

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH SIDNEY A. ROSENGREN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Sidney Arthur Rosengren in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, on February 1, 2008, with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Sidney Rosengren: Pleasure.

SI: To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

SR: I was born in a hospital, [laughter] I think it was in Union City, New Jersey, on October 7, 1922. ... My parents lived with my mother's family, somewhere in that area, and, shortly after that, we moved up to Ridgefield Park, New Jersey.

SI: What were your parents' names?

SR: My father's name was Carl Sidney, but he used Sidney as a name, and my mother was Mabel Hilkney.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your father's background, like where his family was from?

SR: Well, he's from New York, [the] Westside, I guess, of New York, and he, I guess, graduated from high school, and then, he was in World War I, but not as a combatant. He was still in training camp, I guess, when World War I ended, and then, he met my mother and married and here I am. ... I have a sister and, as I say, ... when I was just nine months old or so, we moved up to Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, where I lived until we were married, I guess, right.

SI: You wrote that your father's family was Swedish, of Swedish descent.

SR: Yes, yes, they were.

SI: Was he first-generation or second-generation?

SR: Well, the first generation was Adam and Eve, you know. [laughter]

SI: Were his parents born in Sweden?

SR: Oh, yes, his parents were born in Sweden and came over, and he was born somewhere in New York. I don't really know just where it was.

SI: Did you ever get to meet those grandparents?

SR: Yes, yes, my grandmother and my grandfather, I've met. On my mother's side, my grandfather had died, but I knew my grandmother on my mother's side. She lived near us in Ridgefield Park, as a matter-of-fact.

SI: Where did your mother's family come from?

SR: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Yes, my great-grandfather, who I remember, I guess I was three or four years old and had visited several times, he came over in the 1830s or '40s, from Germany, and he was apprenticed to a butcher up in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. So, that's where he lived all his life and where my mother was; yes, I guess my mother was born [there]. She must have been born in Pennsylvania, wasn't she?

Marjorie Rosengren: I guess.

SR: I would think so, but, then, she came and was living in the New York area and met my father and got married, and the rest is history.

MR: They met at some church organization.

SR: Yes, they met in a church in New York City.

SI: Do you know why your mother came over to New York from Pennsylvania?

SR: I don't know.

MR: That's a good question.

SR: No, ... I think my grandmother and grandfather, her parents, were already living in New Jersey.

MR: Yes.

SR: Yes, and my grandfather died, I think, before I was born even, and then, my grandmother moved up with her other daughter, my Aunt Viola, to Ridgefield Park also. So, we lived pretty close to one another in Ridgefield Park there.

SI: What are some of your earliest memories of growing up in Ridgefield Park?

SR: Well, going to school, going to a church. We attended the Reformed church, which was right across the street from us. So, we were pretty active in that and went to school and raised the dickens in general. [laughter]

SI: What kind of a neighborhood was it?

SR: Well, residential, single-family houses, residential. We drive past it ... frequently. Even recently, we've driven past it; [it has] changed somewhat, but it was a nice enough place to grow up.

SI: You mentioned that the church was pretty important in your life.

SR: Yes. Now, my mother was an organist, so, she played the organ at the church, and my father was the choir director. He could sing and he led the choir and we had, oh, at one point,

perhaps twenty members of the choir. We have a picture, somewhere, showing the whole list. Yes, that was pretty important in our everyday life, yes.

SI: Did you grow up singing or playing an instrument?

SR: No. ... Well, in recent years, going back to 1970, I've joined the church choir at the Presbyterian church in Hackensack, where we are still members there, but, no, I don't play any instrument. I didn't make the most of my opportunities and, well, all I've done is, as I say, sing in the choir, church choir.

SI: What kind of hobbies or activities were you involved in as a child in Ridgefield Park?

SR: You know, reading, mostly, I would think, and ...

MR: Boy Scouts.

SR: ... Doing homework, you know. ...

SI: Mrs. Rosengren said you were in the Boy Scouts.

MR: Were you a Boy Scout?

SR: Oh, yes, I was a Boy Scout, yes, went to camp several years and the usual.

SI: How far did you go in the Boy Scouts?

SR: Star Scout. ... I didn't make Eagle Scout, ... got too old to be continually involved in it. ...

SI: Which schools did you go to in Ridgefield Park?

SR: Well, the grammar school, what was it? Roosevelt School, I think it was called, grammar school, about six blocks away, and then, Ridgefield Park High School, which was about three-quarters of a mile away, but that was the only high school there was. There were several grammar schools, but that was the only high school in town.

SI: What did you think about the education that you received there?

SR: I think it was very good, yes.

SI: Were there any subjects that you were particularly interested in?

SR: Well, possibly German. I studied that in high school, but, well, I guess English, too, literature, you know, but I had no outstanding interest, I don't think, in any particular area.

SI: Were you involved in extracurricular activities in school?

SR: I was trying to think of that the other day. I think there was some sort of a club, ... I think it was a dramatic club. I remember, we put on a presentation of one of the classics, but I forget what it was, and I think that was the only time I was involved in a presentation, yes.

SI: Were you an actor or involved in the staging?

SR: An actor, yes, line reader. [laughter] I forget what it was. ...

SI: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

SR: Well, it must have, but my father was able to keep working, and so, we were able to keep living, but, as I say, he probably was affected by it, salary-wise.

SI: He worked for General Motors in the city.

SR: He worked for General Motors, yes, in New York City, the branch office, the New York City Branch Office of the company.

SI: Were his hours cut? Did you notice him staying home?

SR: No, no. He continued to work every day, normal routine.

SI: Did you have to go out to work at a younger age, like part-time, after school?

SR: I? No, I didn't, as a matter-of-fact, no. Oh, I used to cut lawns occasionally, [laughter] but, no, I didn't, as a matter-of-fact.

SI: Did you notice the Depression having an impact on the town, like were people losing their homes?

SR: I can't say so, no. I guess everybody was living a rather restricted [lifestyle], but that was the norm then, you see. No, I didn't notice any particular fallout in that area. I don't think anyone was evicted in our area, just a situation in which you had to be careful, you know, as far as expenditures are concerned.

SI: Were there ever transient people coming through, looking for meals or to do work for meals?

SR: Yes. Every once in awhile, someone would knock on the door, usually just a single fellow, and my mother would prepare a plate for him. It wasn't too frequent, but, oh, it was several times, anyway.

SI: Did you ever talk to any of these people, or did your parents say not to?

SR: No, I didn't, no.

SI: Your father was in the service, but did not go overseas in World War I.

SR: That's right, that's right.

SI: Did he ever talk about his experiences in training?

SR: Well, he had made friends with one person, for whom he then worked in General Motors, in New York City, you see, but, no, he never [mentioned anything]. I don't know. I guess they went hiking or camping, every once in awhile, but, no, he never mentioned ... much about his experience or training in wherever it was he was. I don't even know what camp he was in.

SI: Was he ever involved in any American Legion or veterans' organizations?

SR: I think, yes, I think he was a member of the American Legion, yes.

SI: Were your parents active in any other community groups, aside from the church?

SR: No, as I say, just the church, and I think, as I say, he was a member of the American Legion. That was about it.

SI: Was politics discussed much in your household?

SR: Yes. We were born Republicans. [laughter] I haven't voted for a Republican President since 1940, but we are still allegedly listed as Republicans. [laughter]

SI: What did they think of Roosevelt and his New Deal?

SR: Well, in retrospect, I think he did a good job, but, of course, at the beginning, we hated the thought of a Democrat being elected. [laughter] Hoover was President up until '32, when I was ten years old, and then, Roosevelt was elected and I guess we didn't like the idea. Well, of course, I had no opinion, but I don't think the family liked the idea at first, but he seemed to have done all right.

SI: Could you see any of the New Deal programs being implemented in your area?

SR: Oh, yes. Before the New Deal, we had slate sidewalks, you know, pieces of black slate, and then, the WPA [Works Progress Administration] came along. ... Well, actually, we just had a gravel road in front of the house, at Arthur Street, and ... they paved the road with concrete and they put a concrete sidewalk ... in most of the streets in that area, yes.

SI: You mentioned that times were tough in the Depression. People had to cut back on things. Were you able to travel much before you went away to college?

SR: ... Yes, we used to take a two-week [vacation]; well, my father had a two-week vacation every year and, for a number of years, we used to rent a cabin up in New York State, ... on a lake, you know, and spend that two weeks there. ... There was a boarding house. Where was that, Summit?

MR: Yes.

SR: Yes, which we stayed at for a couple of weeks also, occasionally.

SI: When you were in high school, particularly, did your parents always encourage you to look towards college? Did you always think you would go to college?

SR: I would say so, yes. I believe so.

SI: Were most of your classmates geared towards going to college?

SR: ... I would think so, yes.

SI: How did Rutgers come up as a college you wanted to look at?

SR: I don't know. I guess we applied for it and got a scholarship and that was it.

SI: Did you know anybody who went there or did your guidance counselor suggest it?

SR: Not from our immediate group, no. I made a number of friends down there, of course, but none from Ridgefield Park at that time, [that] I'm aware of.

SI: Did you apply anywhere else?

SR: No, I really didn't, no.

SI: Did you have any connections through the Dutch Reformed Church?

SR: ... Well, that's we were members of. As I say, it was right across the street from us and [we were] on very friendly terms with the minister and others, other members of the church.

SI: I was just curious, since Rutgers had such heavy ties with the Dutch Reformed Church.

SR: Yes, I guess it does, yes, now that you mention it, yes. Perhaps that helped get me in, I don't know. [laughter]

SI: You mentioned a scholarship. Was that a State Scholarship?

SR: I imagine it was. I really wasn't concerned with the financial aspects of it at all. I don't think it cost my folks too much, if anything, except for my living expenses, you know. I had room and board, which I believe they paid for, but, as far as the college fees were concerned, I knew nothing about them, really.

SI: You entered college in the fall of 1940.

SR: Right.

SI: At that time, the war had been on in Europe for a year.

SR: Yes, I guess it had, yes. That's right, yes, '39, it started, I guess, yes.

SI: Were you aware of what was happening internationally?

SR: Oh, yes, it was in the news all the time, you know, following it closely.

SI: Do you remember any opinions you had, or your family had, about what America should do or what was going to happen in the future?

SR: No, not really, no. I guess we thought about it without our own involvement in any way. Oh, I guess, ... I think the country was selling stuff to Great Britain, you know, and I know ... there were sinkings of ships, you know, ... in the Atlantic there, so that we knew the world was at war, but I don't think we thought too much of our own personal involvement, except, of course, we were suppliers of material to the Allies.

SI: You do not remember anybody, among either your circle of friends or your family's friends, saying we should get more involved in helping Britain or we should not get involved in it at all.

SR: No, I can't say that I remember it at all, no.

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

SR: Well, it was an interesting experience. ... I was living in a dormitory and attending classes and, as I say, I made friends and, I guess that first year, I joined a fraternity, Theta Chi Fraternity, and, subsequently, in subsequent years, ... I know I lived in the fraternity house, part of the time.

SI: Which dorm did you live in, initially?

SR: Pell. Is there a Pell? Yes, Pell, the Quadrangle, I think, Jameson, Pell and some other dorms. ...

SI: Hegeman. [Editor's Note: The Rutgers College Avenue Campus Quadrangle dorms are Leupp, Wessels, Pell and Hegeman Halls. Jameson Hall is a dormitory on Rutgers University's Douglass Campus.]

SR: Yes, right, right. So, I was in Pell, yes.

SI: Was there any sort of initiation or hazing for freshmen?

SR: Yes. [laughter] You had to carry a paddle around. ... The upperclassmen would, every once in awhile, swat you, you know, with the paddle, but, yes, you had to go down to the lumberyard and tell them you wanted a paddle. They knew what it was, you know, [laughter] and you carried that around pretty much all the time.

SI: Was that for your fraternity or for Rutgers in general?

SR: I think that was for Rutgers in general, yes.

SI: Did you have to wear anything, any kind of special clothes?

SR: No, I don't think so, no.

SI: Was there any competition between the freshmen and the sophomores when you entered?

SR: Not really, not to my knowledge; perhaps in sports there were. I hadn't gone out for sports myself. I wasn't an athlete of any sort.

SI: What attracted you to Theta Chi? Why did you join them?

SR: I guess they asked me. [laughter] Yes, I suppose that's the reason. ... Well, the roommate I had in Pell also joined Theta Chi, so, the two of us, you know, went in at the same time.

SI: Was it difficult to make the transition from high school to studying at Rutgers?

SR: No, I wouldn't say so, lecturing, homework, you know, it was the same sort of environment; a lot more walking down at Rutgers, you know, building to building.

SI: Did you have to join the ROTC right away?

SR: Yes. I don't know whether I had to, but I did, you know, and we had three one-hour classes a week, and then, one afternoon, we did drills. We got uniforms, did the drilling. ... Do I still have that uniform jacket? I might have a ROTC jacket in there, for all I know, and, as I was thinking over your coming, I can't recall any specific time when I joined the Army. I don't know whether joining the ROTC automatically made you part of the service when things developed, which they did, in '41.

SI: Can you tell me about how you chose your major and what subjects you found interesting at Rutgers?

SR: I think, originally, I went in as a ceramics major, but, somewhere along the line, I switched to business administration, and that's what I graduated as, a bachelor's degree in business administration, yes.

SI: Did you make the switch the first time you were at Rutgers, before you went in the service?

SR: Oh, after about, oh, I don't know, maybe my junior year, could have been, or sophomore year, something in that area, but I had taken a course in ceramics and, of course, chemistry and physics and things of that sort.

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

SR: Yes, Dr. Houston Peterson. He taught a philosophy course. I think I took that in my last year, after coming back from the war. That was quite impressive. He was quite impressive.

SI: What was impressive about him? What did you find impressive about him?

SR: Well, the whole subject of philosophy, and he had quite a distinguished background and had been an author of something or other. ... I thought that was the most impressive professor I had had, yes.

SI: How involved were you in the fraternity. Did you involve yourself in other clubs or activities?

SR: I don't think I was an officer in the fraternity, but we were all living together, you know, in just like a dormitory, and eating together. I guess we did have a president and a treasurer, I mean, but I wasn't an officer of it, no.

SI: I was just trying to get an idea of what being in a fraternity meant back in the early 1940s. Was it just living and eating together or did you do more activities together?

SR: Oh, yes. Well, we had card games, you know. We had a living room or a card room and we had a piano there, not that I played the piano, but, I mean, there was regular home living, you might say.

SI: Did you have dances and events?

SR: Not in the fraternity house. The college had dances, but not in the fraternity house, no.

SI: Were you involved in other activities, like the yearbook?

SR: No, no, I can't say that I was, no.

SI: Did you spend most of your time on campus or would you go home on the weekends? Did you work?

SR: No. Home was close enough to get to, if my father could pick me up, you know. It was only about an hour-and-a-half away. So, I was frequently home on weekends, but ... not every weekend. I think I was more oriented toward the life on the campus there.

SI: Did you have any jobs, like part-time jobs?

SR: Not while I was at college. ... Oh, well, yes, I used to work in the library, checking books out, you know, thirty-five cents an hour or whatever it was at the time. ... The summer between freshman and sophomore year, I worked somewhere, at an amusement park upstate. ... I don't know where that was, but ...

MR: I thought it was near Lake Hopatcong.

SR: It was up near Lake Hopatcong, yes, handing out golf clubs for the miniature golf course or something of that sort, you know.

SI: Either before or after Pearl Harbor, was the war discussed much on campus?

SR: Oh, yes, yes. I was in a soda store that Sunday afternoon, December 7th, having a Cherry Coke, I think it was, [laughter] and we heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and, of course, that changed everything. Everyone got oriented toward the fact that we were involved in a war and going to have to do something about it.

SI: Was the soda shop near Rutgers or were you at home that weekend?

SR: No, I was at Rutgers, yes.

SI: Do you remember what the initial reaction was around campus?

SR: I don't know. Well, I think we all realized life was going to be different from then on, [laughter] but, of course, we'd been familiar with the fact that the world was at war. ... I don't think we were too surprised by the fact that we got involved in it ourselves, you know. ...

SI: Was there any initial fear or panic? Did people talk about enlisting the next day or week?

SR: No, I can't recall any particular change in attitude. I know, once, we had occasion, shortly after that, ... as members of the ROTC, to put on our uniforms and walk down the main street of town, and people were watching, of course, from all over. ... That was December of '41. We were able to complete the spring semester of '42 as civilians, but, then, when we came back in '42, in the fall, we were in uniform. We were issued uniforms and we were in barracks; that is, they made the Quad a barracks. I think I still lived in Pell, at that time. I had been living at the fraternity house, but I think, by that '42-'43 year, we were, as I say, in the Army, you might say. We had uniforms, living in the barracks and studying military science.

SI: Did the tone or pace of the ROTC training change or pick up after that?

SR: I would imagine it did, yes.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor, had people taken the ROTC seriously?

SR: I don't really [know]. Not as much as they did after, I don't think, no. I don't know whether we had an option to take it or stay out of it. Now, I have a grandson who's now in college and he hasn't joined the ROTC, hasn't had to, you know, but, in those days, I think it was pretty much automatic that you joined the ROTC.

SI: Did the classes in general change? Did they accelerate the semester at all?

SR: I don't think so. As I say, we finished out the spring of '42 normally and, when we came back in the fall, somewhere along the line, we were issued uniforms and issued assigned rooms and we went through the '42-'43 year as soldiers, you might say.

SI: Aside from the uniforms and the barracks, did they make you follow any kind of military discipline or anything like that, like do calisthenics?

SR: I don't think so, but they may have. I don't really recall.

SI: Aside from people who were in the ROTC on campus, was the campus emptying out? Were there fewer people around? Were people going to enlist?

SR: I really couldn't say. I really couldn't say. ... The women's college [New Jersey College for Women] was across town, you know. I don't know how their reaction was to the war, but, as far as we were concerned, it was pretty much the same.

SI: Were you pretty content to stay in the Army or were you looking at other options for service, like the Navy or the Air Corps?

SR: Well, I wound up in the Air Force. At the end of the '43 summer semester, then, we went into basic training in Alabama, Anniston, Alabama, I think it was, Fort McClellan or something of that sort. ... So, somewhere along the line, in basic training, oh, I lost about twenty, thirty pounds, somewhere along the line, we heard that, if you wanted to go into the Air Force, you had to have very good eyesight. So, I did have good eyesight. So, at the end of this basic training, I applied to transfer to the Air Force. There was an officer's training program in the Air Force, and I was sent down to some place in [the] Deep South and questioned or whatnot, but I was turned down, because, well, my eyesight was all right, but I hadn't been interested in planes all this time. They were looking for young people who were fascinated by airplanes, you know, and knew one plane from the other and this, that and the other thing, and I had no particular interest in airplanes up to that point. So, I washed out of any officer training for the Air Force, but I was stuck in the Air Force then. So, they sent me to radio school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in the fall of '43. ... I was there, oh, through the winter, about five months, I guess, five or six months, became a radio operator, and then, I was sent down to Yuma, Arizona, in the late winter or early spring, for gunnery training, you know. ... Then, after a couple of months of that, this is now we're in '44, after a couple months of that, I was transferred to Georgia, Savannah, Georgia, for flight training, B-24s, and we spent, oh, quite a few months in flight training. In fact, that flight training was as dangerous as actual combat was, as far as crashes and deaths and all that. So, that took pretty much the summer of '44, and then, we were sent down to, or up this way, to some field in Long Island, I don't know whether it was Roosevelt Field or Mitchel Field, for a final training. In fact, I think I was able to get home for Christmas in '44 and back to Mitchel Field, or whichever it was, for more gunnery, and getting outfitted for clothes, you know, for overseas. ... Then, in very early '45, ... we were flown up to Gander, Newfoundland, and, from there, we were going to go over to Africa. Well, something on our plane broke down, so, we were delayed for three or four days there, which was a lot of fun, [laughter] cold, icy. So,

finally, we took off, some time in, as I say, early '45, January or February, to Europe and we landed in; what are those islands off the coast of Africa, Canary Islands maybe?

SI: The Azores?

SR: Azores, yes, that's right, the Azores. We landed somewhere in the Azores, a day or so there, and then, we flew over to Marrakech, French West Africa, Marrakech, and, from there, we hopped along the northern coast of Africa, just below the Mediterranean there. ... I think we got to Egypt, and then, we flew from there across to Italy. We landed in Gioia, Italy, as I say, maybe February of '45, and, from there, we were sent to Cerignola, Italy, the Air Force base in Cerignola, Italy, and started being used for flying missions. Now, we were latecomers there, of course, so, we didn't really serve as a crew, that we had trained as. We were used to fill in ... for missing people from other crews, you see. So, interestingly enough, I just read a couple of years ago that Cerignola, Italy, is in the heart of the cereal growing region, not only for Italy, but for the whole of Europe, and that's where we get Cheerios from, from Cerignola, Italy. [laughter] ... So, we had time to fly four missions, and then, our crew was transferred north to Romagnana, Italy. We were supposed to be dropping supplies to the Italians, who were fighting the Germans and the other Italians in Italy. ... What do you call them? Well, at any rate, they had to keep hidden in the hills somewhere and, every once in awhile, the Air Force would drop supplies to them. The Partisans, yes, but we never even got to do that. We just sat there for a couple of weeks, and then, all of a sudden, May 8th, ... the Germans surrendered. ... So, as I said, we were only on four actual missions from Cerignola. The first three were just tactical missions, just over the front lines, dropping bombs on the German troops. The fourth mission, which I'd like to discuss a bit, was a mission to bomb Linz, Austria, and Linz, I don't know, no one wanted to go on those runs, because Linz was very heavily protected by antiaircraft guns. I don't know what they did up there. They must have been manufacturing something, you know. So, we took off in a group of seven planes, commanded by Colonel (Frederick C. Way?). I happen to remember his name. ... We flew up there and, fortunately, [laughter] Linz was clouded over, you know. You couldn't see a thing. So, the order came to turn around, so, we turned the group around. There were seven planes, as I say, and I don't know whether you call it a box or whatever. [At] any rate, on our way back, the Colonel decided to bomb a target of opportunity, you know. We approached the town of Klagenfurt, which was a major rail center and, looking back behind us, I could see four different rail lines coming down from the mountains and ... forming like a main street going through Klagenfurt, and then, spreading out again when they got [further out]. ... There were all sorts of buildings alongside, warehouses, repair buildings or whatever. So, we bombed them, ... from the north to the south, because we were heading south any way, going back to the base. ... Of course, after the first bomb hits, you can't see anything. It throws up either a lot of dust or smoke or whatever, you see. So, we dropped all the bombs and went back to the base, thankful that that was over. Well, [at] any rate, the next day, we heard a rumor to the effect that the Colonel had been called back to the States to answer charges of financial irregularities while he was a commander at one of the State[side] ... airbases. ... Then, we figured out that it was probably because the Allies didn't want that rail [hub] destroyed. They were going to move forward, you know. They were in the process of advancing, and so, I guess, they rewarded him by sending him back to face a jail sentence or whatever. [laughter] ... At any rate, so, then, shortly after that, as I say, we were sent up north to Romagnana, to drop supplies to the Partisans, but we never had any missions of that sort, either, and then, come May

8th, the war ended. So, we were sent back to our original base in Italy, Gioia, and just hung around for awhile, until about the end of May, and then, we were flown back to the States. We went back to Africa, across Africa, but, then, we went across to South America, this time, and then, up the coast to Puerto Rico, and then, from there, to, I guess, Fort Dix. ... We were given a pass for the whole month of June. I was home all June of '45, and then, back to ... Fort Dix in July and we were sent down to Tampa, ... an airbase in Tampa, to await assignment for going to the Japanese [front], the Far East fighting. That was still in process, you see. Well, we were down there, doing nothing, actually, and, all of a sudden, one day, we heard that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, you know. ... I said, "Uh-oh, the war's over." Well, sure enough, a couple days later, they dropped another one on Nagasaki, and then, a couple of days after that, the war was over, in early August. ... So, after that, I was sent to some Air Force base, I think in Louisiana, and I wound up being the morning report clerk, ... just to sweat it out until I was released or discharged. Everyone got a number, depending on how long you were in the Army, whether you're overseas or not, and, when your number came up, then, you were discharged, you see, released, whatever you want to call it. So, I was there until, oh, mid-November and the number came up and we were sent to Fort Dix to be discharged, and I was discharged on November 19, 1945, as a staff sergeant. ...

SI: I would like to go back and ask questions about each stage of your military career.

SR: Yes, sure, yes.

SI: Going all the way back to when you first joined the military, the Rutgers guys, did you go in as a group or did you go in individually?

SR: Where, at Rutgers?

SI: Yes, when you went from Rutgers down to Anniston, Alabama.

SR: Oh, yes, as a group, yes. Yes, we went through basic training together. "Fritz" Kroesen [Retired US Army General Frederick J. Kroesen] was one of the group, you know. He became a four-star general afterwards.

SI: Do you remember anything about the journey down that was memorable?

SR: No, not really. I don't remember much about the train rides. ...

SI: I realize you had had this prior experience at Rutgers, being in the barracks and being in uniform, but was it a big change for you to go into the military and suddenly have a lot of your freedoms restricted?

SR: No, not really, no.

SI: Were you nervous about going into the military?

SR: Well, of course, you realized you could get killed, you know. [laughter] So, I suppose there was some apprehension, but, no, it was the thing to do at that time, you know. You had to fight, had to defeat the Nazis and the Japanese.

SI: It seems like your training at McClellan was pretty physically demanding.

SR: Oh, yes. As I say, I must have lost twenty, twenty-five pounds, which I ... could easily lose, you know. I had it to lose [laughter] and, yes, we were on long hikes and training lectures and whatnot.

SI: The gentleman I interviewed earlier in the week, he mentioned having to run through the nearby forest.

SR: What?

SI: Run up a hill in the forest all the time; they kept making you do that.

SR: I can't recall.

SI: Maybe he was in a different training group.

SR: ... Yes, he must have been. I can't recall having to run up a hill. I had to do a lot of walking though.

SI: Did the drill sergeants stand out in your memory at all?

SR: Yes. They were obnoxious. [laughter] I suppose they felt they had to be, I don't know.

SI: Did you feel like the training was adequate, like they were giving you what you needed to know to be in the infantry?

SR: I would say so, yes.

SI: Did you ever get to go off base?

SR: Yes. Well, in Alabama, ... we may have. I don't really recall about Alabama. I know, when we were in Sioux Falls, I got to go into town frequently, if I wanted to, but I can't recall whether we did much in Alabama. I doubt it.

SI: How long did it take before they decided that it would be better to send you to Sioux Falls than to go to officer training?

SR: Well, basic training, I guess, was about thirteen weeks at that time. That was, say, June, July and August or something, maybe into September. ... As we approached the end of it, that's when I decided that I could perhaps do more for the effort by going into the Air Force, because I knew my eyes were okay, at that time, although I use glasses now for reading. ... So, I imagine

it was around the end of August when I went down to, wherever it was. I don't even remember what base it was, just to be interviewed, you know, and washed out, as you might say, of the officer training program, because, although my eyes were all right, ... I wasn't up on the culture, you might say, attached to planes, and this, that and the other thing.

SI: They sent you to Sioux Falls pretty quickly after going to this classification center.

SR: ... Yes, right, yes. I got there probably in early fall and I was there for probably through February.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about the radio training and how you took to it?

SR: Well, it was a lot, of course, repetitive [work], learning the code and sending and whatnot, and the more I think of it, well, we had to learn about the sets that were being used in the planes at that time, but ... I can't think why it took about five months to do that, [laughter] now that I think back on it. Well, of course, it takes you time to learn the code and all, but I remember, you mentioned going ... out of the base, Sioux Falls had a big meatpacking operation, John Morrell and Company, in Sioux Falls. ... Sometimes, on our days off, I think we had one day off a week, we'd go into town and we could go and work for them for that day, for about fifty cents an hour, you know, and then, go to dinner and go to the theater, you know, and make a whole day of it, but I remember, several times, going to work for John Morrell and Company.

SI: What would you do?

SR: ... They handled mostly pigs and they seemed to slaughter the pigs up on the second or third floor, and then, the carcasses would come [down]. Well, they'd cut them up into legs, you know, hams. They'd come down a chute and [land] on this belt and we'd stand there and we'd weigh them. ... Depending on what they weighed, we'd put them in a certain carriage, you know, a certain pushcart, depending on weight. So, we'd stand there all day, weighing hams coming down. Other times, they were cutting bacon, the ribs, you know, and the ribs would come down and we'd have to guide them under a press to flatten them out, because ... they're curved, and you'd flatten them out and they'd look like the bacon you might see today. So, I did that three or four times, you know, just as a change in the routine. When I had a day off, I'd go in and work for John Morrell, [laughter] and go to the movies, go to dinner and whatnot.

SI: Did they have any USO clubs or USO facilities?

SR: Yes, there was the USO club. You'd play cards with some people and, yes, there were things to do, if you could get into town, as I say, once a week or so.

SI: How demanding was the training? Was there a fear that you might wash out of the training?

SR: No, I don't think so. I don't really think so, no. I don't think anyone did washout, that I can recall. Then, as I say, we went ... from the cold to the heat of Yuma, Arizona, for gunnery training. [laughter] ...

SI: Tell me a little bit about the gunnery training. Was it just training on the ground or did they take you up in the training planes?

SR: Basically, I'd say learning how to adjust the aim for whether the plane that you were shooting at was behind you or broadside or ahead of you, you know, and then, how to operate the machineguns, and I guess we had target practice. I don't know whether we did any flying and firing at that point or not, but, then, we did the flying when we got to Savannah, Georgia.

SI: Had you ever been in a plane before then?

SR: No, I don't think so. I don't really think so. As a youngster, I don't think we were ever in a plane. No, I guess my first recollection is [of] being in a small plane, piloted; what were these small planes called?

SI: The trainers?

SR: Well, yes, they were trainers, I forget, but, [at] any rate, they held two, ... the pilot and myself, and just flew around a bit, I guess, to get oriented toward flight. ...

SI: A biplane?

SR: Biplane, probably, yes.

SI: A Stearman?

SR: ... No, I don't think so, but, then, we were definitely assigned to B-24s, when we got to Savannah, Georgia. There was a big bag factory there and you could always home in on the smoke from the bag factory. [laughter]

SI: Is that when you joined your crew or was that later?

SR: Yes, yes, that's when we formed the crew, I guess.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your crew?

SR: Well, there was a pilot, Lieutenant Bresenden, and then, there was a co-pilot, I forget the names, navigator and bombardier. ... Those were the officers, and then, there were six of us crew members. I was the radio operator and left waist gunner, and there was an engineer, who would take care of the ball-turret gun, and then, there was another waist gunner and a top gunner and a tail-gunner. In fact, I've got a picture of that plane.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SR: ... So, in combat, there were examples of crashes. Planes would come in and crash on the landing strip or they'd be shot down in the air. More often than you would think, the crew would be rescued, particularly if it took place over Yugoslavia. There was a whole network of ...

SI: Partisans?

SR: Partisans, again, right, who would rescue these fellows and get them to the coast and get them across the Adriatic Sea, I guess it was. So, we saw lots of fellows come walking back into camp, [laughter] but many were lost, you know.

SI: You mentioned that, in training, the threat of crashes could be as deadly as combat.

SR: Oh, yes, yes. There were definitely crashes in training, too, and people were killed.

SI: Do any of them stand out in your memory?

[Editor's Note: Mrs. Rosengren brings over some materials. Mr. Rosengren, looking over a B-24 poster, points out the different positions.]

SR: See, here, there's a fellow at this left waist, with the machinegun, and that's where I would be, if I were in any danger. ... Here's the top guns and the tail. There's the ball-turret, underneath. ... There's gunners here, too. ... In other words, there were six non-coms [non-commissioned officers] and the four officers.

SI: You were in the left waist. Was there a radio table there?

SR: No, no. The radio was up here, [towards the front of the fuselage], just back of the officers, but, if we were in a combat situation, I would have gone to the left [waist]. ...

SI: These are both drawn posters of B-24s. I am just explaining it for the tape.

SR: Oh, yes, right. Yes, I meant to have that one framed, and I will, one of these days, [laughter] that one, showing the fellow at the left waist. ...

SI: Can you explain to me a little bit about how you would operate in flight and what would you do on a typical flight, either in training or combat?

SR: Yes. Well, ... to take off, we'd all get into the waist there, where the bombs were, [laughter] just to distribute the weight evenly, and then, take off, and then, we'd go to our positions and I'd be sitting at a desk, right behind the pilot and co-pilot, but ... I was never in a lead plane, so, I never had to do any radio work, you see. In fact, I can say, accurately, I never fired a shot in anger or sent or received a radio message. I was just along for the ride, as it turns out, but who knows what could have happened? Oh, so, at any rate, I wanted to follow up ... on this business of bombing Klagenfurt. That was, as I say, ... probably in late April, well, mid-April, of '45. Well, then, I was discharged in November of '45, November 19th. Five years later, to the day, we were married, November 19, 1950. I had five years of freedom, there, you see, [laughter] and I was working. ... Oh, I finished college. I went back to Rutgers [for] the spring term of '46, and then, I went for the fall term of '46 and graduated with the Class of '47. ... At any rate, so, I was working and we got married ... in '50 and we had four children and, in 1985, I

was only sixty-two, but the company was going to move its office. So, I thought, "Well, I'll take early retirement," which I did.

SI: Which company?

SR: The Grand Union Company, and I took early retirement and we went down to Florida ... that spring, April. At any rate, some time during the course of the year, we saw an ad for a TWA tour of the Alpine regions of Europe. So, we decided to go on that, signed up for that, and we left JFK [Airport], I guess it was, about the middle of September and it was a two-week trip. We flew over there and got on a bus and went all over the place, very interesting, but the interesting thing is, when we got on the plane at JFK, it was a big plane; I don't know. Again, I'm not ... too familiar with planes, but they had two aisles and the center and the center had most of the passengers, but we were on the side. I was on the aisle seat and Marge was next to me, in the window seat. ... Across the aisle and up ... one row, I noticed there was a middle-aged woman sitting in the aisle seat, across the aisle from me, apparently all alone, you know, and flying. She looked as though she was German, of German descent, you know. So, we took off around, I don't know, seven-thirty at night or something, tried to get some sleep that night. We were going to land at Frankfurt at eight-thirty in the morning. So, about eight o'clock in the morning, the pilot called out, "We're approaching Frankfurt. Put your seat belts on," which we did, and an attendant, ... flight attendant, stewardess, came down the aisle and spoke to this woman right across and one row up from me. She says, "Now, when we land in Frankfurt, you go to gate so-and-so for your connecting flight to Klagenfurt," and I said, "Oh, my God, Klagenfurt." What goes around comes around, you know; I wondered if we had killed any of her relatives in dropping the bombs there. [laughter] So, I had the feeling, at that point, that if she just turned her head, she'd see me and remember me from forty years earlier and twenty thousand feet up in the sky. [laughter] So, I said to my wife, "Let's not try to beat the crowd out. Let's wait until the bulk of the crowd gets out," which we did. She got up and she went out, and so, then, we went out, but, of course, cooler heads prevailed. I said, "Well, Klagenfurt is probably just the nearest airport for her," just as JFK was the nearest airport for us, you see, living in Hackensack at the time. So, she may not have suffered any loss in that bombing of Klagenfurt, but it's funny, as soon as the stewardess said, "Klagenfurt," I thought, "Uh-oh, what goes around comes around," you know. ... So, we never saw her again and we had a very pleasant trip around the Alps and Europe.

SI: Did you ever go back to any place where you were during the war? Did you ever go to Austria?

SR: Well, we went through Austria, yes, but not to Klagenfurt or Linz or anything. ... Our bases were in Italy, you know, ... but we enjoyed Austria, Vienna, Munich. In fact, when we were in Vienna, toward the end of the trip, they were starting their *Oktoberfest* celebrations, which they start in September, and so, we were taken to one of them. There's different halls for different brands of beers. I forget which one we were in, but, yes, so, we went to the beer hall and I guess had beer and Wiener schnitzel, and a lot of music, very good time, but, no, that was the last traveling. ...

MR: Well, if you want to say where you went, we went through the Canadian Rockies. We did it by train, all across. ...

SR: Oh, yes. We did some train trips. ...

MR: From here, all the way to the Canadian Rockies.

SR: Yes, and then, to Hawaii. We went there earlier, but, no, the only other trip to Europe was that trip in '85.

MR: Oh, Europe, yes.

SR: Where we met the woman, or we saw the woman, who wanted to go to Klagenfurt and, boy, oh, boy, that was quite a shock.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your bases in Italy, what the set up was like?

SR: Well, we were living in tents. Each crew was in a separate tent, and there were some buildings there. There was a barbershop, there was a place where you could buy beer, [laughter] ... but, basically, the food was served outdoors. They'd set up a long table and we'd take our canteens and whatnot and get it. ... I don't think we had bad weather that ... interfered with that at all, but it was pretty much outdoor tent living, and, there, they had a shower or a bathroom, of course, and shower room, as I say, ... a barbershop. ... Every once in awhile, you'd turn your clothes in to get dry cleaned and get them back in a few days, and so, it was pretty much of an outdoor experience.

SI: Did you feel like the food was adequate and the services were adequate?

SR: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SI: In the military, enlisted men have one life and officers have another.

SR: I suppose they did. [laughter] ...

SI: Did you feel like there was a real difference or did you feel like you were getting less than the officers?

SR: No, I didn't. I think they did what they could for us. It was certainly an adequate experience. Whether we went to the same places to play, I don't know. [laughter] ...

SI: Did you feel like they had a more privileged experience?

SR: No, no. ... As I say, I don't know what they did, but, no, we were taken care of, yes.

SI: Did officers and enlisted men socialize with each other?

SR: ... I don't think so, no, no. As I say, ... the six of us in our crew were in a tent, you see, and we had our own chow line there. ... I don't know where the officers were, but [we] got together for the flights every morning. We'd go to the briefing room and see who was assigned to where and whatnot. We didn't fly every day, certainly. Maybe once a week, you'd be on a flight.

SI: Was that just for whichever crew you were with or the entire bomb group, that would only fly once a week?

SR: The entire group would be in a big auditorium, you might say, and assignments would be made. ... If you were flying, you'd get a ride out to the field, you know, and load up and off you'd go.

SI: How did you feel, either on your first mission or any of the missions? Was it a nerve-wracking experience?

SR: [laughter] Oh, yes, it certainly was. That first mission I was on, I was just a replacement. We didn't go as a crew. I was just a replacement radio operator for some other crew, and I think the pilot was George McGovern, who later ran for President, you know, in the '60s or '70s. [Editor's Note: Senator George McGovern (D-SD) ran for President against President Richard Nixon in 1972.] I didn't vote for him. I wasn't too impressed with him [laughter] on that, no, but, ... well, they were all sort of scary. I mean, anything could have happened. Fortunately, ... our plane wasn't hit, but we did see some antiaircraft action on some of the [missions], well, particularly, the flights over the frontlines, you know, I mean, infantry. ... In fact, I was looking out the window once and what should happen but, in the plane next to us, the ball-turret cover blew off and the ball-turret gunner slid out, still in a sitting position. [laughter] He slid out into the air, and then, he finally opened his chute. He was able to open the chute. You wear it on your back, in that case, but that was a heck of an assignment. I was never in the ball-turret myself, but I wouldn't [want to be there]. You were cramped and, as I say, this fellow happened to fall out, but ... his chute opened. Whether he got back, I don't know. I didn't know who he was, but it was hairy. Every trip was hairy.

SI: Did it bother you that you never went up with your crew?

SR: No, not really, no, not really, no. I think, when we were transferred to up north, to Romagnana, we went as a crew, the whole crew, but had no activity up there at all. That's where I first tasted Marsala wine. There was a little winery in that town, [laughter] and we'd go in there and have a glass of Marsala wine. Yes, the civilians were functioning, pretty much.

SI: Did you have an opportunity to interact with the civilians much?

SR: Not really, no. Well, of course, the barber was a civilian, in the barbershop, but, no, they didn't seem to be hurting too much. I don't know what their occupational situation was, you know, during the war, but they were living.

SI: Did you have much communication with home, like letters?

SR: Letters, I guess. I guess I wrote letters, every once in awhile, and I don't think I called home, no.

SI: Was that important, to get letters from home? Did it help your morale?

SR: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SI: How was morale over all?

SR: I would say it was good, yes. I think we knew, when we were there, that it was a foregone conclusion that we were going to prevail, eventually, you know, with all the stuff we had over there and they [the Germans] were moving back, you know. It was just a matter of time, and that time came on ... May 8th of '45. We had a brief parade on the parade ground and ... memorialize the activity and the action.

SI: Was there a celebration afterwards?

SR: ... I don't recall going overboard on anything, at that point. ... The PX, [post exchange], I guess you could get beer there. ... Every once in awhile, I'd have a glass or two, but I never got intoxicated or anything, while over there.

SI: Did your unit suffer any casualties while you were there, that you remember, anyone you knew?

SR: Well, no, not in our crew, but, as I say, ... there were casualties when planes landed and crashed and caught on fire. Then, you had to watch out for the machinegun bullets going [off], popping off in the air. There was one morning, we were in our tent and ... we hadn't been assigned or anything that day, and we were in the tent and the planes were leaving. ... All of a sudden, one of them ... flew over us, very loud, and we realized something was wrong. So, we ran out of the tent and we saw the plane disappear beyond a hill. We were on a sort of a hill and they passed the crest of the hill and disappeared and, all of a sudden, there was a, "Boom." So, we ran to the top of the hill and there was a plane spread out over the landscape, smoldering, and, yet, I think a couple survived that crash. The ambulance was there immediately, and I think several survived, but I'm sure most of them were killed [when the] plane crashed. ... There was hardly any distinguishing aspect to combat or ordinary flying, you know; you could die in either situation.

SI: Do you remember any cases where people would refuse to go back up, any mental problems?

SR: Oh, no, no. I'm sure they might have had some, but, no, I don't recall anybody.

SI: How long were the missions, typically?

SR: Well, from about seven in the morning, probably get a briefing about six in the morning, and then, we'd take off around seven in the morning and you'd come back maybe two, three in the afternoon.

SI: What were the conditions like in the plane? Was it very cold, cramped or noisy?

SR: Well, we had heated suits. ... Under our outer flying suits, we had a heated suit, which we could plug into the electrical circuit there and, of course, you had to pull it out when you wanted to move somewhere. ... Then, we had heavy, sort of sheepskin-type jackets and pants. Boots, I think we had boots over our shoes. So, yes, it's cold up there at twenty thousand feet, but we didn't suffer from it at all, I would say, and, fortunately, we didn't suffer any hits of anti-aircraft particles, you know, that might have injured somebody. We didn't have to try and cope with an injured person on the way back to the base. I don't know how we would have made out in that case. ...

SI: You mentioned that, on the first three missions, you were bombing near the front.

SR: Yes, the German front, yes, the frontlines of the Germans. ... They weren't strategic missions, they were tactical missions, you know. ... I mean, the B-24s were for, basically, ... strategic missions, as was the '17s [B-17s] from England, but that's where they needed us at that point, the frontlines, so, that's what we bombed.

SI: Did they have to have a lot of coordination, over the radio, between the ground forces and the air forces?

SR: They may have, but, as I say, that would have gone through the head plane, the one in which the commander of the mission was in. ... I wasn't in any of those situations, but I'm sure there must have been some back and forth, yes.

SI: Were you flying as high as you would on a strategic mission, or were you closer to the ground?

SR: No, usually twenty thousand feet, yes.

SI: Were there any close calls that you remember, from either training missions or the combat missions?

SR: That I was in? No, I can't recall any, no.

SI: Any mechanical problems?

SR: No. Well, the plane we flew up to Gander, Newfoundland, to begin with, then, we started, from there, over to the Azores, but, about an hour out, something went wrong with the engine. So, we turned back and landed there. ... That kept us there three or four days, until they fixed it up and whatnot, but, no, that was the only untoward event.

SI: Did you get along well with your crew members?

SR: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

SI: You were friendly with each other.

SR: Yes.

MR: I was just thinking; there was one that Sid became very friendly with, ... David.

SR: Yes, David Strain, yes.

MR: Yes, and, after the war, they corresponded and, after we got married, I did the corresponding with his wife, Daisy.

SR: Yes.

MR: When we had our family, we decided, "It was time we met;" we'd never met.

SR: They lived in Indiana.

MR: ... So, we got the children into the car and off to Indiana we went. Now, we had never met these people and they had never met us. So, how are we going to get along? Good question; well, anyhow, I said, ... "When we get there, don't let them know how long we're going to stay or anything. We could just stay overnight," if we weren't happy. Well, we had such a wonderful time, and the two guys, they just had a great time together.

SR: Oh, yes, yes.

MR: Yes, but the daughter said she understood why her father and Sid got along so nicely together, because they could sit in a room all evening and say nothing. [laughter] ...

SR: Didn't we go out there twice? Hadn't we gone out there twice?

MR: Oh, we went several times there.

SR: Yes, yes, after the first time, yes.

MR: Yes. He was ... a school bus driver. ... They had four children, we had four, so, we did all our traveling in the school bus.

SR: [laughter] Yes, during the vacation, the summer, you know.

MR: I thought it was worth talking about, because it was part of his experience and it brought us together.

SR: Oh, yes.

MR: And so, this Christmas, we did not receive a card from them. So, I had to call Daisy, and David passed away.

SR: Oh, yes, this past year.

MR: So, that's a sad part in our life, but, when you get up in your eighties, why, you can expect things like that.

SR: Yes.

SI: It is interesting. A lot of people never keep up ties with the people that they served with.

SR: Oh, yes. Well, as I say, the main reason was, we really didn't fly as a crew once we got over there. We were here, there, this plane, that plane, you see, but David and I got along quite well and we kept together, in touch with one another, after the war. ...

MR: He was a farmer.

SR: Yes, he was a farmer, right.

MR: Cattle.

SI: What position did he fly on the plane?

SR: Well, he was the top-turret gunner, you know, yes, up there somewhere. [laughter] So, we got through the experience and defeated the enemy and survived. [laughter]

SI: Were you nervous about the prospect of going over to the Pacific, or were you looking forward to it?

SR: Yes, I didn't like the thought of it, no, but, you know, you have to do what you have to do, and so, ... fortunately, that didn't become necessary. ... As I say, I was down in Tampa and hadn't been there very long, wasn't too familiar with the base, and this one morning, I walked over to the post exchange, to get another cup of coffee or something, and, on the way back to the barracks, ... I got on the wrong street. I didn't realize it at first, but I went into the wrong barracks, and then, I realized I was in the wrong place, but there were two fellows. The barracks was empty, except for two fellows, who were at the other end of the barracks, listening intently to the radio. ... I saw, I thought, "Well, something's up." So, I listened and it was H. V. Kaltenborn. I don't know whether you remember [radio and television journalist] H. V. Kaltenborn, Henry Van [Hans von] Kaltenborn. He was the; who's the famous [person], today, that we listen to every New Year's?

SI: Dick Clark?

SR: No, no.

MR: No, he has a program from Vienna every year. [Editor's Note: The Rosengrens are referring to retired journalist and TV anchorman Walter Cronkite, who hosts the New Year's Eve performance of the Viennese Philharmonic each year on PBS.]

SR: Yes, elderly fellow.

MR: I can't think of his name.

SR: Yes, that's what I'm trying to think [of], but, in other words, this fellow was like this fellow more recently. He was on the air every night, for one thing or another, and he was saying that, "We have just dropped a new type of bomb on Hiroshima in Japan, an atomic bomb." Well, I immediately knew that there was going to be tremendous devastation, because, when I was in high school, I wrote a thesis, a paper, you know, on radioactivity and how it goes from this to this to this to this, emitting all sorts of energy, and I knew that it would have been a disaster. The effect of the bomb was a disaster, and it certainly was, but they had to drop another one a couple of days later on Nagasaki, but, as I say, I'm standing there, listening to H. V. Kaltenborn, and I thought, "The war is over," and the war was over. So, I was very glad I didn't have to go over there. [laughter]

SI: Were you expecting the war to be a lot longer?

SR: Well, I thought it would be longer than it was, and it would have been, if we hadn't had those two bombs. It would have been ... quite a long time.

SI: Do you know if you would have stayed in B-24s or would you have been put in B-29s?

SR: Probably stayed in B-24s. I mean, if you're going to another plane, there's a lot of training involved in that sort of thing, but I didn't give it much serious thought, and, of course, when I heard the bomb dropped, I said, "Well, that's it, that's it. It's over," and it was.

SI: I just have one more question about Italy. When you were sent to Romagnana, to potentially aid the Partisans, did that require any additional training or was it a different kind of mission?

SR: ... No. All they did was to take out ... the ball-turret from the plane, and that's where you would have dropped the supplies, you see, the big, round hole there, ... but we never were asked to fly any supplies to anywhere. ... Occasionally, you could see fires in the hills, you know, where the Partisans were camped out. They were fighting the Germans in Italy and, also, the Italians who were sympathizers with the Germans. They were doing their best to disrupt things, and I guess they did quite a bit, and, as I say, the government would drop supplies every once in awhile, but we never went on ... any mission of that sort, just sat there, basically, for a couple of weeks, until the war [ended], the Germans surrendered.

SI: Was that assignment any more secret than your other assignments?

SR: No, I don't think so.

SI: Were you told not to tell people about it when you went into town?

SR: I don't think we discussed much with the people in town. [laughter] They spoke Italian, you know, just order a little glass of Marsala wine.

SI: Did you ever give any thought to staying in the military?

SR: No, I didn't, no. Maybe if I had become a general, like Fritz Kroesen, I might have, [laughter] but, no, I was a staff sergeant when I was discharged, and you want me dig out my discharge paper?

SI: You do not have to.

SR: I saw it the other day, in one of my drawers. ...

SI: If you think of it later and you want to send us a copy, that would be great, but you do not have to go digging through your papers.

SR: Okay.

SI: When did you learn about the GI Bill? Were you still in the service?

SR: I guess so, yes, yes, I imagine. As I say, I don't know what the financial arrangements were for my tuition down there, but I imagine the GI Bill was covering part of it or all of it. ... Living expenses were covered by my folks. ...

SI: What was it like to come back to Rutgers after being in the war?

SR: Well, it hadn't changed very much. In fact, we went down, frequently, for football games. We had some friends who had graduated from Lehigh, so, we'd go to Lehigh for the Lehigh football game or, if it was at Rutgers, we'd go to Rutgers for the football game. It hadn't changed very much, but I understand, now, I wouldn't know the place. Talking to our grandson, who has been a student there for a couple of years, three, there are campuses here and campuses there and busses going from place to place, and it's not in walking distance anymore, you know. So, we really haven't thought of going down there; we'd probably get lost. [laughter]

MR: Our three daughters went to Douglass.

SR: Yes, oh, yes.

SI: When you came back, did you live in the fraternity house or did you live in veterans' housing?

SR: No, you mean at Rutgers for the last year? Yes, I think I lived in the fraternity house, yes. I'm quite sure I did, yes. Yes, it was on Mine Street there, at the time, yes.

SI: Were most of the students veterans, like yourself, or were there kids right out of high school?

SR: Yes. There were a lot of returning fellows, like myself, but, then, there were the newcomers, the freshmen and sophomores and whatnot, who hadn't been involved in the war.

SI: How did the two groups get along?

SR: Okay, I would say okay.

SI: Did you find that your experience, being in the military and having flown combat missions, affected you in any way or made you stand out from the other students?

SR: [laughter] I don't know whether I'd be the one to be a judge of that, you know.

SI: For example, did you feel like you took class more seriously?

SR: Perhaps, perhaps, yes, yes.

SI: Did you have a clear idea of what you wanted to do with your life after the war?

SR: Just get a job and support myself, and I was able to do that.

SI: Was it difficult to get a job at that point, with all the servicemen coming back?

SR: I really don't know. My first job was with a bank in New York, had that for about two years, and then, I got this other job with the Grand Union Company, which ... had its headquarters in New Jersey. I didn't have all that commuting to do, but I don't know how I could evaluate whether it was hard to get a job or easy. I suppose, initially, it was probably easy, because the enterprises had been starved for young people, you know, for several years, and I imagine the first ones back had an easy time getting jobs, but I was fortunate. I had no trouble getting that second job that I had with the Grand Union Company and, as I say, I was there, with them, from about 1950, or '49, maybe, to '85, wasn't it? yes, '85, when I retired, yes.

SI: What did you do with Grand Union?

SR: Well, I was in the tax department, real estate taxes, personal property taxes, income taxes. We had operators in a number of states, you know, had state income taxes to prepare and Federal income taxes. That's what I was doing, pretty much.

SI: How did you meet Mrs. Rosengren?

SR: Well, ... our families knew one another for many years and we had, of course, met as children, you might say, when we'd get together, once or twice.

MR: Our families always knew each other. I was from Long Island.

SI: Yes, I was curious about that, because you were from Long Island. Your families knew each other.

SR: Well, as I say, the families knew each other and we'd get together several times a year. We'd go out there or they'd come to our house, and we, more or less, grew up together, you might say.

MR: Oh, yes. We really did grow up together.

SR: Yes.

SI: Then, you settled in Hackensack.

SR: Yes.

MR: No.

SR: Well, first, we lived in Paramus. We bought a house in Paramus, in 1951, and then, in '55, I guess it was, we sold that and moved into Hackensack, and we were there until last year. We sold the house in June of last year, 2007. We had moved here in March of 2007 and we were able to sell our house just before the housing market collapsed, you know. [laughter] We were pretty lucky in that respect.

MR: Yes, we were very lucky, very.

SR: Yes.

SI: You grew up and have lived in basically the same area, Northern New Jersey.

SR: Yes.

SI: What are some of the major changes that you have seen over the course of your life?

MR: A lot of development, a lot of development.

SR: Oh, yes, well, yes, that's right, yes, [housing] developments, television, radio, and then, television. [laughter]

MR: Well, we were fifty-one years in Hackensack.

SR: Yes.

MR: And I don't think we saw a lot of changes.

SR: No.

MR: No. ... Our children all went to school there.

SR: Some of the stores would go out and new stores would come in.

MR: Well, that's the big change. ... [There are not many stores in the] Hackensack town any more, because they were all wiped out, a lot of them, from all these ... malls. You know, they ruined business for the little man, very sad.

SI: Were you involved in the town at all, any civic clubs?

SR: No. We were involved with the church.

MR: And the Scouts. I was a Scout leader.

SR: Yes, you were a Scout leader. ...

MR: Our life has been developed with the church.

SR: Yes.

MR: We held a lot of offices there. ... That's always been our main goal.

SR: Yes.

MR: ... And have a close family. We're very close. Our son served in the Navy for five years, in a submarine.

SI: I saw that he served from 1979 to 1985, or thereabouts.

MR: Who, Carl? When was Carl in the Navy?

SR: Yes, from '79 to about '85, yes, ... shortly after he graduated from high school. He was born in '61, graduated, I think, in '79, had made arrangements before that to go into the Navy and he went off and got out in '85, yes.

SI: How did you feel about having a son in the service?

SR: Well, I guess a little apprehensive about his well-being, you know.

MR: Well, you know, somebody said, when he left, "Well, Marge'll cry," because he's our youngest, and I said to them, "Why am I going to cry?" He volunteered. We never told him he should go in service. We never discussed it. He just came home and told us ... a man was

coming for us to sign papers, because he was going to join the Navy, and he did, and he was very happy with it all.

SR: Yes, and he wound up in the submarine service. [laughter] That gave us a little concern at times. ...

MR: No, only when he wrote letters and said there'd been a fire on the submarine. Then, I [worried], you know, or ... you wouldn't hear from him. The longest time we didn't hear was, what, fifty days?

SR: Something like that.

MR: They were under. That was very scary. We never talked about it.

SR: Yes. They were chasing Russian ships in the Atlantic, you know, keeping track of them, so, they couldn't communicate. ... So, as I say, there was that period of about fifty days where we didn't know where he was or how he was, ... but he was okay.

SI: Talking about the church reminded me; did you have to go to chapel when you were at Rutgers?

SR: Oh, yes, sure, chapel services every [week]. During the week, there was an obligatory meeting, I guess for announcements and whatnot, and then, Sundays, they had services. I went frequently, yes.

SI: Did they have speakers come in?

SR: Yes, I think so, basically. I forget the name of the minister who was there when I was starting out there, but, yes, they had Sunday services, which I frequently attended. ... Then, as I say, ... during the week, there was a meeting for each class, I think, and they had announcements and this, that and the other thing.

SI: Was Dean Metzger the minister?

SR: ... Metzger, yes, yes, right, Metzger, right. That's right, yes.

SI: Did you ever have any experiences with the Rutgers administrators or any run-ins with them?

SR: No, just signing up for the courses every spring or fall. ... Yes, we used to eat, occasionally, at Winants Hall there, cafeteria or whatever you want to call it. Then, when I was in the fraternity house, we had our own cook and meals served there.

SI: Is there anything else you remember about Rutgers that you want to add to the record?

SR: ... Well, is the Corner Tavern still there? [laughter]

SI: Yes. Still there, still running.

SR: Yes. We were there occasionally. Well, it was very pleasant, very pleasant, on the ... Raritan, yes, and the song, you know, *On the Banks of the Old Raritan, Loyal Sons*, and whatnot, a very touching experience, very pleasant. In fact, I think, ... during the winter, I think we went skating on the Raritan River, when it was frozen, I think, yes, but it was a very pleasant experience.

SI: Is there anything that I am missing that you would like to add about any aspects of your life or the war or afterwards?

SR: Well, you know, just the fact that we had four children, [laughter] three of whom went to Douglass for varying periods of time. Our son is a chef. He went through the CIA. ...

MR: Culinary Institute [of America].

SR: Culinary Institute, yes, up in New York State there. He's a chef in New York. No, it's been a very rewarding life, hasn't it, my dear?

MR: Oh, yes, fifty-seven years. [laughter]

SI: Congratulations on that. That is quite an achievement.

MR: Yes.

SR: And, of course, I wish Rutgers well, but I'm not about to go down, because I know it's nothing like [it was]. ... I'd be lost down there, I feel, unless ... our grandson'll take me down some time, [laughter] show me around. ...

SI: The older parts of the campus are still there, the core of the New Brunswick Campuses.

SR: Yes. The library, I guess, is still there, isn't it?

SI: Yes. The library is now the art museum [Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum] and the larger library, the Alexander Library, is down the road a little bit.

SR: Yes, what was that called, Kilpatrick Commons or something like that?

SI: There is the Voorhees Mall. That is where all the older buildings are, Milledoler and Van Dyck Halls, and then, there was Kirkpatrick Chapel.

SR: ... Kirkpatrick Chapel, yes, that's what I was thinking of.

SI: Right next to Old Queens and Winants.

SR: Yes.

SI: That is all still there. During reunions, that is where most of the action takes place.

SR: Yes, but, as I say, we used to go down, occasionally, for football games, but haven't been down in recent years. In fact, our friends, well, they moved away, and then, they died, and so, we don't have that rivalry to celebrate any more. [laughter]

SI: And Rutgers does not play Lehigh any more.

SR: No, I guess not. I wish they'd never gotten [into] trying to get into the big league, you know. I read somewhere, when they decided to emphasize the football aspect, they had to cut out about six other sports, like rowing and whatever, and I thought, "Well, ... they'd have been better off to stick with all the other sports and not emphasize football so much," and I see, now, they're going to spend 102 million on expanding the stadium there. Well, it's not like the old school we used to know. [laughter]

SI: That side of the campus has changed a lot, particularly recently. They expanded the highway and all.

SR: Yes, right. As I say, ... I think I'd probably get lost if I tried to drive down there anymore.

SI: I get lost myself. [laughter] Thank you both very much, unless there is something you want to add.

SR: Well, you know, I think we've covered everything I had in mind. Did you want to add anything, my dear?

MR: No, I didn't go there. I know nothing about it.

SR: Yes, right.

MR: Except I married one. [laughter]

SR: It was a very good experience for me, I think, to have gone there and to be an alumni, but ... I haven't been active in the last few years, last number of years, good grief. Well, the last time we were down there to any extent was in '73, when our two oldest daughters were in Douglass and they had a parents' night, you know, or day, Saturday, I guess it was, parents' day, and we were down there then and that's about all. ...

SI: Thank you very much. I appreciate your time and I appreciate all the information. It was great.

SR: ... A pleasure; I'm sorry I didn't get in touch with you earlier on this project.

SI: No, do not apologize.

SR: But, as I say, I happened to meet Crandon Clark, he mentioned it, and I guess he got in touch with you or your office, and he's been hectoring us about it for the last six months or so. [laughter]

MR: See, we still belong to our church in Hackensack. That, we will not separate from, but, most of the time, we go to Ridgewood, because our daughter that lives in Ridgewood goes there, and Crandon happens to go to that church. So, our son-in-law got in touch with him one Sunday and brought him out, and I said to Sid [that] I would not go back another Sunday unless he made a date to have this interview, because I got embarrassed. [laughter]

SR: Well, hey, sure.

SI: Now, you can go back to church. [laughter]

MR: Oh, I wouldn't stop.

SI: Thank you very much.

SR: Okay, a pleasure.

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Reviewed by Edwin Robinson 7/28/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/6/08

Reviewed by Sidney Rosengren 8/8/08