

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH NORMAN N. SIEGEL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Norman Siegel, on December 4, 1996 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and Hector Pimental. Before asking you about the war, we would like to know a little bit about your parents, growing up, and Rutgers. The first question is what led your parents to come to the United States? Do you know, or at least your father?

Norman Siegel: My mother was born in this country, but her parents were immigrants. My father died as a very young man. ... I was only two-and-a-half. He came out of Poland, Russia, thereabouts, and, I guess, he was looking for opportunity and religious freedom. That's about what I can tell you, about all the background.

KP: Do you know how your parents met?

NS: Yeah, I know how my mother [and father] met. My mother was working as a salesgirl in a store on Fifth Avenue, and my father walked in there to buy dress styles. He was a dress manufacturer, and he was buying styles of better dresses so he could make them cheaper. So, my mother was a young woman. He was a widower and had two children. He was about thirty-three, thirty-four. My mother was nineteen, twenty. She was very young, and that's how they met and they married.

KP: You never knew your father?

NS: No, I never knew my father at all.

KP: Do you know what he died of?

NS: Yes, something that people still do, I don't know if they die of it anymore, he had a burst appendix. He was playing basketball, I understand. They lived in Brooklyn. He was playing basketball, and came home with cramps, and asked his wife to give him an enema, in those days they didn't know that probably killed him. You're not supposed to do that when you have cramps, and whatever. ... He had cramps for several days, and the doctors didn't do anything to him. We took him to the hospital. By the time they cut him open to see what was wrong, gangrene had set in and he was gone. That's the story I know. I don't know ... he was a very young man. He was only thirty-seven.

KP: Your mother was very young.

NS: My mother was around twenty-three, twenty-four when he died. I was raised by my mother, and she never remarried. She died at the age of eighty-nine, almost.

KP: You had two half-brothers?

NS: I had two, ... wait, yeah, ... yeah, that's right. [I have] two half-brothers by my father's first marriage.

KP: Did she also raise ...

NS: No, no. They went off to boarding schools and they had family that took care of them.

KP: So, your mother only raised ...

NS: Just raised me, right.

KP: And what did your mother do to support you?

NS: My mother was a saleslady, on Fifth Avenue, whether it was Saks Fifth Avenue, or Henri Bendel, what's that other one? Bergdorf's, fancy stores in New York. That's how she made a living and I was able to grow up on that basis.

KP: How, I mean, it was ...

NS: It wasn't easy in those years.

KP: Saleswomen didn't make very much.

NS: She was making thirty-five dollars a week, but that was good money for that time. Making thirty-five dollars a week in 1932, 1933. Sometimes she made eighty dollars, ninety dollars on commissions which at the time was like an awful lot of money.

KP: Your mother did fairly well in the 1930s during the Depression.

NS: Well, she survived. Let's put it this way, she was a survivor all her life.

KP: So, in other words, she stayed employed during the Depression.

NS: Oh, yeah. She worked right through the Depression. She worked right through 1929, 1930, she worked.

KP: But, you also see your mother going off to work it sounds like?

NS: Yeah, well, my mother lived with my grandmother ... and my grandmother raised me so she lived in the house with me. So ... she was my nursemaid.

KP: What was your grandmother's background?

NS: Well, I don't know too much about it. Now, it was, I always thought it was Russia, now I understand it's the Ukraine. She came out of Odessa, so, that's the Ukraine. I don't know too much about it other than ... she's a carbon copy of thousands and thousands of people that came through that period. You know, thank God they came here, that's all I can tell you, or I'd be still in the Ukraine. You know sometimes the black people complain, and the poor blacks got an awful, awful bad message. I mean, ... you can thank their ancestors that suffered that came to this country. I just feel that way, you know? I mean, the slavery and the death, their pestilence,

and whatever they went through, but thank God they came here, you know? Or else they'd be in Rowanda now chasing Tutsies or other jungle things, that's horrible. We're all lucky to come to this country. It's a wonderful country.

KP: Growing up in New York, what did you like about it and what did you ...

NS: ... New York ... I lived in the Washington Heights at that time. It was a melting pot of all the immigrants that had come over at that time. I understand that Henry Kissinger lived there. A lot of prominent people came out of that area, [like] Simon, the playwright. A lot of very important people came out of that. It was a nice childhood, considering I was an only child. We played basketball, and we played hockey in the streets, and softball. It was a good, a good existence, I think.

KP: Did you ever, did you ever go to summer camp growing up?

NS: I went to a YMCA camp when I was about twelve or thirteen. I had a talent, which was given to me. ... We used to live in Asbury Park. My mother came to live in Asbury Park briefly and I learned to swim at the ocean in Asbury Park. ... When I went to the YMCA camp they discovered that I was a natural swimmer, so to speak, and ... leading up to why I came to Rutgers. Then, I came back to Manhattan and I joined the 92nd Street YMHA where they discovered my ability to swim and I became a natural school board champion as a swimmer.

KP: So, that brief stint in Asbury Park was fairly important to you.

NS: Yes, right, the ocean. My mother could swim, and she taught me how to swim, you know, and that. Swimming is what brought me to Rutgers. ... I became a national scholastic swimming champion when I was in high school, and I got a scholarship to a private school in New York called Columbia Grammar School. I don't know if you ever heard of that, Columbia Prep on Ninety-third Street.

KP: It was because of your swimming?

NS: Because of my swimming, right.

KP: What was it like to go to a private school as opposed to a public school?

NS: Very nice, very nice. All rich kids. It was amazing how well they lived. I use to travel to Washington Heights, down to Ninety-third, which was midtown in New York City. This was off of Central Park West, and all these kids, most of them lived in the Central Park West area, which was a very elite area. It was very interesting. I met a lot of nice young men there. The richer kids seem to be better educated, you know.

KP: So, you noticed that there's a real difference between your public schools and your ...

NS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Quite, quite. I went to DeWitt Clinton for a year, after getting out of public schools. I wasn't too thrilled with that. ...

KP: How observant was your family in terms of religion?

NS: Not very, not too. They observed ... I had a good exposure to my ethnic background, though. I knew I was Jewish and most of the people I associated with were, in that Washington Heights American ghetto, yeah.

KP: Did your family keep a kosher household or ...

NS: ... She did and she didn't. My grandmother kept the household. She did and she didn't, whatever was convenient for her, you know? She was pretty liberal in a sense, you know.

KP: Did your family belong to synagogue?

NS: We didn't. I got *bar mitzvah*, but we didn't really belong because we couldn't afford it. You have to pay, you know.

KP: Yeah.

NS: I wouldn't say we belonged, you know. They used to sneak me in on the high holidays to get me some exposure, but we couldn't afford it. I now belong to a temple, so I know what it is. It costs money.

KP: Yeah. Yeah.

NS: It costs money to be a religious person.

KP: Going to a private school, what percent of the school was Jewish?

NS: Oh, I think it was about ninety-five percent Jewish.

KP: It was predominantly Jewish?

NS: Very, very well-to-do. You had people like the Sarnoff kids from David Sarnoff, or Barneys from Barneys Department Store. You know, all very well to do kids of the immigrant generations that made out and prospered in this country.

KP: Growing up, what did you think you wanted to do for a career? Did you have any sense, going to this prep school?

NS: I got a little carried away. I thought I was going to be very rich. You start rubbing shoulders with rich people, I ... [figured] I was going to do very well too, I don't know. I was an athlete. I was a poor kid, I was thrown in. ... I was bigger and better looking than most of them, so I fit in on that basis, but I didn't really socialize. I had a couple friends that I got close to. There were a couple of other kids there who were on scholarships that didn't have a lot of money.

KP: Did you gravitate to the scholarship kids?

NS: Yeah, I gravitated to the scholarship kids, right.

KP: But, it sounds like most people were friendly to you.

NS: Yeah.

KP: You were not made to feel like you were the scholarship kid.

NS: I was a scholarship kid and they were nice to me, but, I didn't, I really wasn't part of their social system. It was nice to be there because I got a lot. I got small classes and a lot of attention. ... I remember my English teacher had a deep impression on me. It was small. At Clinton it was ... triple sessions. There were thousands of boys springing in and out of the school, you know, all day long. Some of them ... with very poor backgrounds, and I'm sure there were some comfortable people there, too, but it was a huge maelstrom of human beings. Can you imagine triple sessions? ... You go in, ... and as you leave at the end of the day another session's coming in, and then even another one, and there must have been maybe twenty thousand kids attending that school. It was up in the Bronx. Any of you've heard of Clinton at all?

KP: I have heard of the school.

NS: I don't know what it is today.

KP: Yeah.

NS: I imagine it ... [would be] bigger, I don't know. I swam on the team. ... Somebody mentioned, I don't know, I met somebody who said you ought to come here. They were looking for athletes. ... We got them a little publicity when ... I use to get write-ups in the *New York Times* and things like that, so, it was interesting going to Columbia Grammar School.

KP: Especially after having a year in the public high school.

NS: Yeah, right. It was nice. We wore jackets and ties, and, you know, it was nice.

KP: You mention that swimming got you to Rutgers?

NS: Well, my mother ... wanted to take the child away to the beach in the summer, me, and we joined a beach club in West End, New Jersey. Have you heard of West End?

KP: Oh, yes.

NS: When I was fifteen years of age, I went down to James H. Reilly, the coach. I was telling you about. In the summer, ... he made an extra buck by teaching kids how to swim. I could

swim, and he recognized my ability to swim, and one of the lifeguards got fired and I became a lifeguard at the age of fifteen. I was six feet tall, as big as I am now. I became a lifeguard at the Colony Surf Club it was called, and that's where I met Reilly and he talked me into [Rutgers]. ... I got a scholarship here. I think it was a need scholarship as opposed to an Upson's. They still give Upson's here?

KP: I think they do, but I am not positive.

NS: I got a scholarship, I think a half scholarship. It paid my tuition, and the ... he got me interested in Sammy's [fraternity] and got me a waiter's job and free room and board, so ...

KP: Was this the only college you thought of going to? Had you thought ...

NS: No, I had applied to Yale and Pennsylvania, University of Penn. I wasn't too interested in Penn, but I was interested in Yale, I don't know if my grades were good enough or the contact that I had. My grades weren't that good. The contact that I had was in Europe at the time. The coach's son was supposed to help me get in. I didn't get in. I got rejected at Yale, and I got rejected at Penn, and I got a scholarship here.

KP: Did you think that you ran into the quotas at either school?

NS: I don't think so. ... I don't know what happened at Penn. Penn was nothing. But, I had, I had pull at Yale, and I had pull at Rutgers. You know, Larry was working for me and he knew, at that time it was Fraser Metzger, was the Dean of Admissions. Is Metzger a historical name? A guy by the name of Hill was also. ... I'm trying to think of the name.

KP: Hill, I don't hear often but ...

NS: Fraser Metzger.

KP: I hear about Dean Metzger quite a bit.

NS: Dean Metzger, he came in, I had an interview with him.

KP: What was that like?

NS: It was funny. You know, it was ... pomposities.

KP: Well, could he, I mean, people are really struck by how pompous. ...

NS: ... Am I right? Is that what they still do?

KP: Oh, yes. Most people have had a Dean Metzger story.

NS: Yeah, you were coming into a great man in a big office, and no, it was a funny interview. It's fifty years ago. I don't know.

KP: What did he ask you?

NS: I don't know what the hell he asked me. You know, as pompous as he was, Reilly was the other way around. Reilly was a cigar smoking, free swinging guy. Dean Metzger, Luther Martin, that's the guy, I think ... was the Director of Admissions. Right?

KP: Yes.

NS: These three guys used to sit around and play poker a couple nights a week. That how they ...

KP: They conducted their business.

NS: Conducted their business, right. That's the way I got it, you know. I can't remember, but I know he was ... pompous. I remember he was rather pompous with Fraser Metzger [and] Luther Martin. Luther Martin was a skinny little man. ...

KP: Oh, I know.

NS: Goddamn, this was 1940, I think I'm going back to. It's more than fifty years.

KP: Had you thought of City University at all?

NS: Studying at CCNY?

KP: Yes.

NS: I don't think I had the grades. I didn't want to go to CCNY because, you know, it's not for me, and I wanted to get out of town. I wanted to get away from my mother. You know, my mother was all dominant in my life. I just wanted to get on my own and get away.

KP: It seems like you really liked the idea of going to a private college.

NS: Yeah, this was a small school then.

KP: Yeah.

NS: Yeah. I was only here three years, and it was ... I was exposed to fraternity life, you know. We use to get the entire college into The Barn for what they had convocations on Saturday. It was a congregation. Everybody would hear the president speak once a week or something like that.

KP: Students in fact, have read the *Targum* in your year. They have had to read a semester's worth of *Targum* in order to have an essay based on it, and that is the two things they noticed, how many social activities there were and how dominant the fraternities were.

NS: Fraternities were dominant. This word convocation ... whatever the hell that means. I don't know what that means. Everyone, 3,000 of us, I think it was about 2,500, we all sat there and Clothier would talk to us, or something like that. Clothier was the president, Robert Clothier.

KP: Yeah, you also had mandatory chapel in your day.

NS: I don't think that went past the freshman period. I use to run around the campus with a little dink. Do they still have dinks?

KP: No, the dinks are ...

NS: ... You had to run on the Queens campus, if somebody whistled you had to run. You know, it was traditional and it was cute. But, the little dinks, I remember you had to wear a dink. The fraternity house was at that time at Seventy-eight Easton Avenue, my fraternity.

KP: Which eventually ... Sammy's [fraternity] lost.

NS: They lost that and then they went up to the Phi Gam House, on the river, which burned down when I was overseas.

KP: I have interviewed ...

NS: ... Somebody was killed or something.

KP: I've interviewed, Bart Klion. ...

NS: Bart Klion.

KP: Yes, Bart, he talked about that.

NS: Yeah. He was a lady-killer. I was a senior at that time, you know.

KP: You mention your freshman initiation, what about the fraternity initiation?

NS: Well, they did a little hazing. They use to swat your ass with a paddle, and that was something I carried on when I became an upper-classman, swat the ass of the kids, you know. It was fun, bend over and they swat you with a paddle.

Hector Pimental: So you pledged your freshman year?

NS: I got swatted in my freshman year, but, I mean when I became a senior. I've subsequently met guys, does Leon Katz name mean anything to you? He was involved in Bart Klion's class in that period. I subsequently met the guy in civilian life, many years later. He said I was a "sadist," maybe I was, you know. I use to, you know, hit, that was the extent, it really was mild,

it really wasn't ... I mean, when I read about what's done today, some of these things are ridiculous.

KP: You decided to major in economics, why?

NS: Well, I wanted to make a fortune. I wanted to be a businessman. It was economics, but I don't think you really had a formal business administration course. Although, I think my degree may be written ... no, I think it's natural science. They were feeling their way along as far as business school. This wasn't the best business school at the time as far as I know. You could have gone to the Wharton or Sheffield School. Yes, I wanted to get into business until I took accounting, and then I had to drop accounting right away.

HP: How would you rate your time here?

NS: Rate my time?

HP: Yes, your time here ...

NS: ... Well, when I think back it was a good time. It was a good time. ... I consider myself a poor kid, and it was an opportunity ... a coming out situation with further experiences of life. I think it was good. I got along with these guys in the fraternity house. We were talking about ... at that time Sigma Alpha Mu was all Jewish. I don't think it is now.

KP: Yes, I do not think it is.

NS: My exposure to the swimming team, they were all young Jews, most of them, maybe one or two, so I got a little more broadening coming out of New York City, which was ... all my contacts were Jewish people.

KP: So really, Rutgers was the first time you had significant contact with non-Jews?

NS: Yes, significant. Oh, I had contact. In the city you do come in contact with others, but significantly, it was at Rutgers.

KP: How did you like the swimming team at Rutgers? You did very well at swimming.

NS: Well, yeah, right. Well, I won a national championship and (Charlie Gantner) that I mentioned, was a champion. He was another national champion. We had fun. I got recognition. I got attention. It was fun.

KP: Athletes [who did well] were ... big men on campus.

NS: Well, it still is, isn't it? Isn't it still that way today?

KP: Right.

NS: I used to work at the football games, I use to park cars. I attended all the football games. It was like, mandatory. We all went to football games on Saturday, you know. I was shocked, my daughter went to Douglass and never went to a football game. That was shocking.

KP: Because you felt that you should go?

NS: Yeah, well, it was a social event. Well, I must admit that I picked up five or ten bucks, you know, working in the parking lot. That was a few bucks.

KP: It sounds like you had other odd jobs going...

NS: Yeah, well I, at the fraternity house, I'd wait on the tables and wash dishes once a week. That was about it, and parking cars.

KP: You didn't have any other jobs?

NS: No, no.

KP: What about in the summers?

NS: Summers, I was a lifeguard. I was a lifeguard at the Colony Surf Club. I worked for Reilly.

HP: You did that even through college?

NS: Yeah, I did it about two or three summers like that. Actually, it was eight summers, because I also did it through high school. Yeah, I was a lifeguard. It helped get me through school, you know. ... That was it.

KP: Did your mother expect you to go to college?

NS: Yeah, yeah, very definitively. As a matter-of-fact, in grade school and junior high school I wasn't too bright. ... The social workers had to slot these kids for proper careers. There were Puerto Rican kids, there were black kids, and everything, and they called my mother to school and said I should become a carpenter or something like that. My mother wouldn't hear about it. She was determined that I was going to go. Following my grades didn't call for much better than that at the time, you know. She wouldn't hear about that. Which reminds me, what was the senator from Texas? What was his name? Grant? Bill Grant? "Give me your ..." you know. Did you ever hear his little speech about his mother? He says he had awful grades. I mean, he was doing shitty, and his mother got called to school and [they] said that he had problems and his mother said, "I don't give a damn what his problems are, he's going to go to school and he's going to do it. I don't care what his problems are, I'm going to kill him." So, subsequently he had to go to a private school for ... and he got his PhD in economics and he's a ...

KP: He has had a very successful career.

NS: Yeah, very successful. Academically, he ended up as a professor.

KP: Yeah.

NS: Of economics and like that, and his mother was called in and she said, "I don't give a good goddamn what his problem is, he's going to do it or I'm going to kill him."

KP: Your mother sounds like she was the same way.

NS: Yeah, right. Well, I had to, that's right.

KP: How rough was it coming to college? Was the work harder for you here at Rutgers? Were you prepared for the academic work? You mentioned you had a run-in with accounting. ...

NS: I have, I had a run in with the English. They put me in ... [zero English]. Do they still have a zero English?

KP: No, I do not know if they do.

NS: Well, zero English is your grammar is poor [and] you don't have the composition class. ... I was put in the zero English, and the grammar class, and a comp class. I did all right. I was a "B" student. I only flunked one course and it was in this building, physics ... I flunked it and I got a remake of it. I hired a tutor, Reed. The guy was (Emmet?) something or other, but this was the only course that I flunked. Other than that, ... I dropped bookkeeping, or accounting, I did it within a week or two. I just didn't want it, it was too much for me. I took relatively easy courses. I think I had, you know, history, English, interesting courses, which were very important. I took a music course.

KP: So, it sounds like you enjoyed a lot of your courses.

NS: Yes, I did. I did.

KP: Did you date much with Douglass women?

NS: One woman and that's about all, but not, tentatively. We had all tea dances here and there, but I wasn't into women until I got a little older. I was about nineteen in my sophomore year.

HP: How was the interaction? How would you rate the interaction between Rutgers and Douglas?

NS: The attraction?

HP: The interaction.

NS: Oh, the interaction. At that time, I don't feel it was a hell of a lot. There was not much interaction in those years. I don't think so, was there?

KP: I do not really know.

NS: I don't think there was.

KP: What about the relationship of Sammy's there were the three Jewish fraternities, with the other fraternities?

NS: There was the Phi Ep and the Tau Delt.

KP: What was the relationship between the Jewish fraternities and the other fraternities?

NS: I think there was a certain amount, a little mild competition between the two. Sammy's had excellent grades. They use to have several Phi Beta Kappas there, Jesus, maybe three or four. I think I was rounded out with the athletics. There was another guy, who was a class ahead of me, name of Jerry Levin, he was [a] class before me, and I knew him from New York, also, an athlete, and we rounded out the athletic picture. ... The prior ... head, Bob (Haber?), I don't know, he subsequently passed on. He was a football player or something, and he got hurt and he never played. He had an Upson and they recognized him, and let him stay with the Upson. Upson, I think was a full scholarship.

KP: Yes, a full scholarship. I think it was mainly to football players.

NS: Yeah, right. Well, no, a couple of swimmers got it before me. There was a swimmer that I knew that had gotten it.

KP: Had gotten it?

NS: Yeah, gotten it. Larry use to swing these deals. ... They were the guys that swung these deals. Metzger and Luther Martin and Larry.

KP: So, you got the sense that there was real deal-making going on.

NS: Yeah, well, there was. ... Yeah, right.

KP: You were in ROTC. Everyone had to be in ROTC, right?

NS: Yeah, well, you had to be in ROTC. I wasn't in advanced ROTC.

KP: Why did you decide not to stay in advanced?

NS: I don't ... I think you had to qualify for number two, when it was ... compulsive to freshman and sophomore.

KP: Yeah, freshman and sophomore year.

NS: Well, things moved along very fast. I really only had three years here. I went down to NYU in the summer, because I lived in New York, to make up courses. I told you I graduated in October of 1943 as opposed to June of 1944. You know, when the war broke out, within two weeks this campus was like, stripped. The kids were just running out and enlisting and disappearing, and the campus was like in a trauma within two to three weeks. ... I wanted to try to finish my schooling because I ran down to 33 Pine Street in New York, enlisted in the Reserves because I heard there were programs. You know, the army and Navy were expanding and they couldn't take them all in at once, so they wound up programming, let's say, officer material, so they'd be available as the ships came home. The Annapolis and West Point graduates, whoever it was, did some fantastic job on the logistics of building up the army and Navy. It was just an incredible thing.

KP: Why the Navy as opposed to the army or air force?

NS: I'd say equally. I mean, I don't know too much about the army, you know, I'm assuming they did the same thing.

KP: Yes, but why did you choose that?

NS: Oh, why did I choose that?

KP: Yes.

NS: Oh, I wanted to be a pilot, so I went downtown to lower Broadway to enlist in the Army Air Corp, and apparently I had poor depth perception. It was a thing with pulleys, and you had to line them up, and they rejected me. It was very disheartening and I went across the street and I enlisted in the Naval Reserve. V7 was the program there.

KP: Did you pick the V7 because of your deferment?

NS: Yeah, I was anxious to finish my schooling. Incidentally I was at the time the war broke out, I was enrolled in a CAA, Civil Aeronautics. I was flying a little plane.

KP: You flew out in Hadley Field?

NS: Is that where it is?

KP: Yes, in New Jersey.

NS: Yeah, I flew out of [Hadley Field]... it was driving distance from here.

KP: Yes, the old Hadley Field.

NS: I had soloed several times. I even buzzed the campus a couple of times, but then, I remember, when the war broke out, my mother called me, and my brother called me. They were afraid that I was going to be pulled right into the service, and I dropped out of it.

KP: What led you to join the Civil Aeronautics?

NS: I wanted to fly. I told you that I even went to try and join the Air Corps, but then I dropped out of it when I got family pressure.

KP: When did you start learning to fly? When did you start taking lessons?

NS: I forget what year it was, my sophomore year, maybe.

KP: So you would fly. I do not know if you knew Tom Kindre, but Tom Kindre was in the Civil Aeronautics.

NS: Kindre?

KP: Yes, Kindre. He also flew in that program.

NS: Oh, he did fly in the Civil Aeronautics?

KP: Yes.

NS: Probably had I held onto it, I probably would have gotten past the depth perception.

KP: It is interesting that they rejected you even though you had flown already.

NS: Yeah, I must have told them that I've flown a little bit, you know. I mean, I wasn't that far advanced, but I had a couple hours solo. It was an exciting thing.

KP: Why were you interested in aviation?

NS: Well, it was the up and coming thing, you know, it was a new thing. It was ... I don't know, I think ... heroes were being made already. I don't know, at that time, it sounded like a heroic thing to do. It was exciting, but it didn't come to pass.

KP: You mentioned that the campus was stripped by the war. How did it change the atmosphere of the campus?

NS: Well, it was a nothing campus. ... There were some ROTC units and the Army immediately ... started a ... I forget what they call it, some army program.

KP: ASTP.

NS: ASTP, that's right. That seemed to take over the area. The ASTP, I don't know, I lost contact with it, as I said. Let's see, when did the war break out?

KP: December of 1941.

NS: December?

KP: Yes.

NS: December. So, I'm talking December of 1941. So [in] 1942, yeah, 1942, ... I had finished ... and I went to school that summer in New York at NYU. It must have come around to 1943 again. I had another year here. Oh, oh, I know, that was my junior year, right. Well, it wasn't that stripped in [my] junior year because ... we had the swimming team and events were going on.

KP: Your last year it must have become more stripped in 1942 and 1943.

NS: Forty-three, yeah, it was stripped. I remember I graduated in October, ... there was a very small ceremony. There were five kids graduating. One girl from NJC, New Jersey College, and Clothier's office, Clothier gave me my degree, Robert Clothier.

KP: It sounds like a very small ceremony.

NS: It was a very small thing. I think my mother came in. That was graduation.

HP: Do you know any who graduated?

NS: I know about five or six graduated. I don't know how they all got their degrees. As I said, there was one girl from Douglass and I guess there was still interplay there. Was that part of Rutgers at the time?

KP: Yes, it was part of Rutgers, but very loosely done.

NS: Yeah, no, it was loosely done. Clothier ... I don't know what kind of president he was. He looked like a department store executive to me. He was a very distinguished looking man, a good-looking man. In that period, one of the things that I remember, the big event in my life, was at this Barn, they use to have concerts. Paul Robeson came back and sang. He was a campus hero, you know, in spite of whatever hot water he got in.

KP: It's interesting, because a lot of people had mentioned that, of all kinds of political persuasions, that they all admired Paul Robeson.

NS: They admired and loved him, and I had the opportunity to shake his hand.

KP: At the concert?

NS: After the concert I went backstage, or whatever it was. A very imposing man, he was like six-foot four, very generous of his personality. He had this beautiful voice, sonorous tones and his singing was just thrilling, absolutely, I think one of the greatest voices of this century, you know. We all, at Rutgers, had a great love for him. I knew a guy named Al (Neushaefer?). He

was on the Rutgers football team with Robeson in the Class of 1919. ... Robeson came out for the team in his freshman year. They gave it to him. Robeson was on the ground, he ground his knee into Robeson's head, you know. They were going to beat the crap out of him, but Robeson stood the thing and then he gave them you-know-what. They were out to get him, but they couldn't get him. It was interesting, and this was a comment in later years. He was enormous, just a pillar of strength. He was All-American for two years in a row, you know. He was a wonderful human being and I still feel that way.

KP: How did the war change the swim team and the athletic schedule?

NS: I don't know what the hell kind of swimming team there was after I left. I don't know.

KP: But, while you were here?

NS: We managed through my junior year, we went to Harvard, went to various places in New Haven. We had some schedule. What happened after that I don't know.

KP: Your last year ...

NS: ... That was my big year in swimming.

KP: Really?

NS: I mean for me, personally. My junior year, I won the national championship at the New York Athletic Club and up at Harvard I won the intercollegiate championships. So, I mean, we had, and maybe I'm wrong, and maybe the campus didn't strip that much because that was war years, right?

KP: Yes, yes.

NS: ... Well, the ASTP was flourishing. So, maybe I'm a little exaggerating what took place on the campus. Oh, I remember, we were in a state of shock. Oh, I know that a lot of guys just went off and enlisted. A lot of guys got killed, too.

KP: Do you remember any classmates who did not make it?

NS: Oh, sure. There were several, the department of athletes too. A lot of these young kids got wiped out in Normandy, a lot of freshman, I remember at the time. We lost a lot of people. They might have the figures, didn't we?

KP: We pretty much know who died during the war.

NS: How many people would you say?

KP: It is over a hundred.

NS: Over a hundred? I know about ten or twelve that I can think of, a lot of basketball players. Try to think of his name, Potzer. Emil Potzer. There were a lot of kids in the fraternity house, I can't think of their names, Saperstein, Weinstein, (Weiner?), a lot. ... Kids, they were eighteen, nineteen year old kids. They didn't get past twenty, you know. They were thrown right in Normandy. I know a lot of them went out to the Pacific, too.

HP: You mentioned that you went [to] V7 school. How was that experience?

NS: V7 school was a funny experience. It was a good experience. I brought the book here. There were like 1,500 of us there. They actually had a yearbook at the end of it, it was Notre Dame. ... Here are pictures of everyone there. All the officers to be, and the eight or nine companies. We marched and we went to school. Somehow or other, I got through.

KP: Because the training was fairly rigorous.

NS: Yeah, it was a Spartan existence. It was incredible. Actually, in my case, it was like a gentlemanly way of getting into the service. I reported to somebody in the Grand Central Station as a civilian, you know, and they put us on a train, an overnight train. And the next morning they dumped me into the Notre Dame stadium, the University of Notre Dame stadium. There ... I was in the service, you know what I mean? Now all of a sudden you had a man, "Line up!" You know, "Over here!" ... They started to give you clipped orders. "Do this and do that." ... You were marching. They marched us to a place where we docked our clothes, and they had to send them back, and they gave us issue, you know, so overnight I got in the service.

HP: What was your specialty? What were you training for?

NS: I became a deck officer.

HP: What is it?

NS: Deck officer? You don't know what a deck officer is? Well, a deck officer is involved in administration, running of the ship, duty on the ship when it's underway. You instruct people on how to keep the ship going. You're one of a group of seven or eight officers onboard the ship.

HP: Did you have training as an officer?

NS: Yeah, I became an officer. Well, you start out as an ensign ... and that was out at Notre Dame when I became an ensign. Then ... I got to the amphibious school and went down [to] Norfolk, Virginia. I went to camp down there, and we were grouped together. ... You talk about the transition of my leaving the so-called "ghetto" and "semi-ghetto." Well, I wasn't in a ghetto in Rutgers, but I was still grouped with "my people," so to speak. At Little Creek, in Camp (Bratford?), which is in Norfolk, ... we required 150 sailors and seven officers. ... I was the only Jewish guy in the group, which was my first time. It was fun, and I had no problem. I lived with this group and they became my friends and my shipmates.

KP: Were they surprised to learn that you were Jewish at first?

NS: ... Sometimes, I don't think many of these guys knew what a Jew was. Most of these guys were from Ohio. I don't think most of these guys [knew] what a Jew was, and it didn't bother them and it was funny as life went on and we went overseas. I used to jump off the ship and swim, so they would see me swim. I would go and swim ten lengths of the ship back and forth. The ship was 328 feet long, the length of a football field, a little ship. ... I use to swim, you know, backstroke, and they got to admire my swimming ability, my athletic ability. That's what people admired generally, you know. They had a lot of respect for me as I remember. So, I picked up the crew and then we were sent up in a troop train up to Boston to pick up the ship. That's how we acquired the ship.

KP: People that have gone to Notre Dame have told me that the Navy is a very regimented service, and one of the things that they try to teach you at Notre Dame at the V7 training program is navy protocol.

NS: Oh, it's not a democracy. The army is not a democracy, either. I don't know what it is today, at least when I was there it was no democracy. ... Being an officer you felt like you were part of an elite corps. They used to tell you that you were better, you were the cream. You can imagine what they told the Marines. You were the cream.

KP: What was the hardest part of Notre Dame, the V7 training, what did you find the hardest?

NS: I think navigation. I don't remember one thing. I managed to get through everything. It wasn't particularly hard because they didn't want you to fail, number one, because they needed you. They would fail you if you were ... a dummy, you know.

KP: They were not to wash you?

NS: I don't think so. They were not spending that kind of money to whitewash you, no. They wanted you live up to a certain standard. It was very regimented. Boy, you got to bed at nine o'clock I think, and then you were up at five-thirty, running around. I mean, this was harder than the rest of the war for me, those four mouths, you know. It was an encapsulation of Annapolis, you know, the running around, they really kept you busy. Oh, boy, nine o'clock came, you fell asleep.

KP: Because you were up pretty early.

NS: Yeah, we got up early, classes, forced exercises, running, and all kinds of things. It was a full schedule. Marching to dinner, marching to breakfast, marching to supper, marching, you know. I like marching. It was fun, you know. ... I'm still fascinated when a corps of Nazis goes by, you know, in those pictures ... [of] the goosestep. To me, it's a fascinating thing. It's like watching the Rockettes kick their legs up, you know, it's an incredible thing. They can't do that for too long, you know. I can't imagine that they can do that for too long, you know, it's mainly in review, you know, they are ... pumping away. I liked marching, it was fun.

KP: It sounds like you didn't have a lot of time, but how did you like being in Notre Dame?

NS: Well, Notre Dame was a Catholic school, a religious school. It was stripped, there were very few students going there at the time. Beautiful campus. Churches all around you.

KP: Did you get to any legendary football games?

NS: No ... I was there from February to May.

KP: So, you missed the football season.

NS: There was no football. Again, that campus was stripped, you know. There must have been ASTP there, too, or whatever. I don't know. No, well, they rented it to the Navy, the midshipmen's group. The Navy even built separate special buildings, which I think may still be there, temporary buildings, you know. You know, there may have been an armory, and the people in front of you were like chicken shit, you know, they bossed you around. I'll never forget, I was in the line and ... the guy who was my platoon leader was an ensign, I was a midshipman and he was probably in the class before me. ... I remember one time this [guy yelled out], "Mr. Siegel!" ...

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

NS: I'm scratching my nose, this guy with a southern accent yelled out at me and I was like, embarrassed.

KP: What did he yell out?

NS: He said, "Mr. Siegel, stop picking your nose in the ranks!"

KP: And you couldn't answer back.

NS: No, you couldn't answer. I said to myself, "Fuck you."

KP: Everyone in the squad had heard this.

NS: Yeah, right.

KP: How did you find the food at your training base?

NS: Good. The food was good in the Navy.

KP: Really, even in training?

NS: Good. I have no complaints of the food in the Navy. The food was good in the Navy from midshipman school right on through the service.

KP: What was the background of people in midshipmen school?

NS: Oh, many varied. Some very prominent people came out of this ... James Daly, for instance, you know, that singer. ... His daughter was a big shot ... what's her name?

KP: I think, Tyne Daly.

NS: Yeah, right. He was there, James (Daly?), a guy from the *New York Times* who became a very fine dietician, or something. Some prominent people came out of this class. I didn't know them, but, you know, ... coming through, my wife and I would pick out various people. These guys had all college backgrounds from all over the country.

KP: Was anyone from Rutgers there that you knew?

NS: No, ... never anybody from Rutgers. Never came ... [by] anybody from Rutgers. ... Just at random, you'd look through here at these guys from the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Yale, all over, ... Georgia Tech, chemical engineers, some of them had backgrounds, you know, scholastic backgrounds. They had, at that time, it was the elite of our educational period. They ... were all college people, to speak of. I don't know anybody that wasn't. Unless they came, a few guys may have come through the ranks, ... and were sent to midshipman's school, not too many. College is a priority in the armed services.

KP: It sounds like the navy experience really confirmed how important it was to get your college degree.

NS: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. ... Well, listen, you can have a college degree and end up in a foxhole too. I didn't, you know. Not that I was running away from it, you know, that's what I picked and I was very happy with it.

KP: You mentioned that you went to Virginia, to Norfolk, for amphibious training?

NS: Right, that's where we picked up our crew.

KP: So, you trained with your crew?

NS: With a crew. [I] trained with a crew for several weeks. I don't know how long it was. It was done, I think, mockups, you know, on deck, and then we were put onboard ships, and each man was assigned a counterperson. In other words, ... if I was a gunnery officer, I roomed with a gunnery officer, if you were a quartermaster in the ranks, you roomed with a quartermaster and you watched what he did and did it with him.

KP: Someone with experience.

NS: That's right. See, ... it accelerated the training of everybody. So, we lived maybe two weeks onboard a ship with another crew.

HP: Was that your first assignment out of Notre Dame?

NS: Well, my assignment was assigning me to Norfolk, and, as I said, I got assigned a crew and six or seven other officers.

KP: In Notre Dame you hardly saw a ship.

NS: No, I didn't see any ships.

KP: What was it like to actually be on a ship for the first time?

NS: I liked it. Yeah, I liked it. ... I lived in the dormitory called (Morrissey?) Hall and we use to call it the "Good Ship (Morrissey?) Hall," when you were on campus at Notre Dame. You know, so actually ... it wasn't until I got into the Chesapeake, Norfolk is in the Chesapeake, ... [that] I went on my first ship there, LST, I only was on an LST.

KP: Did you want to serve on an LST? What was your first preference?

NS: Battleship.

KP: You wanted to go on a battleship?

NS: Battleship, yeah, that seemed like the safest. They wanted me to volunteer for scouts and raiders at that time, which was something to do with the ... what do you call it? ... It was the early days of the frogman, and, I guess, I was qualified, and I said, "No."

KP: Did they really encourage you to?

NS: No, they didn't ... they didn't know anything about whether I can swim or not. They were looking for ...

KP: This was a general call for ...

NS: ... I could have volunteered for that, but, I didn't think I wanted to go swimming in the ocean, you know, that way.

KP: You wanted to stay with your crew and your ship because you met them in Norfolk and you trained with them?

NS: Right.

KP: What was the background of the officers you served with?

NS: Oh, they were characters, especially the skipper and the executive officer.

KP: Starting with the skipper. What was his background?

NS: Yeah, let's start with him. His name was P.C. (Greenwell?). P.C. (Greenwell?) was a mailman during peacetime, he used to carry the mail. ... He belonged to the National Guard, the naval National Guard, and he was interested in the Navy, and whatever, and when the war broke out he was put onboard a tugboat in New Guinea, or out in the far reaches, or maybe in the Coral Sea. He was a tugboat skipper and he was like a chief quartermaster, which is an enlisted man, like a master sergeant, and he was the skipper of this little tugboat and, God, I don't know what the hell, he must have seen some action. I don't know what it was. ... The war was a very fragmentary thing in the beginning there, I don't know. Anyway, when they started to build these LSTs, which were assault ships for amphibious warfare, these ships were made all over. They were made in Illinois, and they came down to Mississippi, and they were made in Boston. ... Then when you graduated from midshipman's school you could say you wanted to go to a battleship or a destroyer, but they would put you where they needed you, and they needed officers for the amphibious force, okay? So, (Greenwell?) was pulled in as the chief quartermaster and assigned to this LST situation, and he was jumped from quartermaster to full lieutenant, which is like a captain in the Army. The captain of a ship, you know, he was a full lieutenant, so he had two bars, from being an enlisted man. He was a little fat man. He was forty-three years old, that's an old man.

KP: In the Navy ...

NS: ... To me. I was twenty-one, he was forty-three, that was an old man. He was the skipper and he was really salty. I mean, after all he'd been in the Pacific and ... he was great. When I think back, he was a beautiful character. He used to have a pipe in his mouth, and he was a real loud man. ... The executive officer was a guy by the name of Ed Day. Ed Day was a lawyer, who'd gotten his commission through political pull, so, they were some combination. Ed Day was like a lawyer, he was a sissy, you know, he had a big ass, narrow shoulders; you know what I'm saying?

KP: He also sounds like he was a wheeler-dealer.

NS: Yeah, he was a wheeler-dealer, he definitely was, and he was a pain in the ass. ... He knew from the book. ... He only knew from the book, you know what I mean? He was very ... he was like a marionette. ... I use to like to sleep and he used to bother me. He used to get me out of the sack. So, he was such a wheeler-dealer. I'll jump to start. Ed Day, after service years, he became Chief Supreme Court Justice in Colorado.

KP: Really?

NS: Yeah. ... He became an important guy. Anyway, these two guys use to sit around. ... After we left Boston and we went through the Canal, Captain (Greenwell?) had me turn over all the alcohol to him, and these two would sit with grapefruit juice and alcohol and they were polluted. They were drunk the whole time. Did you see *Mr. Roberts* ever?

KP: Oh, yeah, a long time ago.

NS: Yeah, he used to polish his braid and he did this for lieutenantancy to get ahead, you know.

KP: (Greenwell?)?

NS: (Greenwell?). He was a character.

KP: And they seemed to go along with it?

NS: They went along with it. He used to sit and drink all day long when we were at sea. I'll never forget, I was in the conning tower, where it's way up high and you're navigating. You're telling them left ten degrees, right five degrees, and you're following the plan of the book, and (Greenwell?) had a room, the office. The captain had a big room, big [and] personal, but on the way, he would sleep in what they call a seagoing room and he was underneath the conning tower. I'll never forget, we were going through a squall, in line with other two other LSTs, and [the] squall suddenly ... and I yelled out, "Skipper, Skipper, we just ran into a squall." So, he was down there, and his voice tube ... and I'll never forget. He says, "Skipper, aye" and his breath came up that tube and here this was the voice tube and he just hit me with his breath. It was, you know, he yelled "Skipper" and I'll never forget that was one of my memorable moments about P.C. (Greenwell?).

KP: That ship was against almost every regulation. I mean, you weren't supposed to have beer parties.

NS: Officer, all officers. Yeah.

KP: I mean ...

NS: Well, who knew, he was drinking alcohol, this was government alcohol.

KP: How many members of the crew knew that he was drinking?

NS: We all did.

KP: Everyone knew?

NS: Everybody knew, yeah, of course. We had in the overseas, there was officer clubs where you could go out and where you got drunk.

KP: Yes, but that was off the ship.

NS: Off the ship, yeah. No, no. This was ... [on the ship.] Another funny thing when we were in the Philippines, ... (Greenwell?) was a terrific ladies man. He had ten children or something like that, but he could chase the broads. He brought a woman onboard in the Philippines, which was the first white woman I'd seen in months. He brought her onboard ship and took her to his room and they had big keyholes, you know, in this thing, and we all took turns looking and watching him screw this woman that he brought onboard. The junior officers lined up. We were

so horny that we just lined up and watched. “Now me! Now me!” ... I’ll tell you, it was a funny situation. It was war, but we had a lot of laughs.

KP: It sounds like you had this captain and his exec that really ...

NS: But the skipper was good.

KP: But, it was important ...

NS: He was good. He took us through hurricanes, he navigated, he knew what he was doing, you know, he was qualified. He was completely qualified.

KP: It sounds like, in terms of discipline, he led a fairly loose ship.

NS: Yeah, we all were. Right, right. It was a reserve ship, it was not a ...

KP: Did you have Annapolis people onboard?

NS: No, no.

KP: What about any other older chiefs. Did you have any experienced chiefs?

NS: The chiefs? We had several chiefs.

KP: Were they all reserve?

NS: No, some were regular Navy. Oh, yeah, no, no. We had a fourteen-year-old kid board the ship who lied, said he was seventeen. ... We had a man, who was maybe sixty-five, who lied and said he was forty-five.

KP: How did you discover that?

NS: Well, I knew that (Pappy Price?) was a man ... in his sixties. They wouldn’t take you in. He was part of the Black Gang. The Black Gang ran the motors. The Black Gang were down in the hold keeping those big things going. I don’t know.

KP: He was part of the engineers?

NS: An engineer, yeah. He was probably a very qualified man. I guess he wanted to join the service, and we had a fourteen-year-old kid, who probably wanted to get away from home, you know.

KP: What about the other officers? You had two colorful characters.

NS: These were the most colorful, the other guys were kind of bland, like me.

KP: What was their background? Do you remember?

NS: Yeah, they were all college men. Every one of them were college men.

KP: What parts of the country did they come from?

NS: Well, (Pennington?), ... [who] I was close to ... was from Nathan's Creek, South Carolina, wherever the hell that was. You know, he graduated, I think, from the University of South Carolina. I subsequently had a reunion with him, had dinner with him recently.

KP: What was that like after these years?

NS: Very nice. (Pennington?) was an engineer and after the war he went back on the GI Bill of Rights and became a doctor, he became a radiologist.

KP: You did not know this until you met with him?

NS: No. ... [Do] you know what a yeoman is?

KP: Yes.

NS: All right, we had a chief yeoman, he was only nineteen or twenty, and he, after the war, went back to college and he became a successful newspaperman of some sort. He moved to Penn State and he's been trying to get all the boys together.

KP: How interesting.

NS: He works the computer, he writes for the Navy department, and he's traced to a lot of the people.

KP: Did you ever have a reunion?

NS: I never had the reunion. ...

KP: He's working on it.

NS: He's communicating. It's rather impossible. ... Now they're all well-to-do, or comfortable, and they're all over the country, but he updated me on several of them. I got (Pennington's?) phone number through him. ... I called a guy from Louisiana, another brother officer. I got it on Sprint, you know, Sprint at ten cents a minute.

KP: Yeah.

NS: Well, I called a couple of my brother officers, shocked the pants off them. They hadn't heard from me in fifty years.

KP: It sounds like you both enjoyed it.

NS: I enjoyed it. It was fun ... they were thrilled. "Oh, wait a minute, I want to go in the next room," you know, when they got the call. "Siegel, Lieutenant Siegel, reporting, sir." It was fun. Yeah, I thought it was fun. I'd like to see some of these guys, you know.

KP: It sounds like after the war you all lost touch.

NS: Oh, yeah, completely. Hey, listen, another world started then. You had to make a living.

KP: What was aboard ship? You wrote in the *Rutgers Alumni Magazine* that you were Possibly the slowest minor moving man of war in this modern navy. You covered a lot of mileage, a lot of miles.

NS: This is a history of the USS *LST*. I'm not going to read everything to you, but there are some statistics here. "A summary of the operations of the ship during this period will reveal that she traveled 35,542 miles; that she transported 620 various types of mobile equipment from one-quarter ton trucks to eight ton vehicles for a total gross tonnage of 5,514 tons. Army and Navy enlisted personnel, exclusive of the crew, carried during that time numbered 4,304, plus 189 officers." It was a ferryboat. So we ... picked up the ship in Boston, and we came down and loaded up some cargo in New York, and then went down through the Canal. From that point on until we got out to the Pacific where we continued the logistical movements. How these people, the Navy, ever did this? They had thousands of these little ships and then they had Liberty ships. I mean, my most impressionable thing that I have of the United States Armed Forces is being in convoy in the Pacific, moving up, where as far as your eye could see there was nothing but auxiliary ships in movement, Liberty ships, [and] LSTs. We would go into a pattern, each ship had a secret document and to avoid submarine contact they would all go like this, then they would go like that. It was called a zigzag motion, you know, ... as far as your eye could see, you know. When you look at this, you say, "My God, these things didn't exist two years ago, the industrial might of this country." This is one of the things that stays in my mind. ... we weren't freed babies. We were told where to go. "Go to Los (Neglos?)," "go to Zamboanga," "go here." Who the hell was telling us where to go? Amazing. We had a schedule every day. It was amazing. Thousands of ships, I don't know who the hell these guys were that were doing this, this was before computers, you know.

KP: Were most of your missions part of a convoy, or did you ever go solo?

NS: Well, when we went through the Canal, we went solo.

KP: Did you stop in Hawaii?

NS: Yeah, we didn't go to Hawaii.

KP: You didn't even stop at Hawaii?

NS: No, no. We went through the Canal on the Equator out to a place called Espiritu Santo. I don't know if you ever heard of that one.

KP: No, people have mentioned it, though.

NS: Espiritu Santo ... this is a log of all the places we went to. It's boring to read, but everything like names like Dumageute, Manus Island, the Lingayen Gulf, I made that invasion in Okinawa. I didn't get to Iwo Jima, Biak, Peron, Japan, many places in Japan. So it was a ferryboat. They just kept right on moving and during that period ... here's the final summation. These were the most exciting parts of my career. Our contact with the enemy, I saw enemy in the distance. I saw some Zeros, but they were remote. We carried a lot of anti-aircraft guns onboard.

KP: Did you ever use the guns?

NS: Yeah. I'll tell you when we used the guns. I was sitting in the Manila Bay preparing for the final assault on Japan, we were preparing. It was called Operation ... I forgot what it was called. Anyway, they dropped the bomb, okay? And then we were sitting there and they dropped the second bomb, we were still sitting there. We were in preparation of the final assault, I think it was "Operation Coronet" that's what it was called. Then the Emperor came out with the rice scripts saying "Drop your arms, we're surrendering." Well, all hell broke loose in that harbor. We started shooting our guns. We shot all over the place ... the fireworks were just unbelievable, and you were lucky ... some of the ammunition went on other ships. That's when the real big time we used it.

KP: So, this is the only time you shot your guns in combat?

NS: We were not really in combat.

KP: Well, in celebration.

NS: It was in celebration. We had big guns. I had ten twin forties onboard the ship that was, you know, great big guns, and a lot of twenties all over the ship. I don't remember ever using them in combat.

KP: No kamikazes?

NS: In the distance I saw a couple of kamikazes, once.

KP: But, never close enough.

NS: Never close enough that we could take a pot shot at them. The hardest part of this war was during the period of occupation of the Japanese empire. The ship was in four typhoons, one at anchor in Tokyo Bay and three off the coast of Okinawa. We didn't suffer serious damage and in October 10th, 1945 it was in winds of up to 120 miles per hour and rode in the seas with a height of about fifty feet.

KP: Because a number of people had been in combat, in tough combat in the Navy, and they said that typhoons are far more ...

NS: I went through four typhoons and one hurricane in the Chesapeake where we almost ended up on the beach. You know, the ship was being pulled in, and I ... Talk about Ed Day, I remember when Ed Day went into his compartment one day and he said he was sitting there with the bible doing his rosary. I was rather contemptuous of him, because, after all, I was a swimmer. If the goddamn ship fell over, I would just swim. I was twenty-two years old, you know what I'm saying?

KP: He was down there ...

NS: He was doing his rosary, he was shitting in his pants during the storm. The goddamn ship was going like this and like that. You know, the typhoons and the hurricanes were incredible. A hurricane is the same as a typhoon, except that it's in the Pacific.

KP: Was there any fear that the ship might capsize or roll over?

NS: I never feared, the ship would bend and buckle and roll, you wouldn't believe it. ... I don't know, these things just didn't bother me. I don't think when you're twenty-two you're that frightened. Today I'd be frightened, you know. ... This ship would hit a wave ... I don't know if you know how this ship was built?

KP: They have a very low weight. They're basically on top of the water.

NS: Basically on top of the water. If you hit a wave, you would direct the guy on the steering to hold the bow of the ship into the wave. If you hit the wave hard, dead on, the goddamn ship, ... the whole deck would buckle, oscillate, you know? You'd think it was going to tear up, but they were a very seaworthy little vessel. ... I had a room as big as this, my personal room, I'd say about this big.

KP: You didn't share with someone else?

NS: No, only when ... we took officers on. When we took some soldiers ... they slept with me.

KP: Because most navy ships are very cramped.

NS: Yeah, well, I'd say the room was as big as, from the window to here, you know.

KP: By Navy standards that's pretty luxurious.

NS: Yeah, it was nice. I had my own little room. I would sit there and I'd write a letter or read a book. ... The only time I shared my bunk, ... I'll never forget. A guy came in that was forty months in the jungle. The guy was sleeping in the woods all the time. ... I said, "Take the clean bunk." I met him outside and I said, "You're going to share the room with me, take the clean

bunk, which is the one on the bottom.” I like to sleep up high, but it’s better ... the one on the lower bunk, you would think, is the most comfortable. I’d told him to take that clean bunk on the bottom, you know. Fine. I go into the room and goddamn it, he’s in the top bunk in my sack. Now, this is sacrilegious to go into my sack, and I was pissed. “What the hell are you doing in my sack?” I said, “This bottom bunk is clean and neat.” He said, “All I saw was a bed.” After all, he’d been sleeping on the ground for the last four years. ... Yeah. So, I’m just saying, that was the only time I was inconvenienced.

KP: You ferried troops that had been in combat, sharing this room with this guy, who had been in the jungle for a long time.

NS: We used to talk to these guys and we’d get war stories from the guys that were in the jungle.

KP: And what did they tell you about?

NS: Oh, they’d tell you some gruesome stories and you didn’t know whether to believe half of them. Yeah, they’d kill people and they would ... Talk to Charlie Dan, he tells you how they carried a machine gun and killed people. It’s another world, you know. I saw some dead Japanese here and there, but not too much.

KP: It sounds like you realize that some people had really a tough war.

NS: Oh, sure.

KP: I mean, someone not being aboard ...

NS: Oh, yeah. I had a clean war. I mean, I saw stiffs. ... Bodies in the water for a long time ... blows up to a big white blob. I saw things like that, you know, and I was in the war zone. ... That’s all I can tell you, fortunately, I didn’t get it, you know.

KP: One of the reasons that people join the Navy was in fact that people said you got three squares a day, you had clean sheets, and you got a shower.

NS: Yeah, but the guys on the aircraft carrier got the shit kicked out of them. They didn’t have such a good time.

KP: Yes, it would be very dangerous.

NS: For instance, another thing when I was in the Pacific, we heard about the *Indianapolis*. I don’t know what happened to it, it blew up, it broke down, and I heard that they, maybe a year before that, there was such a thing as the bomb. I thought it was such tight security.

KP: You heard about it? Where?

NS: In the officer's clubs. The Navy would secure an island lets say. ... Initially there was island hopping. Manus was a place where the Japanese were. They'd secure that, or they went to Espiritu Santo, the Japanese had been there, ... a whole bunch of islands. Let's say, Manus, for argument sake. I get to Manus, we went ashore, [and] there was a big officers' club. They built it, by the Seabees. They just built a big officers' club. As a matter-of-fact, it was kind of comical, you'd walk into the [officers' club]... they had urinals, and you'd have painted on the urinals Mussolini with his mouth open, and Hitler with his mouth open. You'd pee in their mouths. You know what I mean? So, what was the point I was trying to make?

KP: You mentioned the bomb.

NS: Oh, yes. In these places for two bucks you could get yourself so drunk, you got little chits, and we drank. ... We drank a little bit at the ... [fraternity] house, not too much, that was the first time I was ever drunk, at a Sammy's party. We were all so bored at being at sea, you know, that we were going to try to get drunk. We were in there to get drunk. So, you'd have a shot of scotch and you'd have a beer chaser. It didn't take very long before you were out of your head.

KP: Really, on the ship you didn't drink much?

NS: No. Oh, I had a couple of bottles, officers could do that. Yeah, but I had a couple of bottles. I used it mainly for trading purposes. You know, they were worth fifty, sixty bucks or more. You know, the crew would give it to you, because you know, they never had, they never had anything other than beer. What was my point I was trying [to make]?

KP: You were drinking.

NS: Oh, yes. So, in these officers' club you met men from other ships and scuttlebutt was the conversation. Somebody told us, I remember, a discussion about the *Indianapolis* and that we had a bomb that was like the equivalent of 50,000 tons of TNT. We said bullshit. Nobody even believed it. So, I'd heard rumors, there'd been a rumor in the armed services that there was such a thing coming.

KP: Before the actual bombing.

NS: Before the actual bombing. I mean, to me, it didn't mean anything.

KP: It sounds like it only made sense after the bomb had gone off.

NS: That's right. I'm just saying I didn't believe it. Who could make 50,000 tons? It was incomprehensible, you know. But I mean, we had heard about it at the officers club. This is where you had the opportunity to meet other officers', it was a big social club.

KP: And it sounds like in some ways it was a lot of fun, the officers' club?

NS: Yeah, that was. It was only for officers, though. The crew, they used to give them two six packs, or something like that, and they'd put them out on an island and let them get drunk. I

remember the kids when they came back they would be ... this color, they were so sick. We'd pull them up in cargo nets, you know, from the small boats. The ship was in the bay and we'd pull them up in cargo nets. I'll never forget, it was the first time I ever got drunk. I only did it once or twice because it wasn't worth it. The ship has got a high freeboard. You know what freeboard is? You'd come in, if you didn't come in the cargo net, you come in the small boat and then there was a ladder you had to climb to get, to get up to the deck, which was like two stories high off the water, you know. So, I remember climbing this Jacob's ladder and then rushing into the head and sticking my head in the toilet and throwing up. I remember that.

KP: Did you ever get seasick?

NS: I was seasick all the time.

KP: Really?

NS: All the time, I didn't feel well.

KP: I could imagine with the alcohol that that just made it horrible.

NS: Well, I didn't drink very much, just one or two times. I'm citing ... Captain (Greenwell?) and Lieutenant Day. They were drunk.

KP: They were the drinkers.

NS: They were happily pickled all the time, but they were qualified.

KP: It also sounds like the captain didn't get drunk in typhoons and stuff.

NS: Oh, no. He knew what to do, no question, the man pulled us out. ... He was an "old salt."

KP: It sounds like his language was pretty crude, too.

NS: Not too, he was pretty gentlemanly. ... We were like children. He was twenty-five years older than me, you know, and I'll never forget him, with a pipe, a little fat man. But, he was the captain, P.C. (Greenwell?).

KP: What about the crew? What was their background?

NS: We were a bunch of young men from all over the country, mainly Ohio. Nice kids. All good young men.

KP: Did you have any stewards on board?

NS: Yeah, we had three black stewards, three or two. Black stewards were ... they were in the caste system. They made my bed, they fed me, they did my laundry. I mean, I was like a ... I never had it so good. ... The funny thing, one steward ... was about six-foot-two inches tall. Tall

kid from South Carolina, he was Ebenezer (Chaney?), southern boy. This kid, they abused the hell out of this kid. I'll never forget the kid ate the captain's cake one day, or something like that. They had a court-marshal, a summary court-marshal, put the kid on fish and (punk?) for a week. You know what fish and (punk?) is? It's bread and water. ... He was sort of a big gangling sort of a guy and I liked him. This guy (Shultz?) put me in contact with him, his phone number. Chaney called me. He lives in California, and I called him back, and had a long talk with him.

KP: What is he doing now?

NS: He told me he was in the trucking business. He probably had a truck, and he had about eight children and no longer living with his wife. We talked for about a half hour and we discussed all the other members of the crew, and he was very articulate and we talked. ... Finally, I thought this guy was about two years younger than me. So, I said, "By the way, Ebenezer, how old are you now?" He says, "Eighty-two." I almost dropped my teeth. The guy was in his thirties when he was ...

KP: He was a steward?

NS: He was a steward. He was about ten years older than me.

KP: How did he feel about his experiences? For example, being in a summary court-marshal for eating a cake and being put on bread and water?

NS: I don't know. It was a ridiculous thing to do this to him. But, that's the way the Navy is. The Navy is petty.

KP: You were living in some ways a privileged life as an officer.

NS: Sure, but my first reaction when the war was over and ... the bombs were going all over ... "now I got to get a job." Now I really had to get a job. Life was just beginning, you know.

KP: Had you thought of staying in the Navy?

NS: Little bit. Not too seriously, a little bit.

KP: You were supply officer.

NS: Right, I was a storage officer. That was my [job] storage officer. I was a deck officer, but that was ... my responsibility. There were gunnery officers, there were communications officers, there was an engineering officer, we were all deck officers. We all had various categories. I was in charge of storage, which was good. I could go down to the freeze box and ... I left with a couple gallons of ice cream. Everybody said, "... ice cream." It was my own ice cream though. Yeah.

KP: One of the things I've gotten talking to people in the services is that there is a lot of wheeling and dealing. The Navy has a lot to deal with since their supplies are better.

NS: Well, mine were small potatoes, only onboard this ship.

KP: You did not deal with other ships? You did not trade with the army?

NS: No. There were things, PT boats would come and beg for water. Remember, Kennedy was on a PT boat? So, they were like the dregs, the PT boats. They didn't have provisions. This was a big ship, I mean, a big little ship. ... We carried all our own supplies for months on end. ... We'd pull up to a supply ship and we'd get big rounds of steak and meat. A PT boat, they had no place for storage. I think they probably lived off an island somewhere, you know.

KP: So, they would be begging for food.

NS: Sure, they were begging, you know. It was like the caste system, you know, the rich and the poor, even though we were the same branch. It was sort of funny.

KP: What about your showers? Were they salt water or fresh water?

NS: I had both. I could turn them on. We carried what they called evaporators and we could make fresh water. The crew probably got salt water, I think they might have been salt water. There's special soap that you can use for salt water. You know, all these things come back to me now.

KP: Did anyone on the ship ever get seriously hurt, or killed? Even though you weren't in combat, accidents happen.

NS: I got hurt once. I had a fistfight with a brother officer.

KP: Over what? What did you do?

NS: Well, ... you talked about my ethnic background. I told you I was the only Jewish guy aboard ship and this guy was a Texas guy. His name was Tex (Latson?), a big kid, my age. We went ashore, and ... we have a certain date of rank. I outranked him, maybe by a couple of months, you know what I'm saying? Whatever it was ... I was in charge of this boat and we went ashore somewhere, somehow, and I don't know, maybe I took too long getting back. I came back and the boat's not there. So, I had to hitch a ride on somebody else's boat and get dropped off and this guy (Latson?) was, at that time, the officer of the deck. That means, "I request permission to come aboard, sir." You know, I said, "What the fuck did you leave me on the beach for? You had no right to take this boat," and he says, he said something to me ... I think once he said Jew to me and I didn't appreciate that and he was bigger than me, but I had felt him out, I had boxed with him previously. We had a boxing bout, which I was in charge of.

KP: So, you would have boxing bouts onboard the ship?

NS: Yeah, we had boxing bouts onboard the ship and I was the athletic officer. I had boxing bouts with this guy. He couldn't box worth a shit. So, I swung at him, I hit him right in the eye, and he hit me back. I still have a knot on the top of my head where he hit me. He was very strong. They stopped the fight, that was the only time I got hurt. We were both confined to our rooms by the skipper. Eventually, this guy was a bad boy, he jumped ship, actually.

KP: Really?

NS: Yeah, he didn't come up, you know, we were in a port and we left without him. That's the only time we ever lost anybody.

KP: What happened to him?

NS: I don't know what happened, he might have gone on another ship. The next thing I knew, his gear was sent somewhere else. He was reassigned. That could be a court-marshal. He was a bad boy. That's the only time I ever got hurt.

KP: What about the crew, did they ever get in trouble? Were there any discipline problems?

NS: I don't think there were discipline problems. They were all good men.

KP: What about gambling? How much gambling?

NS: Gambling? I had this black cook, the name was (Mitchell?). He came to me one day, in my room, with five thousand dollars. He said, "Can you hold this for me, Mr. Siegel?" ... So, I held it for him. He was afraid that they'd ... I don't know. ...

KP: He obviously trusted you. That's a lot of money. Five thousand was a lot

NS: Oh, yeah. It's a funny thing, after the war, I worked in the garment center in New York City and there he was. He was an elevator man in one of the buildings in New York. I had contact with him for a number of years.

KP: Do you know what he ever did with the five thousand? Did he ever buy a house?

NS: I have no idea. He might have bought a house. I don't know.

KP: Because five thousand then was a lot.

NS: How you going to carry it around, in the service? In his duffle bag, I guess, he could have, but they all knew he had it. They must have had a craps game. That was funny. I think I sold him a bottle of scotch for sixty bucks. In Norfolk ... you could buy all this stuff in a small store. So, I remember somebody said, "Get yourself extra bottles of liquor." You know, I had a room I could store it. So, I think I might have sold him a bottle of liquor for sixty bucks.

KP: You mention you stopped at some of the islands, and some of the islands just had military people, but some of them like the Philippines had civilians. How much contact did you have with different people from different countries?

NS: Well, not in the Philippines. ...

KP: Well, the captain obviously did, you mentioned.

NS: Yeah, ...he picked this woman up in Manila. ... In the Philippines I was very sexually oriented. I think I went to a couple of houses of prostitution. ... I'll never forget we had a lineup of ... [guys] from here to that building. [These were] guys lined up for prostitutes in the Philippines.

KP: They were waiting in line to get into the houses of prostitution.

NS: They were waiting in line. ... In some places there were fathers and sons on the same line. I remember that one, and then I remember the officer. I wouldn't go, but then when we closed them down, we were all doing SP duty, Shore Patrol. Going into it, it was a privilege time when the officers went to the prostitutes. Girls of like fourteen and fifteen years of age, it was difficult to even go. ... It was hard.

KP: So, you would have to shut these down?

NS: Yeah, we would shut them down after awhile. You patrolled them or policed them and then you'd shut them down and then the officers would take care of their occasions. But, as I remember there was a fourteen or fifteen year old girl. You'd read about them in the papers. That's what they were. These were Philippines girls. In Japan I had more contact with the civilians and people. I had a love affair with a Japanese girl in Japan.

KP: You did occupation duty?

NS: Yeah, I occupied for about six months.

KP: Where did you serve occupation duty?

NS: Well, in Tokyo and Yokohama.

KP: What was it like to be with the Japanese? They were really the dreaded enemy.

NS: The Japanese are an amazing people. I don't know what the hell they are today. We bugabooed and bugabooed about how horrible people they are with big teeth and ... [about how], they were ferocious fighters. When we got there they were told to lay their arms down and they laid their arms down. I'll never forget, I was in northern Japan in a place called (Sendai?). ... We'd just landed and, you know, this ship had bowed doors and the ramp came down and there may have been ten or twenty of them lined up and plenty of cargo would roll off of it. So, this was maybe late at night and I remember about two, three o'clock in the morning we took a walk

into (Sendai?), which was an industrial town. This was maybe a couple of weeks after the peace treaty. I won't forget, I was with another brother officer we were just walking through these little quaint streets and suddenly a whistle blew, it was in a factory, and these people come tumbling out. They were all wearing a uniform. They looked like soldiers, but they were civilians, and boy, we were backing up against the wall, and I put my hand on my pistol, not that I would ever use it, and these people come streaming out, and when they got near us they went right around us, like we didn't exist. ... All my exposures with them were just sweet and gentle and they were trying to make you comfortable.

KP: The woman you met, that you had an affair with, how did you meet her?

NS: Well, this was an interesting story. I had occasion to run into my half-brother a couple of times. I had a half brother who was onboard a communications ship. ... It probably coordinates the entire fleet ... and ... [they] probably [were] the ones that were giving the orders, you know, and he was able to find me and we had a couple of rendezvous together. He went to Cornell and one of the guys that went there was (Mitzui?). (Mitzui?) was a big trading family, just like Mitsubishi. It's an old name. At that time the country was run by five or six big families, they were trading companies and all sorts of things. ... We looked up, he knew he had a guy at Cornell whose name was Roger (Mitzui?), and we looked up, there was a phone book, [so] we looked up and found Roger (Mitzui?). So, within a couple of weeks after the signing the treaty, I found myself in Japan with my brother and Roger (Mitzui?) drinking beer, Japanese beer, which is excellent, and singing college songs.

KP: He would be singing along too?

NS: Of course, of course, he was 4-F, he said, you know, or the equivalent thereof. He worked for (?) with a newspaper and they invited us to his house to a party, and I met this girl, who I made a pass at and I connected with her. She took me home and I was making love to her for about a couple of months. She was wonderful.

KP: So, it sounds like the occupation ...

NS: ... The occupation was a relief. It was fun. At that time, my ship was parked in Yokohama it became a store ship. I mean, it became a retail store. I use to leave at eight o'clock in the morning and would come back at night, or sometimes I would stay overnight, and I was traveling back and forth in Yokohama to (Coma Cora?) She lived in the town of (Coma Cora?). So, I had a marvelous time there. Yeah, I had a good several months with her. So, I say, yeah, she was nice girl. I'll never forget, when I went out [with] her, I tried to make out. She said, "No, not on the first date." She was just like an American girl. She said, "Not on the first date." She spoke English.

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

KP: You were just saying.

NS: I was saying you talk about the typhoons being frightening to some people. It was frightening. I remember being in the eye of the typhoon, very interesting.

KP: It must be a strange experience.

NS: Very. It's sort of calm and it's a wall of clouds all around you. It's like a doughnut, and then eventually you go into the doughnut. Then you get these sixty and seventy foot waves. What a seventy-foot wave is, or a fifty-foot wave, you go up and down the wave. ... They're not rollers. In the ocean there not rollers, they're just peaks and valleys. In other words you could be way up and you had to stay far away from another ship because you could crash into them. You'd go way up on the top of the wave and you could look way down, you know, into the valley. You have to be at least a mile apart. It's very easy to crack into another ship, because once a ship moves, you chart ... changes direction. ... Some people say that was the most exciting, huh?

KP: Yes.

NS: Except me, I'm a water boy.

KP: The person, the woman you had an affair with in Japan, had you given any thought to marriage?

NS: I thought of it at the time, but ... it was early, a lot of people did marry Asians. I felt like ... she was a wonderful girl, Jesus, she was a wonderful girl. No, I don't think I even conceived of it. I was too oriented to being Caucasian, you know. My mother wouldn't have liked it, but as I think back, I might have been very happy with this girl because, boy, she was a great girl.

KP: Really?

NS: I wrote to her, she never answered me, after the war.

KP: You said there was a lot you liked about Japanese society.

NS: Yeah, I got to be a (Japo phile?). I got to like them because this girl was so nice to me that I got to. I found them very warm. ...

KP: You also saw, Yokohama and Tokyo. They were very devastated cities.

NS: Oh, you have no idea. Going back would be ... interesting ... Tokyo was ... leveled. You know, they talk about the atomic bomb. Tokyo was firebombed. Mile after mile was just nothing. ... The structures, I think, were mostly paper in those years. But, it was just ... lot after lot was zero. ... [It] just smelled. ... Little shops appeared or peddlers appeared, they were selling their wares. I'll tell you what struck me about Japan. ... At that time they had a subway system going from Yokohama to Tokyo and there were a lot of spots in each town, ...I can't remember the names but they were weigh stations, or stops in-between, and you'd board the train at Yokohama and, I don't know, the country was supposed to be devastated. People piled into

these subways, as I see them even now, and they're all up to here, you know. Mostly they're little guys and squeezed in, like in the subway in New York City, more so, because the stationmaster would just push them in.

KP: So, you saw people being pushed?

NS: Yeah, I got pushed in but they're all up to here on me. Not that I didn't see. You know, every so often you'd run into a guy six foot two and a girl six foot. I've seen them, too, but by and large, they're little people, but they have some big people. Well, look they've got this baseball pitcher, six foot three inches. A great big boy, you know. ... They were very nice. Some of them shunned you, but they were never rude. I guess when I was going with this girl people used to turn around, turn away, they didn't approve of a white guy with a Japanese girl, you know. ... They're very much into their own purity of race, too.

KP: You got that sense?

NS: Oh, yeah. She was an outcast. She had no right to be with me. I remember that. Oh, yeah, they're very, what's the word? ...

KP: Yes, that's ethnic purity.

NS: Ethnic purity. Racial purity. ... They look down to Chinese and they have various grades of Japanese that have Chinese background that are to this day, you know, looked down on.

KP: Did it surprise you? Did it surprise you at how well Japan has done since the war?

NS: Oh, oh, the point I was going to try to make, also, I told you that they rush into the subway. Where the hell were they going? Did they have jobs to go to? I was completely impressed with the dynamism of the society. They were going somewhere. They were going to work machinery. ... They had jobs they were going to, and in the evening they came back. So, I was very much impressed with their energy. Even then they were working. They never stopped working even though the country was in big trouble. The dynamism of the human being. They're hard, hard workers. So, I'm a little shocked that they're having problems there now.

KP: The fact that Japan was so successful in the '70s and '80s does not come as a surprise.

NS: No, because I remember saying I couldn't believe the dynamism of the people, that they had some place to go and they were doing something. You know, you'd think they were devastated. ... That was no surprise, but I'm a little unhappy and surprised at what's happened now, why they slowed down. There must be economic reasons for this.

KP: So, it sounds like you are someone who's willing to buy a Japanese car after the war.

NS: I own Japanese cars. I'm on my third Japanese car.

KP: There are a lot of vets from the Pacific theater who are very hostile Japanese cars.

NS: I know. Some say the same thing about Mercedes. It's gone. To me, it's over with already. I don't blame the youth of Germany or the youth of Japan. ... In those days there was Tojo, there was Hitler. I loved it. Japanese cars are very well built. My daughter just bought a new Camry. The Mercedes, I wouldn't care to buy a Mercedes, the Germans have a deeper hold on me than the Japanese.

KP: Than the Japanese?

NS: The Japanese are ruthless too, I mean, what they did to our people. ... They were no better, the "Rape of 1939" and all that. They were horror shows. That's because they do what they're told to do. They're robotic. I don't know about now, but they were very robotic. That's part of the problem with their economy, the present economy, is that they can create, but they're greater imitators. They do something, but they do it better. But, their education, as I understand it, is ... [in] the basic areas ... they're not the greatest creative thinkers. We may not be as smart, generally, in this country, but we do come up with creative thoughts, don't we, in this country? I mean, ... incidentally, they all can read and write, not necessarily so in this country, right? Education is a plus with them, because kids commit suicide if they can't get into a school. It's an interesting culture. I liked Japan.

KP: You have never been back since the war.

NS: No, I keep talking about it. I'd like to go back. I'd like to go back before I die. I've been to Europe several times and I've been to Israel. I'd like to go to Japan, but it's so expensive.

KP: You would probably feel in absolute shock.

NS: I would like to go back to (Coma Cora ?), I would like to go back to a couple of places I've been. You know, I was up in the Mountain Fuji.

KP: You saw a good chunk of Japan.

NS: No, I wouldn't say around Tokyo. ...

KP: You did not travel much outside Tokyo?

NS: No, it's a small country. I didn't see a big chunk of it. I went up the mountain to a place called, I don't know what ... a mountain resort. There wasn't much to see in Tokyo, in those days. I got involved with this girl so I used to go with her. You could get a jeep and you could drive around, but I didn't see much. It was a big effort. Then I had an opportunity to go, thank God, I didn't go to see Hiroshima.

KP: Oh, you have seen ...

NS: No, I didn't go there. I'm glad I didn't go, you know. ... That would have been seeing a chunk of Japan, but I didn't go. ... Yokohama, beautiful harbor, I mean, I see pictures of it now. What a megalopolis Tokyo is now.

KP: Yes, it would be interesting, if you did go back, what your reactions would be to the Japanese.

NS: No, I ...

KP: You had given some consideration to staying in the Navy but you decided not to.

NS: I gave it some consideration because you didn't know what the hell your career would be. I didn't know, I don't know. I had dreams of being very wealthy. Oh, I had a girlfriend. ... I had a girlfriend, who had a rich father, and I thought we would get married and I would go into his business. That was my dream.

KP: That did not take?

NS: No, she dumped me when I came home and I went nuts.

KP: Where did you meet her?

NS: ... My aunt's brother had rich relatives. I met her through them and I wanted to marry her, and it wasn't to be. She [gave me a] Dear John [letter] ... when I was overseas and met me when I came back and jerked me around, and it didn't work out. I was heartsick. ... I got sick. ... I had several periods of depression in my life and I went through a deep depression and it took me a little while to come out of it.

KP: So, coming home was a bit bittersweet? You had, what might be termed a comfortable war.

NS: Very comfortable war.

KP: Had you thought of using the GI Bill?

NS: I did, but I was not a good student and I just don't think I had the mind. Then, especially since I had this terrible love affair, my mind was shattered for a good year or two. So, I couldn't possibly sit down with a book. I had to get a job, a lowly job in a textile company in New York City, which ... I was directed to because of family contacts. ... I started in the mailroom as an office boy. I became a sales person in textiles in New York City. ... Too bad I couldn't have gotten into the stock market in those years. ... It was very difficult to get the right kind of job to start a career.

KP: So, it must have been hard, you'd been an officer and people were waiting on you, to go back.

NS: Right, right, and I lived in a little two-room apartment with my mother, who still didn't have very much money. ... In the midtown, in New York, it was difficult. I got a job for like thirty-five dollars a week, and by then thirty-five dollars a week in 1944-5 wasn't the same thirty-five dollars a week my mother got in 1932. You know, it was like twenty-five thousand dollars today is not the same.

KP: Yeah, well at one time twenty-five thousand dollars you were really set.

NS: I remember Roosevelt said, "Nobody should make more than twenty-five thousand dollars a year." Remember he was socializing the country. ... It wasn't easy, you know. As I said, I worked for a year or two in the textile business. It's not an easy business, the garment center, and here I'm back with mostly Jewish people again, so it was very comfortable with Jewish people. I met a young lady who I knew since she was eight years of age and somehow we got married.

KP: So, some good things came out of that experience.

NS: Which one?

KP: Your initial working in the garment industry.

NS: Oh, no. My wife I met in Long Branch. I used to come down to the beach.

KP: You didn't meet her at the garment?

NS: No, no. I didn't. When I was a lifeguard, when I was fifteen I told you I was a lifeguard?

KP: Yes.

NS: My wife was eight years of age, or seven years of age and I remembered her from being a lifeguard at the beach club down in Long Branch. I came back when I was about twenty-five, or twenty-six and I met her at the beach there. She was now eighteen. That's how I met my wife.

KP: You made a career in the textile industry.

NS: Yes, yes. ...

KP: This became an increasingly tough industry because a lot of it shifted overseas.

NS: Oh, yes. I retired about ten years ago. ... My son is in that business and he's struggling. It's not easy. That's right, it's all overseas. I did well for that time. I never got really rich but I made a living. I raised three children. But, the big hardship about that job was that I lived in Long Branch and I commuted every day. It was an hour and twenty minutes each way.

KP: Wow.

NS: ... It was difficult, very difficult. But, I loved living in Long Branch, as I still do.

KP: It sounds like you like to swim a lot still?

NS: I do. I still try to swim three, four times a week. It's some distance now, long distance, and I love swimming. I think it's kept me in shape. I'm ten pounds lighter than I was when I'm swimming. I use to be about 180, now I weigh 170, 174.

KP: That is good.

NS: Yeah, I use to weigh 185 when I was swimming, so I'm thinner. I think it keeps me in shape. But, I love to swim.

KP: Have you ever coached swim teams?

NS: No, I tried with my kids and I was a failure.

KP: Your kids aren't swimmers?

NS: They are, they turned to swimming. ... Well, there was no competitive place to swim in Long Branch. I still have the Ninety-second Street YMHA in New York. There were no swimming pools in Long Branch. Now there is with JCC down there, and there was no really decent place to swim, but all three of my children are like recreation swimmers. They like to do laps, they're lap swimmers.

KP: Not competitive.

NS: No, no. Except with me, they want to beat me all the time. One son, I have one son who's very successful. I don't know whether he'll have a job tomorrow, but he's the Vice President of Motown Records. I got him into the entertainment business. I got him into it.

KP: How were you able to?

NS: Well, I didn't want him in the textile business. You have to have a lot of energy in the textile business. He went to Monmouth College, and then he went to, graduated from the University of Colorado. He was a good skier. I had some contacts through Rutgers. There was a guy in my class, (Elliot Frankel?), I don't know if that name ... [is familiar].

KP: Yes, I've heard of it.

NS: Well, he was the vice president of something or other in NBC. ... I remember watching the news, a co-producer or something, I went, "I know him." ... Sure enough I met him at a reunion and he knew me, but I didn't know him other than his name later on. When Mark graduated college, somebody said you could make so much money as a talent agent. That's where they begin. You know, what a talent agent is, MCA or William Morris Agency, or International Creative Management? Anyway, I called; it's tough to get interviews if you don't know

anybody. So, I called (Elliot Frankel?). He knew me and [I said], "I'd like to get my son an interview with the personnel people," so he called somebody who lived in New Brunswick, I forgot, a big-time agent, and arranged for Mark to get an interview. Got the interview, didn't hear from them for two months, then he heard, he went in and went to work.

KP: So your Rutgers tie really paid off?

NS: Yeah. That's why I went to college, to help my son get a job, that's right, one of the reasons why you go to college. I'm trying to think, there was a big time agent, a Rutgers' graduate, lived in New Brunswick actually, and he got Mark an interview with the personnel man and then from there on in, he did it on his own.

KP: It sounds like your son is very successful.

NS: Oh, yeah, Christ. ... It's obscene the kind of money he's making.

KP: You mention that you wish you had gone into the stock market. Do you think there were barriers?

NS: In those years I think there might have been, but yet when I think about it, I didn't know anything about the industry. There was a Goldman Sachs, there was the Lehman Brothers, all heavily Jewish dominated companies but who knew. I only knew about Merrill Lynch in those days and I don't think Merrill Lynch at that time had barriers, so I don't know. I don't know if I could have ... you had to go to work for fourteen dollars a week in those years. ... Who knows whether or not I would have succeeded or not, I don't know? The reason why I say it now is because I've been retired for ten years and I've taken my little capital that I had and I've quadrupled it in the market. ... Of course, this is the biggest boom market in the history. So, I'm smart, you know. You know what I'm saying? Everybody is smart that had a little capital. Most of us don't have any capital. So, I'm saying the big money, the real, real big money is in the market. It's incredible. You know, incidentally, Sonny Werblin, Sonny Werblin was a talent agent, with MCA originally, Music Corporation of America. ... Actually if a kid is interested in entertainment or music, or any form of entertainment, working for a talent agent is like getting a masters degree in entertainment, all these former agents run the industry. The president of Disney was an agent, Ovitz. I don't know if you've heard of Ovitz?

KP: Oh, yes.

NS: So, getting Mark this job, when he became an agent, it secured his future. This is it. If I had to do it all over again, I'd either get into the entertainment field or in Wall Street.

KP: You mentioned that one son is in the textile business.

NS: He's in the textile business.

KP: Textile, right. What does your daughter do?

NS: She's a nutritionist. She's got a masters degree in nutrition. She had gone to NYU and then she graduated from Douglass.

KP: So, your children have been very successful.

NS: Well, two of them are. Well, ... the one in the textile business kind of survives.

KP: Which, given the textile industry, it is a tough industry to survive.

NS: Very tough, very tough. ... I was on straight commission all my life. You didn't know what you were going to make that day.

HP: My question is why textiles? Why did you get into textiles?

NS: Well, textiles ... first of all, I had some family contacts. I had some relatives. My father was in the textile business. He was a dress manufacturer. I didn't know my father, but he was a dress manufacturer. It was like a heritage from someone. It was in New York City, the heart of the city, and at that time, during the war years, the textile business enjoyed tremendous growth. During the war years, the materials and fabrics were all being sold in the black market at premiums, terrific premiums, because they weren't available for defense operations or whatever. ... Anyway, it seemed like the white, the big white-collar job to go into. But, when I got into it, it's not a white-collar job. It's all physical work. You've got to carry a bag from place to place all day long.

HP: So things shifted after the war.

NS: I was a salesperson and I never seemed to get into the administrative end, which I would have liked. I never quite made it, but I made money. I made a living, as I say. I lived comfortably in the country, but I paid for it with my life, I commuted.

KP: Yeah, my wife commutes up to the Bronx Zoo, everyday, and she reminds me everyday how bad her commute is, and how she hates commuting.

NS: It's hard. If it wasn't for *The New York Times*, I'd be dead. Really. I even have it with me, where is it?

KP: It's right here.

NS: Yeah, I don't go anywhere without *The Times*. It's also a great assistant in retirement. You know, by the time I finish *The Times*, the day is over.

KP: In retirement, have you become active in any clubs or organizations?

NS: No. No, I'm not a joiner.

KP: But, you have come back for reunions.

NS: Yeah, reunions. I'm only forty-five minutes from here.

KP: Yes, and it seems like you've stayed in touch with a lot Rutgers people?

NS: Yeah, I touch base with a lot of Rutgers people, yeah, more or less ... I see at reunions, a fraternity brother, I had a roommate by the name of Jerry Levin and he lives in Chamonix and married a French woman. And I visited him once in Chamonix. I saw him in the Pacific. He found me. He was in the army, an army captain.

KP: You got together?

NS: Yeah, we got together. I saw my brother and Jerry, in Japan.

KP: Even though you had half-brothers, you were put in different schools?

NS: Well, my older half-brother, Jack, kept in touch with me. He touched base with me. Not too often, enough to know that I had a brother. I visited him in Cornell and he came down to Rutgers once. I still see him. He lives in Florida now. So, I'm in contact with him, but not like a real brother. I didn't really live with him, other than about two or three years, and like I said, my father died when I was two-and-a-half, so there was nothing, no real bonding, actually. You know, but he's a brother and I talk to him.

KP: None of your children served in the military?

NS: No. I had big fights with my wife. I had problems with my oldest son. He came through that drug period, with the marijuana and whatnot. I wanted to send him to Vietnam, believe it or not. ... I wanted him to go into the service, I didn't want him to go to Vietnam. My wife wouldn't hear to it.

KP: Because you thought it would straighten him out?

NS: I thought it would straighten him out.

KP: The textile industry is tough.

NS: Oh, yeah. What do you know about it?

KP: I have interviewed some people who have been in the textile industry and I know from just generally reading in the paper.

NS: Oh, I never did like it. ... Once I got into it, it was just too hard. It was a pressure cooker.

KP: Did you ever try to get out?

NS: Nobody ever offered me a job out. Yeah, no, I would have.

KP: Did you ever apply to other ...

NS: No, how could I? I had three children, I had a house to support, automobiles, I couldn't get out. What was I qualified for?

KP: In terms of college, getting out and changing careers.

NS: Oh, so, yeah. How could I get out of it? I had these responsibilities. In those days, the war was over, you don't have an opportunity to think, "What I want to do?" You take the nearest job unless you're an engineer, or a doctor, or a specific thing. I wanted a job. Isn't that the case of most of us?

KP: People didn't move around jobs as often.

NS: And that was a mistake. I stayed twenty-five years and that was another mistake. Today kids move around, three years, four, five years and go onto a better job, a different job. I have a son-in-law who's a computer expert, a systems analyst. He was with, have you ever heard of ADP?

KP: Oh, yeah. You started out as a Democrat and you became ...

NS: ... A Republican.

KP: When did you switch?

NS: My wife may have had an influence on me. There were Republicans in this small town. Yeah.

KP: So, your wife grew up in Long Branch?

NS: Yeah.

KP: And she was a Republican?

NS: Well, her father is, yeah, but she voted for Clinton this time because of the gender gap.

KP: Really, she was for Clinton?

NS: Yeah, I wouldn't vote for Clinton, believe me. But, she said because of his gender gap and the platform was [for] women. My wife is very concerned about woman's equality, abortion, but she voted the rest as Republican, which is the way it came out. A lot of people voted for him and Republican down the line, right? I can't stand him, Clinton, you know. I think we're going to have some embarrassing thing before we're through with him, you know. He's so oily, I think, isn't he?

HP: Oh, yeah.

NS: The whole country knows that, but he's a politician, he's personable, unless you read through him. ... You know, he's cute, whatever. I think Dole might have made a good President, might have. He'll never be, but he might have. He certainly had enough experience in his life in Congress.

HP: I just had two general questions in terms of during the time when you were serving. What did you think of the leaders like Truman, Roosevelt, and MacArthur, being that you served in the Pacific?

NS: Oh, that was interesting. I was in tears when Roosevelt died. I was a Democrat, I actually wept. I guess I even wept when Kennedy was killed. I mean, Kennedy, I voted for Kennedy. Truman was a surprise. Truman was a great surprise the way he backed into this thing. ... It was a great surprise. I saw him one time on Seventh Avenue. He waved at me. I mean, I was real close to him. I think he was an amazing guy. He's now considered a great president. He made great decisions. Now, this decision, and I say this without ... these fucking people that talk about [how] he made the wrong decision to drop the bomb, they didn't live through that period when we were hysterical here, when we thought the Japanese could overrun the country. They may have never quit. When we invaded we may have killed a million Japanese but we would have lost a lot of people, too, and I was sitting there, as I say, they were getting ready to jump in there, and I don't know, I might have been killed, I might have been hurt, but it ended the war. I don't care. I'm sorry. I am very sorry about the 150,000 Japanese that were killed, but I think he made, you know, a quick, correct decision.

HP: Being part of the military, how about MacArthur since you served in the Philippines and the Pacific?

NS: McCarthy?

HP: MacArthur.

NS: Oh, MacArthur. MacArthur was a warlord. He was an icon. He was something. Oh, yeah. He was the Seventh Fleet, whatever it was. They said he was a genius. He economized on the amount of deaths that occurred. He fought a brilliant war, and he may have been right about going into China, I don't know. What was that? About going into Korea. He may have been right. He was a big man to buck a President and to come back in Congress and make the speech that he did. He was an emperor. Actually, he was the one that Japan should have a lot of love for him, he didn't obliterate the country, he set it up, didn't he? He was actually the warlord or whatever it was. He was a brilliant guy, but he was a conceited asshole, terrible. We heard about him. He thought he was God. He did.

KP: Did you ever join any veterans' organizations?

NS: No, none at all, nothing to do with that. I'm not a joiner. I think I have enough to do in my own life, you know, surviving financially and taking care of my house. I'm my own gardener, my own landscaper.

KP: It sounds like you have enjoyed retirement a lot.

NS: Oh, just to be out of the garment center. The garment center was a bitch. The guys were smarter than me, shrewder than me. I wasn't shrewd, or ruthless, and you got to be shrewd, ruthless, you know. They had to be creative too. I touched greatness once. You've heard of Donna Karan?

KP: Oh, yes.

NS: I knew her when she was seventeen years of age. When she was Anne Klein's assistant. Ann Klein was a big designer, that's where she learned. Now she's the queen of the industry. I remember her as a seventeen year-old girl, you know, working with her. She's the queen. She's worth millions of dollars and what not. Actually, I've been, well, I don't know. I like New York by the way. I wish I could afford to live in New York.

KP: You have maintained your love of New York?

NS: Oh, I love New York. I wouldn't want to live there. My son lives on Columbus Avenue and Ninetieth Street, Mark, right in the heart of it. He'd like to retire and move to, into my house. I have one grandchild with him. He lives in the heart of New York, and he does things. He meets important people, celebrities and, you know, he even met Clinton once. I mean, that's his big job, Motown, but he's libel to get fired because they're loosing money, but I'm not worried about him because he'll get a break-away fee and he'll always get a big job. Are you into rap or tapes and stuff like that?

HP: Yes.

NS: Have you ever heard of Andre Harrell? Have you ever heard that name?

HP: I think I have.

NS: That's his boss, Andre Harrell.

HP: Oh, yeah, he's a big Motown head.

NS: He's the head of Motown, but he's lost seventy million dollars for them and so we don't know how long he's going to last. Mark is his assistant, but Andre Harrell is a nut, a nut. He got a twenty-two-and-a-half million dollar signing fee for taking the job, so nuts, you know. This was out of the projects. Money is incredible in the entertainment field.

KP: There was just an article about the record industry.

NS: Well, one of the best role models is Michael, Michael Jordan. I mean, he's got to be worth two, three, four hundred million dollars. He's unbelievable, and the other crackpot's got seventy-five million dollars for three little fights, but I was so thrilled when that guy beat him. Did you see the fight at all?

HP: No, but I heard about it.

NS: Oh, it was such a brilliant fight. He fought it brilliantly. Holyfield, oh he did it brilliantly. ... Nobody can punch harder than this guy. ... He springs up, he bends his knee, he crouches before he throws that punch. So, they decided to keep him out of that crouch. So, Holyfield kept leaning on him, and pushing him back and that's the way he won every round, Holyfield. He didn't give him the opportunity to crouch and throw the punches and he caught the punches and he proved one thing, Holyfield, he ain't no Joe Lewis. He's no Joe Lewis and he ain't no Mohammed Ali or even Jack Dempsey, ... because he can't take a punch. Buster Douglas, you know, Mohammed Ali could hit him all day, and the poor guy got sick. He wouldn't go down. ... You've got to be able to take a punch. So, he was on Queer Street from the sixth or seventh round up. Holyfield is not the hardest hitter, but if he hits you often enough, he could hurt you, you know. So, I was thrilled with that, because he's a ... Holyfield is a great fighter. He may be a nut but ... [he is a great fighter].

KP: It sounds like you like fights.

NS: I like fights. I wouldn't like to go. I like to see them on TV. I went to a fight many ... years ago and ... it's not pleasant to watch men get their skin lacerated, or get hit, that's not pleasant.

HP: You do not get that on TV.

NS: On TV it's a little more removed, that's right. Although when they do the close-ups you see the eyes and you know. I love to watch the heavy weight fights, it's fun, it's interesting. They're not dumb, there's a lot of thinking involved in prize fighting. Frankly, what else I can tell you about the war ... exciting.

HP: Did you serve anywhere else?

NS: No, that was it.

HP: You were not in the Atlantic Theatre at all?

NS: No, I was in the Atlantic Theatre when we picked the ship up to Boston. I think I'm entitled to a ribbon just for coming down the coastline.

HP: I just have one question. I want to ask you in terms of your years here at Rutgers, two questions. One, did you read *The Targum* much?

NS: I think I read *The Targum*.

HP: What did you read the most of?

NS: I don't remember. We had a couple of kids in the house that were on *The Targum*, you know, they wrote articles. I was only at Rutgers for three years, of course, I got credit for four years. I liked Rutgers. My memories of Rutgers are good. I mean, probably it was better that I went there than to Yale or some other school, a little bit out of my class, perhaps. ... It was a middle class school. It was a middle class type of school and yet, if I were smart I could have got a better education, but, I'm proud of it. I mean, I sort of lost contact with it when you hear the school's got 50,000 people in it now.

KP: Yeah, I know, students feel that way, but I'm surprised to see how the alumni feel.

NS: I'll come back for the dinner.

KP: The Old Guard?

NS: The Old Guard dinner, yeah, and you know you talk about, you ask me about ethnic bars and like barriers? The world has changed. Who would dream that Cornell, I don't know about Cornell, Harvard, Princeton and Yale, Princeton has a Shapiro, and there's Levin who is the President of Yale, and Rudenstine is the President of Harvard. There are three Jewish men as presidents of these "waspy" universities.

KP: Which in your day would have been unheard of.

NS: Oh, you couldn't ... I think there was a limit on how many Jews could get in. Well, Harvard was always open. They were on the liberal side. You had to go to CCNY or Rutgers to get in, and now, you know, Mark has women working for him, black women, who came out of Yale. All black people in Mark's company, in Motown, oh, ninety-nine percent black, all black, oh, yeah.

HP: The fact that they went to Yale is pretty amazing.

NS: Black girls from Yale?

HP: Yes.

NS: Yeah, Harvard, too. Well, that's because of ... is that affirmative action? No, they get in because they're qualified today. There use to be quotas on all ethnic backgrounds. Boy, they must be thrown to the winds now, aren't they?

KP: Yes, I think so.

HP: I was looking through your yearbook and I noticed that there were very few African-Americans.

NS: I only know of one, a guy by the name of (Hazelwood?). Is he still alive? (Hazelwood?) became a judge. There were no African-Americans that I can think of. Were there any in my class?

HP: Yes, I noticed that there were two or three.

NS: I didn't think there were two or three in my class. Well, first of all, I don't know, I graduated with five people in the class.

HP: Right.

NS: I don't know in that freshman class.

HP: I was looking through your yearbook and at the graduation.

NS: I should have ... I don't think there was any. (Hazelwood?) was the only one I knew. I don't know of anybody, I don't know of any black athletes in those years, now that you mention it.

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

NS: The football team's so lousy. ... I mean, blacks are predominant on most football teams throughout the country, be it Yale or UCLA. We've got the same percentage here, why aren't we better?

HP: Right. I guess the theory is there are the big names, the big names ...

NS: Well, most of the football players.

[Tape paused.]

NS: Now that you mention it. In my freshman year, I don't think, I have to look in my yearbook to recall, there was ... [a] spastic in my class. Do you know what spastic is? You know what it is? Sick kid, they can't ... and we had a kid like that and I think he graduated. I think he was the assistant manager of the swimming team, which gave him something to do.

HP: You had contact with this ...

NS: I had contact with this kid, I remember.

KP: He must have had a very hard time.

NS: This kid?

KP: Yes, the spastic.

NS: No, everybody was nice to him.

KP: Really? He wasn't picked on or ostracized?

NS: No. A spastic kid, his brain is as good as yours. He hasn't got the neuromobility. He goes like this ... you know, they go like that, but their brains are normal, aren't they?

KP: Yes.

NS: The brain is normal and he can study and he can do work, but he might have trouble writing it down. I remember him as an unusual kid. They don't have a long, he's probably gone by now. ... I remember Harry (Hazelwood?), does that name mean anything to you?

KP: No. I think Irving Pape mentioned him.

NS: I think he was in the Class of 1943.

HP: I looked in the yearbook and I saw an African-American.

NS: Well, there's wasn't a yearbook for 1944. That's one of the reasons why. I'm in the class of 1943 yearbook.

HP: Yes, in that yearbook is where I found it.

NS: In that yearbook?

HP: Yes.

NS: There are no blacks in there, are there?

HP: Yes, there were two or three.

NS: There were?

HP: In the senior class and also in the junior class.

NS: Okay. Well, I'm actually, I got my picture in that class that's why I went to their reunion, 1943 and I went to the 1944 reunion.

KP: So, you go to both?

NS: Yeah, I'm a hybrid, so I go both, and they are fun, you know, I see people at either one of them. So, ... I enjoy seeing them. I'm a nostalgic person. I told you, I pick up the phone and called a brother officer I hadn't seen in fifty years, you know, and they almost dropped their teeth when they hear me calling them, you know. As I say, I like to see old friends. You know, as you get older they're starting to disappear. I talked to one guy from my high school. I called

him and he called me back, and he says to me, now he's very successful, he's got lots of money and lives out in California, but in the conversation he says to me, "Did you ever think of dying?" I think of it all the time. I think I've been thinking about it since my father died, you know. It's not something I brush over, you know. So, my answer to him was, "Well, I was born in 1922. In 1921, I don't remember whether I was happy or not happy." I say, "Surely in the pursuing years there will come a period where I will also not know whether I'm going to be happy or unhappy." You know, we all face this. But, I mean, I thought it was a ... I don't know, something I wouldn't mention to another guy. ... Do you ever think of dying? You know, I think we all do, like I think of sex all the time. I mean, this is part of the male syndrome, right? You know, I think you might find me a little more candid than some of the people you've been talking to.

KP: No, you're candid. It's great to have candid interviews. Candid interviews are always good.

NS: Am I a little more candid than some people?

KP: Yes. Some people have been equally candid, but some we can tell they are not.

NS: Some are rather, what's the word, withdrawn or disciplined or dignified?

KP: Yes, for a story the more candid the better.

NS: Yeah. You know, my wife talks continuously. I don't have an opportunity to talk, so I'm exploring a little bit here, and I guess I like to talk.

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

NS: No, I think you've covered it. As I say ... I paraphrase my experience with war. I think I said right away, what's the word? ... boredom.

KP: I mean, how did you pass the day? I mean, it must have ...

NS: Oh, it wasn't easy.

KP: Did you read a lot?

NS: I read. I read *War and Peace*. I had books. I'd write letters. I slept, by the way, because I ... [went from] apathy to tedium and back again. That's what I was going to say, tedium to apathy and back again.

KP: You also swam.

NS: No, that wasn't frequently because this was in the tropics. ... We weighed anchor in the Philippines. Okinawa was a gorgeous place, or Manus, or Espiritu Santo, these are all tropical islands ... [in] the Pacific and the Equator, 120 degrees in the shade, and the water was warm.

Fortunately the sharks would stay away when you were in the harbor. But the ship had what they call bilges and the bilges shit would come out of the bilges when you were swimming. You could see it come out on the side of the boat. You'd know when a guy would be going to the head, toilet. The water was clean, it was clear, you know. ... Well, ... you don't think of those things, you know. But, I swam in the ... [water] whenever we ... [had the chance], you know. I swam once, I'll never forget. I swam once in the Chesapeake ... with a Portuguese man-of-war and this time they had the bow doors open and we would dive in off the ramp. And I dived into a Portuguese man-of-war and they give you like a second-degree burn. ... I'm trying to think what would be of interest to know. As I say, did you see *Mr. Roberts* or read about *Mr. Roberts*?

KP: Yes, I saw the movie.

NS: Okay. So, ... I was like a *Mr. Roberts*.

KP: In fact, it sounds like that's the movie that probably closest captures your experience.

NS: Yeah, right. *Mr. Roberts*, Henry Fonda starred in it. ...

KP: Were there any other movies that reflected your experience?

NS: Well, the *Caine Mutiny* would be a little more serious than what I [experienced], ... that summary court-martial that I just told you about. That was a big mutiny. The *Caine Mutiny* also captured the naval life. I used to listen to war stories from the infantry when we had them on board. ... The magnitude of the American fleet was just awe inspiring, and the amount of the [weapons] ... God forbid, I think it would be a different war this time. I don't think ... people would be that much involved. ... We had ten or fifteen million people under arms. ... Do you think the next war would be like that? I don't know. I hate to even talk about it. ... Do you think it would happen? ... It would require ... [those] kind of people.

KP: I wouldn't know, but who knows?

HP: Technology.

NS: Well, we had an example ... we had a sideshow. That Persian Gulf was a different kind of a war. Unfortunately, we seem to be full of electronic perfection, right? ...

HP: I think technology is definitely ...

NS: ... Technology. In *The Times*, did you read *The Times* yesterday? I think it was in yesterday's [paper]. ... I wouldn't want to go in there because they'd sacrifice millions and millions of lives and we'd get nowhere, but they do say that that [the Chinese] army is ill-equipped and outmoded. When MacArthur went up to the ... I don't know, the Thirty-eighth parallel was it?

KP: I think that was it.

NS: Was it the river, the Yalu River?

HP: Yeah, the Yalu River.

NS: The Chinese came in to support the North Koreans. They were coming wave after wave after human assault. I don't know if you can get away with it today? You would just slaughter them. You couldn't hold them in those days. They would eventually, ... by attrition, withdraw. I don't know what would happen today. It was a *banzai* attack so to speak. Wave after wave, ... because they got the people, you know, they can sacrifice the people. ... See, the Asiatic mind will do what they are told to do, be it Japanese or Chinese. Although we're getting democracy there. Tiananmen Square, right?

HP: At least they're fighting for it.

NS: ... They're fighting for it. You know, for many years we just didn't think these people were people. They were little slant-eyed, yellow men, ... but apparently their thinking, their humanity is as great as anybody. Hey, their culture goes back further than Europeans, thousands of years, even further back than the Hebrews, eight, nine, ten thousand years, I think, their culture goes back. Wow. I think it's an interesting world we're living in.

KP: Yes, it is.

NS: ... It's an exciting world.

KP: Well, thank you very much.

NS: All right. What time is it?

HP: Four o'clock

NS: We did put in three hours.

KP: Yes, we did.

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

Reviewed by Kathleen Ruck 01/07/02

Reviewed by Dustin Elias 05/24/02

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 06/04/02

Reviewed by Norman Siegel 10/02