

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD ROLSTON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

HILLSDALE, NEW YORK

NOVEMBER 24, 2009

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Bernard "Berne" Rolston on November 23, 2009, in Hillsdale, New York, with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Bernard Rolston: You're welcome.

SI: Also, thank you to your son for allowing us to conduct this interview in his home. To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

BR: I was born in Bayonne, New Jersey, on April 3, 1922.

SI: What were your parents' names?

BR: Sally Rothstein and Harry Rothstein, R-O-T-H-S-T-E-I-N. The last name was changed somewhere, I'm not certain of the exact date, in the late '20s as a result of some family issues between my father and his brother, who had already changed his name ... and anglicized his name for business purposes. They were in the business together and the older brother was embarrassed, he said, to introduce his brother by a different name. So, he forced my father to change, who didn't want to. Most of my family still retains that name.

SI: Can you tell me about your father's family background, such as where his family came from and when the immigration to the United States occurred?

BR: A lot of that is vague, of course, because of the lack of records, but he was born in a very tiny village in what is now Belarus, sometimes known as the Ukraine, near the largest city, called Minsk, and it's a ... Russian-Jewish background. Those communities were really in the classic *shtetl* that was popularized in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. We have a surviving picture of what is in effect the log or wooden shack that my grandfather lived in. I've never seen my grandfather; he never came. He sent all of his sons away from, then Russia, to escape the draft into the Russian Army, which, in those days, was a life sentence. ... If you're drafted into the Army, it was anywhere from eighteen to twenty years, I'm told. ... For Jewish kids, who may have been raised [religiously], most of them were raised religiously in those days, to have to eat the food and eat whatever you had to eat, it was a terrible event. ... So, they found a method to get different names for their children. So, my father's uncles, three of whom came to this country, all came under a different name. So, there are three branches of the family having different names.

SI: That is very interesting.

BR: The only branch that I'm kind of familiar with is Rothstein, which is very large. We have a very large family organization. We own our own cemetery, in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and that's my father's background, no education, came here all by himself when he's eleven years old. He had a tag on his shirt and money sewed in [the lining] and tickets and he had somebody waiting for him here. ... My grandfather sent his family out one by one, including the sisters. My father had eight siblings and the oldest sibling was a woman who came here, my Aunt (Sophie?), who

was the matriarch and the place to which they all came and, for awhile, that was the center of the family.

SI: Did your father ever describe this journey and the hardships he must have faced, being so young and coming over by himself?

BR: I don't have any real recollection of that. I do know, when he got here, they were all living in New York City, in what was then the great Eastside of New York, and they put him to work immediately, selling newspapers. So, he went down to, on his first day out there, ... get in line and the youngest ones were supposed to get in line earliest to get the paper, because, ... if they ran out of papers, you had nothing to sell. So, he was too young, got pushed to the back of the line and his group didn't get papers that day. ... One of the older boys in the group, not a member of the family, hit him and gave him a black eye and said, "This'll teach you to get in line early enough and don't let them push you out of line." That person happened to be the brother of Irving Berlin, the famous songwriter. They were known as Balines then; their name was Baline. ... As far as I know, he came through Hamburg, and then, over to New York, and [took a] train to Hamburg, and I have no real information about how he got here, no recollection.

SI: After he was a newspaper boy, did he go to work in the factories?

BR: Well, what he did was, he stayed as a newspaper boy and stayed doing that until he got to be about fifteen, and then, he heard that if he went out to East Orange, New Jersey, on the Lackawanna, I think it was the Lackawanna Railroad then, out there, that if you could sell papers out there, you got a penny more. ... If you know anything about East Orange, New Jersey, in those days, that was the rich center of wealth, of people who lived there and worked in Lower Manhattan as financiers. They took the train to some place on the Hudson and took the ferry across. ... So, he established himself on that train platform in East Orange, New Jersey, and prospered very quickly, ended up having, in effect, a newsstand there. ... When he was seventeen, he sold it and went on a trip around the world, ended up in Perth, Australia. Now, we're talking probably around 1900, ... between 1900 and 1904. Perth, Australia, was like the Wild West here, and he disappeared from sight and he got sick out there and he was gone so long that they named a child after him, thought he was dead, which is a tradition in the Jewish faith. You can't name a child after a living person is what I'm trying to say. ... All of a sudden, he surfaced in London, getting from Perth to London on a cattle boat, and he worked his way back and came back to the US. I'm guessing that, by that time, he was maybe eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old, maybe a little older. He began to have jobs that I am not aware of, and I do know he ended up in Montreal, Canada, doing some kind of work in the garment business, and then, he ended up, in the '20s, as a young partner to his brother, Louis, in a store on Springfield Avenue in [Newark], New Jersey, which, the story goes, it was the first store to offer home delivery. It was a small department store and I remember it as a child. It was two stories; it was kind of huge for me. So, that's my father's career, never had a formal education.

SI: What was the name of the store?

BR: Rothstein's.

SI: Okay.

BR: Strange enough, even though they changed their name, they didn't change the name of the store. [laughter] ... It was just south of a street called Prince Street, on Springfield Avenue, I do remember that part. My mother was born in Latvia, but, then, it was called Courland or Prussia, was German in its background. ... So, my grandmother, who came with my mother in 1907, ... again, to New York, they came together, had a second language of German. ... When I was young, I really learned to speak German with her and it stuck with me a long time. It's gone; a lot of it's gone now.

SI: Did your mother ever talk about her early life in Latvia?

BR: No, not that I recall. I mean, they probably did, but it's been so long for me and so removed. She [his grandmother] died during World War II. I went from Rutgers into the Navy, from the Navy, except for a brief time in New York and New Jersey, back to California and never went back. ... When you lived that far away, even in the '40s, it was pretty difficult going back and forth.

SI: Did your father also serve in the Army?

BR: In the [Army]? No, he did not.

SI: He did not.

BR: Oh, he was drafted into the US Army during World War I, yes, but he did not go ... overseas.

SI: Your father was older during the time of World War I, right?

BR: He was older than my mother. ... He was pretty young. He was; let's try to figure out that.

SI: Was he around thirty-seven?

BR: Let's see, yes, pretty close to that, in his early thirties, yes.

SI: I thought that was pretty surprising. Usually, it is younger people, eighteen, nineteen, in their early twenties, who are drafted.

BR: Right, but maybe he volunteered, I don't really know. ...

SI: He never gave you an idea of what he did during that time.

BR: No. I know he went to camp and that's about all I know.

SI: Do you know how your parents met?

BR: No.

SI: Were they living in Bayonne when you were born?

BR: Yes, that's where they were living. They lived there about six months there, yes. My father had a previous marriage and one child from their marriage, who's died since.

SI: Your earliest memories of growing up are from Newark.

BR: Newark, that's my earliest memories of growing up. ... They moved from Bayonne to Newark almost [immediately], in my first year of life.

SI: What was the neighborhood that you grew up in?

BR: ... I grew up; well, my really early time, ... from one to say five or four, something like that, was on Prince Street, off of Springfield Avenue in Newark, which was then, oh, a very nice, decent neighborhood. [As a] matter-of-fact, I drove by there a few years ago and the building I lived in was burned out. ... The shell was still standing. My memory of that place is very vague. One thing I remember about it is, they took out my tonsils and adenoids on my kitchen table.

SI: Wow.

BR: And I have a vague memory, I was about two years old, which is the ... youngest memory I have, of looking at the ceiling of the kitchen as they were putting me out. ... My cousin was a doctor; he performed it at home. ... The other memory of that place is a fire that occurred across the street in an apartment house. This is an apartment building, and my mother had people in our house. ... She'd taken them in with blankets over their shoulders while they were sheltering during the time of the fire.

SI: Wow. After that, where did you move to?

BR: We stayed in Newark and our next move was up to a place called Clinton Avenue, or Clinton Place, which was a cross street in Newark. ... By cross street, I believe it ran east and west, as opposed to Lyons Avenue, which goes north and south, I think, and, [as a] matter-of-fact, I think Clinton dead ends into Lyons, and so, we lived there. ... Then, I went to my grammar school, my kindergarten, was Hawthorne Avenue [School], kindergarten on Hawthorne Avenue and Clinton, and my grammar school was Chancellor Avenue. No, I'm sorry, I'm out of turn. ... My next grammar school was a different Chancellor Avenue [Elementary School], in Irvington, New Jersey. Yes, the Depression had taken away my father's business and we moved to Irvington, New Jersey, in 1926 or '27, something like that. If you recall, or maybe you don't recall, but to tell you this, Irvington, New Jersey, became the home of the German-American *Bund*, which was a pseudo-Nazi organization here in the United States, run by a man named Fritz Kuhn. ... My recollection of that area was seeing butcher shops that had hanging deer in the [windows]. It was very German. They sold deer, you know, deer meat, venison, I should say, and the local tavern was called the Turnverein, and it was very Germanic and very anti-Semitic.

They put *swastikas* on my father's car and it became very difficult for me to go to school, until I became friends with an Italian family that lived across the street. ... They had two houses and, in-between, a garden, where they raised grapes and stuff. ... They had a lot of kids, and, if I went to school with those kids, I was sort of protected. If I didn't, I was harassed, books thrown in the gutter and stuff like that, but I loved that school. That's my fondest recollection of grammar school. My teachers up there were terrific. ... When I was nine, I got what is still called pleurisy, [an infection that causes inflammation of the lining of the lungs], and there ... were no antibiotics then. I spent seven weeks in the hospital, Beth Israel Hospital in Newark, and lost a whole semester of school, but I was self-taught. What do they call it, home taught?

SI: Home schooled?

BR: Home schooled by my mother, and the teachers were helpful and I took all the exams then. In those days, if you were extremely good at school, they pushed you ahead and I skipped. I was skipped. Even though I was in [the] hospital, they skipped me that year. ... Then, we moved down to Newark. We moved several times in those years, because of the oppressive economics, and then, I entered into Chancellor Avenue High School [Elementary School] in Newark, which is right next-door to Weequahic High School, literally side by side, and we lived in that area in three different houses. ... Then, in my junior year, my father was able to raise enough money to buy a small business. He did all sorts of things trying to make a living during that period, home manufactures, in the basement, of laundry bags and selling them ... to laundries. ... I remember, when I was ten or twelve years old, working down in the basement with him. While he sewed them, ... there was a way you could pin ... the material up and he could cut them with a big knife, and I did the pinning up and other chores around there after school. ... I was about twelve then, and that went on until he was able to buy this, what was, [in] effect, a little, tiny coffee shop in Maplewood, New Jersey, on Millburn Avenue, just before it became Millburn, and it was the end of the Springfield Avenue car line, streetcar line. ... This little house sat in the middle of the turnaround area. The cars would come down Springfield Avenue, go around our place and go back up down [the tracks]; it was a turnaround. It was also the end of the line. So, all the streetcar men would come in and eat there, people waiting for the streetcar would eat there and locals would come and eat there. ... It was also a place where the milkmen and the bakery men would come and eat while they totaled up their evening's or day's work. I remember, then, I began to work there. Now, this was when I was about twelve or thirteen years old. I began to work there, just doing whatever I could, again, washing dishes, and, over time, [I] began to be pretty good in the restaurant, became a pretty good fry cook, ... or short order cook, as they're known now. ... Some of the memories of those years, related to what we're talking about today is, the milkmen came down from their routes around that area in horse-drawn wagons. ... They would pull into the space around the little coffee shop. Because the track went around in a large circle, there was a huge area in-between, and so, five or six or seven of these horses and wagons would be stationed there in the morning. The men would come in, they'd eat their [meal], in effect, their dinner, but they ate breakfast, and they'd feed the horses and they'd sit and tally up their books and leave, and it was a wonderful memory to me. As I got older, I relieved my father of the duty of getting up in the morning to open the place. So, I would get down there at five in the morning, and then, by seven, about seven, he'd show up and I'd go off down to school on the streetcar. I stayed at Weequahic [High School], I guess illegally, because we lived in Maplewood, but no one ever questioned, I guess, where I lived. ... My mother wouldn't take me

out of that school, and so, that's how I finished at Weequahic, while living up there and commuting, every day, on the Springfield Avenue car line down to the bus that ran down Chancellor Avenue. In Irvington, you'd pick it up there. There's a connection.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

BR: Oh, yes, she worked with my father, ... particularly in the coffee shop. She worked all the time there, full-time.

SI: Did you have other siblings?

BR: No, except my half-sister, who didn't live with us and lived separate and apart, who I didn't meet until I was about thirteen, and then, we connected very well. ... She died of pneumonia during World War II, neat lady.

SI: Between the department store going under and the coffee shop opening, your father did a lot of odd jobs. Besides manufacturing the laundry bags, do you remember any of the other things he would do?

BR: No, he was out selling stuff. I don't remember what they were. He became a salesman for various items, but that I can't remember, and then, he'd try to invent things that he could sell. ... He'd try to invent, and he did manage to produce it, how to describe this? a metal insert that went into the window of the car, so that when you lowered the window and it rained, the rain didn't come in. It was a rain gutter.

SI: Okay.

BR: As a matter-of-fact, and it disappeared, we sold it to Pep Boys. I remember, he went there, ... but [it] never really took off. He had to mold them, used to work them right down in the basement, manufacture them right in the basement of our house. ... He had a bending mold you could bend them on, and then, I noticed, in a car magazine, recently, they're making them for cars again. [laughter]

SI: You and your father would make them and Pep Boys would retail them.

BR: Right, but it just never went anywhere as a really moneymaking venture. He dropped it after awhile.

SI: Did you ever have any part-time jobs outside of helping your family out in their business endeavors?

BR: Always worked, I've always worked, all my time. I had very little playtime, very little playtime, [had to work] right after school from when I was about twelve, maybe even a little earlier.

SI: You were always working with your father.

BR: Right, always helping my father.

SI: You never worked for anybody else.

BR: No, no.

SI: Were you able to get involved in the different neighborhoods you lived in, such as making friends and being involved in activities?

BR: Not really, as a result, ... and I always have regretted that, that I'd missed a lot of normal childhood activities, street play. I did a little bit, but I was always having to go back and work at what he had to do or we had [a business]. ... It wasn't like I just helped when he said, "Do this, do that." I had real tasks, real, organized tasks, like, later on, getting up in the morning and opening up the restaurant or coffee shop. ... I even remember the start of World War II; in the morning, I had the radio on, the Germans invaded Poland. I remember it so distinctly. I wasn't aware of it then, but, consciously, after a time, I remember that as a pivotal event, in my mind, of my life, because I really would have not been at all the person I am today but for World War II. It changed my life dramatically, from a sheltered [existence], and I mean sheltered by events and custom and family and local custom. I left, well, sort of a different kind of ghetto, honestly. ... Newark is where I lived, finally on Chancellor Avenue and Vassar Avenue, and I went to that high school. It was a big Jewish neighborhood. It wasn't Jewish in the "Eastside New York Jewishness," but enough [of a] different level of it. As a matter-of-fact, Roth, the author, made a lot ...

SI: Philip Roth?

BR: Yes, Philip Roth, he lived in that neighborhood. He talks about Weequahic all the time in his books. I'm sure you're aware of that.

SI: Yes.

BR: And so, the neighborhood was very neighborly in that sense, all-encompassing, and the people I left behind over the years were different than [who] I became out on the West Coast and [in] my five years, I spent five years in the Navy, longer than most people; ... most people, I say, who went into the services during World War II. It changed me dramatically. I was very, very young. You know, I came to Rutgers at sixteen, you probably know that, too, ... and a very immature sixteen, in terms of [that I] did nothing but work for my father and live. ... The only person I really, really knew in high school, the two of us, maybe three or four people, was the man who became my roommate at Rutgers, Al Steiner. I knew him from my junior year in high school and, when we both knew we were going to Rutgers, ... one said to the other, "Want to room together?" "Sure," but even at Rutgers, and I'm skipping ahead, of course, my life was very constrained, because, even though I lived on campus, every Friday, I went home to help at the restaurant, so [that] my father ... and mother could get some relief, and then, they came back on each Sunday night. He drove me back, or somebody did, and that went on that way. Once in awhile, I could stay over a weekend because I had to study, but I missed campus life that way,

dramatically, and it's a regret that I have still today, a little hostility, probably, about it. I really missed a lot at Rutgers by having to go home every weekend. I did stay a few weekends and, once in awhile, I'd lie, [laughter] and then, I did go to the big events. I went, especially, to a couple of the football [games]. In football season, I stayed for the games, some of the big games, and I remember, I was at the game that we first beat Princeton in 1939, after sixty-nine years. You know that story. [Editor's Note: On November 5, 1938, the Rutgers football team beat Princeton for the first time since defeating them in the first college football game, sixty-nine years earlier; the original Rutgers Stadium was also dedicated that day.]

SI: Let us stay with that for a second; what do you remember about that game? I have heard a little bit about it from other people, but what stands out in your memory?

BR: The mistake I made in that game was, I took a girl to it and we didn't sit on the Rutgers side. We couldn't get tickets; we had to sit on the other side. [laughter] It was sort of another one of my isolated events. It was just a (charged then?) in my life, just stood there, and I have no other recollection of it that I can help you with. I remember the old stadium. That's about all.

SI: Before we get too deep into Rutgers, let me go back and ask a few questions about your early life.

BR: Sure.

SI: You talked about the concept of customs. For example, in your family, were a lot of "Old World" customs, Jewish traditions, food or the language, kept up?

BR: Not really. ... Well, the language, ... my father and mother communicated in Yiddish, when they wanted to, and I got to learn it and that helped me, and especially since, ... really, my grandmother; ... German and Yiddish are kind of a mixture. You may or may not know that. ... I've lost the train here; where were we going with this?

SI: We were talking about customs in your family.

BR: Well, so, my father was, in effect, a Socialist, didn't believe in ... organized religion. ... A large argument in my family continued as to my religious education. My mother finally prevailed and I spent a few years going to "Sunday school," as it was called, where I could get confirmed, but it wasn't the traditional Jewish way. ... It was over the objection of my father, who wanted none of that, anything, although he continued to read *The Daily Forward* in Yiddish, and he spoke English and read English and wrote English very well. The biggest tradition about my family was my mother's family. Now, my father's family was very social, ... especially with the many siblings in the area, only one of which, of my father's siblings, had moved away, to Washington, DC. So, all the other siblings were in the area and, although they didn't all have children; ... some had no children. One uncle, one of my father's brothers, had a farm down in Jamesburg, New Jersey, and as well as a place up in Newark. ... Around that part of my family, and today still, that part of my family is the nucleus of all the events that were familial. We had big parties. They put on shows. We had this organization that ... they organized in 1921 called the Link of Israel, still functions. It owns and operates a cemetery. They have meetings three

times a year, still. I still get mail and stuff, and email. ... I've recently renewed my connection with all those people, ... which had drifted away because of the distance in space and time. ... We went to a big wedding in Denver, Colorado. Our family is spread out all over the country, or that part of the family, and it was another renewal. It was just great. It was wonderful. I had a great time, and so, in terms of customs, getting together constantly was a big custom. In my mother's side, my mother was close to her family, who ... now had moved upscale. They'd moved from downtown, Eastside, to Harlem, was before it became black, and, as Harlem became black, they moved from there to the Bronx. ... That's where I really knew them, although I remember my grandmother still living ... in Harlem for awhile. I remember exactly where she lived. I remember walking around on Lennox Avenue and Amsterdam Avenue, which is the heart of Harlem today, of Black Harlem, and she lived at 114th Street, next to Lennox. ... We would go there literally twice a month, every other weekend. We'd drive over and my father and my mother's brothers would play cards and the women would talk and I had a couple of cousins I'd play with. ... We stayed at my Aunt Mary's house, who became a big figure in my life, and her husband, William, Uncle Willie, was an important person in my life. He had two sons, very athletic, large men, one five years older than me and one seven years older than me. He had two interests in life. He was an uneducated man, he was a cutter in the garment business, ... but he had two interests, classical music, opera, and fishing, deep-sea fishing. So, when we used to go over weekends, he would drag me off, ... because his sons wouldn't go with him, to learn deep-sea fishing and music. ... I went to the Metropolitan Opera when I was ten years old, standing up in the freebies up at the top, the old Met, on 34th Street, and various places, various music venues, in New York City. ... He taught me to love music; I'm an opera lover to this day. Uncle Willie, very important man in my life. So, that goes to your question of what kind of customs. Our customs were really familial, non-religious. We had no religious participations of any kind, except at weddings and funerals.

SI: This group was not really too religious. I am sorry; is it called Link of Israel?

BR: The Link of Israel ... was not religious at all. It was a memorial ... to the father and mother they left behind in Russia and that's where the "link to Israel" [comes from]. The father's name was Israel, his principal name.

SI: Okay.

BR: It happened to be, is, one of my middle names that I was born with. The name is used throughout all the males from a different variety of connections. I was born Bernard Isadore David Rothstein. There are David Isadore Bernards, there are Israel Bernard Davids and various variations. ...

SI: Did your family keep up any contact with the people who were left behind?

BR: They tried, but the purges of the '30s and the political upheavals after World War I killed many of the people, and then, along came World War II and destroyed the rest of them, and all the records and everything. So, we are literally almost stateless, or family-less, if there's a word for it, with all the destruction of all those people back there, who never came here. So, we have very little. We recently put together a family tree, which is really interesting, that we

accumulated. One of our young members today is an architect, besides my son, and she became the motivating force and developed this whole family tree, not only the Rothstein side, but the most prolific member of that, as I said, was my Uncle Sam. He married a woman from a family called Eskin, and so, on the other side of the family tree is that Eskin side and it's huge. If we print it out, it's an architectural page, and, in the middle, we've got some pictures of where we lived. [As a] matter-of-fact, I can't unwrap it now, I'd show it to you, but I just printed it out, ... but you can see it online. I can show you how to get online for it, or I can send you a copy of it online if you're interested.

SI: Yes, that sounds very interesting.

BR: I don't know if you are, but ...

SI: That would be good to have, to go with the interview.

BR: Okay. It's an interesting piece of collection.

SI: Growing up, was the Zionist movement ever discussed among your family?

BR: No.

SI: No?

BR: My father was not a Zionist; he was a Socialist. Zionism was not an issue in my family.

SI: Were they anti-Zionist or was it just not discussed?

BR: No. You know the biggest issue in my family? survival, education, taking care of their kids, very un-political. We have more religious types now in my family than we had then, people who've immigrated to Israel, a couple young ones, some who practice the formality of the Jewish religion, with *kosher* keeping and all that at home. ... Those are latter day people, not the people of my father's generation. They were too busy escaping, and they found their own "Zion" in the United States. [laughter] They did, [freedom from] poverty and death and recruitment into the Czar's Army and all that stuff, and the famine and the pestilence of the wars, not just the World War I, I'm talking about the war of, let's see, what would that be? Well, first, there was the Russo-Sinoese War, that Sino War, that was in [the] early 1900s, [the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905], but, before that, I guess the Crimean War [from 1853 to 1856] affected my grandfather and my great-grandfather, whoever he may be, and then, there's another war in-between, after that. ...

SI: When you say your father was a Socialist, do you feel that way because of his political beliefs or was he active in any way?

BR: No, he was not active politically, just his beliefs.

SI: Did he develop this feeling through things he had read?

BR: Yes, and his, you know, ardent support of Roosevelt, and so anti-Coolidge, ... which is my first memory of his [political beliefs], and Hoover, oh, my God, he hated Hoover and all that Hoover stood for. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Your father sounds like he was very anti-the Republican establishment at that time.

BR: Oh, yes. ... I'm steeped in that, never left me, [laughter] but he's not an activist, in any way.

SI: In all the years where your father was trying to make a living, did he ever get involved with the New Deal, like getting a WPA [Works Progress Administration] job?

BR: He did. I remember the NRA [National Recovery Administration] thing. He was really involved in that, because he was making those laundry bags at that time and he felt like he was one of those people that the NRA was talking to, ... and a very ardent supporter of the New Deal. ... You know, we're a classic American family in that sense of "huddle around the radio." I remember sitting in the living room, the radio was in a cabinet, two or three feet off the floor, ... I sat on the floor, my father and mother in a chair, and I'm listening to Roosevelt, you know, his so-called fireside chats. They were great events. My uncles, my mother's side, were all workmen; they were painters, carpenters, taxi cab drivers, cutters in the garment business. They were all workmen and not very skilled.

SI: Were any of them in unions or active in unions?

BR: I'm sure they were members of unions, otherwise, you couldn't get [work]. You had to [in order to] work, but they were not active. There were no political activities that I recall them engaging in. My mother was a seamstress in a shirtwaist factory. Remember the famous shirtwaist fire in New York?

SI: The Triangle Shirt fire? [Editor's Note: On March 25, 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Manhattan caught fire, leaving 146 dead and dozens injured, primarily young, female garment workers.]

BR: Triangle Shirt, she ... remembered it, and my mother lived quite a long time. She died when she was about ninety-seven.

SI: That was around 1993, right?

BR: Something like that, yes.

SI: Could you see the impact of the Depression on the different neighborhoods you lived in, for your family as well as for your neighbors? I always picture the famous images of hobos coming through looking for food. Do you remember any of that in your own experience?

BR: A little bit of it up in Maplewood. It never seemed to penetrate into the Weequahic section, where my biggest memory of my life is, or earlier. It had not quite penetrated urban Newark, but, up in Maplewood, we saw that. Now, Maplewood, the edge of Maplewood we lived in, was one of the few places in Maplewood then where they had multiple housing. We lived in a three-plex. Most of Maplewood was, if my geography is correct, was east of there, and very fancy, very upscale. ... I did see the street people. Hobos are just like our street people today, not much different. That's just a different name for them. [As a] matter-of-fact, I think there are more street people in urban America today than there were in the '30s and late '20s. I have no basis for that, but I'm pretty sure I'm right, from my reading. I'm a big history reader and I'm pretty certain that I'm right about that. For one thing, ... one thing people have to remember, I'm not trying to be pedantic, but my daughter once asked me, "How was it for you growing up? Why is it so different? ... What was it like then?" "Why was it?" is the question, you know, and I said, "Well, you've got to look at two things; you've got to look at the facts, the size of the country. When I was growing up, we had about one hundred twenty, twenty-five million people." It's three times that today, and was two-and-a-half times that when I was talking to my daughter. "So, now, you've got more people around you, but, more importantly, the big influx into the urban society began in my youth, and especially during World War II and thereafter. ... Everybody moved from the farms into the cities and the cities where you [his daughter] have grown up are now so different, if only [as] the result of such compaction, so much people being pushed into the same community." I had no numbers, but I said, "I'd venture to say, if I lived in a city that had a ratio of three-to-one of people, in terms of space, when you grew up, probably, [the ratio in] cities was twenty-to-one, and that makes for a huge difference [in] the way you live and the way you connect with people," and she understood that. She was pretty smart about it. So, you asked me, "What was it like?" yes, ... I didn't see hobos, but ... one of the big parts of my remembrance of the Depression is skimping food, working sort of hand-to-mouth in what we could live on. If we ran out of coke; ... this is the stuff you burn in the fireplace, not [cola].

SI: Yes, a variation of coal.

BR: Coal, yes. Sometimes, we went without it; a little chilly.

SI: Would you have to go around collecting materials to burn?

BR: Somehow or another, my father always managed to get something in. He never sent me out to pick up anything. I never had to live that way and he always managed, but it got pretty low. At times, it got pretty cold. We had to conserve, bank the fire earlier, you know, put on more clothes during the day and at night, and very few entertaining things, went to the movies, I remember going to a movie, movies, never ate out. The only time we ate out was at somebody else's house, usually a relative at that, too.

SI: When you say your family had to skimp on food, do you mean you would have very basic foods and the same foods all the time?

BR: Yes.

SI: Potatoes?

BR: Yes, potatoes, and, to this day, I'm not a big vegetable eater, [laughter] or a fruit eater. I've only learned to eat, literally learned to eat, fruit in the last twenty years. It took me a long time to get over that habit, that I didn't "like" fruit, but I do, certain kind of fruits. ... Although my memories of the Depression were of restriction and limitation and carefulness, somehow or another, my father always provided, even though my mother and I had to work at it. We just managed to not get down to the level where we were at the level of so many people that we saw. We weren't on relief; we never went on relief. We never had to do anything like that. ... By the time ... [I was] into my high school, where we had this little restaurant, ... it was a little, tiny place, he was able to parlay that into a bigger one ... in Newark, in the market area south of Frelinghuysen Avenue. There was a central market area there, and that was in my last year of college. ... That would be 19--, he bought the place in '41, and it was big. ... They had a bar and they had an establishment, but it had odd hours. They opened at eleven at night and closed at eight or nine in the morning. It was an all-night affair for the people who worked in the markets and I translated my work to there. I became pretty proficient working in that as a cook, fry cook, short order cook, as a relief on weekends, and it was a pretty good-sized place, sat 110 people, maybe. ...

SI: It also had a bar.

BR: Little bar, yes. It was a service bar, it was not a hangout bar, because the people who worked in the markets, ... it was their dinnertime. So, they had drinks and [would] come in. It was about as big as this table, eight or nine feet long, and it was at the corner of the [restaurant]; basically, more of a restaurant. They'd eat there, but they could get their food, their beer, their whatever they wanted, and that was after, ... you know, we had [Prohibition] until '33, we got liquor again. So, well into the '40s, it was pretty common now to have liquor at the restaurants. ... This [restaurant] served full meals, ... except at odd hours. [laughter] ... One thing we did have, though, was, we'd gotten prosperous enough by then, with that, to, when I became commissioned, as an [ensign] in the Navy, the commissioning ceremony was in December of '42, ... Al Steiner and I had arranged [that] we were going to have a big celebration of everybody who was still around in high school, get as many people as we could and have a party for New Year's Eve, and we used my father's restaurant. It was a wonderful, wonderful highlight of my life. ... The floor was kind of a terrazzo type thing. We were able to clear [it] away, have dancing and a Vic [Victrola phonograph] in there played, and it was a great time. ... It was December '42, and then, we all went off to where we went.

SI: It is interesting that your father had a restaurant like that at that time. Did rationing affect it at all? Do you remember?

BR: It destroyed the restaurant. ... My father died in '43, early '43, but he got sick in '42, and she tried to run the restaurant during the war. ... She didn't drive, and so, she was dependent upon others, and rationing got in the way and the markets changed, everything changed. ... She lost the place, which was a tragedy, but, in a way, it wasn't, because I probably would have had to come home after the war and take it up. I didn't have to do that. I did whatever I wanted to do, which was not stay in New Jersey.

SI: Going through your grammar school and into Weequahic, what was your family's attitude towards education? Did they want you to keep trying for the highest level of education?

BR: Absolutely, that's why I ended up [living at Rutgers], even they insisted I live away. ... They wanted me to have all the same benefits and privileges ... of people who had more money or had greater opportunities. Education was very important, ... big thing in our whole family. We have a lot of well-educated people now. ... Because my father was a junior of the family, there's a twenty-year gap between the oldest sibling and him, and so, I had cousins who were older than me as a result, who have died off first. I'm the sole surviving member of the generation I'm at, that is, the first child of these immigrant siblings, and so, I ... hold that peculiar position, at least in my head, in my family. ... To show you how far my family has expanded in many ways, we have college professors, we have all sorts of people in it, and we have a retired colonel of the Air Force, two colonels, ... we have somebody still on active duty in the Air Force, very diverse spread of a family.

SI: Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do with your life at that point?

BR: No, had no idea. ... At what point [are] you talking about now?

SI: When you were in high school, did you have an idea that, one day, you want to do this or that as a career?

BR: What was pushed into my psyche, I don't know whether it was mine or my mother's or what-have-you, was to be a doctor. So, I took pre-med when I first entered Rutgers, did miserably at those courses and turned it into economics, which was nothing. ... Then, I went into the Navy and, as I mentioned earlier, the Navy and the experience of the war made me an entirely different person. It taught me responsibility. It matured me physically. ... I was nineteen years old when I joined the Navy in February 1942. The draft is only at twenty-one in those days. I was twenty years old when I got commissioned. I was small, physically small. I was five-feet-eight, but I was maybe 140 pounds, 135 pounds, as compared to today, at 160, and ... I'm pretty much the same physique I am now as I came out of the war. [The Navy] taught me leadership, responsibility, leadership, really, really. I ran a very large law firm for a long time; I was only able to do that because of what I learned as an officer in the Navy. It taught me so much. The service has changed, and the war experience, ... my entire life, made me an entirely different person, literally. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: I want to ask you a couple of questions about what you knew about the world before you went into Rutgers and before you went in the Navy. You mentioned that the beginning of the War in Europe stands out in your memory, but, after that point, did you follow the news of what was happening overseas in Europe or Asia?

BR: Avidly, avidly, I followed [the news], and I don't know why we [did]; maybe my father, in his [influence], was more instrumental in keeping me alert about that, because I remember the Japanese invasion of China and, when the war broke out in Poland, we followed it avidly, I

mean, looking at the maps, as they were, drawn in the newspapers. ... There was no television and we listened to the radio an awful lot, and then, at the beginning of the war against [Great Britain], when the war became [real], after the so-called "Phony War" was over; ... do you know what I'm talking about?

SI: The period before the invasion of France and the Low Countries.

BR: Correct, right, correct. When that was over and we had the broadcasts of Edward R. Murrow, oh, those, I could hardly wait for them, you know. They were unbelievable, so vivid.

SI: Did you think that the United States would eventually be drawn into the battle?

BR: Yes, ... I just knew it would. I? What did I know? I was only; 1939, I was seventeen, but very much aware of what was going on, very much aware. There were recruiters on campus before that, recruiting for the Spanish Civil War, I remember that. [Editor's Note: The Spanish Civil War was fought between the Republicans and the Fascists (Nationalists) under Francisco Franco from July 1936 to April 1939.] I remember, in a moment of glory in my mind, saying, "Gee, I'd love to [go]. I'm going to go. Dad, I'm going to go." "No," you know, "just a kid, what do you know?" So, I was interested in all that, absolutely.

SI: Your father talked you out of it.

BR: He just said no. [laughter] We never got near the subject.

SI: Recruiters actually came to Rutgers.

BR: Oh, yes, they were there.

SI: Did you know anybody who went to support the Republicans?

BR: I'm sure somebody went. There's a rumor that [happened]. Let's see, ... I entered Rutgers in '38 and it seems to me, my chronology may be off, that some of the juniors or seniors that preceded me had already been there. I don't know if anybody [went then]; I don't think recruiting was as avid as it might be by then. I don't remember now too clearly. Remember the dates; ... have you heard from anybody else about this?

SI: I am interested because you are the first person I know of who mentioned people coming to the campus. I know some people did wind up in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

BR: From Rutgers?

SI: I believe so, yes.

BR: What were their class, do you know?

SI: No, I do not know offhand. I have heard references to them. Somebody from, say, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade came and tried to get people to sign up.

BR: Yes, yes.

SI: Do you remember, in the period between the beginning of the War in Europe and Pearl Harbor, did people come and try to get you to enlist in the British Navy or the RAF?

BR: I never saw anybody, but I heard stories, you know, of people going, whether they were rumors or what-have-you, but it was [the case that], you know, everybody, we were all so conscious of the war, "Are we going to go into it? Are we going to be called? Are we going to go up? What are we going to do?" ...

SI: Growing up and living in the Newark area, where there were all these ethnic enclaves, Poles, Germans, etc., was there any animosity between the different groups? I know you mentioned the German-American *Bund*.

BR: Only up in Irvington.

SI: Okay.

BR: And that was, you know, pretty far ahead of the war. No, there was none of that. ... I lived in a Jewish enclave and, you know, there wasn't a lot of travel available to people in those years. I'm talking about local travel. You stayed within your area, you stayed within your own enclave, or use whatever words you want to use, "ghetto," and, though, they weren't the kind of ghettos that were enforced like they were in Europe, they nevertheless were ghettos, self-imposed. The Germans lived in one area, the Poles in another, the Italians in another, and, if you went into those neighborhoods, you went there because you were going to some restaurant, if you went to a restaurant, or you went to buy something. I don't remember going to an ethnic restaurant. ... We couldn't afford it. The only real restaurant I remember going to was for an "event," in quotes, to a very famous place down on the edge of Weequahic Park. I can't think of the name of it now, became a very famous restaurant, lasted well after the war, [The Tavern?]. It was, in those days, for us, upper-class, and so, for a big event, a wedding party or something, you might end up there, or a really celebratory thing.

SI: Before I forget, what were the names of the two businesses your family owned in Maplewood and Newark?

BR: ... They had no name. [laughter]

SI: Okay.

BR: Just the end of the car line, [laughter] and the restaurant was, ... it was in the poultry market area. [laughter] No name; that's weird. I have no recollection of them anyway.

SI: All right. Can you tell me a little bit about your decision to attend Rutgers? How did you choose Rutgers?

BR: There weren't many choices available. It was one of those things where you [had few choices], and I don't want to put Rutgers down in a sense, that it was by default, but, when you examine our economics, I couldn't go to a really private school, I couldn't go too far away. ... The decision was made [that] I would live away, for the education, "personal education," it would give me, in quotes. So, where do you go in New Jersey that's close, that's reasonable? You've only got one place to go, Rutgers, and my grades were good enough to get me in there. The only other school of consequence ... in New Jersey that was contemplated was Princeton, but we couldn't afford that, that was relatively close. There were no other places or campi [campuses] of any consequence in New Jersey then. It was one of limited choice.

SI: What do you remember about your first few days and weeks at Rutgers?

BR: Confusion, scared shitless. You know, we had to wear beanies in those days. ... Do you know that?

SI: I have heard of it, yes. Could you tell me what your experiences were like?

BR: It was kind of fun, I thought, and then, of course, we had to go to chapel. [I had] never been in a Christian religious environment in my life before that, which I found very interesting, and then, ROTC, which was mandatory. It was all very exciting, [in] the beginning, kind of frightening, but I must say, my memories are nothing but warmth of that period. Frightening was only [temporary]; a poor word to use now, because it implies real fear. I had no fear; it was just the unknown, the strangeness of it, and I got used to it pretty quick. I loved it.

SI: Where did you live at first?

BR: Hegeman, you know, in the Quad. [As] a matter-of-fact, out of the ... four years there, we lived three years in the Quad and one year at Ford.

SI: Did you stay with the same roommates?

BR: Yes, just the two of us. You've gone down to four people in some of those places now, but, at Ford, for example, which had a living room and two bedrooms, it was just the two of us. That's the way it was then. ... It was neat. The Quad was terrific, and that building [the dormitories along the Raritan River] hadn't been built, so, you had your views. We lived right in Hegeman, we had the third floor, in the corner room, looking out over the river, lived at Pell; Hegeman twice, Pell, and then, Ford.

SI: What was life in the dorms like then?

BR: What do you mean?

SI: From what I understand, there was a split between the fraternity people and the non-fraternity people and the dorms sometimes would form their own little fraternity-type atmosphere, do things together socially.

BR: Yes, yes. I'll tell you one of the great regrets, ... if that's the right word, but even a resentment, and it was a resentment, I didn't live on campus the way most people lived on campus. I had a job on campus. I worked for NRA, cleaning bottles at the old Biological, Bio Hall. [Editor's Note: The NRA stands for the National Recovery Administration, but Mr. Rolston might mean the National Youth Administration, which funded jobs for college students as part of its programs.] I got a job working downtown a little bit in one of the restaurants.

SI: Do you remember which restaurant?

BR: It was a Greek coffee shop on, not George Street, the cross street, the big cross street, near the campus, that ran down to the river and the bridge.

SI: It is Route 27 now.

BR: There's one bridge, right, at the Rutgers side of downtown and ... the street ran right across into that bridge, still does, and that street ran up to the railroad station.

SI: I am drawing a blank.

BR: Anyhow, ... it was on that street.

SI: It is Route 27 now, but I forget what it once was known as. [Editor's Note: The street in question could be Albany Street.]

BR: I think the buildings are gone now. ...

SI: What were your days like, between attending classes and working?

BR: That was about it, classes, work and study at night, and got really involved into buying and playing music, you know, the Big Bands, all those people, classical music. I bought my first classical music record when I was a freshman, first classical record I ever bought, and I remember what was on it, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* by Mozart, the other side was *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*. Al and I were provided [with]; ... Al's family was a little better off than mine, ... but both families provided us pretty well with decent things and we had a record player. We had, you know, all the stuff we needed and there wasn't a lot of demand on ourselves for things. I made a little extra money working, and so, I could indulge myself with some [food], walk out to the; there was a little drugstore over on the street where the SMU [SAM, Sigma Alpha Mu], Sammy, House was, on the corner. [I] can't remember the name of it, but I used to sneak out there and get a lemon Coke or maybe even a sandwich, if I could afford it. ... We ate breakfast down at Winants Hall. We ate on campus, [or] we walked downtown to a couple of the restaurants at night. They were really cheap. They catered to the students pretty well, and then, Friday, I would take off for home. Missed a lot of life on campus, missed a lot of the good; I did

go to the big dances, the freshman and the sophomore hop and the junior prom and the senior prom, and [saw] the Big Bands that came to those in those days.

SI: Did you ever attend the classical concert series, where they played in the College Avenue Gym, or see the more popular bands that played there?

BR: Oh, yes, oh, yes. The Big Bands coming to the gym for the dances, ... I got to do that. The concerts didn't occur during the week very much, and, on the weekend, I was gone. I missed a lot of the social life of the college and lived with a lot of regret about that, and I must say, a lot of anger, back anger in myself. I really resented having to work for my father and mother the way I did. ... I didn't think about it then as resentment, but, at post time, right after it, post it, you know, I'd look back and be very resentful of the loss of [the] social life I didn't get. ... That's why I say the Navy was so important to me. ... Although it was total restriction, it was total freedom.

SI: Your leave time was your own.

BR: Everything was my own, you know, and I learned to do other things and do what I wanted. This is like a therapeutic session. [laughter]

SI: Sometimes, people say that.

BR: They do, don't they? yes.

SI: With all the work you were doing, such as the NYA jobs, did you have to help put yourself through school or was that so that you would have spending money?

BR: Well, that would help pay for my food, and it left me a little extra, if I could make it. No, they paid for my tuition and my room and gave me enough allowance so [that] I could eat ... at Winants. If I wanted to do better than that, I had to save somewhere or make somewhere, and, when I wanted anything I wanted, like buying records and stuff like that, I had to do it ... out of my pocket, so-to-speak, wherever I arranged it. ... To this day, I often try to remember what kind of allowance I got, [but] I don't remember it, but I do recall, I think the tuition was three hundred dollars a year, I think. Do you have any confirmation of that? ...

SI: Yes, I have heard that it was about three hundred dollars a year in your era, but, if you went to the Agricultural School, it was maybe two hundred a year, or less than that. I know a lot of people went through the Agricultural School so that they would have lower tuition, but still have access to some of the same classes.

BR: I'm nodding, yes, yes. ... I'm confirming that.

SI: However, you were in Rutgers College.

BR: Rutgers College, yes, right. Here's ... [Editor's Note: Mr. Rolston raises his hand.]

SI: I notice that you are wearing your class ring.

BR: Can you believe it? [laughter] Never comes off my hand, in all these years.

SI: Really?

BR: The only time I really took it off for any period of time was during the war, when I got a fungus infection under it, and I hung it around my neck until I got the fungus infection cleared. [laughter]

SI: Your ring is pretty meaningful for you.

BR: It's pretty worn down.

SI: You can still tell what it is, though.

BR: ... Yes, sort of. The gold was soft. I often think of renewing it. You can see the silver Queens thing on the side. ...

SI: I see where it says 1766.

BR: Yes, and I think they were smaller in size than they are now.

SI: Yes, I think they are a little bit bigger now. They put more stuff on it.

BR: Yes. I really wish there was some way that we could reproduce this and get a new one.

SI: Yes. Do any of your professors and classes stand out in your memory? Was there anyone who was particularly good and inspiring or taught you something new, or did you find the opposite to be true, some professors who were not so good?

BR: I had a physics professor in my freshman year named; I think his name was [George] Winchester. He was a dynamo. He was a tough guy. I remember him, and then, I had an economics professor, whose name escapes me, who I adored, who I remember leaving Rutgers in '40, maybe '40 or '41, and he went down to Washington to be a member of government, you know, the gathering of the brains as you've heard about, "the Brain Trust," all that. Well, that was high level, but they got a lot of young men from the universities to come in. ... I remember once, I went to [see him], in the Navy. I was in Washington, I went to visit him; can't think of his name, beyond me, tried for years, but I don't have any distinctive memory of any of the other professors at all.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you switched your major from premed to economics.

BR: Right.

SI: Does anything about that curriculum stand out? Did you specialize in any particular area?

BR: No, no.

SI: I would imagine you were at home, working, but you were still a student at Rutgers when Pearl Harbor was attacked, right?

BR: Oh, absolutely, yes.

SI: Can you tell me about that day and what you remember?

BR: Yes, I remember, we were out; we, [meaning] myself [and] a man named Seymour Pulver, P-U-L-V-E-R, who was a classmate at Weequahic. We were all home from college. That was December 7th. We were home that weekend, for some reason, or maybe we were home for Christmas vacation, whatever it was, and he went to the University of Illinois and he played football there. ... We each had dates and he'd borrowed his father's Packard. We were out driving around and the radio in the car told us when the war started. That's such a vivid memory, and so, that's how I knew about the war, then, and we all got very somber and we broke up for the day, went back to our homes and [converged] on the radio, listening and talking and wondering and worrying.

SI: Had you considered the military at all before that?

BR: Not at all, not at all.

SI: You had only done the mandatory two years of ROTC.

BR: Right, that's all.

SI: When you came back to campus that next day, Monday, what was the mood like?

BR: My recollection is that we were home then. I don't remember going back to campus until January. I may be wrong, but that's my recollection of it. ... Then, the talk was all about who's going where, ... "What's going to happen? The draft, is the draft [age] going to lower?" For many of us, it didn't matter, because some of them, they were all twenty-one already. Choices were being made, and I went immediately to a recruiting station in New York City, I don't know why I went to New York City, and I got rejected at the moment because I had a tooth problem. So, I went and got my teeth fixed, and then, my recollection is, in February, I was enlisted as an apprentice seaman, going toward a program called V-7, if I got my degree. I believe they graduated us a little early that year. I think, normally, it was May and I think they got us out in April. I think they finished the curricula in April. I may be wrong; you may know more about that than I. [Editor's Note: The Navy V-7 Program offered Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School slots to college juniors or seniors. Student would enlist in the US Naval Reserve, complete a month-long indoctrination course as apprentice seamen, and then, three months of Midshipmen's School. At the successful completion of Midshipmen's School, the candidates received their commission as an ensign and were put on active status.]

SI: I am not sure of the exact date, but I know it was moved up maybe three weeks or a month.

BR: Three or four weeks into it, about a month, and then, [I] waited for the call up, and then, in August, I was called. ... I got my notice before that, and then, went off to Notre Dame for a month of what they called indoctrination, and then, from there, to Midshipman's School in Chicago, and, from there, I was commissioned in December.

SI: I just have a couple more questions about Rutgers before we get into the Navy.

BR: Take your time, take your time.

SI: In that period between December 7th and going into the Navy, did you see any changes at Rutgers, aside from everyone deciding what they were going to do?

BR: Just a tumult; it was a tumultuous time. I just remember the feeling of tumult and unknown and anxiety. It was all-pervasive and constant, and very patriotic. I mean, ... it wasn't a question [of, regarding] anybody that I knew or heard, that we're not going; it's how we go and when, and how do we work it ... to do something maybe we wanted to do. That guy wanted to fly; a guy wanted to do this. The only reason I went in the Navy was, ... my mother wouldn't let me [fly]. You see, I was too young. ... She had to sign. It's a funny story. [laughter] So, I wanted to be a flyer, of course, like everybody did, and she wouldn't sign. So, I said, "Okay, I'll join the Army," and she said, "No, [you are] not going to join the Army, because it's too filthy," [laughter] really, and she said, "I'll let you join the Navy because they have clean beds." Honest to God, that's what she said. [laughter] So, she signed off.

SI: Your father had been in the service. What did he have to say?

BR: ... He was in World War I. ... He didn't go anywhere, in terms of combat or overseas, but he was very supportive of my going. He thought that we had to get in there and do this, and even though it meant his son going, there was no saying, "I'm going to do what I can and not let you go." It was just, "Go how you want to go," and he was instrumental in forcing my mother to sign the [form]. She was the patriarch in that sense; she had the decision about me and he bowed to her. ... So, when she acquiesced to the Navy, he was happy in that regard.

SI: At Rutgers, you also played lacrosse.

BR: One year, and I ... tried to do it the second year, but, by that time, [with] the demands for practice and my leaving on weekends, it didn't work. ... In the first year, I managed it because ... the freshmen teams don't play very much, and we went off to Peekskill one day and played. I don't think we played on a Saturday, I think we played on a Friday, so, I could get permission from my father, ... or consent's a better term, and then, come home late Saturday and work, but it was too conflicting. So, at the end of the second year, I just couldn't make it anymore, and I regret that, too. That's where I have this so-called resentment, ... about I didn't get all I wanted and could have gotten out of Rutgers and campus life, which I think is very, very important for [students]; it still is. I think anybody going away to school is an experience that's wonderful.

SI: How did you get involved in lacrosse?

BR: I don't know. Oh, I remember what it was. I wanted to go out [for football], and I was 140 pounds or something like that, so, I wanted to play ... 150-pound football. You know, we used to have those teams. My mother blew her cork. So, I said, "Well, okay, I won't play football, I'll play lacrosse." She didn't know what lacrosse was and she said, "Okay." [laughter] It's tougher than football, and Al, my roommate, went out for lacrosse, too.

SI: Are there any games that stand out in your memory?

BR: No.

SI: What about ROTC? Does any part of that training stand out for you?

BR: [laughter] Well, two things; I loved the marching, I loved the music, and I thought that, even at that age, I thought the goddamn instructors were so bloody stupid. They were really has-beens, ... you know, the dregs of whatever the Army still kept on payroll. We had no respect for them, at least my group. We played with dummy stuff and sandbags and what-have-you for the mortars, and dropped sandbags in the mortars, just didn't make any sense to us, and, of course, it made no sense to what the military finally became. They were still teaching the protocols of World War I. ... So, there wasn't a lot of respect for them, at least in my group. ... My father rarely, I mean rarely; I can only think of one time when he came down to campus and it was a funny memory I still have. It's a vivid memory. Remember the old; you don't remember it. There was a practice time and practice football field that we marched on. That was ...

SI: Neilson Field?

BR: It was just west of, or whatever, north of Bishop Campus; it was literally across from the [College Avenue] Gym and there was a slight embankment in the flat. ... I was a guidon, if you know what [that is], you know, someone outside the troop holding the guiding flag and walking, marching down to music. ... As we're marching down, on this embankment ahead of me, my father was standing there. He had decided he wanted to come down and see me on campus. It was a vivid memory. He was all dressed up in a suit and tie, childhood memory.

SI: Did you have any interactions with any of the administrators, such as Dean Metzger or any other deans?

BR: Metzger was a person I would have an interaction with, and I don't know why I did, but I remember that.

SI: You mentioned attending chapel before. Did you ever try to get an exemption from chapel?

BR: No.

SI: You always went to chapel.

BR: Yes.

SI: Do you remember any of the speakers that came?

BR: No, I do not.

SI: Do you think you experienced any anti-Semitism at Rutgers at all?

BR: None that I recall. I know we were segregated in the sense that the College Avenue, all the [fraternities, were religiously segregated], except for one, and I was pledged to Tau Delt [Tau Delta Phi]. ... Then, the cost of it and the fact that I was going home every weekend just knocked me out of that. ... They'd stay in separate groups, the separate fraternities and separate groups, and we always used to think of the guys who hung out on College Avenue, you know, sat on those verandas, as the "rich guys." So, it was self-imposed, in a sense.

SI: Did you see a lot of class distinctions and differences at Rutgers?

BR: Didn't see it, but sensed it, you know, but that may have been self-imposed, you know, ... the self-consciousness of somebody coming out of Jewish Newark into a more; what's the word? I'm looking for a word to describe the atmosphere at Rutgers. I can't think of it right now, but it's much broader, much more extended, ... different people, different groups, different religions.

SI: Cosmopolitan?

BR: Not cosmopolitan, it wasn't; that implies sophistication. Diversity would maybe [be] a better word. ... It was really my first experience with diversity, living in a diverse atmosphere. ... I never felt that the diversity was any "anti" involved in it. I did have the idea of the rich, better-off people out there and it was vague, never personal, more cultural than anything else.

SI: Before you went into the Navy, how far had you traveled? You said that you would visit family in New York, so, you had been between New York and Newark. Outside of that, had you done any kind of traveling?

BR: Washington, DC, twice, Atlantic City, [laughter] that's it, never went any place else, never any extensive kind of travel. That's why I keep referring to how the Navy changed me; you know, I had very limited views, very limited experience.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Thank you again for the coffee. To get into your Navy experience ...

BR: [Yes].

SI: First, how big of a change was it to go from civilian life into the military, where people are giving you orders and you had to follow them?

BR: You've no idea, you've no idea. Probably one of the most dramatic things of all is the bathroom facilities, you know, first time I walked into a bathroom [that] was no doors and just a row of johns. I lived a very sheltered life; sheltered in the sense that I went from my home to Rutgers, where I lived [in] a nice, quiet, little room and had my own place and, although we shared a bathroom, it was not at that level. ... [Another change was] the restrictions, but I didn't mind it; it was just a shock, just a shock. The boot camp people, ... at least the trainers, were all tough but good. I began to revel in that life immediately. I really liked it. ... If anything, the only really [bad] memory is of that shock of the bathrooms. [laughter] ... I was a very private person and I had a problem with that, the breaking of my privacy. That was probably the biggest part, but I accustomed myself. ... When I went up to Midshipman's School, we lived twelve in a room, quickly adapted to that.

SI: Was everyone at Notre Dame on the same path as you, in the V-7 Program?

BR: Yes, right, right.

SI: Was that general training or was there any kind of specialization? Was it a high-pressure-type situation?

BR: ... You know, it was a condensed boot camp is what it was, but they also tried to teach us a little bit about [Navy life]. Well, it's what they taught the boot camp people, you know, a few nautical terms and nautical issues, athletics training, you know, just to accustom yourself to the whole regiment of the system. That's what boot camp really is, and then, when you went to Midshipman's School, you lived twelve to a room, you broke down by units, and then, you expanded to the squad. ... For some reason or another, I quickly became a leader. I became, [I] forget what they called us, you know, a cadet officer, at Midshipman's School in Chicago.

SI: What would be a typical day at Midshipman's School? What would you do?

BR: Classroom, marching, athletics, food, make your room, make your bed, but classes and marching, and marching was just ... morning and night, and some athletics, but it was pretty condensed. ... Once a month, or twice a month, you got shore leave, as it was called. There was a funny story ... among the local people. ... I got introduced to a local family, somehow. I have no idea how I got [introduced to them], because we had no connections, but somebody introduced me to a family and [I had] a date for a local Jewish family there. ... When I showed up, as midshipmen, we had not been issued any peak caps. We wore what ... looked like a white sailor's cap, except the rim of it was in black, the very edge, about a half an inch, or maybe an inch, and what I heard when I got there, from this young lady, [was] that the rumor [was] that the non-officer trainees, that is, the regular sailors, ... [they] would say that, "You've got to look out for the guys with the black rims, because those guys are all infected with venereal disease." [laughter] Isn't that funny?

SI: Yes.

BR: I'll bet that's a story you haven't heard. [laughter]

SI: No. Did you have to do some quick explaining?

BR: Yes, quickly, [laughter] but I did get to see movies in downtown Chicago, [in] one of those great movie houses on State Street, and that's where I saw ... *White Christmas*, Bing Crosby movie. I remember that very vividly.

SI: Is that the kind of thing you would do when you were on leave? I have heard stories about what sailors do on leave; did you stick to the more cultural things?

BR: We weren't sailors; we were a bunch of college kids is all we were, you know. All of us were college kids that got [into] this program, graduated from college somehow and got into this program to not be a swabbie [ordinary sailor] and to get ahead, so-to-speak, and we didn't get a lot of shore leave there. ... We got limited shore leave. You could go within, I think, a six-block radius of the Midshipman's School. Midshipman's School was a high-rise building. It was a former women's club. So, you lived in a high-rise tower right ... in Chicago. If you know anything about Chicago, there's Michigan Avenue, [which] is a famous street, like Fifth Avenue in New York or what-have-you. ... At one point on Michigan Avenue, before it runs into Lake Shore Drive, there's something called the Water Tower and it's a remnant of what happened during the Chicago Fire [of 1871]. It's the one place that didn't burn down, and it's a monument, in effect, and there's a little square, like in many major cities. ... On one side of the square was this seventeen-story building which was a women's club, which was taken over and was full of midshipmen, and then, the Navy Pier was directly down toward the lake and we'd march to Navy Pier. We'd hold classes down there and hold classes in various places in the building. ... It was just college again; that's all it was. [laughter]

SI: Was there a lot of pressure to succeed or else you would become a washout and not be an officer?

BR: Oh, yes, that was there. You were very anxious about not making it and you were anxious about what your assignment was going to be at the end of the program.

SI: Were there a lot of washouts, that you remember?

BR: I do not remember. I remember some, a couple guys disappearing, and I don't know whether they washed out or gave it up or didn't like it. It was a pretty intense program.

SI: You mentioned earlier that the Navy taught you to be a leader and you became a cadet officer pretty quickly. Can you articulate that in any way, such as what changed and what did they try to teach you?

BR: Actually, they didn't teach you very much in terms of leadership qualities. They lectured you a lot on leadership and responsibility, but you sort of [found it within yourself]; not everybody can be a leader, not everybody has the will or desire to step out, take responsibility. It's what happens when you take that step and what you learn from taking the step, after you've been taught maybe some basics, but you're really looking at your peers and you're looking at people who are senior to you. ... Once you make that step and [are] willing to step out away

from the crowd, so-to-speak, well, that step you took when you wanted to become an officer, you took that way back when you signed up for the program, and you're constantly taking that next step. It's one step after another. There is no point where you can point [to], in the whole scheme of things, "That's where I learned to be a leader; that's where I learned responsibility." It's an osmotic effect. You understand that word?

SI: Yes.

BR: Osmosis, you know, sifts through the membrane. ...

SI: For you, it was more the experiences. Was there any mentor-type figure for you to emulate?

BR: I'm sure I emulated some of the instructors at Midshipman's School, in terms of appearance, posture, manner, which I had to learn, and I had to learn it by emulation, because there's no lecturing on that, and either you learn, you adapt, maybe adapt is a better word, and adopt [or not]. No, it's an absorption of people, absorption of experience, is what it really is.

SI: This time in the Navy might have been your first time being exposed to people from all over the country, right?

BR: Absolutely, my first time, literally, out of that Newark/Jewish/Rutgers enclave.

SI: What was that like? What stood out?

BR: Just astonishment, you know, learning. ... My eyes kept opening everywhere I turned, and I enjoyed every minute. [laughter] You talk about little, minor experiences that stuck out in my head, I remember, we were always arranged by alphabet, you know. That's the way you lived in the military, and the man next to me was "R-O-G" and I was "R-O-L." His name was Rogers, and Rogers was from Arkansas. I'd never met anybody from Arkansas before; his accent, everything about him, was different. Nice man, I really liked him, and, at Notre Dame, I remember, because we went through the chow line together, I remember him picking up a piece of pie and ... him spreading butter on it. I looked at him; pie, by the way, was something very limited in my experience. The food was entirely different. He says, "Man, you don't know how to eat," you know, in his accent. So, I tried it. I became a fan for eating pie with butter on it, [laughter] and, to this day, I'm a butter freak. I love butter. [laughter] I eat it like cheese. That's really funny. [laughter] So, you talk about culture, you know, there was a lot of culture shock, accent wise, attitude wise, but these guys were all college graduates from different places in the United States. Your limit was "R-O-L" [to] "R-O-S-T," you know, and the few guys in your room were all in the "Rs," but the making of a leader or an officer is a long time in the process. It doesn't happen in the four months, and, when you read these stories about the "ninety-day wonders" and these "shavetails," as they called them in the Army, it's very true. These were just kids put through a course, put uniforms on, said, "Go do it," and some became very good at it and some didn't. Some just managed.

SI: How was the discipline in either Notre Dame or Midshipman's School?

BR: Very strict, very strict, very strict. Punishment was extra duty. There wasn't many fuck-ups, though; excuse me. [laughter]

SI: That is okay.

BR: There weren't many cut-ups, or foul-ups is the better word. ... The guys who couldn't stomach it were the guys who left. The theoretical work wasn't very hard and you had to memorize a lot of rules, but it was mostly just shaping up of your body and your mind and to know you're going to have some responsibility for somebody's life when you made a decision later.

SI: You were commissioned at the end of Midshipman's School.

BR: Right.

SI: What was that day like?

BR: Exciting, just an absolute thrill, absolute thrill. ... I came home and my father couldn't believe, my father couldn't believe, says, "I just can't believe that I would have a son [who was] a US Naval officer." He said, "That never occurred in my life that it could happen." He said, "You know, officers, when I was a kid, ... they were mysterious people and disciplined. I mean, the Army was something you avoided," and he was very proud that he had come to America and his son had achieved a college education and was a naval officer, equal to anybody. He was very proud of me. I was proud of myself and I was proud of him, having [done] what he had done. It was a "mutual admiration society." [laughter]

SI: After you were commissioned, did you get leave to come home?

BR: [Yes], came home. That's when we had that big party and saw my relatives and made the tours, and then, ... I was directed to go [to] Norfolk, Virginia, for assignment. I don't remember whether I was assigned to [the] LST or I had to go someplace, and then, get my assignment. I think that's more likely what I did, up at the naval headquarters station down there at Newport [News or Norfolk?], and we joined some other people on the train. ... Two of us ended up trying to get a place to stay when we got into Norfolk that night. We stayed in a hotel, and I remember, [laughter] you read about these stories about "hot sheet places," where somebody [had slept there so recently], the bed was still warm. Well, this room was really still warm. The bureau was covered with ashtrays and bottles and liquor and what-have-you bottles and the place was a mess. They hadn't cleaned the room up and they finally gave us sheets and we made our own place and they wouldn't do anything. ... Next day, we reported in at the naval station, and then, we ... hung around and got our assignments, and I got on this LST over at Solomons Island, which is on the Chesapeake Bay.

SI: How long had the crew been together?

BR: It was pretty new, pretty new, hadn't gone anywhere. It was still in the shakedown period.

SI: Solomons Island is where they do the practice landings.

BR: Well, the practice landings and just maneuvering the vessel and getting to know [her], right. I don't remember how long I was on it, because there was a lot of turmoil at that point. ... I got word that my father had come down with cancer. We knew he hadn't been well when I was home for Christmas, at Christmas holiday. He didn't feel well at all, coughing very heavily, but he was a smoker and we kind of attributed it, you know, [to] a smoker's cough. Well, it turned out he had lung cancer. ... By the time February or March rolled around, I don't remember exactly now, he ended up at Massachusetts General Hospital, for some reason, although we lived in Newark. My recollection is that the family doctor we had in Newark was a graduate of Harvard and Mass General, and so, his inclination was to send him up there ... to the specialist he knew. ... So, after a couple of months on this LST, he was pretty bad off and my mother got to the Red Cross, somehow, the Red Cross got to the Navy, and they gave me a four-day leave to go up and see him, because he was pretty ill. So, I went up and, when I got back, the ship had gone. They'd put my stuff ashore and I lost my ship. So, I hung around there and messed around there and, finally, probably about, it was March, I think, yes, it was March, I got orders to go out to California to help establish a naval replacement station at a place called Livermore, California. So, I got to see my dad one more time, because I went up to New York to get the train, and, by that time, he had been through the operation and they had taken him [back to Newark]. My mother took him home, and he died at home ... some months later, well into the summer, but I got on the train. It took seven days to go across country. Now, I'll go back; as an aside, one of the things my father did in his early days, before he met my mother, he and a cousin came out to California in 1908. He was a pretty adventurous guy, you know.

SI: Yes, he sounds like it.

BR: He was very adventurous, and he ended up in California in 1908 and the two of them rented, or bought, a wagon [and] a horse and fitted it out ... as itinerant merchants, peddlers, and went into the Arizona Territory. ... Until recently, ten years ago, maybe, I still had his Western-style holster with a gun in it.

SI: Wow. [laughter]

BR: But, being the Jewish cowboy he was, it was a holster for a .44-[caliber pistol] and he had a .32-[caliber pistol] in it. [laughter] So, he couldn't pull it out [easily]. He had to reach down in it to get it, because it was a small weapon in this big holster. I kind of laughed about that over the years. ... He wandered around with his cousin, wandered around out in the Arizona Territory and came back to California, and then, for some reason, he went back East again. ... One of his dreams, throughout the Depression, was, "Go back to California; it's the land of milk and sunshine and honey," and it was ... a constant refrain. "When we make enough money," or, "we make it," or whatever the words were, "we're going to ... move to California," always wanted to go there. He never made it, of course. The war came along and other events, and so, here I am, going to California, not knowing what it was. The train took seven days in March, was troops and what-have-you, stopped in Chicago. In those days, there was no through train. You got into one station in Chicago and you literally were marched or walked or drove across the city to another railroad station and got in a different train system and went across the country. [As] a

matter-of-fact, ... some famous financier, trying to combine the two railroads, had advertised in the New York papers, "Pigs can ride through and you can't," because the freight trains went through, but not the passenger trains. ... [I] wake up and we're told we're now coming into California, ... coming through the Sierra Nevadas. I got up, went in, cleaned up in the bathroom, and we hear the train slowing down. The announcement was, our first stop in California was a town called Martinez, North Bay, we're going to [the] San Francisco area, and I stepped out on the platform. I've never forgotten this. The conductor had opened half the door and, as we pulled in, the train was slowing down, it was like somebody hit me with ... a perfume atomizer. Looked out, it was sunshine, it was seven in the morning, the dew, California dew, we're famous for California dew, palm trees, cattle, green. I couldn't believe it, "This is real?" you know, after this dull March, the cold, the winter, in the East. I said, "My father was right. This is truly beautiful." An hour or two later, we couldn't see where we were in the fog in Oakland, California, taking the ferry across, and I ended up in the Eleventh Naval District Headquarters. They gave me a bus ticket, to the Greyhound Bus, [laughter] believe this or not, to Livermore, California. [laughter] I got off the bus in Livermore, California, which was nothing more than a little cow town, famous for only one other person [that] had ever lived there, Max Baer, the world's heavyweight champion [of 1934-1935], boxing champion, was called the "Livermore Larruper" and he came from Livermore, California. [laughter] Fortunately, a petty officer was there with a car and we drove out to what was to become the naval base. I was the seventh officer to report onboard and there was a small cadre of people and a CB [construction battalion, also known as "SeaBees"] battalion building the buildings. ... There were a couple of buildings, several buildings, up by then, including a bachelor officers' quarters. Four months later, when I got my next [assignment], my transfer orders to the [USS] *Sheridan* [(APA-51)], we had twenty thousand people there. ... I bought a car from somebody going in the service there and I traveled back and forth on Navy business to ... San Francisco. Because they found out my father was in the restaurant business, [therefore], I must know something about setting up kitchens. So, I was in there buying and arranging for the transfer of the kitchen equipment, [which] had been specified by architects, getting [it] back, getting it installed. I got to know San Francisco very, very well and I got to have a lot of time there on the weekends, when I could get away, and had a girlfriend there and it was an entirely new life. I was really living. I was then twenty-one years old.

SI: San Francisco is a great city anyway, but, in wartime, it must have been even more bustling than usual.

BR: It was just an exciting place, just uniforms, people, girls, events. ... It was the stuff you see in the movies, absolutely. Every weekend, the Top of the Mark, the restaurant, the hotel, the bars at the tops of the places were filled with people with uniforms, and the officers' clubs were around already. I remember my first experience in an officers' club was in Newport, Virginia, the Newport Naval Base there. ... They had a building left over from a fair of some sort. They had reproduced an antebellum mansion and it became [the club]. It was [built for] some reason for the fair, but after, at the war, they took it over and made a naval base out of it and that was the officers' club, big staircase and all that stuff, you know, a beautiful building, and I felt so self-conscious. I was just a kid, ... [had] my first [officer's] uniform, you know, didn't know where I was, among the "big boys," and I remember walking in the bar and who was there? [actor and naval officer] Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

SI: Wow.

BR: He was a lieutenant commander then. So, going back to San Francisco, the same experience repeated itself. By that time, though, I was accustomed to my status as an officer, I was accustomed to feeling myself and I'm aware of [what] my position was. I had a good time there.

SI: Okay. Just to touch on your time in Virginia, that was your first time in the South, correct?

BR: [Yes].

SI: Does anything stand out about being in the South at that time?

BR: No, just the attitude that they didn't give a shit about anybody if you were in uniform in Newport, [such as] when I got down there about the hotel experience and all that, but, after that, I was isolated, on the naval base, on the ship, ran into nothing really Southern. The only real Southern experience I had was after the war when I was driving through the South, coming to California, but we haven't gotten to that part yet.

SI: Okay. [laughter] When you were on the LST, what were your duties?

BR: Trainee; I had no duties that were of any consequence. I was raw material they shaped in[to an officer]. They had me in communications, I think, on there, but only, you know, two, three months on there, didn't do me enough to make me solid in my position, didn't get to know the crew like I should have, didn't get to know my fellow officers like I should have. Then, getting pulled off of it because of my father, I kind of resented that, because I really wasn't doing anything for him. He was pretty out of it. It was my mother's whole idea, and I lost my shipmates. I was pretty pissed about it, to be honest with you, ended up as ... a non-naval experience on what was, in effect, an Army base in California. I was very resentful of that, the loss of my ship.

SI: From what I understand from conducting these interviews, being detached from your unit could be very troublesome. You could feel like you do not really have a place.

BR: Yes, I was very, very upset with it, ... but I wasn't upset leaving Livermore. Good people there, I had a good time, as you heard me say, but ... I really wanted to go back to sea and I kept agitating about it and, finally, they [acquiesced]. I actually ended up there because they didn't know where to put me, because, when I came off the LST, ... everything had been filled. Their systems had been filled. It's like a factory system, where the bottles are running through and we were just bottles on the conveyor belts, went in different directions. You were ... filled with different liquid, you went to different places, but, if you got off that chain, you didn't get into a box, and that's what happened. So, you end up as an extra, supernumerary, and they send you wherever they have extra needs. That's how I ended up out there, but I did have a good experience, again, learning leadership. I had a lot of people working for me out there in California.

SI: Were they all sailors?

BR: All sailors.

SI: You said you were mostly building the kitchens.

BR: Yes, and then, as that got done and the troops ... started to come in, I was in charge of a section of the "concentration camp," I called it, for them, [laughter] where the "boots" had already gone through boot camp, it was not a boot camp, [they] were awaiting transition to a ship, or someplace else. ... So, I had, my recollection, two thousand men there, [and only] one petty officer, who was a survivor from World War I. He was a really old, salty old guy. He had false teeth, I remember that, [laughter] but ... he taught me a lot. He was pretty terrific. He was very supportive, and it wasn't hard. All we did was run training programs. We also had, you know, a bunch of other smaller petty officers that ran the [programs] to keep these guys busy during the day, and they were shipping out all the time. So, it was a chain, an assembly business. I was glad to get out of there. I felt it was not productive, but it was; it was ... shoving the raw material out to the fleet. ... They were going to new construction, most of them, and to fleet assignments, replacements.

SI: Do you remember approximately when you joined the *Sheridan's* crew?

BR: Yes, that would be around, let's see, probably August of '43, yes, maybe September.

SI: It was an attack transport.

BR: Yes.

SI: Can you tell me about being immersed in the crew and getting set up?

BR: Well, I went down by train to San Diego. First night, I stayed in a place called Balboa Park, which was also a holdover from a fair. It was an imitation Spanish village, stucco, and if you know anything about [California]; you ever been to California?

SI: Yes.

BR: The nights get pretty chilly and, down in San Diego, at that time of the year, at night, it can get pretty foggy and damp, almost froze to death, [laughter] so cold. ... We slept in these bunks. [I] got out to the ship and Eddie, a famous actor, [Eddie Albert], was on that ship. He was just leaving. He only spent a couple of weeks on there while I was still there. He had a show on television for many years, *Green Acres*, Eddie ...

SI: Eddie Arnold?

BR: No, not Eddie Arnold; a nice guy, very nice guy. Anyhow, I was quickly, you know, taken into the ship and we spent a lot of time in training there with the Marines, and then, a lot learning

small boat handling. That was my position on there, small boat officer, eventually rising to the level of a boat wave commander. You've probably heard enough [in your] experience with these interviews to know sort of what my terms are. If they don't [make sense], just stop me.

SI: Sure.

BR: And we were shaping up for an invasion. We had no idea where. This was Second Marine Division, remnants of the Second Marine Division and rebuilt, that had come out of Guadalcanal, and we did a lot of training at Camp Pendleton, in the beaches of California, doing simulation beach landings and all the exercises, being under submarine attacks, ships going out to sea, what-have-you. Finally, we all loaded up with everything, put all the cargo onboard, put a whole Marine battalion and their gear onboard; ... I mean, gear, their fighting equipment, their lightweight tanks and their lightweight armor and what-have-you. ... It was a complete unit. They didn't go ashore waiting for [equipment]; they went ashore with all their gear and that was part of our training, getting all this heavy-duty stuff ashore. ... There were accidents, but nobody, in my experience, got seriously injured. Boats got overturned, boats got swamped, you know, it was [routine], and then, we set sail across the Pacific, still not knowing where we were going.

SI: What kind of landing ships did you have to work with?

BR: We had LCVs [Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel], LSVs and a couple ... landing ship; the thirty-six-foot tank, the big tank landing craft.

SI: Is it the LCI [Landing Craft Infantry] you are thinking of?

BR: No, LCIs were infantry. They were ships by themselves. They were tiny ships. This is all small boat stuff. The personnel [craft] with the ramps, that took thirty, forty troops. The command vessel, the command was the same vessel, but with a fixed bow, no ramp, and the wheel was up forward, not aft, and it was more like a motorboat and had the radios and stuff. That was my command vessel. ... Anyhow, we ended up, the armada finally converged into the Maui Roads, R-O-A-D-S, is a word for harbors that are not enclosed. [Editor's Note: The roadstead Mr. Rolston is describing is known as the Lahaina Roads.] ... The sea around the Hawaiian Islands is very deep, except between the triangle formed by the islands of ... Maui and Molokai and Lanai, are the three islands, and in-between there, because it's all based on all volcanic [formations], the sea floor was only two hundred feet. So, it was a huge area between these islands and that's where the fleet anchored. You couldn't anchor outside anywhere, because it was too deep. We're talking about five thousand, six thousand feet right off the [coast], because [of] the volcanoes; you know about that.

SI: Yes.

BR: Okay. Anyhow, we anchored there, and then, we set sail again. ... After we left, as a fleet, we got our assignment, and so, we knew where we were going and began to study the terrain with the Marines as to how we're going to land, and we were going to an atoll called Kwajalein. Any of your people been there, that you've interviewed?

SI: Yes.

BR: Oh, good. Then, you've heard this story before. ...

SI: Please, pretend that I have never heard it.

BR: Yes, that's all right. Anyway, we got to Kwajalein, and then, [the operation] became a transfer. They required transfers between ships to make up [landing waves]; transfers of people. So, there we are, offshore, the bombardment still going on, as it had been for two days preceding our arrival. The battleships, the old battleships, had been refloated that were there, that survived Pearl Harbor, were bombarding, the aircraft were bombarding, and we were then to make the transfer on, for us, for day one. We're outside the atoll, we're not inside the atoll, and my job was to take Marines and move them from our ship to another ship. ... They gave me one of these tank landing craft, which is a larger version, with a ramp then; the LCT [Landing Craft Tank].

SI: LCT, okay.

BR: And loaded up a bunch of Marines that quickly got seasick, because it was pitching out there at sea. ... As we made for the vessel, ... the ship they were supposed to go on, it took them a fucking long time to get off that, because they were sick and they couldn't climb up the rope ladders, the nets. ... By the time they finished, the day was over and I couldn't find my ship, because the ships all had to put back to sea. So, I was lost, in effect. Well, ... I could see Kwajalein itself. So, what I decided to do [was], I had three men on the crew and we ran the ship, the LCT, back toward Kwajalein, where I got close enough [that] I could hear what was going on onshore, so, it'd give me sound at night. ... I set a course and ran back and forth all night long, knowing the fleet would come back in the morning, ... because they had to put to sea because of antisubmarine [protocols]. If they hung out there at sundown, they became targets, and so that they all moved to sea and they had a protocol for that. ... Whoever was left behind, you were screwed. I don't know who else was left behind. All I know [is], I was left behind, and so, the next morning, I was able to find my ship, but I could hear the Japanese literally talking on shore. [laughter] That's how close we were, or the noise, not talking, but the noises they were making; got back on my ship, and then, that date was D-Day, [January 31, 1944]. We came through the entrance into the lagoon, and then, ... we began our boat waves into the beach under the attack. ... I led a boat wave into the beach with Marines, second wave, and heavy-duty fire from the Japanese. ... My ship, my boat, got hit, couple people killed. We managed to get there, come back, got more in, and then, began the shuttle of supplies, and it was, it's a little vague in my mind, two or three days before we finally secured the place.

SI: Had the first wave already gotten off the beach or were they still on the beach when you arrived?

BR: They were still on the beach, oh, yes. ... It was pretty badly screwed up. They had used these "alligators," [Landing Vehicles Tracked or LVTs].

SI: Yes.

BR: Yes, they didn't do very well, and the Japanese, ... you know, you've heard this story before, in spite of all the heavy-duty bombardment, came out of their caves and holes and revetments and whatever they were in and opened pretty heavy-duty fire. The Marines took it pretty hard there. I don't remember the casualty list, but ... I think there were five thousand Japanese Marines on that island, quite a classic force, highly trained, and the [US] Marines killed them all and [it was] a pretty intense battle. ... You know, when you're in that stuff, you don't know what's going on. You're just doing your job. You're going back and forth, and the only thing I really remember that was significant to me, as kind of an awakening, is, we're coming in and I'm [signaling my boats]. You know that one of the things a boat wave commander had to do was keep his boats even in line, so [that] ... all the boats got in, hit the beach at the same time, and used hand signals ... to the coxswains. You know, they all didn't have radios, only I have a radio communicator to the main ship, to ... my ship, and we're going in and the fire is coming and we hear the sound. ... You know, it's really like a movie, you know. I remember standing up, gesticulating or something, and I look over and I said to the coxswain, "For Christ's sake, it's raining." Then, I realized, [laughter] "No, that's not rain; those are bullets hitting the water," and I said, "Son of a bitch, somebody's trying to kill me," and that's when I realized what I was into. [laughter] I mean, such a realization, like a light went on, and I ducked down, ... but, after that, you just [say], "I wasn't hit, so, let's just finish what we're doing," and so, that was the day, back and forth, all those days, heavy-duty, no sleep, you know. ... Then, the strangest thing happened. In the arrangement for the occupation of Kwajalein, ... if you've talked to anybody who's been there before, it was a huge atoll, forty-five miles long, and it had the naval end, where the Navy had responsibility, with the Marines, to take it, was called Roi-Namur, R-O-I-hyphen-N-A-M-U-R. The real Kwajalein name [island] was at the other end, the other end of the lagoon, and that was taken by the Army's Seventh, I think the Seventh Division, ... with the Navy taking them in, of course. So, each end was really an independent command, in a sense. So, what happened was, somebody screwed up in the number of people to come and occupy [the island]. A different cadre of troops came in to occupy, but there was no way to support the incoming materials. There was no boat pool, as they were called. ... It was not a harbor. It didn't have any docks; one small dock that was there was destroyed, in effect, almost, during the fighting, and how were they going to get the stuff off the ships that came in after the invasion on to the island to rebuild the island, all the things they needed? Well, what they finally did was, they took people off each of the ships and contributed them to what's called the boat pool, and I was one of the officers, unfortunately, I [say], selected to be ... left there. I hated that idea, hated leaving my ship again, and it was really the same ... thing all over again for me. ... I lived there for several months, because ... we didn't have any harbor pilots to bring in the ships that were coming in. I did that until a trained pilot came out, a harbor pilot, and only because they selected me and a Coast Guard officer and another officer who was left behind in this boat pool, because we had come in and, so-called, were experienced. We had no more experience than the man in the moon, but I managed to guide ships in through the [lagoon?], and I was really a greenhorn at the command level of ship handling. It was just crazy, but I knew enough, and I remember, most of the transports were slow, so, it was easy to handle them. ... The channel had a funny set to it, a current and a set to it, and you had to go at one angle at one speed and make a half turn (or never get through?) the channel, and it was pretty standard. I got onboard. The best thing about it was, I got fresh food on the ships and I got a shower. That was my price. [laughter] ... I did have one crazy experience. I got on a destroyer, for the first time, on, you know, a "real" war

vessel; I got on, came aboard as the pilot. Captain turned over [control], I looked ahead and I rang up, "All ahead, two-thirds." All ahead, two-thirds, on a destroyer is a hell of a lot different than all ahead, two-thirds, on a transport, and that destroyer took off like I was driving a Porsche. Now, I quickly corrected. My heart was in my mouth that we were going to hit that bar ... before we made the turn; got all done and the Skipper said, "Well, that was tight, wasn't it?" [laughter] He says, "I think you need something," took me down and gave me some brandy. [laughter] ... I think he was more upset than I was, but I did that for a few months. ...

SI: Was it always US Navy ships coming in or were there any other Allied ships or merchant ships?

BR: It was all US, all US. I don't remember any Allied ships of any kind.

SI: You mentioned this moment where you saw the bullets and you realized that your life was actually in danger.

BR: Oh, the bullets? yes.

SI: Going back to the invasion. Before that, had you ever given combat any thought or had you had any apprehension about it?

BR: Yes, yes, what was going to happen, what could happen, if I'd get blown up by a bomb or blown up by heavy-duty fire, but that's all abstract. It was all abstract. It was like a movie. We sat out either in the wardroom of the ship or out on one of the hatches where they could lecture us on what we could expect, ... because we were constantly going over that terrain, the island and the bay and the lagoon, so, you could kind of [memorize it]. It was like putting an imprint in your head and, really, to this day, I've still got the imprint.

SI: Did you actually go in where you were supposed to go in?

BR: Oh, yes, oh, yes. You couldn't miss this one. [laughter] The only thing that, all that, quote, "training," unquote, that they gave us about what this place looked like was helpful to me [for was] when I was offshore that night, all by myself. I had a good map, and I happen to have good imagery in my head. ... I'm a very good geographer, so, I could translate in my head where we were. I had no chart, but I could translate in my head where I was and I could set a course where I could be free of the island, but close to where I knew the ships were going to come back.

SI: When you say the boat you were on was hit, was it by machine-gun fire?

BR: Yes, yes, heavy machine-gun fire.

SI: Did you and the coxswains with you have to treat the men who were wounded or did you just put them ashore?

BR: We just put them ashore. Actually, we didn't put them ashore; we kept them and took them back to the ship. They had not yet set up, on that first wave, any emergency or field medic

operations. The medics were there with the first wave, but ... there were none in our boat at the time, so, we just [took them back]. I think the coxswain was able to do a little work with them, and they were not deathly hit, but they were hit. ... The boat got a little damaged. I transferred to another boat while they were quickly making some repairs. ... I also managed, because I thought we were in danger of perhaps taking water before we could get to the beach, I got one of the other boats in my command to come next to me and we lashed on. Both of us hit the beach [at] the same time, because we got hit with slanting fire and it came through the [sides]. You know, the sides were only plywood, the front was the only thing, the bow, ... that was metal, the ramp.

SI: Before the landing, had there been any threat from Japanese ships or airplanes?

BR: Well, we were told there was going to be threats, but there was never [a major attack]; nothing really ever appeared. Submarines, they were always worried [about]. That's why the ships all put to sea. It was all fear, you know, what would happen, but the Japanese were not very potent at all in that regard. The place they were potent was their survival ability and the [ability to] continue to fight as they did, their willingness to die in ... even a hopeless situation. The other thing I remember very much about that place was the smell; took a long time for the decaying smell to go away. That happened very quickly in a hot climate and, when the CB battalions came in to build the airbase, which was part of what we were doing, bringing those ships in, you know, they'd build those huge trenches and buried the remains and really worked the island. They really scraped the whole island off and just redid it, [laughter] to get rid of that, or to build the airbase and get rid of the smell. I never forgot that smell, never forgot it; still haven't. ... There were a couple of air raids after we were there, air raid alarms, which didn't amount to much. ... There was some Japanese islands close enough for a long-range plane to fly over, and they would fly over at night, mostly, and drop a bomb or two and go away. Sort of the name that ran through the fleet for all us, at all the places, [was] "washing-machine Charlies," and things like that, and everybody had different names for those planes. ... They caused an alarm. You didn't know what else was coming, ... but, after awhile, you know, you just [said], "Okay, here it comes," and just duck down and wait to see what happens. No real damage was done by them.

SI: While you were stationed on the island, did you have to worry about mines or unexploded ordnance or Japanese holdouts?

BR: Well, the Japanese holdouts were there until, in this case, only a few days. I remember one time, about the fifth day, the fighting had really stopped by then and [was no longer] really bad and we were unloading on the beach and there was one survivor who broke through the perimeter. Where he came from, none of us ever knew, and he came screaming. It was at night and we had these cherry pickers, as we called them. They were cranes that had lights on them and they faced the sea, the lights. So, they shined or shone on the beach where you could ramp and unload, ... so [that] you couldn't see behind the light. ... He broke through ... whatever patrols we had there and he came out of the light, screaming and yelling. He was half naked and we all started firing at him, [using] my sidearm, and who knows who hit him? ... When I say all, maybe three or four of us there who had small arms; ... what was your question again?

SI: Did you have to worry about holdouts?

BR: That was the only [one], yes, that, and then, the periodic air raids was about anything we really worried about, and then, after awhile, "Was there going to be a movie tonight?" [laughter] They quickly set up the movies and the food.

SI: Did you have trouble getting supplies while you were out there?

BR: Not a bit, not a bit.

SI: Was there any point where the morale was low? Was your morale hurt when you got taken away from your crew?

BR: My morale was pretty bad, as a person, in that regard. I was more angry than I was [demoralized]. I just went ahead [and] did the next thing I had to do. It was after, when things got really quiet, we'd finished; ... I was there almost four months, or three months, maybe, three or four months, there was nothing really to do. ... I've got a story for you, a classmate story. Had a classmate named Bill Gunther; remember his name by any chance?

SI: I have read your class yearbook many times; all these names are familiar.

BR: Okay, that's familiar to you, yes. Gunther was on an aircraft carrier called the [USS] *Princeton* [(CV-23)]. I knew that, for some reason. How'd I know that? I have no idea how I knew that, but, while I was at the Roi-Namur end of Kwajalein, in this boat pool duty, I heard or knew that the *Princeton* had come in down at the other end. So, I literally was in command of myself; I was the commander of the boat pool. So, myself and a fellow officer, Coast Guard officer, took the LCVP, the command boat, it's like a speedboat, and we took off down to the south end. I was going to go visit Bill Gunther on the *Princeton*. It was kind of just a fun [thing], an escapade, you know; didn't need to get permission. I was my own boss, so-to-speak. ... We were well into the period where there's nothing to do, and I must admit that I ... had gone kind of native, in a sense. ... I wore khakis, no shirt. I wore boondockers, rain shoes, because of the coral. You couldn't go swimming in the lagoon without it, unless you put the boots on, because you'd cut your feet, and that was another way to break the boots in. When they got them new, you went right into the water and softened them up. So, my hat, floppy; I mean, I was, in the terms of those guys, a pretty salty-looking guy. ... So, we come up in this, what's in effect a speedboat, it's a very fast landing craft, and we come sweeping in alongside the gangway to the *Princeton* and I was running it. I was pretty adept at it, pulled her right in, right up against the gangway, and the guy with me took over and I stepped on, and I had with me a sack of clothes. There comes a story. I get up to [the] top and I was buttoning my shirt, because I came down without it, not wearing my shirt in the sunlight, tanned and wrinkled, boondockers. [The] officer of the deck [was] impeccably dressed on those ships; they were very formal, you know, even in wartime. ... I saluted the deck and asked permission to come aboard and [the] guy's looking, "What can I do for you?" I said, "I came to visit a friend of mine who's an officer onboard, Bill Gunther." "Oh, yes." So, they call him up on the intercom to see me; comes up, he looks at me, starts to laugh. He said, "What can I do for you?" after awhile, you know. I said, "Two things, Bill," or three things, "Give me a bath, give me a hot meal," although we had plenty of hot meals,

"and get my laundry done," and he did. [laughter] Come forward now to '92; was it '92? That would be the ... fiftieth anniversary, right? yes, '92, came back, one of the few times I came back to Rutgers. Bill was there. We meet in the Commons. He said, "You bring your laundry?" [laughter] It's a big joke, you know. So, that's a good wartime story, I remember very well. It was kind of a nice escapade in my [mind].

SI: Since you saw him at the reunion, you knew he had survived the war.

BR: He did. He died about a few years ago, unfortunately.

SI: The *Princeton* was hit by a *kamikaze*, correct?

BR: Yes, later, but he was not involved in that, that I know of. I know nothing about that.

SI: What were the amenities like on Kwajalein in this period, after everything was set up? Did you have tents?

BR: Tents, Quonset huts, that was it. Quonset huts were mess halls, combined; they'd combine them together, make one large place, tents for the Marines and us. For the first month-and-a-half, I slept in the bottom of the boat, literally. ... Not only did it not have any personnel, but they had nothing for us at all. I wish I'd brought my picture. ... Maybe I'll send it to you. There's a picture of what is in effect a hut, a large hut, and it had a flag in front of it and I'm standing out in front of it. I should send you that picture, and then, you send it back to me.

SI: That would be good.

BR: I'm standing there in Marine fatigues and a Navy shirt and a Navy hat and boondockers, and what that was was our personal mess hall that we built ourselves out of scrap. I was a very good scrounger. When I would bring loads of stuff in, I'd steal some off and my guys [would, also]. We were very adept at that, because they'd left us with nothing. It was the biggest screw up you could think of, not only had no people, but no equipment; we didn't have our own boats, we had no [ability to make] repairs. We had to get some of the Marine mechanics to come over from what they had there to help us when our engines would give [us] a problem. It was just a bloody mess, but we managed and it was kind of a challenge and kind of fun, in a way. We built this mess hall, until, finally, the Marine commandant had it torn down, because you could eat with the Marines now. They'd finally built a mess hall. We were included. [laughter] That was a neat experience. The other thing that I did, because we were so independent, in a sense, I guess, there were some very small, little islands there, attached to this main island. I mean, literally, you could walk between them if you got in the water. There was not a lot of water. ... This Coast Guard officer and I, he was kind of a common guy with me, we just pushed the envelope. We got the Marines to give us a tent and we got some guys to help us. We put up a tent over there and that was our own officers' quarters. ... We stayed over there and ... motored back by water to ... our little pier, where we had the group and where I had my enlisted people living, and we lived there, like, you know, a couple of [natives]. What was that picture with Cary Grant, that *Petticoat Navy* or something? I forget; sort of [like that], you know. [Editor's Note:

In the 1959 comedy, *Operation Petticoat*, Cary Grant stars as the commander of a pink submarine who takes refugees from the Philippines to safety in World War II.]

SI: I think that was the name of it.

BR: Yes, something like that. He was taking care of a bunch of schoolchildren or something, or we'd go to *Gilligan's Island*, [as a reference point], if you want to, but the two of us lived in this tent, four of us lived in this tent, was just by ourselves. We'd go over, eat, come back, but we were off to ourselves and feeling pretty cocky. [laughter]

SI: In the end, did you request to get on another ship or were you transferred?

BR: Oh, I badgered them, I badgered them. That Marine colonel hated me; ... actually, he was a colonel, then, became general. The island was run by the Marines. I had to go through him to get channeled to the Navy, into the naval communications system. I kept badgering him for transfer, badgering for transfer. Finally, when the boat pool situation was gone, they'd rebuilt the dock and they could get the vessels in by themselves, they finally consented, and then, I got screwed again. [laughter] This time, they sent me to Eniwetok [Atoll], and to run ... a boat pool up there, which I hated. I spent another few months at Eniwetok and, from Eniwetok, I got transferred, after badgering, again, people onboard, to the [USS] *Chew* [(DD-106)], in Honolulu. When I got my orders to go back for reassignment to the Hawaiian sea command, by that time, I'd been out a long time. I was eligible to go back to the States for a new construction assignment or another assignment, and I don't know what happened, but, at the Hawaiian sea command, they had a need for somebody on the *Chew*. So, I ended up on the *Chew*, didn't get home.

SI: In Eniwetok, were you doing the same thing, piloting ships in?

BR: Boat pool stuff, yes; no more piloting, just boat pool stuff, and they also used the cadre of us naval officers there ... as officer messengers. When secret stuff had to go back and forth between commands, it had to be taken in hand, I mean, stuff that couldn't be transmitted by radio, in hand, in a locked case, [cuffed] to your arm, transferred. So, I did a little of that, by plane, from Eniwetok to other islands.

SI: Had you ever been in a plane before?

BR: Yes, as a matter-of-fact. That's a good question, a very good question. When my father died, when I was in California, again, the Red Cross got involved and I got leave to go back to his funeral. Now, how the hell do you get back from California to [New Jersey] in the wartime? So, I heard that if you went to an airport, a naval air station, rather, you could hitchhike, in effect. If some plane was going in the direction you wanted to go and he had a spot, it's up to ... the aircraft commander. So, I went out to Alameda Air Station, outside of Oakland. I had four days; a little longer, I had a little longer than that. I forget how many days. I'll tell you the story. I stuck out my thumb, my literal thumb, and got a flight to Oakland; I mean, to Bakersfield, California. That's about two hundred miles, out of a leg [where] I had to go to New York. At Bakersfield, I got a hitch to a naval air station somewhere in Arizona, a training station. From

there, I got a ride to Olathe, Kansas. There, I got a meal. It was six o'clock in the morning when we landed and I got into the officers' quarters, ... as a transient, and they gave me a meal and I could get rest. ... Then, I got a flight to Memphis, I think, and from Memphis to Floyd Bennett Field in New York. Floyd Bennett Field was [an airfield]; it's still there, but it's now a park. ... It was the place that [Charles] Lindbergh flew from. Coming back, though, I drove my father's car. I took it, I drove non-stop across the country. ... I got a high school friend of mine who was going to California, and he was not in the service, had a 4-F, and he spelled me driving. We picked up a couple of Army hitchhikers and we drove non-stop all the way across the country, interesting. ... To answer your question, that was my first airplane ride in my life. I flew in some odd airplanes, I might [add]. I flew in what was a "gooney bird," a DC-3, with the metal seats, I flew in a two-seater plane and I flew in a four-seater plane; never been in a plane in my life. [laughter]

SI: Was this all on just that one trip?

BR: Yes.

SI: Wow.

BR: And then, when I did the officer messenger stuff, I flew again.

SI: Did you mostly fly in Catalinas for the messenger flights?

BR: Yes.

SI: Does anything else stand out about your time at Eniwetok?

BR: Boredom.

SI: Were you able to communicate with your mother at all?

BR: Yes, you got mail; you know, mail worked.

SI: After Eniwetok, you joined the *Chew* in Honolulu, correct?

BR: Right, right.

SI: What was your position on that ship?

BR: By that time, I'd become a full lieutenant. I had had two promotions, through lieutenant, junior grade, while I was out at; I think I got JG when I was either at Eniwetok or at Kwajalein, I forget which now. ... Then, I got lieutenant, I know, at Eniwetok. So, when I got to the *Chew*, I was pretty ranking and ... I became first lieutenant onboard. ... [Do] you know what a first lieutenant does on the [ship]? Have you been told?

SI: You are in charge of the deck and the deck crew.

BR: Right, you've got it, right. I was the deck force and all that went with that, plus, the fact, again, once again, because of where I'd come from, I got to be the officer running our mess [hall], and so, I stayed as the first lieutenant there until the end of the war.

SI: That must have been a big change, from what you described as "going native" to the *Chew*, a pre-war destroyer.

BR: Right. They had remodeled it, but it was still an old, old ship. They had taken out two of the stacks and they had changed it into what is, in effect, an assault attack ship. ... It still retained its torpedo armament, but it didn't have much of a gun material, mines, antisubmarine. ... It was a good part of my life. I really enjoyed ... the crew on there. I enjoyed my chief petty officers and my senior petty officers, and my division had 110 men. ... I enjoyed my fellow officers; didn't like my captain, nobody did. The first captain I got in, he was idolized by everybody and he left shortly after I got onboard, and the new person was a local man from Honolulu. Since we operated out of Honolulu so much, ... when we'd get in there, he'd be gone ... with his wife. She still lived there. He was not a very nice man.

SI: From what I have read, the *Chew* had been in Pearl Harbor during the attack. Were the men you were serving with on the ship at that time?

BR: Right, right, some. She had been pretty well turned over by then, but there were some, still some, on there, particularly in the engineering force, yes. ... Two men died on her during ... the attack on Pearl Harbor. As a matter-of-fact, if you go out to Pearl Harbor, the memorial they have; as a matter-of-fact, it's quite reminiscent of our class memorial at Rutgers, all those plaques. They have a similar situation along the seawall facing where the [USS] *Arizona* [(BB-39)] is, on the mainland, and there's a plaque for each of the ships that were here that got hurt, or suffered damage or lost people, and the *Chew* is at the end, ... with the two names on it for each boy they lost; so, a historical, meaningful vessel, kind of neat. [Editor's Note: The Remembrance Circle section of the memorial complex at Pearl Harbor features a series of plaques with the names of servicemen killed during the attack, arranged by ship. The Rutgers World War II Memorial Plaza, donated to the University by the Class of 1942, similarly features a semi-circle of plaques with the names of Rutgers alumni who perished during World War II, arranged by class year.]

SI: Were the officers you were serving with regular Navy?

BR: No. There was not a single regular Navy officer onboard, all Reservists. I was the only one on there that had any ... real combat. The ship never went into combat after that. It did an awful lot of patrol duty, antisubmarine work, but never any real ... combat. ... I was, again, like you said, I had, interesting phrase you used, "gone native," [laughter] never thought of it that way, but it was a very good phrase, had to readjust myself to the more regularized life. ... Then, there was a certain amount of respect they had for me, having been out there and as long as I had been out, too. They were younger than I, in terms of service, not in age, but younger than I in service. Except for the Executive Officer and the Captain, I was the longest serving officer they had onboard. ... I carried over all my energy. I had a lot of energy; still, I'm still a very energetic

person. I've always got a project going, I'm always doing things. I'm still doing that today. ... I remember, I changed so many things on there to make life more comfortable for us. Ventilation and things that nobody thought about doing before, I took the initiative to do, and I would push the envelope, as, again, the Captain would say. I'd have to get permission, sometimes, did it without permission, then, got permission later, operating on the principle, "It's easier to get forgiveness than permission," sometimes; ... it's a strange envelope. My last wife hated that. My wife who died thought that was a wonderful thing to do.

SI: What were some of the things that you changed? You mentioned ventilation.

BR: Ventilation, and, you know, it was a ship that still had portholes. We had to lock those portholes down when you were at sea. Even in a calm sea, you couldn't open them. So, in the officers' quarters, particularly, it was stifling. There was no air conditioning. It was an old ship. So, I finally figured out that, "I know there must be a system," and I went into one of the naval yards nearby. There's an implant that you could put in the porthole that it won't let the light through, won't let the water through, [had] a number of baffles inside, but the air will circulate through it. ... If you put a scoop on the outside of it, it'll scoop the air into it, so [that] you can ventilate the ship even underway. So, I got those for a couple of bottles of booze that I picked up at the officers' club. I was able to get one of the ship fitting outfits ashore to make them for me and had them installed. Then, I had the cloth chutes made when we were in port that could sit up and funnel the air, the trade winds, into the ship. [I] changed some of the bunk arrangements for the officers, because it was built for, in my recollection, we were built for twelve officers and only seven of us [were] on there. So, I took out some of the bunks, made people more comfortable, did the same thing for the crew quarters, did something that was really [interesting]. The Captain, he was a nasty guy and he [would be] raving and ranting about the coffee cups that were left up on the bridge after the watches at night. He couldn't get anybody disciplined; no different than today, anywhere you go. So, he finally said, "We're going to close the galley. There'll be no coffee during the night watches." Oh, that was terrible, a terrible thing to do. So, I got together with the shipfitters onboard and we ran a deal with the galley. They'd leave a big urn of coffee on, lock the galley; we bored a hole through the galley wall into the urn, [installed] spigots, and cups appeared again. He never could figure out how the cups showed up again. [laughter] It was almost a ... "Mr. Queeg" thing, remember that book, that story? [Editor's Note: *The Caine Mutiny*, Herman Wouk's 1951 novel, later adapted into a 1954 film of the same name, starring Humphrey Bogart, follows the eccentric Lieutenant Commander Philip Francis Queeg as he loses control of his ship to his subordinate officers.]

SI: From *The Caine Mutiny*?

BR: Yes. It was almost that. So, that was, when I'd say I would do things on there, I was always pushing the envelope, so-to-speak. The guys, the crew, liked me, I'm pretty sure, and I don't say this with a lot of ego. I think I felt their warmth and their liking me.

SI: How did you deal with the line between officers and enlisted men? Did you want to get closer to the men or did you distance yourself?

BR: When I talked earlier of leadership, there's a way to, and I can't describe it except to do it, and I carried it over into my life as a manager of a law firm. In the law firm, I would call it "hallway management." You're out there, walking the halls of the firm, you're out there talking and talking and talking, nodding and recognizing where things are happening, where things are not happening, and gently, or however you want to say it, reminding people. ... I learned that in the Navy. I could move around ... down [in] the crews' quarters, out into where it was, and observe and know what was going on. So, I was not isolated, but I did retain my position as an officer. I was never called by my first name. I respected their rank, I respected their privileges, because they had a hierarchal arrangement, too. ... What was your question? ...

SI: About the line between the officers and enlisted men.

BR: It was very clear; they kept it, I kept it, but I was also available. I was also always very visible. I could have stayed up on that bridge on my watches. I could have stayed in the wardroom, having ... my petty officers report to me there or meet them up on certain parts of the ship. I could have stayed there and not seen anything else and transmitted my directions, ... whatever training programs were going on and whatever things had to be repaired, or taking in reports, but there was a certain amount of formality to that. I had a regular report, you know, standing reports, but I was always moving around.

SI: On an average day as first lieutenant, were you mostly taking reports and checking up on things?

BR: Right, right, and then, the training programs. We had a lot of training. The first lieutenant's also responsible for; I lost the word.

SI: Training?

BR: Training, but the training for damage control, damage control. So, we had a lot of simulated trainings for that. [As] a matter-of-fact, one time, [damage control] was very important; we rammed a submarine, a US submarine, was kind of scary. ... We were training submarines and the captain of both of these, never figured out who was to blame, missed something and I think we hit the US submarine.

SI: Do you remember which submarine it was?

BR: No.

SI: How did you react to that? What did you have to do?

BR: Well, we'd (staved?) in our bow. We had to do damage control, put up the wooden bulkheads, press in, put the mattresses in place, ... lock off the compartments and limped back to port, went in the dry dock to get repaired.

SI: Was the Captain able to stay? Did he lose the command?

BR: No, he didn't; a training accident, nobody got hurt. Probably, somewhere in one of their records, they got a kind of a black mark, but who'd give a shit? None of these were regulars. ... I guess the guy ... who was the captain of the sub was a regular; rarely, at that point, were they USNRs, but I enjoyed it.

SI: Did you have any experience with Annapolis men, [US Naval Academy graduates]?

BR: The "ring knockers," as we used to call them? Only in the command structures, where I'd run across them ... where they had the staff responsibilities, staff officers, trying to, for example, get transferred out of one of these commands I didn't like. ... I never had any direct conflict with them because they were Annapolis, but, you know, it was, what's the word? a common expression about the "damn ring knockers," or whatever.

SI: Was the *Chew*, for the remainder of the war, just patrolling? Was it doing any escort duty?

BR: Any what?

SI: Escort duty?

BR: Yes, islands from the Hawaiian Island chain out. Among other things, we would do escort duty for civilian transports coming in from the mainland, when they got close to Hawaii. It was a good duty, getting into Hawaii, into Honolulu, regularly. Midway, went up to Midway a lot, doing escort duty up to Midway, and were there a few times. What the hell is that big island west of there, was a stop, Johnston [Atoll]? ...

SI: Do you remember when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

BR: Yes, we were west of Wake at the time; yes, Wake, that's where we were, west of Wake, and just heading back to Honolulu. ... That's where we ended up, and got orders to then go back, ... finally, got orders to go back, to the Philadelphia Navy Yard, for decommissioning, and so, that was like a cruise, you know, a pleasure cruise. We left Hawaii, went to San Pedro, [California], next stop was Acapulco, Mexico, which was not what it is today, and there's a story in that. We don't have time for it, and then, down through the Panama Canal, stopped there, Guantanamo Bay, and then, Philadelphia Navy Yard and decommissioned the ship. As first lieutenant, I probably had the biggest responsibility, and the engineering officer, for its decommissioning, and, when it was finally over, I got transferred. I didn't want to leave the Navy then, still didn't, primarily because I didn't know what I wanted to do. I came to the conclusion I had nothing in my education, yet, that was going to fit me to do anything. It gave me a degree that allowed me to be interviewed on my resume, but nothing else. So, when an opportunity came, I got transferred to ... headquarters, New York, and ... got assigned to the Naval Personnel Office and began working there. ... Somehow or other, they liked my administrative ability and promoted me to lieutenant commander. ... I stayed on the Admiral's staff there as, my title was enlisted distribution officer for the district, and all the paperwork for the enlisted people that were demobed, or demobilized, through the ... Third Naval District, all the paperwork came through my office. I had thirty-two yeomen [administrative workers] working for me, women, all women, and two males, chief yeomen, and I ran this office and had a

good time. I was in New York City, and then, came the choice, "What to do?" ... My captain, the four-striper in charge of me, so-to-speak, offered me an option to stay in the Navy. ... I thought about it hard, because, if I had a sponsor, I could get somewhere. ... He was an Academy graduate, and I decided it was no place for a Jew. It just came [to me], that was my feeling, and I didn't think it'd work for me. In retrospect, I'm sorry; ... I should have stayed. I liked the whole thing, I liked the whole experience, but, then, what was I going to do? You know, I didn't know what to do with myself. So, I went on leave, terminal leave. I had ninety days' terminal leave and I was still living pretty good in New York City and I was having a really good time, a really good time. The first time in my life, I was really an adult, in a civilian life, with money in my pocket, and a uniform, respect, and it was great, girls. I was having a good time, but I began interviewing, trying to get interviews, and the corporate jobs all turned me down. ... I wasn't trained for anything. I didn't know what the hell to do with myself. So, I said, "Well, if I can go floundering some place, I'm going to do it not here, I'm going to go to California. How am I going to get to California?" So, I figured, well, I had enough connections with the whole system in Washington; because of my being on the Admiral's staff, I had a lot of intercommunication with my counterpart at the much higher level in the Navy enlisted distribution network. So, I went down to Washington, by train, went into the headquarters, found the guys I knew and asked them, "Is there anything they can get for me out in California? I could come off my terminal leave," in other words, re-up for awhile. [He] says, "We have no money to transfer you. We can't issue you transfer orders unless you're on ... full active duty. You're not on full active duty now." So, I said, "Well, what if I get to California on my own? Is there any place out there you can get me a job as a naval officer?" He says, "We've got the ideal job for you, if you can get there. You've got to give me an address to send your orders to." I says, "I'll figure out an address." It was officer in charge, or commanding officer, of the US Naval recruiting station in Los Angeles; [laughter] what a sinecure. I'd lived with a guy from Los Angeles in a tent on Eniwetok, I remembered his name, Sandy (Arack?). I called him. Long distance was really something in those days; it was expensive anyplace. [He said], "What are you doing?" I said, "I need you to be my address." He lived in Montebello, California, a suburb of LA; says, "Sure, no problem." [I] told the Navy Department, "Issue me orders to report ... from that address." I had bought a car by then and I just took off, drove across the country again, only this time, in a more leisurely fashion. That was where I had my Southern experiences driving. I took the southern route down to [California], ended up in Los Angeles, and that's where I was. I stayed there until February '47.

SI: You were in charge of a recruiting station until February 1947.

BR: [Yes].

SI: In that immediate postwar period, you were in this demobilization unit. Was there pressure to get men out of the service?

BR: Pretty heavy. ... I don't know if you'd call it pressure, but it was a job. I mean, we had to keep them moving, you know. ... The best analogy I can give you, at that time, was, like, ... you had the problem of getting the ships mothballed or taken apart or demobilized, or whatever you want to use, and then, taking those people and flowing them through like a pipeline. [If] the pipeline got clogged, something happened, you had to keep the stuff moving; that was the

pressure, so, no clog up anywhere as they came off the ships. It was a very interesting job, really. I traveled up the coast a lot, up and down the East Coast a lot, down to conferences in Washington, went to a conference out in California once for it, first transcontinental flight I ever took, on an American Airlines [flight] that made two stops to get here; one stop to get here. It stopped in Dallas. They literally rolled out a red carpet, not for me, but for the [aircraft]. It was that significant to fly transcontinental; ... all the passengers came off, walked down on the red carpet.

SI: What kind of things were you expected to do? Were you expected to encourage people to join the Reserves? Did you have to educate people about the GI Bill?

BR: That was not my job. ... What was my job was staffing all those places, right, with people who would stay and do that, or who were careerists or what-have-you, to do all that, right, but that was a separate program that ran independently. ... I was just a people mover.

SI: The reason I asked you about pressure was, more in reference to the Army, I have heard stories, such as how Walter Winchell would get on the radio and say, "This camp is not letting people out fast enough," and then, Congress got involved. I was wondering if anything like that impacted the Navy?

BR: I'm sure it did, but it never impacted me enough to think about it. The only thing I can tell you about that is that I had the same feeling then, I had the same feeling then, about the Walter Winchells and the Congressional investigations as we have today; it's all damn political. It's all about pressure groups. It's all about "anti;" somebody is anti somebody or somebody is anti a philosophy. I mean, if you look at today's life, it's the same. Just what is the issue? The sensitive issue [then] was the people, the voters, wanted their sons home, or their daughters home. So, that became a nice football for the politicians to fight over and to have hearings over it. It's the same thing all over again, hasn't changed. I'm a big history buff and Harry Truman said something really interesting. He said, "The only thing new is the history you don't know," and that life repeats itself, always. So, as far as the Navy was concerned, if there were pressure, it was not on me or my command, or my commanders. ... The Admiral and my captain were solid people, "Do your job. We're moving the best we can." ... If I had a request to help more people at some place to process [men out], I had to travel out, I would say, "Get more people to Portsmouth. Get more people at the Brooklyn Navy Yard," wherever we were, you know.

SI: Roughly how long were you in the recruiting position in Los Angeles?

BR: I came out to Los Angeles in '46; I can't tell you exactly what month. ... That's when I did that, and then, I stayed until February, so, probably, wish I could remember that, eight, nine months, maybe, not quite a year, '46; February '47, back up from that, maybe nine, ten months.

SI: Was it difficult to get people into the Navy at that time?

BR: Nobody wanted to do that. [laughter] It was a sinecure; it was easy. [The] Navy wasn't really recruiting, really recruiting, heavy, and there was a little armory where I was based in Chavez Ravine, which is where the Dodgers play. It's a big park. There was an old armory in

there. ... The best part of our recruiting is that people'd get in the Reserves, which we did, and I was a Reserve member. I stayed in the Reserve and was a battalion commander in the Reserve in Los Angeles until '52, another big career mistake. If I'd stayed in, ... I already had ten years, another ten years, I would have had a great pension, ... but the Korean War was on and they got within one number of me. ... I was in law school at the time and I said, "I can't do this again." ... I was fearful of being called up, I was married, and so, I resigned my Reserve commission, big mistake. I was sorry ... to this day. I miss the Navy. I liked it. ... I should have stayed in. I was kind of pushed by the pacifist part of my life, anti-Korean War, you know, the whole bit. "I'd been through one war, I don't want anymore," but I loved the Navy. I wish I had stayed in the Reserve.

SI: Earlier, you hinted that one reason you did not stay in the Navy was the institutional anti-Semitism you felt.

BR: Right, but the Reserve was different, because they were true Reservists. ... They weren't the traditional hierarchy of the Navy.

SI: When you were in the Navy, on active duty, do you remember any anti-Semitism?

BR: No, no. It's just that you knew there were very few Jewish officers around, so, you sensed you were isolated. You knew there were no Jewish officers in command, contrary to today. So, you sensed that you had limits. It was clear. ... I don't know how people your [age], how Jews of your generation, look on themselves, but my generation looked at themselves as being always visible. We always had a star on our back. ... It was probably some sense of inferiority or some sense of not belonging that caused that to happen, ... although there was true anti-Semitism; I sensed that in my attempt to get jobs in the corporate world in New York. Outside from my lack of training, I know people with as little education, not degree education, but experience education, got jobs that I wasn't [getting]. I'm not a bad interviewee. ... I had that sense of being ostracized. As a matter-of-fact, getting to be a lieutenant commander on staff duty as a Jew was pretty significant, even then. I was the youngest lieutenant commander in the Navy. I was twenty-four years old; [youngest] non-flyer [lieutenant commander], I should say. At least that's what I was told.

SI: Before we move on ...

BR: Whoa, you're getting to have a long day, buddy.

SI: No, this is average. [laughter]

BR: Is it really?

SI: Yes.

BR: Well, go ahead.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to say about your time in the Navy before moving on?

BR: No. If it comes to mind as we go along, I'll interrupt. ...

SI: You left the Navy, active duty, in 1947, correct?

BR: Yes.

SI: You entered law school in 1949.

BR: Yes.

SI: What did you do in the two years in-between?

BR: Well, I used that seven or nine months to meet people. I had a cousin who was a lawyer in Los Angeles. ... He was not very interested in [me], not familial, so, he really didn't take me in, but he was kind enough to have me for dinner once in awhile. ... His wife introduced me to a woman whose daughter I took out. So, I met some young people that way. In that process, I met one of the fathers of one of those young people, and he was running an advertising agency. So, I sold him the idea that he should take me on as a trainee, because he could get part of my salary paid for by the GI Bill. I don't know if you knew that; they were [subsidizing] training.

SI: During the training phase, correct?

BR: Yes, and I got a stipend from the GI Bill and ... he could make up the difference. So, my salary was two hundred bucks a month and I think the GI Bill gave me 120; big numbers. [laughter] ... I did that for awhile and really didn't like that very much. I tried to sell some insurance and learned a lot about the advertising agency world and it seemed kind of phony to me, and started examining my life, "What am I going to do now?" ... Then, I met a girl, was going to get married, and I said, "All I got is my head. ... What can I train myself to do under the GI Bill?" I could become an accountant; didn't appeal. I wasn't going to be a doctor; I found that out a long time ago. What was left for me in terms of training was to be a lawyer. So, I decided to apply and go to law school. That's how it happened. ... Drawing on my advertising agency life, I got a job working as a representative for somebody that makes some ads for a couple of local places. So, I was able to add to my salary, my GI allowance and the GI Bill. ... I was married in '49, on the understanding I was going to go to law school. She was a secretary, and so, we managed and got through law school, and, during the course of my social life, I met other young people. ... When I was in law school, one of them said, "You know, my mother has a lawyer who was talking about expanding. I'll ask her about him; maybe you can get a connection." This is my second year, end of my second year in law school. So, they tipped me off to him and I went out to see him. ... He was a solo practitioner; there were not many lawyers in Los Angeles then. He was Jewish. Very few law firms [hired Jewish lawyers], there was only one Jewish law firm, two Jewish law firms, and they weren't hiring anybody that wasn't connected to somebody. It was all familial connections. The other law firms weren't hiring Jews at all, clearly. That was clear. You knew it, you were told that, "Don't apply," and so, I didn't know. "What was I going to do at the end of my law school career?" was still a question. So, I went to meet this man and he was a really nice guy, brilliant lawyer, Harvard graduate, just

absolutely brilliant. He had an office downtown. He was a solo practitioner, which was quite traditional in those years. He was establishing himself with a second office out in Beverly Hills, downtown, about nine miles apart. Beverly Hills was just a tiny, sleepy, little town, at that point. So, he gave me a job as being a clerk in my third year in law school and I'd come out there after school and I'd do my research for him. He gave me a little desk with a small office, in the Beverly Hills office, and I'd work three days a week out there after school and he'd come out, those were his two days out there. "When you get finished with law school," he said, "what are you going to do?" I said, "Start wherever I can start." He says, "Well, you can come to work at my office." ... He had finally established a place, a larger place. He says, "There's a small room," eight by ten was the size of it, he says, "You can pay rent by working so many hours a month for me, and then, I'll pay you X dollars for every hour you work for me, on work I give you, and you can just try to build a practice." That's how I started. He and I became partners over time and, from that point on, we built a law firm with pretty close to a hundred lawyers and two hundred employees, until it dissolved in the financial debacle of '82.

SI: What stands out about your time at USC Law School?

BR: Drudgery. [laughter] Oh, it was a hard time. First of all, the USC Law School wasn't what it is today and it had a building that was old and decrepit. As a matter-of-fact, it was so bad, ... the student lounge was a basement room, in the basement, literally. ... It was a stimulating intellectual experience, and I was older and more experienced than almost all the students there. By the time I got there, in 1949, I was twenty-seven years old. I'd been out of college seven years, had five years in the Navy, been in a war. Everybody else was [younger], for the most part. Because of that two-year gap, the GI Bill had run its extent through. There were a few seniors that were there when I got there who were still under [the] GI Bill, but very few freshmen. ... That flux had come through already. So, there were only a couple other vets there. I was just a "grandfather" to most of those guys, [laughter] although I was young, still young. It was a very stimulating experience to me, intellectually, I thought. I just had a good time, met some great guys. We'd study together. One guy was a captain in the Army, in Europe, so, we had some similar lives to exchange, in effect. ...

SI: Was it all men then? Were there women in the classes?

BR: There was one woman in my class, one woman.

SI: Was it mostly a standard curriculum or was there any specialization?

BR: It was all the casebook, the whole traditional Harvard system, no special courses, no how-to-do courses, no practical courses. That came years later, years later. I mean, that was just the traditional Socratic method, [a pedagogical method focused on debate and critical thinking]. ... You had no campus life as a graduate student, there was just none, and there never is in the graduate schools, even today, probably, and particularly if you were older and married, and that's about what it was.

SI: Do any of the professors stand out in your memory?

BR: Yes, they do. There were some very interesting guys. We had a Canadian who was just a terrific professor. ... Their names have escaped me, believe it or not, but I remember their faces and their manner, I remember the whole experience. It was great. I enjoyed it. There was a lot of drudgery, because I was working at the same time and I went full-time. ... They still were doing full-time summer [semesters], so, I got through law school in two-and-a-half years, instead of the three it [normally] took. So, I graduated in February, instead of June. ... It was good. Where was I? I lost my train of thought.

SI: We were just talking about law school and your experiences.

BR: It was good, took the bar exam, and I found out, if I flew up to San Francisco, I could get sworn in six months earlier than if I had to wait. So, I flew up there with those of us who wanted to get sworn in. I was sworn in immediately, went to work under the system that I told you about with (Irwin, Irwin Philip?), and began to practice and, a couple of years later, had a child and another child. ...

SI: How many children did you have?

BR: Had two children by that wife. ... She and I separated. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Okay, I am going to turn the tape back on.

BR: Okay. Well, this will be a quick summary of my life from the time that ... my first wife and I left apart. I had two children by my first wife, remarried for forty years, had three children then. My wife died suddenly of an aneurism, and then, I remarried again, without children, and I'm now living separate from that wife. My three children; I lost my son, at age forty-one, and my wife and my daughter within a twenty-three month period, from 1994 to '96. ... My present wife was a school ... counselor, high school counselor, and a psychologist and we're now separated. That's a pretty good summary of what we did.

SI: Yes. Regarding your law career, what kind of law did you get into, particularly in this early period?

BR: Well, when I started, you took anything that came in the door, really, but, because the man who had taken me into his practice, who later became partners with me, as I described; that was on the record, right?

SI: Yes.

BR: He was a well-known real estate authority, and so, the practice that began to evolve toward me, because of my connection with him, was real estate. Although I did a little of everything, trial work, whatever have you, it slowly evolved into [my] being a real estate lawyer, meaning representing people who are in real estate transactions of all sorts, including large developments, housing tracts, multi-story buildings and all the ramifications of that, including finance and

unions, whatever it was, and particularly the entitlement portion of that, which has become more significant as the decades rolled by. ... As my law firm grew, we added people because of the litigation, particularly, that arose out of that, which I wouldn't handle. ... We became well-known as real estate litigators, litigating issues about tract and housing development, particularly, and then, we branched out and got other disciplines. ... In about 1976, we opened a branch office down in Orange County, which was then the center of a lot of real estate development, and we had a lot of clients down there we had to service and we needed a presence down there, so, we opened that office. ... By the time the late '70s rolled by, we were about sixty lawyers with two offices, and then, ... the firm, as a group, wanted to diversify and wanted to be more involved with the local, primary business in Los Angeles, which was entertainment. We merged with an entertainment law firm that had an office in the same building we were in and an office in New York. So, we acquired them. We had grossed about a hundred lawyers and about two hundred employees in three offices, principal office being Beverly Hills. ... I was the managing partner and later became what was later called the executive director, which put me on a full-time basis, almost ninety percent of my time, in running the firm. ... During that period, the twenty years preceding that, I became very involved in the theory and management of law firms and writing about it. I became very involved with the American Bar Association, began lecturing at various meetings and conventions, began organizing meetings along the lines of law office management, helped organize the law practice management section of the American Bar Association, which didn't exist. It came out of a committee I was on, a standing committee, which I had joined in 1966. I wrote a book on how to manage a law firm, operated from a management point, an operation point of view, which is still in its fourth edition at the American Bar. ... Then, as time went by, my law firm, we ran into economic difficulties in the recession of the '81-'82 period. The law firm dissolved, which was very unusual for a large law firm in those days; it's commonplace today. ... As a result, as time went by, lawyers began inquiring of me primarily because of my management experience with it. "How do you deal with issues like those which arose when we dissolved?" and my practice began to change and, thereafter and to today, ... whenever I practice, I represent lawyers and law firms only. They've come to me with their problems; I organize them, I write their partnership agreements. I've written extensively in the area of that, in local ... and national publications. I've got a website that tells you all about that. It's www.rolston.net, and I'm still an authority in that field and I'm still trying to do that, but, as my age has gone on, my references began to diminish. ... I did other things, and so, I kind of let that practice slip away a little bit, [though, I am] still doing it. Now, I'm reviving it again, began a little advertising campaign in our local bar association magazine, and I'm a substitute judge. I think I told you that earlier, did I not?

SI: Not on the record, if you would like to say something about it for the record.

BR: I was on the record, was I not, with you, on that?

SI: No, that was before we started the interview.

BR: Okay. Anyhow, that's what I do a lot of now. ... Our county has a shortage of judges, only because we don't have the money to fill the vacancies, and so, they have a system for training and educating lawyers to be temporary judges, or substitute judges, which I do now. I work about fourteen sessions to sixteen sessions a month, which ... a half-day session is a session.

Sometimes, it's two sessions a day, in various courts. It's just like being a teacher sub, which I enjoy very, very much. I really like it, great people-watching experience.

SI: Before becoming a substitute judge, in your type of practice, did you have to go to court often?

BR: Hadn't been in a courtroom in many years, but I'm a good public speaker. I've done a lot of public speaking. ... I still think I have maintained my leadership qualities, [from] running a large law firm, so, making decisions about issues, ... and I'm still a pretty good lawyer, I think I can be a pretty fair judge.

SI: Are you politically active at all in your community? Did you get involved in any community type activities?

BR: I did for awhile, not political very much, but one of my specialties, when I was practicing real estate heavily, was [that] I had a very intimate knowledge [of] and connections into the financing of low-income housing. In those days, in the '60s, '70s, the FHA [Federal Housing Administration] was an independent organization. There was no HUD [US Department of Housing and Urban Development]. FHA's now part of HUD, the Housing Authority, and so, I would travel to Washington pretty regularly, and New York, on connection with the financing of multi-family housing, financed, in part, by the guarantees of FHA. As a result, a lot of projects around Southern California, and other parts of the country, are done by my clients. ... I did a lot of work and had a national reputation and I enjoyed it very much, and so, if you talk about community work, a lot of it was for low-income housing. I did a lot of that pro-bono. ... Most of my work was for fee, of course, but the low-income housing I did pro-bono, met some interesting people that way in government, testified before a House committee on ... that legislation.

SI: Was the legislation mostly dealing with making these guarantees available to people with low incomes?

BR: Yes, the FHA legislation that existed in the '60s and '70s, right.

SI: Were you involved at all in establishing the rules that would prevent discrimination in housing?

BR: No, that was done independently, ... but I worked for organizations that did that, like a couple of black organizations, African-American organizations, in Los Angeles. I did their work pro-bono, along with, usually, an African-American co-lawyer, ... who wasn't as experienced as I was in this, and so, I came in as a honcho.

SI: Going back, I wanted to ask you about when you went on your trip across the South in the late 1940s. Do you remember seeing segregation?

BR: Oh, yes. That's what shocked me. ... I had a sense of the segregation pretty much by my travels to Washington, DC. During the war, a couple of times, I was down there, before the war,

a couple of times, because my father went down to see his sister, and Washington was really a black community, a really black, Southern town. You felt it. The speech, the sounds, the mannerisms, the experience was really Southern, but not as Southern as [the] Deep South. It was pretty Southern and, when I took this trip ... to come to California, I went down to Washington, picked up a cousin of mine, who was going out to visit a friend, never been in the war. So, he was a lawyer and he traveled with me and we went down through Virginia and down through Tennessee, on that Route 66, Texas, all those, across the country. ... You're traveling, even in Texas, through the South, in effect, and, boy, the segregation was really [apparent], and the regional foods, and it was so different, so different. My first time I ever saw pecan pie was in Tennessee, Nashville, Tennessee. The lady thought I was an idiot, in this little coffee shop I stopped into. I didn't know what that kind of pie was. [laughter] In a heavy accent, "What, you don't know what kind of pie, boy?" you know, [laughter] really, and the "Whites Only" signs were up. ... We're talking 1946; South was still very much the South, the old South.

SI: Did you ever become involved in any veterans' groups or veterans related projects?

BR: No, too busy raising a family and developing a law practice. I was not very politically active. I'm supportive, but not active.

SI: Is there anything else you wish to discuss?

BR: Whatever is in your protocol.

SI: I think we pretty much covered everything I usually talk about. Let me just check my notes. If there is anything that you think of later on, you can always add that later on.

BR: Were we off the record when I was talking about my sons and what they did?

SI: Yes, we were. Would you like to say a little more about your sons' careers?

BR: Oh, I would, I would like to. ... My first son went to UCLA and wanted to become a lawyer and he went to McGill [University, in Quebec, Canada]. The reason he went to McGill is, he always wanted to practice law in France. He was a Francophile and he had learned to speak [French when] he was in a facility for language. He began to learn to speak and read French while he was at UCLA, because that was a requirement to go to law school at McGill, because they taught both the common law and the civil law, and so, you had to speak French and read French. He graduated from there and he was number two in his class [in] law school, and law review and all that, got a master's at Columbia, went to work for two big law firms down in New York, Coudert Brothers, and then, White & Case, was on track to go to Paris, to ... White & Case's Paris office, which was unusual, and he quit practicing law and went into the art business. My second son ...

SI: Was he the photographer?

BR: No, that was the lawyer. My second son ... is the one who became the photographer, went to Art Center College of Design and has become a world-renowned photographer. He has

photographed almost all the celebrities of old Hollywood and new Hollywood. He's the last portraiture photographer to do a portrait of Michael Jackson. He directs TV commercials and he directs hit music videos. He's still very, very active, very busy. He's fifty-six years old and he's going like a house on fire. This recession has done nothing to him. [laughter] My third son is a social worker in Santa Monica, dealing ... as a manager in an organization that deals with street people problems and drug people coming through the disciplinary system onto the street. My daughter, who died, as well as the first son who died, she was a graduate student. She was getting her doctorate from Northwestern University, was teaching at the University of California, Santa Cruz, when she died. ... My youngest son, the fifth child, is an architect in New York and he's the owner of the house we're sitting in now, that we're [recording in]. I'm very proud of all my kids. Two of my surviving children are gay, both with long-term relationships, seventeen and nineteen years, in separate cases. I have two grandchildren, and that's another story, and they're five years old and two months old.

SI: Thank you very much. I appreciate all of your time. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Okay. This concludes my interview with Berne Rolston on November 23, 2009, in Hillsdale, New York. Thank you very much; I really appreciate this opportunity.

BR: Well, I thank you; I really appreciated the opportunity to do this.

SI: Thank you very much.

BR: Hope I haven't forgotten anything.

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

Reviewed by Sarah Thomson 8/1/10
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/2/10
Reviewed by Berne Rolston 6/14/2022