three children were, oh, the youngest was probably, maybe, six or so. They're [like] stair steps. So, after their greeting, he went, and she was in behind him, about two paces to the rear right, the children behind her. That's the way they left. Customs are a little different in some cultures. [laughter]

SH: Yes. They lived right there in Hawaii.

JR: Yes, that was their home. Yes, that was his home, was there in Hawaii.

SH: Was he a native Hawaiian?

JR: No, no, he was a regular GI.

SH: Yes, okay.

JR: Yes, he was just a regular GI.

SH: He had been in for awhile then.

JR: Oh, yes. He was a career fellow, and, let's see, what else was it? Oh, I didn't tell you, ... while we were on rest leave, ... we were on the grounds of the big hotel there at that time.

SH: The Royal Hawaiian?

JR: That's it. We were on the grounds. They had some temporary buildings set up back around the tennis courts, and, in each one of these buildings, there was a room here for one crew, a room for another and a rec room, and each one was in the charge of a Red Cross person. ... The one that my crew was assigned to was Pat Frank; that was her name. I thought, "Oh, that's a good omen," and so, she arranged whatever you wanted to do. ... You could visit most any of the islands, and, in fact, you could even go to Australia, if you wanted, for your leave.

SH: Really?

JR: But, we chose, Johnny and I, and a fellow from ... the other crew; there were two crews in each building, and (Ritchie?) was his name. ... The three of us, then, we chose to go to Lahaina, to be the guest of a Mr. Brooks. The native people call him "Father Brooks." He was the dispenser general for the sugar cane company, for the whole island. He was dispenser general, and, when we got there, we landed at an airfield. We were [on a] C-2 transport to an airfield at the middle of Maui, in the central location, there's only one airfield there, and a GI six-by picked us up. We headed for Lahaina. Lahaina was beyond the pass, the Pali [Trail], and going up the Pali, from our side, the valley side, there were switchbacks. ... Some of these were so tight that the guy in the six-by, driving, would have to back up and make a second turn at it to get around the corner. That was how short the loops were going up. ... We got there and he dumped us off at Mr. Brooks', and this was a rather large home on the seaside and we were each assigned a separate room. Mine was on one corner of the house, had windows here and windows here in my room, and the sea was right below. Well, ... in the same location on the opposite end of the house, which this is probably, oh, 125, 150 feet away, there was a dining room, and then, the pantries and cooks, and so forth. Mr. Brooks introduced us to (Comiton?), ... she's the head woman. I mean, that's the general meaning. She's the head person and she was the housekeeper. Right away, ... Mr. Brooks took us out to the garage, which was separate, and there was a Mercury in the garage, which had been his wife's car. His wife, after Pearl Harbor, he sent her with the two boys back stateside. ... They had been going to the University of Hawaii and they were continuing their education there, and so, this had been her car. ... He said, giving us the keys, it'd be ours for the duration of our stay with him. Every time we wanted to use it, it was full of gas, but it might have been one of the help that took care of that part. ... The coffee; now, we've had powdered coffees ... in our squadron, but, now, I was that far away from the kitchen and, yet, in the morning, the heavenly smell of the finest coffee you've ever smelled would even penetrate to my room. Of course, there was no fans or air-conditioning-type things. That was an all-natural thing. ... I commented to Father Brooks on the coffee, and he explained. One of his friends was a coffee plantation owner ... in Hawaii, on Mauna Loa. Mauna Loa is the name of the mountain and he kept him supplied with the coffees. He said, "This coffee was not used on the general market, but it was used ... by blenders to raise up the level of the South American coffees." So, we had some wonderful coffee while we were there, and, one morning, ... when I got up, it's daylight, I look out and one of the kitchen help girls was walking out into the sea. This was a rock strewn area and the tide was out. So, she had to walk a little ways to get in the water, but, when she got to the water, she picked up her skirt, this way, and waded right on out into the sea, and she was gathering something. When she came back, she had her skirt full of whatever it was she was picking up. (Comiton?) said that she was making a special feast. We were going to be going home, or returning to Hawaii, and she said, "(Comiton?) make a hekka for you," that was the name of the dish. ... Now, this girl was picking up some of the ingredients from the sea, and I didn't know what hekka was, but, apparently, it was something special. So, I was interested in the preparation. So, she let me stand in the butler's pantry opening and watch the preparation. She chopped up all this stuff and everything, and chopped meat up in little squares and cubes. ... That was one of the highlights of the meal on that evening, but, when we were leaving, the day we were leaving, she gives me a big hug, tears in her eyes, says, "You come see (Comiton?). Anytime, (Comiton?) make a hekka for you." [laughter]

SH: Did you ever find out what was in the dish, what the woman picking up?

JR: Some kind of weeds from the sea. That was the green part in this sort of a stew, you wouldn't call it hash, but it had little cubes. ... I figured it was probably pork that she cut into about half-inch cubes in this dish, and I don't know what the broth all consisted of or anything, but it was a very fine dish.

SH: Good that you liked it.

JR: [laughter] Yes, and she'd make a hekka for me anytime.

SH: That is good. [laughter] Too bad you never got to take her up on it, right?

JR: One day, Johnny and I and (Ritchie?) ... went for a little exploration walk, and the whole town, the whole village was very tidy. This is Lahaina Village. ... If there was grass, it was well trimmed. It didn't matter where the grass was; it's still well trimmed. So, we came over a little rise and there are kids playing baseball, small kids playing baseball. ... So, we sit down to watch the kids for a little while, and a voice behind us said, "You must be the flyers staying with Father Brooks." "Yes, we are." She said, "This is my first grade class," and she was teaching them to play baseball. She sat down and talked with us for a little while. ... She explained that she lived with four other girls, five girls, all teachers, and that they had one house that the five of them lived in, and ... she invited us to supper, to a dinner. ... So, we didn't know about that, with five women and three GIs and she said, "Talk it over with Father Brooks," and, "Give us a call," and she gave us her phone number. ... So, we talked to him and he said, "Why, no;" ... mainly because of the inference, fellows spending an evening with the women, and he said, "Why, there's no thought of that [that would] enter anybody's head in this place." He said, "That's American, stateside." He said, "That's not here." He said, "You go." He said, "You'll have a wonderful evening," and he sent us to the girls. He said, "I know every one of them and they're of the finest deportment," and so, we called and accepted. ... [They] told us to get there at five o'clock. Now, this is wintertime in Hawaii and five o'clock is pretty well up in the middle of the afternoon, like it doesn't get dark until after nine o'clock. So, we get there, with the Mercury, and ... the girls were introduced to us by the one we were familiar with, and that was to be your companion for the evening. The girl she introduced me to was Tomí. That's her Japanese name. ... All of them had one of their names changed to an American name, and Tomí had her name changed to Tommy. She was a very delicate person and very, very pale skin. ... She didn't even have wrinkles across her knuckles here, on her hands. We came there at five o'clock, and so, the three of us, the ladies who were to be our companions piled into the Mercury and they directed where we were going. They wanted to show us a little bit of that end of Maui. [The] first place we stopped was Soldiers Beach. Now, I know I've seen that beach a number of times in movies, but they directed us to this beach. It was deserted. Now, this is a large beach, I mean, a big [beach]. ... From the sea, it goes back, oh, I would say at least two hundred yards or so, interspersed with palm trees here and there. I know I've seen that setting in some movies, and so, we asked, "How come the place is deserted?" "Oh, it's wintertime." We looked at one another [laughter] and didn't say anything. After we'd spent a little time there, we went on down the road and turned in on a road, off of the highway that we were driving on. We turned in and the farther we went, the ... more lush the place became, until we go down into a little park-like setting, waterfalls, pools. I know I'd seen that setting, too, in a movie somewhere, and flowers of every description all over the place. It was a real, I mean, a real park place. I mean, it was just

fabulous. So, we walk around and talk, and they explained some of the flower names to us, ... but, finally, they said, "It's time to get back." So, we started back to Lahaina. We got there, ... and, during this course of time, they had explained to us that they rotated chores every week and one of the girls would have the cooking chore. ... She said she ... had been preparing the main part of the meal, but each one of the girls had prepared a dish typical of ... her native town, where she was from. When we set down at the table to eat, the girls would serve and explain the dish. ... I was eating pretty hearty to start with, but I soon gave that up, because [they] kept [bringing] more and more. ... Everything was really nice, really well prepared, very tasty, everything ... that we were eating, and one thing that struck my mind very, very much was a kind of cookie, I would call it. These were fish and birds, very thin and hand-painted with colored sweet [frosting] of some kind, so that the bird would be a bluebird or a redbird and the fish, [and] so forth. ... So, I had a couple of these and they were very tasty and, each girl, ... with the one dish that she prepared would serve it and explain the dish and its connection with her family or place of birth, and we finally got through all this, all the meal, and I'm breathing pretty hard. ... Well, they had wanted to be able to dance a little bit, if the fellows cared to, she said, but they couldn't get the phonograph to work. Well, (Ritchie?) had that going in just a little while, [laughter] with a hairpin and whatnot. I explained to Tomí that I didn't know how to dance. "That's fine," she said, "I'd rather talk." So, we sit over in a little nook and talked, and the other two couple would dance, now and then, and Tommy told me of her background and her home in Chichi Jima.

SH: Oh, no.

JR: She was upper caste. Her father was principal in the governing of the island. We didn't let out of the bag that that was one of our targets. ...

SH: How did they come to be on the island? Were they there just to teach?

JR: Yes, they were teachers. They had gone to the University of Honolulu [perhaps the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu?]. That's where they learned to be teachers, and the school they were assigned to was Lahaina on Maui. ...

SH: Where were the other girls from? Do you remember where any of them were from?

JR: No, I don't remember. The one girl was in the hospital. They had a little, local hospital. I think it was an appendectomy. So, we visited her when we were out on the tour, in the hospital, and we were apologizing [that] she wasn't able to take part in the meal. ... That particular week, Tomí's chore was the *tokonoma*. The *tokonoma* is either a niche or a separate little room or a place for contemplation, and they changed whatever's there, to give you something to contemplate. Every day, there's something new, a different arrangement, and so, that was her chore for that week, and, of course, one of the girls was "cookie" for that week. [In] the house, there were paintings. ... Father Brooks' wife was an accomplished artist and carver, wood carver, and, in the dining room I was telling you about, in Brooks' house, there were twelve chairs around the table and, each one, the back panel of the chair, she had carved a separate flower of the Hawaiian Island flowers, and there was a four-panel screen and both sides of the screen had been carved in flower motifs, very, very fine. ... At this teachers' house, they had

several paintings by her that she had given them. So, there was a connection there with the family, as Father ... Brooks? [was] saying he knew the girls intimately and they were fine girls.

SH: [laughter] Do you think they were mostly native Hawaiian?

JR: No, they were Japanese.

SH: They were all Japanese women.

JR: Yes. There wasn't one I would have called a native Hawaiian at all. They were all Japanese origin, but Tomi was the remarkable one, ... she was a small and delicate-looking person and [had] no wrinkles, even on the knuckles, no wrinkles, very white skin, whiter than any American.

SH: Interesting.

JR: Yes, but she was high caste.

SH: What an interesting choice of where to go.

JR: Well, while we were there, one day, Mr. Brooks said that he was going to go to the GI hospital on the island for therapy. He had broken his shoulder in a polo accident and the little hospital there at Lahaina wasn't able to offer anything. So, he said, "If you want to go along, you'll see a part of the island you haven't seen yet," and he said, "Besides, you'd be able to visit the PX," and so, we all three went. ... When we got there, this was of Italian villa-like architecture, very large. It was a hospital, and they had terraces and balustrades of stone, pillar balustrades, around here and there, and so, we helped ourselves at the PX. ... I think I had a chocolate malted, and then, candy bars, and so, we're going along a hallway and munching and talking, and we hear all this laughter and it was right close by. So, we go out double doors and onto one of the terraces. ... There's, oh, must be two dozen fellows out there, anyway, and a number of nurses, and this was their first day to receive their prosthesis. They were all leg amputees of ... either one or two, and either short or long or whatever, but that's what they were, their leg prosthesis, and all the laughter that was going on. So, we go out and watch and these fellows were trying to walk with the new [prosthetic], ... they'd fall down and stumble, and laugh at each other. I looked at Johnny and I said, [laughter] "We think we have something to worry about." ...

SH: Wow. Was that the only military presence on this island?

JR: Oh, I think there's others, would be others out toward the middle and the other end, but the only airfield was there, ... actually, almost midway of Maui, and over the Pali, this is Lahaina, it's isolated over here. ... At the time I was there, it was still a very little, primitive village. The old whaling wharf's there and between the wharf and the main street in this village was a huge park. There was a huge banyan tree, which, on the sign, they had a plaque there to tell you about the tree, it claimed to be the largest banyan tree in the world. Now, are you familiar with banyans?

SH: Yes.

JR: Well, the central core of this banyan was almost a circle of trunks almost growing together and this was oh, thirty feet across, or more. ... There was openings where you could go in, ... pathways, and, when you're inside, there's benches you can sit on.

SH: Oh, my word, really?

JR: Yes, and ... there was a plaque, that (Longfellow?) and (Leilani?) used to stroll here and he wrote some of his poems there, in that setting. ... It went for acres, that tree did, and, when you get to Main Street, ... there's wooden sidewalks, covered sidewalks, like porches, only they're all connected together and the shops are all [next to each other], so that you have a boardwalk or sidewalk, and furnishing all the little ... vendors and all in the village. ... One incident that was very interesting; two women, these are nearly all Japanese people, the two women meet on the boardwalk and the one bows to the other, "*Ohayo*," and the other one says, "*Konnichiwa*," and the other one says, "*Gozaimas*," and then, [Mr. Richards imitates their rapid conversation]. ... They start going at it, [laughter] and we observed this several times. Several different couples would meet and very formal in the introduction, but, once they got that out of the way, boy, they really went at it. ... That's the way they sounded to me, but I still remember that. That's still pretty fresh in my memory. [laughter]

SH: In the United States, the Japanese-Americans had been interned, but, here, in Hawaii, it seems as though there was no concern.

JR: No, and this little ... village of Lahaina, the killed-in-action was a list that was appalling, that every able-bodied soldier, nearly, ... from Lahaina was killed during the war. ... To me, I thought, well, that was a terrible loss in that town, but it didn't affect their [morale]. The town was all upbeat. Everyone you'd meet in the town was nice ...

SH: They were welcoming to you all.

JR: As royalty. Yes, we were treated with the highest respect and regard. ... I've pretty well covered that eighteen days. We were back, then, at the Royal Hawaiian, ... our mess was the (*lanai*?), which is what they called ... a big terrace down just above the sea. ... You had stairs to go down to the beach from there and one end had a building, which was the kitchen, and our cook ... had been the head chef at the Astoria [Waldorf Astoria in New York City]. Now, one of the things that [Pat Frank] arranged for Johnny and (Ritchie?) and I, and another fellow, was to go fishing. So, the day came ... for our fishing trip and they carried us in a sampan. Now, everything that carries people is a sampan. If it's a boat, it's a sampan. If it's a vehicle on wheels, it's a sampan, and I don't know how much has changed in all the modernizing, but he carried us in this sampan down to the boat. It's a fifty-four-foot fishing vessel, twin Scripps ... diesels, and we're introduced to the crew. ... Pat Frank had baskets of food, ... and everybody carried the baskets.

SH: It was Anne Frank. I thought it was Pat Frank. I am sorry.

JR: Yes, Pat Frank. It is Pat Frank, yes. Yes, it's Pat Frank. Well, she had prepared a meal for us, because we were going to stop in at that same rescue station at Haleiwa. That's where we were going to stop for lunch, but we were going to circumnavigate the island of Oahu in this fifty-four footer, fishing. When we got aboard, the captain told us that, "We probably won't have much luck today." He said, "It's too rough." ... Of course, we were in the harbor, but, when we cleared the harbor, it was getting choppy and we headed towards Kahuku Point. We didn't know that at the time, but he explained later, he said the Japanese current divides ... on the Hawaiian Islands and part of the stream goes this way and part of the current goes this way, and, at Kahuku Point, it comes together again. ... He said, "It'll probably [be] pretty rough rounding the point." So, we fished two fellows off the stern, two fellows off the outriggers, and we didn't catch any fish. We got to Kahuku Point, still no fish, but the sea, oh, what a sea. This is a fifty-four-foot boat and it would rise on the swell; screws would come out of the water and she would shudder and dive down into the next wave. ... It would submerge the boat, fill the after deck, and so, we were all holed up inside. ... The scuppers wouldn't have it really all drained out before it did the repeat of it. This went on for, probably, twenty-five or thirty minutes. ... After we get out on the other side, it's better, much better. ... While we were in the rough area, the crew, there were two other fellows crewing the boat, besides the fellow who was driving it, and they were handing out barf bags to everybody, [laughter] and most everybody needed it, by the time we got through all that rough water. ... Before that, that morning for breakfast, Pat Frank ... made sure we had four meals a day and she made [sure there was] a quart of milk at everybody's plate and you have everything else you want. I think I had four eggs, and so, we were all a little queasy. ... When we got into the smoother water and all, why, I'm still that way, ... but here's one of the crew, he's out there at one of the stanchions that holds the railing around, and I think he was sick, too.

SH: [laughter] It was really rough.

JR: And, I went out there to empty my stomach, too, ... but, eventually, we got to Haleiwa, and, when we entered the lagoon, and this is a big, nice, beautiful lagoon, beautiful setting, when we entered the lagoon, we came upon a turtle, a sea turtle. ... The crew boys, they were ... pretty excited about that. The skipper chopped the throttles and, as we approached the turtle, one of the guys had run down in his bunk and had come back up with a carbine, thirty-caliber carbine. ... So, as we were approaching the turtle, he fired two shots, and, as we were going by, ... the other fellow was wrapped around a stanchion with a big, long gaff, and he hooked the turtle and he nearly turned the boat around.

SH: Oh, my word.

JR: ... The turtle was pretty [slow], wasn't going very fast, and we were still moving a little bit, but they turned one of the divots for the lifeboat around and got a line on the turtle and hauled him up on the deck. ... This is a big turtle, and the skipper looked it over and said, "Oh, it'll probably go 275, maybe three hundred." He said, "That's small, really, but, it'll make a lot of good eating." ... He said, "They get as big as six hundred pounds," and so, we thought it was quite a catch, but that was the only catch. After we landed there at Haleiwa, Pat Frank ... was really retching back in the rough sea and she was [in a] pretty bad way, but she was recovered enough to serve us our lunch. ... We had a glorious lunch. I mean, everything you can imagine, and some that you couldn't imagine, ... but she decided that she would take the bus back and not

continue on around with us. So, that was okay, and the rest of the trip around was very uneventful. We finally got back to our anchorage. ... There were two boys, two men, native Hawaiian types, with a sampan. ... Now, this was, like, similar to a touring, open touring car, except it was very large. ... It had canvas over the top and fringe around, and plenty of headroom when you stand up in it, and a seat that went all the way around, ... except for the driver, but you got in on the side opposite the driver, ... kind of like getting into a bus, ... but, when these two kids see the turtle on the deck, what do they do? They jump from the dock to the deck of the boat, and start tugging on that turtle and talking to one another, which we didn't understand. ... Between the bunch of us, we were able to get that turtle transported over to the sampan and dumped over into it. Then, we all piled in. ... When we got to the center, there at the Royal Hawaiian, there was a stir going through the whole place. ... Very quickly, we were going to have a luau the next evening, so, the next evening, they served the turtle. ... That was the main dish. Of course, there's everything else imaginable, and the dish, the one I had, was little cubes of turtle meat and the sauce was sort of gravy-like and rice. It was a very tasty dish, but it was fixed in several ways, may have been because of the various meats or something. I don't know. There's white meat and dark meat and all in a turtle, but it was very good, very good. ... They had a native dance troop, too, and they would explain the movements of the dancer, so that you knew what she was saying with her hands and body, ... because they don't talk. They just do the thing and so, this was very nice. ... Finally, I went back and found my bed and went to sleep, but they were going on still when I left the party. ... Going back to our squadron, ... we crewed the airplane going back. ... Coming up, we didn't have to fly it, but we did fly it going back. ... Right off, it was Iwo Jima night and day. Of course, this was late in January now, and it's only, maybe, three or four weeks before the landing, and we were flying fast and heavy. [On] one occasion, we flew three missions without any rest between. We were [up] seventy hours total, from bed to bed, and we were all dead tired on our feet. ... When I knelt down to give the navigator a report, why, apparently, I passed out at that time, and I went right back on my [heels]. I was sitting up on my knees and I just went right back onto my heels, but the radar equipment is in cans that are pressurized off of the turbos [to] keep down the arcing, when you're at altitude, to keep them from damaging the contents. ... My head was kind of wedged between two of those cans. I didn't know all this until I waked up. I could hardly get out of the place, I couldn't get up, and I kept struggling around until I finally did get up, but the rest of them were in the same shape. ... [My] first impulse was to get a little angry, because they didn't wake me, but they were in the same shape. ... That was the longest stretch, I guess, we ever had, of that type, but that was just before the landing.

SH: How on Earth did they keep flying and navigating in that condition?

JR: Yes. Cappy was "Dead-Eye Capps," as far as navigation's concerned. ... His mother was head of the math department at the university there in Houston, and, when Cappy was sixteen or seventeen, he had his master's degree in math.

SH: He was a Texas boy, like you.

JR: Yes, and he was hired by the government, the US Government, to correct cartography errors. It seems that, after all the surveying had been going on, some would overlap, and ... his job was correcting cartography errors, when he was just still a teenager. ... As far as math goes,

it didn't matter which side he's figuring or working, and he combines them, either the complement or the actual figure. It didn't matter which side he was working on. ... After the war, I was working at Normoyle Ordnance Depot, on IBM machines, and that's the way the computer works, those old-fashioned ones, ... but that was in his head, yes, all that. Yes, he was an amazing person.

SH: Where was he from? What was his last name? Do you recall Cappy's last name?

JR: Capps was his last name. That's why they called him Cappy. His head was very large, ... he couldn't buy a cap to fit, and he had his caps, regular dress caps, custom made. When we went overseas, he didn't want to trust losing his favorite ... caps. ... Eight something was the biggest thing he could buy. So, he bought the biggest he could buy, took it to the parachute department and they altered it to fit. That's what he wore during the war, when we were overseas. Yes, he had a very large head. He wasn't a very big guy, really. In fact, I have a picture. I have one picture of the crew before we left the States. It's on that pile, on the table. ... This is Smitty, the pilot. ...

SH: Where was he from?

JR: Elizabeth, New Jersey.

SH: Okay.

JR: This is Bob (Smith?), the co-pilot. He's from a town just south of Los Angeles, and he was studying to be a mortician before he went in, and that's Cappy and this is (Dewey Williams?).

SH: Where was (Dewey Williams?) from?

JR: He's up here, someplace, in this area. I don't know the town. ... That's (Kirklin?) Stark and he's the flight engineer. He is from Baltimore. That's the radioman, Fredrick Augustus Dubose, he is from Houston, and this is Johnny Hawkins. Freddy is a Texas boy from Houston. Johnny Hawkins is from Nutley, New Jersey.

PR: Nutley.

JR: Nutley, New Jersey. This is (Barg?), the tail gunner, and that's Menzie; notice he is kneeling. You couldn't get that in that turret at all. ... Here is Benjamin F. Capps, [which] was Cappy's full name.

SH: What was (*Glenda B?*) the name of?

JR: Well, this is a stateside picture. That's a training plane.

SH: Okay, I see.

JR: We're wearing the issue clothes, stateside-type, sheepskins and all. When we went overseas, I got all new gear, electric suits. Of course, we had electric suits here. I've got the scars on my legs to prove it.

SH: Really?

JR: But ...

SH: Hot spots from it, you mean?

JR: Yes, you get a short. ... Of course, your knees are all scrunched up. Underneath of this was the favorite place, but we got the electric suit, [which] was silk, and it consisted of a pair of trousers, a little bolero jacket and there were strips of cloth with snaps, two snaps, all the way at the end. Your gauntlets could snap into your sleeves here, for heat, and your oxygen system would plug in, so that it wouldn't fog up and freeze. ... Oh, it was very [good]. ... My electric suit that I had, what I was issued ... before I went overseas, that's the one I turned back in, same one, no problems. I don't know how many of the old ones that I had; they were like two wool blankets, heavy, wool blankets, together, with one wire system all through this, and that's why, ... any place it would short or anything, it would be a hot spot. ... With me, it was behind my knees, and, when, of course, you're through the whole flight, you get back and they're stuck. You pull it off, and [laughter] it is a sore and makes a ... puffy, little scar.

SH: For so many of these flights, you had to turn right back around and go again. It must have been a little painful.

JR: What do you mean?

SH: You had this on and you pulled it off and you tore the tissue. Now, you have to turn right back around to fly again.

JR: Yes, with another pair, ... heated suit, yes.

SH: Must be.

JR: And the coldest temperature I saw while I was here in training, this is Tonopah, seventy-six or seventy-nine below zero, Fahrenheit. We were at altitude and it was a stormy night. Normally, you only lose, if there's, ... we'll say, ideal weather, you lose two degrees for every thousand feet you gain. So, at forty thousand feet, you would have been at eighty degrees below whatever it was at sea level. ... Only once, in a B-24, did I ever fly that high, and that was while we were in training, and that was the object of the mission. That's just about all that old airplane would do and without a payload.

SH: When you were flying in the Pacific, was there any chance that you would lose your oxygen?

JR: Yes.

SH: Were there any instances of that, because you were kind of isolated there as a ball-turret gunner, are you not?

JR: Yes, and ... your oxygen comes in this; ... the turret is suspended by a tapered roller bearing, much like an axle bearing for a truck, and from the ceiling. ... Below this is the brush box. They had brushes for electricity and you also have ... the oxygen entering on slip rings, and your intercom, all this is in the box below the bearing.

SH: Did you ever have any problems with anybody passing out because of lack of oxygen?

JR: Oxygen? No, ... once through the decompression chamber told everybody to be on the alert.

SH: How often was your plane hit?

JR: Most trips, you'd take something. I remember, one trip, I made the note in my notepad that there was no patching to do that trip, ... but, sometimes, there was a lot of patching to do. One time, ... over Iwo Jima, a Rufe, it made the pass on us and we took two hits, twenty-millimeter, I don't know what else, of frags, that we'd take from flak or anything, but we took only two hits from this guy on that pass, and the one was the fuselage, the other on the right inboard engine, the back of the propeller was where the one popped, and it took out most of the ... feathering [apparatus]. In hydraulic props, to feather, you have two tubes [that] go down over the nose of the engine to slip rings on the prop, and this is how you adjust the angle of the propeller. Well, it had cut those tubes, the debris from that shell, and, on the propeller itself, which is solid aluminum, at that point, it had made a crater in the aluminum. ... Twenty millimeters are pretty awesome looking, when they're pointing at you and going off.

SH: I would think so. Was there any point where you thought you might have to ditch? You said the plane was hit. Did you have your parachute on at all times?

JR: ... I don't know if we related that, but, yes I did. ... While we were ... in Hawaii, out at Hickam Field, I read in the newsletter, the GI newsletter that came out every thirty days, I read of a new parachute the Navy had for turret gunners and this was a thin pack and broad, all over your back, and you wore it at all times in the turret. Normally, like, the issue I had, my silk was hanging outside. I had the harness on and, if you had to use it when you got out of the turret, then, you found your silk and snapped it on. Then, you could exit; be sure you did snap it on before you exited.

SH: Right, that would be key. [laughter]

JR: I went to the base commander, at Hickam Field, ... and I had the article with me and I said, "Would there be some way that I perhaps could get a parachute like that?" and he took quite an interest in me. He said he was very interested and happy to see that I would take an interest in my personal gear, that much of an interest, and he said, "Why, yes." So, he wrote out an order and I was to go to the parachute department manager ... and give him the order that the

commander had given me, to make me a parachute like that. Well, when I went there, the guy was, a civilian fellow in charge of the parachute department. He said, "Oh, yes," he said, "I read that article." He said, "I have the drawings." He said, "I've just been itching to get some excuse to make one," and I said, "Well, you've got the excuse now." He said, "Come back in about;" I don't know if it was two days, or something like that. He said they'd have it ready for me, and so, when I got [it] that day, why, it was even in the Navy gray canvas. It wasn't in the GI color, [laughter] but it was in Navy gray canvas and, to open the pack, it had four flat elastic bands, flat, I guess, because you're going to be wearing it in the turret and, in the course of my using it, ... the elastic got bad and I was concerned. So, I went to the parachute fellow in our squadron and I said, "If you could maybe replace the elastic..." He said, "No problem." He put them back bungee chord, which is a round chord. Oh, you could never tell the difference; you're padded about this thick anyway, and it worked out. I was much more comfortable knowing that that'll get it open. [laughter]

SH: Did they ever get around to issuing that same type of parachute to others?

JR: Yes, and in G.I. color. The later crews coming in to our squadron, the turret gunners, had those.

SH: You started a trend there.

JR: Yes.

SH: Are there other incidents or stories that you would like to relate at this time?

JR: Well, when I got back ...

SH: You were talking about Iwo Jima. That was kind of where we left it.

JR: Yes, and, after we finished our missions, we were waiting to get orders to go re-cycle back to the States, and this evening, this one evening, there must have been, oh, fifteen or eighteen of us gathered at our place, under the huge breadfruit tree. ... We had a little cook fire and would spin yarns and [ask each other], "What are you going to do when you get back to the States?" and all such like this.

SH: What month is this?

JR: This is late February.

SH: Okay. Iwo Jima has been taken.

JR: Yes.

SH: Or they were in the process.

JR: I could relate an incident there, I guess, which we didn't cover when we were [discussing that]. ... I believe it was the 21st of December, it might have been the 22nd; Iwo landing is the 19th ...

SH: In February.

JR: Yes, and, now, the Air Force-landing force connection has been severely damaged, but my squadron commander suggested that; there was a new munitions being manufactured and this was a proximity-fuse-type thing, and they were manufacturing these some place in the States. ... He took an airplane, ... which, at this time, was the old (*Glenda B?*), which been converted. We had a new airplane. He took that airplane and flew back to San Francisco and there was another from the arsenal that was making these fuses. They were to meet him there. Well, he came back to the squadron with a load of these fuses. The fuse was a radar-operated fuse and it was a plastic [device]. ... The bomb has a hole about this big where the fuse goes in. It had the regular fuse here, but outside was this plastic thing, about this big around, the head of the fuse, you might say, and it was about so far out, and then, it tapered off and the end had a multi-vane propeller on it, and, in operation, operates in the regular way, with a wire attached to the bomb rack ... When released, the propeller arms the unit, and, when it arms, the propeller doesn't fall off. It stays on and that runs the generator that operates the radar mechanism inside, and these are adjustable to what height above the ground or terrain that you want it to go off, and, in this instance, it was 150 feet above the terrain. ... When he got back, we were all waiting, ready to go, loaded [with] bombs. They distributed the fuses then and our armorer, Johnny Hawkins, installed them in flight, on the way to Iwo Jima, and our orders were, when we got to Iwo Jima, ... was to wait until we got ... the command from down below to come in. The GIs [Marines] were having a great deal of trouble, two or three days after the landing, to take the ridge. Suribachi is here and there's a valley here and there's bluffs here. Airfield #2 is here. Well, they were having a lot of trouble trying to get over that hill there. The plan was was to drop our bombs on the ridge, all strung along the ridge. The lethal range of this bomb, concussion, was eighteen hundred feet; that's the radius.

SH: Wow.

JR: So, in a circle, a thirty-six-hundred-foot circle is lethal, if you're there, we get up there and we wait until they tell us to come in. Well, we went up and was waiting and waiting, and all this while, you're looking down. I'm in the ball, looking down, and the side of the island ... where the landing took place, and was taking place, as there were more [Marines coming ashore], ... the foam from the surf was tainted pink, for some distance, or at least a mile or more, and that kind of got to you, too. We waited and waited until finally they said that you were at your own discretion to leave, when you figured that you had to leave, on account of your fuel, you were free to go. We were among the last to go and we never did get the signal to go in. It seems as if they couldn't get the troops in position; we would have been killing too many GIs. So, that was the last time I saw Iwo Jima.

SH: When they started the bombardment and you would fly in, what would you see from your vantage point?

JR: At Iwo on December 7?

SH: Yes.

JR: A number of ships of the line firing and lots of carrier planes and no Japanese airplanes. I think I did explain, earlier, a long time ago, about identification, friend and foe?

SH: You had said how difficult it was.

JR: No, I'll talk about the method. From the time we entered the service, we had identification, friend or foe. This was carried out by a thirty-five millimeter projector that had a shutter in the lens and had film strips. This would flash on the screen according to whatever speed the shutter was set. To start with, when we were first in, it was pretty slow, and you'd probably just get one item that you had to identify, and you had a pad and it was numbered in sequence to the sequence of the film strip as it appeared ... that should appear on the screen, and you write ... what it was, and then, you're graded after you finish, and, as time went by, the shutter speed was increased and the items were changed. You might get, instead of a single ship that you had to identify, there might have been a group of ships with airplanes in the air, so that your mind is getting more retention and recall, and that went on with us all the way through and I think that was a very good way. Now, when we got to Hawaii, it was our aircraft, Japanese aircraft, our ships, Japanese ships, so that it was narrowed down from before, just general. ... That was an immense help and that kept your mind not only sharp. When we would go in on target, we were on straight oxygen. You flipped a switch and just get oxygen only. Well, that brightens your mind, brightens your eyes, and you see more, actually, in this given time and it's amazing what you can recall at debriefing from that and, as far as the enemy aircraft or a ship, you instantly recognize whether it's a Japanese ship or an American ship. You even tell them what the name of it is, most likely. ...

SH: Wow. At Iwo Jima, what would you see when you would look out? Was there just a solid mass of ships?

JR: Oh, it was nothing at Iwo, in that regard. What you'd see would be what activity there was on the ground. Now, the intelligence division had constructed a scale model of Iwo Jima. This took two of those large tents fastened together to house this model. It was up at waist height, ... where it's set on sawhorses and the like, but it must have been at least fifty feet long, the model, scale model, and, after each crew debriefing, any changes that you observed on the ground, which they would bring out in debriefing, it would be changed on the scale model, any changes that occurred that was observed and reported, and, of course, when you have thirty airplanes or something, why, you've got quite a few eyes to see.

SH: You were still flying missions as the invasion started. Could you see how many ships there were?

JR: Oh, I wasn't [there]; ... I hadn't seen the place at landing. ... During that time, we were keeping Chichi Jima [neutralized] and taking out any shipping coming at Haha. Now, the fourth squadron in my group was the 42nd. Now, the Japanese, just prior to my joining my group, at

Kwajelain had done away with the 42nd. We were all in revetments, but the 42nd was on a field that they had scraped up out of the coral, just a place to park. There were some buildings. ... The Japanese came down, and these were ... aircraft carrier planes and they came down at ... very low on-the-deck height. The runway at Kwajelain was perforated metal, joined together, and they would drop their bombs, ... they were making their passes the length of the runway. We were in revetments, very little damage, to those in the revetments. A bomb would hit the revetment, but you couldn't hardly put one inside unless you came crossway, but, at the 42nd, it was all open, airplanes all parked out on the slab, and they wiped that out pretty well. ... In fact, they salvaged what they could out of it and scraped it all off into the sea and made more fill out of it, and they sent the 42nd back to Hickam to regroup and to retrain as mine-laying crews. Now, the mine itself is very large, ... we had covered these in our interrogation-type classes. Here's one sitting there and it's aluminum, like a big, aluminum hot water heater, very large, with its aluminum case, not real thick skin, and this had to be dropped at sixteen hundred feet altitude. That's sixteen hundred feet, not thousand, and it was dropped by parachute and, on entering the sea, it had an anchor that's preset for where they're supposed to be putting that particular one. ... Iwo Jima was mined very heavy. All the perimeter of Iwo Jima was mined, ... but there's a plug on the side of the case where you can screw this item in ... these would dissolve from the seawater at pre-designated times. So, if you want to go in here in ninety days, well, you set this thing for eighty-five and it's going to destroy itself. It won't go off; I mean, it's just going to absorb the seawater and kill itself.

SH: Okay.

JR: So, it's safe then for you to go in that area, but all the time that they're active, they have a counting mechanism, also inside, and, as a metal ship passes, it counts it magnetically. It could be set to go off on the seventh ship that passed, or whatever was planned, and it would go off when ... that ship came that near, near enough to count, and it would also go off if you were to hit it, ... and these were submerged. I mean, you wouldn't see them. From the air, you might be able to see them, ... because I've seen a lot of things, like, at Chichi, on the bottom, but, when they ... joined us, they went to Tinian where they were assigned, but they were still part of our group, Eleventh Bombardment Group. ... We were all surmising amongst ourselves, "Boy, I'm sure glad I didn't get that duty. At sixteen hundred feet, ... you're laying those things in a crucial place, you know, like Chichi Jima Harbor or something, you know, at that altitude?"

SH: You were a sitting duck. [laughter]

JR: Yes, and we said, "Why, they won't half of them come back." Well, when we came back to the States, at that time, the 42nd had been in operation for a good little while, ever since we went to Guam, and their losses were not near what our losses were. I don't know why that was, but that's the way it worked out.

SH: We were talking about when you were just about finished with your missions.

JR: We'd finished and we were having to wait ...

SH: Yes. This is the end of February now.

JR: No, we're into March now. I got back to stateside on April 1st. So, by this time; oh, I don't know how long it was before we left. Sometime in March, though, we left to go back to Hickam Field to process to go back [to the] States, ... but this evening, particular evening, we had a bunch of us together. ... I still had a pair of jars of venison, and Smoky and I are about the only ones that tried any. These fellows from up in this country, [the Northeast], they wouldn't. That didn't appeal to them at all, to try [it]. [laughter] So, Smoky and I had plenty of venison, and other goodies and all, and the other fellows had brought goodies, and there was the preserved cheese and, when you have a gathering like that, you can open a tin of preserved cheese and it was good, very good, like cheddar cheese. ... So, I'm sitting with my back against the breadfruit tree trunk and we're all gathered around, squatting, sitting on something, talking, and I see an airplane taking off. ... It is down several hundred feet below where I am, to the airfield, ... or at least two or three hundred, maybe, but, from here, as they cleared ... getting off, here he is in the air, I see him, taking off for a night mission, and the landing gear brakes ... to go up. When the landing gear brakes, the thing explodes, B-24, full load of bombs, full load of fuel, and it crashes ... into a native village. It burns the native village, cremates the crew, and I knew instantly what had happened, because it almost happened to me one time. ... When you have a "bay tank full of fuel," which they had, you could put four into place, but the first one you install would be the left front bay, and I don't know why, but that's where we always put them. If you're carrying only one, that's where it's at, and right behind, on the skin, is the auxiliary hydraulic pump. This is an electric-driven hydraulic pump. Now, when the landing gear starts to come up, ... your pressure drops, hydraulic, and the object being, ... they told us, "You always have that on on takeoff. In case you lose the third engine, that's where the pump, the regular pump, the mechanical pump, was located. If you lose that engine, you still have hydraulic power." ... So, I was doing that. Well, on this particular time, a night mission, and we takeoff, I'm starting back to the waist and, as I entered the bay, the tank is siphoning. The bay tank is siphoning, fuel going out, that pump came on as the gears unlatched and started to go up. The pump came on and ... I was right there, fortunately, and I slapped the switch off, because it's vented around the brush area of the motor and you see all the sparks flying and I just know that's what happened that night, ... because it was at that precise moment that it exploded, ... which wasn't a very nice way of making our departure. Well, we left just a few days after that.

SH: How many missions had you flown?

JR: Forty official missions and two extras. We took medical supplies to Tinian, when it was in the process of being modified for GI use, and one to search for the top brass. So, that was forty-two, but I had to have forty to get re-cycled. So, I re-cycled back to the States.

SH: What did you hope would happen to you?

JR: What, stateside? ... I was open-minded. ... We were in a C-54 coming back and, when somebody yelled, "There it is," why, ... everybody in the airplane was on that side and the pilot had to correct. [laughter] ... The first thing, we were in the auditorium of the movie theater, and the commander of the base gave us a welcome call and said that we would be all deloused. That was the purpose of the stay there, but, also, to eat. He said, "We serve three or four meals, three meals a day, and, at night, one of the messes is open, serving short orders, whatever you order or

anything, and it's open until midnight," and he said, "I want it all used," and he said, "I want you fellows to eat heartily." He said, "We've got to put some meat back on your bones," [laughter] and so, that's the way it went.

SH: Where did you come back into, San Francisco?

JR: Yes, Hamilton Field, and I was shipped by bus to Fresno. That's where the delousing center was; that's what we called it. [laughter] ... They had a big barbershop at that station, ... at Fresno. ... I got an appointment and I told him, "Give me the works." I got a shampoo, I got a shave, I got a hot massage, I got a mud pack and a hot massage, and I felt like maybe I was getting human again, also had a haircut. ... The routine, while we were there, we would make the chow lines and, in the evening, then maybe we'd take in a movie, but we'd always stop by ... the mess that was open, and one thing there, when you go in for the regular mess, there may be a Jell-O salad that [was] bigger around than this table is and six feet high or so, a Jell-O thing. They'd be cutting on it. They served very, I suppose, high-calorie chow at that place, and we were all gaining weight, too. ... While I was there, I had gotten four teeth [knocked out]. Oh, speaking of those twenty-millimeters, one of them struck my turret, where the bearing support [was], and I got a sliver, which I think was a splinter, actually, of the aluminum, that my turret was made of cast aluminum, but I got a splinter here, it breaks four teeth, two down, two up. It broke four teeth all together there, and cut my tongue. I figured I'd had some problem, I ... had my mask off and spitting blood and stuff, which [was from the] broken teeth, mostly, I guess. ... The co-pilot and I borrowed a jeep, he drove. There was supposed to have been a dental trailer on the island of Guam. We never did find it and my teeth were not repaired until I got back stateside. That was one of the things they were going to repair while I was there at the delousing station. ... So, the day came and I had my appointment and I go in. I'm waiting and waiting and waiting. Nothing's happened, nobody'd called or said a word to me, and, finally, a little lieutenant, a woman, comes out and said, "Your appointment was with Dr. So-and-So?" I told her, "Yes." She said, "Well, on the way to work this morning, he had a flat tire and, when he was changing the tire, it fell off the jack and he's in the emergency room." She said, "I'm just finishing up and I'll get to you in a few minutes, if you like, ... and we can take [care of it]." I thought, "A woman dentist?" Here I am, a twenty-year-old kid, ... but she did and she explained she could fix one on the bottom and one on the top. She had to make molds, put molds around, to make the teeth, and she's doing this on the old broken roots, that is what she's building on. ... She could do one below and one above, because she couldn't get the other mold in there, "Tomorrow then, we'll do the other two." "Okay." She seemed very efficient in her work but I still had my doubts when we got through. ... (Freddie?) had had a tooth filled one time and, boy, on the first trip up, ... he was in pain, and then, all at once, his eyes brightened up and he spit the filling out in his hand. ... I could see that happening, but I had here a full upper part of the tooth constructed all around. I could see that maybe happening with me. Well, it never did, ... and, for all my queasiness about the woman, it was ten years before one of them had to be removed. [laughter] She didn't do a bad job.

SH: After you finished the delousing and getting your teeth put back in good order, what did they do with you then?

JR: You had your choice on the re-cycle. You get better choices of schools than if you're the first time through. First time through, I had my choice of mechanic's school, radio, armorer. That was the choices, but, this time, now, I could have electrical, mechanic, or others, and I chose electrical, thought it to be of more use to me ... when I get out, and it was a wonderful school, very excellent school. All of the schools I attended, military-wise, were topnotch, ... and I compare that to what I found in civilian life, that was going on with the GI Bill in schools. They were trash, mostly, the ones that I was [exposed to]. I was interviewed to be a teacher in one of them; I wouldn't accept it. ...

SH: Where did they send you? Where was the school?

JR: The school was in Illinois at Chanute Field ...

PR: It complicated things.

JR: [laughter] ... When I was going to electrical school, I had told Pat that, whenever I found an apartment she could come and we'd be married, because her parents wanted to get her out of their hair. [laughter]

PR: Oh.

JR: That's the way it was. [laughter] We were wanting to wait, but, oh, no, if we were going to be married, they wanted [us to] marry and get out of ... their hair, she was a girl. They didn't know what to do with girls. When I got to Chanute Field to the electrical school, I kept looking and reading the papers, but it's the underworld, friend-to-friend, always had them rented before I ever got there. So, that didn't work out. From there (Chanute Field), I got a delay en route to (Lockbourne?) Airbase in Columbus, Ohio. In that delay en route, I went back and was married and we took off for Columbus, Ohio. ... Eventually, we got there and we rented a room in a hotel down on the square in Columbus, which is right on the river, ... and while we're there, there was relocation places for GIs seeking, housing, and we went there and they sent us to Becky and Bob.

PR: Don't ask me; it's been too long ago.

JR: [Becky and Bob]'s house, out in Franklin Park South.

PR: I thought you got that through the USO. I thought you learned about that through the USO.

JR: ... Well, I learned about the location center.

PR: Okay.

JR: The rental place was a civilian staffed place helping G.I.s in whatever their need.

SH: This would have been in, what, April, May?

JR: No, September.

PR: September of '45.

SH: The war is over by then.

JR: Yes. FDR died while I was in electrical school. When I was in Hawaii, just before I came back to the States, I stood a review for him, at Hickam Field.

SH: Did you?

JR: Yes. He was in a touring [car], the open touring-type thing, and he was so made-up, he looked like he was a wax figure.

SH: Really?

JR: Yes.

PR: Well, it's just before he died.

JR: Yes. It was just shortly before he died. ... Where were we there?

SH: You were talking about finding an apartment in Ohio.

JR: Yes. ... If you went out the north gate, you were in the town of Rantoul. There was a gate that joined Indiana-Illinois, and this was Champagne-Urbana. Most of my searching for apartments was in that area. Rantoul was a small town to the north, out the north gate, and was nice. Just outside the gate, there was a very large trailer, which is a popcorn machine, very large, all glass around, has walkways all the way around, girls waiting on you, and this was the most ingenious machine I ever saw. ... The corn is running all over the place and, when it finally ends up it touches a plate down here, it pops. It's a real well-timed affair, [laughter] and next-door to that is a root beer trailer wagon. We made that often. ... While I was in school there, we were studying electrical systems, B-29 was the [aircraft]. ... When we got far enough along to be using the engine area, we had a double cell on either side of the central control room and it had two engines, ... B-29 engines, in one cell, two in the other, and we would wire them up and they would give us problems to search for. ... Beyond us then, there were two more cells and they were jet engines. One jet engine to a cell, and that was for the mechanics, jet engine mechanic students. Well, the street to the north gate was right behind this and, in order to accommodate the jet engines, they had to make big ramps near the street to direct the jets upward, over the people. [laughter] Otherwise, they'd be frying every car that came by. That was my first experience to see a jet engine.

SH: You had stayed in the military. At this point, you were still in the military.

JR: I'm still a soldier, yes, and it will come out, in a little bit, as to what was going on, which [was] unbeknownst to us, of course. It got time ... for me to ship out. ... We shipped to

(Lockbourne?) Airbase, which was just south of Columbus, a short way, almost incorporated with the outskirts. ... A second lieutenant was my boss in the electrical department. There were three of us [who] arrived there at the same time, ... and so, we were working and we had very little work. The Lieutenant said, "There won't be a whole lot to do, the war is over." Once in awhile, I'd get [to] maybe recharge some magnetos or rebuild a generator. ... It came a time when he ... had orders to release us, and he said, "Every day, you read the bulletin board and sign in." He said, "You'll get your orders in a little while." We kept doing that and nothing's happening. Pat and I are going around the countryside and wondering what we were going to do when we got out. Finally, one day, I go in to read the bulletin board and there's an MP there with one of the other electrical fellows, and he informed me that I was AWOL from Mobile, Alabama, Air Field. ... So, we waited until the other fellow came in to sign in. The three of us, he carried off to the commander of the base, and he began apologizing to us. He said, "You were to be part of a B-29 aircraft group." This had started before the end of the war, the assembling of all this, getting guys trained, and he said Mobile, Alabama, was the staging area for the three squadrons, and they were to be the first to go into Japan. ... He said they had discovered ... our 201 files [official military personnel file] on top of a file cabinet, which explained our AWOL status, because they weren't included with the Mobile bunch. [laughter] He said, "Now, if you desire, if you so desire, I'm duty bound to ship you on to Japan and join your squadrons, but it would be a convenience to the Air Force. You fellows have more than enough discharge points than necessary, to get out." ... He said, "It would be a convenience to the Air Force, if you want to receive your discharge now." He said, "I can send you down and have you discharged, but, ... if you do want to join your squadron, I am duty bound to send you." [laughter] We looked at one another. ... [laughter] No one chose to go to Japan, and so, I went to ...

PR: Patterson Field, [Ohio].

JR: Yes, for discharge, the next day, I drove down. I had a little car I'd bought while there and I drove down. ... They processed me and gave me some money and so, I'm a civilian. I go back to Franklin Park South, where we were living, and here's the other couples, all the various [renters]. They had divided this big mansion into some apartments, and they were all in our apartment. ...

PR: Were all in our kitchen.

JR: In the kitchen of the apartment, and here I go up the stairs, singing, and they all said to her, "He's drunk." [laughter] She knew better, of course. I couldn't be drunk, [laughter] but there I was, a civilian again. We liked the area around Columbus, and thought we might stay. So, I went down to a relocation/job finding place that had been set up for GIs, and I didn't want to go back into mechanics, and they told me there, "Well, I can get you set up today, I can provide you with tools." ... He said there was a shortage among the dealerships. [laughter] He said, "You could go to work right now, today," ... but I was wanting a change from my experiences, and Acme Brass Company, there, and this is headquarters for Acme, there in Columbus, and they wanted patternmaker apprentices, under the GI Bill, and that would be right down my alley. I'd been making models of this and that all my life, [laughter] and so, I went to interview and the nastiest person, a man, interviewed me and I felt, every once in awhile [like hitting him], but I didn't. [laughter] ... He said, "GIs, they'll be a dime a dozen, in a little while," but I didn't hit

him, I didn't get the job, either. He was going to see to that, and so, we decided to go back to San Antonio. At least I would have reemployment rights there; that was my point of induction, and, the law required, that you could be reemployed in your former work place ...

PR: It was a good job, with the government.

JR: When I got there, my job had been incorporated with the Texarkana Arsenal, in Texarkana, [Texas]. ... I was working in Normoyle Ordnance Depot before the war, which was an ordnance base, vehicles, mostly, at Normoyle. They'd come back and they would strip them all down and build new ones out of the parts ... at Normoyle, this was the full scale. They built Normoyle specifically for that and, now, they were going to be receiving war goods back, used tanks, and so forth. ... They were set up ... to rebuild tanks on down. They would strip a tank, take the shell of the tank and ... heat this up. If it was dented or bent or injured, they'd heat this up to forging heat and straighten it all up and weld up whatever needed [welding] and start from there then, ... after they got the shell cool, to building a tank, and that's the way they reprocessed. They did this with the other vehicles, too. A six-by'd come in. It would be stripped, bolt-to-bolt, and the pieces sent for rebuilding, like differentials and transmissions, engines, and the frame, the body, the whole thing. There were different divisions that would rebuild those parts, and they had assembly lines then that would assemble new vehicles. ... By the time it got off the other end of the assembly line, it would be a full vehicle.

SH: This was working for the government.

JR: Yes. ... When I went to San Antonio, to reclaim my job, well, my job was now in Texarkana, and so, we went to Texarkana.

PR: Red River Arsenal.

JR: I had been working in the print shop at Normoyle. So, ... when I get to Texarkana, I'm a duplicating machines operator. That was the title they gave me and we had offset duplicators. These were printing machines and they used a blanket to offset; you take an order sheet from the girls that make up the orders, ... oh, there must have been forty or more women with machines, and they'd type up the order. Well, this is a legal-size order and you put that, ... no stencil, like a mimeograph; this is a duplicator. You put that paper order on the machine and this is bathed in a solution, and it's then imprinted from a regular ink system, like a printing press, multiple rollers. ... So, with the solution on the paper, now, this is just regular paper, it's inked, and then, as it rotates on around, it imprints this on the blanket, which is another drum down below, with the blanket on it, and then, as it comes around, it prints it on to paper, offset. It's an offset duplicator. ... There were two girls that had been taking on the four machines, four duplicators, two girls were taking care of ... those machines, and I was to be the third one, to help out. ... We cleaned the blanket between each run of, say that this was an order for parts, maybe ... the run would be for thirty pages or so and, at the end of the run, you cleaned the blanket with fire extinguisher fluid, carbon tetrachloride.

SH: Something like that. [Editor's Note: Carbon tetrachloride was used in fire extinguishers until the early 1940s and can cause severe health problems.]

JR: Yes, here you are, sponge and a bucket, and you're there breathing the fumes. Well, right away, they had a shortage over in the machine section. So, I was transferred to the machine section. ... I wasn't on the duplicators but for a few days, maybe a week or two, and, in the machine section, they had old-time IBM card machines. ... George (Pierce?) was the IBM representative and had an office there. He served other places, too, some banks and others, too, but I would help him clean the machines and I was also operating the big machine, which was the computer-type thing, the tabulator.

SH: [laughter] I was just going to say, I think we are talking about computers here now, right?

JR: Yes, ... but this is no chips. But, with the card machine, it was all mechanical. Have you seen a punch card? Well, we were processing over four thousand items a day in this setup, and that meant that you ran through the entire files every day, in the machines. ... My machine, if it was just one, there were four grouped, and each one was hooked up to a reproducer, through a cable, and has a circuit board on one end of the machine. Now, for my machine, this is a board about this long, about this high, and it's wired, and then, a cover put on and it was for a particular purpose, or you can wire up a blank board to do what you wanted the machine to do. It would process the stack of cards, and every time it came, to a file card, it would process all the cards above it, add or subtract the number of items of all the order cards. The machine would stop and via cable the attached reproducer would cut a new card for our files. All of the cards come from the sort section where those machines assemble our file cards and all like-number incoming cards above it. And these come to me in long trays for processing that particular item. So, it'll cut the new card. The card then goes back to sorting section. They have interpreter machines that print out what is on the card. Eventually, it'll be back into the bin and, tomorrow, you're starting through the whole thing again. ...

SH: When you were getting ready to get out of the military, did they try to talk you into staying in?

JR: Yes. I was offered, to start with a junior warrant officer ...

PR: Commission?

JR: ... It's a warrant officer job, non-commissioned.

SH: I know they have those in the Navy.

JR: Yes, warrant officer, ... a junior warrant officer, and I later received, by mail, asking me if I would consider a senior warrant officer's job, and I didn't take either offer. [laughter]

PR: Yes, in Korea. They wanted to send you to Korea.

SH: Did you stay in the Reserves?

JR: No, no, I didn't.

SH: You were not in danger of being called up then for Korea.

JR: No.

SH: Mr. Richards, thank you so much for talking to me today. We have been doing this now for about four or five hours, and so, I think you must be just about exhausted, but thank you so much for talking to me.

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

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