RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT SATTER

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 the Honorable Robert Satter in Hartford, Connecticut, on September 20, 2006, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Charles Edmonds: Charles Edmonds.

SI: Judge Satter, thank you very much for being with us.

Robert Satter: Sure.

SI: To begin, could you please tell me about the books that you've written about your life?

RS: I've written four books. The first book was called *Doing Justice*, published by Simon & Shuster in 1990. [It] dealt with the dilemmas of a trial judge, decisions a trial judge has to make in the course of his daily life. The second book was called *The Path in the Law*, published in 1996 by Connecticut Law Book Company. It deals with my careers as a lawyer and a legislator in the Connecticut legislature. The third book, … *The Furniture of My Mind*, is a collection of essays of my writings almost over the period of my lifetime, including my period at Rutgers. The fourth book is called *Under the Gold Dome*, published in 2004, and it is a description of how the Connecticut Legislature operates, its history, and the relationship between the legislature, the governor and the law, and so forth.

SI: Okay. Well, thank you very much. This interview may touch upon some of those issues, but mostly we will focus on your earlier life, but for those who wish more information, they can certainly check out those four books. To begin, could you please tell us where and when you were born?

RS: I was born on August 19, 1919, in Chicago, Illinois.

SI: Could you state for the record your parents' names?

RS: Henry Satter and Patty Salvin.

SI: Could you tell us a little bit about your father's background, where he was from and what he did for a living?

RS: … My father was an illegitimate child. He was adopted by the Satter family in Hartford, Connecticut. He had very little education. I don't believe he went beyond the seventh grade. He went into World War I and he had previously met my mother in Middletown, Connecticut. … In World War I, he married her in Texas, when he was in the service. After the war, he went to Chicago where he worked in various jobs, including as a telephone man. He broke his leg and my mother wanted to come home to her family [that] lived in the East, in Middletown, Connecticut. So they moved to Queens, New York, then to Irvington, New Jersey and, eventually, to Cranford, New Jersey, and I started school in Cranford, New Jersey in 1926, I think, or '25.

SI: Did your father tell you anything about his time in the service, any stories?

RS: No, he never did. He was never in action. He was in [an] air force base. No, I don't think I ever heard anything about his war experience. I don't really think he had what we'd call a war experience. He was in the States all the time. The only thing I know about him was that once, perusing, looking through the cellar of our house in Cranford, New Jersey, I found a box and my brother and I opened it; it was his uniforms, and so forth. But other than that, I knew almost nothing about his experience in World War I.

SI: What about your mother's background, any family history there?

RS: My mother was born in Europe, in the Polish section of Russia, at the time. She came here when she was about three or four. Her father had a grocery store in Middletown. She was raised in Middletown. She, again, did not … have a high school education, but she had a very, big interest in reading and all her life she read. One of my clearest, clearest recollections of her, is she would ask me to go down to the Cranford Library to get books for her. I was so impressed with *Anthony Adverse* and *Les Miserables* and the other fat books … she used to read. She was a very good reader. … There were six children in our family, I was the oldest. … My clearest recollection of my early life is in Cranford. My father … was working then … as a decorator for movie theaters. … At the time, the movie theaters were just starting and they weren't sure that movies would sustain them so they had stages where they had vaudeville acts between the movies, and my father designed the stages. … He made a fair amount of money and, eventually, he was able to buy that house in Cranford, on Adams Avenue, with some of his money, some of the bonus money he got as a World War I veteran, and I'm not sure what else, but he bought that house. … There were six children: four boys and two girls, and, as I said, I was the oldest. One of my brothers, the third brother, died during World War II of tuberculosis.

SI: What do you remember about growing up in Cranford, in terms of what you did for fun, or what do you remember about the neighborhood?

RS: Cranford was a wonderful town. It only had about ten thousand people. It had a lot of open fields. … It had a wonderful field with blueberry bushes that my mother used to have us … pick and she made blueberry jam. We played baseball in the open fields all over town, played football, played basketball … with a hoop over a tree. … [I] had a lot of athletics in my life, I really loved athletics. I played baseball, football, basketball. Started to play tennis when I was … about in seventh grade … but liked baseball more. … I graduated from grammar school, graduated from high school. I was editor of the school … senior annual. I was sports editor of the regular paper. I wrote a sports column for the *Cranford Citizen and Chronicle* in my last … years in high school. Unfortunately, my father went broke in 1929 or '30 and he somehow, courageously and inventively, got into the motion picture business, showing motion pictures to shut-ins at various State institutions, tuberculosis asylums, prisons, insane asylums, various facilities like that. They didn't have their own equipment; my father showed films at those places. … My sophomore year I'd been playing on a high school basketball, … football and baseball teams, but because he needed somebody to help him lift the machines into the buildings, I had to quit the athletics. … So the only thing I could play was baseball, because the daylight savings time allowed me to do that. So I played on my high school baseball team, and graduated National Honor Society, and I had almost … a straight A average in high school. I don't

remember exactly what it was but I remember somebody looking at my report card and saying, "Holy socks, you got all As," or something like that. So I must have done pretty well in high school. I had a magazine route. I delivered the *Saturday Evening Post* around town, and I got twenty-five or thirty cents a week for that, and that was the only money I had. My father had no money at all. We were really very poor and a lot of times during the Depression, our electricity in our house was turned off because my father couldn't pay the bill. One time a man came to turn off the water but he, fortunately, relented. We had six kids, and so forth. … But everybody was poor so it wasn't a terrible social disadvantage to be poor. There were obviously some well-to-do people in town, but the average classmate was poor, so we never felt we were outcasts or anything. In fact, I was elected treasurer of my high school class and I always did well, fairly well. I guess, when I graduated high school I got the English prize for creative writing.

SI: Even though your family had some difficulties during the Great Depression, were they still encouraging you to think about college? What was their thinking towards that?

RS: It's strange about that. These days a person thinks about college a year before. In those days there wasn't SATs and, suddenly, I don't know, it must have been May or so, I decided … I wanted to go to college. I didn't know how I was going to pay for it. … I applied to Rutgers and got accepted and then that year, 1937, was the first year that the State provided State Scholarships. Rutgers was a private school, it had about fifteen, or seventeen hundred students, that's all. Our class had a little over maybe three-fifty [three-hundred fifty students] … but the State didn't have a State College, didn't have any State colleges at all, no community colleges … it had just Rutgers and NJC, New Jersey College for Women, were private schools. … The State for the first time in 1937 … gave an exam for scholarships, and I didn't get a scholarship. [It] came time to go to college. … I had worked at tennis courts over the summer. My father never paid me for working for him, but I earned some money working, taking care of the tennis courts in Cranford, New Jersey and I had about forty dollars. We went up to Rutgers in September of '37 and … Rutgers agreed to let us pay at the rate of forty dollars a month. My father said he'd pay twenty dollars, if I would pay twenty. The first month I think he paid the twenty dollars, and I paid the twenty dollars. Second month, he didn't pay it, and … I remember it was after the mid-term exams … that first semester and the teacher, the physics professor, named Professor Winchester, came up to me after class, after I had gotten an A in the midterm and said, "I have to tell you that the registrar told me to bar you from going to class because you haven't paid your tuition." So I didn't know what I was going to do. I only had twenty dollars, or less left. So I went home to Cranford, spoke to the principal of … the high school, he couldn't help me. I spoke to the Latin teacher, whose son was in my class and whom I knew, and he said, "Well, ask the college for a loan." It never occurred to me, nobody ever said that to me. So I went back to the … Dean's Office and asked for a loan. They gave me a loan of a hundred dollars enabling me to get through first year. I got almost straight As the first year. The only thing I didn't get an A in is Military Science, I think. Second semester I earned some money, over the summer, and was able to pay my way through with … I think another loan. … Starting my sophomore year I was on the *Targum* staff. … I played on the freshman baseball team my freshman year, that was a lot of fun.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RS: So my sophomore year I couldn't make the … baseball team because there was a red-shirted football player who was sitting on first base. I wasn't going to dislodge him, so I went out for the tennis team, which I had played all the time. … I didn't make the team, but I made the squad. The next year I was on the team, played two varsity season[s]. Played on the JV basketball team but practiced with the varsity everyday and got into a couple of games when we were ahead by a million points, or something. … So I had that. … I exercised every day, I mean, I went to the gym or played tennis; played tennis in the fall, spring, and went to the gym, played basketball. … I didn't have much money and up until my senior year, I ate at Winants and I never could buy a dessert. I never had the money to buy a dessert through my first three years. My senior year I got a full scholarship, again … I didn't have straight As but I was (to be?) elected Phi Beta Kappa, so I got this full scholarship and that eased my concern and I graduated. I started out at Rutgers in journalism. I had won that creative English prize in high school and Rutgers had a good journalism school. My sophomore year I took some journalism courses. In the fall I realized, "Gee, I don't want to spend my time in college doing … newspaper items about the new cars coming in, or one thing, or another." So I said, "I want to take economics and political science and learn something while I'm here." So I shifted my major to economics and, eventually, I graduated with honors in economics and Phi Beta Kappa. My college career … was a good one. I was inspired by the teachers. I wrote in that essay, *Furniture of My Mind*, the enormous impression that Professor Houston Peterson made on me and on most members of my class. He was an inspiring teacher. I mean, he made learning so exciting. As I mentioned in that essay, his … lecture on one of the Greek realists led the class to … induced it to enter into a foot race to get to the library to read, *De Rerum* [*Natura*], I forget what it's called exactly but the major work of that philosopher. That's how inspiring he was, and I remained his friend for the rest of his life. Went to tennis matches at Forest Hills with him every year and … when I graduated Columbia Law School … and went down to alumni meetings, I'd stop to see him in New York City. … I had an excellent economics professor at Rutgers, Arthur F. Burns, who became chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to [President] Eisenhower and, I think, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. … He was inspiring and a really intellectually challenging professor, Professor Burns. In the History Department was a great lecturer, Edward Burns. … It was a small college then, but it was an excellent faculty, an excellent faculty. I got a marvelous education at Rutgers. I felt so blessed with the education I got there. … In April or May, … April, I guess, of my senior year, I was thinking I'd get an advanced degree in economics. I had graduated with honors in economics and that seemed to be my field, but one day I was walking up Queen's Campus and Dean Marvin was coming in the opposite direction and he said to me, "Bob, I've been meaning to get in touch with you. Do you want a scholarship to Columbia Law School? I have to recommend somebody from Union County to Columbia Law School and if you're interested I'll recommend you." … I really didn't know what I was going to do, this is 1941. Germany had already conquered France; England was being … air attacked by the Germans. The world looked disastrous. I had registered for the draft and so I decided, "What the heck, I'll go to Columbia." So that fall I started at Columbia Law School.

SI: Before we move on to Columbia and World War II, we have a couple of questions about Rutgers.

CE: You were involved with the Liberal Club while at Rutgers?

RS: Yes.

CE: What was your experience in that, in relation to news about the war, and the discussions going on about that?

RS: Well, the Liberal Club really wasn't much of an organization, but ever since I was a child my father had … always spoken real highly of Roosevelt, President Franklin Roosevelt. … Actually what happened, when I was a child during the Depression, my father couldn't pay the mortgage on the house. We lived in kind of a nice house in a nice area of Cranford and he couldn't pay the mortgage. But President Roosevelt had gotten through a law that prohibited banks from foreclosing on mortgages, so we were able to stay in the house, and his remarks about how great Roosevelt was led me to consider myself always a Democrat. So the Liberal Club, I can't remember what discussions we had about the war but … in Winants we had discussions about the war. … We were all sympathetic toward England and hated Germany and some of us, not me, but some were … supporting Russia, because you remember Russia first sided with Germany in 1939 … when the war started and then, eventually, Russia broke with Germany. … So there was a period of time when some of the communists on campus were against the war because Russia was on Germany's side, but, eventually, that changed and by 1941 everybody was in favor … of the Allies.

SI: It's interesting that you bring that up because a number of people that we interviewed, when we asked about the political climate at Rutgers in that period, they don't remember any political climate at all. Do you remember if people were leaning towards the Democrats, or the Republicans, or even the harder left or the harder right?

RS: … I think that at Rutgers, I was there from '37 to '41. It was Roosevelt's heyday; you know, he was the most popular president, he was elected four times. The third term was in '40, reelected in '40. I don't think there were many Republicans on campus, I mean, most of us were Democrats. As for the far left or the far right … there was one guy at Winants, he used to talk like a communist, far left. … Other than he, I don't remember any real, serious political discussions that went to the left or the right. Most of us were pretty apolitical I think. The Liberal Club … was interesting, because when I was in the navy, I was graduating from midshipman school and I applied for bomb disposal school because a guy had come through and said, "This is an opportunity to prevent destruction rather than cause it," and that appealed to me. So I applied for bomb disposal and an officer came to interview me at midshipman school and he saw that Liberal Club thing on my record and he said, "Well, what's your politics?" Because of that he thought I might be a far left, or whatever, but it didn't matter, I was accepted. Anyway, so the answer to the question is that I don't think politics was very important at that time. School politics was, … who got elected president of the class, but not national politics.

SI: Also because you were involved with the *Targum*, and looking at old issues of the *Targum* we found that mostly it spoke about school issues and school news, do you remember anything that you worked on at the *Targum* that stands out in your memory?

RS: I remember my first assignment was to cover the freshman soccer practices and, jeez, I wrote an article about that. The … students were wearing different colored uniforms, I guess, they hadn't made any new [ones], it was just a … multi-color on the field. Anyway, I wrote about this in a way that, I don't know, … the editor thought was great. I don't remember it exactly but it was interesting. I've always been interested in writing so I tried to express myself. … The only *Targum* incident that I do remember … does not involve me, but Rutgers then, the first two years, had a football coach, Ed Tasker, and he was lousy. The team was losing and Rutgers was then considered a power. I mean … it played all the best teams in the country. It wasn't a second rate school, by any means, even though it's a small private school. It played Army, it played Navy, it played Pennsylvania, and so forth. Anyway, this guy had a bad record, so, finally, the *Targum* got hint of the fact that Tasker was being fired and the headline the next day in the *Targum* was "Ask Her Out," as a kind of a play on Tasker, and the editors got reprimanded by the dean for kind of traducing Coach Tasker. Other than that, I don't remember anything else. I was a feature writer, too, for the … *Targum* and I was also a writer for the … *Anthology*. I wrote a lot of columns, a lot of pieces for that, including that Peterson piece, a piece on a Spanish professor, and other things.

SI: You lived on campus?

RS: I lived on campus. First, away from the dorms … the street that runs perpendicular to College Avenue, just up a small ways there was a rooming house. Then on the street that runs parallel to College Avenue.

SI: George Street?

RS: Yes, George. … Then I lived in a dorm, Leupp hall, my senior year. My … roommate was the president of the class, Joe Siry.

CE: You were involved with the neutral Quad Club as opposed to joining a fraternity.

RS: I never could afford joining a fraternity so I was involved with the neutrals. One of my friends was George Ritter of my class. He was very ambitious politically. He was elected president of our sophomore class. His senior year he wanted to run for president of the student council and candidates could run for the student council if they had a certain number of points based upon outside activities, it might have included grades but I don't think so, mostly outside activities, sports and clubs, and so forth. So he urged me to run, so I would vote for him, and I didn't campaign at all and one day he said to me, "Why aren't you campaigning to get elected?" and I said, "George, all I want are the quality votes," and he was so amused by that, "the quality vote." Anyway, I didn't get elected, and he didn't get elected president of the council.

SI: You mentioned that you were in ROTC during your first year at Rutgers. How long did you stay?

RS: Two years.

SI: People that I speak to, from the classes of ‘40, ‘41, ‘42 talk about how when they first got there, ROTC wasn’t necessarily seen as serious or important as the other classes, but then as we got closer to the war it became more important. When did you begin to realize, or become aware of that what was happening overseas might impact your life?

RS: First of all, ROTC was not my favorite subject. At the time, I was playing around with, though I never did activate it, with being a conscientious objector, but I didn’t do it. … So I never related ROTC to the world events but obviously, in ‘39, September of ‘39 … Germany invaded Poland and France, and so forth. In ‘40 they … defeated France, obviously, England was being bombed, the whole news … you couldn’t not know the war was going on … and so that’s when I became aware. Although even, and I was registered for the draft in Spring of ‘41 so I knew I was going in the service, but the war was still far away and it wasn’t as close to me as the immediacy of college experience.

CE: To jump ahead to your training for the Navy, you said you went on to special training for bomb disposal, right?

RS: Let me just tell you just a little bit about Columbia, I mean not much. I started in September of ‘41 as a class of almost one hundred percent, either first in their classes or Phi Beta Kappa’s, brilliant guys. I was awed by how brilliant these guys were. December 7th, … December 7th is Pearl Harbor Day. December 8th we go to class. The first class was “Civil Procedure,” the professor called on somebody for a case, unprepared, another guy for a case, unprepared, another guy for a case, unprepared. Finally, somebody was prepared. The professor usually went through four cases, called on maybe twenty people to get them. At the end of the class he said, “Gentlemen,” it’s all … men at that time, “If you’re going to be in class on Wednesday, I expect you to be prepared, good day,” and that’s how he dealt with it. We had a course in legal history called “Development of Legal Institutions”; it went from eleven-twenty to twelve-ten. It was a history of law course. President Roosevelt was going to address the Congress at twelve o’clock, to get them to declare war. So … we went to the professor before class and asked him whether we could get off at twelve o’clock to hear the president address Congress, “This day that will live in infamy,” as Roosevelt said, and he refused. We said, “Well, can we bring a radio to hear the president?” He said, “No.” So a couple of us said, “Professor Goebels,” that was his name, “go to hell,” and we went down to the Hotel Pennsylvania and heard the president address the nation, address Congress. It was on radio of course. So I limped through that … first year, always hoping, … excuse me, before the end of December … I enlisted in the Navy, and I limped through the rest of the academic year hoping I’d be called up so I wouldn’t have to take the damn final exams. [laughter] I feared the exams more than I did the war. Anyway, it didn’t. I take the exams and in June I got my notice to be called up. I was called up on July 1st and went to Notre Dame for … start of midshipman school, stayed there a month. That was just really physical, physical fitness and discipline and, a month later, I went to the so-called *Prairie State* which is on the Hudson River and that was where … I got my training as a midshipman and we went over to Columbia a lot of times, for various things, including … that Riverside Church for chapel service, and marched over to Columbia for a number of different things. So I got through midshipman school and then, as I told you, this officer came by and so I volunteered for bomb disposal school. I went down to bomb disposal school; I thought I’d be sent to some place like England. Bomb disposal was important at that time

because the German bombs that didn't explode often disrupted the city more than the ones that did, and so they had cordoned of vast sections of the city and the bomb disposal people went in and diffused the bombs. Instead, I got assigned, after bomb disposal school, to USS *Santa Fe* [CL-60]. It was a light cruiser, Cleveland class cruiser. … The first time we went out, I'll never forget this, the first time we went out at sea, for a seagoing voyage, it was out of Philadelphia, and the first time I'd been at sea in my life and we got into a storm. So I was an officer in the antiaircraft defense division and so I was assigned a job of reading a dial in the engine room. … The first time I did it, the ship had rolled and I went down … through several ladders, and then there was a crew eating … space, and there was a big barrel filled with the leftover food … of the sailors, and I puked into it, came back up, and threw up in it again. After that, I went back to my stateroom, stayed for the twenty-five minutes, I'd read the dial every half hour, every time I passed that barrel, I puked into it, and every time came back up, and, boy, I thought the most courage I showed during the entire war was getting up from my bunk and going down past that barrel to read that dial. [laughter] Anyway, that was the beginning. We went through the … Panama Canal to Long Beach and we had a shakedown cruise there. … A number of the sailors on our ship … had been survivors of the battle early on in the Pacific, … Battle of Savo Island, I think it was. … Two heavy cruisers, I can't remember the names now, were sunk and they filled the *Santa Fe* sailors with the survivors of these two heavy cruisers. So … at Long Beach, the last day we were there, there was a detail of sailors to sweep around the dock where we had been moored and the sailors just swept, and kept on going. They didn't want to go back to sea. [laughter] They got rounded up by the shore patrol and, eventually, a motorboat took them out to catch our ship. So we went to Hawaii that first time and then, this was in 1943, in the Spring of '43, and then we were sent up to the Aleutian Islands. Now the Aleutian Islands was a desolate place. We were up there, it was raining or fog almost all the time. … We patrolled around the two islands we wanted to capture, Attu and Kiska. … God, I remember, I used to have to get up … apart from our regular watches, we had to get up half hour before dawn, every morning. … God, every time I got up, I remember that line in [John] Mansfield poem, "And a gray mist of the seas' face, and a gray dawn breaking." … That's what it was like, every morning, it was a terrible time. We spent about four months up there and by September, I think, we had completed the invasion of Attu and Kiska … Attu turned out to be abandoned. All of our bombarding efforts with these light cruisers didn't make any difference. Kiska might have had some people on it, but not many. So, completed that operation in September, and I was transferred off the *Santa Fe* and assigned to the USS *California* [BB-44]. … Sometime in October 1943, I guess early October, I went aboard the USS *California*. *California* had been resurrected from the bottom of Pearl Harbor, it was now being refitted to be a war vessel again. … By the end of December we went out. We went down for shakedown cruise, again, to Long Beach, California, and then to Hawaii. [The] Captain was a former commandant of the University of Notre Dame Midshipman School. He had never been in a war before and, as our ship came into Pearl Harbor, he had all sailors and officers in whites, and we were kind of the laughing stock because everybody by then, middle of the war, were wearing dungarees and khakis, but we came into Pearl Harbor and I remember an incident that happened. … We were supposed to go, leave the ship at either nine o'clock in the morning and get back at four o'clock in the afternoon, or leave at four o'clock and stay overnight. So I went into Honolulu at nine o'clock and met a classmate from Columbia Law School, who was on a destroyer, and he was staying, he had a room at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu. So I said, "The heck with it, I'm not going to go back to the ship." So I stayed with him. We went out to dinner and one

thing or another. At five o'clock, four o'clock in the morning, I had the most vivid dream I can remember. I dreamt that the USS *California* was moving down the channel of Pearl Harbor. I was so scared I got up, took a cab back to the pier where we're supposed to be tied up and the *California* wasn't there. God, I almost died on the spot. I was so afraid … you know, I'd jumped ship, and I asked, frantically, "Where's the USS *California*?" and somebody pointed down the pier and said, "Well, it's outboard of the USS *West Virginia*." So I raced over to the *California*. …

SI: Were you still on the antiaircraft guns?

RS: Yes, I was still on forty-millimeter antiaircraft guns. … Saipan, [it] was a huge invasion. If you read the history of World War II, Saipan was a fierce invasion. A lot of American troops were killed, maybe, just ten thousand. Anyway, the ships when, we were supporting the invasion, we first … we were moving to port so that our starboard guns could shoot. Battle ships … can't shoot straight ahead, they have to shoot broadside or partially. So then we'd come in and then we'd shoot our port-side guns and then we'd come in, our starboard guns, and so forth. We got in, and we hadn't noticed up to that time that there was an island just in front of … Saipan, and suddenly there was a flash of light from that island and a … shell went over us, landing beyond us. Then another shell landed in front of us. We knew then we were bracketed, that's the way shore batteries located their target. Next shell hit our ship, killed a couple of people, and the most interesting thing is it killed the most innocent man aboard our ship. This was … a sailor from the engineering department, he was high up on the mast, his sole function was to determine … was to see whether or not the … ship was giving off smoke, because we weren't supposed to give off smoke when you're traveling. … That's what his job was and this poor guy was among those who were killed by that shell. We stayed around Saipan, had a lot of air attacks, with a lot of enemy attacks coming from both Saipan, Japanese had airfields in Saipan and Tinian, which is an island next to Saipan, maybe two or three miles away. Anyway, we were under a lot of air attacks, but we survived those and stayed there for several weeks to support the landing. Then we went to Guam. Guam was a former United States possession and we participated in [the] invasion of Guam. Then we came back and participated in the invasion of Tinian. Tinian, as I say, was that island near Saipan and we had bypassed it. For that invasion, the armada of heavy battleships, which included the *Colorado*, the *West Virginia*, the … *California* and one or two others, I can't remember, at least those, anyway … this group of battleships bombarded a very sandy beach on Tinian that looked like a very good place to land. Next day, instead of continuing the bombardment there, although the *Colorado* stayed to continue the thing, we went around behind the island to a fairly rocky area where the Japanese didn't expect us and we bombarded that morning and invaded through that rocky area. The *Colorado* stayed in the original place and got shelled by the shore batteries that the Japanese had brought down to that area to defend. So, we stayed. Both Saipan and Tinian were major invasions, and then we went to. …

SI: When you took fire during the Saipan invasion, was that the first time you had come under fire?

RS: No. Well, the first time we'd come under shore battery fire, yes; but we had numerous air attacks where we were holding off airplanes, Japanese Zeros and bombers.

SI: Was that in the Aleutians?

RS: No … really nothing happened in the Aleutians of any concern. It was in the Marianas. …

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

SI: Please continue.

RS: I knew we were going to get hit but, you know, I think almost everybody under fire feels a sense of immunity. You know, "it's not going to be me." It turned out, I was lucky, of course. … The air raid attacks, the airplane attacks, we were so busy firing at them, and we shot down a few, that we were so excited we never thought of their danger to us. But one time, and it might have been after the … Mariana's invasion, that we had to be rearmed, that is, we had to get more ammunition, and an ammunition ship was stationed between us and two other battleships. I think, we were on the … starboard side of the ammunition ship. There were two battleships next to the ammunitions ship. One of them was outboard, one was completely inboard, and Japanese planes came over. That was scary, because if they had … dropped a bomb anywhere near us, they could have blown up three battleships at once. So that was a scary moment, I do remember that. They didn't get close enough, or they didn't hit so we didn't worry about that. So after the Marianas, we went to a huge port in Manus, off of New Guinea, and there … something happened about ammunitions ship … that I just remembered. Manus was a tremendous, tremendous port enclosed by land, and … there was assembled there the largest armada of ships that had ever been assembled in the war, in any war, for the invasion of the Philippines. … One day I was looking out at the, just looking at the water, and suddenly there was a huge explosion and an ammunition ship had blown up by itself, and I remember somebody telling me, that one of the officers on the ammunition ship had gone to visit a friend of his on a destroyer and the debris from the ammunition ship landed on that destroyer and killed that officer. So jeez, his number was up. So, anyway, we assembled this enormous armada, which included the battleships I just mentioned, plus heavy cruisers and light cruisers and destroyers and troop ships and LSTs, landing crafts of all kinds. … We started toward Leyte Gulf, and, God, there was a terrible storm, a really vicious typhoon and those poor ships. The landing crafts were going all over the water, but I was on a battleship, that wasn't so bad, and, by then, I wasn't seasick at all from motion of the ship. We got to Leyte, the island of Leyte. Leyte was, we entered a gulf, Leyte Gulf. Leyte Gulf had two entrances, two straits coming into it. One was, I can't remember the name of one, the other was San Bernardino Straits where they came into the gulf. … The battleships started to bombard Leyte and we did it for several days and then the landing occurred. The landing was relatively unopposed at the very beginning. About three o'clock in the afternoon, I saw in my binoculars, General MacArthur land off of … a motorboat and that's when he said, "I have returned," which got the Navy infuriated, because we've been fighting in the Pacific for three years and he was claiming, "I have returned." Anyway the … fighting on Leyte got pretty tough for the Army and the Marines, and we were warding off air attacks all the time there. … Then for the first time the Japanese used *kamikaze* planes. The first one I saw was on a Saturday afternoon, I'll never forget it. *Kamikaze* hit an Australian destroyer and sunk it. A little while later, maybe twenty minutes later, a *kamikaze* hit an American destroyer and blew it up, and so we were on alert for them. … In the Philippines the sun set in a … bank of

clouds over the horizon. So it made a gorgeous, gorgeous sunset and we all had our eyes on the horizon watching the sunset and suddenly there appeared a plane over us and … diving at us. I can still see the red dots on the plane and the slate-gray wings. Came straight at us.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RS: So that plane was diving straight at us and, by some miracle, it missed us by ten feet and we … quickly saw the reason it missed. Over the crash of the plane there blossomed a parachute and the Japanese pilot had jumped from the plane, steered at the ship but then jumped from the plane, and that's why we were missed, and that was also a scary moment, of course. So in October of 1944, we had started in earlier October. On October 24th, of 1944 … the captain said over the ship's public address system … said, "Action is imminent tonight in Leyte Gulf." … We went to an officers meeting and they told us that they … had learned that two Japanese armadas were coming into the two straits of Leyte Gulf and at about one or two o'clock in the morning the general alarm rang. We all raced up to our battle stations. I remember my close friend saying, "Is this it?" And this was the biggest ship-to-ship battle of the entire war. The Japanese never came into that other strait, I can't remember its name, but the Japanese battleship and cruisers, destroyers came into … the San Bernardino Straits. They had been interrupted by … American PT boats, who I think had damaged one of the destroyers. … When they came into the Straits, it was an opportunity for the American forces to "cross the T." What that means is the Japanese fleet was coming in one direction and the whole American fleet could cross the T, that is, be perpendicular to the Japanese fleet. … All the American guns on our fleet that was crossing the T could fire at the Japanese fleet, and we fired, and we saw the shells landing and some of the ships started to have fires on them and we knew they were in trouble. Then, after about ten minutes of firing, there was a order from the Admiral, Admiral Jesse Oldendorf saying, "Ships right, fifteen." The captain, who had been commandant at the midshipman school at Notre Dame, had an ensign who had been the boyfriend of his daughter, and he had brought that ensign along as his aide. During the firing on the Japanese fleet, the captain and the executive officer and the gunnery officer on the flying bridge, outside of the bridge. … The ensign was on the bridge, that's where the … ship is steered, the helmsman is, and the ensign called out to the captain, "Turn fifteen, [that] means turn to the right fifteen degrees?" The captain didn't respond, so the *California* turned fifteen degrees to the right. The rest of the armada turned a hundred and fifty degrees. Because the order for turning fifteen degrees is "Turn 1-5 ANS." "Turn 1-5," means turn to the right a hundred and fifty degrees. So there the American ships, all these battleships, had turned one-hundred-and-fifty degrees and the *California* was right in front of them. The USS *Pennsylvania* lowered its guns to fire, but, fortunately, they saw us and didn't. That was one of the biggest blunders of the entire war. That captain was pulled off the ship the next morning. Anyway, the effect of … that battle was that we destroyed, really, enough of the Japanese fleet, it no longer was a serious … force in the Pacific. The Battle of Midway and … the aircraft carriers really won the war in the Pacific. … The big battleships were just floating gun platforms to aid the invasions. But we were in the biggest ship-to-ship battle of the whole war. …

SI: What were you doing specifically during that operation?

RS: … I was in the superstructure, the highest part of the ship, except for the mast, where we controlled the … antiaircraft guns. What I was doing was watching. I didn't do a damn thing. I remember a sailor bumped into me during the battle and he says, "Excuse me," and I was so touched with the humanity of somebody speaking in that polite tone in the middle of this great battle; but I, personally, was just a spectator.

SI: Was there any kind of air cover or air response at all?

RS: No, this was in the middle of the night. …

SI: I'm wondering about the captain. Were you as a crew member aware of that?

RS: Oh, yes. We were aware that we were out of position, in front of the American fleet. We were obviously blocking our American battleships from firing. Sure, we were aware, and we knew right away what had happened. We didn't know why it happened or how it happened, because we didn't learn until later, but we found out quickly enough. …

CE: Did the USS *California* actually get into a crash with the USS *Tennessee*?

RS: Yes. Gee, I forgot about that, yes.

CE: Was that the same instance?

RS: No. After we left the Marianas; sorry, glad you pointed that [out]. We were going down to the invasion of Peleliu and Peleliu was Palaus where that famous photograph of the Marines raising the flag. … The ships when they are … going through the ocean, zigzag. They go ten degrees to starboard, fifteen degrees to port, twenty degrees to starboard, five degrees to port, and that's the way they avoided submarines. Battleships are steered by first putting their rudder over, and then, when you get close to the course, you meet her, that is moving the rudder back against the swing of the ship to hold it on the course you desire. So the *Tennessee* was off of our … port side, and my stateroom of the *California* was on the portside in the after part of the ship … crew's quarters were in the forward part of the ship. The *Tennessee* kept coming toward us and the officer of the deck, I remember his name was Charles Curtis from Harvard, just did nothing, didn't make any maneuver away from it, just watched it come and, eventually, the *Tennessee* called over its ship-to-ship radio, "Steering mechanism out," meaning its steering mechanism, after it had turned on its course, the steering mechanism hadn't brought it around to the course desired. So it clipped our bow. … It tore out about forty feet of our hull, and there were about forty or so sailors in their sleeping quarters and they were immediately drowned by this. It was just terrible. So we stayed until we got some of the other sailors out from some of the other watertight compartments, and then with the destroyer circling around us, we went to Esprito Santo, an island off of New Zealand, not far from New Zealand, and there we were repaired. … It was from there we went to … Manus, and then to the Philippines. What happened after the Leyte Gulf battle was we heard that a Japanese battleship, the biggest battleship they have, was planning to go into that other strait, but there were some American light aircraft carriers at the entrance to that … strait and the Japanese battleship saw them and bombarded and shot at them, sank a number of them, … using heavy armor piercing shells that

went right through aircraft carriers, but sank several of them. There were a lot of people in the water and we … heard about this and we're going out after them but we couldn't get out fast enough. The Japanese battleship turned around, and went away, and, of course, Halsey, which is in Third Fleet had … misjudged where the Japanese were and he had gone up north and … didn't participate in the Battle of Leyte Gulf at all. … Eventually somebody woke up to the fact there were sailors in the water and destroyers went out and rescued them. So after the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which was in late October, November, we went back to Manus to go to the invasion of Lingayen, which was the main island, it was Lingayen Gulf, the main island of the Philippines, not Leyte, but, what is it? I can't remember the name of it? …

SI: Luzon.

RS: Luzon, yes. … We were in Manus and I was playing deck tennis with some friends, some friends of mine, some officers. Deck tennis was, you had a rope coiled into a circle and you tossed it over the net like badminton and we were playing this and having a lot of fun. … An aide to the executive officer came up, he said, "You got orders," and I said "Oh, shucks, I don't want to leave the ship. I'm having too much fun," but my friend, who I was playing with, said, "When you get orders, you go back, you don't fool around." So, I left the ship and went back to Hawaii and there, I heard that, in the invasion of Luzon, a *kamikaze* this time didn't miss and hit the *California*, and hit and killed every man on my battle station, and so I was lucky to get those orders. … Then I went to an advanced … gunnery school in Washington, DC, went aboard USS *Portsmouth* but was on our shakedown cruise when the war ended. So my war really ended with Leyte Gulf.

SI: You were an antiaircraft officer and you saw a lot of combat because the Japanese threw a lot of planes at you. What would you be doing during an air attack? Can you describe what your duties were and what it was like?

RS: I commanded the port side forty-millimeter batteries. There was about four of them on the port side, just one side. … When the Japanese planes came, and they came within our range, I ordered "fire" and the gun crews were then loading the ammunition and firing the guns and aiming them, and we didn't have any special equipment, it's all by line of sight. So we weren't so great at aiming but … I think we shot down six aircraft in my time on the ship. But we missed a lot, too.

SI: It must have been very hectic and exciting during an attack.

RS: Oh, yes. It was very exciting. … We were trained so we were doing our jobs but, sure, it was exciting. … Can't say it was fun, but, I must say, I enjoyed the war. I remember we shot down one plane, there was a huge shout of exultation by us, because we'd hit the plane. Yes … I had a good war. By that I mean I wasn't injured. I participated in some action. I made a lot of friends, and it filled an important need in my life, because when I graduated from Rutgers, professors … always would mention books that you should read, and … you never had a chance in college to read them, but in the Navy when I was ashore, the last night ashore, instead of going out with the guys and getting drunk, I'd go to a bookstore and buy these modern library books of titles that the professors had mentioned, and books that I always wanted to read, like *War and*

Peace, and *Crime and Punishment*, *Brothers Karamazov*, just the classics mainly, and all during the war I read them and sent them home. So I really felt that I completed my college education in the Navy, at sea. So that was … kind of rewarding.

CE: I was wondering what kind of news trickled in about what was happening on the European front and how that may have affected you personally and your ship generally?

RS: We really didn't get much news. … The *Time Magazine* printed a serviceman's copy of the *Time*, without any advertisements on thin paper, and sent it out. When we got mail we'd see that. The only thing I remember about Europe was on D-Day, June 6th; we were heading across the International Date Line and went from June 5th to June 7th. So I never had a June 6th, to have D-Day. [laughter] But other than that we really didn't get much information. We were fighting our war and we just didn't learn much about Europe, and, of course, I was at sea for three years out of … three years and seven months in the Navy, so I was away from the country a long time.

CE: I was just wondering, kind of related to that, but different, what about your first hearing about the death camps and the Holocaust?

RS: I was in Washington, DC at that advanced gunnery school when … the newspapers came out with that and, of course, I was shocked by it, and it justified the war. It was just a gross, terrible event. Sure I was affected by it as every American.

SI: Having been in combat against the Japanese, what did you think of the Japanese as an enemy?

RS: Well, again, in the Navy, they were … machines, they were a ship or they were a plane, they weren't an individual, so that I had no personal animosity towards the Japanese as individuals. I mean, as opposed to Marines who landed on these islands and fought them hand to hand virtually. So I had no animus towards the Japanese and as far as the atomic bomb was concerned, gee, I was delighted about the bomb. It ended the war. God, I read about the war, that projected invasion of Japan and the Japanese defenses, it was estimated a million Americans would be killed in such an invasion. So … I never had questioned Truman's decision to drop that bomb.

SI: What were your living conditions like on the ship, on say the *California*, which is one of the larger ships in the Navy?

RS: They were excellent. … I had … a two-bed stateroom with another officer and we ate in … a officers' dining area. We were served by black messmen. The food was generally excellent. The only time we ever were hungry was in some of these invasions, well beyond the dawn, we stayed all day in our battle stations. But, you know compared to the army, we … lived in luxury. We really did. We had plates and silverware, utensils and silver cups for the milk, or the coffee, and it was really pretty darned good. Compared to when I lived in Rutgers, this was really luxury, [laughter] had desserts and so forth.

SI: I'm not sure if we covered this but what were your motivations for going in the Navy as opposed to another branch?

RS: I think the main motivation was the Navy had this V-7 program where college graduates could become officers and that was the main motivation. … Also a friend of mine, my law school friend of mine, was going in the Navy, so I was going to be drafted so I went in the Navy. That's all, that was the only motivation.

SI: You saw a lot of battles. What was your most vivid memory of your time in World War II in the Pacific?

RS: My most vivid memory is … of our shooting at those Japanese ships and the Japanese ships exploding and fires burning on them and … I mean … that was the biggest moment of my war. That was really, that was exciting, it was great.

CE: Did you ever make use of your advanced training of bomb disposal?

RS: No, oh, I forgot to mention this. I'm glad you asked me about that. So when I went aboard the *California*, I was a bomb disposal officer. So I told you that once [a] Japanese plane came between the *Colorado* and the *California* and the twenty-millimeter shells of the *Colorado*. Oh, I mentioned this I guess, twenty-millimeter shells landed on our deck and the captain saw them. They were … splattered all over; they hadn't exploded. So the captain said, "Bomb disposal officer, to the bridge, on the double." So I raced up to the bridge and the … captain said, "See those unexploded shells? Get rid of them." Well, I knew that the twenty-millimeter shells, which are about ten inches long, had a fulminate of mercury fuse. We had learned in bomb disposal school that they are supposed to explode when they hit … the thin shell of an airplane. So I went down, the first shell I picked up holding it level, walked it over the side the ship and dropped it down, and the sailors were up in the superstructure of the ship laughing at me. But I really was scared, right, took the second one, did the same thing. Picked the third, did the same, then I started to get courageous. I winged them over my shoulder, and under my arm, and through my legs. By the time I cleaned it up, I was, I was okay. So that was my only use of the bomb disposal … training I had.

SI: You mentioned before seeing the *kamikazes* when they first started, what went through your mind? At first, did you realize what it was?

RS: No. That was the first time I'd seen them and, I mean, I was just shocked, of course, that they smashed into a ship like that, and two ships that one afternoon.

SI: Did you think the first one might have been an accident?

RS: No, no. We knew. It was so deliberate; it flew directly into the ship, into that Australian destroyer. The second one we saw, it flew right into it. There was never any doubt what they were after.

CE: You had mentioned with the *kamikaze* plane that had missed your ship that the Japanese soldier jumped out of the plane. Do they normally jump out?

RS: No. No. They normally steer the plane right into the ship. What happened was that parachute, as it descended, the Marines on the fantail of the *California* shot their twenty-millimeter guns at it until it settled into the water.

SI: Did you ever lose anyone on any of your gun crews, any of the men under you?

RS: Yes. Well, excuse me. … The *kamikaze* that hit the … ship after I left, killed a lot of my friends who were in the … same battle station I was on, air forward. One of them, my best friend, guy from Lincoln, Nebraska named George Cottrell; it was just so tragic, he was about thirty-eight, or so, older than we were, I was only twenty-three or twenty-four. Anyway, … all the officers and sailors in that battle station were killed but on my division I don't remember any of the young men being killed, when I was there, yes.

CE: Is there anything more you wanted to say about your experience in Japan or the victory?

RS: Not really. I just would conclude by saying I had a great time in the war. I mean, I remember it was a good deal of affection and happiness. As I said … it gave me this opportunity for re-education or continued education. It also gave me an important time span. I had started law school without being sure I wanted to go there, but when I was in the Navy I represented some sailors before courts-martial and I was also a judge in a court-martial. As a matter-of-fact, the captain got so mad at me for representing a sailor. There were two court-martial on my last ship, the *Portsmouth* and I represented a sailor and got him off. The captain was so mad, because I was on the other court, that he confined me to my quarters so, the last two or three days of my service on that ship, I was mostly confined to quarters. But the experience of representing sailors and defending them against the Navy and then also deciding cases in the other court-martial, was such … it made me want to go back to law school, and I did, and I was glad I did because I started a new career, which I had never thought I would do.

SI: Do any of those cases stand out, from the court-martial, any one?

RS: There was one case, where the guy was accused of "absent without leave" and I asked him; I noticed on my check that I receive each month from the Navy, it said, "At Sea," and I said, he was gone for a month or so. I mean, he was at a leave for a month or so. It was after the war was over. … I said to him, "Did your check have on it, At Sea?" He said, "Yeah, I guess it did." I said, "Well, maybe we ought to mention that as to why you didn't go to the port where we were at the time," and he did and the court-martial bought it and they didn't convict him of being absent without leave. That case I remember. I remember another case, I don't remember the details of it, but I was walking to my office in New York City; when I graduated Columbia I worked in New York for five years; office was on 40th and Madison Avenue and I used to have to go to the library, the Bar Association Library on 43rd and between 5th and 6th Avenue. So I'd walk up from my office, east to 5th Avenue and up 5th Avenue to 43rd Street and then west on 43rd Street to the Bar Association. I was making that circuit one day, I ran into a guy who recognized me and he said, "You represented me in a court-martial," and he said, … "Well, the

reviewing board of that court-martial, reversed the decision so I was free and I always wanted to thank you for that." This was two or three years after the war, on the corner of 42nd Street and 5th Avenue. Other than that, I don't remember the cases that I represented. … The important thing is it inspired me to want to go back to law school.

SI: Do you remember where you were and how you reacted when you heard that Franklin Roosevelt had passed away?

RS: Yes, when Franklin Roosevelt passed away I was in Washington, DC, it was April 12th, I think, 14th. Lincoln died on the 15th. It might have been, it was April 14th or 15th I guess. … I was at that advanced gunnery school and there was … across from this gunnery school was a big park and there was a long line of tennis courts that were adjacent to each other, a long line. … I was playing tennis with some guys on one of the courts, saw a woman coming along in white dress, dangling her tennis racket and as she passed each court, the play stopped. She finally got to us and she said, "Roosevelt has died," and we stopped playing, too, and it felt like the ball almost didn't bounce. I went back to my quarters, and that night I, and a lot of other people, went to Lincoln's Memorial in Washington, DC and we kind of, that's the only place we felt it appropriately pay our respects to Franklin Roosevelt. That's my experience of that.

SI: Before you left the *California* and got to this school in Washington, DC, had you had any chance to visit your home or get any leave, let's say when you went out to sea and when you came back?

RS: Not very much. The only time I got home, apart from when I went to this school, later in the war, was between the *Santa Fe* and the *California*. I had about ten days. So I was in San Francisco and I hitchhiked a ride on a plane back to New Jersey and visited my folks and then went back out to the *California*. Other than that, I really rarely was home.

SI: Did you find it difficult to be away from your family?

RS: Well … one of my brothers I said died during the war of tuberculosis. The other brother was in the … Army, and he was in the invasion of Algeria and he went all the way through … Northern Africa into Sicily, into Italy, and he stayed the whole war in Europe. My other brother, younger brother, was in the Navy on a destroyer. I saw him once, we happened to be in the same port.

SI: Were you able to correspond with them, your brothers or your parents?

RS: … Oh, yes. I wrote to my parents all the time. My father died a couple of years after the war.

SI: How quickly after V-J Day were you separated from the Navy, from active duty?

RS: I wasn't married, didn't have any children, so it, release from duty, was done on points. I'd been at sea an awful lot but, somehow, I didn't get out until February of '46, pain in the neck. It was after the war, there was nothing going on, but I didn't get out until February. I was

separated from the Navy on Pine Street, New York City, took the subway up to Columbia, 116th Street, and enrolled in Columbia to start that semester of law school. God, I had a terrible time that semester. You know, it was so hard to get back from what I'd been doing, to studying law. The first semester I didn't do very well. In fact, the first year before the war I didn't do well because of the … war coming on and inevitably going into it. So I didn't have a brilliant … law school career. Although I did write an article that got published in *The Labor & Management Review*, but I didn't have a great law school career.

SI: Were most of your classmates when you came back also veterans?

RS: Yes. Law school was wonderful by taking everybody back, and so our classes were very over crowded, but the faculty stood up to the test and took us back and we all graduated. I mean, those of us who went back graduated.

SI: Were there any changes that you noticed at Columbia, either physical changes or changes in the way class was taught, or the way they did things?

RS: Well, I told you the incident of the professors that just virtually ignored us. Young people were going into the service that day after Pearl Harbor. We got back and many of us were still in uniform, we didn't have any clothes, any civilian clothes. It took me almost a semester to buy a suit in New York City. Anyway, the professors were kinder, I think, and we stood up to them more, too. We weren't browbeaten by them, and it was fun. I mean, we students bonded and, you know, we'd been through a great experience together and we just bonded with each other a lot. … When I went back in February, met a wonderful girl in April, married her in November. So my last year in law school I was married, living off campus, and a child in December, and I was practicing law.

SI: Did you feel like there was a need to catch up for lost time?

RS: No. I remember telling somebody once, "Boy, I'm wasting a lot of time," but I didn't feel that way when I got back to law school. I was only twenty-six, I think, so it wasn't a big deal. I mean, it turned out, as I said, to have been a wonderful interlude in my education. I was much more mature. … What difference did it make, I mean, whether you're twenty-five or twenty-four or twenty-two and twenty-six, you know?

CE: What kind of law did you practice?

RS: Well, after I graduated from Columbia, I went to a law firm, kind of a small law firm in New York City. … There were a big backlog of litigation because a lot of people had been in the service, and so forth. … The trials had been postponed. So when I went there, there was a lot of litigation. … It was a commercial law firm primarily. … I had an opportunity to try a lot of cases, which I might not otherwise have had, and I had opportunity to write briefs for the … New York Court of Appeals and even for the United States Supreme Court, so I got an excellent training. But it was a law firm that catered to the rich and I felt that … I was just making the rich richer and it wasn't what I wanted to do, I still was idealistic about life, I hope I still am. Anyway, the consequence was that I called a Rutgers classmate, whom I played on the tennis

team with, and he invited me up here to Hartford to practice with him, and he was my best friend in college, and so I took the offer and it was the smartest thing, next to marrying my wife, that I ever did, because I just had a … marvelous time here. We had our own practice and, I don't know, I had a lot of fun. I was successful. I was elected to the legislature, a counsel to the Democratic majority of the legislature, participated in a lot of big events, wrote many of the bills for one of our governors. … I just had a great time and then I became a judge in … 1975. I've been a judge for almost thirty-two [years].

CE: What motivated you to run for state legislature?

RS: … Oh, just the fun of it, you know. I had been very active in community affairs. I had been president of the Greater Hartford Community Council, which is kind of the leading social … welfare, or social service organization in the city. I had been on family … service boards and, had been in a lot of things, and I turned to politics because I wanted to make things happen more than just ask other people to, and I did, too.

SI: What years did you serve in the legislature?

RS: I served from 1959 to 1967. I served three terms. One term I missed, was defeated one term and I won the second election by one vote.

SI: I read that chapter in your book; it's pretty exciting how that happened. …

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

SI: This continues an interview with Judge Satter on September 20, 2006 in Hartford, Connecticut. We were just talking a little bit about your legislative career, and in reading your book [*The*] *Path in the Law* you described both the 1960 election that you lost, and then you regained your seat in '62. What were the circumstances surrounding the 1960 election? It somehow brought the Catholic issue into it.

RS: Well, involved that, yes, it also involved a racial issue. A neighbor of ours, who was a very close friend of ours, sold her house to a black person in the town of Newington, which is just south of Hartford, which is an overwhelmingly white town … middle-class town, and I represented her for that closing. My daughters had gone up to the black person the day after they moved in and brought them some cookies, or something. My wife had cut some flowers and brought it to them. Anyway, that sort of got around town, that if I were elected there'd be a black person on every street and that's what defeated me, essentially.

SI: And we think of Connecticut as being such a liberal community.

RS: It wasn't in the 1950s and '60s, early '60s.

CE: How did the Vietnam War impact the community and those racial aspects of it? Did it have an impact?

RS: Well, the Vietnam War came, of course, in the middle of the Civil Rights Revolution, they were sort of co-existent. My daughters taught me about the Vietnam War. I mean, I had been a veteran and felt whenever the United States went to war you upheld … her. But my daughters taught me that the war was wrong, like one of my daughters went to Oberlin and, so I became an opponent of the war. … The racial impact, of course, was created by the blacks themselves, when Martin Luther King and through the other Civil Rights leaders. … I was involved. I was the president of the Connecticut Chapter of the ACLU … the American Civil Liberties Union, so I was involved in racial questions, and when I was in the legislature I introduced the first bill in the Connecticut Legislature that made it unlawful to discriminate in private housing, based on race, religion, creed and so forth. … Got it passed … I was a liberal and I was always involved in racial issues. But strange, I didn't have many black friends. I mean, I played tennis with one guy but I once said to my wife, we don't have many black friends and I felt that was too bad.

SI: Also in your book you talked a lot about the McCarthy era and that role on your career. Would you mind talking about some of the cases that you dealt with that dealt with issues of persecution related to the communists?

RS: Yes. Well, when I was in New York, which I guess is … I left there in '52 … yes, it was the McCarthy era, there was a senior … partner in the firm, said, "I've got a case here. One of the employees of one of our clients has just been fired from his job," and maybe he was a relative of somebody. Anyway, somebody was fired from his job, working for the Veteran's Administration, on the grounds he's a communist. The senior partner said, "Will you handle the case?" So I took the case. I met the guy. The guy had an extraordinary history. … He had been accused of this, of being a communist on the basis of a report of Representative Walters, who was Chairman of the House Un-American Affairs Committee [House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)]. … Walters had gotten that information from a police chief in Seattle, who had told him that, my client, our client, had published books by the Marx Publishing Company. He thought that indicated he was a communist. The chief never read the books. So the VA suspended him and had a hearing and that's where I represented him. … I talked to my client and his story turned out to be entirely different. He had been a white Russian, he had been, not a communist, not a red Russian, he'd been a white Russian whose father's lumber factory had been expropriated by the government. He had fought against the communist government up … to the borders with China. He had been forced across the border of China and, eventually, took a boat, took a ship to Seattle. In Seattle, he had established this … publishing company for Russian books and he called it the Marx Publishing Company, but had nothing to do with Karl Marx. … The police chief accused him of being communist and told the House on American Affairs Committee. He sued the police chief for defamation of character, and the court found for the police chief, on the grounds he was privileged in his job as a police officer to report something like that. But the court went out of its way to say, after hearing his story that my client was not a communist. So … when I got to the hearing on the loss of his job with the Veterans Administration and time, … the chairman of the Loyalty Board, … he was an ex-Marine officer, said, "The evidence upon which your client has been charged is confidential. Proceed with your case, counselor." So I had to prove he was not a communist. So, I had him tell the story about his white Russian affiliation, I introduced the judgment of the Federal District Court that found him specifically not to be communist. I asked him questions like, "What newspaper did you read in New York?" and he said he didn't read the *Daily Worker*, read the

Daily News. Asked him whom he voted for president in 1936, he said, "Alf Landon," probably the only guy in New York City who voted for Alf Landon, you remember, he lost by a landslide. Anyway, put on all this evidence, waited six months, the poor guy was still out of work, he'd call me every couple of weeks and I didn't have an answer. I was so embarrassed by it. Eventually, a decision did come down that they reinstated him. Then I had a case of a union leader who was accused of being a communist by the Un-American Affairs Committee. The Un-American Affairs Committee was holding a hearing in New Haven, they subpoenaed him to testify. He was a labor leader. So he came to see me and he wanted to plead the Fifth Amendment. So I told him how to plead the Fifth Amendment, and represented him before the hearing. Next day, he called me, and he said he'd been fired from his job, and there was nothing I could do about it. I was sorry for him, but I didn't offer to do anything more for him. … Well, during that McCarthy period there was a bill in the legislature to require teachers to take loyalty oaths, and as president of the American Civil Liberties Union, I testified against it. There was another bill, to outlaw the Communist Party. I testified against that as the president of the ACLU, both bills failed. … So that was my involvement. I also, one minor thing, when I was president of the Connecticut chapter of ACLU, we invited Owen Lattimore to speak in Hartford. He had been a famous opponent of the American policy in China. He had written a book, I can't remember the name of it now, but it was a very good book. … We invited him to speak and … we had hired the hall of an insurance company … for him to speak, and the day before, or two days before the scheduled … date, they canceled. So we had to locate some place else, but that got in the newspaper … so we scheduled at a church and there was an enormous crowd, because the newspaper had made such a fuss about it, and it was a very successful speech. That's my record of involvement with communists.

SI: In speaking to a few other people who had similar experiences, they found that a lot of these accusations were not just motivated by hatred towards communism, or whatever, but it was using that for personal gain, did you find that to be the case in a lot of these cases in your experience?

RS: I don't think I can say that. No, I can't say that. There was some basis for all of those claims that were made, although the one by the Veterans Administration, they just did a lousy job of investigation on that, but against that union leader, they certainly had a basis for subpoenaing him.

SI: Is there anything else … you'd like to add to the record?

RS: Well, all I would say is, I just recently had a serious heart operation … a quintuplet bypass, and it was really serious because I had some complications and right after the accident I was feeling terrible, right after the surgery, feeling terrible. I said to myself, "This must be the way it feels to die." I thought I was going to die. I didn't, of course. … Ever since that experience, I've had such … an awareness of the wonders of human … of our lives, and I look back on my life and I feel, I remember that I had no regrets if I had to die and I had no regrets because I lived such a full life. I mean, I had successful careers as a lawyer, legislator and judge. I taught at the University of Connecticut Law School for twenty-seven years. I've written four books. I have a wonderful wife and four absolutely, magnificent children and ten grandchildren. So if I had died, then, it would have been without regret. Having survived, I just feel such a sense of gratefulness for every day. I don't know exactly, but … I just feel so grateful to be alive and

able to function. Tomorrow I'll play golf and, on the weekend, I'm going to visit my son in Albuquerque and play golf with him. Actually on Sunday, also in Albuquerque, I'm going to a USS *California* reunion. It must be, God knows? I left the ship in '44, that's … sixty-two years ago. I'm going back to a reunion on Sunday.

SI: Is this the first time you're going back to a reunion?

RS: They actually had one here in Hartford in the '70s; I went to that. So anyway, that's my life.

SI: Well, that's great, a great note to end on. Just one more question, what was your favorite thing to do in your career, you know, as a lawyer, a legislator, a judge, a teacher, what was your favorite thing?

RS: Well, actually, as a lawyer I loved representing clients. I loved being on their side and carrying their banner into the fray in court. Enormous satisfaction out of that, not cases that won me a lot of money, but cases that made a difference in their lives. As a legislator, I introduced a lot of bills that are still on the books, including that anti-discrimination bill I mentioned, including the first bill in Connecticut, which I authored, to create separate trials in capital cases with the jury first determining guilt, and then whether to impose the death penalty. I wrote a lot of laws as counsel for the Democratic Party and, as a judge, I've enormously enjoyed the intellectual and … human characteristics of the job. I loved the challenge of taking a group of facts and applying the law to them and make a decision that seems to achieve justice. … I love the human quality of deciding cases where I have discretion, where I can help people in one way, or the other. … So I've enjoyed each aspect of my career enormously. … I don't have to go to court everyday. I mean, I'm over eighty-seven, I'm eighty-seven. I could have quit, stopped at seventy, but we can continue as a senior judge. … I come in everyday because I want to, because it's fun, because I love the challenge. I think I'm good at it, I hope I'm good at it.

SI: You have an amazing record so I'm sure you're very good. Thank you very much; thank you, we really appreciate your time.

RS: Sure.

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

Reviewed by Charles Edmonds 10/23/06
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 12/07/06
Reviewed by Robert Satter 1/15/07