RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD RIEMER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

MARK EISEMAN
and
NICHOLAS MOLNAR

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Mark Eiseman: This begins an interview with Donald N. Riemer in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on April 26, 2005, with Mark Eiseman and …

Nicholas Molnar: … and Nicholas Molnar.

ME: Mr. Riemer, thank you very much for sitting down with us this afternoon.

Donald Riemer: You're welcome.

ME: Let us start at the beginning. Can you tell us when and where you were born?

DR: I was born in Newark, New Jersey, on February 14, 1934.

ME: Can you tell us a little bit about your father?

DR: My father was an electrical engineer who worked for Weston Electrical Instruments Corporation in Newark.

NM: What do you know about your family history on your father's side of the family?

DR: You mean in terms of …

NM: … How they came to the United States.

DR: Oh, they came to the United States many generations back. My wife, actually, has done a really complete genealogy, all the way back, but I don't have it in my head. He was born in Carlstadt, New Jersey, which is up in Bergen County and, like I said, you know, it was many, many generations back that they came to this country.

ME: Did any of his family members live near you, his father or brothers, anything like that?

DR: His parents lived in Newark, but … I was pretty young when they died. I barely remember them.

ME: Do you know much about your mother's side?

DR: Yes. She was born in Nutley, New Jersey, and, same thing, I barely have a recollection of her parents. So, I don't have too much recollection about any of my grandparents and they were also in this country for many, many generations. In fact, one of the ancestors, way, way on back, … lived in New York when it was a Dutch colony … and he was appointed by Peter Stuyvesant as some sort of [office holder?].

ME: Did she stay home with you guys? Did she have a job during World War II? What was her role during that time?

DR: … During World War II, I didn't know her, but … we were very young. … She and I were young. So, I hadn't even met her yet, but she did stay home, obviously, because she was a student. [Editor's Note: Mark Eiseman intended to ask about Mr. Riemer's mother, but Mr. Riemer believed he was asking about his wife. The confusion arose from the ambiguous phrasing of the question and the fact that both women were discussed in the previous responses.]

ME: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

DR: I have one sister, she lives in Arizona, no brothers.

ME: Is she older or younger?

DR: Younger. She's three years younger than I am.

ME: What was it like to grow up with a girl in the house? Was it not too bad?

DR: Oh, no, we always got along great. There were no problems at all. …

NM: What was Newark like when you were growing up? I imagine it has changed since.

DR: It's changed a great deal, yes. [laughter] We lived in a part of Newark called the Clinton Hill Section, which, at that time, was a nice, middle-class area, neighborhood, to live in. … Most of the residents were Jewish. It was a Jewish enclave there and I went to a high school called Weequahic High School, first, to a grammar school called Bergen Street School, and then, to Weequahic High School, and it was quite different. … You know, it was a city; there's no doubt about that. … There was no country there, no open space to speak of, but it was still nice and it was pleasant.

NM: Are both of those schools still operating today or did they shut down?

DR: The high school, I know, is operating. The Bergen Street School, I don't know. Actually, my father had gone to the same grammar school, yes. He hadn't lived in Newark continuously from the time he went to that school. … He had moved to Hillside, New Jersey, but, then, they came back to Newark and I ended up going to the same grammar school that he had gone to, which was a very, very old building then. If it's still operating, the building itself must be in pretty bad shape.

ME: What kind of activities were you involved in growing up? Did you participate in the Boy Scouts, sports, anything like that?

DR: Practically nothing like that, no organized activities at all. My parents owned a small summer cottage at Lake Hopatcong, and so, we spent our summers there. So, a lot of these kinds of activities you're talking about, you know, Little League and that stuff, go on during the summer and I wasn't even there for the whole summer, but, even so, I just never really did participate in any organized activities at all to speak of.

NM: Were you and your family involved with the church?

DR: No, no.

ME: At the lake house, did you go canoeing and stuff like that?

DR: Oh, yes. … The area we lived in was a remote corner of the lake, actually. It was just all woods and forests. … Oh, yes, I was canoeing all the time, fishing. …

ME: You had your Boy Scout-type activities.

DR: Right, right, bird watching. I became an avid bird watcher very early in my life.

ME: Did your father serve in the military? Did anyone else in your family?

DR: No, no. … During World War II, he worked, as I said, for Weston Electrical Instrument Corporation and they made instruments, during the war, … for tanks and planes and stuff. So, he was a foreman there and he was exempt from … military service, because it was a, you know, war-related [job]. … It was pretty essential to the war process.

ME: You were born in 1934, therefore, you were seven or eight years old when the war broke out. Do you remember your parents talking about Pearl Harbor?

DR: Oh, yes. … I remember the day it happened, yes.

ME: Please, tell us about that day.

DR: Well, it was breakfast time and we were having breakfast; I believe it was a Sunday, right? Yes, it was a Sunday and, yes, we were having breakfast and the radio was on and, you know, the news came across and I wasn't really old enough to fully understand all the implications, the impact, but I was old enough to know it was something really important going on, you know.

ME: How did your parents react? Were they mad, afraid, ready for the war?

DR: Oh, they certainly weren't mad. They were concerned, I would say, not really afraid, either, but they were certainly concerned, you know, about what was going to happen, obviously.

NM: Franklin Roosevelt obviously played a big part in the country from the Great Depression through the war. What were your family's feelings towards him? Were they big supporters of his or were they against him? There were very mixed feelings on Roosevelt.

DR: Yes. I'm not sure what my mother's feelings were. She didn't express them too much. My father was pretty much anti-Roosevelt, especially when he ran for his third term. My father thought that was terrible. … From that point on, especially, he was very, very anti-Roosevelt.

ME: Is there a history of Republicanism in your family or were they just anti-Roosevelt at the time?

DR: No, I'd say it … probably was a history of being Republican, but, at the same time, I think it was not so strong that they wouldn't support a Democrat if they really thought, you know, he was better, the better person, but they definitely were anti-Roosevelt. [laughter]

ME: Do you recall any changes in your lifestyle and the town after the war broke out? Were you put on rations, anything like that?

DR: Oh, well, yes. The thing that I remember most clearly was gasoline rationing, because, for one thing, my parents did own this summer cottage up in Lake Hopatcong. We couldn't go there anymore, and so, they were even concerned about, you know, vandalism or the roof starting to leak and they wouldn't know about it, couldn't [even] get up there to mow the lawn.

ME: That was throughout the war.

DR: Pretty much, yes.

NM: What about blackouts? In a big city like Newark, were air raids a concern? How did that affect you?

DR: … Oh, that was a routine thing, yes. … The house that we lived in in Newark … was a very large house. It was really three stories high. The third story was sort of an attic, but … there were finished off rooms there and, you know, it wasn't a little place [where] you had to bend down to walk around. It was a regular third floor, practically, and so, during the blackouts, … I remember, we used to go up there, get a good vantage point and look out over the city. We were on a hill to begin with, and then, this house was very high. So, we had a view for a long ways over the city. So, yes, we used to go up and, you know, everything would be absolutely black and, once in a while, you'd see a little light flash somewhere, here or there, which was some air raid warden with his flashlight or something like that. So, yes, I remember those very clearly. …

ME: In school, was a different curriculum introduced as a result of the war? Did they, say, place more emphasis on phys ed classes?

DR: Oh, certainly not in phys ed classes. I don't really recall any particular [changes]. I mean, you know, they would talk about current events somewhat, of course, but there was no special curriculum or no special courses. …

ME: During the Cold War, there were often air raid drills where kids had to get under their desks. Was that the case during World War II?

DR: We didn't get under the desks, but each school, and each factory, for that matter, and store, had a designated, what they called an air raid shelter, and there'd be signs on the wall there and

all and there would be practice air raids, where everybody would have to gather, and, I think, in my grammar school, it was down in the basement. …

ME: That sounds pretty nerve-wracking for a ten-year-old kid.

DR: Yes, oh, yes, yes.

NM: You thought that an air raid could actually occur.

DR: Oh, sure, oh, yes.

NM: Some interviewees say that they did not take it too seriously.

DR: Yes, oh, no, no, no. I mean, we knew it was, you know, at least a possibility, didn't seem imminent.

ME: You took them pretty seriously.

DR: Yes, yes.

NM: You said that you did not participate in many organized activities. Did you have a group of friends that you hung out with, played stickball with, anything like that?

DR: Yes, a very small group, very, very small group. I guess I was not … really very outgoing or social when I was in school, but there were a small group of people and we used to play stickball or have a catch, you know, in the street. You have to keep watching for cars coming, make sure there's no cars coming. [laughter] Somebody had to be watching all the time for traffic. We didn't live on a real busy street.

ME: Still, you were in the city. You always had to keep your head up.

DR: Yes, yes.

ME: What do you recall about high school? Was it a good experience? What were your thoughts on your high school experience in Newark?

DR: Well, Weequahic High School was, and I think this … could probably be documented, actually, if someone wanted to delve into it, was probably the most academic-oriented high school in the city. It had a very good reputation. I don't remember the statistic now, but a very, very high percentage of graduates went on to college, very, very high.

ME: Was it unusual, at that time, to have such a high-achieving group?

DR: Yes, yes. It was higher than any of the other high schools in Newark, of which there were, what? about five others, I guess. So, I was … really kind of proud of that and I got into some of the advanced classes and advanced chemistry and I took some courses, some advanced math

courses, which, … even though I'm not a big math fan, [laughter] … nevertheless, I was proud of it. I was proud of being there. So, I would say, all-in-all, it was a positive experience.

NM: You knew that you were on the college track, with all of these advanced courses.

DR: Yes.

NM: Right from the beginning?

DR: Yes, yes.

ME: Was that something that your parents really pushed? Were they big on education?

DR: Oh, yes. … I never felt pushed, but, at the same time, you know, I knew that that's just what they expected me to do. That's what they expected of me.

ME: Did they go to college?

DR: Yes. Well, my father did.

ME: Where did he go?

DR: He went to what at that time was called Newark College of Engineering and is now … NJIT.

ME: New Jersey Institute of Technology.

DR: Right, right. At that time, it was called Newark College of Engineering.

ME: Did your younger sister go on to college?

DR: Yes. She went to college and she was in the education curriculum, … to become a teacher, and then, she got married. … I can't remember all the exact details. … Anyway, she got married soon thereafter. She did teach for a short time, in Cranford, New Jersey, and then, she got married and her husband had really bad emphysema and [the] doctor recommended that he move out to Arizona, which they did, and then, she had six kids, all very close together. So, she was not working, and then, right after the last one was born, her husband died and she was still very, very young. … She had to support them somehow. I mean, she had some life insurance and so forth. … I can't remember why, but, for some reason, in order to get her teaching certificate in Arizona, she had to go back to college, because she'd already taught in New Jersey. So, I can't remember, now, why that was.

ME: Every state has its own standards.

DR: … She had to go back to college, which she did, and she just retired a couple of years ago. She was a kindergarten teacher in Arizona. They lived really, really out in the desert. I mean,

when they built the house, which they built with their own two hands, they didn't have a contractor. My brother-in-law was pretty good at that stuff. He was a contractor and he owned bulldozers and dump trucks and a backhoe and all that stuff, and so, they built this house with their own two hands and, when they finished that, or when they moved in, it wasn't even quite finished, you could stand on the roof of their house and, out there, you can see a long ways in the desert and you could turn around, 360 degrees, and you wouldn't see anything made by man, except for one row of telephone poles coming across the desert, to their house. That's how remote they were and she raised the kids there. …

ME: Did they have access to water?

DR: Yes, there was a well on the property when he bought it. The guy who had owned it previously had planned to live there himself, now, and he died and he had dug a well, … a good well. So, anyway, she's been out there ever since. …

ME: Was there electricity?

DR: Yes, yes, that's what this row of utility poles brought, electricity and a telephone line.

ME: Did you visit them a lot?

DR: Oh, not a lot, no. …

ME: Have you been out there?

DR: Oh, I've been out there, yes, numerous times.

ME: Did you have any part-time or summer jobs while growing up in Newark?

DR: Oh, I worked as a packer in a supermarket, you know, and then, when I was in college, I worked in the factory where my father worked, Weston Electrical Instrument Corporation.

ME: You had a job there.

DR: Summers, yes, two summers.

ME: Doing what?

DR: Well, I'm sure you don't want me to take a lot of time to talk about Weston. …

ME: No, it is okay.

DR: Weston was an extremely unique company. It was owned by one man and had an excellent reputation around the world for really fine electrical instruments, but the interesting part about it was that they did everything internally. I mean, they had to make transformers, little transformers. Well, they didn't buy wire, they made the wire. They bought copper blocks and

… extruded their own wire and, naturally, there were dials on these instruments. Well, they didn't go to some printer to have these dials made. They had their own print shop.

ME: All in-house.

DR: All in-house, and they were all good instruments. They were expensive, good instruments, and so, the bearings that the things turned on, you know, were jewels, rubies and so forth, and they had a jewel shop, with jewelers, and they cut and drilled their own jewels to make the bearings, everything internally.

ME: Which department were you in?

DR: Well, okay, … that's all right. That was just little background.

NM: Was that the owner's policy, that everything would be in-house?

DR: … Yes, and the reason was, the original Dr. Weston, who founded the company, just wanted the absolute best quality of everything he could get and, in order to insure it, he said, "We'll make it ourselves." They made their own nuts and bolts and screws in the automatic screw machine department.

ME: That is unheard of today.

DR: They had a plating department, with big vats full of acid and stuff, where parts that needed to be chrome-plated or copper-plated, whatever, … after it was made, they shaped and formed [it], they did their own plating there, everything. … Anyway, I worked in a quality control, I'm not sure [if] that was the exact name of it, but that's what it was, a quality control department. … Every batch of everything that was made there, including just an old piece of wire, you know, coil wire or dials or whatever, screws and nuts and bolts, each lot; maybe they needed five thousand screws of this size, okay, and this thread and so forth. … The automatic screw machine department would make these five thousand screws and they'd bring them to the quality control department and what we did is, we would randomly select some, and we had tables that told us exactly, … if these things were screws and there were five thousand of them, we had to select, randomly select, fifty or a hundred, whatever it was, exactly, and then, they had certain dies that we had to run the threads in and make sure that the threads were okay, on that fifty or that hundred, and, if it was printed dials, then, we had to look and make sure there was no smeared ones. … So, that's where I worked, in this quality control department.

ME: Did you enjoy it or was it a tedious process?

DR: I sure wouldn't have wanted to have done it the rest of my life, but for, you know, two months in the summer, yes, it was fine. It was something different all the time, because, I mean, if you're just sitting there, running screws through, you know, a tester, that would have been terrible, but, every time you finished the job, the next one would be something entirely different, and then, you'd have to go and get the printed specifications of how to test or check that particular item. So, it was kind of neat.

NM: How big is this company?

DR: Well, it doesn't exist any more.

NM: Back then, how big was it? Was it based entirely in Newark?

DR: Oh, absolutely. It was on Frelinghuysen Avenue in Newark and it was just this one place and they made very expensive instruments, but very high quality instruments.

ME: Were they making electronics, like radios? What were they making?

DR: No, not radios. They were all measurement meters of one kind or another, electrical meters, instruments, right. No, they didn't make any radios or anything that would really be a final product. They made instruments which would be used in making, maybe, a radio or whatever.

NM: Where did you think you were going to go to school? Which schools did you apply to? Did you have a guidance counselor to help you through it?

DR: We had a guidance counselor. My father had a cousin; well, my father had a female cousin whose husband … was a graduate of Rutgers and I really admired this guy, really liked him, and he was in World War II, in the Navy, but, anyway, he kind of steered me, you know, towards Rutgers.

ME: What was his name?

DR: Francis Hickey, Frank Hickey, and he kind of steered me. Well, first of all, I was always interested in some aspect of biology. I mean, ever since I was a kid, like I said, I was a bird watcher and a fisherman and so forth, and so, he kind of steered me here and, actually, it was the only place I applied. I applied early, so [that] in case I didn't get accepted, you know, I might still have some time and, to tell you the truth, after I got accepted here, … we got called in, as seniors, to talk to this guidance counselor. … You know, I was talking to her and she asked me if I planned on going to college. I said, "Yes, I've already been accepted at Rutgers," and her reply was, "You can do better than Rutgers." [laughter]

ME: Some things do not change.

DR: But, I mean, you know, she didn't sway me at all. …

ME: Did you apply for any scholarships in your freshman year?

DR: No.

ME: When the time came to leave home, what was it like to tell your parents, "See you later?"

DR: That was a bit of a, you know, traumatic experience, because I'd never lived away from home. My parents brought me down here and … they didn't even know where New Brunswick was. They had to get a map out and they had never been in New Brunswick and, as I was telling you on the way over here, the entire freshman class lived in Demarest Hall, at that time. No freshmen were allowed to live anywhere else, except in Demarest, which was brand-new. I was [in] the first class to move in there. … So, my parents came and got the car unloaded and so forth, and then, my roommate … hadn't showed up yet, but, after my parents left, they showed up. He was from Pittsburgh and his parents were very, very friendly people, very nice people. His father was a physician and, you know, we hit it off pretty well and, [for] everybody there, this is their first day there and everybody was a freshman, nobody knew anybody else, and so, it was pretty nice. Everybody was in the same boat, having the same experience, and it wasn't bad at all.

ME: What year was this?

DR '52.

ME: 1952 was your freshman year. Was that the same year that you graduated high school?

DR: … Right.

ME: You said that your freshman roommate was from Pittsburgh. Was he a nice guy, as nice as his family?

DR: He was nice, certainly. … There was never any animosity or friction at all between us. On the other hand, we didn't have very much in common, either, and it wasn't too long before he had his own group of friends and I had my own group of friends, but, nevertheless, we still got along fine, but we didn't do [things together], you know, as opposed to my wife. She was a freshman at Douglass, she had her roommate, … they're still in very close contact now. They haven't seen each other in years and years and years, but they write and send e-mails all the time and they have remained friendly their whole lives, very close friends, and, you know, I never saw this guy again after the day I graduated. [laughter] In fact, I didn't see him much after my freshman year, unless I just happened to run into him, but there were no problems, there were no frictions, no bad feelings or problems at all.

ME: Did you know right away, in your freshman year, what you were going to be studying? You said that you were interested in biology. Did you know that you were going to go into that track?

DR: Well, yes. … When I applied, I guess, one of the things you have to, you know, put on your application form was what you want to major in, which, I guess, is not true today, but it was then, and I put down biology and I was majoring in biology and I liked biology pretty well, as a major, but I really became disenchanted with my advisor.

ME: Do you remember his name?

DR: Yes. You want me to say it? [laughter]

ME: Sure. We will call him out.

DR: His name was Dr. (Difalco?) and the problem was, I felt like he never, never got to know me at all. … The thing that really got me is, every time I went in to see him, and you had to do that at least once a semester, at the time you registered, every time I went in, he'd start talking to me about [what] the requirements were for medical school and I would remind him, I said, "I'm not interested in going to medical school," … and I guess the majority of biology majors were.

ME: That was the next step.

DR: That was the next step for most of them, but not me, and, every time I'd go there, he'd start talking about, "You're going to have to take this and this, because this is what medical schools require," and, by the end of my freshman year, I got so discouraged with that that I went over and I talked to Dr. [James R.] Westman, who was the chairman of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Department, which is really where my interests lay. I went over and talked to him and, you know, said, "I would like to switch my major to Wildlife Conservation and Management," and, you know, he said, "Fine," and … seemed agreeable, and so, that's what I did, at the end of my freshman year.

ME: You actually switched majors.

DR: Oh, yes.

ME: Switched the track completely.

DR: Yes, yes, switched over from what at that time was Rutgers College, which is not what Rutgers College is now, over to the College of Agriculture.

ME: Did you have to switch campuses in your sophomore year? Was that over on Cook?

DR: Well, it wasn't Cook then, but, yes, but I didn't live there. There were no dormitories or anything at that time.

ME: Where did you live?

DR: I lived in the fraternity house, Alpha Gamma Rho, which … stood, I can't explain it to you, because I'm not sure it's still there, but there was a little building on George Street, the last building that was owned by the University on George Street, as you're going north, towards the bridge, a little, long, low building, which is ROTC headquarters. Is it still?

ME: The ROTC is now on College Avenue, next to the library.

DR: … Well, anyway, that's where the Alpha Gamma Rho House was during my sophomore year. It actually belonged to the University. … It had been a private home, which belonged to

the University, and Alpha Gamma Rho was a brand-new fraternity on campus at that time. They didn't own a house, but they rented that house from the University for one year, and then, the following year, the University tore it down and we got another house, which stood where the infirmary now stands, on that corner, and that's where I lived during my junior year, and then, during my senior year, my sister became a freshman at Douglass, and so, it made things a little more difficult, financially, on our parents. So, the College of Agriculture had a program, which you may or may not be familiar with, where the Dean had found little cubbyholes and attics and places around and students were allowed to live there for nothing.

ME: Do you remember which dean this was?

DR: Bill Martin, and the director of resident instruction was Frank G. Helyar. They had started this program, and so, there were little … groups of two or three students scattered all over the place, in cellars and attics and what have you, and one of those places was over on Georges Road, an old blueing factory, which was called the Towers, and it had been a factory at one time and it was a two-story, flat-roofed building, but, on that flat roof, there were two long, I don't know what you'd call them, they were rooms, I guess, is all you could call them, but they went the whole length of the building, from front to back, and the sides were all glass, one hundred percent glass, and there were a group of us who lived in those two rooms up there. Today, I feel kind of funny about that, because there were no window shades, not much privacy, had to put the lights out to get undressed. [laughter]

NM: There were still veterans from World War II coming back to campus in 1952. Were there many veterans enrolled while you were here? Did you notice many veterans on campus?

DR: Oh, yes, yes, … there were a lot and they were different, you know. They were kind of … almost like a separate population within the overall student population, because, first of all, they were older, had a lot more experience and weren't about to tolerate any kind of nonsense, like wearing dinks and anything like that, you know. [laughter] So, yes, we were quite aware of them, but, … by then, I was a senior, they were freshmen. … Because we were, you know, just different, I never got to really know them or interact with them very much. We certainly were aware of them.

NM: What about in your classes? Were they in your classes?

DR: No, again, because they were mostly freshmen when I was a senior, and so, we weren't taking the same courses, yes.

ME: At the same time, Korea flared up. Was the ROTC program pretty important on campus at the time?

DR: Yes, well, you know, the first two years of ROTC were mandatory for all male students. You had no choice if you came to Rutgers, and that goes way back to the land-grant concept; you know all about that. … Your second two years, Advanced ROTC is what they called the second two years, was optional and I guess the reason I went into it was, well, first of all, I kind of, in some respects, enjoyed ROTC and, in other respects, I didn't. I didn't hate it, certainly.

ME: What were some of the things that you liked?

DR: I liked drill, believe it or not. Yes, I liked close-order drill, the formality and the regularity of it and so forth, and I liked to hear about the … organized nature of the Army, period, you know. So, you know, I was kind of interested in it, and then, my reasoning was that, like you said, Korea's flaring up and so forth and the draft was on. The only reason I was exempt was because I was a student, and so, I figured, "Well, I'm going to go in the Army anyway, I might as well go as an officer," you know. So, I stuck with it, yes.

ME: You were in a fraternity. What was the pledging process like? Did you enjoy it? Was it a tough period?

DR: No, it wasn't tough. Alpha Gamma Rho was only, I think, when I pledged, during my sophomore year, I think that was their second year on campus only, as a fraternity. They were here as some sort of a club or something, you know, but as an actual fraternity, and so, they were new and it was an all-agricultural fraternity. So, I already knew a lot of the guys and, frankly, they were a little concerned about keeping going, you know. They were young and just getting started and they didn't want to make things too hard on anybody for fear of losing them. [laughter] … It was no problem at all, no, no.

ME: Did you enjoy your friends and the brothers in the fraternity?

DR: … Oh, yes, yes. One of the guys was the best man at my wedding. So, yes, no, all-in-all, it was a good experience.

ME: Your future wife was over at Douglass. Did you meet while you were at Rutgers?

DR: … Yes, a blind date.

ME: How did that get set-up?

DR: … Well, Douglass, you know, at that time, didn't have big dorms. They had all these little, individual houses and that's all they had and there was a girl that I had known, who was a year ahead of me, … whose parents also owned a summer cottage at Lake Hopatcong, right close to ours. So, I had known her all my life, ever since, you know, we grew up together, or summers, at least, we grew up together, and she was one year ahead of me at Douglass and I don't know whether I contacted her or what. We talked on the phone fairly frequently, since we knew each other well, and I don't know if I suggested it or if she did, to tell you the truth, [laughter] but, anyway, she set-up this blind date.

ME: Where did you go, out to dinner, the movies?

DR: No, to a dance on campus. I don't remember which dance, but they used to have [them]. You know, dances were big things in those days. … The big events of the year were the dances.

ME: Were you now dating? How often after that dance did you see each other?

DR: After about six months, almost daily. [laughter] …

ME: What was she studying in school?

DR: Home Economics, Education.

ME: What was the social life like? Was it centered on the bars, close gatherings, stuff at your fraternity? What did you do for fun?

DR: It was mostly fraternity, and Alpha Gamma Rho, again, at that time, … it has changed since, but, at that time, Alpha Gamma Rho was a little fraternity. It was not a typical fraternity. On most campuses, not here at Rutgers, but on most campuses, they were dry fraternities. No alcohol was allowed in the fraternity house and … we used to have parties and we did everything … at the parties from, as corny as it sounds, making candied apples or making taffy or, you know, stuff like that. At least twice a year, we'd have a hay ride. … Most of my social life was certainly centered around the fraternity.

ME: Did you ever go out on the weekends, to movie theaters or anything like that?

DR: Oh, yes, sure.

ME: Has the movie-going experience changed a lot? Were the theaters smaller or larger?

DR: Well, you mean here, in New Brunswick, or statewide? I mean, there were none of these great, big theaters, like there are in the shopping centers now, nothing like that. … Let's see, there were one, two, three, four theaters in New Brunswick, of varying degrees of cleanliness and class. [laughter]

ME: Did you ever make it to the bars around campus? Old Queens and the Corner Tavern seem to have been hot spots.

DR: A few times, that's all.

NM: What did you plan on doing upon graduation? What were your plans?

DR: My plans were to go in the Army. I didn't have any choice. [laughter] I graduated in May and I went on active duty in September.

ME: You knew that you were going on active duty.

DR: Oh, yes, there's no question about that, right from the time I went into Advanced ROTC.

ME: Before we move on from Rutgers, did you have a favorite professor?

DR: Oh, gee.

ME: Put you on the spot.

DR: Yes, that is a little difficult, favorite professor? This sounds strange, but one of my favorite professors, his name I can't recall right now. [laughter] He was in the Biology Department and I had him for invertebrate zoology and one or two other courses and he was a really nice guy. I wish I could remember his name, … friendly, well, not just friendly, but, well, I guess that is the best word. I mean, you really felt like he wasn't just your professor, but your [friend]. There was another professor named Edwin Moul who was also a favorite and a friend.

ME: He was genuinely interested in your future.

DR: Yes, yes, and there was another professor in the Biology Department named Melbourne Carriker. …

NM: We actually interviewed him.

DR: You did? He's still alive?

NM: Yes. We interviewed him.

DR: Really? Melbourne R. Carriker, and he was … another really, really nice guy, you know, laid back, kind of, just easy-going.

ME: What about clubs? You said that you participated in some wildlife/forestry activities. What did that entail?

DR: … I was in the Forestry Club, which, later on, while I was in it, became the Forestry and Wildlife Club, and, in fact, I became president of that and that was the only real club I belonged to.

ME: What did you do?

DR: Well, a typical meeting, we would have people, guests, come in to lecture to us, but we also had some other kinds of activities. We also had a hay ride once a year, the Forestry Club, and we had a fundraising activity each year, where there was a student, who was a couple of years ahead of me, whose father owned a cider press, right across the river, on a farm, it was a big, old farm over there, and this guy's father owned a cider press. … Another one of the members of the club knew somebody that had an apple orchard and they let us come in and not pick apples off the trees, but pick apples that had dropped to the ground, which were perfectly good for cider. … So, we'd go out and gather up, you know, a couple of bushels, or more than a couple of bushels, a lot, of apples, and then, take them over and press them and make cider and we went around, for weeks ahead of time, to all the soda fountains and everything, getting their gallon jugs that were leftover and made cider, and then, sold it. … We'd send little flyers around the campus, you know.

ME: Advertising the cider.

DR: Yes, yes. We would deliver it to the dorms or to professors offices or we'd have a little place set-up for two hours a week or something where people could come and buy it.

ME: What was your graduation like? Did your parents come down to see you walk?

DR: … Oh, yes. It was kind of a big deal, because not only was it graduation, but it was also the commissioning ceremony that same day and, yes, my parents were here and, in fact, … my future in-laws were here also, because they had come down for my wife's graduation, which was the same day.

ME: Was that the first time you met them?

DR: Oh, no, oh, no, we went up there. … So, yes, that was kind of a big event. Of course, at that time, graduation was in the football stadium. That's the whole University. People came down from Newark, Camden, everywhere, and graduated in the football stadium. It was quite a pageant, it really was. It was very, very colorful and … a moving experience.

ME: Do you remember who spoke at your graduation?

DR: No.

ME: Was the ceremony long, like it is today?

DR: Probably. [laughter]

ME: Now that your Rutgers experience has come to an end and you were commissioned in the Army, what was the next step for you?

DR: … Getting married.

ME: When was that?

DR: August of '56.

ME: Right after school.

DR: Yes. … In fact, our honeymoon was a cross-country automobile trip to Fort Bliss, Texas. [laughter] That was our honeymoon.

ME: Fort Bliss, Texas, of course, was the goal because …

DR: Oh, that's where I was assigned.

ME: You took your time, I suppose.

DR: Yes.

ME: What was your wedding like?

DR: Oh, well, it was in Bergenfield, which was my wife's home, in a small church, and it was certainly more than just my parents and hers. There were, jeez, if I had to take a guess, I'd say eighty to hundred people there.

ME: Pretty good-sized, friends and …

DR: Friends and, yes, other relatives. My father had relatives galore. … Most of them didn't live in New Jersey, but I think he had something like thirty-eight first-cousins, most of whom lived in Wisconsin. … Anyway, so, yes, it was a moderately-sized wedding, and then, the reception was in a kind of a restaurant place. I don't remember what town it was. It was north of Bergenfield, not far from where you live, in Oradell, might have been in Oradell, for all I know. I don't remember the name of the town, but it was an outdoor reception. …

ME: For your honeymoon, you drove down to Fort Bliss. Was this now the end of September?

DR: … No, it was the very beginning, because we got married on the 25th of August, and then, … I'd planned it so that I'd get there just a couple days ahead of time. So, it was early September. …

ME: Since you had gone through ROTC, did you have to go through a basic program?

DR: No, it was officers' basic, but it was specialized. … I was in a school where we were being trained to become guided missile unit commanders and my particular class was for a type of guided missile called a Nike, which was an air defense missile. Fort Bliss is the Army's Air Defense Center and the Air Defense Artillery, … that's their home and that's where their schools are and all that stuff. So, that was like, maybe, something like a twelve-week course and it was divided kind of partly between classroom work and fieldwork, in which, you know, there was everything from firing on the firing range to bivouacs. …

ME: In this program, how many men were in your class? How many men did you go through the twelve weeks with?

DR: Oh, about twenty or twenty-five.

ME: It was a pretty small, close-knit group of guys.

DR: … Yes, yes. It was very close.

ME: Do you still talk with any of the guys from the training program?

DR: I still exchange Christmas cards with one of them, but, no, nothing more than that.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

ME: What was your daily routine? Was it calisthenics, then, training in the classroom? How did that go?

DR: Well, as I said, approximately half of the time, overall time, was classroom work and half was, you know, field stuff, calisthenics and so forth, but each day was not necessarily divided half-and-half, because, like, if we were going out on bivouac, we'd be out for three, four, five days, and so, there'd be no classroom work, but, all-in-all, it was about half-and-half.

ME: You were being trained on these missiles. Were you thinking that your ultimate goal was that you would be sent off to Korea a few months down the line?

DR: No, no, not at all, because Nikes were air defense missiles. So, what they did was, at that time, every major city in the United States had a ring of Nike sites around it, to protect them from incoming aircraft, and they were all in this country, because it was … strictly a defensive missile.

NM: Which area of the United States were you protecting?

DR: Well, I never got to a Nike site. [laughter] I went to school for twelve weeks to do exactly that, but I never got to one.

ME: Why?

DR: [laughter] Well, … I have to go back a little bit. … One of the functions that the Army has, is wildlife management on the Army bases, any big base that has a lot of land, and it so happens; … I'd graduated, or was about to graduate, from school and I already had orders to go to a guided missile site, to answer your question, where I was supposed to have gone, which I think was in Oklahoma, … anyway, somewhere in the Midwest, out there, and then, it turned out that each Army post has someone whose supposedly secondary duty, but, really, it is their primary duty, is a wildlife conservation officer. So, the old wildlife conservation officer was getting out of the Army and he was leaving and they were going to assign; well, okay, another piece of background information is, on any Army base, wildlife management is the responsibility of the provost marshal, and the reason for that is because the Army looks upon wildlife management primarily as game law enforcement. So, the provost marshal has the job. So, anyway, I already had my orders to go to a Nike site when some colonel, who was a big hunter, an avid hunter, … he knew the … previous wildlife conservation officer and he knew he was leaving and he wanted somebody with some kind of training. He didn't want to just assign some MP, didn't want the provost marshal to pick … one of his MP officers to do that as a secondary duty. So, he pulled some strings, somewhere along the line, and got the post G-1 [the officer in charge of personnel/manpower issues] to cut new orders assigning me to Fort Bliss as the wildlife conservation officer.

ME: Was that right at the end of your twelve-week program?

DR: Yes, within a few days, one way or the other, of graduation.

ME: Was that right before the holiday season, in December?

DR: Yes, I guess. I'm not even sure that training was twelve weeks, but it was approximately.

ME: After you found out that you were staying on the base, did that make your wife happy? Was she ready to move on?

DR: No, I think she was happy. I mean, just for one thing, just moving itself is a darn nuisance, you know, and, you know, the unknown ahead and she had participated in a few of the wives' activities on the post, and so, she … knew a few people there. … No, I think she was happy.

ME: Was this something that you wanted to do? Were you looking forward to using your training?

DR: I was glad, because, I mean, I had four years of training as a wildlife manager and twelve weeks, or whatever it was, [on Nike missiles]. So, no, I always thought it was great.

ME: What did the job actually entail?

DR: Pretty much whatever I wanted it to be. Fort Bliss is an enormous base and it's called Fort Bliss, Texas, because that's where the flagpole happens to be, but, I don't know, ninety-some percent of Fort Bliss is in New Mexico and it's just desert and what it is is a practice firing range for various types of guided missiles. So, it's big. They fire these missiles out there, live missiles. It was very long. It was, I don't know, let's say 150 miles from north to south or something, maybe not that much, but it was huge, not nearly as wide. So, there was a lot of wildlife out there, antelope and mule deer and turkeys and, you know, all sorts of wildlife, and I pretty much could do as I pleased, as long as I enforced the game laws. That's all the provost marshal cared about, which was no big deal, and I had a unit, a wildlife conservation unit, that, believe it or not, consisted entirely of master sergeants. Fifteen master sergeants, that was the whole unit, not anybody below the rank of master sergeant, and they were game wardens. They were Army game wardens. They had badges and armbands and what have you and, you know, we worked out patrol routes. I mean, that had already been done. It was not a brand-new job and they had their patrol routes worked out and they pretty much knew the territory and all. So, you know, I spent some time patrolling with them, to learn the land and so forth, and then, we began to do some census counts of deer. There was a light, I forget … what they were called, anyway, an Army Aviation unit stationed at Fort Bliss, and they were more than happy to take us up and fly us around. The northern part of this firing range was mountainous and they were more than happy to take us up there and fly us over and do deer counts, because they … didn't have any job in peacetime, you know. I mean, what do they do fly around, just to get their hours in. So, to have a real function, to have a real mission, so-to-speak, they were delighted. So, we could get a plane any time we wanted, and a pilot, obviously, and so, we did deer counts. … Then, there were quail, … out in the desert part, the lowland part of the base, and I, with the help

of two of the sergeants in particular, devised a system to provide water for these quail and what we did is built great, big; these sergeants, these master sergeants, you know, they could get anything they wanted, anywhere, because they had friends all over the post and they wheeled-and-dealed like crazy. So, we built these big, wooden catch basins, sort of, on the side of a hill and lined them with metal and had … the water come down into great, big tanks that these guys got somewhere, and God knows where they, you know, get these things. [laughter] You don't ask, and so, the water would go into these tanks. They must have been, … like, two-thousand-gallon tanks, and then, we had a little copper tube come out of that and had a metal box on the ground with a float valve in it, just like in a toilet, and so, only enough water would come out to fill up that box, and then, the float valve would cut off, … whether it evaporated or the quail drank it or deer drank it. Coyotes drank most of it. … So, we built a bunch of those and I guess that was, you know, the main thing.

ME: How long did you keep this job for?

DR: The rest of my two years. …

ME: When your two years were up, did you stay in the Reserves?

DR: Oh, I stayed in the Reserves. I had a, … I guess it was a six-year commitment. When I signed up for Advanced ROTC, my commitment was two years of active duty, plus, I think it was five or six years of Reserve duty.

ME: You moved away from Fort Bliss at that point.

DR: Yes.

ME: Where did you move to?

DR: Auburn, Alabama, because I got accepted in graduate school there and my wife got accepted in graduate school at the same place. …

ME: Is that the University of Auburn?

DR: Auburn University, yes, right, and I was in the fisheries management program and she was in textiles. At Douglass, home economics was just kind of home economics. There was an education phase of it, but, at Auburn, it was such a big department that, in fact, it was a school of home economics. It wasn't just a department and they had majors in nutrition, human nutrition, and textiles and, I guess, sociology or something, I don't know. … My wife majored in textiles and we both got our Masters degrees there.

ME: How long was that program, two years, four years?

DR: Two-and-a-half years.

ME: How did your family feel about you going through the ROTC in college, then, going off to serve afterwards?

DR: They were not real vocal about it, but, … well, I think they had the same attitude I did, that I was going to go into the Army one way or the other, I might as well go as an officer. I think that was their reaction. You know, they probably would have been just as happy if I didn't go at all, but that was not an option, really, at that point.

NM: During the Cold War, the new threat was the Soviet Union. How did you feel about that? Did you think that we were going to end up using the Nike missiles at some time?

DR: Oh, yes. I mean, I felt that was a definite possibility. I knew that there was very little chance of my going overseas, because of reasons I've already mentioned, that this was a defensive missile, but, oh, no, I mean, I felt that … there's certainly a good chance that I would be going. … I guess it was during my second year on active duty, there was a problem in Lebanon, and it turned out to be a minor problem, but we sent some Marines to Lebanon and they weren't there too long, but it was a big thing and people thought that … might, you know, really trigger a bigger conflict. … At that time, I … felt pretty certain, not certain, but I felt there was a good possibility that … I'd be on a missile site somewhere. …

NM: You thought of a Soviet attack as a real threat.

DR: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

ME: You were at Auburn during the very early Vietnam era. Were you still in the Reserves?

DR: … Oh, yes, I was in the Reserves.

ME: Was that something that was weighing heavily on your mind?

DR: No, and I don't know why, but, … no, it wasn't weighing on my mind.

ME: It started off so small.

DR: Yes, yes. I mean, Reserve units were not being called to active duty, you know, and I was in the Reserve. … My Reserve time in Alabama was really kind of strange anyway.

ME: Why?

DR: Well, I probably could have been excused from going to Reserve meetings at all, because of the distances involved. Auburn was a tiny, little town at that time. There was nothing there but the university, and so, I cast around a bit, trying to find out where the nearest Reserve unit was. I knew … I had an obligation. I was supposed to be participating in the Reserves and I cast around and I found that the nearest Reserve unit was a field artillery battery in a little town called Lanett, Alabama, which was a good, long drive from where I lived, but I said, "Well, you know, I'm supposed to do it." … Nobody was pushing me or anything, but I drove over there. I found

out … what night their meetings were and I drove over there and it turned out that they met in an old storefront, glass windows in front. [laughter] That was where this Reserve unit met and they had one officer, a captain, who was the battery commander. So, I went over and talked to him and I said, you know, "I'm supposed to be participating and do you have openings?" "Oh, yes," he said, "I'm the only officer here." He was delighted to have, you know, another officer. So, I … joined the unit and I went to meetings once a week, … at night, and then, I was not in it very long when this darned captain volunteered for active duty [laughter] and left me as the battery commander, because I was then the only officer there, and it was a little, little, rinky-dink outfit. It was field artillery and, at the time he left and I became the battery commander, I had to sign for all the equipment that they owned and that was piled in the back of one of the storerooms in back of this old store. … On the day that I was supposed to sign for all this stuff, take financial responsibility for it, a couple of guys came out from Fort Benning, Georgia, I think it was, regular Army guys, plus this captain who was leaving and myself, and we kind of quickly inventoried most of this stuff, but they had two or three 155-millimeter howitzers that they owned, which they couldn't keep at the store. So, it was over in the playground, behind the high school, way over in the middle of Georgia somewhere. They never even saw them and, like a darned fool, I signed for those things. I never should have done it. That was the stupidest thing I ever did.

ME: Did the issue ever come up?

DR: No, no, thank goodness, but, I mean, to sign for these things, sight unseen, was a stupid, stupid thing on my part, [laughter] and then, eventually, before I graduated from Auburn and left, they deactivated the whole battery. Yes, it was so small and it was rinky-dink.

ME: When you were living in Alabama, was that your first trip to the Deep South?

DR: Yes.

ME: How did you decide on Auburn, as opposed to coming back up to the Northeast?

DR: Because Auburn had, and has, the greatest reputation in the United States as a warm water fisheries management school. Nothing with trout or salmon, it's all warm water, but they have a huge program. It's an international program, yes. In fact, I would say, at the time I was there, probably more than half of our graduate students were from overseas.

ME: What was living down there like? The Southern style of living is much different than up here.

DR: Yes, it was.

ME: What were some of the differences?

DR: It was. … In a nice way, I never felt bad about it, but, in a nice way, they never let me forget that I was a Yankee, ever, ever, you know. Everybody, I mean, from professors, students, neighbors, everybody, but it was not malicious or anything like that. I never objected to it,

really. Things were slow. Of course, the South was segregated at the time, which we weren't used to at all. You had to find out which of your local gas stations were for black people and which ones were for whites. Even the gas stations were segregated and the only thing that, well, I won't say the only thing, but the only major thing that I can think of that wasn't segregated was the bank, because there was only one bank in town, but they still had two separate lines, a line for blacks and a line for whites.

NM: When are we talking about, 1957?

DR: No, well, we went there in '58 and left in December of '60.

NM: Were there racial tensions in the area? Was that something that you could feel while going to the school?

DR: Well, there were no black students in the school. The school was not … integrated at all. So, no, I didn't feel any tensions.

NM: You did not experience much of that.

DR: No, no, not at all. I just wasn't exposed to it. … For example, … the Fisheries Department there owned several hundred ponds, varying in size from a tenth of an acre to, I guess, almost ten acres, and it took a lot of maintenance to mow all the banks and the dikes and drain them when it was time, you know. … So, we had a big … field crew that took care of these ponds and this whole crew, they were all black, but the attitude of the people, in our department at least, towards these black people was kind of interesting, because, again, there was no maliciousness or anything like that. They considered them inferior, there's no doubt about that, but, like, at Christmastime, the department took up a collection, a big collection, I mean, lots of money, and they bought turkeys and canned goods and, you know, all kinds of food and gifts for the kids of these people and took them around. … I mean, you'd darn well better contribute to this fund, you know, to the best of your ability, because that was something they felt was their responsibility.

ME: They felt that they were better than them, but they still had to take care of these laborers.

DR: Right, right. … Occasionally, one of them'd get drunk and end up in jail, you know, and our department chairman, who's named Dr. Homer Swingle, he got a call from the cops, in the middle of the night, you know. "We got one of your guys down here. He was drunk and disorderly." I mean, Dr. Swingle, … he was just expected to get out of bed and go down there and bail him out, you know. So, there was kind of a strange relationship, but, you know, I didn't feel guilty about the way they were being treated.

ME: It was not overtly negative, just strange.

DR: No, no, right, right.

NM: Did you see any of that in the North?

DR: In the North?

NM: Where you were from.

DR: Oh, yes, yes. … It was more racially integrated, but, at the same time, I mean, I can't imagine a department at Rutgers, for example, who had some black people working for them, going out and taking up a collection and buying toys for the kids and turkeys and hams. … So, it was a very different relationship.

ME: Was having a German last name ever an issue after World War II? Did that ever come up?

DR: Not that I was aware of at all.

ME: Did both you and your wife graduate from Auburn at the same time?

DR: … She graduated six months before I did. Well, actually, it was three months, because we were on a quarter system, not semesters, and I … took one extra quarter, which was three months.

ME: Did you and your wife work while you were down there or was it strictly studying?

DR: We both had assistantships.

ME: You had some income.

DR: Oh, yes. We had saved up some money while we were in the Army, believe it or not, but, yes, we both had assistantships.

ME: After graduation, did you want to move back up North or did you want to move out West? What were your thoughts on moving?

DR: Well, you asked me a question a long time ago and I didn't give you a complete answer to it, and that was that while I was an undergraduate here, I also worked, a couple of summers and part-time during the year, for the New Jersey Division of Fish and Game. The New Jersey state fisheries laboratory was over in Milltown and I worked for them part-time. So, I knew them a long time, I knew the guy that was head of the laboratory and everything and, when it came time for me to graduate at Auburn, I figured, "Well, I'll write to this guy." I knew him and I knew some of the people here and asked him if he had any job openings. I had to find a job somewhere and he wrote back and said, "Yes," they did and he'd be happy to have me and he sent me the necessary application forms and so forth, and so, I guess I never really just considered anything else.

ME: You were happy to move back to the Northeast.

DR: Yes. One of the things we really didn't like about Auburn was the climate in the summer. It was so humid, not only hot but humid. Put a pair of shoes or a leather suitcase in a closet and, two months later, you get it out and it's just covered with mold, just absolutely covered with mold. … Yes, we didn't like the climate.

ME: What were her plans? You had a job waiting for you in Milltown. Did she start applying for jobs or did she want to start a family at that point?

DR: Well, by the time we got back, she was pregnant.

ME: Was that exciting?

DR: Oh, yes, that was exciting all right, yes, looked forward to that.

ME: When was your first child born?

DR: … Don't embarrass me. [laughter] I should know when my kids were born. Well, we got back in December of 1960 and she was already pregnant, but not very far along. So, it was about seven or eight months after that.

ME: 1961. Was that your son or your daughter?

DR: … Our daughter.

ME: Your daughter was born first. Now, you had this job and your wife was staying home with the baby. Was this a fun time or a stressful time, trying to support a family now that you were out of school?

DR: It was a little stressful, financially. At State Fish and Game, I started at the bottom, as a … junior fisheries biologist, and so, the income was not very great and she wasn't working. So, financially, yes, it was kind of stressful time.

ME: How long after that was your second child born?

DR: Three years.

ME: Did you settle down in Milltown or a town around there?

DR: … By the time I had finished my two years in the Army and a little over two years at Auburn, the fisheries laboratory had moved. It was not in Milltown anymore.

ME: Where was it now?

DR: It was out in Lebanon, New Jersey, right near the dam of Round Valley Reservoir. They built a brand-new building for them.

ME: Did you move to Lebanon?

DR: Yes.

ME: Your family settled down there. Did you stay there for a while?

DR: In Lebanon? I guess it was about two years.

ME: Both of your children were born there, then, you moved.

DR: Yes.

ME: You went back to Rutgers at some point.

DR: I came back to Rutgers at that point.

ME: What was your job at Rutgers?

DR: Instructor, in, of all things, soils and crops and the reason for that was that when I was at Auburn, in the fisheries program, I became interested in the control of aquatic vegetation and its effect on fisheries' fish populations, and so, when I came back to Rutgers, that's what I wanted to do. … In fact, that's what the job was in, it was in aquatic weed control, but, at Rutgers, unlike most universities, all weed control activities are centered in one department. At most universities, somebody who's working on aquatic weed control would be in the fisheries department, somebody who's working in the control of weeds in horticultural crops would be in the horticulture department, somebody who's working in the control of weeds in agronomic crops would be in the agronomy department. They'd be scattered around, but, at Rutgers, years before, an administrative decision had been made that all the weed control activity would be centered in what at that time was called the Farm Crops Department, and so, if I wanted to work with aquatic weed control, I had to go to the Soils and Crops Department.

ME: Was that a good or a bad thing?

DR: It was bad, bad, bad, because everybody else in the department was working with soybeans and corn and, you know, … here I am, working with fish populations. So, I really didn't have anybody to work with. … It was a bad, bad, bad decision.

ME: Did your wife also work for the University? Was she still at home with the kids?

DR: She gradually got back into the work force. … At some point, when the kids were a little bit older, she began teaching in night school, a couple of nights a week. Then, she came to the University and … taught a few courses in the Home Economics Department at Douglass, but just, like, one course a semester. So, you know, it wasn't full-time by any means and that grew, that job in the Home Economics Department, until, for all practical purposes, they did away with textiles in the Home Economics Department and concentrated only on nutrition, and she lost her job. … As I alluded to briefly before, she is extremely interested in genealogy and a lot of the

research that she was doing was right here in Special Collections, because they have a pretty decent collection on New Jersey genealogy, and so, she got to know all the people here, all the staff, and then, when she lost her job, she happened to mention it to the guy who was chairman of the department at that time, a guy named Don Sinclair, you know, that she was looking for a job, did he have anything? … He said, "Oh, yes, as a matter-of-fact, we do," and so, he hired her, and then, she became full-time here.

ME: You were over at what is now Cook, teaching, and she was on the College Ave Campus, or were you both on the same campus?

DR: No, she was here. She was right in this department, where we're sitting right now, but she didn't teach. She was working as a conservation archivist.

ME: Were you living in New Brunswick or were you commuting?

DR: … Well, for a very short time, we lived in a rented house in a corner of South Brunswick, actually had an East Brunswick address, but it was in South Brunswick, and a very nice house and we were quite happy with it, but, then, all of a sudden, they started having problems with the well and the landlord was nice about it. He tried to fix it, but, … constantly, sand was coming up and grinding up the pump and coming out of the faucet. … He was trying; he really did. The landlord was very good about it, but, you know, we just couldn't put up with that any more. So, at that point, we bought a house in Kendall Park, which is in South Brunswick, and we lived there for, I think it was twenty-two years.

ME: You said that your Reserve commitment was four or five years.

DR: Yes. It was more than four. I think it was maybe five.

ME: You did two-and-a-half to three in Alabama. Did you have to finish up in New Jersey?

DR: Yes.

ME: Where was that unit based out of?

DR: Fort Dix.

ME: Were you the only commander there as well?

DR: … [laughter] No, no, not even close, because I was in division headquarters. So, we had a general there, plus, all kinds of brass. … One of the big things in the Reserve, of course, is training, because what else is there to do? and each company has a training officer, who doesn't do the training himself, but he schedules it and makes sure it gets done and grades the instructors who are doing the training for that week and so forth, and I became the training officer for division headquarters, which is like a company in itself. … So, I was training officer there for division headquarters.

ME: For the rest of your Reserve time?

DR: Right.

ME: When that was up, were you done with the Army?

DR: Yes.

ME: What was the process of getting out like? Do they just say, "You are done?"

DR: No, well, you know, as usual, there were a couple of forms to fill out. You go see the personnel officer and he gives you some card saying you're officially released from the Active Reserve. Of course, … technically, I guess I'm still in the Inactive Reserve. I mean, you never get out. I still have my commission.

ME: They will not be calling you up.

DR: [laughter] No. … That was my release from the Active Reserve to the Inactive Reserve.

ME: Your kids grew up in Kendall Park.

DR: Yes.

ME: Did they both go on for higher education, college and whatnot?

DR: Yes, they did.

ME: Where?

DR: My son got his undergraduate degree at Virginia Tech, and then, he went on to the University of California at Berkeley and he got his Masters and PhD at Berkeley, and he's still working at the university there.

ME: He is teaching now.

DR: … He is, but that's not his primary job.

ME: Does he have a family?

DR: … He's getting married next month. The university out there has a class of faculty members, which Rutgers doesn't have and they really ought to, … and these are people who, are on the same pay scale and the same everything as assistant professors, associate professors and professors, but, since teaching is not their primary responsibility, nor research, it's very difficult to get promoted, which I found out myself at Rutgers. So, I think his title is something like associate research engineer or something like that, which means, with that title, that he's not expected to do a lot of teaching. That's not his job and he can get promoted for doing his job,

even though it's not academic. There's not a lot of intellectual; well, it is intellectual, but it's not an "academic" pursuit.

ME: How old is he now, around forty?

DR: Forty, yes, forty. …

ME: You have a daughter who is a little bit older than him. What did she do for her education?

DR: … She went to Penn State, got her Bachelor's degree in physics, left Penn State and had several jobs working with computers, … one in a bank and one investment firm, and then, she … went back to Penn State as a full-time employee in the Computer Science Department, but, as an employee, she was permitted to take time off to take classes, like, one course a semester, and she eventually got her Masters degree in computer science and her boss is pushing her all the time to work on her PhD. …

ME: She is done with school.

DR: [laughter] Yes, that's exactly what she said, "I've had enough studying."

ME: I can relate to that.

DR: So, what she's doing, her work is kind of interesting, because I don't even understand it all, but she's been working on a grant that has to do with the Human Genome Project.

ME: When they were growing up, did you ever go on vacation, see other parts of the US?

DR: … Yes, not every year, by any means, but we traveled around, went up to Upstate New York and saw some of the historical things up there, Fort Ticonderoga and that stuff. …

ME: Lake George?

DR: Yes, right, went, you know, down to Virginia at one time, and we traveled around a bit.

ME: They got to see a little bit.

DR: We weren't big travelers, no.

ME: Have you ever gone back to Newark to see the area you grew up in?

DR: Once, but not in a long, long, long time.

ME: It has changed a lot.

DR: Oh, yes, it's terrible. … In fact, when I went back, it was right after the riots, which were … in 1970, was it, in the '70s?

ME: I do not know the year, offhand.

DR: I think it was in the '70s and, not too long after that, I went back. Oh, boy, some of the streets there were just, you know, ruined, yes, just ruins.

ME: Do you stay active in your community? Are there any groups that you are involved in?

DR: Not at the present time. When we lived in Kendall Park, I was more active. I was on the library board of trustees and, you know, a few things like that, but, since we moved to Pennington, I was just getting too old for that, especially those late night meetings that go until two o'clock in the morning. [laughter]

ME: You were an Army veteran, did your eight years, when it was all said and done. How would you have reacted if your kids said that that was what they wanted to do? Was that something that you would have supported?

DR: I very much would have. In fact, I kind of gently encouraged them. … My daughter had what, you know, … didn't seem like a good offer to her, but it didn't seem too bad to me. My daughter, when she graduated with her Bachelor's degree in physics, the Navy offered her a deal where she could get a commission without going to any special schools. I mean, there might have been some little training, but she could have gotten a commission in the Navy to serve as a technical officer on atomic submarines. That would have been a three-year hitch and she had no interest in that at all. You know, to me, it sounded like a not too bad of a deal. … I think it was three years as a technical officer on an atomic submarine, and then, at the end of the three years, they would pay her tuition, plus a stipend, to go to graduate school. … My son never, you know, really considered it, but I certainly would not have been against it. I think it's a good experience. Of course, it is not a very good experience if you end up in Vietnam or Afghanistan or Iraq, but I think the Army is good for young people.

ME: Do you keep up with any of your buddies from the Army or from Auburn or have you made new friends?

DR: No, pretty much new friends. Like I said, there's this one guy from the Army, that we still exchange Christmas cards, and, once or twice, I had an occasion to contact some of the faculty at Auburn, but they're mostly changed now and I don't know them anyway.

ME: How often have you come back to Rutgers since you moved away?

DR: Today is my first day since the day I retired. [laughter] I just don't really have any business left here. Well, for one thing, right after I retired, my old department was merged with three other departments and moved into a new building, and so, you know, it's not the same at all. If that department had still been there; plus, another thing, two of my best friends in the department retired about the same time I did and I still see them. One of them I see monthly. We get together and have lunch or whatever, you know, but not on campus. It's just entirely different.

ME: Are you involved with the Alumni Association?

DR: No. I would have to say, if I can interject something here, … that I left Rutgers with a somewhat bad taste in my mouth.

ME: Why?

DR: For the reason I just mentioned before, about my son not being a professor, he doesn't have the title of professor, he has the title of research engineer, and for my last, or almost my last, … seven years at Rutgers, I was department chairman. I was associate professor and, as department chairman, this is a big department. I mean, we owned a farm down in Monmouth County and … at least twenty vehicles in the department and it was a big operation. We had a big farm that had to be run, and so, as department chairman, I really had very little time for research or for teaching, and so, every time I came up for promotion, … it was denied because of lack of intellectual activity, and so, a couple of times, I sent my resignation to the Dean and, each time, he refused to accept it. I mean, I told him, one time, "How about if I just refuse to do the job?" [laughter] … You know, I really didn't want the job anymore. I didn't want it in the first place, to tell you the truth, and we had a big graduate program and a lot of graduate students that needed some attention and so forth. … If they would have promoted me based on what I was doing as a good department chair, which I felt I was, I would have left very happy, but I was denied promotion about six or seven times, which is a big deal, too, because you've got to go through all this rigmarole to … put in for a promotion. You've got to get all these letters from outside the University and all that stuff. … To be honest with you, I felt I was treated pretty unfairly.

ME: That was in the last couple of years.

DR: Right. It was great up until then. … You know, if they want me to do this job, which they obviously did, then, they ought to recognize it and promote me, but the trouble is, the promotion doesn't come from within Cook College, you know. That comes from the super-duper committee down in Old Queens somewhere.

ME: What were some of the differences in college life at Rutgers and Auburn? You were a graduate student at Auburn, so, perhaps, you did not have the same feel for the social life. What were some of the differences between the campuses?

DR: Well, Auburn, when I went there, when I first went there, was smaller than Rutgers, by not a whole lot, but it was smaller, and I guess one of the biggest differences I would notice is, … and I can't think of the exact right word to describe it, … but the student body, the average student, certainly not all of them, but the average student, I'd say, was more sophisticated, … had more social graces, if you want to put it that way. I can't think of the right word, but things were calmer, more quiet, more genteel. … Rutgers, when I left, was an all-male school. Auburn was not, it was coed, which, you know, was a difference. It's strange just seeing women walking around and coming into class, but, as an example, women were not allowed to wear shorts or slacks on campus. They had to wear a skirt or a dress. That's all … they were allowed to wear on campus. If they were going on a picnic somewhere, believe it or not, if they were going on a

picnic with some fraternity or some club or something, they had to go to the dean of women's office and get a letter allowing them, on a certain day, to wear slacks on campus.

ME: They had to carry that around with them in case they were stopped.

DR: Yes.

ME: Would you say that the differences were based more on where in the country they were located or the time period?

DR: No, it wasn't the time period. In fact, if anything, it definitely was not, because … the time turned it around more. No, it was the part of the country, the differences. It was not integrated, as I said.

ME: It was just the difference in the part of the country.

DR: … It was the difference in the part of the country. … The average student at Auburn, I think, … this is just a guess on my part, but I think they came from a more well-to-do financial situation. The poorer people in the Deep South didn't go to college.

ME: Was Auburn a private or public school?

DR: It's public. In fact, the official name, when I was first went there, was Alabama Polytechnic Institute. Nobody called it that, nobody, … they just called it Auburn, but they changed the name while I was there, by then. No, it was a state-supported school.

ME: Did you follow any of the athletic teams at either school?

DR: I didn't go to a lot of athletic events at all, no. You know, I read the *Targum* and stuff like that.

ME: Is there anything else that you want to talk about for the record, any stories or any people that you met?

DR: You mean at Rutgers?

ME: At Rutgers, or any Army stories.

DR: Well, I have one story I think that's maybe a little bit interesting. …

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

ME: This continues an interview with Donald Riemer on April 26, 2005, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This is tape two. You were going to tell us a story.

DR: Well, it's an Army-related story, not from my active duty time, but, when I was a graduate student at Auburn, I told you that I belonged to this artillery Reserve unit. … I couldn't go to summer camp with them, because my research for my Masters thesis had to take place in the summer. That's the only time I could do it, because it had to do with insect populations and rivers and streams during the summer in Alabama, and so, my unit went off to summer camp for two weeks. … It would have messed me up, you know, terribly. So, I went to our department chairman and explained the situation and he wrote a letter asking that I be excused from summer camp, which got forwarded through the channels to the proper place where they had the authority to approve it, and they said, "Fine." They would approve that. There was no problem, but I would have to make up for that by going back on active duty for two weeks at some point that was convenient to me, any time it was convenient for me, but I had to actually go back on active duty. So, I picked a time that wouldn't conflict with anything too badly and I went back on active duty and I got assigned to a Nike site, a Nike battery, which was in the Washington-Baltimore defense ring. They had one defense ring around both Washington and Baltimore. It was in Herndon, Virginia, this place was, and so, I went and I reported there. My wife came up as far as Virginia with me, and then, her folks came down and picked her up. So, she went home for those two weeks. … As it turned out, you know, I was supposed to be getting some training, or at least experience, as a guided missile officer, which was what my twelve weeks had been, years and years before, but, as it turned out, they were short on officers, too. They had a captain who had just left. He had been reassigned to somewhere else and a new guy hadn't reported yet and they had two lieutenants and they had three or four warrant officers. They have quite a few warrant officers on a Nike site because these are the guys who know how to repair the computers and all this stuff. So, there were only five of them, yes; there were two lieutenants and three warrant officers. … All five of them were married and lived off post and these five guys had to pull duty officer every fifth night and every fifth weekend, because there was nobody else. So, they rotated around. Every fifth day, it was your turn to be the duty officer. So, I got there and they were all nice guys. … The two lieutenants were quite young and they were telling me about this and how upset they were, you know. It was bad enough when they had a captain there and … [it was] every sixth night, but, now, it's down to every fifth night. So, they had little bachelor officers' quarters right there, one room, … right there on the site, where I was staying, and so, I said, … "Look, I'm going to be here anyway. I'm sleeping here, I'm going to be here." I said, "If you'd like, you know, I'll be duty officer every night," … for the two weeks I was there. Wow, did I hit the right note; I could have done anything I wanted after that. [laughter] … They were so happy, so relieved that, for two weeks, they would not have to be the duty officer, … you can't imagine how overjoyed they were. They were so sick and tired of that, and so, they just appreciated that so much that, boy, I could write my own ticket. I could do whatever I wanted.

ME: How were those two weeks, not too bad?

DR: No. A couple of little things came up. One of them, … one night when I was duty officer, a guy who had been AWOL for about three weeks came back, and so, I just took him and confined him to his quarters until morning. … Oh, yes, another time, it was a bit of a decision on my part, … it was a little bit of a responsibility on my part, because I was duty officer, each Nike site, … they were either on call or they were not on call, and of those that were on call, one was always alert. … If everything was working all right, all the computers; … the computers, at that

time, were in trailers, that's how big they were. You walked right into the computer. If all the computers were working and everything was working fine, but you didn't have a back-up part for every single possible thing that could go wrong, that you could just pop right in there, you couldn't be on active status, or whatever they called it, and that was our situation. We were missing a couple of back-up parts for a computer, so, we were not on active status, if that's the right terminology. … In the middle of the night, like, I don't know why this should happen in the middle of the night, but, like, two o'clock in the morning or something, the CQ comes and … wakes me up. He says, "We have a radio message from the Air Defense Command Center in Washington and they have changed their rules," essentially, that as long as everything is working, even if you don't have a back-up part, if everything's working fine, you can be on active status. You don't have to be off of active status. This was not just to us; this was a general notice to everybody, that this was a change in procedure or a change in rules. So, you know, I didn't know that much about it. I'd never been on a Nike site before or anything, but there was some specialist who was CQ that night, who was sitting there watching the radar screen, and he was a fairly young guy, but … he seemed really sharp. … He says, "Lieutenant, that's us. Everything's working fine, but we're lacking some parts. So, we really should call in and tell them we're going on active status." So, it was a decision I had to make, not really knowing … too much about what it meant, but, you know, I did. I got on the radio and called in, told them who we were and that we … wanted to report back to active status, but that was a decision. … I really wasn't sure what the heck to do. I said, "Couldn't we wait until morning, when somebody comes back who knows what they're doing?" [laughter]

ME: While you were on active and Reserve duty, you served under several Presidents, including Eisenhower and JFK. Was there anyone that you really liked or disliked?

DR: Oh, I liked Eisenhower. Yes, I really liked Eisenhower.

ME: Because of his military background?

DR: Yes, yes, and, you know, I guess I was young enough to be impressed by his war record and, you know, he was a hero, a national hero, let's face it. I mean, he orchestrated D-Day. I figured, "If he can do that, he can run our country." I might feel a little differently now. I don't know.

ME: At the time, he was somebody that you really admired.

DR: Yes, yes.

ME: Have you noticed a shift in the way people look at the Presidency? At that time, people looked up to them and said, "This is the guy that can lead us."

DR: Exactly. That's just what I was going to say. I think, at that time, there was much more respect for the Presidency. Even if you didn't like the guy, the Presidency itself was something that you looked up to and you said, "Well, you know, this guy, maybe he's doing some things that I don't really agree with, but he was elected by the people and, you know, we should all be behind him," and that attitude, obviously, is not as strong today. I mean, even, you know, the

respect for authority was a lot greater then. You know, when I grew up in Newark, there were cops who walked the beats and, you know, by gosh, they were the law. They were in charge there, on their beat, and, if he told somebody to move on, they'd move on, without giving him a hard time, unless they were too drunk or something. … Nowadays, people don't have that same respect for the police. …

ME: There has been an overall decline.

DR: I think so.

ME: Is there anything else, perhaps about your family, your wife?

DR: She's retired now.

ME: You are both living down in Pennington.

DR: … Three or four days ago, she ended up her term, a two-year term, as president of the African Violet Society of America, which is a big organization. … They have employees and they own their own building in Beaumont, Texas.

ME: What do they do?

DR: The society? … Well, they sponsor some research on African violets. They are very active in the judging of African violets, that their goal is to have judging uniform, across the, I was going to say the country, but, really, across the world. They have a lot of international members, too, and a plant that gets a certain score, you know, in a show in New Jersey should get the same score in California or Alaska or Japan. … They're very active in trying to standardize the judging. Judges have to go through a long series of training and take exams and they move up from a student judge to a judge to a senior judge, whatever it is, you know. There is a whole procedure. So, that's one of their big activities, is to standardize judging of African violets.

ME: Your wife has obviously been pretty active in education. You married her and had kids with her. What was so great about your wife?

DR: Oh, she's a very organized person. She really is. She's very, very organized. There's nothing irritating about her whatsoever. She's intelligent and she's very devoted to anything that she becomes a part of. She's not a person who joins clubs, and so on, and so forth, just to be a member and pay her dues and, maybe, get their newsletter. … If she joins something, she really devotes herself to it, like this African Violet Society. … She just came back yesterday from a meeting in Kentucky and I think, if I'm not mistaken, this is her twenty-seventh consecutive year attending this convention. You know, she just feels …

ME: Committed.

DR: Yes. In fact, I felt so strongly about her commitment that, after my second heart attack, you know, I wasn't home from the hospital very long and she was going to not go to the convention

and I insisted that she do and not break her … winning streak. So, she's a very, very devoted person to anything she gets involved in.

ME: Can you think of anything else that you would like to talk about?

DR: I don't think so.

ME: Thank you very much. This concludes our interview with Donald Riemer on April 26, 2005, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Mark Eiseman and …

NM: Nicholas Molnar.

ME: Thank you. Have a good day.

DR: You're welcome.

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

Reviewed by Michael Vallone 11/15/05
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 12/10/05
Reviewed by Donald Riemer 12/19/05