

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL RORK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Paul Rork on July 18, 1994 at Mahwah, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler. I guess I would like to begin with your family. You had listed on the survey that you had a father who fought in the Civil War, Grandfather, rather.

Paul Rork: Grandfather. Yeah, I had a grandfather who fought in the Civil War. I have his rifle downstairs in the basement, yeah. My father was in the First World War. He was in the D-Class submarines, and he told my mother that he never wanted me to be in the navy. So, when I graduated from Rutgers, I went down to enlist in the navy, to get a commission there, ... in spite of what my father had asked my mother to do. And the line was so long that I said, "I don't want to wait here all day." And someone says, "Go around the corner. There's no long line at the Coast Guard." And that's how I got in the Coast Guard. [laughter]

KP: Your father was a navy man.

PR: Yes.

KP: And when you say he was on a D-Class submarine, was he on a D-Class during World War I?

PR: During World War I.

KP: Had he seen any action, any enemy action?

PR: Yes. But I don't remember ...

KP: He never talked about it?

PR: No, my father died when I was a baby. So I don't, I never talked to my father.

KP: Did he die during the war?

PR: No, no.

KP: What about your grandfather, was he alive?

PR: My grandfather, ... that was my father's father.

KP: Yes, was he alive?

PR: ... No, I never knew him.

KP: Yeah. So you don't have any memories of World War I?

PR: No. No. No.

KP: What did your mother say about your father's service? Did you ever talk about the First World War with her?

PR: The only thing she told me was that he always washed and darned his own socks. [laughter] And ... [she] also ... told me this story. ... They were on a practice dive off of New Hampshire, and the submarine suddenly conked out. It just wouldn't move, and he was an engineer, and the C.O. called him in and told him that they'd have to hit the escape hatches if they couldn't get the engine started. ... He went back to the engine room and took out a New Testament that my mother had given him and started to read. Where? I don't know, but he read from one of the letters from the Apostle Paul and then started to look for the problem. The Lord evidently gave him the answer and the submarine ... was free of the bottom and up they went, and as a result, I was named Paul.

KP: Ah, so that's how you got your first name.

PR: Yes, right.

KP: When did your mother come to the United States?

PR: I think she was thirteen-years-old. ... She was born in 1890, so she came here ... [in] 1903 or so, yeah. I think my grandfather and grandmother came over, maybe, just before she did. But I know they were all over on Ellis Island, on the scrolls over there. ...

KP: So they came to Ellis Island, and they settled in ...

PR: Paterson

KP: Paterson, New Jersey.

PR: Yeah.

KP: You were born in Reading, though. Reading, Pennsylvania.

PR: No, I was born in Paterson, New Jersey.

KP: Oh, okay, yeah. ... But your ...

PR: My father was born in Reading.

KP: And he worked, for a time, in the navy yard.

PR: Yes, he worked after he was discharged from the navy. He worked in the merchant marine and then worked in the navy yard.

KP: And then enlisted in World War I?

PR: Ah, no, that was ...

KP: That was before...

PR: World War I came first, and then came ...

KP: The navy yard.

PR: ... The merchant marine and then the navy yard, [the] Philadelphia Navy Yard.

KP: Do you know how your parents met?

PR: I think they met down in Philadelphia. I remember my mother taking me, after my father died, of course, she took me to a house in Germantown where my father and mother had had a room and introduced me to the people there. ... [They were], evidently, very well aware of the background of my mother and father. But I think they met in that area. Under what conditions, I don't know.

KP: You had listed that your mother worked as a social worker.

PR: Yes.

KP: Did she work for an agency?

PR: No, she worked for the B.P.O.E, that's the "Best People on Earth" or better known as the "Benevolent Protective Order of Elks." And she took care of crippled children, handicapped mentally or physically or both and worked for them for almost twenty years, I guess, right through the Depression. And I, at the time, was not with my mother. My father had died, and he was a Mason in a lodge in Philadelphia, Tacony 600, and the Masons found out that my mother was widowed and having a difficult problem at home and offered to take me off her hands, so to speak, as a guest at the Masonic home in Pennsylvania. So, I lived there as an orphan, or a half-orphan. When I was six, she released me until I went through school, at age eighteen, and applied for a state scholarship at Rutgers, and that's how I ... went to RU.

KP: At Rutgers.

PR: Yeah. She had some connections. People in the Elks who were up in politics and judges and lawyers, accountants. And there was one fellow who was a trustee at Rutgers University. He was Hugh Spernow, was an attorney, and he was an Elk and a friend of my mother's, and he ... helped me get into Rutgers. I had to pass the ... state exam to get a state scholarship, but he brought me right down to Rutgers and took me into the Kappa Sigma house before school opened and ...

KP: So, that's why you joined Kappa Sigma?

PR: Oh, yeah. Otto Hill and Vinny Utz and I were ... in the fraternity house before school opened. The only freshmen on the whole campus. Nobody joined a fraternity in the history of Rutgers as a freshman, that early, but we were there. They were football players, and I knew somebody. [laughter]

KP: Now, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

PR: ... I was an only child.

KP: Your mother had a tough time during the Great Depression.

PR: Yes, she had a tough time because she was taking care of her mother and father, too, who were becoming of age, and they couldn't work any longer.

KP: What was it like to grow up in the Masonic home?

PR: Oh, it was a privilege. It was great. People said, "Oh, you poor soul." ... Look, if you've ever been to Blair Academy or Princeton, our place was just as beautiful. They took them from the cradle to the grave. This was the largest Masonic home in the world, and we had everything. Depression was a name, a word I could hardly spell. We had everything we needed. Never knew there was a Depression. And we had a good education. At the end of my tenth year in high school, I was supposed to finish high school and then, ... the Masons would have then sent you to college. But my mother said, "No." I had an option to learn a trade. They had their own vocational school. I would take the last three years. Instead of two years of high school, I would finish my two years in three years and learn a trade. So the Masons had their own vocational school called Patton School. And I went to the Patton School and finished as a brick layer/tile setter, all kinds of stone work, and then had high academic achievements there. A side note: here we are in 1994, and just last night I talked to one of my favorite instructors at the Patton School just to see how he's doing. We see him every winter in Florida.

KP: How old is he?

PR: He's eighty-eight. And ... he was not only an instructor, he was a coach of most of the sports, (Red Angstat?).

KP: So you could have just become a mason. Had you really thought of becoming a mason/stone worker?

PR: No. My mother said to me, "You should learn the trade. If you have to use the trade, you'll have one, and you'll be successful at it. If you finish college, you will then have the opportunity to be one of the few people who really understands what the other side looks like, to work with your hands, and you'll appreciate those people more." I did a few jobs for my mother at home, but I never worked.

KP: You never, you just ...

PR: No, I never worked as a stone mason, no.

KP: How crucial was the state scholarship for you? Had you thought of going to other schools?

PR: No, I only thought of Rutgers. That's all my mother talked about. She was sort of brainwashed by these people in the Elks who were Rutgers graduates, especially this one fellow who then became a ... member of the board. And that's the only one I ever, the only school I ever thought about. And if I didn't have a state scholarship, I would have never gone to college. And, besides the state scholarship, I worked in a fraternity house. I waited on tables. I washed dishes. I became treasurer for my board. And I had a N.Y.A. job, National Youth Administration; thirty hours a month I worked for a professor at the School of Education and got ten dollars a month, and I was living high on the hog. And my mother had died in my sophomore year and left a very, very small estate that was handled by one of the people who was influential at getting me into Rutgers. ... He was a judge in Newark and, once a month, I would drive up to Newark and report in to his courtroom. He would adjourn the court and bring me into his private chambers, and we would talk about what happened in the last month. And he would give me my ten dollar a month allowance. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned earlier that even before you had come to school, you were already in the fraternity.

PR: No, I lived in a fraternity house.

KP: You lived in a fraternity house.

PR: But then, when school opened, when they started to pledge, they, of course, we were, it was quite obvious that Vinny Utz and Otto Hill and I would be pledged to the Kappa Sig house. And then, when the second semester started, they had the initiation. My mother, sort of, I don't know how she did it, but she scraped together the seventy-five dollars it took ... to become a member of the Kappa Sigma fraternity.

KP: And so you lived in the fraternity house?

PR: I lived in the fraternity house for four years. I lived, ... it was kind of regimented there. ... Not like the Masonic home where we lived in sort of like dormitories, just two or three to a room, and we marched everywhere we went. We were regimented that way, so I had that discipline. And in the fraternity house, ... I'm sure looking back on it, it was much more disciplined because of the upper-classmen, especially, and ... the alumni supervisor, than it would be in a dorm. I think I would have been lost in a dorm.

KP: Really.

PR: Yeah, yeah. ... There would be no discipline. And I was in this rut. I loved discipline.

KP: Now you said you had the unusual experience of being a first-year student and joining a fraternity, living in the fraternity house, even before you got on campus. How did you see the divisions on campus? A lot of people have commented. One of the divisions is the fraternities and non-fraternities and the commuters and the non-commuters.

PR: Well, I had ... an experience before I went to Rutgers. I had applied, and I was invited by the Chi Phi house to come down to prep-school weekend. So I had spent a long weekend in a fraternity house. ... Fraternities then were neat, clean, and everybody was dressed well, and it really made an impression on me. And, when I was in the Kappa Sig house, ... immediately I thought the fraternities were the best thing that was ever invented. And we had many commuters. My best friend was a commuter, ... (Dave Bevan?), a commuter from ... Highland Park. ... We had lots of commuters, then. And we had no problem. We were all fraternity brothers.

KP: So you had members of the house that did not live there then?

PR: Oh, yes, yes. I would say one-third were commuters, yeah.

KP: You served in R.O.T.C. for two years. Did you decide to leave, or did they not accept you?

PR: Well, after two years, I sort of had enough. You know, I was disciplined marching at the Masonic home. We didn't march in step, we ... walked in columns wherever we went. We had our own theater at the Masonic home. We marched there to the chapel. The only place we didn't march, but we started off marching, was to school. We had to go on ... a one mile walk to school, then one mile back for lunch. ... And I figured after two years, I'd had enough R.O.T.C.

KP: You had enough regimentation.

PR: Yeah, at that time. ... I knew what the future was that these fellows would become officers, and I figured I really didn't want to be in the army, anyway.

KP: Okay, because a number of people said that the army, especially after R.O.T.C., definitely didn't appeal to them. And you would be in that group.

PR: Yeah. I enjoyed R.O.T.C. I enjoyed all the marching. I thought that was really fun. And I enjoyed the classes, and I enjoyed the professors, the majors or captains that taught us, but I didn't want any part of the army.

KP: Your mother passed away around the time of the Second World War.

PR: She passed away before that. She passed away my sophomore year in college.

KP: Did she ever talk much about Germany?

PR: Yes, she talked quite a bit about Germany. Talked about her family and the town she came from and all the relatives we had still living over there. And I had a hunger for German. ... The only regret I had was that when I was three-years-old, I spoke no English. I only spoke German. But my mother said, "You have to go to an English school." "*Du Mußt!*" So, I learned English and went to kindergarten. You know when I went to the Masonic home, I was in first grade, but my mother never talked to me in German when she visited me or when I came home on vacation. That's one regret I have, but I took German in college and enjoyed it very much.

KP: In fact, you were a member of the German Club.

PR: I was a member of the German Club. I loved the professors, and ... I got along so well with all of them.

KP: Now, you mentioned that Professor George was your favorite professor.

PR: Yes.

KP: Why does he stick out?

PR: Well, I was a history major. I was just telling my son this morning, he is a dean at Saddle River Day School, and he was a history major. ... When I was in eighth grade, in the civics class, a teacher had given me an "A" in civics. ... I asked to speak with her and asked why she would give me an "A," and she said, "Maybe I shouldn't have given you an "A." However, you have more potential for history and civics and liberal arts and things like that than anybody I've ever taught." ... She encouraged me so much I became a history major.

KP: And you feel like you had the full ball of wax?

PR: Oh, I had everything. Nobody got out of Rutgers what I did. [laughter] So, at Rutgers, I think I took more history credits than anybody before me. Chinese history, history of American agriculture, you name it. And it, it sloughed off to one of my children, too, who is really a good history teacher.

KP: Had you thought of a career in teaching?

PR: Yes, I was in the School of Education, but ... after the war, a classmate of mine called me and said, "Would you like to come down to ... Rutgers to the placement bureau?" And I went down to see, his name was McNeil, and I went down to see him, and he gave me some tests and interviewed me and then made arrangements for me to be interviewed at all the big, well, at least six or seven large companies, in New Jersey, like Public Service and AT&T and Bell Telephone and some other companies, just for practice. So, I never thought of teaching. My wife was a school teacher. But I really never gave it a thought because shortly after that ... I was called for an interview for a job. And I took that job in the insurance business, and then I never gave a second thought to teaching.

KP: After that.

PR: No, never gave it a thought. I taught insurance, but I never taught as an educator.

KP: Do you think the war was central in the fact that you had gotten married and you had children? Or did the war change your outlook?

PR: That's a good question. I think that I saw the restrictions, and I tried to stay in the Coast Guard, but they wouldn't give me the appointment where I wanted it, so I came home. But I saw what meager livings these teachers were making, and I said to myself, "We're going to have a large family." We had one child then. It was born just before I went overseas. And if we're going to have a large family, which we did with seven children, I'm going to have to do something aggressively, and selling, there's no limit. So I wanted to be in the sales, insurance, yeah. Some kind of sales, anyway.

KP: Yes.

PR: Yeah.

KP: Now, you had mentioned that the Depression was for you, in many ways, a name only.

PR: That's all.

KP: When you were at Rutgers, what did you think you would do? You thought you would teach while in school. It was only after the war that you shifted, that your plans changed?

PR: Well, I really wasn't ... over-excited about teaching. I think I wanted to be in School of Journalism. Where I lived in Lancaster County, this was almost Amish Country, the Amish, the Dunkards, and the Mennonites. And in my freshman year, I was called in by my advisor, and he said, "I think you should change your major, unless you're going back to work at a Lancaster County small newspaper. You even write Pennsylvania Dutch, and that's not good. And you should be out of the habit right now. And you talk Pennsylvania Dutch, and you should change your major." And I said, "Well, what do you suggest?" "Well," he said, "I have a record of your aptitude tests, and ... it says here you should be a teacher, a preacher, or a salesman. Now, you can go to Holy Hill Seminary and be a preacher." Which would have been okay, too, they're salesmen, "or sales." So I figured, well, the ... easiest education to get a degree at Rutgers would be in the School of Education, so I did it the easy way, to be honest with you. [laughter]

KP: Did you have any sense of when you felt America's involvement in the Second World War would be inevitable?

PR: I was sitting in my cousin's [house]. My mother had died, and I was living with a cousin, and she had some children. One child, instead of going to college, went into the navy at the same time I went to Rutgers. ... Pearl Harbor hit the day we were listening to the radio, and, of course,

this was not a premonition of the war itself, but then I knew we were in the war. But prior to that, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, I think, hit me that we were going to be in this war.

KP: The *Lusitania* or the *Greer*?

PR: No, the *Lusitania*. The *Lusitania* was supposed to be a vessel that carried passengers, but the Germans found it. We had contraband aboard, and they sunk it. ... According to history, they were right. I don't know if they were right to kill all of those people, but they sunk the *Lusitania*. And then I knew there was going to be a war.

KP: Given your German background, were you concerned when Germany declared war on us, that you could be fighting Germany?

PR: A little bit, a little bit. And when I finished the Coast Guard Academy, received my commission, they immediately gave me a submarine chaser ... in the worst part of the Atlantic. You know, the Hatteras area. ... It's not only bad for seamanship, but it was bad for sinking ships, more ships were sunk off of there, from New Jersey down to off of North Carolina. And I always had little feelings in the back of my subconscious about dropping a depth charge on a German submarine. But, we did, and we had an assist on a German submarine, and that took away that feeling immediately. I felt they were our enemy and ...

KP: And this was what you had to do?

PR: Yeah, that's what I had to do, and it never bothered me.

KP: You mentioned earlier about joining the Coast Guard. You originally wanted the navy and the Coast Guard was the easier option. Where did you enlist?

PR: In New York.

KP: New York.

PR: I signed up in New York City down at 90 Church Street, the Coast Guard headquarters. The navy was right around the corner, but there must have been 150 people in line. The Coast Guard, I walked right up the steps, and he said, "How are you?" [laughter]

KP: Did you have any regrets making the Coast Guard your service?

PR: Oh, no, not at all. I knew the Coast Guard. I had done some reading on the Coast Guard, and I knew that the Coast Guard ... was everywhere anybody was in the war. ... They were the spearhead of all the invasions in the early part of the war, the Coast Guard was mixed in it. And it was small, so I thought I could maybe be a big fish in a small pond, rather than a non-entity. The Coast Guard only had 100,000 total, officers and enlisted men, including the ladies, the SPARS. And the army had over a 100,000 second lieutenants. So you were lost in those big numbers, even in the navy. So I figured I was more comfortable being with a small group. ...

KP: You had done your training at the Coast Guard Academy?

PR: Four months.

KP: What were your experiences there? You had been through R.O.T.C., so you had, sort of, did the military regimentation, but had you, for example, had you sailed before? Sailed on a boat very often?

PR: No, no. But the R.O.T.C. was a lifesaver. ... Most of the officer candidates up there didn't know how to march, so they asked for volunteers, anybody that had R.O.T.C. And my hand went up, and I taught marching. So, that came right back. It didn't haunt me. It was a ... real blessing to be able to do that. And right away I was recognized as one of the instructors, [laughter] especially for the two-left-footed people, but that was a joy. But, other than that, I had never sailed before. At the Coast Guard Academy, however, ... I had the biggest challenge of my life. I have (altriphobia?); I can't climb. I can stand heights. I can fly my own airplane, which I did, but I'm cooped up in a little cabin. But to climb a mast on a big schooner would make me want to jump over. And they said the top five percent of the Coast Guard class would not be on the schooners. They would be on the elite group on submarine chasers, the kind I was given after graduation to command, my first command. So, I did not belong in the top five percent of my class. But I'll tell you, I was in the top two percent for fear.

KP: But you did, in fact, climb those masts?

PR: I never climbed a mast. Never had to because I was with the elite group.

KP: Ah, but if you hadn't been with the elite group, you would have ...

PR: I would have been bilged, as they called it, thrown out of the Coast Guard. But I would have ninety days under my belt,the fellows who couldn't do that, and ... didn't have enough grades to be in the elite group, immediately went down and got commissions in the navy because they had, ... the navy only had a ninety-day school with no practical work, and that's what we did for ninety days. The same education, so you immediately got a navy commission.

KP: So in other words, you were better trained than your navy counterparts?

PR: Oh, yes.

KP: ... The navy's ninety-day wonders were not as ...

PR: We were 120-day wonders, but we did it practically [all]. ... The last month, we were at sea every weekend.

KP: Which, the navy didn't have that?

PR: No, no. Not until later. Then they would send you to school. But we worked with the submarines at the sub base at New London every weekend, yeah.

KP: Are there any other memories you have of training at the academy?

PR: Yes, it was, it was very difficult. Everything was difficult up there. You know, you're up 5:30 in the morning or 6:00 at the latest, doing physical exercises before breakfast and then having your breakfast and going to class. And listening to sonar recordings hour after hour and more physical exercise. It was like a boot camp. ... But to look back on it, it was a great, great experience. ... And I was so proud to have my first uniform, which was a ... seaman's uniform, but with cadet stripes on it. So, I knew I wasn't an enlisted man. But I was in between. I wasn't anything. I was just a cadet.

KP: The Coast Guard is a very small service. In training, how did the regular Coast Guard, the prewar Coast Guard view you? You were the 120-day wonders. Was there tension between or was it the fact that the Coast Guard was so small that it did not make much difference?

PR: ... When I took command, the chief on this ... on this sub chaser, had more years in the Coast Guard, than I was old. He had twenty-five years in the Coast Guard, Chief (Hodorowsky?), and I was twenty-three-years-old. And he called the people together. He was in command, just for a month or so, until they got their commanding officer, and he read the riot act to them. ... He said, "There's no more goofing off now. We got a regular old man aboard now." The old man, twenty-three-years-old. [laughter] And they respected me like I was God. I was an officer, and maybe more so than the navy would have, but in the Coast Guard ...

KP: So your chief was really helpful to you?

PR: Oh, my chief was, the chief anywhere was worth his weight in gold, but my chief ...

KP: There was never a question of authority?

PR: Oh, no. No. No. No. He grew up in the Coast Guard and became a chief, and he was ... a chief for many years. And he respected the rank. ... Of course, my wife and his wife became very good friends, so that ... didn't hurt much! [laughter]

KP: You were given a command right out of your training.

PR: Yes. ...

KP: Were you prepared for it?

PR: Yes, I was prepared for it. We had, I had four weekends there, and when they told me that I was in command, I just took it for granted that I was in command. But I had a good captain. We were at a navy base in Moorhead City, North Carolina, where we now have a condo. That's how much I liked it down there. But he called me in one day. He called me in several times and

asked me how I was doing, and he said, .. I remember him telling me this, “If your crew isn't continually bitching, you better hold onto the railing. A quiet crew, is a crew you don't want. You want them forever bitching, complaining all the time, then they're happy.” And he would call me in every month and say, “They still bitching, Rork?” [laughter] I'll never forget that. ... And I think that's the most helpful advise I ever had in the Coast Guard.

KP: Joe McCartney talked about his experience on a sub chaser, and that it's very small. How large was your sub chaser?

PR: Eighty-three feet long; it was wooden. I should have bought stock in Nabisco because, ... I was so sick, so many times, running up that Hatteras run, that I lived on crackers and apples. Unless the winds were blowing the other way. ... But I was a sick dog, yeah.

KP: So you got seasick quite often?

PR: Oh, did I get seasick. And ... I was seasick at the Coast Guard Academy, and my fitness report said, “Not recommended for sea duty.” But like the army, if you're not recommended for something, that's what you're going to get.

KP: Were you the only officer?

PR: I was the only officer. One officer and a ...

KP: And a chief?

PR: And a chief, yes.

KP: And then, how many crewmen?

PR: Fifteen.

KP: Fifteen. It's very small.

PR: It's very small and very crowded. The Chief and I slept in the forward compartment, and the crew slept in the crew's quarters. We ate there and had a cook and had a gunner's mate, machinists' mates, boatswains' mates, sonar operators because we had sonar gear, and we were listening for submarines. And ... always thought that if I ever heard a submarine, I'd be the first one ashore. I was heading for shore. But it didn't work out that way. We got a sounding on what I thought was a submarine [and] called the base. There was a destroyer ... nearby, and I think he did all the work, but we got an assist.

KP: How long had you been on your sub chaser when you heard this submarine on sonar?

PR: Oh, I would say about five months. Yeah. But I could hear those “pings” in my sleep because we heard them for hour after hour after hour at the Coast Guard Academy. The Doppler,

bing-bing-bing. And then, you had to time it and find out where it was. And, down there, they had menhaden fish, and menhaden swim in schools of millions.

KP: So that can throw off the sonar?

PR: ... It sounds just like a submarine. They change course by the millions, and you'd think it's solid.

KP: Had you ever depth charged a school of fish?

PR: On a patrol once, a fraternity [brother] of mine at Rutgers, Vance Kniffin, was with me, and I was the senior officer present, so he and I took ... a merchant ship up to Norfolk and came back. And I told him, I said, "Vance, there are no submarines in the area," because we had a special message to that effect. "Don't drop any ... depth charges. It's probably menhaden." Well, at 5:00 in the morning, this tremendous bang went off, almost knocked me out of my socks. And I got on the line, with the light, with him. I could operate one of those signal lights even though I wasn't a signal man. And what happened. He said, "Well, we had a perfect sound, ... it happened so fast, I couldn't even call you." But I had to write the report, so I confirmed it all. You know, my fraternity brother. Not only a Rutgers man, my fraternity brother. [laughter]

KP: But he had really killed a bunch of fish?

PR: Oh, you should have seen the surface.

KP: They just bobbed all over?

PR: Oh, it was a riot, yeah!

KP: Now, ... at one point in your Atlantic service, you had rescued some people in a storm.

PR: Yes. ... A ship was floundering and these people were in lifeboats. A lot of them were just floating on ... jettison, which is just garbage in the sea that you can hold onto. And we were, we received a radio message, and they gave us the coordinates, the latitude and longitude, and we went full blast over there and were fortunate enough that nobody died.

KP: Had the ship been hit by a storm or by a submarine?

PR: No, by a storm.

KP: People who have been in the navy have said that they feared the weather, in some ways, more than the enemy, especially in terms of hurricanes and typhoons.

PR: Oh, yeah, typhoons and hurricanes. Typhoons were in the South Pacific. We rode out five typhoons in the South Pacific, and it was a conning station. We're jumping ahead a little bit, but the conning station on a LST which ... I served on later, was forty feet off the water. And, during

this typhoon, which I think to this date was the worst typhoon that ever hit the Pacific, the typhoon, the waves were so big that they were coming by us forty feet over our head. But we were in a LST and had a flat bottom. And that was like a cork. It would roll in a toilet bowl! [laughter] So we were, I wasn't a bit concerned about the ship breaking up. The bigger ships broke up. ... We were 327 ft. long, and there was a 325 ft. section of a cruiser that snapped right off. Fortunately, ... it had watertight integrity. All of the watertight doors were ...

KP: ... Held ...

PR: Held. And the bow just floated out there until they could tug it to Pearl Harbor. No, the weather was fearsome, yeah.

KP: What about the Atlantic?

PR: Oh, the Atlantic was, I never had anything that severe or a hurricane or anything. But, it was enough to make me sick. I was never sick on a LST.

KP: Really?

PR: It was the gasoline fumes, I think, because I've never been sick on a boat since, but the gasoline fumes.

KP: On your Coast Guard sub chaser?

PR: On the Coast Guard Cutter, yeah. In the Pacific on a LST it was diesel, yeah.

KP: How interesting. Do you have any other memories, things that stick out in terms of your Atlantic service aboard ship? Any problems with the crew? You said, they complained a lot.

PR: Well, ... I found the crew gambling one day. And I picked up the pot, and gambling was *verboden*, forbidden. And I picked up the pot and told them to read the regs, the regulations. This is a court-martial offense. But I let them sweat it out for a couple of weeks. But the money went into the ship's pot. And another time a fellow ... was confined to the ship. He had done something, and the chief reprimanded him, and, then, he was brought up to the captain's mast, they called it. It's not a court-martial, but the mast. ... And they both gave me their side, and ... I told him he could not have any liberty for a week. And his wife was in town, and he sneaked off one night. My wife and I happened to go to the same place he was. And there again, I let him sweat that one out for a month. And the whole crew, you know, they didn't know what I was going to do, you know? But ...

KP: What did you end up doing?

PR: ... I end[ed] up ... taking him to dinner with his wife. [laughter] Because my wife was very sympathetic, and she influenced me in a lot of these decisions. ... Another thing had happened, not on a ship, but at the naval base there, the section base, they called it. I went to get some

supplies and there was an old navy chief in there, and he was wearing submarine bars. And I said, "Hi, Chief. You know, I see you were in the submarine service." He says, "Yep." I said, "My Dad was in the submarine service." He said, "No kidding, ... what ship? ... What boat?" I said, "The D-3." He said, "Say that again." "The D-3." He said, "I served on the D-3." Now, remember, I never saw my father alive. He died when I was a baby. He said, "Who was your father?" I said, "My father was Rork." "You mean 'Red' was your father?" He had red hair. This guy knew my father like a best friend. And he told me all about my father. He confirmed the story about the submarine and the

KP: ... and the name Paul.

PR: Yeah. ...

KP: What else did he say about your father?

PR: Well, he just thought he was the greatest, you know. And I walked out of that place about two feet off the ground, you know. I had just met my father. Yeah.

KP: How long would you be out on sea with your sub chaser? How many days in port?

PR: We didn't carry much fuel. And we were on standby one day, at sea another day, and we came in the third day. We were only at sea twenty-four hours because of the fuel capacity. And Vance Kniffin, that I mentioned before, took his eight-three-foot cutter, and they gave him orders to go to Manila to fight the Japanese submarines in the Philippine area. And the captain called him in and said, "He would be patrolling with a destroyer for five days." He said, "But I can only patrol one day. I'll run out of gas." He said, "Ah, come on, you know" Well, they towed him in. [laughter] He then became the captain's barge, so to speak. The captain would inspect all of the ships on the eight-three-footer. In fact, he would take the patrols. It was his play toy. And we hit the Philippines, and there was this eight-three-footer. And Vance was still aboard with his original crew.

KP: So, they took them from the Atlantic and sent ...

PR: Yep, put it on a Liberty ship and took it to the Pacific.

KP: What year was that?

PR: That was in 1944. ...

KP: Had you ever seen any freighters hit by a U-boat?

PR: No, never.

KP: Any wreckage ever that you would come across during patrols?

PR: No. Some ... C.A.P. pilots went down, and we rescued C.A.P. pilots, "Civil Air Patrol." Some we didn't rescue. We just found the remains of their bodies after the sharks had gotten them, and we brought them aboard. One, that was a frightful scene, to see a body chewed apart by a shark, but we didn't get him safely. But I never saw a ship hit. No.

KP: Did you have any responsibility for enforcing blackout restrictions?

PR: Oh, yes. Same as on the beach. Yeah. Everybody had the blackout restrictions, and you might be riding along the beach, and you couldn't even see the beach because it was so black. And we never showed a light. The only lights we showed were red lights and the running lights, the green and the red. The green was on the starboard side, and the red was on the port side.

KP: So the areas you patrolled, you did not have a problem with civilians and their lights?

PR: No. No, not at all.

KP: Because I know in parts of the Jersey shore they were a real problem.

PR: Yeah, we weren't in New Jersey, though. We were in North Carolina.

KP: You were married to your first wife during the war?

PR: Yeah.

KP: How did that come about? Where did you meet? Did you meet at some Rutgers function or?

PR: No, I was married to a little girl genius. She finished Newark State Teacher's College. ...

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KP: Could you continue on about meeting your first wife?

PR: ... Yes. Her name was Ruth Buller, and we met at Camp Hope, where she was a counselor, and I was a latrine digger, or whatever. [I] had to make up, ... get the camp ready and close up the camp, and we met there. She had just finished college, and I was just going into my sophomore year. But I fell madly in love with her. And fortunately, she reciprocated. So, from then on, it was, she was my Kappa Sigma ... sweetheart. So she came down to the Soph Hop that year, and I took her over to the School of Education porch. ... We sat on the steps, and I took my fraternity pin, and I said, "Sweetheart, I'd like ... you to wear my fraternity pin." And she really called my bluff. She said, "Do you know what this means?" I said, "Yes, you're my girl." And she said, "No, that's not what it means. This is a substitution for an engagement ring because you're still in school and you can't afford an engagement ring. But the giving of a fraternity pin is a pledge that we will be forever together." And I said, "That's fine with me. ... Will you please wear my fraternity pin?" She said, "It would be a pleasure." And from then on, we were literally

engaged. ... She came down to every Rutgers function for three years, and then after, when I went to the Coast Guard Academy, she would visit me up there.

And I got my first command at Moorhead City, North Carolina. We had planned to be married as soon as we could, and we were married that April. I received my commission in 1942 and in 1943, in April, we were married.

KP: And you had an apartment in Moorhead City?

PR: ... We had a cottage on the beach, at Atlantic Beach, and it was terrific. ... Great honeymoon. And it was pretty. It was kind of expensive, but it was nice. So, Vance, my old buddy Vance Kniffin, was quite wealthy. His father was the president of a bank in Long Island, and Vance said, "If you want me to rent one of your rooms, I'll be glad to. It'll help you out." And Ruthie says, "Fine." You know, we knew Vance from way back. So he helped out.

KP: Did he stay with you?

PR: He stayed with us, yeah. It was terrific. ...

KP: Before the war had come about, how far had you traveled? What's the farthest south you had gotten before 1942?

PR: ... My mother ... had *wanderlust* a little bit, and she used to take me places, like a cruise to Chicago on the Great Lakes steamer, the S.S. *South American*. [I] went to the World's Fair in Chicago in 1933.

KP: So, you traveled quite a bit before the war?

PR: ... For someone in my position, being at the Masonic Home and only having a little time in the summer, my mother made the best of it. ... [She] took me places. I was in Charlotte, North Carolina. That's about as far south as I ever went.

KP: Had you traveled in New England?

PR: [I had] never been to New England, no.

KP: So you had been to Chicago, and you had been to North Carolina?

PR: Yeah, yeah. [I had] been to Chicago, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit on that cruise, Mackinac Island, but ... never any other places. But enough, for ... Oh, yes, I went to California [and] back on a Greyhound bus when I was fifteen-years-old. Alone.

KP: How was that?

PR: That was something. That was one of the great experiences of my life. Alone, fifteen-years-old. ... Fortunately, we had friends in Chicago. My mother coming over from Germany,

[had] met this fellow, Fred Marks, on the ship, and they became friends, and they corresponded. We visited them a couple of times. And with my grandfather, also. ... Then, ... I stayed, on the way to California, stayed at their house for a couple of weeks, continued on the Greyhound, and, coming back, I stayed another week on the way home. And then went back to New Jersey on the Greyhound. A great experience for a fifteen-year-old. [laughter]

KP: What do you remember from this trip?

PR: That trip? I remember almost everything about that trip.

KP: What struck you about the country? What sticks out?

PR: It was so phenomenal to go through the wheat fields and the corn fields out West. I didn't think we'd ever finish. And then when we went through the desert, I thought, wow, ... Death Valley. On the Greyhound bus in those days with no air conditioning. Oh, ... but ... I remember that vividly. That whole trip.

KP: And when you were in California, where did you go?

PR: We had this friend, my mother had done them a favor, so they wanted to reciprocate, and they invited both of us out, but ... my mother couldn't make it. But I ... stayed in Long Beach and, from there, they had some connections up in Hollywood. I've been to Hollywood several times and went to a private viewing, had big directors, private little viewing room to see a new movie coming out and went down to San Diego to not only the zoo, which was open back in those days, ... that was about 1935 or so, but went down to San Diego to see a concert in that big auditorium they have outside. Oh, I remember a lot about that trip. Riding on the red train to L.A., playing tennis a lot out there. Yeah, that was a ...

KP: So, it left a big impression?

PR: Oh, yes. So did that trip on the S.S. *South America*. Yeah. All the good things in life, and I had very few bad things in life, leave great impressions in the front of my lobes. [laughter] I can remember.

KP: ... From the California trip, is that where you got your tennis playing? Had you played tennis before you had gone to California?

PR: When I was at the Masonic Home, we decided to build a tennis court and we, by hand, built a tennis court. We didn't have much ... choice to do it. As a matter-of-fact, in the right-hand corner of the area was a rock that we couldn't move, so it stayed there forever. We had to run around it. But we learned to play tennis there, a little bit. But I never played serious tennis until I went to Patton School. And Warren, that fellow I told you about, he was eighty-eight-years-old, ... was the county champion, and he ended up to be the ... all-navy champion. ... He was an excellent player and a good instructor. And he encouraged me and encouraged my mother to get me some lessons, which she did in the summer in the Bronx. And I stayed with friends in

Brooklyn, commuted an hour and a half on the subway and elevated to take an hour lesson. ... Again, if somebody motivates you properly, and he told me, I was going to make it, and I did, in tennis. I played the circuit. I built an indoor tennis center after the war. First one in New Jersey. Fifth one in the United States. Before all the tennis centers opened, I built the first one.

KP: Where did you build it?

PR: Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. Right on Route 17. ... We've had great exhibitions, all the great players. I knew them all by name, ... including Arthur Ashe and Clark Graebner.

KP: Is the center still there?

PR: I sold it with my swim club, and it was then turned over. The people who bought it have just recently released it to an indoor go-cart place, believe it or not. [laughter] They're running go-carts on the tennis courts.

KP: You had moved to North Carolina. What struck you about the South? You had traveled a good part of the country, coming from the North.

PR: I ... couldn't quite get used to the discrimination against, not only the blacks, especially the blacks, but the poor whites. And I really couldn't handle that and neither could my wife. She was really upset about that, so, the discrimination. After the war, we bought a house in Florida. We used to drive down with our children, and as soon as you hit the Mason-Dixon line, it was colored here and white here. And my children went all through that. Fortunately, they saw it firsthand ... because they would have been told about it and wouldn't believe it. But that was the impression I received in the South. I really didn't like it too much. I liked the people, who were very nice, but not when it came to the "inferior." ... They treated them like dirt, ... and I didn't like that. I wasn't used to that coming from the New Jersey area. We never had that. I had very good friends at school who were black.

KP: At which school?

PR: At Rutgers. There wasn't a black in the whole area at the Masonic Home. There weren't any blacks there, but at Rutgers, we had blacks and they were good friends.

KP: What else struck you about the South? You had a wonderful place on the beach.

PR: Oh, yeah.

KP: What about the food, and the fish and the shrimp?

PR: ... They had a restaurant that opened just before I arrived. It opened, maybe, two years before, called the Sanitary Fish Market/Restaurant. It only had twenty-three seats, now it seats about 400. And we used to go there because it was such a neat place to eat. Fish right out of the water and shrimp right out of the water. And to this day, I claim I'm the oldest ... customer, and I

challenge the owner, whenever I go down, to introduce me to somebody. He introduced me to somebody ... who ... had eaten there the same year I did, 1942, but he's the only one. ... And they can't believe this Yankee ...

KP: Who keeps coming back.

PR: [laughter] Yeah.

KP: You had attended fire fighting school?

PR: Oh, yes.

KP: When did you attend that?

PR: That was a great experience. Fire fighting school was at Fort McHenry, where the *Star Spangled Banner* was written. And the Coast Guard had their own fire fighting school. In fact, the navy then patterned their schools after the Coast Guard. They were the first ones. This was really exciting. We would have to really go right into a burning building to put the fire out. ... Fire is probably the worst thing that could happen to a ship at sea. It's frightful. You know, worse than weather. You can ride out weather, but sometimes you can't put out a fire and you're finished. So we had a complete course in fire fighting, including going into this building without any suits on and just with a man behind you cooling you down ... with huge volumes of spray, and you with a hose trying to put out the fire. So, it was a little scary, but I figured everybody else finished, and nobody got hurt, so I'm just going in to have fun. ... So that was two weeks there.

KP: This was after your ...

PR: After the eight-three-footer experience. Yeah, I went to fire fighting school.

KP: Were they envisioning you in a new assignment after the sub chasers?

PR: Yes, they were getting me ready for a new assignment, and this was part of it. And then I had to teach my crew everything that I learned. ... But ... that experience stayed with me, and I could still appreciate the work. I think I could still go out and fight a fire.

KP: How did the Coast Guard come to send you from the Atlantic to the Pacific? To an LST?

PR: I guess, I don't know if they had computers then, or they flipped coins. But ...

KP: You hadn't requested a shift?

PR: No, I didn't request it. I was just waiting for an assignment and the next assignment was amphibious training school in Norfolk, and the crew was already made up, and we all met there. That's the first time we ever met, and the officers went to their schools, and the enlisted men,

depending on what their ranks, their ratings were, whether they were machinist mates, ... and they were all being trained to operate LSTs, in our case. Yeah, LSTs.

KP: So, you hadn't requested this; you would have been happy serving out the war on your sub chaser?

PR: No, I don't think so. I had enough of that.

KP: So, even though you hadn't sought out an assignment, you were ready for something different?

PR: Yes, well, the way the Coast Guard worked, ... they had so many complements at different positions that they were responsible for, and they just looked at the numbers, who wasn't doing anything right now, except going to school, maybe, and when the school was over, you were assigned accordingly.

KP: You shifted theaters to an LST, and I guess I want to start, in terms of the LST, what was your commander like, Lieutenant Kane?

PR: Oh, Lieutenant Kane. He was a good seaman.

KP: Now, was he regular Coast Guard?

PR: No, he was reserve.

KP: Was your crew Coast Guard?

PR: All Coast Guard crew. I think that ship was manned by about ninety-five percent reserves and five percent regular Coast Guard. So we were really neophytes on the LST. The LST experience started in Pittsburgh. ... We went ... from Camp Braddock, to Norfolk, to Pittsburgh by train, and we did some more training there, but we went to Pittsburgh to pick up our ship. Our ship was built at Dravo Shipyards. And the crew picked up the ship there, with the pilot, and we spent ten days going down from the Monongahela to the Allegheny into the Ohio at Three Rivers, where Three River Stadium is at Pittsburgh. And we took ten days to go down. It was quite an experience, which nobody could duplicate today because we went through fifty-two locks on the Ohio River alone. Now, I think, they have two. Each lock was more beautiful than the next. The Coast Guard was in charge of all these lock keepers and these lock keepers took such pride in their little gardens and their houses and their locks. ... We went through fifty-two of those with the pilot and then went, at Cairo, we met the Mississippi and continued on to New Orleans.

KP: So you took a very traditional route from Pittsburgh to New Orleans?

PR: ... Oh, yeah. We were busy doing inventory and learning navigation a little more on the ship and learning how the ship operated.

KP: You went from a very small ship to a larger ship? How large was the crew on your LST?

PR: We had 130.

KP: And how many were officers?

PR: We had, I think, seven officers and 130 crew.

KP: This was a big ship for you?

PR: Oh, yeah, it was overwhelming, yeah.

KP: Because, first of all, you're no longer commander which ...

PR: No, I was a first lieutenant, which was a name that they used in the service, in the navy and the Coast Guard, as the deck officer.

KP: Did it feel strange not being commander?

PR: No, no, no. I would rather not have been in command. ... I was not qualified to command that ship.

KP: The navy people have mentioned, for example, that in many ways, it's the executive officer who runs a navy ship, but that the captain is always responsible. Also, that the captain eats alone, he doesn't eat with his other officers. Is that the case with the Coast Guard?

PR: Not on an LST. We only had seven officers, so we'd eat together in the ward room, but ... we had the right protocol, you know. The captain was at the head of the table, the executive officer to his right, and the deck officer. I was third in command. I was towards the left, and then it went down depending on what your rank was. But ... we all ate together, and the captain ran the ship. Actually, the exec, in this case, did not have that much responsibility. He was the oldest member of the ship, became a very good friend, but he was really not qualified to run a ship. He had never been to sea. He was a captain of the park police in Washington, D.C. But Captain Kane was really good.

KP: And he was reserve?

PR: He was strictly reserve. All the officers were reserve.

KP: What was his background before the war?

PR: He was in the insurance business, as I was going to be. He was in the insurance business, and he had his own boat, and he sailed a lot, and he raced.

KP: So, he was in many ways very well prepared for this stuff?

PR: Oh, yes. He understood navigation, seamanship. ... He was good.

KP: What was the crew like? This was a much bigger crew, so ...

PR: Well, the crew, ... we had the blacks in the crew that waited on tables.

KP: So, they were strictly stewards?

PR: Stewards, stewards mates, right. So, here was discrimination again. Not as bad as it was in North Carolina because nobody would, even the southerners, wouldn't treat them, call them nigger or anything like that, but the way they did and still do, by the way, ... down in the South. But ... the ship was a big, happy family almost from the beginning. We had a few trouble-makers that we got rid of.

KP: You said you had some trouble-makers, how did they ...

PR: Oh, trouble-makers, rather.

KP: Trouble-makers.

PR: Well, just, they were always disobeying and not doing what they were supposed to. And the word would get out that their superior would tell them, and then it wouldn't do any good, and they would tell a chief, and a chief would bring them up. And after a couple of times, the captain would just call the Coast Guard and tell them the problem and ask for a replacement. But I think we only had two or three that way. Got rid of them early.

KP: Now, when you had gotten out to New Orleans, how did you get out to the Pacific? What was the route that you took? Did you take the Panama Canal?

PR: Yes, we did. We had to do our training, ... what they called a "shakedown" cruise. Every ship has a "shakedown" cruise, and we went to Panama City for the "shakedown" cruise. And we had some professional pilots aboard who were used to LSTs, teaching the skipper all of the nuisances of operating an LST, and dropping a stern anchor. When you were making a beaching, you had to drop a stern anchor as you ran up on the beach to keep the ship straight. And ... he was the only one who did that. The exec did a few just in case of an emergency. ... We took care of our own little duties. I did a lot of target shooting ... off of Panama City. Then we went back to ... New Orleans. My wife was down there to wish me "Bon Voyage," so that was great. ... Ate in Galatois restaurant, which we still eat in. [laughter] So I like New Orleans.

KP: Had this been your first experience in New Orleans?

PR: Oh, yes, yes. But, since then, I've been there several times. Saw that Rutgers played football down there against Tulane, indoors, in that big dome they have. We went down to

Mardi Gras once. Oh, yeah, I like New Orleans. Love it. ... From there we went down to the Panama Canal. And we went through the Panama Canal, up the coast of Mexico to San Pedro, California. ... We were there a couple of days. ... [Then] I picked up my cocker spaniel and took her with me.

KP: Was that usual? Did most ships do this?

PR: No. Nobody had a dog. Or maybe they picked up one. But Captain Kane had a cocker spaniel at home. I said, "Captain, you have a cocker at home, and I have a cocker at home. ... I see an ad in the paper. There's a kennel here in North Hollywood. How about my calling them?" And he said, "Okay, go get it." So we brought her aboard. She was six weeks old.

KP: And how did she adjust to the ship?

PR: Oh, it was terrific. She became a case history in the veterinary legends. ... Not the crew, but the army or the marines that were aboard, would smoke and throw their butts over the side, but didn't know the lee side from the windward side, and the butts would fly back on the deck and Inky would come over to a butt and sniff it. It would burn her nose. She would knock off the ash and eat the cigarette, literally eat it. And she did this for over two and a half years. And when she had her puppies, and when we brought them home, the veterinarian called me over, and he said, "You have to tell me the history of this dog." I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "There's not a worm in any puppy."

KP: Really?

PR: Yeah.

KP: That's interesting.

PR: ... He said, "Tell me what she did." I said, "Well, she was famous for eating cigarettes." "Awww," he said, "You know what a worm capsule is made out of? What kills the worms? Nicotine!" [laughter] He said, "I have to write this up for the Cornell Veterinary Journal." He sent me a copy of it.

KP: Oh, really?

PR: It was published. Yeah. Here she was. We had her dressed up for the picture for the article. I had a uniform made when we came back from the Pacific at a tailor shop, the Coast Guard tailor shop. Made a uniform with a seaman's big collar on it, with her dozen campaign bars on it. [laughter] Yeah, it was great.

KP: When did you pick up your complement of marines that you were to carry over? Was it first in the Philippines?

PR: Well, before we did that, we had to go to Port (Whyaneme?), which was a base on the West Coast where the Seabees headquartered, and we picked up our pontoons. And they were on the sides of the LST. The pontoons were used as bridges. If you couldn't make a beach, you would just tie it to a pontoon and everybody would go unload the tanks or trucks or whatever you had. Then we went. We picked up some troops at Port (Whyaneme?) to take to Pearl, but they were army. And then we picked up more army troops at Pearl after we left Pearl to go down to the Guadalcanal area. Guadalcanal had been secured, however. And we went to Espiritu Santo to unload our ships and unload the complement of army. We didn't pick up marines until we were going into part of the end of the Philippine invasion. And then, the main one was Okinawa. And we would pick up the marines with their buffaloes, which were light tanks, only they would float. And we would practice with them for weeks and weeks. Staged at Ulithi with thousands of other ships and then went in to Okinawa on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1944.

KP: So, the Philippines was ...

PR: That was our first ... taste of combat. The Philippines, yeah.

KP: So, you landed on a hostile beach?

PR: Yes, yeah. We were in Lingayen Bay, and that was the hostile beach we landed on ... with army, however. The marines went in early and the army went in later. Why? I don't know. If it were just trying to take a small island, it was only marines, like some of those terrible invasions they had over there.

KP: Oh, yes, Iwo Jima, for example.

PR: Yeah, Iwo was primarily starting. We staged for Iwo. We started out for Iwo, and we got a message to come back. So we didn't go to Iwo. Then we had more time to work for Okinawa.

KP: When you had soldiers or marines aboard, how did that change the nature of the ship?

PR: Very little. They were very regimented. The servicemen, the marines, or the army, and they had sergeants who kept them in line. They watched movies with us, ... but they had their own chow time, and they had their own, they slept, our crew slept in their quarters, and most of these guys were sleeping on the decks or in trucks or in the tanks, or sleeping anywhere they could find.

KP: So, it was very cramped?

PR: When we were loaded, we would have maybe 300 service combat people aboard, plus all of their equipment. It was really something. You know, you go to Okinawa and there were 2,000 ships there.

KP: The showers and the head, how did they cope? You had 300 ...

PR: It was no problem. We ... divided it by hours and the officers ...

KP: So, you divided it?

PR: Yeah, ... they had their own times. And the officers, the same way, they knew. It fit in, no problem at all. We had our own watches, we had to stand, and they knew what the times were. They just fit in between, no problems.

KP: Did you ever get used to saltwater showers?

PR: We had freshwater showers.

KP: Really?

PR: We had evaporators aboard, and we used to make fresh water.

KP: So, your evaporators were effective enough that you didn't have to depend on ...

PR: Yes. Yeah. Once in a while one would break down, but we had enough talent aboard to keep them in good shape. So we ... always had fresh water. We did take navy showers though, which is getting wet, turn the water off, soap down and rinse off, and get out.

KP: When you went into port, discipline on the ship was very rigid, at least that's what people in the navy have said. What were your experiences when your men went into port? You docked in Hawaii. Did your men ever get into trouble when they were in various ports?

PR: They didn't in Honolulu, and that was the only port we hit.

KP: So, you didn't see any other port, except when it was hostile?

PR: No. Just islands ... or hostile shores. But we never hit a ...

KP: A place where your men could get leave?

PR: No, ... near the end we went to Peking, and the men were all allowed to go to shore there, but nobody got into trouble. I think the MPs brought a couple back that were drunk, but they weren't ... unruly. They were just drunk.

KP: What is your most vivid memory of the war, if you had to pick one defining moment?

PR: [My] most vivid memory was leaving Okinawa to go to Saipan. As we were shuttling for several months to pick up ammunition for five-inch .38 guns for the destroyers that were on picket duty at Okinawa, where the Kamikaze planes would come in and try to sink the ships. The destroyers were out there trying to keep them away, but they ... would run out of ammo, and we had to carry 20,000 tons of ammo on our ship. And we'd come back to Okinawa, and we

unloaded on a destroyer. And they told us that we would make up part of the convoy the next day. And then we got orders within five minutes that the convoy will slow down, and we were to catch it. And this was in the evening, still light. And, as we were going out there, we were at general quarters, and I was standing with the forward ... forty-millimeter crew on the bow of the ship, and one of the men says, "Mr. Rork, look to the starboard, please." And I looked and here comes a torpedo. And I called the captain ... on the intercom and I said, "Torpedo, 500 yards, starboard bow." And he just tried to maneuver, but an LST you can't maneuver that quickly. Fortunately, the Japanese intelligence wasn't too good. If they had shot a torpedo at us when we were loaded, we would have been way down in the water. This time, we were, we only had six feet under us. Six feet to the keel; keel, the flat bottom. And the ... [torpedo], I swear, it went right under my legs and just kept going. It just kept going. ... It wasn't set right. It was set too low. That was vivid. [laughter]

KP: So did you ever sight the submarine?

PR: No.

KP: Did you drop depth charges?

PR: No, no. We were an LST. We didn't have anything to drop. We just had a few guns.

KP: So that was it. So you were really basically a sitting duck?

PR: We were. ... If we'd been loaded, we would have been a memory. [laughter] We had one other one. [It] was a Kamikaze at Okinawa. [It] was diving on the ships, and they were firing like mad. And this guy couldn't get in there, and so it looked like he was almost out of control. And, suddenly, we were off the beach about a half mile, but alone, and he was coming right at us. This was, "May as well pick a LST if I can't get a capital ship." And, suddenly, the deck was full of hail. Actually, it was the ships shooting at this Kamikaze, and all the rounds of ammunition were falling on our ship. And ... "Everybody hit the gun tubs!" Everybody dove in gun tubs, or in the boats or anything. ... This fellow crashed about 100 yards astern of us. So that was the second most vivid. ... We had our only wounded during that experience, that couple minutes it happened. We had six people hit by shrapnel. But nobody serious.

KP: So you never lost anyone on the crew?

PR: No, no.

KP: How scared were you in combat?

PR: ... Well, in that instance, it happened so fast.

KP: That you didn't even have ...

PR: No. And in the other one, oh, ... I didn't think that torpedo would ever get to us. But I could see wake, and I thought to myself, "You'll never make it." You know, it was kind of obvious that ... they knew we were shuttling ammo. But this guy ...

KP: Had miscalculated.

PR: Yeah, ... well, he was just backwards.

KP: In terms of your assaults on the beaches, what was memorable about them? What was the process you went through in terms of each invasion? How did it go at the Philippines and then at Okinawa?

PR: Well, in the Philippines, we went right on the beach. We just, I think the immediate area where we were going in was secured, so we just ran a ship on the beach, dropping the stern anchor, of course, and ... I gave the orders to open the bow doors and lower the ramp.

We had another memorable experience ... when we were in Guadalcanal. We were on the beach, had been at the officers' club, and a bunch of drunken marines were lying on the road or just hanging against a tree by their jeep, and so we pulled up, and we said, "You guys are out of beer?" And they said, "Yeah, we're out of beer." So we said, "You want to make a deal?" They said, "What kind of deal do you have in mind?" "We'll get you eight cases of beer for your jeep. You can just tell your C.O. that somebody stole your jeep." He said, "That sounds good." So we went back to the ship and got eight cases of beer and traded it for the jeep. We were the only LST in the Pacific, and maybe one of the few ships in the Pacific, that had their own private transportation.

KP: So you took this jeep aboard?

PR: We took it aboard, and the machinist mates went over that thing just like a good garage. Repainted it, new engine. [laughter]

KP: All for eight cases of beer?

PR: Eight cases of beer. Yeah.

KP: So, you had beer aboard?

PR: We had beer aboard so that when we had a ship's party before an invasion or after a long trip, we would go to an ... island like Ulithi and have a beer party. I don't think anybody got ...

KP: There was an occasion when drinking was allowed? Under these very limited circumstances.

PR: Oh, yeah. It was locked up, but we had several beer parties for the crew. Yeah.

KP: Okinawa is very memorable in terms of combat. Were there other aspects of the Okinawa invasion that you can recall?

PR: Well, Okinawa ... was very vivid because we put the first people ashore at Okinawa. We hit Red Beach One, and we were the first LSTs to unload. And then they ...

KP: So you were expecting the worst? You were in the first wave?

PR: We were in the first wave, but we didn't know what to expect. We did not know that the Japanese strategy was, let them ... on the island and then sink all the ships and then kill all the men on the island. That was pretty good strategy, but they didn't have enough Kamikazes, and we had too many ships. So, they sunk maybe fifty, but they didn't have enough. It was poor strategy, actually. They didn't have a chance, but we were at Red Beach Three, and we put the buffaloes in the water, and they went ashore with no opposition at all. None at all.

KP: Which was really surprising at the time.

PR: Oh, amazing. Yeah. See, then we had no other equipment aboard. I mean, no other tanks because all of our tank deck was loaded with the buffaloes, which were light tanks, but they would float.

KP: And then after you delivered the men to the beach, you then did ammunition duty.

PR: Then we would form a convoy and go back to Saipan. Yeah.

KP: And that continued until the war ended?

PR: No, no. As a matter-of-fact, when I was at Saipan, my wife's brother, Billy, was in the Fifth Marine Division. He was killed in the final day of the Saipan invasion by marines, by the suicide charge by the Japanese, and he died in the last day, so I got to see his grave there. They brought his body over later to be buried in Paterson. ... Now I lost my track, what was the question?

KP: After Okinawa, and the ferrying of ammunition.

PR: Yeah, ... the war, after that happened, it was announced that the ... atomic bomb fell. Nobody could believe it until the following day when it fell again. And then we believed it and celebrated.

KP: So did you have a beer party to celebrate?

PR: Oh, yes. We had a beer party. It was aboard ship then. ... We're not supposed to do that. But we gave everybody a beer. We were at sea. They got a beer with their dinner. But then we were ordered to go to the Philippines and pick up the Fifth Airborne and take them up ... to Korea. So we were shuttling a couple times from Korea, Inchon, South Korea to the Philippines, bringing up the, I think, ... Fifth Air Force, I'm not sure of that.

KP: So, did you actually go into Inchon or did you just ferry?

PR: No, we went to [Inchon]. ... First, they have some of the highest tides in the world over there. So that was a very ... interesting experience, like going up to Nova Scotia, where they have the fifty-foot tides. Well, they had them almost as much up there. We would go into a dry dock, and we'd be unloading in a dry dock, and then when the tide would change, ... everybody was sitting there just on dry ground. Then when the tide came up again, they'd open up the dry dock and we'd go out. But, then, we would then have to ferry Japanese. We would ferry Chinese, who were used as prisoners and slaves, actually. They were slaves in Korea. We would ferry them to Tsingtau, China. And then in Tsingtau we'd pick up Japanese soldiers and all their equipment, of course, not their guns. And we would bring them to Japan. We went to the southern part of Japan and unloaded them and then went back to Korea and started all over again. So we were ... carrying Japanese troops to Japan and Chinese troops to China. For several months we were doing that. That was interesting. ... The Chinese were so dirty and so unkempt and so undisciplined, but we didn't have any trouble with them. They were just frightened. The Japanese ... weren't braggadocios, but ... they were still feeling their oats, a little bit. But the officers had them under complete control. We ... had built on ... both sides of the ship, so depending on which way the wind was blowing, they wouldn't have any problems; If they had to go to the john. They would have to just stand on the deck ... and go over the side, or, if they had to have a bowel movement, they would sit on these sort of wooden platforms that we had rigged over the side of the ship. And, depending on which way the wind was blowing, they were designated to climb over and sit on the wooden platform and go in the ocean.

KP: This was for both the Japanese and Chinese?

PR: Both Japanese and Chinese.

KP: How many would you ferry?

PR: Several hundred. Several hundred, yeah. But the Japanese were given a big barrel and steam gun, and they would then use the barrel and the steam to cook their rice. Steam their rice and their fish.

KP: Did you ever talk to any of the Japanese officers or men?

PR: No.

KP: So you were really two separate ...

PR: Oh, yeah, yeah. And we had lots of MPs aboard.

KP: What struck you? You got to meet the enemy firsthand, which in the navy and the Coast Guard is harder to do because they are on another ship or they are on the water. What struck you? You had seen the enemy firsthand.

PR: The Japanese, you know, now that the war was over, I didn't have any misgivings about what they did, or what they did to our people. It was all over. Now, it was spilled milk. So we just treated them as cargo. And no bartering, no nothing ... was permitted. The Chinese, I just felt sorry for them. I was glad we were there for the experience to do that. And we went into Inchon ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Paul Rork on July 18, 1994 with Kurt Piehler. So you had this jeep, and you were at Inchon, and you did traveling in the surrounding area?

PR: Yes, we did. We just took turns, ... maybe four officers at a time, riding around the countryside. One of the things I saw which sticks in my craw was the way they, the honey dippers. The honey dippers were people who would carry buckets over their shoulder, ... like a mule with a harness on it. And, they would carry these buckets on their shoulders, and they would go from farm to farm selling what was in the buckets. And they would go to another farm and pick up contents. What it was was human waste, and they used that for fertilizer, and they would fill up these buckets with human waste, and go to the next farm and sell it to somebody that needed the fertilizer. ... It was startling to see, you know.

KP: What else startled you when you used to go inland in Korea, and did you go to other places?

PR: ... Just the style of dress. That was different. The people were altogether different than what we were used to seeing, and we were never really in combat face to face with the enemy, and ... these people looked so different. I remember landing in the Philippines, talking about going ashore. My little girl at that time, ... I'd written to my wife and asked her to give me the number of inches tall she was. It was like somewhere below my hip, and I went into the Philippines, ... it might have been Manila or Quezon City, and ... I found a mother with a little girl, and I asked the mother, she could speak a little English, if the little girl could come over and stand by my side and then take a picture. And she did, and I figured that she was the same as my little girl, who was then two-years-old, and this little girl was seven-years-old. In the Philippines, they were so small, these people. ... But in Korea, I don't think I have too many memories of Korea. We were too anxious. ...

KP: You were anxious to go home?

PR: Yeah. We all had enough points to go home, but we had nobody to relieve us.

KP: Was this a bone of contention for you and the crew?

PR: Yeah. Here we are, qualified to go home, and we had to wait six months, ... and we were eligible. Any other service, they had enough people to relieve them. They were bigger services, but not in the Coast Guard.

KP: This is when the Coast Guard was the smallest?

PR: Yeah, but ... we lived with it. We were getting mail. My wife wrote me a letter every day I was away.

KP: Did you save the letters?

PR: No, we had to burn that one day.

KP: Really?

PR: At home, yeah. I would write to her, ... I would write V-mail to her, and she would write full letters to me, and when we got mail, I might get fifty letters, sixty letters. The big morale booster, plus the dog, was that my wife would send the funny papers from the *Daily News* and the *Mirror*, ... just the funny papers. And she would gather them up in rolls like six, eight, weeks at a time and ship them out to me. And they might be six months old by the time I got them, but I would only open one funny paper a week, on a Sunday, and then I would pass it around in the ward room, and then the crew [would] read it. And one of the worst things that could ever happen [was] if you read the funny paper, and you tore it, boy, you were in trouble! Not with the officers, but the crew themselves. If they couldn't read a funny paper, if somebody tore it, that was terrible. Great for morale though. We were the only ship that had that, too. [laughter]

KP: So on your ship, you had a lot of camaraderie, it sounds like?

PR: Oh, it was great. Yeah. Yeah. That's why we have reunions, yeah. Lots of ships, nobody cared about each other.

KP: Do many LSTs have reunions? I have often heard of big ships having reunions.

PR: Yeah. Well, ... I belong to the LST Association, and I would say they're between the navy and the Coast Guard. There must be a hundred reunions a year, LSTs.

KP: You had said that you had taken a lot of history. Did it prepare you for the world you saw? Especially in the Far East? Did it match your images of China, Korea, and Japan?

PR: No. No, not at all, ... because, unfortunately, we... in China, we were in Tsingtau picking up the Japanese soldiers, and then once we went up the Yellow River, which is really yellow from the mud, to Peking. We then took buses into Peking from the Yellow River, and we stayed in Peking, on liberty, for a day and a night. ... We just came back the following day, but nothing prepared me for anything like that. I saw a lot of interesting things there. ... I used to volunteer for shore patrol. No officer ever did this, but I'm nosy, so I volunteered for shore patrol. I'd go to the shore patrol office, and (Chet?) was always the chief, and he was always so startled to see an officer there. [laughter] But I wanted to see firsthand what life was really like, and he would take me from whorehouse to whorehouse to see these people. And I appreciated that experience because the mothers and fathers would literally sell their daughters, and I was there to inspect

them before. And they were trying to make an impression on me and tell me that, if we send enough men over there, ... [they'd] give them a discount. It would be three dollars for a half hour, or whatever. And they told me that ... when the sailor was finished with the girl, the mother would be making tea for the sailor. And they would really take care of our crew. And, as a matter-of-fact, whenever our crew went ashore, we required them to take a VD kit with them, and when they ... came out of rooms, ... the shore patrol would be sure that they would go in and use the VD equipment, and they'd watch them. We had a couple of people aboard who were very religious. They thought this was an insult. ... You just can't go ashore unless you take it with you.

KP: There were those who did not want to take it for religious reasons?

PR: Yeah, yeah. They were ... Christians, and "We're not going to do anything wrong, so there's no reason for us to carry it." I said, "Well, regulations require it. Take it with you. Don't worry about it." One of them, as a matter-of-fact, became a priest. He was a yeoman ... on the ship. Very nice guy.

KP: Did you have a chaplain aboard your LST?

PR: I was the chaplain. [laughter]

KP: So did you conduct services?

PR: No, but I was known as the chaplain, yeah. So ... if anybody had a real problem, they'd come to me.

KP: For those who were religious, how did they reconcile or how did you reconcile war as killing people and faith?

PR: Never gave it a thought.

KP: Really. You never had the time.

PR: Never gave it a thought. We were ... as the German argument was, we didn't kill anybody. We were only following orders, and really, I must admit that that probably would be my answer, yeah.

KP: That you didn't have any ...

PR: ... It was nothing personal.

KP: Yes.

PR: I wasn't mad at anybody. I was just following orders.

KP: So, you weren't mad at the Japanese?

PR: Well, I was mad at the Japanese until the war ended.

KP: Pearl Harbor?

PR: Oh, yeah.

KP: You had mentioned that you wanted to stay in the Coast Guard?

PR: Yeah. Well, before that, we had to come home.

KP: Yeah. So there is a story in this?

PR: There's a good story here. We left Tsingtau and went back to Pearl, but we stopped at Guam, and we went to the officers' club. And while we were there, having a beer or two, I didn't drink, but I sat with the guys. I didn't drink beer until after the war. Never drank beer in the fraternity house at Rutgers. I was the house mother. I put everybody to bed. I was the last one to bed because I didn't drink. So we went to the officers' club, and I mentioned to a couple of guys at the bar, I said, "Are you guys interested in buying some equipment?" He said, "What kind?" I said, "We've got a jeep aboard." And he says, "Jesus, you've got a jeep aboard? You got a receipt? A custody receipt from the government, official, stamped, numbered?" "What do you mean a custody receipt? We got eight cases of beer." "Oh." he said, "Do you know what they'll do when you hit Pearl? ... These ... officers come aboard, ... and they make an inspection. And anything you don't have a receipt for, you're in big trouble. You could be court-martialed." I said, "Well, what do we do?" He said, "Follow me." So we went out to the ship, and he said, "Where's the jeep?" I said, "Down in the tank deck." So I opened the bow doors, lowered the ramp, got in the jeep, and I road it into Guam Bay, and ... the jeep went, and I just floated and swam back to the ship. ... I swear I could have heard it hit a thousand other jeeps at the bottom of the bay! [laughter]

KP: So you had no receipt because you bought it for eight cases of beer.

PR: No. [laughter] Whether it was true or not, we didn't want to take a chance. So we went back to Pearl from there, and then [we stayed at] Pearl a few days and back to San Francisco.

KP: This was in 1946 before you ...?

PR: This was the beginning of '46, yeah.

KP: The war had ended, but it really hadn't ended for you?

PR: Oh, no. No, no. We had enough points, but it didn't ... count.

KP: You finally made it to Pearl, and then ...

PR: And then to San Francisco. We were happy to be at San Francisco. And at San Francisco, of course, we were trying to get home. And I went to the transportation office of the Coast Guard, and here's a classmate of mine there. He said, "Can I help you?" "My it's good to see you." You know, we were yakking about old times, and I told him I had a dog, and there was another, the executive officer (Hal Stewart?) was coming east. The other guys were going all over the country and ... needed transportation. I needed it ... to Newark or Hoboken or wherever, and Harold needed it to Washington. So he said, "I'll call you. Call me in the morning." So I called him, and he said, "You're all set. I traded five lowers, three uppers, and two roomettes for a compartment, a full compartment." So we had enough room for the two of us with the dog.

KP: So you went ...

PR: We were first class across the country on a train, yeah.

KP: Which must have been very comfortable after a Greyhound bus?

PR: Oh, yeah! [laughter] Compared to the Greyhound bus, yeah. We were in the Southern Pacific, yeah.

KP: Well, even compared to a ship. I mean ships' quarters are quite ...

PR: Well, we weren't bad. I had a state room with an upper and a lower, ... but I had it to myself. Each officer had their own state room.

KP: So, LSTs, even though they were ugly, were, for the crew reasonably comfortable. I wouldn't use the term spacious, but they're not as cramped as the destroyers and cruisers that I have visited.

PR: Oh, ... they're very cramped. LSTs, no. Everything was comfortable on the LST, except the ride. [laughter]

KP: So the ride was still ...

PR: Well, ... as I said, we'd roll in the toilet bowl, and if there were sea running, you could stand at the super structure, and just stand there, and it would bounce you all the way to the bow. Never bothered my dog, though. She would just walk. She had sea legs, but she would always ... go on the cargo hatch. I trained her on the cargo hatch, and I let the crew know that I [was] going to take care of her, and clean up after her, but that only lasted a couple of days. They just wanted to see if I meant it. ...

KP: So then you cleaned it up a few times?

PR: Oh, yeah. And then the chief came and says, "No more Mr. Rork. We'll take care of it. When we sweep down fore and aft and hose down the ship in the morning, we'll take care of

everything.” When I brought her home, she never saw grass, so she would only go on the sidewalk. It was the closest thing to a cargo head.

KP: So how did she make the adjustment to land?

PR: Oh, she swayed a bit. It was really funny. ... She was a real hero, heroine, I should say. Everybody loved her, yeah.

KP: You had mentioned about staying in the Coast Guard. You made it home.

PR: Yeah, I tried. ... We had a bulletin out. They wanted merchant marine inspection officers. If there was an accident somewhere, in a port, the merchant marine and the Coast Guard would take care of that hearing and find out who was ... responsible. And they had openings in several places. They had an opening in ... Marseilles, Port Said, Manila, Honolulu. ... But the only real choice was Honolulu, and I got the answer back, “Only opening is in Port Said.”

KP: Where is Port Said?

PR: Over in the Far East. The Suez and that area. And I could say, “Hey, being away from my family again, I want to go to Honolulu. I can bring Ruthie over with the baby.” So I declined.

KP: So, but if the right assignment had come, you might have stayed?

PR: I would have stayed at Honolulu.

KP: And made the Coast Guard a career?

PR: I might have, yeah. I stayed in the Reserve then.

KP: Before moving on to the postwar period, I just wanted to get your general views on the navy. You had almost joined the navy, and you had a lot of interaction with the navy. You had interaction with the marines, both in terms of trading for a jeep, but also, you ferried them, and then the army. What is your sense of the different services? What did you sort of see? Is there anything being in the Coast Guard, the smallest of them, that you noticed, differences from little things to big things?

PR: In the war, it didn't matter. Everybody was doing the same thing, and it didn't matter what color your uniform was, ... what kind of an emblem was on your hat. You were part of the same team, and it really didn't matter. And nobody ever thought of that.

KP: So the navy people did not look down on you because you were in the Coast Guard?

PR: No. No, they would just rib us a little bit. “What the hell are you doing in the Pacific?” And I said, “I’ve been asking the same question for over two years. How long have you been out here?” “I just got here.” [laughter]

KP: You had mentioned earlier that you had considered teaching, but, by the end of the war you had pretty much decided to go into something else. Was it insurance or did that come up later?

PR: No, that was my first ... real interview. We have a job interview, and I went to Newark. It was for a special agent for an insurance company. Well, special agent! Sounded like maybe the FBI, you know. I went for the job interview at the Aetna Casualty Insurance Company. Ahead of me was Jim Kearns, a classmate of mine. And the interviewer, (Dick Coolidge?), an officer at the Aetna, said to Jim, "Do you know what a special agent is?" And Jim said, "Yes, my father is in the insurance business. A special agent is sort of a liaison. ... If a company has a problem with the agent, he settles it with the agent, and if the agent has a problem with the company, vice-a-versa. He tries to take care of the problem. Basically, that's it. If the agent needs help selling the product, he'll do that, too." And actually, my body was sitting there, but my mind was already walking out. I wanted no part of this.

KP: You didn't envision ...

PR: No, I wanted no part of this. So, I had the interview, and I told him that. And Dick said, "That's interesting. How about taking a test?" So he gave me an aptitude test, and he came back, and he said, "Would you like to see a couple of the other guys here?" So I went to see other officers of the company. And he said, "Just a minute." And he made a phone call to Hartford, the headquarters, and here I was the next day on a train to Hartford for interviews at the home office. And I didn't know what I was getting into, except it was 3,000 dollars a year. Who cared? That was a lot of money. I went up there for the interview. The first fellow had a picture of a cocker spaniel on his desk, so I talked about cocker spaniels. The next fellow had a miniature camera on his desk. I had a camera right through the war. I was one of those privileged guys. I had a 35-millimeter Argus camera.

KP: So you took pictures throughout war?

PR: All right through the war.

KP: Do you have these?

PR: Yeah, I made up albums for the crew.

KP: Oh, really?

PR: Yeah, after the war.

KP: So, most of them got albums?

PR: Yeah. Yeah, I sold them to them. You know, for cost. Whatever the cost was.

KP: But if they wanted one, you offered it to them.

PR: Oh, I'd send it to them, yeah, yeah. And Ruthie, my wife, had beautiful printing, and she would identify each picture, and a lot of the crew still has their albums. I don't know where mine is. [laughter] So I talked to him about cameras, and then we, that was interesting, you know. They said, "Well, now we're going to lunch." ... I was going to meet the guy who made a decision. I'm ready to eat in the officers' dining room, and the first thing he says to me, he says, "Why do you want to be in the insurance business for, anyway?" I put my fork down and I said, "You know, that's dirty pool." He said, "What's dirty pool?" "You invite me to lunch, and then you ask me probably the key question of my lifetime, for my career, just when I'm ready to take my first swallow. That's dirty pool." He said, "Go eat your lunch." I was hired. Just like that.

KP: It almost sounds like the war gave you a lot of self- confidence, that if you could have commanded a sub chaser, that you go into insurance. Is that a correct?

PR: Yeah, I wouldn't argue with that. Yeah.

KP: If you had been right out of Rutgers, with your BA, you might not have been quite, I wouldn't say brash, but you wouldn't have been quite as confident.

PR: Yeah, yeah. I think confidence, the war did give me that. ... At the Aetna School there was, one of the officers came down to lecture to the students who were there as company representatives. We were there nine weeks. And he came in there, and he'd ask us about homework. He asked me the answer to a question, and I gave it to him. He said, "That's stupid!" I said, "That's nuts. You're stupid!" He was an officer of the company. Well, he stormed out of that room like nothing. The phone rang a couple of minutes later. "You're wanted upstairs." God, ... I'm going to lose my job before I got it. ... Not him, but his superior says, "What happened?" I said, "He called me stupid. I just came back from war. I had my own command. I was an officer in charge of so many people, went through so many invasions. I had so much responsibility. I'm not stupid. I don't appreciate someone calling me stupid." And if he said, "Next, that's wrong." He said, "That's just his way." I said, "Well, he can use his way with anybody else, but I don't want to be treated that way." And he called (Amos Reading?) in. ... He says, "Rork, tell (Amos?) what you told me." And (Amos?) says, he shook my hand; he says, "I apologize." [laughter] He apologized to me. I came down and back to the room, and everybody is wondering, "Well, are you ... [going] straight home?" [laughter]

KP: You obviously took to insurance.

PR: Oh, I loved it.

KP: It had proved to be better than you imagined?

PR: Well, there again. I had one individual who was responsible to give me some background before I went to the home office, and he was such a good teacher. ... He made it so interesting. As technical as all these contracts were, he made it so simple that ... I couldn't get enough of it. I just lived it and breathed it and read everything I could about it and did everything. After five

years with the company, I went into business for myself. I figured I knew more than any of the agents I was working with. I literally, I think, I did, no matter what they were doing. And I worked at it. I went in on Saturdays and did surveys of companies. ... I took to it like a duck takes to water, and my wife did, too. She took all of the exams and ...

KP: So your wife also worked in the firm?

PR: Oh, she ran the office, and we had an office in our home in Ridgewood and in Paterson, first. Just as you walk in the house, there was a little alcove and that was the office. Then we moved to Ridgewood. We bought a doctor's house, and we used his office as my insurance office. And had a couple of girls working, and she ran the office, and I did the selling. Yeah, yeah. I think a lot of the success was due to her and her encouragement.

KP: It was very much in a sense ...

PR: Oh, that was a great partnership. She was smart, but, boy, she ... really encouraged me. ... I told my family, we had a meeting, I said, "You won't see me for five years. I'm going to work day and night." After two years they saw me.

KP: You attribute part of that to your wife?

PR: Oh, yes, yeah. A big part of it. I appreciate what she did.

KP: You used some of your GI benefits for photography school?

PR: Oh, yeah. I ...

KP: Had you thought about possibly becoming a photographer?

PR: Yeah, I love photography. ... I took pictures at Rutgers. I had that same Argus I took overseas with me. I didn't bring it back because some marine had just won a big craps game and gave me 500 dollars for it. I think it was worth about ten. [laughter] I had taken all the pictures. So I went to the GI school, American School of Photography, but I found out, I was working for Aetna at the time, and I really liked that business. But I wanted to try photography, and I took the course, and I bought a ... a used speed graphic camera which all the press photographers used. I got one used, and I took some weddings, and baby pictures and things like that, but it was no competition, no comparison. ... I got it out of my system. I'm still active in photography, but I got that out of my system.

KP: After sort of seeing some of it, you didn't want to become a professional photographer?

PR: No, no, no. ... It was ... too tedious, to do all of that.

KP: Now, you had a very large family.

PR: Yeah.

KP: I guess, one question, in terms of your family, or more for your sons, is that none of them served in the military.

PR: No, no. I don't regret that. They made their own decisions, you know. When the long hair was in, we let them wear long hair. They went along with the crowd. We never had any problems with them drinking or drugs. ... We just let them go with the crowd. They never tried to be influenced by their peers, but we didn't want them to be embarrassed by being an extreme just because their father wore a crew cut.

KP: In the 1960s.

PR: ... So we have pictures with their hair down. We were lucky with our children.

KP: So, you didn't, in a sense, want them to serve or not want them to serve. None of them served in Vietnam or in the military. Did you feel that they broke with family tradition by not serving?

PR: No. Not at all. ... One of them had a very low number, as a matter-of-fact, but he was lucky; he never was called.

KP: Now, you had remained active in the reserves all the way?

PR: Yeah, ... after the war, the Coast Guard Reserve was non-existent. The Coast Guard had to join the naval reserve. Well, I didn't do that. I waited. I figured there was going to be a Coast Guard Reserve, and, within six months or so, there was a Coast Guard Reserve, and I was the first one standing in line because we had a room full of people interested, but I became very interested. As a matter-of-fact, I guess, I was one of the very first to be in the Reserve in the New York area, and we had to start a unit. So the Coast Guard had volunteers to join the unit, enlisted and officers, but ... as the unit ... was growing, we were enlarging, and ... I worked for the Aetna, and I would take two weeks. The Aetna, being a good New England company, would let me take two weeks ... of reserve time with pay and two weeks vacation with pay.

And I always spent my reserve time doing something profitable for the Coast Guard. I would do recruiting duty quite a bit. Go into high schools. When the Korean War broke out, 1950 or so, I'd go into high schools with the full uniform, and everybody would look at me and [go] "Oh, boy." ... And all the guys knew that there was a Coast Guard representative there. We'd meet, ... and I'd say, "Now, ... anybody that wants to go to Korea, would you please raise your hand." Nobody. The reason I ask, "If you want to go to Korea, the Coast Guard isn't allowed into Korea. They were there in the beginning, and then they were pulled out. You can't be in the Coast Guard because the Coast Guard is not going to go to Korea." But they were all interested, and, of course, their parents were interested. They didn't want them to go to Korea. So then, ... as we had openings, we would bring them over to my house. My wife would give them the AFQT test, the Armed Forces Qualification Test, and then I would interview them after that. I gave them a

brief interview before, and, then, interviewed them after she had corrected it. Then, I would have enough qualified people, I would take them to New York, and we'd swear them in, and then they'd be part of our unit. And I stayed in the Coast Guard Reserve ... They gave us that six months. Since we were the first ones to join the Reserves, they gave us credit for that six months.

I stayed in nineteen years, in the Reserve, and I was the commanding officer of the North Jersey unit for ten years. I was the training officer for a couple of years, and then, when Captain Oaksmith retired, Lieutenant Lewis was senior to me. But Lewis was a state trooper, ... and he stepped on too many toes during his career in the Coast Guard, as well as, the state troopers, and he was passed over, and I became the C.O. And he came to me, and he said to me, "Captain." Right away. "I'm not a Captain. I'm the captain of the unit, though." "I would consider it a privilege if you would keep me on as the executive officer." Well, he ran the unit literally as the execs do many times. He ran that unit. I just showed up.

KP: And what was your unit's mission?

PR: We were port security. In case of a disaster or in case of an invasion or scare, we would go to the port of the City of New York and man the piers. And we did a lot of practice, going over there to practice weekends or two weeks at a time with other units from all over the East. We would come over there, and we'd all practice port security.

KP: Did you ever have any disasters or other problems?

PR: No.

KP: You just basically practiced?

PR: No.

KP: You were fortunate enough just to practice?

PR: Yes, that's all we did. Yeah.

KP: Is there anything I forgot to ask?

PR: Well, ...

KP: Or is there anything you would like to add?

PR: ... Yeah. The goodies ... [from] the Coast Guard after I retired. I had to wait until I was sixty-years-old until I could get the benefit of all of these things. I stayed in the reserve. I joined the reserve after reading some of the benefits, ... and I was in the insurance business, and I knew. I wasn't selling life insurance at the time. I was selling casualty insurance, but I knew the benefits. And the retirement benefits were pay and recreation. Lydia and I travel, like Ruthie and

I did. ... We travel to Europe almost every year. It used to cost ten dollars, now it costs fifteen. But they get you for the lunch, a dollar seventy-five. [laughter] We travel on these big, huge C-5 transports, and they have special passenger compartments up in the stern of the C-5 aircraft. You fly out of Dover, Delaware right to Frankfurt, where Lydia used to come from. She was born in Darmstadt, and her sister lives in Frankfurt. ... I get a pay check every month, and when I die, Lydia gets half of that until she dies. And we can shop in any PX or commissary anywhere in the world. When we go to Europe, if we're not feeling well, we go to any GI hospital or any army hospital. ... Never a charge. Complete exam, private consultation, prescriptions, the whole bit. So all of those goodies, I was thinking of them all along. I couldn't wait until the time came.

KP: Several people from previous interviews had said that was part of the reason they joined the reserves.

PR: Oh, yes. The benefits, the benefits. A lot of them said, "I had enough service. I don't want any more of it." But I liked the service. I liked to wear the uniform. I like the responsibility. I didn't like it. I loved it. I loved it all. I loved it when my kids looked at me, when I was all dressed up, and they would salute me. [laughter]

KP: When they were growing up.

PR: Yeah, little kids, you know, they said, "Boy, my Daddy, my Daddy is a commander in the Coast Guard."

KP: None of your sons or daughters were interested in the Coast Guard?

PR: No.

KP: You could never ...

PR: No, and I never said, "Look at the tradition. Grandpa Samuel was in the Civil War, my father was in the First World War, and your Daddy was in the Second World War. Somebody is going to break this tradition?" I never gave it a thought. No. Not at all. I can honestly say that.

PR: Well, it's been fun.

KP: Thank you very much.

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

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