RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT M. SCHNITZER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Colonel Robert M. Schnitzer on September 16, 2003, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Ashley Perri: … Ashley Perri …

Geoffrey Cerone: … and Geoff Cerone.

SI: Sandra Stewart Holyoak is in the background. Her voice may also appear on the tape. Colonel Schnitzer, thank you very much for coming in today. We would like to start by asking you a little bit about your family, beginning with your father. Your father was born in Trenton. How long had his family lived in the Trenton area?

RS: Well, my grandfather, his father, was an immigrant from Germany. … I think he came over in the 1880s and lived in Trenton then all of his life. I think he might have been recruited from Germany by John [Augustus] Roebling, who, subsequently, was instrumental in building the Brooklyn Bridge and so forth. So, his employment, entirely, until he passed away, was at John Roebling's in Trenton. He married a German woman and that's about as much as [I know] from that side of the family.

SI: Was your grandmother born in the US?

RS: She was born in Germany, also, in what was called Silesia at that time.

SI: Could you tell us about your mother and her family?

RS: Her family came from Ireland, back in the 1840s. … My great-grandfather is listed in the [United States] Census of 1850 … as a resident of Trenton. So, that branch of the family lived there all of their lives also.

SI: Did they come to the US because of the Irish Potato Famine?

RS: … I have a good idea that that's what happened. I don't have any record of that, though.

SI: There are no stories in the family.

RS: No, that's right, yes.

SI: Was there a family occupation on your mother's side?

RS: Oh, my mother's family? Yes, my great-grandfather opened a hotel on Broad Street in Trenton, New Jersey, and operated that for many years. … His son, my grandfather, Andrew, worked … [at] just a grocery store on Broad Street in Trenton, also, and married my grandmother in that location.

SI: What kind of education did your father have?

RS: He had a very limited education. You know, in those days, particularly with foreigners, they took them out of school early and involved [them] in trades. In fact, my grandfather was apprenticed, at an early age, as a brick maker and, subsequently, as a brewery worker. So, he knew quite [well] how to make beer during the [Great] Depression, during Prohibition, of course, during the Depression era. [laughter]

SI: Was Trenton divided into ethnic wards?

RS: Very much so. That was one of the things I've always been very happy about, that I grew up in that kind of an area. Trenton was very ethnically involved with Polish, Germans, Italians, Jewish folk, and they all had their little areas and enclaves and carried out their rituals, and so forth, and [their] religious affairs. In fact, … I just happened to be down in Trenton [recently] and the Italians are still conducting their (Streets of Lights?), you know, which is a religious festival that lasts about a week. … I've always been grateful that I had that experience, … particularly in high school, by meeting all of the grandchildren of these people, yes.

SI: Do you know how your parents met?

RS: I don't, actually, no. You see, my father died at a very early age, as the record shows. … I was only forty-seven months [old] at that time, so that it was a rather hard situation for my mother, who had been a graduate, at that time, of … what they called the [Trenton] Normal School, which was the two-year teacher's program. That was before the state colleges, and so forth, and she taught for a few years, after completing that, but, then, somewhere along the line, … she contracted typhoid fever, which affected her hearing. So, by the time she was married and my father died, she was not able to go back to teaching, because … of her hearing loss. So, she spent some time at night school, learning accounting, and took up that profession. So, it made it difficult for her to support two children. I had a younger sister by about two years. … My father had just completed building a new home, in the suburbs of Trenton, and she was unable, of course, to carry that and we had to go live with my grandparents in Trenton. So, I was brought up, actually, by my grandparents, her mother and father.

SI: Did losing your father at such a young age separate you from his side of the family?

RS: Oh, no, I still visited with them and I made it a point to try to get over once a week, starting when I was in junior high school and, you know, could roller-skate or that sort of thing, to have dinner with them. … I enjoyed maintaining those relationships, and they lived in another part of town, of course.

SI: You mentioned earlier how ethnically diverse Trenton was when you were a child.

RS: Right.

SI: Do you have any vivid recollections of any ethnic traditions, for example, any German traditions when you would visit your father's family, or Irish traditions?

RS: Yes. Well, I don't know that, as far as the family was concerned, there was that kind of relationship. I found it more with respect to my schoolmates. My grandfather, despite his background, became a commissioner in the City of Trenton for a few years, apparently representing the German enclave in town, but, other than that, family-wise, there was not that much discussion. They were, I think, integrating themselves very well into the New World, and they spoke English, … no problem in that respect.

SI: They did not speak German in the household.

RS: No.

SI: Did they maintain certain holidays?

RS: No. It was only after I took some German in high school that, humorously, we would converse in German, just to polish up my German. [laughter]

SI: Do you think your family avoided the German language and traditions because of the anti-German backlash associated with World War I?

RS: No, no. … I never felt any indication of that. Of course, my grandfather died in 1933, his wife died in 1936, so, this was kind of prior to the Second World War and the rise of Hitler, and so forth. … I never heard anything [about] during World War I, with respect to any castigation or so, ethnically, that way.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit more about your childhood neighborhood?

RS: Yes. I lived … contiguous to what we called "Jew Town," which was right around the area next to where the capitol [is] now, you know. I lived downtown in Trenton, within a few blocks of the capitol, and a certain area there, several blocks, was where the Jewish people congregated. … So, the grammar school I went to had a high percentage of Jewish children and, of course, they were a very intelligent group and I enjoyed them. In fact, one of my closest buddies was one of the Jewish fellows and I palled around [with him] and we dated together and that kind of thing, you know, in high school. So, I've always found them as a very warm people and, over my lifetime, I've had a lot of pleasant associations that way.

SI: Were there ever clashes between ethnic groups in Trenton?

RS: Not at all. I think that's kind of an unusual thing, where you had so many enclaves in town. No, once you got to junior high school or high school, it was all melded very well. In fact, Trenton High School, it's not in that category today, but it was one of the better high schools in the country. In fact, our principal, … who retired in the middle of our senior year, was considered one of the five best high-school principals in the country, by a survey that was done by the University of Pennsylvania. … He was the type of fellow that was granted a PhD, an honorary PhD, from Lafayette, and, also, one from Rutgers. [laughter] So, we had the state championship soccer team. We were category four, which was the highest bracket. We were state champs in swimming. We were state champs in basketball, for the fourth year in a row.

So, it was a very active high school, as you can appreciate, and [there was] a lot of school spirit, naturally, with all of that going on.

SI: It must have been very challenging, academically, with such a fine faculty.

RS: It was that. It was a brand-new high school, built during the Depression. In fact, our class, who spent three years there, was the first class to go through for the whole three years before graduating. … As it turned out, I was president of the senior class and quarterback on the football team. We weren't state champs, because, for the main reason, they had a lousy quarterback. [laughter]

SI: Were there fraternities and sororities in your high school?

RS: No. Well, no, not in that sense; we had a prolific number of clubs, of various interests, like *belles lettres* or arts, and so forth. … It was an extremely active high school in that respect, too.

SI: From what I know about Trenton then, there was a lot of industry and manufacturing.

RS: Very much so, yes. In fact, if you cross the Delaware [River] there, from Trenton to Morrisville, you look across and on the railroad bridge is the sign, says, "Trenton Makes, The World Takes." [laughter] It's been there for as long as I can remember, but, yes, places like [the] Lenox Factory, CertainTeed, Thermoid, [which] made brake linings. In fact, … during the summer of my freshman year in college here, I worked for a box lunch company, starting at three o'clock in the morning, … making up the sandwiches. … Then, starting at seven o'clock, we'd go to a factory and stand there and sell the box lunches as they went in. At eight o'clock, after all the factories were operating, then, with a basket, I would run, walk, through [the] factories, selling the box lunches, until twelve o'clock, and then, go to a construction site and pull up there and sell the box lunches. So, I had a very good overview of the industry in Trenton, by all of those contacts.

SI: Did you have to hold down a lot of jobs to help support your family?

RS: Well, of course, my mother, subsequently, worked herself up to a job with the State Purchasing Department, doing accounting there. So, she had a reasonable income, at that point in time. You know, it wouldn't be very great today, but, at that point, she was able to support us significantly well, I'd say. …

SI: She sounds like a remarkable woman. She was well-educated and she supported your family.

RS: [Yes]. … She wanted to see that I had [the opportunity to go to] college, and so forth. … There were some ways I could earn some money, you know, at college, taking in laundry and dry cleaning, and so forth. You know, in the fraternity, … [I] waited on tables at the fraternity, and [then], became the steward of the fraternity, so, I didn't have to wait tables, but at least I got my meals, and so forth.

SI: How did the early years of the Great Depression affect your family, your neighborhood and Trenton as a whole?

RS: Well, I'd say, by the time the Depression came along, my grandfather, of course, on my father's side, had had good employment. … In fact, he was a foreman on the night shift in his latter years. So, I think, relatively, he had a very decent income, and he retired in 1928, with, again, a reasonable pension. So, I never felt that they were particularly affected, financially. … Of course, as far as my mother was concerned, she had a reasonable income. My grandparents had no pensions, and so forth. The only thing that they had in the way of income was that they had a son who was in World War I. He … didn't go out of the country at all, but, following the war, he took a job down in what was called Hog Island, which is around Philadelphia, and he was killed in an acetylene tank explosion, but he had had a government insurance policy still in effect. So, there was an income from that that they lived on for a number of years. … They were not the kind of people, this is my grandparents I'm talking about, on my mother's side, that did a lot of socializing. So, they didn't have a lot of expense in that sense and, in those days, you didn't go out to eat and that kind of thing, either, you know, as they do today. So, you didn't have all of the ancillary expenses that a lot of people do today. So, I was never particularly conscious of the fact that we were deprived of anything, although, personally, I didn't have any money. … You realized that it was hard to go out on a date, because you didn't have any money to do that, but, in those days, you did a lot of simple things anyway. … I think our parents probably did a good job of keeping us so that we weren't cognizant of the problems.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Vincent Terri has just joined us and may jump in. How did the Great Depression affect Trenton, with its large industrial base?

RS: Yes. In thinking back, I was not too aware, maybe because I was active in other things, in school and the like. I think, you see, growing up, I think, in this kind of diverse area that we had, a lot of these people, … as immigrants, didn't have a lot of money to begin with. So, that's the kind of people we were associating with and we weren't looking for ways to do things that would cost money or so forth. We just seemed to have a lot of fun among ourselves. … This brings back one thought. When we were in high school, and that was during the Depression era, we would, like, at Thanksgiving time, bring in canned goods, and so forth, to make up some baskets. As it so happened, I had a distant relative who had been employed by what was called American Steel, one of the steel companies on the river, Delaware River, … [which] had closed because of the Depression. … I was aware of this through my grandparents. It was a relationship on my grandfather's side. They had three children and, in our homeroom class, the teacher asked if anybody knew of anybody that was having problems, and so forth, and this family came to mind. So, I suggested it and he picked it up, and he and I took the basket of groceries, and so forth, over, just before Thanksgiving, to this family. It subsequently happened that, of the three children, the older became vice-principal, subsequently, of Trenton High School, and the daughter became a registered nurse and the third child became a policeman in Trenton. So, in one sense, it seemed to have done some good, but that's one incident that I remember about the Depression, yes.

SI: I guess Trenton was not like New York City, where there were a lot of homeless people or apple-sellers.

RS: I was not aware of that, no, no, and, of course, you realize, too, that Trenton, being the capital, a lot of people were employed by the state and there were quite a number of offices of different types around there. So, these people weren't, you know, handicapped in that sense. They were getting an income during the Depression.

SI: Did you follow politics at all?

RS: No.

SI: It was never discussed around the dinner table.

RS: Well, you always have politics discussed around the table, but, no, … there wasn't adamant discussion about it, yes.

SI: Do you have any sense of how your mother and her parents felt about Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal and issues like that?

RS: My family, we were basically Republicans. I don't know that they were too concerned, politically, as to what was going on at that time. … Again, this is occurring in junior high school and senior high school and, as far as I was concerned, there were other thoughts on my mind than politics, but, as far as the family was concerned, I was not aware of too much discussion about what was going on.

SI: Did you notice any of the effects of the New Deal programs? It sounds as if your high school might have been a WPA project.

RS: Yes, I think so. I think it cost, at that time, about three million dollars, which is a lot of money. Now, … after all the wear and tear over the years, there's some discussion about revamping the interior and that sort of thing, and they're talking many millions of dollars in comparison. [laughter] … I don't know that this [news] has broke in the city yet, but … I think, when it hits, it'll create quite a problem, yes. The ethnic nature of Trenton has changed drastically. … The high school now is probably ninety-five percent black and five-percent Mexican, and so forth, so, there are very few whites in Trenton Central. The area has developed, so that you have high schools in the outlying areas now, and, of course, that's where the whites are pretty much living now. … As far as Trenton Central High School is concerned, it's drastically different from the time I went there.

SI: You were starting your high school years in the 1930s, around the time that Hitler came to power. Were you aware of events in Europe? Was the news discussed?

RS: It was a little early yet, like, in junior high school. I was not aware, particularly, until after college. Of course, my year was '39 and it was only about '40, and so forth, that people could begin to sense that things were really in not the best shape over there, and that there was the

possibility of our getting involved. … Then, there was some earlier warfare in Africa, prior to the time we were involved in Africa, with Rommel and the British, you know, when they were concerned that they might get into Egypt, and so forth. Finally, they were stopped there, but you could see this desert maneuvering going on, you know, prior to our entrance into the war, and you could appreciate that something really could develop.

SI: You graduated from high school in 1935.

RS: Correct.

SI: That was right in the middle of the Depression. How did you come to Rutgers? Why did you choose Rutgers and how were you able to afford it?

RS: Well, to tell the truth, I was thinking about Princeton first, [laughter] and I went up … for an interview and I sat for several hours, waiting to be interviewed, and never was, or at least I got to thinking that, "Maybe this is a little too rich for my blood," too. … Before I was called in, I just left and went up to the library and got some material on Rutgers, and then, it so happened that one of my classmates came by, whose father and other members of the family had been Rutgers graduates, and he was planning to attend Rutgers. So, he asked me if I were going and I said, "Yes, I think I will," and he said, "Would you like to be roommates?" So, that kind of sealed it and that's, basically, the way I made the decision. … Of course, I knew about their biological science program and that was the curriculum that interested me. So, all together, it kind of fitted [my needs].

SI: Was it the norm for people from your high school to go on to college?

RS: No, I wouldn't say so. Well, when you look back on it, those that had the higher scholastic accomplishments considered [college]. … The difficulty was that so few families had the resources to send them to college at that time, because of the Depression. So, unless there were some scholarships involved, and, at that time, there were very few scholarships that were granted to high school graduates; so, in looking back, those that I've seen that have gone to college were among the better students to begin with. … Of course, Trenton had a lot of industry that would attract people. … Comparatively with today, I don't think you had the highest percentage of people going to college then.

SI: What was the name of your roommate, this man who got you involved in Rutgers?

RS: Larry Pitt. You've heard of him?

SI: Yes. [laughter]

RS: Yes, he's been around Rutgers for quite awhile.

SI: Yes, I hear that name a lot.

RS: Yes.

SI: Tell us about your orientation to Rutgers. How was freshman life? Was there any hazing?

RS: Of course, it was a change in living circumstances. I lived over in Pell [Hall], on the top floor. The other classmates were nice kids, liked them. I felt alone a bit, being away from home. I think that's only a natural feeling, but there was a lot of activity and, of course, Larry was a DU [Delta Upsilon] and his family had been DUs, so that he was rushed early, naturally, and he kind of dragged me along, and so, I got rushed, too. So, both of us [were] accepted as freshmen, although, of course, we continued to live in Pell for that year. They had the usual initiation, but it was more constructive, I'd say, than some you find, in that the incoming freshmen had to spend the night cleaning up the house and that sort of thing, running the vacuum, all of that bit. The rest of it that went on was kind of fun, to a degree, but it wasn't outside of the fraternity. … Of course, at that time, there wasn't any beer or other liquids that were available, and so forth, and a lot of us didn't have any money for it anyway, if it was available. [laughter] …

SI: Where was your house?

RS: [Do] you know Ford Hall? Is that still called Ford Hall? Right across the street from there.

SI: Yes.

RS: Apparently, I don't know, ten, fifteen, twenty years ago, they got involved with drugs, I guess, and they took them off campus, so that we lost the fraternity, … but it was a nice house. There were most of the sports represented at the house and good students. … They employed a proctor for us, as freshmen, too, which was very beneficial, and that helped [us] to get acquainted scholastically, and so forth.

SI: Did you have a housemother?

RS: There's a housemother, right. She had … an apartment there and was full-time, and then, we had a couple that prepared the food and served the food.

SI: I get the impression that fraternities back then were very formal. For example, if you went to dinner, you had to wear a jacket and tie.

RS: Oh, yes, jacket and tie for dinner, right. … That was very favorable. You learned etiquette, and so forth, and, of course, we would have faculty over, now and then, for dinner, and other people on the campus as guests. … Yes, the wear, in those days, was a lot more formal than it is today on campus.

SI: I know [Dean of Men] Fraser Metzger was also a DU.

RS: That's right. Fraser was, and his son; can't think of his name.

SI: Karl?

RS: Yes, Karl, right. Karl, [later Secretary of Rutgers University], was a DU.

SI: Did your fraternity have any run-ins with the college administration?

RS: Not while we were here, no, no. In fact, we always had an annual meeting, you know, the alumni, and so forth. Metzger would come, and so forth, or he … may have preferred dinner once a year, something like that.

SI: As a regular freshman, before you joined the fraternity, did you experience any hazing? Did you have to wear a dink?

RS: Oh, yes, we all had to wear dinks, but that was as far as the college was concerned, not particularly the fraternity, … just to recognize that we were the innocents or so forth. [laughter]

SI: Was there a rivalry between the sophomore and freshman classes?

RS: Oh, yes. … It lasted for awhile, early on, but, then, it kind of drifted off. It wasn't continuous, you know, throughout the year, and I played freshman football and freshman lacrosse during that year. Those were the days where, you know, you couldn't play varsity ball … as a freshman, yes. …

SI: You were originally a biology student, but you also studied business. When did the business aspect come along?

RS: Well, … one of my fraternity brothers lived up in Orange, New Jersey. He was an engineering student and he was also a DU, and his father was a hospital administrator, up at the Orange Memorial Hospital in Orange. … John and I became good friends and he would invite me up for a weekend. They had a summer place up at Green Pond, and so forth, so, he might invite me up for a weekend there, and I got to know his dad and the kind of work that he was doing. At that time, hospital administration was in its infancy, really, as hospitals were just evolving from a poor era, so-to-speak. … Through him, I learned that they were starting a formal program in hospital administration, the first in the country, at the University of Chicago, at their Graduate School of Business. So, my original intent in taking biological science was for medicine, but, of course, I didn't have a lot in the way of assets to begin with. So, I thought, "Well, this is a way to get into the kind of work I would like to do, without having to go through medical school and all of that bit, at considerable expense." So, when I learned about this program and investigated it, it occurred to me that, when I finished my biological science requirements, I could swing over to business, in the electives. So, I did that, took a summer school program, also, to make up the credits, and graduated with a BS in business administration. It sounds like a crazy degree, but that's the way they wrote it then, I guess maybe because I was so heavy in the biological sciences.

SI: Was it difficult to maintain this heavy class load and also be involved in sports and the fraternity?

RS: Oh, yes. That's one of the things I regret, actually, about my college experience here, that there was so much lab work involved. You know, you had basic chemistry, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, organic chemistry; all of this had lab work. Physics had lab and zoology had lab, and so forth. I could not participate in the programs at the time. I couldn't go out for sports, and it wasn't until my senior year, when I was in business, that I could go out for 150-pound football, lacrosse, and so forth. So, I actually regretted, in the long run, having all those biological science courses. I would have rather had some philosophy, and so forth.

SI: Who were your favorite professors? What were your favorite classes?

RS: Yes. I liked [Walter R.] Peabody. I don't remember his first name, but he was in one of the business courses, and so forth. I really enjoyed the business courses, and the problem was, too, that, in the biological sciences, you didn't see too much of your professors, you know. They would offer the assignments and you'd be in the lab, and so forth. I could never feel close to them at all, but I could very much more have a camaraderie with the business profs. … Of course, you know, in the sciences, they're doing their own research and that sort of thing. They don't have the time to give to the students, as the business people do.

SI: Did the Great Depression affect Rutgers, with cuts in faculty or programs?

RS: I wasn't aware of it at that time. I think, in retrospect, yes, you could see that … things were kind of operating on a shoestring. Also, speaking militarily, that's another reason why I couldn't take the … third and fourth years in ROTC. Of course, I had to take the first two years. It was a requirement, but, … otherwise, I might have been interested in taking the second two years for the commission.

SI: Was the ROTC training very intense?

RS: No, it wasn't. You only had about a two-hour class, once in a week, something like that. As I recall, you only had to drill a few weeks in the fall, and then, drill for a few weeks in the spring. You didn't have to get out in the nasty weather and so forth, and then, they had a field day and you had to, you know, parade the whole corps. The classes were not rugged at all. You learned how to sight a rifle, and so forth, without being on a rifle range and that kind of thing, but, no, it was probably the easiest part of my courses. So, I don't know what it's like today, but I enjoyed the [ROTC]. What?

SI: Vince is actually in the ROTC.

RS: Oh, are you? [laughter] Yes, I enjoyed the drilling, I kind of liked that, and the formations, and so forth.

SI: Did you have to go to mandatory chapel?

RS: Yes, yes, we did, and Sundays. You had to go to so many during the year. I forget the proportion now, but maybe about three-quarters of the Sundays, you had [to go].

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SI: Do you remember any special speakers at the services?

RS: No, I don't recall, no. Maybe we didn't have too many special speakers, in that sense, in those days. As I recall, they were religious-type services. I don't know what they're like today, but, perhaps, they were local ministers and so forth. … No, I don't recall any "headliners," if you are thinking of that, yes. [laughter]

SI: I believe Norman Thomas would speak every year. Do you recall anything like that?

RS: Oh, really? I don't recall that, no. Maybe that's the one missed. [laughter]

SI: I get the impression, particularly in the 1930s, that if you were not in a fraternity, you were missing out on the social life at Rutgers.

RS: Yes, I think that's true. There seemed to be a cleavage there between the group [of students] that were commuting or so and those of us that were on campus and, you know, had parties and dances and that sort of thing. … I think we did things together. There were some intramural sports that the fraternity was involved with, and we'd play other fraternities and so forth, but, as far as … those that commuted, we had very little relationship, except in class, of course, but, you know, in class, you don't get too involved anyway.

SI: Was the DU House known for a particular sport or activity?

RS: The DU House was one of the best on campus, actually. They had a history of nice guys, good students, involved with sports. It wasn't a football fraternity. It subsequently became something of that, I gathered, but, you know, like, a couple of us might play 150-pound football or so. We had quite a track group, cross-country, and (Buddy Allen?) was one of … the best sprinters in the country, actually. He was a DU and, at that time, back in the '30s, he had a wall full of medals and the like. … No, it was a well-regarded group at that time, and there were the Dekes and Zeta Psis and Chi Phi, Chi Psi. They were, I would say, … the leading fraternities, Beta Theta Phi, and then, the Jewish fellows had a fraternity, the Sammys, I think they were called, S-A-M. I don't know whether that's still here or not.

SI: They are still here.

RS: Is it?

SI: Do you have any sense of how the student body fell politically, for example, conservative or liberal, Democrat or Republican?

RS: No, I don't recall that there was much political kind of activity, in that respect. Those that might have those inclinations might be on the debating team or so, and debating seemed like a good activity on campus at that time. I don't know what it's like today. Do they debate today? [laughter]

AP: I am not sure.

RS: Yes, but, you know, particularly people that are considering law or that sort of thing might be interested in debating. They had the freshman debating teams, as well as the varsity, and the Music Department was very good at that time, I recall, the Glee Club, and that was a big activity. We had a great concert series, put on by the Music Department, [featuring], like, the Boston Symphony and so forth.

SI: Was that one of your interests at Rutgers?

RS: Oh, yes, yes, I enjoyed that. Well, it was really my first exposure to the arts, in that sense, musical arts. … For instance, if the symphony was coming … here, the Music Department would put on a little program, a few nights before, of what they were playing, and they might explain the symphony to you and the movements and that kind of thing, which … made it more enjoyable when you went to the concert, to appreciate what's being played. … We were a small school then. I think my freshman class was about four hundred and some. We graduated, I think, somewhere [around] two hundred and some. So, it was nothing like the school you see today here. … Of course, our biggest rivalry was Princeton. [laughter] We couldn't beat them until my senior year, finally got around to it, 1939, and I missed the whole thing, because I was playing 150-pound football up at Lafayette that day. So, I never saw the game. [laughter] Let me say this, too; speaking of 150-pound football, as you know, it's fallen by the wayside, because of the, what is it, Title XIX, [that] favors women?

SI: Yes, Title IX.

RS: Title IX, is it? It favors women's sports now. So, apparently, the 150-pound football … didn't generate sufficient income to support women's sports, so, they gave it up. It's not your fault, Ashley. [laughter]

SI: What kind of relationship was there between Rutgers College and NJC in those days?

RS: Oh, it was our dating source. [laughter] Yes, of course, it was a little far away, and I only recall one female that was taking courses on the campus here. … She had an interest in engineering, as I recall, but all the rest, of course, were across town and you had a little walk, if you wanted a date over there, [laughter] but, you know, we used to go over … and be invited over, to dances over there, and, of course, there were subsequent marriages between students that developed. I enjoyed going over, now and then. [laughter]

SI: Was there a split between the Rutgers College men and the Ag School men?

RS: No. In fact, the proctor we had, as a freshman at the fraternity, he was a graduate student. He'd graduated from Rutgers, but, then, he was taking graduate work at the Ag School. … Also, one of my close friends was in the Ag School, a year ahead of me at the fraternity. So, no, there was no problem in that respect. … I don't know. There probably were a lot of them that might have lived out [there], and so forth, but we felt an integration with the Ag School.

VT: You said that when musical groups came to Rutgers, you would have educational programs beforehand. Was [F. Austin] "Soup" Walter one of the instructors?

RS: Yes, that's right, yes, Soup Walter, great guy, [laughter] very animated, yes.

SI: Do you have any other memories of members of the administration?

RS: … We used to see, of course, [President] Clothier walking down the street, going to work in the morning. He lived … somewhere up College Avenue here, and then, of course, going down to Old Queens, where he had his office, and Metzger, the same way, but we didn't have any real close relationship. I admired him. I thought he presented a nice picture as a college president. He's a Princeton grad, you know. [laughter] We didn't hold that against him. [laughter]

SI: Was there anything more to that rivalry between Rutgers and Princeton in those days? Did you ever pull pranks on each other?

RS: Oh, yes. [laughter] Larry and I and a couple of other guys, a couple of nights before the Princeton game, decided we'd go down and paint the cannon down there, [laughter] and we had to wear long coats, of course, so [that] we could hide the brushes and paint and so forth, but, as we closed in on the cannon, we got closed in by the guards down there. They were waiting for us, I guess. So, we got escorted out of town, never accomplished our mission. [laughter]

SI: Were there any other kind of pranks?

RS: No, I don't recall anything, not with respect to Princeton. We got that out of our system, [laughter] but, yes, that was quite a rivalry, you know, because they were beating us every year, so, that kind of got in our craw a bit. [laughter] … Then, by the time we got good enough to beat them, they dropped us, see. So, we never got any great satisfaction out of it all.

AP: Do you feel that, since the school was so small, you had close relationships with the students in your class, even those that were not in your fraternity?

RS: Oh, yes, yes.

AP: As compared with the large student body we have today.

RS: Right. Well, I liked the fellows that we congregated with at Pell, you know, on the floor there. Larry and I were the only ones that went to the DU fraternity. Some of the others did not become involved with fraternities, but we had such a good year, during my freshman year there, that we kept up these relationships over the years. One of them became mayor of Highland Park for a number of years. I can't remember his name now. … We used to keep in touch with some of the others. So, yes, it didn't mean that we were isolated in the fraternity that way.

SI: Do you remember anything in the newspaper about the Bergel-Hauptmann Case, the "Nazi professor" at NJC, during your time here?

RS: No, no, I don't recall anything about it. Was that during the time I was in school?

SI: I think it was about 1938.

RS: Was it?

SI: It has become a big story, but I wondered if it was significant at the time.

RS: Yes. If I was aware of it, I've forgotten it, you know, yes.

SI: Were events overseas ever discussed in your classes?

RS: No, not at that time.

SI: After Rutgers, you went directly to the University of Chicago.

RS: No. I applied at the University of Chicago and they said, "Well, this is a pilot program. We're only accepting eight or ten students a year, to see how it develops," and so forth, and, of course, the only people that knew about it at that time were nurses or doctors, and so forth, … that they were admitting. So, they suggested that I get a year's experience at a hospital, and then, reapply. So, the man I mentioned, at Orange Memorial, knew the administrator at one of the hospitals in Trenton, my hometown. So, he suggested I go see him, which I did. I made an appointment and I told him that I was interested in getting into the field and the circumstances, and he said, "Well, yes, I'd like to have you as an intern for the year, but I'm leaving. I'm going over to Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital, as administrator." He said, "But, there's been a successor appointed and why don't you come back after he arrives, which is around the 1st of June." So, I did that and, … as it turned out, he was a graduate of the first year of the pilot program, so, he understood the program, what they were looking for, and so forth. So, he said, "Yes, I'd love to have you here," so, I worked at no salary for a year, just to get the experience. … After walking to work [for] three or four weeks, I suggested that maybe it would be a good idea if I moved in the hospital, with the medical interns, which I did. … He started me out right at the bowels of the hospital, … in the storeroom, and I spent a couple of weeks there, and then, relieved the storekeeper, while he went away for a couple of weeks. So, I had the experience of supplies and so forth. Then, he put me in with the housekeeping department, which was operated by an elderly woman. She became ill after about three or four days and was hospitalized, so, he said, "Well, look, you be the housekeeper until I can find someone." [laughter] So, that became quite a humorous situation, with this twenty-two-year-old guy being at the hospital, among the nurses and so forth. So, I rotated through a lot of the departments that way and had a good year. Then, I was accepted in the program the next year. The program was two years, one at the university, at the Graduate School of Business. The second year is a residency in a hospital, and then, you had to write a thesis for your degree, the MBA. … My friend at the Orange Memorial suggested, "Well, why don't you take your residency here?" which I did. … Well, while I was at Mercer Hospital, I had a friend who was a captain in the [New Jersey] National Guard, in the 119th Quartermaster Regiment of the 44th Division, which had their headquarters at the Armory in Trenton, and he said, "Well, you aren't doing anything

with your nights, why don't you join the Guard?" So, I did. … We were called, in December of 1939, to active duty at Fort Dix, for a week. I had a lush job of driving the Colonel [laughter] during that week, because the captain knew me, I guess. Anyway, that was an experience, and then, came the next fall, the National Guard was federalized, the New Jersey Guard, … which meant that I would have had to go out to, I think it was some fort out in the State of Washington, where they sent the Guard for training, but, at that time, if you were going ahead with further education, you could be relieved from duty. … I had already been accepted at Chicago, or I would have been in the Army in 1940. Also, then, that fall is when they started the draft and I had a number that came up. I don't remember the number now, but, as a result of my getting a degree, … they gave me two six-months deferments, because I was getting a degree in this particular field, and they did that with medical men or engineers or that sort of thing, which was a very sensible thing to do, as I look back on it all. … So, I was able to take my residency during that year, to complete my degree in June of 1942. … I knew I'd have to go into the Army and I would have to go in as a private, no question about it, but I learned that they were, with the war already started, you know, now, we're in the spring of 1942, they were developing what they called affiliated hospital units. There were some regular Army hospital units, evacuation hospitals, general hospitals, and so forth, but, with the increase in the troop strength that was developing, these units were made up around big hospitals, like Columbia Presbyterian, New York Hospital, Roosevelt Hospital in New York, and so forth, maybe Jefferson in Philadelphia. … They would take the doctors in various specialties, and so forth, and the nurses from those hospitals, to make up the officer and nurse content. In the meantime, they would train the enlisted men to do the core duties, and so forth, and give them basic training and the like, but they didn't need to do this for doctors and nurses. So, I learned that there was a spot available for an administrative officer at the Roosevelt Hospital and I went over and contacted them and they called me in for an interview. … With my background, … I was recommended as a second lieutenant in the Medical Administrative Corps, and that was granted and this all wound up in June of '42. So, I just had to await orders and I did get orders then, to report July 1, 1942, to … Camp Blanding in Florida.

SI: Before we get into that phase of your service, do you remember where you were on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked?

RS: Well, I was in my residency at the Orange Memorial Hospital. It was a Sunday afternoon and I was listening to the radio, at a football game, you know, New York Giants or so, probably, and they broke in and said that there'd been an attack at Pearl Harbor. Well, who the hell knew where Pearl Harbor was, you know? It was nondescript. My wife was supporting me during that year of residency, … as a nurse at the Orange Memorial Hospital, so, I was there alone. She was on duty, but that's how I learned of it.

SI: When did you meet your wife and get married?

RS: Well, I met her at the Mercer Hospital in Trenton. … I was a 1939 graduate here, she graduated from nursing training in 1939, and she was employed in the emergency room at the hospital and, as housekeeper, I ran into her, making inspections, [laughter] and so forth, in the emergency room. So, … we began to date that year, and then, when I went out to Chicago for that year, she continued working at the hospital, and then, we married when I finished my stay at

Chicago, so that when I went into my residency, like any medical intern, I was only going to be paid twenty-five dollars a month, and so, she went to work as a nurse there at the hospital, too.

SI: What was it like living in Chicago for that year? Was it mostly studying or did you get to see the city at all?

RS: Oh, yes. It was a very intense program. I felt lucky to get out to see a movie, maybe Saturday night or so. It was that intense, and so, I didn't get to see very much of the town at all while I was there. Of course, the University's on the South Side and it's a nice campus, but it was a very intense program and I had a lot of studying to do. …

GC: Earlier, you discussed your personal reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. What was the reaction of your co-workers and the other citizens in the area?

RS: Well, I think it was generally shock, you know. This is the first time, really, that this country was attacked, in that sense, and on our territory. Now, you've been through this experience with 9/11 [the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks] and you know what the reaction is, "Well, here, they've come to us now," you know. Otherwise, other wars, we've gone overseas and helped somebody else out, but here's the first time, really, somebody has hit us on our ground, and I think it was anger, basically, and, "All right, let's go get 'em." I think that could sum up what a general reaction was.

AP: Because of all the things that were going on in Germany, did you feel any racism or anti-Semitism towards you because your background was German?

RS: No, nothing at all. Of course, as far as anti-Semitism is concerned, this didn't come out until much, much later. I mean, I don't think, in this country, we were aware that that kind of thing, [the Holocaust], was going on in Germany. … I think maybe some of our politicians might have been aware, but they just weren't talking about it, and it was a cover-up, really, for awhile.

SI: Were there any fears of enemy attacks on the East Coast or saboteur activity?

RS: Yes. While I was at Orange Memorial, during my residency, … I don't recall the department, but one of the departments involved with health in Trenton here, a state department that I was acquainted with, asked me if I would do some surveying for them in the general area, in Orange and Newark and so forth, for schools, or private schools or whatnot, in that nature, that could be utilized as hospitals or safe houses or that sort of thing, you know, in the event that we were attacked. So, there was that awareness. Also, I don't know that there was any imminence about it at all, but there was concern about bombings. One of my jobs during my residency was to blackout the hospital, so that it would not be visible at all, by light, at night from the outside. So, that was a neat job, I'll tell you. [laughter] Orange Memorial, you know, it's a three-hundred-and-some bed hospital, it's a large hospital. So, I took number ten cans, you know, to put over light fixtures, and so forth, to keep the rays down, pointed downward, … and had to look at all the window coverings and change some of those and so forth. It was quite a project, and we had a test one night and it came out very well, just about one small area that got overlooked

somehow, but that was one thing you went through, in anticipation. Of course, the bombings never resulted in this country. … Of course, one reason for blacking out was to destroy the silhouette … that German submarines might have of ships. In other words, if they lay off [shore] far enough and ships pass between them and the land, whatever lights you had in the background would silhouette the ship. So, that was kind of one reason for blackouts, also.

SI: Did any of the rationing policies affect your work as an administrator or make it more difficult to get supplies?

RS: By the time I got into the Army, I don't think it was a problem. The rationing hadn't started and that sort of thing. … Of course, I went in relatively early, July 1, '42. It's only about six months after Pearl Harbor, and that was one of the problems, of course, we encountered, being in so early. We weren't prepared, but, no, … the rationing didn't develop until after I was gone, where they had rations cards and so forth. So, I never knew what the civilian hospitals encountered during actual, real wartime that way.

SI: When you were with the hospital unit going to Camp Blanding in Florida, what kind of training and preparations were you making there?

RS: Well, actually, when you get orders to report on a particular date, you start out on that date, so, you don't have to be there, actually. So, I left Trenton about four o'clock in the afternoon, on July 1st, by train, to go to Florida and arrived there, at Camp Blanding, about mid-day the following day, the 2nd, to join the Sixth Evac Hospital. … Not known to me were some of the other medical officers from [the] New York area, [who] were also on the same train. So, we all got there at the station, waiting for some transportation to get out to the camp. We found, when we got out there, that the Sixth Evac Hospital was no longer there. They were in North Carolina on maneuvers, [laughter] just typical Army. So, we spent July 3rd getting field equipment and khaki suits, because we were reporting in winter uniforms, and so forth, from Brooks Brothers. Anyway, … by July 4th, we were on a train going, halfway back from where we came, to join the Sixth Evac Hospital, which was a training unit, we were the Ninth, that we were supposed to be reporting for. So, we spent six weeks in Rockingham, North Carolina, operating a hospital, field hospital, and getting acquainted with duties and so forth. Now, there had been a cadre of officers training these enlisted men, about 150 of them. One was the supply officer, one was the commanding officer and executive officer, and so forth. … Our outfit now had seven administrative officers, so, we teamed up with who was doing our job we were assigned to. I was with the supply officer, so, I was supposed to learn about supplying, and, at the end of the six weeks, the maneuvers were over and we went back to Camp Blanding and spent about a month there and, all of a sudden, got orders to move out to Camp Kilmer. … Is Camp Kilmer still here?

VT: It is a US Army Reserve center now. It is not as big as it was.

RS: … Yes, well, Camp Kilmer, at that time, was the debarkation center for moving overseas. The supply officer from the Sixth Evac had been a medical officer and he didn't want to be doing any more administrative work. He wanted to get back doing medicine. So, when we got orders to load all of our equipment on the train, and vehicles, he said, "I want a transfer," and he was

granted his transfer to another outfit, where he could get back into medicine. Well, that left me as the supply officer, this kid of twenty-five years old. … Normally, when you accept accountability, which you have as a supply officer, for all of this stuff, you do what's called a report of survey, which is a rather formal thing, and then, you sign on that you're responsible for this. Now, a 750-bed hospital is worth about a million dollars and it has about seven vehicles to support itself, … run for supplies, get food, and so forth, so, … you have quite a little money involved here. [laughter] So, while we're loading this stuff on trains, I have no time to do a formal report of survey, so, I put my name on the equipment, accepting responsibility. [laughter] So, then, we had a several-day train ride up to Camp Kilmer and we had some shortages. So, I was busy running over to Brooklyn, to see if we could fill those shortages. The enlisted men had very nicely tailored uniforms, and so forth, being in the service for about a year-and-a-half. We got orders that we were to draw chemical equipment clothing for all the troops in the outfit, which meant that they had to turn in their nicely tailored uniforms for equipment that didn't match up very well, because it had been protected, chemically wise. After about three days, I realized that they were going to move us out, which meant that once they put the lid down, you couldn't communicate with anyone. So, about ten o'clock at night, I took a train to Trenton, where my wife was, [laughter] and spent a few hours with her, got back on the train about four o'clock in the morning to get back to New Brunswick. She accompanied me, thinking that I could get her a hotel room, maybe at the Roger Smith. … Is it still called Roger Smith?

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: No.

RS: No. You know what I am talking about, downtown? No, there are no rooms available at the Roger Smith. So, she went out, … by taxi, with me to Camp Kilmer, to drop me off, and I kissed her and said, "See you later," and it turned out to be over three years later. [laughter] So, when I got back into camp, they had already lowered the boom; you couldn't communicate. So, I felt lucky to be able to get home for a few hours. So, from there, we were transported over to New York Port and boarded ship there. That was on September 24th, so, it was less than three months after I went on active duty. That was considered overseas. From there, we went up to Halifax and stayed overnight at the harbor, while the convoy was made up, and then, we went to England by convoy, zigzagging our way across, and, fortunately, no incidents with submarines on that trip.

SI: Were there a lot of alerts and drills?

RS: No, no. … As you can see, we did not have, … as far as the officers were concerned, any basic training. Fortunately, I had the two years [of] ROTC, and a little bit at the [National Guard], so, I was familiar with the terms, and so forth, but we had no basic training as such. The doctors didn't need it, you know, they weren't going to be drilling, and the nurses didn't need it. So, all they were called on [to do] was to do their professional job. The administrative officers had some learning to do, because you had to know your way around, you know, where to get supplies, and you had to know the Quartermaster handles certain things, the Signal Corps handles batteries and flashlights, and so forth, the Engineers handle paint and wood and tools and that sort of thing. So, you had to learn that kind of thing to get your outfit supplied, and then, the Medical Department had their own depot, for medical supplies, and so forth.

SI: When you were on the convoy, did you know that you were going to England?

RS: No. We had no idea where we were going and you couldn't determine that clothing-wise or anything.

SSH: What was the name of the ship that you went over on and, on the trip over, what did you personally do?

RS: Okay. By the time I got on shipboard, I was worn out, because of all the running around I had been doing, you know, … trying to get shortages cleaned up and getting the clothing for the men, and so forth, and running home. So, I wound up with a bad cold and they put me in the … dispensary on the shipboard. So, I was there for two or three days, kind of recovering, and it turned out to be a ship called the [RMS] *Rangitiki*, which was a South Sea Island cruise boat that they had detained, somehow or other, and they still had the Javanese waiters and so forth. … Of course, traveling with the hospital unit, with so many nurses and so forth, it wasn't like one of the big troop carriers, like the *Queen Mary*, that would load up with five thousand, you know, men and take off. So, we had a rather luxurious trip over, [laughter] being served at our dinners and meals. We even had tea at four o'clock, you know. [laughter] So, that's the way we got to England.

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

SI: This continues an interview with Colonel Robert M. Schnitzer on September 16, 2003, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth …

AP: … Ashley Perri …

VT: … Vince Tirri …

GC: … Geoff Cerone …

SSH: … and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

GC: Going back to your training, in preparation for World War II, was the training for a medical evac unit medical specific or did you have the same training as most infantry units?

RS: If you're speaking of the enlisted men, their training was more in whatever section of the hospital they were involved with. For instance, if I had, maybe, eight, ten men in my supply section, okay, they would be trained in doing that at the hospital. … They didn't get any arms training, in that sense. If they would've been assigned to the pharmacy, then, they would've gotten familiarized with what the pharmacy carried, what the stock was, and those that would be involved in engineering or learning how to put up tents; you see, we were almost like a circus operation, because we were operating under tentage, … with cots and that sort of thing, so that you have to learn how to put up these big ward tents, which involved about twenty-two cots, and so forth, and a nurses' station, and so forth, which, as I say, so, you learned how to move like a circus. [laughter] So, there wasn't any arms training really required. We wouldn't necessarily be

in an area, although we subsequently were, now and then, where your guards had to carry arms, and I don't know if that quite answers your question. Does it?

SI: When you arrived in England, where were you stationed and what were you doing there?

RS: Okay. We landed in Glasgow, Scotland, up the Firth of Clyde, took a train, rode all night. A nice memory of that is that, halfway through the train ride, we stopped in the middle of the night at a station and there were a lot of English women at the station, with coffee for us, and so forth, as a refreshment on the ride, and we always thought that was very nice. … We arrived the following morning in Oxford, and that's where the unit was to be stationed until we got further orders. It turned out that the equipment for our hospital and my vehicles, which we were not aware of, the ships … that [it] had been loaded on, nobody seemed to know what happened to them. [laughter] So, there was only one thing to be done and that was for me to go on detached service to Bristol, England, where there was a medical depot company, to make up a whole new hospital, and so, I spent about three weeks there, you know, keeping an eye on what was being put together. So, I made sure that, according to our table of basic allowances, I got what was necessary to operate the hospital. So, … the rest of the outfit didn't have anything to do, because we weren't in operation, and they had a good time roaming around England and Oxford, and so forth, while I was working in Bristol. [laughter] Anyway, we got another set of vehicles and I signed for the hospital and signed for the vehicles and, within a month after our arriving there, we were on shipboard to move to Africa, as part of the invasion that started from England. … As you know from the book, [*An Army at Dawn* by Rick Atkinson], there was another segment that went from the US to Morocco, but those of us from England went either … through the Strait of Gibraltar and into Oran or to Algiers. So, on our way to Africa, the ship that my vehicles were on was torpedoed and sunk, and so, now, in arriving in Africa, I had two hospitals on the books and had three sets of vehicles on the books, after I acquired them one at a time, after getting into Africa. Fortunately, although, normally, if you were in the States, you would go through a very formal report of survey as to what happened to all of this stuff, when you're in a combat zone, it's a simple procedure of writing up the circumstances and getting your commanding officer to sign off that, … "Yes, this is what happened," and put it in your files and get you off the hook. [laughter] So, we landed in Oran … in November of 1942 and that was the beginning of the African Campaign.

SI: When you entered the harbor at Oran, what was the scene? How soon after combat ended did you get in there and what did it look like?

RS: It was about three weeks after the actual landings. You know, they were having a lot of trouble with the French. The French put up a lot of resistance and, by the time we got there, the harbor was in reasonable shape and we landed in what's called Mers-el-Kebir, which is the harbor for Oran, and that seemed to be in good shape. We had no vehicle transportation, but we marched out to one of the suburbs, called La Senia, and that's where we had our first set.

SI: What were your duties once you were actually in the field?

RS: Well, the first thing was to set up a hospital, and the nurses joined us after we got the hospital set up and so forth. We were only there a short while. Then, we were moved out to a

town called Tlemcen, T-L-E-M-C-E-N, which was kind of out in the sticks and I never knew why we were there, except for the fact that, maybe, it was a stopping point or a place where troops could get treatment when they were moving from Morocco, after that landing, … toward Tunisia, okay, but we spent our first Christmas, then, at that location, and, shortly, in January, then, we got orders to move up into the border of Tunisia. … As a supply officer, I got the detail of taking our vehicles and driving up, which was an interesting drive, along the Atlas Mountains there. The rest of the unit went by train and we met up then in Constantine and, from there, went to Tebessa, to set up for our first hospital operation.

SSH: From the time that you started in North Africa, did you have any interaction with the natives?

RS: With the natives?

SSH: Did they help unload or set up?

RS: Yes, … they were helpful. We didn't have too much need for them, because the men knew their job. …

SSH: They were not hired to help with any of the loading or unloading.

RS: No, … except when we got into operation near Tunisia, at Tebessa. We were terribly poorly prepared for warfare. We had no laundry units, to begin with. So, after we started to get patients, we had some linen piling up. So, the question was, "Well, how do you handle this?" Well, I knew that I had, in stock, soup bowls, porcelain, you know, and so, I thought, "Well, Maytag uses a process where they have washers, you know, with suction cups." [laughter] … I, fortunately, had a carpenter in my unit and I got him to make a crossbar and I put the four soup bowls on the crossbar and a long pole, got some large garbage cans from the kitchen and a couple of their gasoline units that they used for cooking purposes, and I heated up water that way. … I did hire some Arabs [laughter] to operate this hand laundry, to clean sheets, to hang out to dry. Can you imagine this, for a 750-bed hospital? [laughter] So, that worked all right, for awhile, but it was cumbersome, and the humorous part of it all was that, a couple of years later, when I was recommended … for captaincy, the recommendation pointed out the fact that I had used my resources in getting the laundry done and had hired Arabs to do so, and so forth. … My recommendation was bucked back with the comment that it was illegal to hire Arabs, [laughter] or it was against regulations to hire Arabs, and, therefore, they suggested that the recommendation be rewritten. That's the Army for you. [laughter]

SI: Another man we interviewed who was in North Africa said that there was a big problem with theft and pilfering.

RS: Oh, yes. You had to be very careful when you're unloading at the dock, or the locals would steal you right and left, and that always made it difficult, because, you know, sometimes, they might be unloading all night long. … You had to be down there, to keep an eye on it all, or it was a problem.

SI: What other logistical kinks had to be worked out in that initial period in North Africa?

RS: Well, another leftover from … World War I, in fact, when we went into operation there, in Tunisia, … and we're unloading the blankets from their crates, and so forth, they still had the World War I stickers in them, [laughter] inspection stickers. Another aspect was that, apparently, in World War I, they used what they called unit supply. Of course, World War I was comparatively stationary, compared with World War II. This is the first instance that we got into more mobility than World War I. So, a hospital like ours, maybe, would be in the same place for a long period of time and they would calculate that you needed this kind of a bandage and that kind of a bandage and this kind of an instrument, and so forth, based on the number of troops that were in the area. So, we kept getting issued, from the medical depot company, stuff that was piling up on us and we couldn't use, and so, we said to the Army surgeon, "Look, this doesn't make any sense. Why don't you let us order what we need and what we want, because we can't handle it? We can't stock all this stuff," and so, that's what happened. … This was one of the changes that came about, you know, from World War I to World War II, but, here, it was happening out in the field, you know, but you've got to recognize, again, that this is so soon after we went into warfare that they hadn't been able to think about a lot of these things.

SSH: What about Allied troops? Did your hospital care for non-US soldiers?

RS: Any soldier that was wounded, and so forth, we took care of. We took care of Germans, prisoners, and so forth. … In fact, jumping ahead, when the fighting ceased in Africa, they evacuated the hospitals, the German hospitals, to us. … By this time, we were on the Mediterranean side of the front, where everything was pushed up, … so that the prisoners were moving back by our hospital to the prisoner compound. … We must have had … what appeared to be about a mile long of ambulances coming to our admitting tent, and these were all Italian and German prisoners that had been in their hospitals and they were dumping them on us. … We had enough capacity to handle it, but we needed their physicians, also, to interpret. So, for about a week, … the German physicians ate with us and took care of their prisoners and their patients, until we got this load evacuated, and so forth.

VT: Regarding the German physicians, since you had a personal interaction with the enemy, did that affect your opinion of the war?

RS: No. We had very little conversation with the German physicians. I mean, it was strained, let's put it that way. They were doing their job, but we didn't have much to converse about. … As soon as that load was off, then, they went off to their prisoner of war camps, also. …

SSH: Did they speak English?

RS: To a degree, yes. They had some knowledge of English, yes, but we didn't have much opportunity to converse.

SSH: What kind of security would be in the hospital when you were housing prisoners of war?

RS: Well, I think they were just as grateful to be out of the war as anybody would be, you know, so, they were no trouble.

SSH: No sabotage?

RS: No, not in that sense.

SI: Were a lot of the POWs you were encountering from the Afrika Korps? Were they very ideological?

RS: Yes. By and large, they were nice-looking boys, blonds, and, you know, the Afrika Korps was their elite, so-to-speak, and I think that's what gave us a lot of trouble, initially. Our boys weren't trained, they weren't prepared, as their troops were. … We acquired it in time, but, in this initial phase, we just weren't prepared. We had no way to, here's a hospital, no way to take a shower. Here, again, we had to improvise. We had one big sterilizing unit, like, you could sterilize blankets or mattresses, and so forth, which was on two wheels and was dragged by a truck. … It could be revved up for steam, and so forth, and you could also utilize it for shower units … with warm water. [laughter] So, what we did, initially, was to take a two-and-a-half-ton truck, you know, that's one of the regular trucks, rig it up with some shower heads, [laughter] prop up the front wheels, so [that] the water would drain out the back of the truck, [laughter] and … put a tent over it and that was our shower unit. Can you imagine? … Then, we'd have to make some time for the nurses to use it and the officers to use it and the enlisted men to use it, and so forth. That was our initial shower unit, out in the field. That's crazy. … In fact, before we operated there, when I mentioned the move out to Tlemcen, we used a ward tent to heat water in the garbage cans for our men to take just sponge baths, you know. We didn't have any way to rig up a shower and, as a result of having these mess units, fire units, to heat up the water on the cans, some gasoline got spilled and the tent started to burn, [laughter] and here are these fellows taking their bath in there and no place to go but run outside, and that was quite a comical situation, as you can imagine. [laughter] Funny things happened, but it was hard to get some special surgical instruments and that sort of thing. You had to do some scrounging to find it. …

SSH: Did you have enlisted personnel working directly under you who could aid with the scrounging? I understand that it should have been one of them.

RS: Oh, yes, you get kind of adept at these things. Let me say, I had to do some improvising, too. … The crates that came with supplies were odd shapes and sizes, and so forth, which, to me, wasn't very efficient, and, when you had to make a move, it took 110 two-and-a-half-ton trucks to move us. So, we'd have to get a Quartermaster transportation company to come in with all those trucks roaring around, and it was my job, then, to corral them and to assign them, "You go over here, get the mess tent, and you go over here and get the pharmacy," and so forth. … Then, I had to set a number aside for the nurses, you know, and then, a number set aside for the officers, and so forth, to make up this convoy that was going to move. … What did I start to say now?

SSH: You were talking about improvising.

RS: Oh, yes. Well, when it came time to load our stuff on, you know, from the supply headquarters tent, it wasn't very efficient, because of the different box sizes. So, I thought, for our main ward tent, which was our main supply issue tent, we'd make up boxes that were standard size. … I got a hold of ammunition crates that were no longer used, they'd just be dumped on the side, and, as I say, with my carpenter, we built standard-sized boxes, and then, pigeon-holed them, depending on the supplies that we were using there, so that if it was bulky, then, we just used the whole box. If it was sutures or that sort of thing, … then, we'd partition it off. … In a ward tent, … it's shaped this way and it comes down to a skirt. So, we could build three rows of boxes, back-to-back, down the center, and then, where the skirt came down, then, maybe two boxes on each side. … So, it had two aisles. All together, I remember, it took sixty-four boxes, and then, [we] designed them so … [that] the lid would just slide down on it, and then, hook it. So, whenever we had a move to make, all we needed to do was to take the tops … that were on the top, put them on the sides, lock them up, and we were all ready to load those, and they were standard size, you see, for the truck. So, I got quite a little recognition for doing that sort of thing. … The other thing was that, in order to be sure we didn't run out of things, then, … I set up a perpetual inventory system, whereby we would determine the level of supply that we wanted and put that on a card. … That would be our ordering amount, and then, what level we wanted to keep it [at]. … When it got down to a certain point, then, that was our ordering point, and so, I had one man operate that system and that kept us so [that] we didn't run out of supplies. … There, again, the Army didn't provide that kind of [training], but I just used my civilian background, which I would use in a normal civilian hospital. So, that's the kind of improvising that you did, because the Army didn't always spell it out for you, you know. [laughter]

SSH: Were you able to share any of these improvisations with other field hospitals or other administrators such as yourself?

RS: Well, we weren't always located that close together. Once in awhile, I'd run into a supply officer from one of the other hospitals, at one of the depots when I was there. We had, I don't know, maybe four or five field hospitals in Africa, depending on the front. One of them, the Eleventh Evacuation Hospital, … I just learned very recently, was a regular Army hospital and they subsequently wound up in Korea, … but I wasn't aware, during the war, that there were regular Army hospital units there.

SSH: I just wondered if they shared with you some of the things they were doing and vice versa.

RS: Of course, as far as the physicians were concerned, some of this was new to them, … in treating war-type casualties. So, they had a learning experience there, but they would have their own meetings and they would discuss this, you know, how best to handle this type of wound, and so forth. Warfare is actually one of the best ways of learning traumatic surgery, which civilians benefit from in the long run, because of handling these type [of] casualties.

SI: Would your hospital also deal with mental casualties?

RS: Oh, yes. Most of those would be evacuated, you know, but, yes, … stress was a great factor. You'd see an ambulance pull up and a couple of … so-called "walking wounded" would

get out, and then, you had to keep an eye on [them]. Some fellow might just take off, kind of wander off in a field, you know, grab him. … He didn't know quite where he was at that point in time, but, with some treatment, he would be evaluated by one of the physicians and, maybe, if … it was too much for him, they might evacuate him back. … An evacuation hospital is the first place in which you really get definitive treatment. I don't know what the setup is today. It's much more of a mobile setup today than we had at that point in time. … Each division, combat division, would have its medical battalion and the medical battalion would involve the corpsmen that were up with the fighting men. … If they got wounded, then, they'd try to treat them there, or get them back to a clearing station, or a collecting station, rather, and then, from there, kind of move them back to a clearing station, where they might adjust bandages or IVs, and so forth, that they'd started. … If a fellow was really wounded, then, the next step was, by ambulance, to bring him back to us, the evacuation hospital, where we had the operating room and facilities, and so forth, to take care of any problem that he had, because we had about fifty physicians. Some were orthopedists, some were eye men, specialists, some were dental surgeons, and so forth. … The way that worked, … there might be a succession of two or three evacuation hospitals on what was called the MSR, the main supply route, up to the front, and, as the front moved forward, then, the last hospital, the one behind, would get orders to leapfrog up to the front. So, they would evacuate their patients, whatever they might have left at this point in time, and then, move up and be taking, then, the primary casualties.

SI: How close to the front would your unit be, usually?

RS: It would depend. If you got up here, you might be fifteen, ten, fifteen miles, you know, initially. … Then, as the front kept moving, then, you were sort of drifting back, but a lot depended on what kind of action was going on, you know, how severe the casualties were, as to how close you were now. We set up, … as I mentioned, initially, in Tebessa. Now, as you read Atkinson's book, one of the big pushes by Rommel was to get to Tebessa, because that was our supply base, really, and that's when he came through Kasserine Pass and … we got into all that difficulty there, but we were right in the path of that, as we were the first hospital in line, and so, we got orders to move back from Tebessa, and we were short on trucks. So, I was left behind, with two or three men, with what was left of the equipment that we couldn't get on this main move, to stay overnight, until they could get some trucks back to clear it. Well, the first thing that awakened me in the morning was the sound of tanks pulling back, you know, from the Kasserine Pass and setting up defensive positions right across the road. [laughter] So, that's how close you can become, you know, depending [on] if there's a counterattack or that sort of thing.

GC: Were you required to move on a regular basis or just when there was going to be significant combat in an area? It sounds like a significant process, with the 110-truck convoy.

RS: … Okay, let me give you a figure here. Of course, we went through the whole thing, you know. We haven't gotten to that, but we went to Sicily, Italy, Southern France, and up and over into Germany. So, you're talking thirty-four months. We moved twenty-five times in thirty-four months and, of course, two or three of these were water movements, too, where, you know, it was a water movement to Sicily, it was a water movement to Italy, and then, a water movement to Southern France, landing in Saint-Tropez. So, there was a lot of loading and unloading and

moving, and so forth, you know, all of this equipment. … [laughter] That's why I mentioned it was like a circus operation, you know.

SSH: Finish the story about waking up and finding the tanks across the road; do not leave us hanging. [laughter]

RS: Oh, you mean at Tebessa? Yes, the interesting thing [was], have you ever seen the movie *Patton*? Do you remember, in Africa, where the Arabs stripped the soldiers of their uniforms, and so forth? Well, that's just what the Arabs do. That morning, then, … as I got up, after hearing these tanks across there, I noticed that there were three or four Arabs [there]. They kind of come out of the ground. You don't know where they come from, but there they were, and they were creeping in and creeping in. … As an administrative officer, we had to pull what they called AOD, administrative officer of the day, for any occurrences that might happen. As a result, they issued us .45 guns to carry. Normally, you wouldn't have a lot of armament in an evacuation hospital, but I got concerned that they were coming a little too close for my comfort. So, I took out my .45 and I put about three rounds over their heads, [laughter] just to scare them off, and they did. They moved, but Patton's movie always reminds me of that situation, where I didn't want them stealing our stuff. … Then, we moved back, I don't know, twenty-five miles or so, to a new location and set up there. … Then, after the Kasserine Pass subsided and that was all over with, then, we moved back, most of the way again, to Tebessa. So, we moved up there. Then, as you recall, as Montgomery pushed up Rommel's troops, the area that needed to be covered by the French and us and the English became smaller. So, then, there was quite a maneuver and we pulled back and moved all the way up to the Mediterranean side and took up positions on the left flank, and the British were next, and then, the French, and so forth. So, that's kind of where we ended up the war, but we probably had about seven different locations in Africa, just moving around that way.

SSH: Was Tunisia different from the other countries you experienced?

RS: [Do] you mean the country? No, it didn't look any different from Algeria, you know, yes.

SSH: You encountered no different sets of problems or situations.

RS: No, no.

SI: After the breakthrough at Kasserine, was there a general drop in morale or did that not affect you at all?

RS: No, I don't think we were aware of that, you know. We knew things weren't going all that well, but we had our own job to do, and so, you were concentrating on that. You could get some feeling from the wounded that you got through, but warfare is very confusing anyway. Most of the time, you don't know, really, what's going on. It's nice, the fun part of, like, reading books like Atkinson's, and so forth, is [that] you have made moves and it didn't make sense to you, … having to do that, you know, but to learn why it was done, later on, then, it adds up, you know. [laughter]

SSH: As a hospital administrator, did you have meetings with commanding officers or people who would be making some of these decisions that would affect you when you had to pack up and go? How informed were you?

RS: Well, as far as our own commander and executive officer were concerned, we messed with them, you know, three times a day, normally, so, … there was a lot of interchange that way. As far as contact with the surgeon of the corps, which would be located at corps headquarters, you know, on my level, I would have no contact there, but my commanding officer would, and how he communicated, I was not too aware, because I was busy with my own job, you know. …

SI: From reading Atkinson's book, it seems that North Africa was where ineffective officers were weeded out and other people rose up. Did you see that on your level in the Medical Corps, where people who could not perform were replaced with those who could?

RS: No, it wasn't a problem. In fact, … our officers stayed together pretty much right on through. I was one of the early ones to leave, in that I had been the supply officer for two years when we got into up the Rhone Valley and, by this time, I was a captain, had been promoted. In fact, I got the first promotion, from second lieutenant to first lieutenant, within six months, and that was the first promotion in the unit, but I think part of it was to give me a little more pull, you know, so that … in praying for supplies, [laughter] somewhere or other, I wasn't a mere second lieutenant, but I could have a little more rank. Anyway, I was promoted to captain, as far as the Ninth Evac was concerned, ultimately. … When we were going up the Rhone, … there was not too much resistance from the German troops, initially, there, and we went up about 250 miles for our first setup from the beaches and I needed to go back to get some supplies of some sort or other, and they hadn't had time even to set up the depots. The supplies were still on the beaches. So, I ran around picking up this and picking up that. When I came back, I found, … the next day, that the hospital had already sent half of it up to the next place, another 250 miles, and so, we tore down the rest of the hospital and convoyed up the remaining nurses to get up to this place … before the town of Besancon, where a heavy battle was going on. … We arrived there maybe about ten o'clock at night and the casualties were coming in. So, all we could do was just start unpacking, get more tents set up, and so forth, and so, we all pitched in and it was about two o'clock, I guess, before I had a chance to get to bed. … The next morning, seven o'clock, the Colonel came to me and he said, "We've got orders to add 150 beds," … to the 750 we already had. I mean, the casualties were that heavy. So, I started off with a truck and a helper and the driver, and I started to have some diarrhea [laughter] and we had to ride all day long, and all night long, about five hundred miles now, to get back to the beach, and I had to stop about every two hours. I was in trouble. [laughter]

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

RS: … Well, anyway, we got down there the following morning, around eight o'clock, and we had to be careful, because of the tentage and the cots and the blankets, and so forth, [we have] got to be careful loading this truck. … We got something to eat and, about noontime, started back again and I had to stop every two hours. We rode all day and all night and got back there about seven o'clock that next morning. Well, as you can imagine, I was kind of washed out and I got diagnosed with amoebic dysentery. So, they put me in the hospital and I was there for about

nine days. … During that time, the commanding officer of the medical depot company, the Seventh Medical Depot Company of Seventh Army, came in to say hello, because he knew me. He was dating one of our nurses, [laughter] and so, he was a frequent visitor to the hospital, [laughter] and he said, you know, "Would you be interested in; I'm not satisfied with my executive officer and would you consider transferring to the medical depot company?" I said, "I think I'm about ready to get off the road, you know, after all these two years." So, I did. … He arranged the transfer and I went to his outfit as executive officer, which called for a majority, ultimately, you know. So, after three months, he did recommend me for the majority. So, I had that experience with the depot company, and this supplied all of Seventh Army units and, of course, we were familiarized with … all the divisions, and so forth, because we were on the southern flank of the approach into Germany. We were Seventh Army, and then, there was the Third Army, with Patton, and then, the First Army, and so forth, going up the line there. …

SSH: To back up a little bit, can you talk about your moves after Kasserine?

RS: Yes. Well, after the warfare stopped in Africa, at that time, we were located at a town called Mateur … and we had the facilities of an old French hospital, one-story units, you know, and it was an old Army installation, I guess. So, that worked out very nicely, at that point in time. We didn't have to put up tents for it, and then, they moved us over to a town called Ferryville, while they went into Sicily, and then, after they got underway there, we had a water movement to a landing at Agrigento, which was on the southern part of the island, and then, that's where the main part of the unit went. I was put, with my supplies and so forth, … on some little coastal steamer and we set out in the harbor there, at Bizerte, I don't know, three or four days before moving over, and then, we landed at Palermo, in Sicily, and unloaded our equipment there and, at that time, the outfit was located in a town called Termini [Imerese], about twenty-five miles up the coast in Sicily. Then, subsequently, after the warfare was over there, … we moved back to Palermo and operated as a kind of a station hospital there for awhile, and then, after they went into Salerno, in Italy, they moved us over to Naples. … My tent mate, who had been the assistant administrator of Roosevelt Hospital in New York, and the reason we tented together was that we were the only two that were interested in hospital administration, so, we had something in common to talk about, but the officers, you know, lived in small wall tents, [that is] what they were called, two cots to a tent, and the nurses, the same way. … So, he and I went as the advance party to make preparations for us to move to Naples. So, we took a command car and drove up, which was very interesting, drove up to Messina, Sicily, you know, opposite the toe of the boot, and crossed over there, by boat, and then, drove up the rest of the "Boot," up to Naples, which was a two-day trip, and spent the night sleeping out on the beach there, on the way up. So, then, the outfit operated there as a station hospital. We had been assigned then to Seventh Army and, if you recall Atkinson's book, as Africa was winding down, they were already making preparations for Seventh Army and organizing that, and that's really what made the invasion of Southern France. The troops that were basically in Italy were Fifth Army troops, under [General] Mark Clark. So, we were never attached to the Fifth Army, because they were holding us for the Seventh Army. So, just to keep us busy, we operated like a station hospital and took care of, essentially, French Goums troops, [Moroccan soldiers serving in French Army auxiliary units], you know. …

SSH: Please explain what that is.

RS: Yes. Well, the French, of course, were quite territorial and they'd have countries in Africa, and so forth, that they supervised and, utilizing their troops. They'd be black and big guys, the kind that would rather fight with knives than they would with guns, you know, and so, … they were quite a bunch to be looking after. [laughter] Well, anyway, … we were ready, then, when they went into Southern France. While we were waiting to board ship, they took some of our officers to supplement the … medical officers on a hospital ship that they used early in the invasion, you know, and it stood off shore to take casualties, and so forth. Well, as I say, there wasn't a whole lot of fighting, really, on that invasion, but, when the doctors came back, they brought a couple of quarts of fresh milk that was available on the hospital ship. Well, we hadn't seen fresh milk for two years, you know. So, we all got out our little shot glasses [laughter] and got a shot glass full of milk and, during cocktail hour, we sat around sipping this milk; [laughter] crazy things happen. Where did I leave off? Oh, we were up in France, weren't we?

SSH: We have not gotten there yet.

RS: Oh, yes, okay.

SSH: Did you take care of the Fifth Army men as a hospital set up there, waiting in Italy?

RS: No, no. They had their own hospitals. … In fact, do you recall Anzio, the terms? Yes, that was sort of a flanking movement that they attempted, and they had … an evacuation hospital up there and, of course, they couldn't break out, once they made the move onto Anzio, and the Germans were bombing them right and left and, unfortunately, several bombs hit this evacuation hospital, killed several nurses and doctors, and, in fact, they were operating below ground level. In other words, they dug down, you know, to get the cots below ground level, as a means of protection. I forget the number of that outfit, but I remember hearing about it at the time.

SSH: Did you hear about the casualties at that time?

RS: Yes, yes. … We heard about the loss of doctors and nurses on that.

SI: Did the German Air Force or any other enemy elements ever threaten your outfit?

RS: No. However, being out for supplies, I was almost strafed one day. … You could see the plane go over, you see the markings. Then, he'd turn around, came back down the road. [laughter] So, we left the truck and hit the ditches, you know, expecting to be strafed, but that was the closest encounter.

SSH: When you were traveling like that, were you traveling with a red cross on your vehicles?

RS: No, no, we weren't. In fact, early on, they didn't even use it on the tents, you know, yes.

SSH: That came later.

RS: Yes, it came later, yes. In fact, we had a shell come in our dental tent one day and it went right through one of our dental chests, you know, that carried supplies as you made your movement; never knew where the shell came from. [laughter] It might have been one of ours, for all we knew, but, fortunately, it was a dud. It didn't explode, but you could have incidents like that happen. … When we were waiting at Ferryville to go over to Sicily, one of the corpsmen that worked in the operating room unit came over to the supply tent to pick up a tank of oxygen, you know, one of the big tanks, "C" tanks, as we called them, "D" tank, and he put it on a carrier to transport it back to the OR unit. He unstrapped it from the carrier and it got away from him and it started to roll and he went after it and, for some reason, … it exploded into two pieces. One of them came up and hit him right below the knees on both legs, took his legs off, and, of course, … you know, it's just bare ground, so, a lot of it got in his face, eyes, this dirt and sand, and so forth. Fortunately, … he was right outside the OR tent, so, they just rushed him in there and saved his life, okay, but that was a horrible accident. … I remember, it was a Sunday, around noontime. I happened to be AOD of the day and I wasn't away from the unit. That was kind of a horrible experience for us.

SSH: Was a chaplain assigned to your hospital?

RS: Yes, we had a full-time chaplain. He was an Episcopal chaplain. He was from Riverside Church, I think, in New York, yes. …

GC: Operating a 750-cot hospital, I am sure things got chaotic when you had large numbers of incoming wounded. Did your duties ever extend beyond supply? Did you ever have to administer medical services to the troops?

RS: No. The only time, that I mentioned, was, I think, when we moved up to Besancon, in Southern France, when we got in there late at night and everybody pitched in and helped. Now, I did some work around the triage area, admitting, you know, where they may do the sorting as to who really needs immediate attention and who can wait awhile, and that sort of thing, but that was probably the only time I was involved. Once in awhile, if I didn't have anything to do, I'd kind of wander around where the medical men were working, and so forth, you know, just as a matter of interest, see what they were doing. I remember, it may sound a little gruesome, but I came back from being out on the road one afternoon, … when we were at Mateur, and the officers kind of had one barracks, you know, there, for our sleeping purposes, and one of the young doctors … had something cooking. … We had little kerosene stoves, you know, and we picked these up in the Arab markets or so, to keep ourselves warm. … Africa sounds like a hot place, but we had snow in the wintertime there and we, … initially, had no real means of heat. So, we'd pick up these little kerosene stoves and carry it around with us, to warm our tent. Well, he had one of these with a number ten can sitting on it, cooking up something, and I said, "What do you got there?" He says, "Oh, I've got a foot I'm cooking up." … One of the problems we had, early on, were jeeps running over landmines, and there was no protection, you know. It was just one sheet of metal on these jeeps and the fellow's foot would be fractured in many ways and there was hardly any way to treat it, you know, you had so many shattered small bones in there. So, they'd often have to amputate his foot. So, what he was doing was cooking up one of these amputated feet, to see what the bone structure was, you know. [laughter] … I said it sounds

gruesome, but this is the way they learned, you know, and, as I say, we benefited from warfare in that respect, traumatic surgery.

SI: Did you see any of the doctors get burned out by having to do this kind of work constantly?

RS: Occasionally, you'd be running twenty-four, thirty-six hours at a time, yes, and depending on the specialty; now, I've seen, like, a casualty with multiple wounds, where you might have three or four teams working on the one fellow, you know, meaning an eye man and maybe a dental surgeon, and so forth, who just had real multiple injuries, somebody else working on his abdomen and maybe somebody [on] a foot, you know, the different specialties, but that was one episode, [one] type episode.

SSH: What kind of R&R were you able to have, or did you ever have any?

RS: Yes. … That's one of the hard things about long warfare now. When I was separated, my record showed no R&R, no days off. So, I had about four months' pay coming to me after I was separated, and then, I wasn't officially discharged until they quit paying me, but it did have its effect. … When I came home, … for about a month, I'd say, I was like a zombie. Well, … you know, it's day after day; you just had no relief.

SSH: It has to take its toll. What about your wife? Did she ever consider becoming part of the Army Medical Corps as a nurse?

RS: Well, at that time, they wouldn't take them … married, [laughter] yes, so that was not a question.

SI: How often were you able to correspond with your wife and your family at home?

RS: … Anytime you had time to write, you could do it. They had what was called V-mail. … I don't know whether you've ever seen that or not, but … there was a form, regular form, and you'd write what you wanted to say, and then, they would reduce it. So, you wound up with something about like this when it got home, [laughter] and it's called V-mail. … Security was very strict in those days; not now. [laughter] Now, everything's on TV and everybody knows if you've got a hangnail or so, [laughter] but, in those days, security was very strict. You couldn't say where you were, couldn't tell anything about your military operation, … but I kind of devised a way to let her know where I was. … I numbered my letters home, and then, like, at Tebessa, I would say, "25-T, 26-E, 27-B." [laughter] So, this way, I could tell her where I was, you know. … I didn't instruct her, but, fortunately, she picked up what I was doing, you know. So, that's the only way I could tell her where I was.

SSH: The letters that you received from your wife, did she write back and say, "Oh, gee, I am glad to hear you are at Tebessa?" [laughter]

RS: Oh, no, she wouldn't say that, but she intimated that she knew where I was. … Of course, mail was very erratic. You might not get anything for three or four weeks, and then, all of a sudden, you get a pile of it, you know. … Of course, they would try to send us some packages,

now and then, and, in fact, … she knew I liked fruitcake, so, she learned how to make a fruitcake to send me. [laughter]

SSH: Since you were learning and improvising as you went along, did you feel more prepared when you went into Southern France than you did when you went into Oran? Did you have more confidence?

RS: Oh, sure, oh, yes. I knew what I needed, you know, supply-wise, [made] sure I had enough blood and had enough intravenous and all of that sort of thing. … From the experience of usage, I knew what we needed. In fact, I might have been a little oversupplied when we got into France. … My friend, who was running the depot, you know, to make sure, he'd come by and say, "You got enough of this? You got enough of that?" I said, "Yes, I'm all right," [laughter] but, yes, you learn from experience that way.

SSH: Did you actually feel more confident each time or was each time like brand-new for you?

RS: Oh, no, right, you knew what to expect, like unloading at Naples, you know, and how to handle it all. … You gained in experience all the way along.

SSH: You were the ripe old age of, what, now, twenty-five?

RS: [laughter] Yes, right, yes, that's something. Well, I've always felt I had more experience in the Army than I would've had in civilian life in the same situation, you know, in the same hospital. No, … for a kid, I had a lot of responsibility and, like, in being at the Seventh Army Medical Depot, I had the job of ordering all the supplies from the States … for all the units in the army. That's the reason I had to know what our order of battle was, yes.

SSH: When did you actually take that position?

RS: … Well, I was actually transferred over to the medical depot company in the middle of Southern France, up the Rhone Valley. So, we stayed very close to the Ninth Evac, [laughter] since our medical depot got located pretty much close to the Ninth Evac.

SSH: They probably were appreciative of the fact that they now knew somebody in the medical depot. [laughter]

RS: Yes.

SI: When new products, like penicillin, were introduced, how did you find out about them? How did you introduce them and were you able to stay well supplied?

RS: Well, actually, penicillin didn't come in until during the war, you know, become available, but we would get communiqués, I mean, from the surgeon's office, that it was available. … In fact, initially, they had no way of storing [materials] like biologicals [that] came into use, and, initially, we didn't have any way of storing those. … Again, a case of improvising, this just comes to mind, … I found a walk-in refrigerator, somewhere in France, and had it mounted on a

truck, so that … wherever we moved, as the depot company, we could easily move this walk-in refrigerator to store the biologicals. [laughter] …

GC: For example, what are biologicals?

RS: Well, ampoules, you know. It's things that need to be refrigerated or they go bad, you know, yes. [laughter] … In the medical depot outfit, we had a fellow that … had some engineering background. So, we sent him on detached service to this engineering outfit to mount this refrigerator on the truck. … As they got it finished and he was pulling out of the place, they miscalculated and hit a tree limb and knocked the damned thing off the truck. [laughter] So, we had to go back, … get it all fixed up again. Gee, we never let him forget that one. [laughter]

SSH: Were there other people who were equally adept at improvisation? Did you have an opportunity to share experiences later? You said you did not have a chance to really interact with others.

RS: No, … not with another hospital. I don't know; we just weren't that close, physically. …

SSH: I meant in later years, talking about the war, did you hear of others? It sounds like you were pretty unique in your ability to adapt. [laughter]

RS: Yes. We had an easy starting point, I guess, you know, following World War I. It was a shame. It not only affected us, but it affected men's lives, too. As you say, the leadership was poor, … but, fortunately, [better leaders emerged].

SSH: Before you left and joined the supply depot, did any of the field commanders come to visit the men? There is the famous scene with Patton.

RS: Oh, yes. … Occasionally, there would be visits by some. In fact, Patton did stop by our unit once, yes. I didn't get much chance to see him, [laughter] but he had his ivory-handled revolvers on and that sort of thing, but I did not see him reviewing any of the patients. …

SSH: You cannot confirm or deny the stories.

RS: No, no. Well, of course, nothing happened in our outfit, but, then, we had some French officers come by and, in fact, my commanding officer brought them down to the supply section, to see these boxes that I made up, you know, and whatnot. Everybody was very proud of those. [laughter] … I'll take that back. As Atkinson mentions about Teddy Roosevelt, [Jr.], and Terry Allen, and so forth, of the First Division, and so forth, they were acquainted with some of the officers in [our unit] from New York, I guess, you know, since most of our doctors were from New York City. … They would come by once in awhile, if they were in the area, and stop by and say hello to them, and so forth. So, I'd see them, occasionally, around, but, as far as other commanders, they were busy doing other things, yes.

SSH: What about R&R for the medical staff, the doctors and the nurses? Were they working, like you, without any time off for this entire period?

RS: Well, no. You see, whenever we tore down the hospital and didn't have any particular assignment, at that point in time, the doctors and nurses … had nothing to do, you see. My function as an administrative officer never quit, you know. I was either preparing for the next move, or something or other, and that's the reason I didn't have the time off. … In retrospect, … we've had a nurse that wrote a book, we've had one of our doctors write a book, and, here, I find out they'd been traveling all over, … sightseeing here and sightseeing there, while we're closed down, [laughter] and I had very little of that. …

SSH: What about sanitation?

RS: Sanitation?

SSH: In the different areas you were in.

RS: It was nil, I guess, you know. We operated on bare ground. … One thing I did for the nurses, when we were in Africa, I was out for supplies one day and I came across a camel caravan that was going to market and I noticed that they had straw mats, hanging on the backs of the camels that they were taking to market, and I thought, "Gee, that's … just what the nurses need," you know, because they had about three feet between their cots, you know. It's all bare ground in their tents. So, I stopped the guy leading the caravan and he gets his camel to kneel down, [Colonel Schnitzer imitates camel noises], and so, I bought about twenty-five of these, for about a dollar apiece, I think, as I recall. … So, I got them to the supply tent and got the word around [to] the nurses, if they were interested, there's something to keep their feet off the bare ground. So, they came in, one after the other. They were glad to have them. So, I got rid of all of them, but, in a very short while, they were back. They were apparently full of fleas. [laughter] So, anyway, … the fleas dissipated, somehow, I guess. So, they were very happy to have them. So, that's kind of a sanitation story, in one sense. … Also, our commanding officer, he was from Missouri. He was not a New Yorker, in that sense, in sophistication, … but he loved to design latrines. [laughter] We had the best latrines of any outfit I know around, you know. He had the heights down properly, and so forth, and, of course, these had to be portable, because, you know, once you moved, then, you set them up in another place. …

SSH: What kind of latrines did you set up?

RS: Well, like, for an officers' tent or an officers' area, there might be four in a row here and four in row, so [that] you're kind of back-to-back. … Of course, there was no regular bathroom time, or so, so, anybody drifted in, and the nurses had the same thing, and the unfortunate thing, from a supply standpoint, [is] that I don't know how many flashlights the nurses lost on me, dropping them down the "you know," getting up at night or so and dropping them down the latrines. [laughter]

SSH: We talked about fleas, but what about the other critters of the desert and the wilds?

RS: … I wasn't aware too much of bugs. The only time was, when we were coming up the Rhone Valley, we got into a lot of bees and, you know, if it was a nice day, you might sit with

your sandwich outside and have it, and then, they'd be flying all around. They didn't seem to bite, in a way, but they were yellow jackets, that type, but, other than that, I don't recall [that] we had any vermin or problems that way.

SSH: No mice or snakes or tarantulas?

RS: No, not regularly, might have been an incident here or there. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: I was curious about the line between officers and enlisted men. Was protocol always strictly maintained in the hospital or was there some blurring of the line?

RS: No, as far as, for instance, the men that were assigned to my section were concerned, we developed a very comfortable relationship. I didn't act like a commanding officer, and so forth, and, … apparently, they felt comfortable with me, … which brings to mind [a story], somewhere along the line, which might have been in Africa. Of course, with all of these officers and nurses, we had our mess and the enlisted men had their mess, and so forth, and, one day, they invited me, I think it was a Sunday morning, to come over to the supply tent and they'd make breakfast for me. [laughter] So, somewhere or other, they scrounged some fresh eggs, and so forth, and they had some cereal, I don't know where they got that, but, anyway, they put on a nice breakfast for me and we all sat around and, you know, enjoyed it, which I don't think would have happened if we hadn't had a good *esprit de corps*, you know, and a good relationship. Now, I thought that was very touching and I appreciated it. After I left that outfit and was with the medical depot company, we were located very closely together in Saarburg, Germany. … This was our third Christmas now, overseas; so, officers were able to get a liquor ration, you know, whatever, rye, scotch, and whatnot, and I wasn't particularly much of a drinker, so, my ration kind of accumulated. So, on Christmas Eve, I decided maybe it'd be nice to go over and see the old bunch again. So, I took what was remaining of my liquor ration over, and so, we went over, had a drink together and [I] left the rest for them. [laughter] So, yes, and, in fact, after the war, several of them lived up in the Orange area, in Brooklyn, and so forth, and we got together, occasionally, for get-togethers and [to] meet our families, and so forth. So, I guess I was a good officer. [laughter]

SSH: You talked just now about how you spent the third Christmas, and I think you spoke briefly about the first Christmas overseas. Do you remember where you were on the second Christmas?

RS: Yes, that was in Sicily, in Termini, was our second Christmas, yes.

SSH: What, traditionally, did they do for the troops at Christmas? [laughter]

RS: Well, they tried hard, like, to get fresh turkey over to us. … Otherwise, we're just eating canned foods all the time, you know, … but they would try very hard to get fresh turkey in, and so, that was a treat.

SSH: Did you acknowledge Thanksgiving at all, since that is such an American holiday?

RS: Well, yes, it might have been that the turkeys came Thanksgiving. I don't actually recall now, but, … for celebration, like, in our first Christmas in Africa, we were able to get a hold of some red wine, which we called "the Purple Death." [laughter] That was … about all we had to drink, you know, in celebration on Christmas. The second, at Sicily, … by this time, there's some, like, canned grapefruit juice [that] came through. … As a supply officer, I was able to pick up some alcohol, straight alcohol. … So, our drink was grapefruit juice and alcohol, I think, for the second Christmas. [laughter]

SSH: Did the men exchange Christmas presents?

RS: What happened was, that I remember, in, I guess it was Sicily, the officers, you know, to have a little party, … drew a name and, if you were in town, you might pick up a little something or other as a present, but that's about all that we could handle. [laughter]

SSH: Did you ever see the USO, the American Red Cross, those institutions? Did they ever visit any of your hospitals?

RS: No. We did have a Red Cross worker that was assigned to the hospital.

SH: Did you?

RS: Yes, and she was a very lively, interesting person. I never got to know too much what she did. I imagine, probably, she visited the patients and saw if there's anything, any communication she could do for them, to their home, or that sort of thing. Once in awhile, maybe she could arrange for a troupe to come through. I remember, in one location, … I guess when we were in France, … she spoke French, so, she could arrange for a French troupe to put on an act or so forth. When we were in Africa, incidentally, it brings to mind [that] Bob Hope came by and put on a show at our hospital, with Jerry Colonna and Frances Langford, that troupe. … In fact, I'd been out on the road that morning and got back a little late for lunch, so, I was sitting there almost alone in the mess tent when Bob and his troupe arrived, and they came into the officers' mess there, you know, just to have a glass of grape juice or something like that. … He sat down almost [at the] next table from me and I got a kick out of it. Everything he said seemed to be funny. [laughter] You know, he's just one of those characters, and it was a nice show they put on, yes.

SSH: They did not make any extra demands.

RS: No. When the show was over, they took off. No, they didn't stay for a meal even. So, I don't know what their itinerary was.

SI: Did you ever listen to any music or the radio while you were overseas, or hear any propagandists, such as Axis Sally?

RS: No. We had no way of receiving it.

SSH: Did any of the press ever show up at your hospital?

RS: Yes. In fact, I had quite a story in the *New York Post* or so. Did you ever hear of a Gault McGowan? …

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

SI: This continues an interview with Colonel Robert M. Schnitzer on September 16, 2003, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth …

GC: … Geoff Cerone …

SSH: … Sandra Stewart Holyoak …

VT: … Vince Terri …

AP: … and Ashley Perri.

SI: You were saying.

RS: What was I saying? [laughter]

SI: You were talking about Gault McGowan.

AP: The newspaper article.

RS: Oh, yes. There was the correspondent for them who came over when we were in Africa and did an interview for our outfit. Well, of course, being from New York, this was a New York outfit, essentially, and so, he found a lot of people to talk to, and the Colonel sent him over to talk to me. So, it resulted in quite an extensive article about my background and where I went to school and what my job was, and he kind of souped it up, you know, being in "Stuka Valley" and all of that bit, you know. … That's the only time. Well, in fact, … Ernie Pyle was on the ship as we went to Africa, our ship. I wasn't particularly aware of it at the time, because I didn't know who he was, but I learned later that he was. You've probably heard of him. Yes, well, he was killed in the Pacific, while over there.

SI: Did you have an opportunity to read *Stars and Stripes* or *Yank Magazine*?

RS: Yes, once in awhile. Yes, Bill Mauldin was quite a great cartoonist. [laughter]

SI: Was there anything that surprised you about the pace of the war? Did you always think we were making progress or were there times when the news was particularly bad?

RS: Just seemed like a long time, but I kind of had the feeling we were moving. … I guess my only reaction was, that might've been similar to some of the others, that after the African

Campaign was over, [we thought] that, "This is great. Now, we can go home. There were plenty more, [laughter] back in the United States." After all, we were only a corps in Africa, … but it didn't happen. [laughter] … I think that was the reaction of a number of the troops, you know, following the African Campaign, "Well, now, they'll send us home," but that just never transpired, just kept going to the next stage.

SSH: Were you aware of the plans for the D-Day invasion?

RS: No, no. That was entirely secret, yes, as far as we were concerned, it was a surprise. Of course, we knew of the troops that were there. For example, the First Division was in Africa, but, then, they transferred them to England to be part of that invasion there. So, we knew that that had happened, but we didn't know why they were there. …

SSH: What about the living conditions of the people who lived in the towns that you were fighting through or moving through? Were they hungry?

RS: Yes. Well, of course, in Africa, you know, I think you can understand what the Arab population was like, sort of non-descript. It was revealing, like, to see their markets, with sheep heads swimming around in water, you know, just bloody, oily water. You wonder, "How do people live like this?" you know, and, "How do they cook it up?" and so forth. So, it wasn't very stimulating about the population there. Sicily was highly agricultural, with olive groves and so on. In fact, our hospital was set up in an olive grove, in one location, and it was very pastoral, you know, peaceful. … In Italy, well, we were in Naples there, pretty much, so, we didn't see too much of the countryside, except when driving up there. … In Southern France, there, again, it was farmland. In fact, when I was hospitalized there, it was humorous that the farmers would come over, like, on a Sunday, and bring apples and so forth to give the patients. … I got kind of a kick out of it, because, with my haircut and appearance, and, of course, they must have been aware that we were taking care of German prisoners as well, you know, there might have been … some German officers in the same ward, that I was never left any apples at the foot of my bed, you know. [laughter] … Over into Germany, there, again, there was a lot of farmland that you were passing through. The people seemed to be reasonably fed. We would take over some houses in Germany, you know, for our living purposes, if it was convenient for us to do. … In the kitchen, you'd find that what they used for coffee … were [some] kind of grains or that sort of thing, you know. They didn't have the wherewithal at this stage of the game there. They were getting pretty short rations, apparently. … That's about my experience.

SSH: Did the people treat you as a liberator or as an enemy? I am thinking of Italy and North Africa. How did they perceive you?

RS: Yes, I think, … by and large, they were glad to see us, yes. … Of course, in Germany, we weren't permitted to fraternize. I mean, that was a pretty strict order.

SSH: Was it followed?

RS: … I think to a large extent, yes, as far as I was concerned, yes. So, what I'm saying there is that you didn't have the chance to converse much with them. Now, like, at places where we

would take over their homes, then, as far as I was concerned, I didn't want to disrupt it, you know. We needed a place to stay and that was it, and then, maybe we'd get into some discussion with the owner, but just to satisfy them that, "Well, don't worry about it. I'm not going to [laughter] tear it apart on you," and so forth.

SSH: Were these houses that you were in used to house you and your staff or was it to be used as part of the hospital?

RS: No, it'd be part of my residence as an officer, you know, okay.

SSH: What did you use for the hospital? By now, you were in the depot or the re-supply end of it, I know, but the hospitals that were moving along, that you were supplying, were they occupying buildings or were they still in camp?

RS: It would depend. If there was a suitable building that could be used as a hospital, they might utilize that. Otherwise, they would be out in the fields, under tentage, yes, but there was only two or three occasions, that I can recall, that we could use a building.

SSH: Really?

RS: Yes. I had one incident, … it was in Germany, and I think this might have been shortly after … the end of the war. I had to go back into France for some reason and I had to stay in a motel, some type of motel. … In the morning, I was waiting for someone to come … by to pick me up and I was just chatting with the maid, and I was surprised that her reaction was, "And, well, what took you so long to get here?" you know, [laughter] and I thought that was a strange reaction, you know, particularly after you'd been away almost three years, you know, and spending your time, and this was the reaction of one of the natives there, "What took you so long to get here?" [laughter]

SSH: Do you know of any of the hospitals that took in the people who were liberated from work camps or concentration camps?

RS: No. In fact, when I was with the medical depot company, … our setup was not too far from Dachau, and this is at the end of the war. Some of our men, … on hearing about it, went down to see it. I wasn't able to get there. The problem was that our depot required a lot of vitamins, and so forth, for these people that we didn't normally carry, because we were treating healthy troops, in that sense. So, I had a big job in trying to locate this stuff and I was spending so much time at it that I just had no time to get down to Dachau. So, I never actually saw it, not that that was anything to worry about at all, but that was the reason that I missed it. …

SSH: Were people talking about what they had seen?

RS: Oh, yes, … I mean, when they came back into the outfit. It was a terrible sight, as far as they were concerned, and, of course, I have a brochure on those camps that the Army put out after the war, … a little of the history of it, and so forth. I still have it in my files, somewhere. So, I had a good view of what went on.

SSH: It took them awhile to realize that they needed to not feed these people who looked like they were starving to death.

RS: Oh, yes, yes. You had to treat them very carefully, right. …

SSH: What about our prisoners of war? As the war ended and we moved into Germany, were you ever aware of the hospitals treating our prisoners of war who had been released from the German camps?

RS: No, I never heard anything of that sort.

SSH: Downed flyers?

RS: Yes.

SSH: Did you see how medical supplies changed as the war progressed? There were antibiotics.

RS: Oh, yes, oh, yes, definitely, yes. That's when, as we were discussing earlier, that penicillin came in. That … came in during the war, and then, the other biologicals, and that was the reason we had to find this refrigerator, you know, to store that. Previous to that, no; it was very simple, as far as the drugs were concerned. …

SSH: What was the reaction to the news of the death of Franklin Roosevelt?

RS: Well, I think that there was some element of shock, in that, you know, you had lived with him … for quite awhile, you know. [laughter] What was it, twelve years, or something of that sort? He was our President, in the fourth term, so, he was somebody that was always there. … Of course, you didn't know that he might have been going downhill or what he looked like, you know. So, it was a surprise, yes.

SSH: What kind of confidence did you and your fellow officers or men have in the new President, Truman?

RS: Truman? Well, he was an Army man, so, he couldn't do any wrong, I guess. [laughter] No, I didn't have too much feeling about Truman. I've always admired him and respected him. I thought he was a good President, when he did better than anybody would have anticipated, yes.

SSH: What reaction did people have to the dropping of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki and Hiroshima? How soon did you hear about this and how fast did the news travel?

RS: I don't know how we did actually hear. … You know, we had not much radio contact or anything like that, not like you have today. So, maybe you'd read about something in the *Stars and Stripes*, you know, that was published, occasionally, but I don't recall that I had any great reaction, other than, … "Maybe we won't have to go to the Pacific now," you know. [laughter]

GC: Between the surrender of the Germans and the dropping of the bomb, was your unit making preparations to leave for the Pacific Theater?

RS: No, no. In fact, you see, what happened then, after the things subsided in Germany, is that they began to move troops back to the United States, or there was thought then that some of them would be going to the Pacific, and this was done by the numbers. They gave you a point for every month you were in the service and another point for … a month overseas and, if you got the Distinguished Service Cross or so, you might get so many points for that, or a Silver Star, you see, and then, they started to move people back who had the highest numbers. So, you began to have a shifting around … to different units, you know, depending on what happened. So, at this point, then, I got transferred to an evacuation hospital, the Eleventh Evac, as executive officer. You see, Army hospital units are always commanded by a physician, but his executive officer can be a non-physician. … Well, you can understand that, because he has to have a command of the physicians, as well as the others in the outfit. So, I was within the Eleventh Evac Hospital until it was actually time for my numbers to come up to move to the States. … Then, they were going to move and they transferred me, as executive officer, to the 104th Evacuation Hospital, which was ready to move to the States. So, I came back with that outfit then, to Camp Myles Standish, in Taunton, Massachusetts, and disbanded the organization. You collected the records and they were going to go to storage, and so forth. So, it took three or four days to what they called disband the outfit. So, the 104th was disbanded, and then, I was sent for separation. …

SSH: Do you remember what day and month of the year?

RS: … November 24th or 26th, I forget which. What did I say there?

SI: 26th.

RS: 26th? Yes, it was right at Christmastime. In fact, I arrived at Fort Monmouth for separation, you know, on Thanksgiving Day, and I was served turkey by German prisoners of war from Africa. [laughter] That's coming full circle, isn't it? [laughter]

SSH: Had your wife continued to work throughout the war in the hospitals here?

RS: Yes. She worked for the Visiting Nurse Association in Trenton, and that was a needed thing, because so many physicians were away. So, she had a lot of responsibility, you know, in Visiting Nurses, you know, house to house, that sort of thing.

SI: When you were being separated, was that when you decided you wanted to be a Reservist?

RS: Well, in a way, you didn't have too much choice. Our understanding was, whether they were giving us the right dope or not, [I do not know], was that, if we took a discharge, we were subject to recall within six months, and subject to recall as a private. Of course, my rank at that time was a major and, well, it gave you something to think about, you know, and, at that time, you know, we weren't so sure about the Russians. They were creating a lot of problems over there in Europe, and sticking around countries and taking them over, and so forth. So, kind of

our feeling was that, "Well, maybe something else is going to happen here and, although they were our allies, they might be our enemies. [laughter] So, it might be a smart thing to do, to take the Reserve commission, you know, in case we were called back." That was at least part of my thinking. I didn't want to be called back as a private. [laughter] …

SSH: Not after all this.

RS: Yes. So, that's the reason I accepted a Reserve commission, and I was glad I did. It was a nice diversion from my livelihood and I kind of enjoyed going to the meetings. Then, I got involved with the Command and General Staff College, which you had to have if you wanted to be [a colonel]. You could automatically, kind of, be promoted, like, to lieutenant colonel, at age forty-two, but you couldn't be promoted any higher unless you completed the Command and General Staff College. … If you were … in the regular Army, you could maybe spend a year out at Fort Leavenworth, and then, made qualified in that sense, but, in the Reserve, it took you five years … to attend classes, and then, … the year was divided into two semesters, and you had to take a couple of hour exams at the end of each semester. … Then, you had to … take two weeks of active duty and you had an exam at the end of each week, and so, it was work, but I kind of enjoyed it. … Then, you wound up at Fort Leavenworth, where the college is located, and [they] gave you some secret stuff, that sort of thing. [laughter]

SSH: When do you get to talk about that? [laughter]

RS: Yes, we don't get to talk about that.

GC: Did you attend CGSC right after you came back, or how long was it before you began the courses?

RS: No, it was quite a little while after I came back, yes. … '63, I was at Fort Leavenworth, and then, I spent three years on summer active duty at the Army hospital at West Point, to keep up with the Army hospital work, yes, with progress, and so forth.

SSH: What about the Korean War? Was there any chance that you would wind up there?

RS: Well, I was telling Geoff, that was a funny thing, which I never quite understood. They called up the Inactive Reserve for Korea and they left the Active Reserve alone, as far as I knew, as far as it affected me. … I could never quite understand, … except that I thought, maybe, they wanted to retain the Active Reserve as a back-up or something, you know, but I never quite understood why they didn't call up the Active Reserve. I had a close friend who was in the Inactive Reserve and he got called back.

AP: Going back, did you receive any awards or acknowledgements for your duties overseas, for example, for your work in the evacuation hospitals?

RS: No. … I think that I mentioned there, the two outfits I was with, … the Ninth Evac and the Seventh Medical Depot Company, received what was called the Distinguished Service Unit Award, which is, I don't know whether you've ever seen it or not, but you wear it on your sleeve

of your uniform. It's like a wreath and it's a special designed thing, which means that your outfit's been awarded that. Awards are funny things and I kind of feel that, in a way, I was behind the door, if you know what I mean, in this sense, that, by accepting the transfer to the Seventh Medical Depot and the promotion to major, I was not with the Ninth Evac at the end of the war when they finally got around to awarding medals. … In fact, my staff sergeant, in the supply section, was awarded the Bronze Star, [laughter] and he fully deserved it, but what I'm saying is, had I stayed with the Ninth Evac, I would probably have been recommended for the award. Earlier in the war, in Africa, I had been recommended for a higher award than this. However, they awarded very few medals. In other words, it wasn't done in the early parts, particularly in Africa. So, apparently, … what I'd been recommended for was not considered worthy enough of that higher medal. They might have bucked it to a second [medal], but I don't think there was any award of the Bronze Star at that time. …

SSH: What had you done to be recommended, even though you did not get it?

RS: Well, for all of that unusual work that I did, [laughter] you know, in the supply that the Army hadn't provided for. … Maybe I shouldn't mention this, but, as far as the Seventh Medical Depot Company was concerned, because the Ninth Evac and the Seventh Medical Depot Company had been awarded this Distinguished Service Unit Award, each of the commanders were awarded the Bronze Star, which was fine, all right, yes, they brought the outfit along. At the end of the war, then, … an order came out, "We want you to consider anybody that should be awarded medals," and so forth, "and get the recommendations in, you know, before you lose sight of them and they get back home," and so forth. So, I brought this to the attention of my CO at the medical depot company, who had been awarded the Bronze Star. He was regular Army and he said to me, "You know, Bob, if I had been awarded more than a Bronze Star, I would have made some recommendations for the Bronze Star," in his unit. [laughter] … After I got home, I read somewhere where they were putting a deadline now on awards for the Second World War, and I said, "Well, gee, I'd better write Gus," and he was living out in California by this time. So, I wrote him a letter, calling his attention to this order coming out, and that if he had any change of thought, now was the time to do it, and I never heard anything more from him. [laughter] So, that's the way the Army works sometimes.

VT: Was he a lieutenant colonel?

RS: He was a lieutenant colonel, yes.

VT: It was a medical battalion.

RS: It was a medical depot company that he was commanding.

VT: Was it on a battalion level?

RS: It was company level, yes. Actually, … he wore two hats, and that increased my responsibilities, too. Not only was he commander of the medical depot company, but he was the medical supply officer on the … [army] surgeon's office, okay? So, he spent quite a lot of time at the surgeon general's office, at the army headquarters. So, that left me, you know, kind of

running the show as his exec officer, a good part of the time, and doing all the ordering for the army as well, medical supplies. So, that's my tale. [laughter]

SI: Could you tell us a little bit about your career and where you worked?

RS: Oh, the hospitals? Yes, after the war, I had the opportunity to go back to Mercer Hospital. He was looking for an assistant administrator. Now, hospitals were getting to this point where they were increasing their hierarchy, so-to-speak, and Orange Memorial, where I'd had my residency, they decided that it was time that they had an assistant administrator. So, I had the choice between the two and I chose Orange Memorial. So, I stayed there … for four years, and then, thought I was ready to go out on my own. So, an opportunity came up as administrator of the Lutheran Hospital in Newark and I took it, and then, I was prevailed on to take the job here at Middlesex General, which is now the Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. … While there, I was involved with the New Jersey Hospital Association in developing a uniform accounting system for hospitals, which they didn't have. Everybody had their own system, depending on who their accountant was and that sort of thing. So, working with a firm from New York, we developed a uniform accounting system at [the] hospitals. So, you knew, when you looked at another hospital's statement, … where they were compared with yours. … As a result, the New Jersey Blue Cross Plan had formerly been paying on the basis of a sliding scale; they'd pay you so much per day for the first day, and so much a day for the second, depending on how long their patient stayed, this way, they could go to a cost basis and pay each hospital's cost. So, I happened to be chairman of that accounting committee when we developed this, and then, when we got all through, to put it into practice, the Blue Cross Plan said, "Well, I think we need somebody that knows the hospitals' accounting statements," and so forth. So, they prevailed on me to become assistant director in charge of hospital relations, and so, that's why I moved from Middlesex General over to the Blue Cross Plan. … After a period of time, that got sort of humdrum, so, I went back to a hospital up in New York State, in Kingston. Subsequently, I wound up with the National Blue Cross Association, involved with the Medicare program, for something different to do. So, … it's been a nice life. [laughter]

SSH: Could you talk a bit about your wife and your family?

RS: Oh, yes. Well, I mentioned her being a nurse and I wound up with two nice children, a boy, Bob, and a daughter, Donna. Bob started Rutgers in engineering and didn't like it, and he talked it over with me, I think, in the middle of his sophomore year, and I said, "Well, Bob, if it … doesn't strike you right, why don't you quit and go to work for a year and see what comes about?" So, that he did, and it turned out that he liked teaching, and so, he got his master's degree in special education and was involved with that for a few years. … Then, he decided he could make more money in construction and he went into that, and then, five years ago, he thought that got a little too hectic, so, he went back to teaching. So, now, he's back to special ed at a vocational school up in Kingston, and he likes it. He's had a good life, owns twenty-five acres up in the Catskills. So, it's a nice place to go in the summertime. [laughter] My daughter went to a junior college, up at Beverly, Massachusetts, Endicott Junior College, for two years, and then, went out to the University of Colorado for two years, … got her bachelor's degree there, went into teaching, teaching art in the grammar school, got her master's in fine arts at Denver University, while living out in Denver, and still teaching, hopes to retire in about a year-

and-a-half. So, it's been a good life. My wife passed away about three years ago in September, Labor Day Weekend.

SSH: Thank you for coming.

RS: Well, I hope it hasn't been boring. It seems like a long time.

SI: No, not at all.

AP: I just have one quick question. Do you feel that the war had any effect on the increase in hospital administration? When you came home, did you feel that it was much more widespread than it had been before the war years?

RS: That's a good question. [laughter]

AP: Thank you.

RS: Yes. … Well, let me put it this way; yes, there's an instance, the adjutant of the Seventh Medical Depot Company, one of my officers, after learning what my background was, decided that he would go into … hospital administration. So, by this time, they've developed several other courses in the country, and one was Minnesota, [at the] University of Minnesota, and he applied there. He was lacking, apparently, one credit in personnel, or something like that, from his undergraduate work at Alabama. So, he wrote to me, … asking me if there's anything I could do on his behalf. So, I wrote a letter to the University of Minnesota and told them I thought he was a fine guy, did a great job, would make a good administrator, and they accepted him. So, he … has been very grateful ever since. He wound up as the administrator of the Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico, got involved with the American College of Hospital Administrators and the American Hospital Association, subsequently, got one of their top awards for his contributions, and so forth. … In following that thought, the Medical Administrative Corps, that fellows got acquainted with and were part of during the war, a number of them went back into the health field, you see, for jobs. So, in thinking back now, yes, the Medical Administrative Corps contributed a lot of people into the hospital field, in one way or another. Subsequently, after the war, they changed the title; now, it's the Medical Service Corps, yes. They used to use a gold caduceus; now, they use a silver caduceus, the Medical Service Corps. That was a good question. You stimulated some thinking there. [laughter]

SI: Is there anything you would like to add to the record?

RS: … No, except to say thank you very much. … It was my daughter that brought … my attention to this program.

SSH: Really?

RS: … Yes, she'd read of it, someplace or other, and I don't know where, but she says, "Why don't you look into it?" …

SSH: Give her our thank you. [laughter]

SI: Thank you. If there is nothing else, I will turn off the machine.

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

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