

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MURRAY ROSENTHAL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Jonathan Gurstelle: This begins an interview with Murray Rosenthal on February 26, 2002, in Jericho, New York, with Jonathan Gurstelle and ...

Shaun Illingworth: Shaun Illingworth.

JG: Murray, can you tell us a little bit about your parents?

Murray Rosenthal: My dad, in fact, was a salesman for the (Hecker HO?) Company for close to forty years when he passed away. My mother was not a working mother, she was a home mother and we had a family. I had a brother, unfortunately he passed away when he was seven years old. I was twelve at that time. We were living in Newark, New Jersey, at that time.

SI: How much schooling did your father have?

MR: My father was a high school graduate and so was my mother. They went no farther than high school.

SI: Were they active politically?

MR: No, they weren't active politically. They didn't have any particular political designation as far as their activities were concerned.

SI: When did your parents move to New Jersey?

MR: They moved to New Jersey, actually, I was born in New York City. We migrated from the lower East side of Manhattan to the Bronx when my father was transferred to that territory for his sales work and then they gave him a transfer to the state of New Jersey. We moved to New Jersey sometime around 1930 and I remained there until my parents were once again relocated, just before I went in the service.

SI: Where did you attend elementary school?

MR: Elementary school, in fact, I still remember the name, Avon Avenue Grammar School on Avon Avenue in Newark.

SI: Are there any experiences that you would like to tell us about?

MR: Well, all I can say is that I made some very, very close friends there, which unfortunately diluted during the course of movement. But I got a good education and it was very close to where I lived on Avon Avenue at that time and my activities were, you know, try to keep a good academic situation was also involved in stickball, that was my main athletic activity.

SI: Which Ward did you live in?

MR: Ward, I did not have any political ward.

SI: Describe your neighborhood.

MR: It was, I would say, basically an upper blue-collar neighborhood. There were no very, wealthy people living there. The homes were small homes. There was nothing of a large nature, so I would say, upper middle-class would be the best way to describe it.

SI: Was there a large Jewish community where you lived?

MR: Actually, it was quite a mixed community. My close friends at the time were a combination of Italians, Irish, Polish. There weren't that many Jewish people living in that particular area.

SI: Were your parents religious?

MR: We were, in fact, members of a temple, which was only about half a mile where we lived. It was a, I would say, let's see, you have Reformed, the middle one is Conservative; it was a Conservative synagogue.

SI: Were you bar mitzvahed?

MR: Yes, I was bar mitzvahed at this particular synagogue, I can't really give you the year.

SI: Can you tell us about your experience at Southside High School?

MR: Southside High School was a very, very, major, good experience for me. I became an extremely active person as a member of the National Honor Society before I graduated. I played on the freshman football team and, I think I mentioned to you, I was a member of the varsity track team for four years and I won ... the shot-put championship of the Newark City High Schools. There were approximately six high schools in Newark. That was my most profound achievement as an athlete. I also participated in the discus and the javelin. I was a weight man. As you can see, I'm not a weight man today.

SI: When you graduated high school, did you go to college right away?

MR: Yes, I was very fortunate in the fact that when I applied to Rutgers, my grades and my athletic background allowed for, an academic scholarship. If I told you the amount of money you would laugh. At that time, two hundred dollars a year, was an enormous amount of money back in 1936.

SI: Was it a state scholarship?

MR: A state scholarship, yes. In fact, I was accepted to Rutgers, as I mentioned, and I enrolled in what is now known as Cook College, the College of Agriculture. That's where Dilly [Carleton Dilatush] and I were classmates. We had the same major, dairy manufactures and bacteriology, if you want to put his name into the picture.

SI: Why did you choose to go to Rutgers and, particularly, the College of Agriculture?

MR: I must tell you that very frankly, my father at that time, if you remember this was the tail end of the Depression. If I told you that his salary was approximately \$25.00 a week, we could not afford a school that was local, that was private. At that time, when I went to Rutgers, it was a private school. It was the one that originally had been sponsored by the Dutch Reformed Church, if you remember, that goes way back, Rutgers College, which goes back to 1766. Our school is the sixth oldest college in the country. Am I right?

SI: Something like that.

MR: When I went there it was not the state university. It did not become the state university until 1945, which was after I came home from the service.

SI: What was it like to grow up in Newark during the Depression? How did that affect your neighborhood and your family?

MR: Well, actually, to put it very succinctly: we all had problems financially, so that it was a matter of nickels and pennies that were very important to you at that time. Whereas today, it would be, what can I tell you? You have to have the green paper. But everybody, you know, did the best they could under the circumstances. I never had an allowance because with my father's earnings we just about made ends meet, in as far as paying rent and the essential things of life, you know, food, etc. You had very little left over.

JG: Back to Rutgers, why did you choose the major in bacteriology?

MR: I became scientifically oriented in high school and I decided that possibly, and it was a long shot that I could not afford the undergraduate, regular college. The College of Agriculture, which was financed through either federal grants or state grants, had a much lower tuition, I'm being very frank now, and that was the only way I was able to attend and I will give you some further information. I commuted from Newark to New Brunswick for four years I had six eight o'clock classes. I had to get up at four-thirty to a quarter-of-five every morning, six days a week, to get onto a bus down to Penn Station and take the Penn Railroad down from Newark to New Brunswick. Fortunately, I made some very good friends who had the same situation that I did. We had a commuters club that commuted from either Newark and then we had guys who got on at Elizabeth and some of the other stops. What it amounted to was that we could not afford the dormitory, or living on campus, so my experiences with Rutgers were mainly as a commuter.

JG: Why was Professor Button your favorite professor?

MR: Professor Button was the head of the department of dairy manufacture in the College of Agriculture, which is today is Cook College. Carleton Dilatush was also in the same major that I had. He was also a dairy major and he was a very, very personable man and did a good job in indoctrinating us in this particular situation. My main reasons for that major was it involved a lot of bacteriology, which was where I had taken a lot of courses at the main campus, bacteriology, organic chemistry, etc, so I had a combination of majors there.

SI: During your years at the College of Agriculture was it required for you to work on a farm?

MR: I worked, in fact, I had what they called ...NYA, National Youth Administration. I had an NYA job at the College of Agriculture. I worked in the horse stables and one of my main responsibilities was taking care of the droppings that the horses dropped. I have to give you an aside story. I was dating a girl, at that time, it was the New Jersey College for Women, it wasn't Douglass College, it was separate, although it had a minor affiliation with Rutgers. ... I was working there on Saturday I was going to go to a dance at the New Jersey College for Women and I didn't have time to take a shower after I finished my job. I changed my clothing, but I'm afraid the aroma was still there. I walked into their dormitory where this young lady was from. She was actually from Lakewood, New Jersey, and when I walked in, there were some ladies there who started looking at me rather strangely and I said to myself, "Oh, it must be the usual leftover from my job." ... It worked out, but that was one of the very interesting experiences I had. I thought I'd give you that as an aside.

SI: Why did you choose to participate in the ROTC program?

MR: I felt very strongly at that time. I mean, things were happening in Europe, as you know, ... my junior year. Adolf Hitler's job in Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc, he invaded that area. I felt that if, God forbid, something happened I want to get in there and get after him.

SI: How much did you know about it? Was the situation in Europe discussed in your home?

MR: Actually, we all had a strong feeling about it. You know, what this man was doing to people but, myself, I had an extremely strong feeling about it. The opportunity came, I was going to volunteer and get in, that's how I felt.

SI: Do you remember any discussion that was actually on the Rutgers campus about it?

MR: I think they did have meetings at the time. I don't recall exactly what they were concerned with but, I think, we had a bunch of young men, like myself, who felt very strongly about what this animal was doing.

SI: Did you hear anything through your synagogue about what was happening to the Jews in Germany?

MR: At the time, there were some discussions by the rabbi ... as far as what this man was doing to the Jewish people in Germany and other countries in Europe.

JG: Did you encounter any anti-Semitism while you were at Rutgers?

MR: I must say, I don't remember having that problem at Rutgers. I do remember having that problem when I first went into service.

SI: Is there anything about being Jewish that made your experience at Rutgers unique?

MR: Actually, I would say that I was not involved religiously at Rutgers because being a commuter, I couldn't get involved. I had, as I mentioned, six eight o'clock classes and I had labs, five days a week from one to four. ... My activities were rather restricted and, of course, I was always looking at my watch worrying about getting the train to get back, so I didn't participate in many evening activities at all, I have to be honest about that.

SI: Did you ever attend any sporting events, football games?

MR: Oh, yes. I went to all the home football games. I felt very strongly about that. In fact ... I started attending the freshman football practice but then, with my schedule, it became impossible because with one to four labs, practice started a lot earlier. The guys who were at Rutgers College had better academic schedules ... and with my commuting, it made it ... very difficult. I did participate though, in freshman track with the shot-put and they had activities later on where they had club meets. I represented the Commuters' Club, in fact, I still have a clipping someplace where I had won the shot-put, basically, the fraternities were all involved and I won one of the competitions.

SI: Are there any students or friends at Rutgers that really stand out in your mind?

MR: I'm trying to think. Well, the man who I still consider a friend when I go down there, Carl Woodward, did you interview him?

SI: Yes, I know him.

MR: And he's got a cousin, another Woodward, his name escapes me. ... Carl and I were fairly good friends also and he's also been very active in the Alumni Association.

SI: I saw him a few months ago.

MR: Oh, did you? Carl is a terrific guy.

SI: Did you see the Princeton/Rutgers game?

MR: I saw the Princeton/Rutgers game after, how many years was it before we had beaten them? It goes back over fifty years ... that we hadn't beaten them. It was an incredible experience, I can tell you that. I remember that ... one of my classmates, Mike Gottlieb, he passed away, unfortunately, a few years after he graduated from college but he was, I think, the quarterback of the football team at the time. That was quite a game, that was one of the highlights of my experiences at Rutgers.

SI: Can you tell me about any celebrations in New Brunswick?

MR: Well, unfortunately, I just mentioned the commuter situation. I attended the game, I was delirious with joy, but then I had to look at my watch for the train back to Newark.

JG: What did you do after graduating in 1940, before enlisting in the Army in '41?

MR: It's a very interesting story. What happened is that, unfortunately, due to being in the tail end of the Depression, I applied to approximately a dozen areas where my background in bacteriology and biochemistry and dairy manufactures might apply. Nothing. There were no jobs available. I had the good fortune of taking a civil service exam and I was notified, with a telegram, that if I was available, there was a job opening with the Census Bureau at the Department of Commerce in Washington at the salary of \$1440.00 a year, which is approximately thirty some odd dollars a week, which at that time was an enormous amount of money. I immediately accepted and when I graduated in June, 1940, I immediately left for Washington. Another classmate of mine had accepted and we got in touch with each other and we became roommates. We rented a second story, small apartment in Anacostia, which is in southeast Washington from a retired Navy CPO, Chief Petty Officer. ... From there, I commuted to the Department of Commerce and the Bureau of Census, from June 1940 to March 1941. I volunteered in the peacetime draft started in October, 1940. ... I figured I can't stay here in the Department of Commerce, it's not my field, and it's not my type of work. I enjoyed the experience, very interesting experience, and when the service situation came up, I figured, "Well, I'm going to get this over with." I volunteered in March, 1941, I was in the Army before Pearl Harbor.

SI: Where did you go for your basic training?

MR: Basic training, I was sent to Pine Camp, New York, which is now Fort Drum, if you're familiar with that.

SI: Yes.

MR: I was in the original cadre of the Fourth Armored Division. It was installed, or, actually started up there and they sent me there as a recruit. I took my basic armored force training, but then I was called in by the commanding officer, who said, "We have a problem. The station hospital people are desperately short of trained lab technicians. I checked your records. I found out you have a degree in bacteriology, biochemistry and they can use you desperately. Would you mind if I transferred you to the Medical Corps, and transfer you to the Station Hospital?" I figured, this was before the war, "What will I have to lose?" I mean, I enjoyed being with the guys ... I enjoyed the basic training in the armored force but I figured, "Well, I might as ... well do something that's in my field." I immediately accepted and I was transferred to the station hospital as a lab technologist and after, let's see, this was 1941, December 7th, you know, the tragedy of when they bombed Pearl Harbor? I found out that my work was good, but I wanted to see if I could do anything better. What happened was my CO called me in and he says, "I have to send a certain number of guys to OCS." He said, "I checked your background, and ... what would you think about applying for Officers Candidate School?" I said, "That sounds great," as long as I'm going to be in the army. At that time I was a buck sergeant, but I said to myself, "What have I got to lose?" The openings I have, there was nothing in the armored force, which I would have wanted to go back into, but he said, "Quartermaster?" I said, "I'll take it." So I went to Quartermaster OCS in Camp Lee, Virginia. I became an eighty-nine day wonder. You remember they used to call the guys who went to OCS, ninety day wonders? They

commissioned you, what took four years for a guy to go through the Naval Academy or West Point, you got a commission in ninety days ... To make a long story short, after I was commissioned, they decided that since I had had a hospital background, I was assigned to the 52nd General Hospital in Camp Livingston, Louisiana. I had to take a real long trip after I was commissioned and I was assigned as the transportation officer, supply officer, assistant detachment commander ... to make sure that everything went along with the discipline, etc, and in December, 1942, we were shipped out. They shipped us out in khakis so that they can fool people. We thought we were going to North Africa. We ended up in England. I ended up in (Gourock?) in Scotland, in December '42, and then was shipped down to a small town in England where the hospital was set up. It's very interesting on the way down. The Germans were still sending over a lot of bombers and fighters, our train was strafed and, thank God, fortunately, none of our people were injured by them. Some of the other troops, had problems, but we made it and we ended up in Kidderminster in England. That's where the 52nd General Hospital, where I had been assigned to, was set up. The hospital was affiliated at that time with the Syracuse University College of Medicine. Most of the major general hospitals had to have background people who were really well-trained. In fact, many of the General Hospitals got their affiliation with the major medical schools and the men who volunteered. In fact, our commanding officer was the Chief of Surgery at Syracuse and so on down. Many of the major members of the hospital unit were all major people at the Syracuse University College of Medicine. Today Syracuse, apparently, just after the war, broke its affiliation with its medical school and the state picked it up. It's now the State University of New York Upstate Medical Center. It's not affiliated with Syracuse anymore.

SI: Actually, I want to go back and ask you a few questions about, even though you were only with the armored basic training for the first time, a lot of what I've read about the military before Pearl Harbor, particularly the Army and the armored force, was there wasn't enough material to go around for everybody.

MR: Oh, I can tell you stories. When we started our basic training, the tanks were built out of cardboard and we didn't have enough rifles ... for recruits they gave us wooden rifles, basically, you may have read about this, and until our very, very, good manufacturing people in the field of the armament area started to go to work, it was an incredible situation and quite an experience to start out your basic training with something that couldn't do anything to anybody. But, apparently, other people had that experience, too. Did you have that told you by anybody?

SI: I heard about it. One person told me they were standing guard duty but they had no bullets in their guns.

MR: Oh, that's true. If they gave you a wooden rifle, what good would a bullet do? We had, you know, if you were sent out, say, on MP duty or guard duty, all you could do is hit the guy over the head with wooden gun if, God forbid, you are required to do so.

JG: You mentioned a few minutes ago about encountering anti-Semitism in the army, could you tell me about that?

MR: Well, what happened is that when I had my basic training in the armored force, there were some individuals that actually made anti-Semitic remarks during the course of conversation, you know, not while we were “fighting,” but in the barracks. There was anti-Semitic conversation going on occasionally.

SI: Were the people, this is another stereotype, were they from the South?

MR: Ninety-nine percent of them were Southerners, basically. Apparently, they all thought that the Jews were like Moses, who had horns sticking out of their heads. Unbelievable, it was really unbelievable. That was due to their upbringing, basically, their family situation.

JG: Did you find that any of that changed when you went to war in Europe?

MR: I think ... that a lot of it did change. They found out what happened, you know, as far as with the Holocaust. Especially when they found out what was going on in the concentration camps, Auschwitz, and the other ones. I think many of them changed their attitudes but there was still, you know, the basic anti-Semite, no matter what. Nothing will change it.

JG: When you were stationed in England, how aware were you of what was taking place in Germany and Eastern Europe at that time?

MR: Well, when we were stationed in England ... we got over there in December '42 and started operating a thousand bed general hospital. ... We received news through the Armed Forces Radio, our own radio, or through the BBC, the British Broadcasting Company, about what was going on as far as the fighting on the main continent.

SI: Were you really aware of Hitler's ‘final solution’ at that point?

MR: In what vein are you discussing this?

SI: The Holocaust, did you know what was really going on?

MR: Well, we knew that there were thousands of Jews who had been sent to concentration camps and then disappeared. He did not really try and publicize that too much but the gas chambers, the crematoriums, or whatever, they were operating twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Unfortunately, and, of course, it was not only Jews, but also the gypsies and other people that he found distasteful got the same treatment. In fact, it's rather amazing that a man, who had his disfigurement, dark hair, mustache, etc., the main feature that they were looking for was the blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryan, if you know what I'm saying, and that was the picture of the future of Germany and the world, if he had taken over.

SI: Let's step back again. Can you tell us a little bit about what you did on an average day in the hospital, both before you went to OCS and after?

MR: Well, basically, what happened is that while I was doing this work, as a detachment commander, we had approximately three hundred enlisted men, so my responsibility was trying

to keep the discipline. ... I was very fortunate that I had a good staff sergeant and master sergeant who, actually, were regular army men. One of them had had fifteen years of service and the other one had about twelve years of service. So they helped keep the situation as well as they could and what happened, approximately a year after I was assigned to this hospital, they found out, or they knew that I had a degree in bacteriology. A bacteriologist, who was assigned to the unit, had a coronary. They had to send him home and the commanding officer, who was a regular army medical service Corps officer called me in and he said, "Lieutenant Rosenthal, I have an offer for you. We need a bacteriologist desperately. I've been trying to get one now for almost three months and there's nobody in the replacement area who has the background that we need, but I found out about your background. How would you feel, if we transferred you from the Quartermaster Corps to the Medical Service Corps?" I said, "That will be great, because I will get back into the laboratory." That's what happened. I became the bacteriologist and serologist. If you're familiar with serology, it's the matter of taking blood, etc., involved in transfusions, et cetera, I was in charge at that point with all the blood transfusion work that was going on in the hospital and after June 6th, you could well imagine, the hospital was inundated with casualties. We were on, at that point ... a sixteen to eighteen hour day, all of us, seven days a week, no days off, because of the number of casualties that were coming in. Everybody worked their butts off. Thank God, we had a great contingent of people working. Our enlisted men and our officers did a wonderful job.

SI: So before the invasion, did you have a few days?

MR: You're talking about Omaha Beach, Normandy? Omaha, Utah, etc.?

SI: Before that time, between December of '42 and 1944.

MR: We were busy ... but the hospital was never completely ... filled. After June 6th, we actually had to put beds in the hallways because we had so many casualties.

SI: Were you only treating army men or were you treating Air Force soldiers as well?

MR: We were treating everybody, we had Air Force, Army, etc. We were not specialized in just Army. It was a general hospital so that it applied to all members of the armed services.

SI: Before D-Day, were most of the injuries that you dealt with in the hospital due to bombing missions by the Air Force?

MR: We had a lot of Air Force injuries involved and, also, we had some Quartermaster truck companies when they ... had accidents and ... while they were training for the invasion men would be hurt during the training exercises. So that's why the hospital was approximately fifty to seventy-five percent full with these types of casualties.

SI: Since you worked for a while with Quartermaster Corps, did you ever work with any African Americans?

MR: We had no African-Americans in our unit. At that time, you know, they had special units in World War II. We did have a number of African-American casualties that were admitted to the hospital as a result of what was going on in Europe after the invasion.

JG: Were you in touch with any of your friends from Rutgers while you were stationed in England?

MR: It's interesting because I was receiving mail from the Alumni Association, I sent back a couple of letters. In fact, you see that picture? Right over there next to your cup, that's when I started taking my basic training in the Armored Force, back at Pine Camp. That was my summer uniform, my wife found it. I do have ... a number of pictures from the service but, unfortunately, they are buried someplace, but this one she found. If you want to take that, you can.

JG: After the war was over, were you assigned to occupational duty in England?

MR: Let me tell you this, the war ended in 1945. ... I was overseas since December 1942 I had ... an enormous amount of points. So, in November '45 I was sent back to Fort Dix, from where I was discharged. What happened is that I immediately volunteered, being single, having had nothing but an army training, I volunteered in the Reserves, I ended up with my almost five years of active service, and I was assigned to the 363rd General Hospital ... in Brooklyn. I was in the Reserves until 1952. I had, five years active, seven years of Reserve; I had twelve years in service. ... What had happened, the reason why I resigned my commission after seven years, my mother passed away and my father passed away and I was the only one around and it just broke me up completely. I couldn't take it anymore. It was involving a meeting one night a week and two weeks of summer ... training. Let me get this out of the way.

SI: What decorations did you receive?

MR: The decorations I received were, ... I have the WWII ETO Medal ... It's a ribbon for having served in the European Theater of Operations, ETO, and I have a Good Conduct Medal and the American Theater Medal, those are my decorations. The important one, though, was the one for the thirty-five months that I served in the European Theater of Operations.

SI: Were you always stationed in England, or did you travel around the continent?

MR: No, we stayed put. Believe it or not, I tried to transfer after D-Day to a combat unit, but they would not allow me to. I wanted to get back, in fact, I tried to get back into the 4th Armored Division but I was disallowed because they said my experience ... I had fifteen technicians working in the laboratory in bacteriology and biochemistry and serology. We did all the blood transfusions work. In fact, I was responsible in getting blood from whatever source I could. The amount of blood needed, especially after D-Day, I had a list of about three hundred some odd enlisted men and they were allowed to give every thirty days and we made sure that they donated because ... there were four blood types, type O, type A, type AB, type B, et cetera ... It was necessary, especially the ones that were the most rare, that we had somebody on hand that could give that type of blood. I, myself, donated because I had a rare blood type, A2 positive, which is a sub breeding of type A. But the fact that's interesting, this is an aside. While working for

Squibb, I was a hospital division manager for some three years, we were at Bellevue Hospital in the city and while we were there, they had a young child who had just been born about three weeks prior ... and they couldn't get the blood type ... I said, "What is the blood type?" They said, "The child is A2 positive, a very rare type." I said, "Okay, you got me." I donated a pint of blood right there. I felt so good about giving because I knew that hopefully, I was able to save that child. Thank God it happened.

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JG: What was your most vivid memory of the war?

MR: I think the most vivid memory I had was D-Day when our complete lifestyle changed from, you know, we were doing our job and working hard doing it, we realized what our guys were going through on the continent and we got into that long working day. I felt that if I had to I'd give them twenty-four hours, if it were necessary.

SI: Did you have any idea before the invasion actually happened that there was a buildup?

MR: Oh, yes, because we were surrounded. There were two fighter fields right near us, the guys who were flying P-51s and P-38s, and we also had a build-up of men, from a couple of the infantry divisions that were taking advance training. We knew they were moving a lot of people in and out and, of course, they tried to keep it pretty quiet, obviously, because the Germans were pretty sharp.

SI: Were you ever visited by any of the main generals, such as Eisenhower?

MR: Basically, the big name that we had, Bob Hope, came to our hospital and performed for the patients, because the commanding officer was a good friend of his, ordinarily, Hope wouldn't perform in a hospital. He would perform before large audiences ... but he was able to get him to come to perform for our people.

SI: What else did you do for entertainment?

MR: Entertainment, let's see. I would say, the biggest entertainment we had was going to pubs. In the few hours that you had freedom, to get away from the life on the post ... the area that we were in had some pubs that went back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They were very, very old. Bromsgrove a couple of other smaller communities. Our army post, our hospital, as I mentioned was at Kidderminster which is between Worcester and Birmingham, if you're familiar with England, it is down not too far from the Welsh border.

JG: Have you gone back to any of these places?

MR: Oh, yes. In fact, we had been to England, as I mentioned, the travel agency situation. In fact, I had a very good friend of mine, who was in the RAF, the Royal Air Force, came over to visit here in the United States. He was a wing commander and when we went to England, he was

retired at that time ... we went to visit him. Unfortunately, he passed away at a relatively young age. He was in his sixties, but time marches on.

SI: Did you make any other friends while you were stationed in England?

MR: Well, while I was stationed in England, being a single man, I did participate in extra curricular activities. But, fortunately, I made no really close relationships because a lot of the women, whose husbands, boyfriends were gone for years, you know, the English had been in active war since 1939. I felt, conscience-wise, I didn't want to cause any problems, so I didn't make any close relationships.

SI: Can you tell us what you saw and how much the English people suffered ...

MR: Oh, very well aware. In fact, I had quite an experience. We came over, as I mentioned, in 1942 when the Germans were still sending three to four hundred planes over there, bombing London, and Coventry. You know, they destroyed Coventry, if you remember that, but I was on a weekend pass, which was, you know, before the actual D-Day situation, with one of the young surgeons. He and I were two of the few single men who were in the officer areas. We went to London and decided that we'd like to take ... a three day pass. Little did we know, that hotel-wise, it was loaded ... you couldn't touch one, when somebody tipped us off to go to the Dorchester, it was right off Green Park. We didn't know that Green Park had ... the heaviest concentration of British anti aircraft and when we went into the hotel, we mentioned if there is a room available there? With a blank face, the guy says, "Yes, we have one right on the top floor." Little did we know what that meant. It was almost like a suite, but they gave us a very incredible price and we took it. We went out that night; we had a great time in one of the English pubs. It was supposed to have closed at ten o'clock but if you slip the bartender a small amount of "coin of the realm," they would take you into a private room where you could continue libating. To make a long story short, we got back to the hotel somewhere around two or three o'clock in the morning and just as we get into the room, all the anti aircraft across the road started firing. The Germans had sent over a raid and it was the most incredible experience. The windows in our hotel room, because a thousand pound bomb had landed on Oxford Street, which was not too far from where the hotel was. The concussion caused glass damage all over the place. That sobered us up.

SI: Were you ever in an area where there were V-2 or V-1 rockets?

MR: Oh, yes. We saw at least some evidence of the rocket attacks. I was very fortunate that we did not experience any in our hospital area, but they were really something. The missiles that were sent to England mostly were in the London area.

SI: Were there any other battles, such as Battle of the Bulge, where there seemed to be an overwhelming amount of work?

MR: That was another area where our hospital casualty rate increased, obviously. We tried to do the best we could, you know, to take care ... of the ... very seriously wounded people after we, hopefully, got them to a stable state. We were responsible for them being transported back to the

States, where they would go to one of the major hospitals for further treatment, because our facilities were good, but nowhere as good as what was going on at home.

SI: Did any of the hospital staff ever start to wear down, under the mental strain, because of the amount of casualties?

MR: Oh, yes. We had a couple of cases where guys went off the deep end and they, themselves, had to be hospitalized because they couldn't take the situation. Fortunately, our medical staff, everyone of them did a wonderful job, really great job. We had some very talented surgeons and internists; we were able to take care of the major problems that we had to treat.

SI: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about, World War II, or should we move on?

MR: I think we have covered the war area, unless you guys have any further questions.

SI: Since you joined the reserves for seven years, were you involved in Korea?

MR: Well, actually, I can tell you that during the Korean War, my MOS, Military Occupational Specialty, was in a critical phase. If I went fifty miles out of New York City, I had to leave a telephone number with First Army Headquarters at 90 Church Street. I was then, at that time, still a bacteriologist and serologist. There was apparently a shortage, but the good Lord took care of me, and I didn't get called back. There were some friends of mine that I knew who were in the Reserves, they had to go back; they were called back to Korea.

SI: What was it like returning from World War II?

MR: Well, having lived as a military person for almost five years, I went in March '41, came out November '45, so that's four years and ten months. It was a very, very, interesting experience to come back to civilian life, to the reality of becoming a civilian again. It was a very, very, difficult experience to become acclimated back to so-called 'normal life.'

JG: Did you make use of any GI benefits?

MR: The only GI benefit that I took, because I already had my education at Rutgers, I did apply to medical school and I was on, in fact, because I had been with the Syracuse unit, I was on the waiting list, basically. What happened is that they had about ... sixty-five openings, and they had 9,500 applicants. With my background, or whatever, my academics, etc., I was interviewed by the Dean of the Syracuse University College of Medicine. He told me, "We'd love to have you, but there are other situations that have to come into the picture." Never did it, but that was one of the things that I tried and then my first job, basically, in civilian life, which became my career basically, was with Squibb, which was a New Jersey based outfit in New Brunswick. That's where they started and I actually had my first job working in a laboratory and I commuted, once again, this time from New York to New Brunswick, because I was married and I didn't want to relocate. After a year of this, I decided that I would rather work with human beings than with microscopes, so I applied to the sales department and I was given the job as a sales representative. So, from that time until the time I retired, I spent thirty eight years with Squibb in

various jobs. I wouldn't have stayed in one assignment. I was sales representative. I was promoted to a clinical research coordinator. I was involved in working with Squibb Institute of Medical Research, which was headquartered in New Brunswick at that time. I traveled all over the United States with research physicians, who were doing studies on new drugs that we were putting through, you know, for acceptance by the Food and Drug Administration. I became a product manager at the home office at 745 5th Avenue and then from there I went back into the field as a division sales manager.

JG: Can you tell us about your wife and how you met her?

MR: The young lady that you saw, I'm very lucky, she's a fantastic woman. She's done so much good for people. She's involved with providing food for the hungry, over a hundred people, believe it or not, even without the so-called great civilization that we have. I met her at a friend of mine's wedding, I drove her home, and that was the start of our relationship. Six weeks later, I proposed to her and ... we will be married fifty years in June, June the 8th, our fiftieth anniversary.

SI: When were your first children born?

MR: My daughter was born in 1954 and four years later, my son was born, in 1958. They were four years apart. Which, incidentally, by coincidence it turned out that I had the responsibilities when they went to college, after one graduated, the other one began, so, fortunately, financially, for me it was a break.

SI: When did you move here?

MR: We were married, as I mentioned, in June '52 and our first location was an apartment in Queens, in Kew Gardens, if you're familiar with that area. We decided that we would stay there until we got settled. My daughter was born at that point in Queens, in 1954. In 1958, one year after my son was born, we came out here and said, "We're going to do it." It was a sweat because at that time, I can tell you what the cost of houses were, you'd laugh. Today, certainly a heck of a lot more expensive ... with the economy as it was then, the house was in a very, relatively, expensive situation, but I was very fortunate that I had money set aside for the down payment, which cut my mortgage. That's the only advantage when I took the GI Bill, because the GI mortgage, which was at that time, five percent. I paid off the house, from 1959, thirty years, 1989, I paid off the house. That was the best thing that happened to me as far as any army benefits. I couldn't use the academic area, because I never got into a graduate school. I thought, also, about, I should have told you, possibly that while I was in the service, my commanding officer calls me in one day, and he said, "You know, I got to send somebody in to serve on the court martial." He said, "Can you help me?" I said, "I never served. I'm not a lawyer." He says, "Well, they need people and they don't have enough lawyers," so I became a defense counsel for some people. That was another part of my life experience in the service.

SI: Were you actually trying cases?

MR: I actually tried cases, major, general court martial. In fact, I had a very interesting case of a man, who had all of twenty some odd years service, that was involved in a major attack on a friend of his, almost killed him. It was part of my responsibilities to defend him as best as I could.

SI: Did you win it?

MR: Did I win? I won to the effect that I got his sentence reduced by arguing about his honorable twenty-four years, without a blemish on his record. The way I'm saying it now, is the same way I did and, apparently, the guys that sat on the court martial, they gave him a sentence, obviously, he ended up in Leavenworth, but not as long as it could have been.

SI: Were your children raised in a Jewish home?

MR: Yes. Right now, I can tell you that my wife and I are very, very involved with a temple; we've been members for thirty-five years. I'm a member of the board of trustee,; a Reformed Temple here in Jericho, and my wife is the chairman of the social action committee, which I mentioned to you, where we get involved in providing food for people who have no means of access for purchasing certain things clothing, and toys for children, you know, the poor families, that's all part of the program. If you look up on that wall, you'll see some thank you notes ... for work that's done by my wife and myself and if you see one of those plaques, I was involved in the Jericho Little League for twelve years. I coached the team for approximately eight years. I was a baby-sitter for fifteen boys every weekend, the parents were delighted because they could go out, do whatever they wanted, but I did it as a feeling, I love kids. I enjoyed every minute of it and, in fact, by doing this, my son became the ... all-star catcher for two years in a row. He ended up being involved in the athletic area, as you can see there. He went to college. He had received acceptance into a lot of the good journalism schools, but he decided he wanted a liberal arts education, so he ended up in one of the smaller schools. He didn't want to go to a big school. He went to Connecticut College, which used to be the Connecticut College for Women. Are you familiar with it, up in New London?

SI: Yes.

MR: He majored in history and Asian Studies. In fact, he was the Asian Studies Scholar. I thought he was going to end up going to Japan. To make a long story short, when he graduated, he decided he was a writer. He was the editor-in-chief of high school newspaper while he was here. He decided he wanted to go back into writing and he applied to Northwestern, to the School of Journalism which I thank the good Lord, he was accepted, that started his career. My daughter went to Tufts, that was her undergraduate.

JG: Have you been active in any veterans associations?

MR: That's interesting. I had been approached frequently by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Jewish War Veterans, etc., but I have never joined them. I feel that, I think, do good work, but I don't want to get involved any farther.

SI: Have you gotten in touch with anyone you served with during the war?

MR: Yes, I did for quite sometime. I had good contact with ... the younger doctors. Unfortunately, the two young doctors that I served with, I'm lucky I'm an octogenarian, they passed away, so my contacts with the Syracuse people now are gone.

SI: Were you active politically during the '50s and '60s?

MR: I never got involved, in depth, as far as any politics is concerned. In fact, the reason I registered as a Republican was I wanted to be a little bit different than the basic community that's here; it's mostly Democratic. So it was like a sense of a little opposition, but it didn't mean anything as far as what my voting situation, necessarily. I told you I vote as an independent, basically.

SI: When you were growing up, were your parents sympathetic towards Zionism?

MR: No, they were not. My parents were really not involved that much, in depth, with the religious area. They, you know, they followed this feeling of being a member of a temple but they did not devote any extra time, like my wife and I are completely opposite, we both put in a lot of time as I am a member of the board of trustees. In fact, I have a meeting tonight of the trustees. My wife comes with me, because she is an important member, chairman of the social action committee and tells them ... what they have been doing to help the people in the community.

SI: Did your family speak Yiddish when you were growing up?

MR: A little bit, not too much. I mean, they spoke some Yiddish ... which is also part of a certain generation going back. Both of my parents were born here, my grandparents all came from Europe and they spoke to people mostly in Yiddish.

JG: Where were they from?

MR: In fact, I can tell you the name of the city. It's in the Ukraine, Ekaterinoslav which was in southern Russia, but they got out when the Russian pogroms started ... They went into certain towns and just completely wiped out the Jewish community. Set them up against the wall and shoot them; it was terrible.

SI: In the late 1940s, did you follow what happened in Palestine? How did you feel when the Israeli State was established?

MR: Well, I felt very good about that because what was involved in Palestine and the Balfour Declaration, basically was something that should have happened a long time ago. The Jewish State that exists there now is very important in the world today. Basically, they sit alone surrounded by five hundred million Arabs and, unfortunately, ... I don't want to sound prejudiced, but a good percentage of those Arabs are violently anti-United States, as you are well aware. Especially with Iraq, ... the President has said the terrorist activities that are condoned by

them, what they want to do to people of American extraction, regardless of their religious affiliations.

JG: Have you stayed active with Rutgers as an alumnus?

MR: Well, I'll put it this way, I had gone back since my graduation, which was in 1940, and I was in the service, of course, till '45. I'd gone back to every five-year reunion; 1950, '55, '60, in fact, we had our 60th in the year 2000 and I was there. We had our dinner at (Centrum?) that's were Dilly and Carl and a number, we had somewhere around thirty-five guys showed up. I do know that a lot of my classmates are gone, unfortunately. What can I tell you, that's life.

SI: Have you kept in touch with anybody else besides the people that you mentioned?

MR: No, I haven't. The guy that I roomed with, whose name was Max Levitan, he didn't get into the service. He got himself a job with a munitions manufacturer, became essential, so he stayed in the States. I contacted him a couple of times, but after the war, we just broke off. He passed away, I think, about a year and a half ago.

JG: Was Max the gentleman that you lived with in Washington?

MR: Yes, he was the guy I roomed with. We were very good friends ... at college. We maintained this small apartment while we were both working for the Census Bureau.

JG: What was your involvement with the Rutgers Club?

MR: Oh, yes, we did have a Rutgers Club out here. I became a member for a short period of time and then it disappeared, basically. ... I don't think they had a ... Rutgers Club of Long Island. Is there still one that supposed to be here? I don't think so.

SI: They have one for greater New York.

MR: Yeah, but not for specifically for Long Island.

SI: How did the war help create the person you are today?

MR: Well, let's put it to you this way: I entered the service, I was twenty-one years old. When I came out I was twenty-six, so maturing years were spent under rather adverse circumstances. I think that made me, in some ways, a pretty strong person to face the situations that could go on in life. I don't regret that I had that amount of time ... involved. A lot of people ... fortunately, can say they built themselves up during that twenties situation. I was involved in a very, very serious situation, but it made a person out of me. It made me feel like human beings ought to be respected and treated as well as you can. That's the point I would like to make.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add?

MR: No, I think I gave you all the information about my children, you have that. My wife, my savior, I should say, she saved my life back three years ago. We were visiting our son, who has been living in California now for over fifteen years. We went up to San Francisco and we were at a hotel, through the night, the second day we were there, I got intense abdominal pains. I woke up about two or three o'clock in the morning, sweat pouring out of my face, I never felt this way in my life. I told my wife, "Don't worry about it. It will be over." She said, "Oh, no." She called 911. The ambulance that came, five minutes to San Francisco, they took me, thank the good Lord, to a teaching hospital. I didn't know any physicians or hospitals in San Francisco and the chief of gastroenterology operated on me at five o'clock in the morning, removed my colon and half of my lower bowel. I had a massive E. Coli infection which was destroying my gastrointestinal tract, and that was what the pain was due to. I am a lucky man, that I'm alive today, she saved my life. I was in the hospital; I ended up being there for almost twenty-eight days, ... the recovery situation. Today, my daughter is professor of performance literature at Hofstra University. My son is the author of eight sports books- involving Nolan Ryan, Randy Johnson, et cetera.

SI: Thank you very much for letting us come to your home.

MR: Well, I enjoyed being with you guys and I hope ... I was able to be of service to you ... If there is any other way I can, don't hesitate to call.

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

Reviewed by Danielle Campbell 3/24/04
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/30/04
Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 7/26/04
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