RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES H. STRIMPLE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

JESSICA DING
and
MICHAEL K. JOHNSON
and
SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

MILLTOWN, NEW JERSEY
OCTOBER 17, 2006

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Jessica Ding: This begins an interview with Mr. James Hoyt Strimple on October 17, 2006, in Milltown, New Jersey, with Jessica Ding and …

Michael K. Johnson: Michael K. Johnson…

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: And Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

JD: I want to start with thanking you for letting us in your house this morning to conduct this interview. Could you first start off with stating where you're born and when?

James Strimple: I was born way down South Jersey in Penns Grove, New Jersey, right on the Delaware River. It was a great river town. It was a DuPont town back in those days.

SH: Was it?

JS: Oh, yes, because of what we called a powder works. Where they made powder of all kinds and the dye works, which was down in Deepwater, New Jersey, but I lived in and around Penns Grove. So it was a nice town when I was growing and two movie theaters, that was fantastic, hard to come by nowadays, but it was a great town. My mother was a school teacher. You haven't lived until you had your mother as a teacher. She taught sixth grade. You had to toe the line, believe me. It was great experience.

SH: Talk a little bit if you would please about both of your parents, their background and, I mean, this is great news to know that you were toeing the line for sixth grade teacher but…

JS: My mother was born and raised in Washington, New Jersey and she was valedictorian of her high school class, in 1908, and my father was born and raised in Penns Grove and he was partner in a men's clothing store down there all his life.

SH: How did they meet?

JS: A friend of my mother's went down to Penns Grove for some reason, she was a teacher also and got a teaching job down there, just around 1910 and she asked my mother, "Come on down, we need teachers." So my mother wasn't down there and got a job and she taught until she got married in 1917.

SH: To back up just a bit, you talked about your mother being the valedictorian of her class.

JS: In high school.

SH: Did she then go on to college?

JS: No, she went to Glassboro, eventually, which was a normal school. In those days you didn't have to go to college to be a teacher but, apparently, they liked her and they hired her, so that's what counted.

SH: But Glassboro is so far from Washington.

JS: Oh, no, no, this is later on. In 1919 they went down to Florida and my father had an orange grove down there and a grocery store, and after two years down there, in that hot, miserable climate, my mother said, "I'm going back to New Jersey, I don't care what you do." She was tired of the lizards, the insects, and the hot, humid climate down there. So they came back in 1921 and my sister was born in 1921, I was born 1923. In 1931, yes, 1931, the board of education down there called my mother, "Would you come back and teach?" Of course this is the height of the Depression, and she said, "Sure." They paid her thirty-one dollars a month. A dollar a day, that's what it amounted, to basically, and she taught for the rest of her life, until she retired I guess, in 1975, something like that.

SH: At some point in this, she then did go to Glassboro.

JS: Yes, because Glassboro from Penns Grove is, I guess, maybe forty miles at the most. So every weekend, go to Glassboro, and evenings, Glassboro, yes, so she finally got her bachelor's.

SH: Dedication.

JS: Well, you have to have it.

SH: Was it during the Depression that she was going to Glassboro or was this after?

JS: This is during the Depression, right, in the '30s.

SH: To back up, I know that Jessica has some questions about, more in depth about your father, but you said he had a men's clothing store.

JS: He was partner in a men's clothing store. The only men's clothing store, basically, in the whole state. It was W. S. Leap and in 1940 the store was a hundred and four years old. Unfortunately, it went down the tube, like everything else. He had a top line of men's clothing, strictly men's clothing is what it was. Stetson of Stetson Hats used to come down, it was quite a store; it really was, very nice.

SH: Had your father worked at the men's store and then decided to try the orange grove?

JS: Yes.

SH: How does the chronology there work?

JS: Apparently, he worked there for I don't know how long when he went there. I just don't know. But in 1919, he decided, "Hey, I've got to look around." That's when he went down to Florida.

SH: Because I was curious whether it had anything to do with World War I or…

JS: No, no, that was over and done.

SH: He didn't serve?

JS: He did not serve, no.

SH: Because I think his age would…

JS: Well, he was born 1887 so maybe he was what, thirty years old, thirty something?

SH: Now did he, did all of his family, had they always lived in the Penns Grove area?

JS: In 1752, the first Strimple came over from Germany, Johann Wilhelm Strimple, whew! [laughter] and settled down in South Jersey, actually in the area of Perkintown, places down there in South Jersey and Johann must have had about ninety-nine kids, I don't know. I have the family history somewhere. [laughter] I think he had fifteen children altogether and one of them, as he grew up when he got older, came up to Hunterdon County and, over there, you'll find a Strimple's Mill, just north of Lambertville. That was his mill; he started there and then the other ones branched out across the country. In those days, they went across the wilds of Pennsylvania, the Alleghenies, so there are a lot of them now in Ohio and Indiana and even out in Washington, now. What's interesting is during the war, on one of the ships in Pearl Harbor, and in talking to an officer from the 14th Naval District, we introduced ourselves. "Strimple," he says, "is my grandfather's name." He was from Kansas and his grandfather was ninety-seven years old at the time. He had lost an arm somewhere along the line, as a farmer, but he was a teacher and was still teaching at ninety-seven years old. So I got his address, sent it to my father, my father wrote to him, and corresponded back and forth for a while.

SH: Were they, in fact, related?

JS: They're all related, whether they like it or not, yes, we are, yes. [laughter]

SH: Did your father later talk about the Depression and what they did to get through it?

JS: Get through it? Well, they were both fortunate. My father was working, my mother was working in the school and, in fact, my father actually supported two other families, who were in dire shape, but they were good friends so he helped them.

SH: Did they come to live with you?

JS: No, no.

SH: He just helped them.

JS: Yes.

SH: Were your parents politically involved at all?

JS: I kept hearing, "Damn Democrats." That's all I kept hearing.

SH: Then I don't think we need to ask the question, "What did they think of Roosevelt and his New Deal programs?"

JS: Oh, to me he's a great American destroyer, quite frankly. Seriously, he brought socialism to this country, and that's not good, as far as I'm concerned. I could tell you a story about Roosevelt. In the middle of Pearl Harbor, taking a work boat from the far side of the harbor, over to the King docks to work as a ship loader, and we were just fiddling along, getting across the harbor, and a patrol boat pulls along the side, there's nobody in sight, "You're going too fast, making waves in the harbor," and I said, we're going across, "You heard the news?" "No." "Roosevelt just died." Everybody cheered in their boat. They were fed up with him, quite frankly.

SH: Really? People have talk about actually crying when they heard that he died. That's interesting, thank you.

JS: It was…

SH: Did anyone talk about the confidence, or lack of confidence, they had in Mr. Truman?

JS: They didn't know who was president. They had not the faintest idea, they kept asking, "Who's president now?" They had no idea.

SH: Tell us then, about your growing up, your education in Penns Grove, and what you did as a young man, and what was of interest then?

JS: Girls, they were of interest, of course. [laughter] We'll be up in town, no televisions, thankfully; no computers, thankfully, see airplanes flying. It was an interesting place. As I say, it's right on the Delaware River and you see ships going up and down the river. The Federal Shipbuilding Yards, up in Camden, and, of course, the Navy Yard in Philadelphia, were great places. They put the *America* and the *Manhattan*, which were two liners, ocean liners at the time. You got to go watch when they were coming down river, so you stand upon the banks and watch them go down, beautiful ships.

SH: Did you really?

JS: Oh, yes, and you'd see various Navy ships as they went down. It was good.

SH: As a young man growing up in '39, you would have been a junior in high school.

JS: I graduated in 1940.

SH: You would have been a junior; did you begin to notice any increased activity? Or was there something that you did notice?

JS: Not really, no.

SH: Did the lend/lease start…

JS: You see, in those days, the Army Air Corps planes flying over in formation, which is most unusual in those days, but you did see that, but as far as ships, no.

SH: The training wasn't going on. I leaped ahead, into the war, when I really wanted to talk to you about the grade school years and what are your fond memories were of things that, you know, now these students have no recollection of now.

JS: The problem was, my sister is two years older than I, so she was always two years ahead of me in school, and all I got through school, mainly in high school, "Your sister did very well, why don't you?" Particularly in Latin class.

SH: You see, that's one thing they don't know, Latin was…

JS: It was required.

SH: Did you have a paper route or did you have a little job that you were in charge of…

JS: I used to go around, trim hedges in the neighborhood and cut grass, those types of things, well, you go to do a little handwork, basically, that was it.

SH: Were you involved in church activities at all or Boy Scouts?

JS: We didn't have a Boy Scout troop in Penns Grove, most amazing, they didn't have one. Church, yes, I belonged to the Methodist Church there. I was in the choir, I don't know why, except the minister's daughter was there, too, and she was nice.

SH: Were there activities for the youth within school or, I mean, did you get to do any traveling were there class trips?

JS: Remember, it was Depression, you didn't travel anywhere in those days. The school couldn't afford it, first of all. Senior class usually went to Washington for three days and that cost you twenty-five dollars, and that was hard to come by, for many of the kids because their parents were of in bad shape financially, but we made the trip to Washington, had three days. It was good.

SH: Do you think that, I mean, you probably even know this, was DuPont able to keep most of their work force employed in some way?

JS: Oh, yes, very definitely, because the powder works plant, this was right at Carney's Point, made a lot of the nitrocellulose powder for the various services, the Army and the Navy. Accidents happened. The plant would have an explosion.

SH: Really?

JS: Oh, yes, the plants blow up. These are big tall buildings and they had slides coming down at each floor level so if something happened, and the guys could do it, they could hop on the slides and get out of the way from the building before it blew up.

SH: Oh, is that what it was for, I've seen pictures, I thought they were for product; they didn't look like they were for people.

JS: Oh, yes, that's for you to slide down, if you can make it in time. In fact, I remember my first grade teacher, she was born and raised in the house next to where we lived, and her name was Hutchinson, but she was married to a gentleman whose last name was Blasé and there was an explosion down at the powder works, they brought him home in a basket, so "here's your husband," that was it, she was my first grade teacher. Also, by that time, her name was Cohlman. Everybody knew everybody, it's a small town. Penns Grove had about ten thousand people in those days, now, I think, it's down to five thousand but it was a great town, really.

SH: It is the exit just before the Delaware Memorial Bridge. When was the bridge built, and was that something that…

JS: I think it was built when we were in California, '51-'52 sometime, or other, I think. Well, yes, because Penns Grove used to have a ferry, went from Penns Grove over to Wilmington, Delaware. It was nice. Or if you wanted to take a trip, go to Pennsville, and take the ferry from there, to New Castle.

SH: Okay, because another question was when were you able, or how were you able to get across the Delaware?

JS: Strictly by ferry boat. Then there was also the Wilson Line, which were passenger ships that went up and down the river from Wilmington, Pennsville, Penns Grove, Chester and Philadelphia, and made the trip back again..

SH: Oh, really, so you could go to Philly.

JS: Sure, we could take a bus if we wanted to.

SH: So there were bridges further up the Delaware.

JS: There were no bridges until you got to Philadelphia.

SH: That's what I meant,

JS: That's the first one, yes.

SH: Okay, because I wondered how soon people could get over without the ferry.

JS: But you say, "How do you get across the river?" We were in high school, one of the guys had a big rowboat, so we used to load that up and row across the river. That river is almost a mile wide there and I remember one time we landed at the Delaware-side, at the DuPont plant. The guards came running, "You boys can't be here, get out of here." Yes, we had fun on the river until, because of Marcus Hook was a big oil refinery and Paulsboro up the river was an oil refinery and the sludge came down river. It's terrible, you couldn't go swimming at all. In fact, it killed the fish in the river. It use to be a great sturgeon place. In fact, Penns Grove had the first caviar factory in the country, around 1890, and my grandfather was a sturgeon fisherman, as well as a carpenter and a farmer. He'd catch these sturgeon and get the roe and make caviar out of it. That went until 1898, that was the end of the sturgeon. Then, there's shad fishing, of course, it's good.

SH: I know the shad festival, up where I live now, it's still a big draw.

JS: Shad used to go for three cents a pound and they throw in the roe for free. We would go to the wharf in Penns Grove and buy shad down there during shad season.

SH: I never knew there was a caviar factory.

JS: Oh, yes, yes, in Penns Grove, right.

SH: Now was your grandfather still a farmer when you were a kid growing up?

JS: I never knew him. He died when I was a year old, so I never knew him.

SH: I was just wondering if you had memories of that as well. Talk about your high school, please, and what was interesting, other than the girls?

JS: I was in the band.

SH: What did you play?

JS: Clarinet. My mother was a teacher and said, "If you come home without homework, I'll give you some," and she would. She could take Latin and translate so easily, after having had it back in 1908. Physics, she still had her physics notebooks from high school, which was much outdated by then, but she knew what she was doing. Math was good, trigonometry, and all sorts of things. You had to toe the line, that was all, no nonsense allowed in the house, fun and games, like they do today.

SH: So you definitely had a sense that you would be going to college.

JS: Oh, there was no question. You were going to college.

SH: Your sister?

JS: She refused to go and she got much better marks than I did. But she didn't go.

SH: Did she go into the work force then after graduating?

JS: Well, during the war, she worked for Chrysler in Newark, New-ark, Delaware, yes.

SH: As a young woman, with your sister being two years older, did you get to chaperone?

JS: I wasn't home, I was in the Navy.

SH: No, no, I meant when she's still in high school.

JS: In high school? Oh, no, no, she went her way, I went my way.

SH: So you weren't in the band with her. Other activities that you were involved in?

JS: We started a soccer team, which really never got off the ground, in high school. That was my senior year, and that was basically it.

SH: It sounds as though your mother was truly the person who was pushing the education.

JS: Oh, yes. Oh, my father did, too. He actually believed in it, sure.

SH: Were there any teachers in your high school that were also encouraging you in certain ways or areas, or direction?

JS: Well, that was the problem. They all knew my mother and they said, "If you mess up, your mother will hear about it." The other thing, my freshman algebra teacher was a cousin of mine, and that's not good either. No matter where you went, you had small towns, small, outlying communities that they all fit in the Penns Grove school, everybody knew everybody.

SH: Was there any discussion of what was going on in Europe as you were in high school?

JS: No, not really. I loved history, really did. In fact, I got a history award when I graduated, which is ridiculous, but I did. No, there was not. My junior year, I took as an elective Modern European History. They got into it a little bit there. That was taught by our football coach. He was a nice guy, Curly Ogden used to pitch for the old Senators in Washington, great guy, really was, nice guy.

SH: Did you have a good baseball team?

JS: Yes, we did.

SH: So, we know that you're focused on, almost a requirement that you go to a college. Why Rutgers? How did you come to pick Rutgers, or had you thought about other places?

JS: State Scholarship is why. Even though both my parents were working, it was still tough to come up with money. My freshman year costs four hundred and fifty-seven dollars, I still remember that, plus, the State Scholarship, of course. It cost my parents four hundred fifty-seven dollars.

SH: Did you come to Rutgers to tour the campus at all before you came in as a freshman? Had you been that far north, so to speak?

JS: I'd always go to Washington all the time, Hackettstown, never came to New Brunswick, no, I never did.

SH: So to back up a bit, you said this was your mother's family that you were visiting out in Washington.

JS: In Washington and Hackettstown.

SH: How often did you get out there?

JS: Two or three times a year.

SH: Was it a car trip?

JS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. In back in the '30s, our good old '29 Chevy sometimes made it, and sometimes didn't. [laughter]

SH: Down Route 46.

JS: Whatever, I don't know. [laughter]

SH: I kind of monopolized the questions, do you have any that I forgot to ask, Jess?

JD: Not as of right now, no.

SH: Tell us then about coming to Rutgers and what you remember about your freshman year, this would be 1939 into '40?

JS: Right, it started 1940, September 1940, right. My roommate was from Salem, real nice guy he also had a State Scholarship, that's how we got together.

SH: What was his name?

JS: Minch, Ed Minch, he was pulled out by the Air Force in the start of his junior year and became a weather forecaster for the Air Force. [We used to call it mail, and not email, but V-mail.] Yes, I got one from him when I was in Pearl Harbor, I guess it was, and he was on a little island just off of New Guinea, (Halmahara?). He said, "This was a nice island until the damn Japanese started bombing us."

SH: That would take away from your…

JS: But he was a great guy. He died, unfortunately, last year. He was a Quaker and, in those days at Rutgers, you had to go to chapel. Freshman on Mondays, sophomores on Tuesdays, juniors on Wednesday, and seniors on Thursdays, that was required, at noontime, during lunch hour, of course. It was required and it was fine because that's where you learned about Rutgers, songs and everything, and Fraser Metzger was the Dean of Men at that time.

SH: Did you ever meet Mr. Demarest?

JS: Oh, yes. He was an old gentleman, he was the past president. Yes, and he lived over on the corner of George and some place there. Yes, we met him. He used to come around and visit classes, right.

SH: He had a nickname, I understand. Wasn't he called Whistling Willie?

JS: Whistling Willie.

SH: Because he had like a speech impediment, so when he speaks it would whistle.

JS: Vaguely, I recall something like that, yes.

SH: When you talked about mandatory…

JS: The only thing is on Sundays, you had to go chapel, also, that was required. You were allowed two cuts on Sundays, that was all. So, unless you could go to your own church down in New Brunswick and get a note from them that you had attended church, and turned it in, pain in the neck. They had a Quaker meeting at the old YWCA, it was on Harrison Street somewhere around there in New Brunswick, and my roommate said, "Let's go to the Quaker meetings." So we went and I had never been in one before, but you sat on a circle there. We sat, looking around at each other, for half an hour, we sat there, nothing happened. Finally, somebody spoke up and said something, I don't know, and somebody else spoke up, that was the end of the meeting. That was a Quaker meeting.

SH: So you got your little piece of paper signed.

JS: Oh, yes, that's required. Yes.

MJ: Did you know early on going into Rutgers that you want to major in chemistry?

JS: Yes, I went there as a chemistry major, right.

MJ: So you had to pick your major before going into college or…

JS: In those days, yes. No five-year courses like nowadays.

SH: Now where were you housed when you came to campus?

JS: It doesn't exist anymore, but right across the street from Old Queens, 81 or 82 Somerset Street and one that feeds into it, right by the railroad.

SH: That would be George…or Easton, which is it?

JS: No, Queens faces Somerset and as you go down to the railroad. Right across the street is a road that comes in right along parallel to the railroad and it used to be triangle there, and there was a big house there, a big old house, and then there was St. Peter's, where the nuns lived, and then the church. I don't remember her name, Jewish woman, that's very expensive, fourteen dollars a month.

SH: So you really were housed off campus, then.

JS: Freshman couldn't get on campus.

SH: Really?

JS: No, it was impossible. My sophomore and junior year, I lived in Ford Hall, I was lucky.

SH: Who were your roommates in Ford Hall?

JS: Well, I had Ed Minch for one and a sophomore, we were freshmen, he was a sophomore, name of George Leaver, real great guy. This is probably my fault in my freshman year; I was on probation when I finished my freshman year. Leaver was quite a guy. I was on the freshman crew, first of all, lightweight crew. I was in the band, and he had a concession to take food around the fraternity houses and dormitories, so he would take one route, I'd take another route. You had these trays strapped around you with the sandwiches that the restaurants made.

SH: Oh really? And this was Mr. Minch?

JS: No, George Leaver, he was a sophomore, yes.

SH: An entrepreneur.

JS: He was, yes, but, anyway, Canadian. In fact, when the war came on, he had to join the Canadian Navy.

SH: Do you think it was because you were so busy that you were on academic probation or…

JS: It was that plus NJC [New Jersey College] was right over there, not too far away. [laughter] I had a good time with freshman year.

SH: Now what about initiation for freshmen or sophomores?

JS: Well, you had to wear beanies, that's all. Nothing really outstanding.

SH: What about attending the football games?

JS: Well, in the band you automatically went in, right, and every Thanksgiving, you went to Brown, because we used to play them. Princeton, because Princeton refuse to play here.

SH: Really?

JS: Oh, yes. They didn't like us.

SH: What about the other social activities? I mean, you talked about NJC being across the way, were there planned mixers between…

JS: They had freshman ball, or whatever you call it, where the freshman class of NJC and freshman class at Rutgers got together and we had a dance, which was nice, and you meet people that way, and, of course, I had to make all the dances, the Military Ball, Sop Hop, Junior Prom, you name it.

SH: Were you a good dancer?

JS: I don't know, they never complained, anyway.

SH: There were convocations also at the chapel, political speakers, do you remember some of those?

JS: You know who I remember? Norman Thomas, the great socialist candidate for president, several times. He was an ordained Presbyterian minister, fantastic speaker.

SH: Was he?

JS: Oh, yes. In fact, always remember the title of one of his speeches was, "There is No Comma." If you say the Lord's Prayer people always have a pause, ("…Thy will be done on Earth as it is…") as if there was a comma there. This was the title of his talk that day in the chapel. "There is no comma," and I plagiarized him later on, because I'm chairman of the administrative council of our church and also the church historian, so every once in a while, I have to write an article. I took that and I said, "This is courtesy of Norman Thomas." Only had great speakers, always had great speakers, and the convocations, of course, were always in the gymnasium and…

SH: That included the entire student body.

JS: Oh, yes, there were only eighteen hundred on campus, that's all.

SH: Now, on freshman crew what kind of practice schedule did you have to…

JS: Cold weather; always at four o'clock in the afternoon, and that was tough because if you had labs, they normally went until six o'clock, so you need to make a choice and you couldn't afford, I did let some of these labs go by. But it was fun. That's my sole experience of my freshman year. I couldn't afford to do it anymore my sophomore year, I had to make up.

SH: How did your mother react in your being…

JS: Well, in those days, Rutgers used to send report cards home to your parents, and she never said a thing.

SH: How often did you go home your freshman year?

JS: Christmas.

SH: Did you go by train or bus?

JS: Usually somebody had a car. Well, Easter, you got Friday and Monday off, that was it, that was your year. You got no spring break or fall break, or whatever you want to call it. No, you were expected to be there.

SH: When your freshman year ended, were you already, did you know where you were going to work? I guess, you knew you had to work between…

JS: Oh, sure, sure.

SH: Did you already have a job secured?

JS: Well, sometime I went down, I always got out Memorial Day, so I went down to DuPont and got a job down there for the summer.

SH: Were you working in chemistry, something that?

JS: I was working in the barrel and drum wash.

SH: Barrel and drum wash, okay.

JS: The DuPont plant down there was the major dye plant in the country, made all sorts of dyes, as well as Ponsol soaps, things like that. No paints yet, but in those days, that's what it was and, of course, everything is in these fifty-five gallon steel drums and we recycled them. You had to wash them, clean up the dye that was in there. What a mess! And then paint the interior, paint stencils on the outside to tell you wherever they're going, and stack them up, send them out. I did that all summer.

SH: Also as a freshman you would have been taking ROTC.

JS: I didn't have to, I was in the band.

SH: Okay, talk about that if you would. That's a first.

JS: What was his name; warrant officer somebody, Miller, Warrant Officer Miller, top of his voice, typical warrant officer. When you went to register for the ROTC, downstairs somewhere in the old gym, and he was standing right at the door. "You play any instrument? You play any instrument?" "Clarinet." "Over there. You're in the band." So that's how everybody got in the band and, I think, we had fifty-some members in those days. Now, we have, what, a couple of hundred? We had one bass horn, that was it.

SH: Now this band was a Rutgers band, not an ROTC band?

JS: It was an ROTC band, yes, see that counted for two credits. Two credit hours for ROTC, but you got two credit hours for band, because you had to take music directions from this character. Oh, he was something else, swear, typical sergeant.

SH: Really?

JS: Oh, yes.

SH: Was he a musician?

JS: He was a musician, yes.

SH: It does help, I thought maybe he was warrant officer with the military does things like that, forgive me for asking. What kind of uniforms did you have?

JS: They were khaki uniform, same as the ROTC, with blue lapels, for the guys that were commuters, to Rutgers on the train, it was fine because they got special fares. You didn't have to pay full up.

SH: If they wear their uniforms?

JS: Yes.

SH: Now how often did you have to drill or wear your uniform?

JS: Well, once a week, on Tuesdays, you had to be there with the band playing for the ROTC as they drilled. Then Thursday night was always practice for the band, sometimes all night, depending on what was coming up.

SH: Did anyone have a pink uniform, a pink-hued uniform?

JS: No, in 1940, the uniform, other than for the ROTC, for football games was a heavy red sweater, with an 'R' on it, and you had to have your own white pants, white shoes, that was it. In fact, I still have the sweater upstairs.

SH: Do you really?

JS: The kit don't fit anymore. [laughter]

SH: Things do shrink.

JS: Anyway, apparently, somewhere along the line at 1940, somebody decided that the sweaters weren't a proper uniform for the band. So, good, old Dean Frazier Metzger went out and got new uniforms for the band, like the Salvation Army. In fact, the first time we had to put them on, wear it at a football game, we came out playing *"Salvation, Salvation, put a nickel on the drum, loosen up you dirty bum."* He didn't like that, didn't like it at all. He let us know. So I don't know how long those uniforms lasted. I think they replaced them pretty soon.

SH: Did he go back to the sweater?

JS: No, they got new uniforms. It was after I left, though.

SH: To me, nostalgia I'm sure rules here, but I would think that would be a real nappy look, you know, this red sweater.

JS: They were, they were nice, yes, and many colleges had them, in those days. You don't see them today, though.

SH: Were these the white buck shoes?

JS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. White shoes, white pants, this bright red sweater, and you had to wear white shirt underneath it, of course.

MJ: I guess, by your sophomore year of college, was there any sense that America might be getting involved in the war anytime soon?

JS: Well, yes, of course. It started in 1939 in Europe and people were deciding, "What are we going to do? What are we going to do? Which way are we going to go?" Yes, there was some concern, very definitely, right. When did the draft start? 1940, I guess it was, yes. So everybody was registered for the draft, and I didn't want to get drafted. I didn't want to be in the army and slug through all the mud and slush, or anything, so I joined the Navy.

SH: Did you do that before Pearl Harbor?

JS: No, no, no, I joined the Navy December 9, 1942, one year later.

MJ: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor happened?

JS: Yes, I was at Hackettstown. My parents had driven up, picked me up in New Brunswick and we went up to Hackettstown, to visit my Aunt and Uncle; had dinner, I think, nice day, drove back. They dropped me off in Trenton so I could take the train back to New Brunswick, and while I was sitting there, a lot of people were running around, rushing around, "what's going on?" One of my classmates, we met, "Hey, Jim, what do you think about the news?" "What news?" I haven't heard it? We didn't have the radio on. He said, "Well, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor." That's the first I heard of it. That was probably about seven o'clock that night. So we hopped the train back to New Brunswick.

SH: What was the discussion like for two young men coming back? You've already registered for the draft.

JS: Oh, yes.

SH: I mean, what were you talking about, do you remember? Did you have the sense that you wanted to rush out and enlist, or were you talking about what your choices were, or options?

JS: Options, probably, choices, yes. Since you're already registered for the draft there was no great push to join anything, at the time. As I said, it wasn't until December 9, 1942 that I joined the Navy, because I wasn't going to go and walk, slug through mud, and everything else, no way.

SH: Being in the band, I mean, many of the people that went ROTC, went on for advanced ROTC.

JS: That's right.

SH: What kind of options did you have as a member of the band? Could you have done advanced ROTC?

JS: No.

SH: But you could stay in the band for four years, then?

JS: Oh, yes, yes. In those days, I don't know what it is now, if you're in an activity for three years, you got a Gold R, got a little Gold R. I still have it on tie clasp upstairs. Do they still do that?

SH: I'm not sure what they do.

JD: No, they don't.

JS: And, of course, you got your class numbers. Do they still give you class numbers?

JD: I think so, but not for every club, I'm not sure.

JS: That used to be the big thing, wearing your class sweater.

SH: Was it like on a pin?

JS: No, no, they're big numbers, 1944, right across in front of your sweater.

SH: Oh, really? Oh, they were part of the design.

JS: No, you had to have them sewn on.

SH: Right, okay, like…

JS: Whatever it is.

SH: That would be a great way to instill pride.

JS: Sure, actually, this is my class, by golly. That's what I want to be, because many of our guys, our class started four hundred and ninety-five freshmen and I think there were ninety-seven who graduated, that was all. The rest of them got pushed back to '47-'48, depending when they could, if they even went back to finish up.

SH: They were the ones who went with the ROTC or infantry or…

JS: No, well, the ones who got drafted in the service with the Army, Navy, Air Force, whatever it was.

SH: Talk to us a little bit about, you just talked about how you found out about Pearl Harbor, what happens, then, when you came to campus? Did the administration talk to you? Give you advice on holding off?

JS: Yes, they did. They said, "Don't get in a rush, because nobody knows what's going to happen," at that time, and we didn't. So they just said, "Let's give it time for a while."

SH: Did most of the students follow that?

JS: I think so, yes.

SH: Or were there those who rushed out?

JS: Well, some did, sure, sure. Colonel Johnson was head of ROTC at the time, his son, Franklyn, was in my class and he was in the advanced ROTC, of course, eventually, and he went on in the army and I think he ended up captain, or something, I'm not sure.

SH: But he went a right away, left soon?

JS: Oh, yes, yes. We had quite a few guys, early on, that went in the service, right.

SH: We are wondering if all of a sudden you began to see the numbers…

JS: Oh, yes, that's right.

SH: When did you first realize that there was an option for you? I mean, you said that you didn't want to be in the army, that you wanted to not be going through the mud and things. What were your options and how were you able to find out about them?

JS: Just word of mouth around the campus was what it was. In fact, a good friend of mine, another chemistry major, classmate of mine, he'd heard about some, he said, "Let's go up to New York and join the Navy." I said, "Why the heck, why not?" So we went up and joined the Navy. That's the only way I heard about it, word of mouth, I think that's basically what it was. I don't recall any recruiting teams coming around, or anything like that, because everybody was automatically registered, whether you liked it or not, and that was it.

SH: Who was your classmate, the chemistry major, that went with you?

JS: Frank Newton. He's down in Florida now.

SH: When you went in, how many people were in line, and what did they, did they do testing right away, or did you just basically sign on the dotted line? What were your options?

JS: Well, you had to take one of the written tests, which was ridiculous,

SH: Do you remember what test it was?

JS: I don't know what it was, and they had physical, and this was on Wall Street, Liberty Street, I think it was, that the Navy had taken over, and it was interesting, the physical.

SH: For a young man, do you want to discuss or tell us some of the things that were…

JS: Well, first of all, you're completely disrobed. Here are these Navy nurses running around, I never had that before, so that was the experience right from the start.

MJ: So how soon after, when you enlisted, did you have to go for basic training and was that in Portsmouth, Virginia?

JS: No, we joined what was known as the V-7 program. In those days, there was a V-5 and a V-7 program. V-5 was for those who want to be Navy fly boys, and V-7 was general Navy, in that sense. Each program guaranteed that you would finish college, so that's why we joined there. However, it wasn't long before the Navy said, "That's much too good," and they transferred all V-7s over to what was a new program V-12, and they pulled you out of your college and sent you to another college.

MJ: That was Princeton that you went to?

JS: Princeton, yes. It was great, beautiful college.

SH: The same college that wouldn't talk to you before.

JS: I had a great uncle, who was the chief blacksmith for Princeton University years ago.

SH: Really? He had his own blacksmith right…

MJ: Now, in the V-12 program, you had to carry seventeen credits, along with nine and a half hours of physical training. Did you find it particularly demanding or…

JS: No, after Rutgers, no. In fact, in three years at Rutgers, I had all the chemistry courses they offered in four years at Princeton, except for one, and that was called, qualitative organic. So, we had a great time down there.

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

JD: This is side two, tape one. So you were saying about some of the classes you were taking at Princeton.

JS: Yes, I said in three years at Rutgers, I had had all the chemistry courses they offered in four years at Princeton, except for qualitative organic. So, we did take that, but we also took geology. Elementary psychology, European History, since Waterloo, was one of them, which was fantastic, that was the greatest course down there, "Buzzer" Hall taught that. I'll tell you that later, but it was a great course, great man, and, also, music. What I called, music depreciation because it was eight o'clock in the morning. There was nothing worse than classical music at eight o'clock in the morning, in this low-ceiling media hall, the Prof would come in smoking a cigarette. He'd put it down, take out another pack, open it up, by the time the class is over, he'd have fifteen cigarettes burning all around the place, and this haze, and he'd be playing the crazy classical records, "This is a fugue." To this day, I don't know what a fugue is. I hated music. But European History, since Waterloo, was really great. "Buzzer" Hall, he held the Phelps Dodge Chair of History. He was an old gentleman, its summertime so he wore shorts when he lectured. He had these gnarly legs, but he had one of the old-fashioned hearing aids, where it hung around his neck and it would buzz, so you got the name of "Buzzer" Hall. That's what they call him, right to his face, "Buzzer" Hall, I know. He would call on somebody to stand up and say something and the fellow got up as if he was talking and Buzzer kept saying, "Can't hear, can't hear." But he was a fantastic lecturer. His main theme was Garibaldi of Italy and he really knew that. It was great, great session, really. In fact, he gave one lecture here, talked on Garibaldi and people in the main lecture hall were seated, over three-hundred-some people, and people would come from the town to hear that. We were lucky, we got seats, they had to stand.

SH: Very interesting that there was something so unifying for everybody. But talk then about your training, how you were housed, and, you know, as part of a V-12 program, were you part of a military unit?

JS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. You wore uniforms and my roommate and I were in Little Hall, which is a dormitory, right by Little Gymnasium, I think the gym burned down later. I don't think we did it. Quite the comparison with Rutgers. At Rutgers' dorms you got a room, here we had three rooms for two of us. It was amazing. It was really great. You marched everywhere you went, which was dumb. You went to meals or Upper Eagle, Lower Eagle, I think, were the chow halls there, something like that in those days, and the caterer for the food, for the Navy people, was Howard Johnson, worst food I ever had in my life. In fact, after the war, he was arrested for the lousy food he served to us at Princeton and he took the good Navy food and served it in his restaurants, so he served a year in jail.

SH: You're kidding, I never knew that.

JS: Yes. I was in Pearl Harbor, I met the doctor, who was at Princeton. We got to know him and met him there. I said, "What was wrong with the doggone meals there?" He said, "You know, I complained about it and they transferred me out here." [laughter]

SH: Now for what were you being trained?

JS: Nothing, just basic training, marching, drilling, that kind of nonsense, nothing as far as the Navy was concerned.

MJ: So at what point, I know at some point of the V-12 program, you got shipped to Midshipman School?

JS: I had my senior year in four months, July, August, September, October, that was it.

SH: That was at Princeton.

JS: That was at Princeton, yes, and you can't get a degree from Princeton unless you have at least six months there, so I had to transfer my credits from Princeton back to Rutgers. That took over a year and a half. So at the end of October, we were all shipped out, some went directly to Midshipman School, shipped down to Portsmouth, Virginia. This is outside of Norfolk, brand new base they built, brand new barracks, everything. Over three thousand of us from the various colleges around the country and, alphabetically, as the space arrived in various Midshipman Schools around the country, and you got sent. Me, 'S' I was one of the last ones, that kind of bothered me. That was where you learn Navy things, like that, signal flags, Morse code, you didn't have to, but nothing else to do, so you did.

SH: Now, what was your rank when you were at Princeton? Were you given a rank?

JS: Just a seaman, that's all, yes, everybody was.

SH: So when you're at Notre Dame, then, you're an ensign?

JS: Well, no. When you first went there you were still a seaman, until you got sworn in as a midshipman.

SH: Okay, but when you're in Portsmouth, then, you were still a seaman?

JS: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Okay, well, I didn't mean to interrupt, I was just curious.

JS: That's all. It's interesting down there, really was, in Norfolk, they had their signs up, "Dogs and sailors not allowed."

SH: Really?

JS: Oh, yes, they did. But it was a Navy town and they didn't like the Navy.

SH: Now, were you able to get home at all during this time?

JS: Christmas was the only time then. Got three days and that was tough, because I took the train from Cape Charles up to Wilmington. It was an old steam engine, the train broke down, somewhere near Crisfield, Maryland, I think it was, that it couldn't go anymore. We sat there, of course, some guys had to catch trains, things like that, I was fortunate. Anyway, we waited there, I guess, four-five hours, they finally ran in another engine. I finally got to Wilmington. Then, I had to get from Wilmington, down to New Castle, and across the river and back up to Penns Grove. Traveling in those days wasn't easy.

SH: Especially when you have to use a ferry, I suppose.

JS: Right, right.

MJ: Did you know at the time that you'd be serving in the Pacific, or did you not find out yet?

JS: No, of course not, no, no. You got your orders, once you were commissioned out of Midshipman School. You got your order to wherever they may be, usually you needed more training, because you still didn't know lots of things. No, you didn't know where you're going.

MJ: Did you have a preference?

JS: Oh, yes. I put in for Navy ordnance, and I don't know what the other two were, but you put in for three, you put in your preference. I worked for Army ordnance for a couple of summers, also down in Delaware Ordnance Depot just outside of Penns Grove. So at least I had some familiarity with the types of ammunition, how they're made up, things like that. So I said, "Navy ordnance, fine, would be great." You had to get uniforms, of course, so we all had our uniforms. We wanted a star on there for a line officer, two hundred of us got our orders, CEC. I said, "What's CEC?" Didn't even know what it was. Civil Engineering Corp, Seabees [CB or Construction Battalion], so back in the mud and muck, and everything else.

SH: Tell us about being in Midshipman School and what were some of the things that you encountered, or remembered fondly or not so fondly?

JS: Well, it wasn't difficult at all. My roommate was from Columbia University, Bill Storch, the two of us had a great time, no problems. You could get perfect marks all the time, it was easy. Particularly, if you were an engineer, or as I was a chemistry major, where you had, really had to build up and study. Next to us was a young lad from, I guess, University of Chicago, Stillman was his last name. He hadn't had the almost a year that we'd had already in the Navy, the nonsense that goes on, and he washed out, but he was a smart kid.

SH: That's what I was going to ask, those of you who had been in college and had a background academically as well as militarily, did you have to help others that were trying to get through?

JS: You could, but it was very difficult. You couldn't go out in one of the hallways, or anything else. Oh, no, you stayed in. Lights out at ten o'clock, bingo, whether you liked it or not.

SH: Now who was in charge of you? Was it a non-commissioned officer, or was it a…

JS: Who was in charge of us at Midshipman School? Actually, you're broken down into platoons is what it amounted to, and our platoon, that was an ensign, who just graduated, his name was Swaggerty and he felt very proud of himself. He was a good man, though. But Midshipman School is broken down, two types, four months and two months. Two months for the specialists and they took people who had been engineering or technical majors in college and they ended up in specialist school, Midshipman School. So that's what I was in, so I had two months. I wasn't a ninety-day wonder, I was a sixty-day wonder, and I'm still wondering. The four months are the fellows who went into landing crafts, that type of thing, as well as others. Ours, you got assigned to various things, compass compensation, which is up in Boston. A good many of us were assigned to Civil Engineering Corps. An English major was assigned to the Chaplain Corps. He said, "What am I going to do there?" [laughter] Very strange, you couldn't tell what the Navy was going to do. You could put in your preference, what you wanted, and they never listen to it, never listen to it.

SH: I'm still hung up on the guy who was an English major, now a chaplain, was it because he could read, or did he have any,…

JS: That's very strange.

SH: With your chemistry background, wasn't that something that they looked at or…

JS: They said, "Oh, technical. Therefore, CEC."

SH: Oh, okay, so just technical.

JS; Most of them were engineers, civil engineers, which is what they should have been in the Civil Engineering Corps of the Navy. I was a strange guy, as a chemistry major. I didn't know what to do. They just went along with it, did what they said to do, that's all. You learned that in

a hurry. But Midshipman School was no problem. Courses weren't that difficult, at all, because you had to prove that you could take Morse code. We had two blinker lights at the top of every classroom and the instructor was an officer who got up there and sent a message and you had to decipher it, write it down, that type of thing. We had an advantage, those of us who had been in for a while, because we had learned Morse code and the signal flags, and everything else, and these other poor guys, who had just come in, trying to, "What's this of blinking light?"

SH: *The new roommate.* [Caption of the cartoon] "I was shipwrecked once and we ate an ensign, a new roommate." Two, "You know, I just joined the navy."

JS: Yes, from Princeton, right.

SH: And the third one is, "I came from Princeton," and his nose was pointed up.

JS: Oh, yes, oh, yes, right.

SH: They weren't talking about you, were they?

JS: No, no, because in those days we hated Princeton from Rutgers.

JD: That was one of the questions I was going to ask you. How was the rivalry, because, like today, it's not as, I guess, bitter?

JS: Well, when we were at Princeton, you attended regular classes with other Princeton students and they were good guys, they really were, such that we did everything we could to disparage them.

SH: Were there any Princeton men in your classes?

JS: No, no.

SH: They were all brought in from somewhere else.

JS: See, Princeton had a naval ROTC, that's why they sent us down there.

SH: Were there any ethnic minorities at Princeton in your naval group?

JS: No way, no. You won't see any in there either.

SH: But I do notice that there is a company of women.

JS: Oh, they were the staff. WAVES and some officers, finance officers, and things like that.

SH: Okay, they were just.

JS: That was the staff at Notre Dame.

SH: Okay, okay, just for the record, I'm looking through the Notre Dame yearbook, called the *Capstan,* specifically for the 35th Battalion.

JS: No, no, no. That little gray thing right there is our commissioning thing, when I started for special…

SH: Oh, wow, wonderful, you have all the autographs.

JS: Yes, all of them.

SH: This is from May of 1944 and the fifth class who graduated, it says, from the Midshipman School. The cartoons, I must tell you, are very good. Who was your favorite professor at Rutgers, just jumping back?

JS: Actually, it was the math teacher, Dr. Grant, Alfred Grant, from Highland Park. Englishman, but he could do anything as far as math. He said his thesis as a math major when he got his PhD was one page long, mine was a hundred-forty pages. He was good and his approach to math was, you can graph everything, so you can see it physically, and all the time I worked, if you could graph it out, you could show someone, rather than some equations or something like that. He was really one of the best.

SH: Now we can leap ahead.

MJ: So after you finished with the V-12 program in September of '44, you were sent to Pearl Harbor?

JS: No, no, no. October of '43, I was shipped to Portsmouth, Virginia and stayed there until the latter part of December, and shipped out to Notre Dame, and for a month there, there was no Midshipman School, just twenty of us there. We were a security force, in effect, standing all the watches, which was good because when Midshipman School started in February we didn't have to stand any watches.

SH: You had done your duty.

JS: Exactly right, yes. So all the guys out there should have been standing guard, we didn't have to. So all along I've gotten breaks, believe me. Let me tell you more, later on.

SH: As you're beginning the Midshipman School, what are you hearing about the war and were you keeping up with what's going on in the Pacific and in Europe?

JS: No radios allowed in Midshipman School. So you just heard what instructor wanted to tell you at that time. You never heard an awful lot, no. Except, "You guys better learn because you're going to be out there," you know.

SH: Because I wondered if your parents were sending you news or information or newspapers? Okay, basically, they're focusing what you need to learn.

JS: Absolutely, yes.

MJ: So when you finished the Midshipman School, what was your next assignment, did they tell you?

JS: You got ten days leave and then, you had orders to go to your next station, which was Camp Peary, Virginia, which is now "The Farm" for the CIA. But that was a big, rambling place down there, just outside of Williamsburg. Tarpaper covered shacks that you lived in, there were two cannon heaters at each end of the barracks, or you froze. They had quite an epidemic of diphtheria and things like that. Over four hundred some people died down there.

SH: Really?

JS: Yes. But, of course, we stayed away from that and that's where you finally found out you're going to be a Seabee and, even though we were Civil Engineering Corps officers, all of our instructors were Marine sergeants, just back from Guadalcanal. They were great guys, really were.

SH: What did they tell you? Did they tell you what they'd seen?

JS: They had one thing. They'd drill it into you. "Be observant." That's all. "Be observant." Because you had to be, if somebody might drop a load on you. It was really jungle warfare training, that type of thing. Amphibious landings, you learned in the James River, where they had a couple of landing crafts, small ones, LCVPs, that type of thing, on the James River, and the Sarge said, "Let me go first, I know where all the potholes are." So the ramp goes down, he jumps off in the water, up to here, he takes a couple of steps, boom, he disappears. He came up, "That's one I missed." But it was basically that and you always had a pack and a rifle. In fact, I gave my helmet away to my son a couple of months ago.

MJ: Did you hear anything about the Japanese as far as what kind of fighters they were?

JS: Oh, yes, that was the whole thing because they, finally, learned that the Japanese weren't that easy. Down there in Virginia you go through the woods, they have these pop-up positions, where the Japanese used to pop up, out of the ground, pick up a target and disappear again. So you learned to be observant. That was the whole point, be observant, and if you messed up, "take off." Well, "take off," meant you had this pack and you have to put your rifle behind your head and run around this big field. That's not easy. "Did you see anything there?" The sergeant said, "Did you see anything?" Of course, your first time, you're stupid, "I didn't see anything, just trees and." "Take off!" Then you run around again. "See anything?" "Yes, there are some people over there." "Okay, you saw something." "Be observant."

SH: Now, were they all midshipmen such as yourself?

JS: They were ensigns, that time.

SH: Oh, ensign, I mean, but were you all ensigns being trained by these men? Okay, I wondered if there were any…

JS: We had one fellow who was in my class at Notre Dame, he refused to be directed around by a bunch of sergeants, "I'm an officer, you can't do that." He was court-martialed out because during training, these guys are in charge, and you listen, and you do what they tell you to do.

SH: Did you think your training was good?

JS: For that type of thing? Yes, it was right. As a start, I mean.

SH: Because you talked about how the academics wasn't that difficult for you.

JS: No.

SH: But this training, when you get to this stage, you really are, in fact,…

JS: Getting down to the nitty gritty of what life is about, that's right, sure.

SH: Did you have any concept what it meant to be in the Seabees, had you had enough Navy background at that point?

JS: "We build, we fight," that's all we knew. We didn't know anything about the Seabees; we don't know anything about the Civil Engineering Corps.

SH: I mean, obviously, you didn't know from…

JS: Right, right.

SH: You were truly only learning for your personal safety, but now you're also learning what it means to be in the Seabees at this stage?

JS: That's right, right. Well, in fact, the Civil Engineering Corps was part of the Bureau of Yards and Docks. The Navy is broken up into seven different organizations, the Bureau of Yards and Docks being one of them. Civil Engineering Corps managed Yards and Docks and they did exactly that. They build docks, maintained docks, facilities on shore, bases, things like that, that's all it did, and, in fact, I think prior to the war, there were only something like five hundred CEC officers and maybe a couple of thousand men, that's all.

SH: They had to build up rapidly.

JS: Oh, yes, oh, yes, right, because you had all these bases, both in Europe and in the Pacific, they had to build, maintain it, and they also started the Special Battalions, 37th Specials, that

comes later though, which was a stevedoring battalion. So we stayed away from the mud and muck anyway.

SH: Because I'm thinking about, especially in the Pacific, I mean, every single island would be someplace that you would have had to then…

JS: You had to build waterfront facilities, you had to build bases where guys could live and to maintain them, build airfields, all types of things like that.

SH: This would not have been just for the Navy, would it, or was it?

JS: Primarily for the Marines, to provide facilities for the Marines, later on, for Navy work crews that came in and, eventually, when the Army replaced the Marines, they would take over.

SH: Rather than jump ahead, go back to your discussion.

MJ: So at what point where you assigned to the 35th Special NCB [Naval Construction Battalion]?

JS: From Cape Peary, Virginia, sent to New York City, tough duty, to stevedore school there, because we didn't know the front of the ship from the rear of the ship. We really did, but to find your way around, on board a ship, is something else, to know what you're doing. So it was down on the waterfront in New York City, Pier 17 in Brooklyn. So ships were coming there and they had regular, professional stevedores there, civilians. They would handle all the loading and unloading, and you would work with them, watch them, see what they're doing. That's where you learn, hopefully, how to handle a ship when it came in.

MJ: You were just observing them at that point?

JS: Just observing, yes, yes, because we didn't know a blasted thing.

SH: How many of you were watching and how many were working?

JS: Oh, we had a cadre of all, just all of us ensigns, brand new, and probably ten of us, something like that.

SH: Had any of them had any prior knowledge of the work?

JS: I was the one raised on the Delaware River, so that didn't bother me, but never got involved in anything like that, no.

SH: That's what I'm just going to say, of all the ten, you may be the only one who would have seen ocean-going vessels.

JS: Could very well be, yes.

MJ: Did you find the training, like, did you feel you caught on pretty well with the duty…

JS: You don't catch on until you do it yourself. That's where you have to do it.

MJ: How long after observing them at the docks did you get to actually do it yourself?

JS: Went from New York City to Davisville, Rhode Island, Quonset Point, which is a big Navy airbase and also the East Coast base for the Seabees. Doesn't exist now, but Quonset Point was turned over to civilians, beautiful facilities. Davisville was where you started to get some responsibility as far as the battalion was concerned. We were assigned to battalion, 35th Special, just being formed in Davisville, eleven hundred men, thirty-three officers, and you got to know each other, your platoon. Ensigns had platoons, thirty men is what it amounts to it and you got to know them. And then we went from Davisville over to what was called Sun Valley. We thought, "Oh, Idaho! Oh, gee, it's got to be great." No, Sun Valley right there in Rhode Island, more jungle warfare training. They really were expecting to specialize on them so we spent a couple of months in Sun Valley learning all that.

SH: Now, you were training with the thirty men that had been assigned to you-

JS: The whole battalion was over there, yes, but you still had your own platoon, yes, yes, right.

SH: So you really are getting to know them.

JS: Oh, absolutely, sure, sure. Came back from Sun Valley, back to Davisville, got our gear and everything, and shipped out to Port Hueneme, in California.

SH: Before you go to the West Coast, though, are you being trained with any kind of equipment other than your rifle and your pack and what you need?

JS: Well, yes, we had a lot, sure, everything up to light machine guns, yes.

SH: But there's no other equipment that you needed to have?

JS: Not at that time, not that time, no. At Davisville, we shipped out of there. They gave us most of our gear there and we were shipped out to Port Hueneme, California.

SH: What would your gear be? Describe for the…

JS: You mean, personally?

SH: For your battalion.

JS: Oh, I think every battalion was issued two bulldozers, D-6s. Caterpillar D-6s, in those days, was sort of the biggest ones they had, earth-moving equipment, that type of thing. We got trucks, jeeps, why we got it there, we couldn't get in California, I don't know, but they did.

SH: On that equipment that you're being assigned, did you also have to qualify as being able to operate that, yourself, or was it something that you were going…

JS: Remember each man had a specific rating.

SH: That's what I wanted, to know, did you have to be able to…

JS: Officers didn't, we were not allowed to, they weren't trained, but we had equipment operators who could handle a cherry picker, bulldozers, anything like that.

SH: Okay, but you, yourself, didn't have to know how?

JS: No, no, fortunately.

SH: Do you get any leave from the time before you leave the East Coast? And how were you transported, how were you shipped?

JS: Trains, troop trains. Officers were lucky, we had Pullman cars and the men were in converted boxcars, five high. But everyone survived went down to various places down to Tucumcari, New Mexico then back up to California.

SH: What time of year was this? This would have been in '40.

JS: This would have been in probably in September of '44, yes, and going through the Midwest, you go through these little towns and the train would go slow. What was interesting, when the troop trains came through, there were always women lining along the streets, along the tracks there, waving and everything, and the guys would hand out, "Mail this for me, mail this for me." Our commanding officer was always in the back of the train; he'd grab the letters and take them away from them. It will have to be censored. Nobody could know where we were going.

SH: Did you know at that point?

JS: Yes, we were going to Port Hueneme, California.

SH: Right, with the assumption that because you were going to California, you were going to the Pacific?

JS: Oh, yes, absolutely, right.

SH: But no one had said….

JS: No. Nobody knew what where we are going. So we put in two months in Port Hueneme.

SH: What did you do when you traveled across country? That's got to be long…

JS: That's what we did, played cards. There wasn't anything to do. But I always remember, we got to Denver and we stopped there for a while and the Red Cross was out on the platform, and you're allowed to go out on the platforms, and they had coffee and donuts, and they charged you for them. Salvation Army, they gave them to you for free.

SH: What about the USO, were they…

JS: That was once we got in Pearl Harbor, you had the USO there, otherwise, you didn't have it here.

SH: You didn't know if they were on stateside or not.

JS: Yes, at least we didn't see them.

SH: What kind of gear did you have? What kind of uniforms, when you're traveling, were you in khakis or did you have to wear dress whites when you travel?

JS: Oh no, no, no. You wore khakis.

MJ: Okay, can you tell me what happened next when you got to California? How long were you there for?

JS: I think, we were there just two months and that's where we got our heavy gear, anti aircraft guns, twenty-millimeters, things like that, which was very useful. As soon as we got to Pearl Harbor, they took them away from us. We were issued Star gauge rifles, which were sniper's rifles, the old Springfield, a great gun; they took them away from us. What do you need them for in Pearl Harbor? They took most of that kind of gear away from us and probably sent out somewhere.

SH: But you were sent from the States with that.

JS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, right.

SH: When did you know that you were going to go to Pearl Harbor and be assigned at Pearl Harbor?

JS: Did not, did not. We got to Pearl Harbor and our commanding officer, who nobody thought much of, he was a retread off of the docks of San Francisco. He was a checker on the docks of San Francisco. He was a lieutenant commander in the Navy, but as a civilian, he's just a checker on the docks, no education, or anything else. Had been in the Navy long enough, he's a lieutenant commander, he's our commanding office. Yes, again, the Navy was dumb. In a war, you couldn't have a CEC officer in charge of a battalion, had to be a line officer. All company commanders had to be line officers. So at CEC, we're just a work hand, that's all it was.

SH: Why do you think that was, why wouldn't they?

JS: Because only line officers could exert military control, CEC could not.

SH: But you trained with these men.

JS: Oh, sure, sure, in fact, when we were up in Davisville, our company commanders were ex-chiefs who had retired from the Navy. They were called back and made them JGs, Lieutenant JGs. We were ensigns, so they were above us, but they've been in the Navy maybe thirty years, something like that, and when we were in Davisville, one of the instructors up there said, "Oh, you anchor yankers," and, that ticked them off. "Oh anchor yankers." [laughter] But all during the war, the CEC was never allowed to have command of a battalion, only a line officer. It changed, they do now. But it took quite a bit of doing to do that. Only line officers can have military control, which makes sense.

SH: When you are in both the East and the West, were you ever hosted by civilian families or it was just strictly military, I mean, how were you treated on the street?

JS: Oh, normally, very fine, except down in Norfolk, but Providence, Rhode Island, or Oxnard, or Ventura, California, or even down Los Angeles, they're great. They were really nice.

SH: When you were traveling across the country, were there any incidences of people who decided that they didn't want to go?

JS: Went AWOL? No, nobody, no. Remember, many of our people, white hats, were right off the waterfront and these are older men. They were stevedores.

SH: So they actually had experience.

JS: They had worked as civilians as stevedores and had enlisted and been assigned to battalions and…

SH: So somehow the Navy was bright enough to at least get them.

JS: Absolutely, yes. In fact, every platoon also had a warrant officer assigned, so the ensign was in charge of the warrant officer who was a stevedore, knew what he was doing, and mine was a fellow named, from Philadelphia, off the Philadelphia waterfront, Frank Moock. Used to play for the old Philadelphia Eagles, football, big guy, but he knew stevedoring and you had to have them because ensigns didn't know anything. But you learn, that's all.

SH: Were you the only one who realized that you needed them and took advantage of that fact?

JS: No, all of us. Every company had, every platoon was headed up by an ensign, fresh out of Midshipman School, like all of us were, and we had to learn from one of those instructors, from all over the country, all over the waterfronts around the country, up and down the East Coast, the Gulf, the West Coast.

SH: What were you shipped out from California on?

JS: The PA, personnel attack, personnel attack ship, which was a freighter, but converted to hold eleven hundred guys and equipment, all our gear.

SH: Was it a Navy crew or was it merchant marine?

JS: Navy crew, yes.

SH: Now what kind of training did you get in California? I know you were only there two months.

JS: More heavy weapons. That was already in California slugging through the mud.

SH: You thought about

JS: Oh, yes. Basically, weapons training was what it was. But the men also specialized in various types of equipment. We did work a couple of ships there, as far as learning front from the rear. What was interesting, big argument in those days, "Do you use a West Coast rig or an East Coast rig?" They had different ways of rigging ships when you are transferring cargo in or out and we ended up with a West Coast rig, which was much better, actually.

MJ: When you were shipped out to Pearl Harbor was there any indication that would be a permanent stop or…

JS: We thought we were going on out. We got to Pearl Harbor and the commanding officer had to get off and go meet the Commandant of 14th Naval District. Our commanding officer was a sort of chicken son-of-a-gun. Fortunately, for us, because it turned out that the harbor needed a battalion there to handle the ships coming in and going out, because civilians weren't allowed in there. Civilian stevedores weren't allowed. So they had to have a battalion there and the battalion that was there had been there for some time, so they were shipping them out. So they put us there. Iroquois Point, which is when you come into the harbor, it's on the left-hand side and fantastic, beautiful.

MJ: By the time you got to Pearl Harbor, was most of the devastation from the attacks cleaned up?

JS: Oh, yes, it was cleaned up, yes. The *Arizona* was still there, still there today. Again, Civil Engineering Corps did that. They had to all the battleships that had flipped over on their sides, they had to pump and try to seal all the holes in them, underwater, and everything else, and put tremendous winches on the shore and just winch them back up. Then pump all the water out and ship them to the United States and rebuilt them.

SH: Most of them were refloated and back in the water.

JS: Oh, yes, they were, except the *Arizona*, that was just blown apart.

SH: What kind of security measures, you said they could only have the naval personnel on the docks, were there other security measures that you were aware of?

JS: No matter where you went, if you try to get on the base you had to have an ID card. Pearl Harbor is a pretty darn big base.

SH: So what does a young ensign do in Pearl Harbor?

JS: He watches what he's doing. We had four docks, the West Loch Docks. There were four docks there and you could handle four ships at a time. Sometimes they stack them up, side by side, so you'd be doing eight ships, it didn't matter, and on down, in the harbor, were the ammo docks, West Loch, also West Loch Docks, but they had numbers. We used to ship ammunition out, but the docks up here were primarily for general cargo, that kind of thing. Liberty ships, Victory ships, WWI ships come, and we were scared to death because they had wooden booms and big splits, perfectly good. Hey, it was fun. League Island, I don't know if you heard League Island down in the Delaware River, that's where they built ships in WWI, some of the old League islanders came in.

SH: Really.

JS: Oh, yes, sure. They took anything that would carry cargo and move. They had to. But primarily Liberties and Victories.

SH: They had already turned out enough that you could be fine?

JS: Yep.

JS: The stevedores that were working for you, were those crews integrated, or were they…

JS: No blacks, all white. Our commissary stewards were black and they were good guys.

SH: Did you have an officers' mess?

JS: Oh, sure. Remember, officers had to pay for their food, the men don't. To talk about our disbursing officer during the war, he said, "You know what the food allowances for a man per day is here?" A dollar sixty-nine for their food, one day of food, and it was good food.

SH: So you did eat well.

JS: We did. Also we had to buy for ourselves, so, our finance officer would go into town and buy stuff for us. We had things that the men didn't have because we would buy special eats but, in general, the food was very good.

SH: Now how often were you on duty and how did you…

JS: Twelve on, twelve off.

SH: Is that what it was?

JS: Yes, no days off.

SH: Twenty-four seven.

JS: Yes, and it would be two weeks from seven in the morning to seven at night, then switch over to seven at night 'til seven in the morning.

SH: What kind of lights and things would you be able to use at night?

JS: Well, the docks were all lighted. Ships had floodlights, also, and the holds, they had lights.

SH: When you traveled from California to Pearl Harbor, by that time, was there much threat from the Japanese Navy?

JS: No, the convoy, and I'm not sure if they were putting a show on or not, but a couple of destroyers went roaring down through the convoy and off in the distance they'd drop a couple of depth charges. I think they were just playing games, make it look good for us. That's the closest I came to combat.

SH: When the people were coming in, these were all Navy ships that you were servicing?

JS: Yes, yes.

SH: There were no merchant marines…

JS: Later on, a couple of big British ships came, big British liners, *Mauritania* carrying ex-prisoners of war from North Africa, Australians and New Zealanders. They were something else those guys. We handled their ships.

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

JD: This continues an interview with Mr. James Strimple with Jessica Ding.

MJ: Michael Johnson.

SH: And Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

JS: Very good, and Jim Strimple, just so happens. [laughs]

SH: We were talking about the *Mauritania* and the British…

JS: Oh, the *Mauritania* came in, yes, which was a big British passenger liner and it had, I guess, about three thousand ex-Australian and New Zealand prisoners of war from North Africa and the

captain gave them liberty. There was a six-lane highway from Pearl Harbor into Honolulu and they just took off en mass out of the harbor, down the highway, and two of them were killed by traffic. Here they had gone all through North Africa and everything.

SH: And survived the prisoner of war camp.

JS: Yes, right. It was crazy. They had a tough time rounding those guys up because they all headed for the bars, and everything else.

SH: Were there other Allied ships or personnel that you dealt with?

JS: Russian ships would come in. We hated them because they followed you around, right on your back, no matter what you did. Oh, they were terrible.

SH: Security type of thing?

JS: Most ships, you take an American ship, you go in the deck house and get coffee, or something like that, the guys come up out that hold, take a smoke break. You weren't allowed to smoke down in the hold. They come, take a smoke break, go in the deck house and get a cup of coffee. You weren't allowed in there in the Russian ships and, in fact, most of them had women crews, and they were mean, mean. They're mean, oh, I tell you. So, we didn't like them. A Russian ship would come in and demand new working gear immediately and, of course, the Navy would give it to them. You know, as far as booms, or all the lines, and whatever it may be. Lend lease, I guess, I don't know but…

SH: That's what I was just going to ask, where these just civilian shipping types, they weren't military ships?

JS: Well, they were Russian ships, I don't think, I don't know what they called them, but freighters really is what they were.

SH: They were transporting material. Did they ever bring any men in with them?

JS: You know, to this day, I don't remember seeing a man. The captain may have been, but he probably stayed in his room. All we could do is work the ship.

SH: Were there other incidents like that, that you can tell us? You know, other interesting vignettes of life?

JS: We had a British ship come in one time; we refused to work because they threw all their garbage in the front deck, in front of the deck house. The garbage was about two feet deep. It smelled. It was terrible, so we refused to work the ship, and that was unheard of, because you had to get out on the deck to do things and you couldn't do it. So the 14th Naval District sent an officer over to find out why. "What are you doing, this ship has to be out of here in three days." He saw the mess, he went back. The British brought a honey barge along next door.

SH: Tell them what a honey barge is.

JS: Clean out the heads and also for garbage, things like that, garbage scow we call it. They spent a day and a half to shovel, just shovel over the side, to clean it up and hose it down. So we could work it. It was a British ship. It was typical, British ships in general are dirty. I'm surprised.

SH: I am, too.

JS: And their working gear probably left a lot, did leave a lot to be desired. It was well worn and sometimes you took a chance with it. That's the way it was.

SH: Talking about the British ship that…

JS: Yes, that was unheard of, you never refuse to work a ship, you had to do it, but this time, we did. It was filthy. It just wasn't safe to work and, as I said, the 14th Naval District finally told them they had to clean up or else. So they did. Eventually, we got to work it. When a Liberty came in, the Liberty held roughly ten thousand tons of cargo, depending on what it was. It's general cargo, and you're allowed three days to unload it and three days to load it up again and get it out. They have what they called combat loads. This is where rolling stock, tanks, vehicles, that type of thing, all gassed up and ready to go, and it was very dangerous, actually, to have vehicles like that on board a ship because of fires, and anything else. But that's what they were. They could pick them out, put them down, and be ready to go. So you had different types of loads, combat loads and general cargo.

SH: At what time they also developed a way to load the ships so that they would be able to take them off…

JS: Roll on, roll off. That's what they have today. Well, the LSTs, yes, sure, and various landing crafts. But the LSTs, we use to load them like crazy.

SH: Did you have special orders that they went on?

JS: They always had special orders, you always had a regular plan on how to load, yes, even general cargo.

SH: Did it change over the course of the time you were there in Pearl?

JS: It all depended on the cargo.

SH: So it was a specific thing. Did you have any of the troops that would be going out, the Marines?

JS: Oh, yes, sure, sure. Just before we got to Pearl Harbor, three LSTs blew up in Pearl Harbor and fifteen-hundred Marines were killed. They charged them off to the invasion of Saipan.

SH: Really?

JS: Yes.

SH: Because that's where they were headed?

JS: Yes, right.

MJ: Were you hearing any news about the war while you were at Pearl Harbor?

JS: Yes, all the time, sure, because you had radios, and everything else.

SH: Were there interactions with the crews that would come in on the ships? Did they tell you what they've been through? Or did they go to dry dock at any point after you offloaded them? Were there any damaged?

JS: No, no, no. These were all safe, workable ships, in that sense. They load them up; they're going out.

SH: You talked about the danger of loading, you know, fully loaded, so to speak, trucks…

JS: Trucks, jeeps, anything like that. Sure, they had gas on, very volatile.

SH: Did you also have to load ammunition there as well?

JS: Oh, with the West Loch Docks, the ammo docks, yes.

SH: You didn't have to do that.

JS: Oh, yes.

SH: Oh, you did.

JS: We had men down there working the docks, sure, sixteen-inch shells, two thousand pounds each. They have nose rings in them and you pick up five at a time. Pick them up, bang them against the ship, and put them down the hold, perfectly safe. It's not until they put in the fuse then you have problems.

SH: Oh, okay. Except for the three that blew up in the harbor.

JS: They still don't know what happened there.

SH: What about sabotage, were you ever concerned of that?

JS: No.

SH: Were there any incidents of black market dealings?

JS: I don't know how there could have been quite frankly. There wasn't anything you could take off a ship and peddle. I know we used to get reefer ships, refrigerator ships, with frozen meats in them. The army would come in with a big reefer ship. We have to unload it, and I remember this one occasion, the steaks came in boxes about yea big, about that thick, sixty pounds each and, invariably, our guys, when they unload it, they'd spill it. They had to put the pallet back together, but one box would disappear. That night, there would be a steak fry. But, no, the guys were perfectly honest; they knew that stuff had to go out to the people out there.

SH: I was just going to ask, what about the sense of patriotism?

JS: I think they were good, really do, yes.

SH: They understood they were part of the team.

JS: Sure. We had no fights. We had the usual football teams, basketball teams, baseball teams and we had our own orchestra.

SH: Did you play?

JS: No, I wasn't allowed to. They were good.

SH: One of the things that the students have been studying in the seminar classes, is the interaction between officers and enlisted men, and the Navy is infamous for their hierarchal-

JS: Oh, yes, absolutely, right.

SH: Did they maintain that on the docks, or was it more relaxed?

JS: I think that Seabees, in general, are very relaxed, couldn't march worth a darn. No, you're working hand in glove with everybody, it didn't matter. I never put a guy on report; I figured they just want to get home just as fast as I do, so why bother. I served on two court martial because I was just assigned to them, that's all. It's just things you have to do. But, no, we got along very well, I thought. We had great chiefs and the men themselves were good. As I say, many of them were older men, older than I was, that's for sure.

SH: Were they from all across the country or were they mostly along the borders of…

JS: Along the shorelines, yes, as far as stevedores are concerned, yes, but the fellows, they were from anywhere in the country. Most of them didn't know what the ocean was.

SH: Now when you say 'fellows,' are you talking about the officers that were…

JS: No, the officers, most of them. A good friend of mine was also in Midshipman School with me was from Peoria, Illinois and another guy was from Cincinnati, Ohio. The other fellow, from

up in Connecticut, Ralph Burr, a descendant of the famous Burrs, and we had several from the Gulf ports, all over the country, really.

SH: As their social life? You talked about the social activities for the enlisted men, what about for the officers, what was your social life like in Hawaii?

JS: Being able to stand up at the bar. If you could get any time off, why usually you went into Honolulu and went to a Chinese restaurant, something like that. There really wasn't an awful lot you could do.

SH: Were there any dances for the officers with the some of the higher brass?

JS: No, no, because you were working, remember, seven on, seven off, and, if you could sneak time once in a while, I used to, if I was working nights, I used to go down to the waterfront and go swimming for a couple of hours, that's all, and come back and go to work. But there was nothing as far as dances and stuff like that. There was USO, but you had to be on the right shift to have a movie, or they'd have a performance there, whoever they may be.

SH: Did you get a lot of mail from home? Had you left someone back home special to write to?

JS: Of course, of course, where she is now, I don't know now. [laughs] From Blairstown, actually.

SH: Really?

JS: Yes.

SH: Oh, this is interesting.

JS: (Marksboro?).

SH: Right, just up the street from, you…

JS: Yes.

SH: What about, were there any unique craft, I mean, you talked about the British ship and the condition it was in and that some of the ships looked like they were World War I and really in danger of being able to stay afloat?

JS: They were, they really were, yes.

SH: Were there other craft that were unique, that you had to service, what about submarines?

JS: Oh, no, we didn't handle any of them.

SH: There weren't any that came in?

JS: Oh, yes, we can handle them. Oh, yes, the submarine docks, over the far end of Pearl Harbor, sure, oh, yes. The sub pens are there.

SH: They were up there where the pens are.

JS: Again, being at the entrance of Pearl Harbor, everything that came in, went out, and you'd see submarines coming in with a broom up, "clean sweep."

SH: Explain to them what that means.

JS: It means that they used all their torpedoes and, theoretically, they sank a ship each time.

SH: Didn't waste a single one.

JS: The USS *Franklin* (CV-15), that really got demolished, hit, and they thought it was going to sink, it was burned. Lost around fifteen-hundred men on board, and they had about six thousand on board. Anyway, still floating, so they put three hundred men back on board and put the fire out. It was really a piece of junk, but they got the engines going again and those three hundred men brought it back to Pearl. [The ship] stank because they still had bodies on board. It was terrible. It was in bad shape, and as it came into Pearl Harbor, they had a little band playing *Anchors Away*. Anyway, they took it back to, I think, to Portsmouth, and rebuilt the thing. It was very impressive, really.

SH: Now, were the men taken off that were dead and buried there in Pearl Harbor?

JS: No, they couldn't get them off the ship; they had, not until they got back to Boston. When we were stationed in Iroquois Point, right next to us was Halava Naval Cemetery. In fact, I have pictures of it. The two-thousand-some guys that were killed in Pearl Harbor, that they were able to reclaim, were buried and after the war, of course, they transferred them over to the Punch Bowl where all the people from the Pacific are buried, Ernie Pyle, yes.

SH: But, originally, they were interred…

JS: Oh, yes.

SH: I didn't realize that they've been transferred.

JS: And mostly unidentified, unidentified, yes.

SH: Were there any aircraft, what should I say, any threat of any kind of Japanese aircraft getting to Pearl Harbor at that point?

JS: The Japanese had big I-boats. They were huge, biggest submarines going. They had a hangar on the front of the conning tower. It carried two planes, always full up. They could take them outside and they would take off. I don't know; we were loading a ship one night. All of a

sudden, all hell broke loose, anti aircraft guns started popping away. Searchlights, they nailed a little speck up there they were shooting at it, whatever it was. I don't know whether it was practice, and the word came through, "all lights had to go out." What it was, I don't know. To this day, I don't know because it could have been a, I find it hard to believe it, these Japanese I-boat. But off the coast. When the war ended, Admiral King was the big honcho, his son was Commander King, and he brought an I-boat back to Pearl Harbor. We went through that thing. The Japanese had round hatches, rather than the tall ones that we have, and, boy, trying to get through them was crazy. The place was filled with Sake bottles, empty Sake bottles, and, rats. It was terrible. It was a big boat. But we had nothing to do with them, no.

SH: Wow, that's a great story.

MJ: So, I guess, in '45, the end of the war, when did you hear about the atomic bombings and how did you feel about them?

JS: It came on the radio, something about an atomic bomb had been dropped in Japan. We asked, "What's an atomic bomb?" Nobody knew what that was, of course. So we said, "We hope it ends the war." Actually, they were getting ready to ship us out. They had loaded us on ships, because we were supposed to have been on the invasion of Japan, and they'd loaded us up, we still had gear on the dock, and they dropped the two bombs, put us back on shore again, and said, "Why, we don't need you."

SH: My question that's leading up to Michael's question, did you begin to see the build up for the invasion?

JS: Oh, yes. You can always tell when an invasion was coming on, because we've been loading ships like crazy, and the harbor would be filled with ships. Come the next day, every ship was gone. So you always knew when an invasion was coming up.

SH: When you're in Hawaii, there's been some discussions that the men in the Pacific felt like, until the war was over in Europe, they were…

JS: Second class, yes, that's what it was, sure. All the good stuff went to Europe, I guess. Good stuff, what's good stuff? I don't know, and the Pacific was, basically, second class and this was Roosevelt. He decided that [Telephone rings – tape paused]

SH: Please continue, we were talking about the second class…

JS: Yes, well, actually, it didn't affect us that much, but with troops who were on out in the Pacific, they had a hard time sometimes, getting supplies, artillery, and it was difficult for them.

MJ: Did you agree with the decision or did you feel that…

JS: I had nothing to say about it.

SH: We hear a lot of stories about the scrounging for, before the ships would take off again for another invasion, that the army or the Marines would be out busy trying to make sure they had extra this or that.

JS: We loaded up a Seabee battalion that was going on out. In fact, a good friend of mine was an officer in it and he came in with a school bus. It wasn't on the manifest. I said, "Where did you get that doggone thing?" He said, "We want to use it where we are going to move people around." I said, "That's not on the manifest." It didn't matter; we loaded it and put it on board. The ship took off, sailed, about five hours after that ship sailed, here come the MPs down. "We're missing a school bus," over some place, they lost a school bus. "Do you know anything about it?" "We never saw a school bus, no." [laughs] We were loading another ship and, of course, the big thing there was to get as much booze as you could and take it out with you, because you couldn't get it out in the boondocks. I don't know if you're familiar with the Seabees pontoons? Well, that's what was formed in a causeway in Normandy, the causeways, see the square things? They weighed a ton and they were, I don't know, about yea big, square, something like that.

SH: And tied together they almost made like a bridge?

JS: They had jewelry, all the fixtures are called jewelry, anyway, brought this flatbed down with a pontoon on it and I said, "Nothing in it, right?" Because you pick up a truck by the front end and the rear, under the chassis. So we picked it up, the chassis had bent like that and I said, "What the hell do you guys have in there?" "Well, that's the battalion's liquor." So they had to unload it and get another truck. You should have seen, there's an ABCD, Advanced Base Construction Depot, right beyond where we were. Mile after mile of equipment, trucks, jeeps, bulldozers, cranes, earth-moving equipment, you should have seen it, mile after mile of it. So if you bang it, you always got a new one. That stuff, when the war ended, was still there. They weren't about to ship it forward, so, they sold it, a dollar on the hundred. Contractors came from the States buying bulldozers, Northwest cranes, that type of thing. It was good for them.

SH: As it comes towards the end of the war, about having the merchant marine ship crews in, you were going to talk more about that. At that point…

JS: We didn't have merchant marines there, we never did.

SH: Okay, I must have misunderstood you.

JS: The only one was that British ship the *Mauritania*, yes.

SH: Did you favor those who worked prior to construction battalion, Seabees, when you got ready to load a ship? If it were your guys, were you hoping to make sure they got things like the school bus?

JS: We tried. Midnight procurement, sure, that was good.

SH: Oh, that's what you called them.

JS: Oh, yes, midnight procurement, yes, and I think the Seabees were the prime movers in that they can do anything, and we did do it.

SH: You talked about the one man that you knew, from before, did you ever run into any of the other people that you trained with originally?

JS: Never did, no, no.

SH: Ever run into any Rutgers people?

JS: Yes, he was a colonel, who just died not too long ago. I can't think of his name. He is well known at Rutgers. Oh, I don't know any stories about it, except, apparently, he was a Mason, also.

SH: Vince Kramer we're talking about.

JS: Yes, and somehow or other, we got word, Vince Kramer, Colonel Kramer is having a meeting of all Masons at so and so. I wasn't a Mason, I went anyway, and it didn't matter. That's the only time I met him or remember having anything to do with him.

SH: Or did you run into any Rutgers people, then?

JS: No, no.

SH: Because I know there was like a Rutgers reunion in Guam or Manila someplace, I remember reading about that, and I just wondered if you'd done the same.

JS: No. Luckily, I had a tough time.

MJ: So after you found out that you're going to be shipped off to Japan, what were you told to do?

JS: It wasn't too long after that, the war ended in August, and, when it happened, we were immediately removed. All work in the harbor went back to civilians. That was by contract that the Navy department had with the longshoremen's organization. So we were out of the harbor and the kanakas took over once again.

SH: The what? What's the term?

JS: Hawaiians, kanakas is what they were called, and they took over all the activities on the harbor again. So we were just twiddling our thumbs, doing nothing.

MJ: Just waiting to go home.

JS: You had to get points to go home.

SH: What did they have you do? I mean, now you're working…

JS: Collateral duties. The Navy is great on collateral duties.

SH: Collateral.

JS: The main duty was stevedoring officer, but we weren't allowed to do that anymore. So I was ordnance officer, I was also in charge of BOQ [bachelor officers' quarters], I was wine mess treasurer, I was ship service officer, and laundry officer, and a lot of things like that.

SH: Were you ever assigned to a ship or a boat or anything? I mean, you were always on the dock?

JS: Always on land, yes.

SH: What about the stevedores that have now, that had joined the Navy, were they allowed to go back to civilian life? Were they needed?

JS: Once they got their points, yes, and, of course, a good many were married so they were out right away.

SH: As the people were coming back, did you see any of the Japanese prisoners of war?

JS: During the war, they had Japanese prisoners of war in Schofield Barracks, and also Hickam Field, and what's interesting; some poor sailor would be in town and get a little pie-eyed. They'd throw him in the brig and whenever he had to go someplace, you'd see a Marine walking behind him with a riot gun. They had a couple of Japanese prisoners of war there; they were out there sitting under the trees, no guard around. So the poor guys, Navy or Marine Corps, messed up, why, they were bad guys.

SH: It was discipline, right? But, I can't imagine what you would do with that many sailors to contain them until they could go home.

JS: I don't know what they did. They had the liberty of going to Honolulu anytime they wanted to.

SH: You no longer were standing watches, you didn't have your twelve on, twelve off kind of thing anymore.

JS: No, no, no. Well, let me go back. I said we weren't happy with the original commanding officer, and, oh, we've been at Pearl for a couple of months. Thirty-three officers at that time, thirty-two of us sat down, requested transfer out, so they transferred him out instead, and the new fellow took over, had been with the Seabees up in Alaska when the Japanese were up there, and he had one rule, "I just ask that one officer be on board at all times."

SH: So, he was much more relaxed.

JS: Oh, much more relaxed, yes. He was good, though.

SH: Did you see any of the Americans that were coming back that had been prisoners of the Japanese?

JS: Never did, no. The only thing I ever saw was, then, we used to go swimming, huge seaplanes, *Mariana Mars* and big seaplanes, stretcher planes, would come in and you see ambulances lined up for a mile, or so, to take the wounded off. Take them to Tripler General Hospital or Ieia Naval Hospital, that's what you saw.

SH: Did you ever see Admiral Halsey?

JS: Well, I was driving through Pearl, going by King Dock, and here's this big ship, the *New Jersey,* coming in with Halsey on board and SPs are, "Keep moving, bud." They had a Navy band there playing, again, *Anchors Away,* what else could they play? It was Halsey coming in from the Far Pacific on the *New Jersey*, a huge ship, beautiful ship, great lines, very nice.

SH: Did you go on board?

JS: Of course not. Seabee on aboard ship, good heavens.

SH: That hierarchy again.

JS: I believe that it was. There's a 'black-shoe navy' and a 'brown-shoe navy' and then there was a 'work-shoe navy.'

SH: Explain to the students what that means.

JS: Well, the brown-shoe navy was flyboys, black-shoe navy was the regular Navy, and the work-shoe boys were the Seabees.

SH: Some of these terms are so unique to the Navy and they're great to get out there. There was a hierarchy, was there not, of the brown-shoe, black-shoe? I mean, the flyboys really did hold court over even…

JS: They thought they did. [laughs]

SH: Well put, well put. Well, then talk to us, please, we know that you're waiting for points and that you've taken all these gravy duties on.

JS: Well, back-track sometime in 1945, I was assigned to Army Ranger Jungle Warfare School over on, it was on Oahu, Kaaawa, big place there back in the hills. Are you familiar with Hawaii? Ridges up there, that's two weeks, and that's where you learn jungle warfare really. This was the army, their Rangers, they were pretty tough guys and we fired everything from the

hip, including light machine guns. The final thing was at nighttime, you go up to a ridge, and the ridges are very steep, like this, and your problem was you had to get off this ridge, down across the valley, up the other ridge, where the trucks would be to take you back to the base. You had to be there by eleven o'clock at night, and, of course, the moon was in the last phase, no light at all, of the moon, and all you have is a little wrist compass and your platoon behind you, and you can't talk, or anything. Meanwhile, they're blowing up stuff all around you, keep you on edge, but find your way down to this doggone site. I walk out on this huge tree trunk that was laying on its side, "What the hell? What do I do now?" Anyway, you get down and you find your way. Try to follow the compass as close as you can, and down the side of this thing, very steep hill, and across the valley, slushed, through mud and the muck, and everything else, and you try to get up the hill on the other side, which was also very steep. You get a couple of feet; you'd just slide back. Eventually, made it up, took time, and, fortunately, we got there, the trucks were there and took us back. I was named as invasion leader for our battalion, because I'd gone through all this nonsense.

SH: Why were you assigned to that? Was that in preparation for the invasion?

JS: Oh, yes, somebody had to do it.

SH: What did the Army think about a Navy man under their…

JS: No, they had beach masters. As far as invasion is concerned, a beach master is going first and determine where the cargo comes, or the ships would come in, the men would come in, things like that. But with us, it would be getting the men ashore, getting the equipment ashore, things like that, that you would need.

SH: Was this done early in '45?

JS: Yes, it was, yes, very early. That's before we got rid of our original commanding officer.

SH: Was it?

JS: Yes, he didn't like me, I didn't like him. We had a closet for a little officers' mess, that's all. The big recreational thing was a Ping Pong table and he thought he could play; I beat him every doggone time.

SH: Where was he sent?

JS: No, no, he was still in Pearl Harbor, another Seabee battalion there.

SH: The Seabees were a lot of the casualties when they were part of these invasion forces, how often were the replacements taken from Pearl and sent?

JS: We didn't lose any men, we lost officers. One of them from Bluefield, West Virginia, he was an ensign just like us, was one of the first guys taken out and sent out somewhere, I don't know. My warrant officer was sent to Okinawa and we lost a couple of guys that way.

SH: Did you have a lot of replacements coming into your group?

JS: Well, that depended on the war, when they brought the battalions back. They came back through us, dropped all their gear with us, then they shipped out home.

SH: Well, then talk to us about how is it with winding down, for you and what your plans are, and how did you begin to make plans? When did you first start thinking…

JS: Well, you start thinking points. I don't know what you had to have, fifty points or something like that, I don't know what it was.

SH: It depended.

JS: Yes, I wasn't married, and in the back area, you didn't get many points that way so it was going to be a while, and it was going to be at least six months before I could get home. So another guy and I got acquainted with some army nurses down at Tripler General Hospital. Go to parties down there, we'd have parties back and forth. The Army was great on martinis, and, they would have these porcelain footbath, about this big. They'd fill it with martinis, and they would give you water glass. It used to be a mixed drink was very expensive in our battalion. It was ten cents. Beer was five cents. We were making money hand over fist and, finally, Bu Pers authorized us to lose six hundred dollars a month. We couldn't do it. We had a slot machine also that somebody had picked up. It was only a nickel slot, money, we made money on that. We had parties, free parties, everything free, we still made money. The slot machine was set sixty/forty, sixty for the house and forty for the player. We had a fellow from Chicago, first class gunner's mate, could have been tied up with the Mafia there in Chicago, and he would come. We said, "Set this thing so it paid sixty for the player and forty for the house." He did.

SH: And he was a regular player then?

JS: Oh, yes, yes. Did anything to waste time, kill time. The Navy got smart and finally started college courses in the harbor and we all went down. I took a refresher course in calculus, and things like that.

SH: Did you start to think about what you would want to do?

JS: What am I going to do when I got home? Sure. Sure, everybody did. As ship's service officer, as I said, I was also laundry officer. We had a complete laundry in operation. We had another complete laundry sitting in crates and it had never been uncrated, sitting unused, sitting there. The officer down at John Rogers Naval Air Station said, "I hear you have a laundry up there not being used." I said, "That's right." He said, "Could we have it?" I said, "It's yours." So he came out and took it down, set it up down there. He said, "If you ever need anything, let me know." Eventually, I got my orders to come home. It was a thirty-day wait to get a ship out of Pearl. It's another thirty days down to the Canal, and back up to Philadelphia, where I'll be discharged. That's two more months. So, I picked up the phone and called the guy, and I said, "I have my orders and I'd like to go home." He said, "I'll call you back." He said, "You're on the

plane, eleven o'clock tonight." I said, "By the way, I have a friend who was going at the same time." He said, "Okay, call you back." "He's on the plane, too." So we went down to John Rogers airfield that night and the plane was a stretcher plane. Oh, man, on top of these pipes and canvas seats, oh, terrible. Freeze? They didn't have heat in the plane, but fourteen hours from Pearl Harbor to Alameda, California, good deal, good deal.

SH: When considering what you could have gotten the other way around.

JS: Sure. That was great.

SH: That's good news, people talk about spending more time at sea trying to get home than they spent at sea in the war.

JS: You said, "Was there any integration?" We had a couple of black battalions on Red Hill, and they were great. They loved sardines. We had three thousand cases of sardines and they were all sent home, the black battalion was sent home; I'm stuck with these three thousand cases of sardines. What am I going to do with them? I paid them off at the officers' club down at Hickam Airfield, they took them. We had cigarettes coming out of our ears. We'd have guys standing ahead at chow lines handing out packs of cigarettes; these are Spuds and Wings, cigarettes you never heard of.

SH: One question that I wanted to ask was, you talked about how the Pacific was like the second theater in everything. What was the reaction when you heard that the war was over in Europe? Did you remember was there an announcement or was it like…

JS: Just since the war ended in Europe and people were going to be transferred from Europe to the Pacific, but other than that, no, nothing special.

SH: Were there a lot more troops ships that were coming through?

JS: Troop ships, oh, we used to work them. You work on troop ships and, of course, the guys are, well, most ships have three holds forward and two holds aft, and all the way down into the hold area, a couple of decks, and off on the sides are the bunks. These poor army guys trying to sleep there while we're working at nights, the clatter and the noise and everything going on and winches and noise. Yes, we got troop ships all the time.

SH: Did it increase after the war was over in Europe?

JS: Started to pick up a little bit, yes. Because they were going out for the invasion of Japan.

SH: By now Okinawa, Iwo Jima

JS: They were going on, yes.

SH: The reaction in Pearl when the war was officially over; were there street celebrations?

JS: I was on night schedule, seven in the evening, seven in the morning, loading a ship and then, all of a sudden, all hell broke loose. I mean that. Every ship, and there were a lot of navy ships in the harbor, firing guns, machine guns, tracers, signals, everything, and we figured the war was over. We were off loading onto a barge, alongside our ship, and some of the flares came down, starting fires, put guys down there to knock the fires out. That went on for a couple of hours, believe me, all work was halted right then and there, you couldn't do a blessed thing. In fact, ships couldn't leave Pearl Harbor for a couple of days until they could replace their signal flares and their ammunition.

SH: They discharged that much.

JS: Ordinarily, ship's here, our base is over here at Iroquois Point, it's twenty-six miles around, but it's just half an hour by boat, you couldn't get a boat in the harbor, you couldn't. It's unsafe first of all, and secondly, they didn't dare. Most of our guys back in the base were half-polluted anyway. It took three hours before they could get a truck around the twenty-six miles to pick us up and back around again to our base. We got back there and we had one big party going on and, I mean, a big party.

SH: Everybody was there.

JS: Oh, yes, everybody.

SH: You were talking about what you're wanted to do when you come back. Are you planning to come back to Rutgers, to use your GI Bill, what are your options? What did you think as a young man after having, seen and done? What you've done, what were you considering doing?

JS: Well, I knew I had to do something. I didn't want to work at DuPont.

SH: Really?

JS: Oh, yes. So I was home for about a month, remember the 52/20 Club? I got my twenty dollars, I think four times, that was it, and came back into New Brunswick, went back to summer school, took…

SH: This would be in '46 that you're coming back?

JS: '46, yes, took a couple of courses, went out in September, got a job, that was it.

SH: Where did you go to work, first?

JS: National Lead Company, titanium pigment, down in Sayreville, and, I retired from National Lead.

SH: The 52/20 club, were there lots of other people taking advantage of that?

JS: Oh, yes, yes. I didn't like it; I didn't think it was right.

SH: What were the changes that you saw in Rutgers? When you came back coming back in '46, the war is over

JS: They had women.

SH: The women.

JS: Yes, that was terrible. Remember Rutgers was all men, eighteen hundred, that's all it was. It's going downhill, obviously. [laughs] I took summer courses and had a woman instructor, of all things.

SH: Did you really?

JS: Yes. I lived at the fraternity house because they were looking for people to get them going once again. I was a Phi Gam, 586 George Street. There was no one left.

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

JD: Side two, tape two.

SH: Please continue, we were talking about coming back and you just realized that you were not at that fraternity you said.

JS: Our house at 586 George Street was closed down because everybody was in the service and the board of trustees rented it out to the SAM's, Sigma Alpha Mu and they burned it down on us, and two people were killed in the fire, two girls from NJC, very illegal having girls in the fraternity house, anyway, they did. I read about this in the *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, whatever their paper was. "Fraternity house burns down at Rutgers, two killed." By God, it was our house. Well, anyway, we came back and we had to get the fraternity started again and we leased a house from University at 15 Union Street. It was nice, really was nice. So we started there and got reorganized and, of course, you had to have a house mother, and we had a house father. Sergeant Baker, he was, he's with the ROTC unit at Rutgers, Sergeant Baker, and his wife were very nice. She was our house mother. Most of the guys, in fact, all the guys went back as officers and we'd have parties and the Sergeant would come downstairs and "All right guys, quiet it down." So you behave yourself.

SH: You still had those sergeants on you.

JS: Oh, yes, right, he was good.

SH: So this is in the summer that you were back in the house. Had you pledged the fraternity when you were at Rutgers as a freshman?

JS: No, as sophomore, yes.

SH: But you continued to live at Ford Hall?

JS: Yes, I did, right.

SH: Were you ever an officer in the fraternity?

JS: I wasn't there long enough, quite frankly. I didn't dare get involved in something else. I was on probation when I came back at the start of my sophomore year.

SH: You talked about when you came back and getting the fraternity going again, with everybody who had been an officer, what about being in class now with students who were recent high school students? Did that happen with you?

JS: It was interesting, yes, and to us, like a bunch of old guys, they were just out of high school. I think coming back from the service you were a little more sincere in your studies and you want to make sure that you got along and got good marks because that was your life.

SH: Who were some of your fraternity brothers that came back and were living in the house then when you were there?

JS: Oh, I don't know. I remember one was a captain in the army, Charlie (Fisher?), and he was a dispatch rider at one time, in Europe, on motorcycles and he said, "You had to be very careful because the Germans will stretch these thin wires across this lane," or something like that, "and you ride along like that and take your head off." So, you were easily taken out. Anyway, that was a little history side story.

SH: That would be one of the questions that I would ask, did you sit around and talk about the war at all or was it something that you just…

JS: No, not at all, no. We had some of the guys who had been in combat in Europe and some in the Pacific. They didn't talk about it, no.

SH: Oh, okay, I was curious if there was ever a discussion.

JS: The big question is, "what kind of booze are we going to buy tonight?"

SH: So, you would confirm for us that there was drinking on campus.

JS: Oh, absolutely.

SH: Because we do have some transcripts that say that there was no drinking in the fraternity houses.

JS: I'd like to know where. Chi Phi, Chi Psi, they all did, everybody did. We weren't about to be left alone.

SH: You started working then in Sayreville, did you stay in New Brunswick?

JS: I rented rooms in New Brunswick, yes, various places, until I got married in 1948.

SH: Where did you meet your wife?

JS: Down in Penns Grove. I was down there for a weekend and a good friend of mine, in fact, he's my roommate, he's a fraternity brother, also, he said, "Hey, want a blind date for the football game and dance at Rutgers?" I said, "Sure, who do you have?" He mentioned a name; I said, "Never heard of her." He said, "Let's go down and meet her." So we did, and that's where I met her, and year and half later we were married.

SH: Do you want to talk at all about your family, your children?

JS: We have four children, two boys and twin girls, six granddaughters, no grandsons.

SH: Did any of your children go to Rutgers then?

JS: My middle son got his master's there. He went to Gettysburg and went to Rutgers, got his master's there in School Board Administration.

SH: You talked about politics, then, and the family's thoughts on Roosevelt, did you ever get involved in any kind of politics or public service?

JS: Me? Sure, I ran twice, got beat twice, thank goodness. 1959 I ran for mayor, like an idiot, and I lost.

SH: In Sayreville?

JS: No, here in Milltown. We lived in Milltown and I lost, thank goodness, and in 1979, twenty years later, I had ten years on the school board, and four of us resigned from the school board and three of us ran for council, and we lost because the Democrats said, "You're just trying to use the experience on the school board as a springboard, that's all." "Not at all. We just want to be on the council, that's all." One guy was running for mayor and three of us were running for council, we all lost. In Milltown, Republicans don't stand a chance.

SH: What are your passions? What kept you going? Now, obviously, you must be retired and…

JS: Oh, yes. I enjoy doing water colors, very much so, yes.

SH: We've asked a lot of questions, covered a lot of territory here, but is there anything that we didn't ask you,

JS: I got recalled in 1951 for a little affair, Korean affair.

SH: Tell us what that entailed for you?

JS: Well, I was in graduate school.

SH: So, you did go back to graduate school.

JS: Oh, yes, oh, yes, at Rutgers, yes. Got this little postcard in April saying, "You'll be recalled as of July 1, 1951. Get your affairs in order." So the mayor in town was a good friend of mine, Ed Crabiel. He was in the reserve unit over in Perth Amboy; we used to travel back and forth together. He was a mayor so he went down to Washington and saw his assignment officer, got his orders cancelled, went into the retired Navy. I figured, "What the heck?" So I go down to Washington, went over at the Pentagon, saw the assignment officer, Capt. WCG Church, my old commanding officer for the 20th Construction Regiment in Pearl Harbor, and when I was mess treasurer in charge of BOQ, he had a suite next to my one room. So we talked. He said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "Hey, my friend just got his orders cancelled." He said, "That's nice. He's a Democrat, he can do it." He's mayor and Democrat, see, it was all Democrat in those days. So he said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I don't know. What do you have available?" So he pulled out the assignment book, big, thick book, and started to look through it, "Look, you could be a Navy liaison officer with the Army chemical warfare service in Huntsville, Alabama. Or you can be in the naval civil engineering research and evaluation development in Port Hueneme, California." I said, "I'll take California." So I was lucky. I spent two years there as chief metallurgist in the lab. That's great duty, great people, great experience, quite frankly. So that was my…

SH: What does a metallurgist do in for the Navy?

JS: Oh, everything, good heavens. Ships are steel, everything. So you're always trying to find improvements in the various metals that are being used.

SH: That's the only thing that came to mind was ship hulls

JS: Aluminum, everything. So that was my Korean experience, quite frankly.

SH: When did you go back to grad school, then? Did you stay in from the time you came back from that summer school?

JS: Well, I took one graduate course at night, Theories of Analytical Chemistry with Dr. Reiman, smart guy, very sarcastic, and as an undergraduate, in quantitative analysis, I did something stupid, I didn't know what it was, and he said, "Well, Mr. Strimple, I see you're never going to be an analytical chemist." I said, "Dr. Reiman, I never intend to be one." He was a sharp guy. I started work in September. In fact, I was working in Sayreville and I had applied to several schools for metallurgy for graduate school and I had acceptance from MIT. They accepted there, except they said, "You have to take a year of undergraduate courses, too," because I had one metallurgy course at Rutgers, that was all. A friend was a PhD from Rutgers in ceramics. He said, "Why don't you take ceramics?" It's really the metallurgy of the metal oxides is what it amounts to, and the school had started two weeks then. He picked up a phone,

called John Koenig, head of the ceramics school, and John said, "Get over here right now," school's going, so I went over there right away and went to the graduate office, because I thought I might have to take the exams, or something. But I took that one graduate course back in 1946, turns out that I was admitted to graduate school. He said, "You're already in." See, I get by all the time. So I was in graduate school; I was working full time; going to graduate school full time; I was in the reserves full time; I was involved in other things.

SH: Amazing. When Korea began, were you concerned that you were going to get called up right away?

JS: Oh sure, sure.

SH: So you were just basically waiting, again, the waiting game until you heard, and then to get assigned to the metallurgy research and development in California. Did that help you in your studies, did you get any credit for doing that or just some background?

JS: I took some courses in ceramics from Penn State.

SH: While you were in…

JS: In California, yes. I don't know if I got credit from them or not. I turned it in, but I doubt it very much. But they helped as far as basic ceramics was concerned; enamels, glass, that type of thing.

SH: Because the Rutgers ceramics program is well known…

JS: That's the best in the country, I think.

SH: That's what we've been told.

JS: I had a big argument with a friend of mine over at Sayreville. He was from the ceramics school in New York, Alfred. Ohio State likes to claim they have the best school, and there are many ceramics schools that are good around the country, but, to my mind, Rutgers still has the very best.

SH: Have you stayed involved with them at all?

JS: Oh, yes. I was in research in ceramic research all my life.

SH: And you did that, then, in Sayreville.

JS: Sayreville, Titanium Pigment Corporation, which is a division of National Lead Company. Then they built new labs down at Hightstown, had seventeen years at Sayreville and sixteen years down at Hightstown.

SH: Had you stayed involved with a professional organizations?

JS: Once in a while. It's changed, everything is computer now. It's still interesting, I like it. I like scientific things.

SH: So you were able to work at something that you really did truly enjoy.

JS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Got several patents, what they're really worth, nothing.

SH: Now have you been in this home, this beautiful home…

JS: Would you believe we moved here in 1957, so that's going to be fifty years. I'm trying to get it back in order, so I can get out of here, because I have four bedrooms, full attic, and, I mean, it's full; basement, I finally got the basement cleaning started, two-car garage, lot is fifty by two-hundred feet and I don't need this.

SH: One thing I'd like to ask. How did your service in the military both in World War II and in Korea, how do you think it affected the man that you are today?

JS: Well, positive, I think. I think in a sense I used to be a follower and this is what bothers friends of mine. Whatever I was doing, I had to be out in front doing something, not in the back there. "What do you want to do that for?" I said, "That's where you should be, out in front, leading," whatever it may be. That bothers some people.

SH: I think your Class of '44 is a leader.

JS: Oh, I think so, right, right; we had some great people there.

SH: Thank you very much. If there's anything that…

JS: Well, I stayed in reserve and retired, eventually, as a commander in the Navy.

SH: What does somebody in the reserves in the Navy have to do? We know that the army has to go every…

JS: Yes, in those days you went once a week to, a full evening. I had to be in Perth Amboy, which is now the, what's the restaurant there? It's a big restaurant right down on the waterfront, that was the Training Center. It belonged to New Jersey, State of New Jersey. They built two training centers in 1926, one in Perth Amboy and one in Camden, and the one in Perth Amboy was great. They had an ocean-going Navy and they had Seabees there. It worked out pretty well. You're required once a week. That changed, eventually, to whole weekends once a month and you're required to take two-weeks training duty every year; that was required, you had to do that. Depending what you get, you had great training duty. Puerto Rico, Roosevelt Roads, Guantanamo Bay a couple of times, good duty. But that's, again, so you kept your hands in. The men do what they were doing, nothing particularly great or anything, and you did something worthwhile. I know in Guantanamo Bay, we were doing a new recreation hall for base people there.

SH: Were there any other times when you were concerned that you would be called up?

JS: Maybe as far a Vietnam, or something like that? You worried about that and they did take a lot of our men. They took them a piecemeal, which I object to, I think that they should have taken us as a unit. Just take them in, put them in something over there.

SH: So you think that it's more efficient to be a unit?

JS: Sure, you've worked together, you've trained together, then, all of a sudden, hey, you're just plugged into something else over there.

SH: What did you think of Vietnam at the time?

JS: One of the training courses I took was down in Atlantic City. It was two weeks long and it was given by officers out of the Pentagon, "The Domino Effect." You know, if Vietnam goes and the other, then, everything's going to go. I didn't really believe in any of that, I just thought it was nonsense. Vietnam was politics, once again. Same thing that is going on right now. This country spends a fortune training generals to fight wars, to know what they're doing, but politicians know better, and they don't help the home feelings at all. They, the media, the media is the worst thing going nowadays. There's good news coming out of Iraq, whether you like it or not. Do you think they'll publish that? No, it's always the bad news. I just think it's wrong.

SH: Did any of you children have to serve?

JS: No, they were fortunate. They had high numbers when the draft came along, they were fortunate, yes, and they both say they're sorry they never did.

SH: Really? Well, I'm glad that you took the time to talk to us today. It has been a fabulous,

JS: Well, it's been fun trying to remember. Did you find my picture in there?

SH: No, not yet. We were just looking at the albums, great pictures, but, please, you were telling…

JS: Sometime in 1944, I got a letter from my mother saying she received a letter from Dr. Clothier's saying, I have been awarded my diploma from Rutgers, could I be there? Well, I went to my commanding officer, he was the guy I didn't like, and I said, "I'm having my graduation," whatever the date was, "Saturday at New Brunswick." I said, "I like to go." "Oh what's that mean?" He said, "You don't need to go!" I said, "You only graduate once in your life." He gave me a seventy-two hour pass, and I came down from Quonset Point actually, and in Dr. Clothier's office three of us, that was it.

SH: Really?

JS: Just three of us, yes, all in military uniform and he gave us our diplomas and shook our hands and we talked for a while, and that was it, that was my graduation.

SH: Did anyone get a photograph of that?

JS: No.

SH: Who were the other two?

JS: I had no idea who the other two were.

SH: That is a great story.

JS: I said, "It took that long for Princeton to transfer credits."

SH: I thank you so much and if there are other stories that you do remember, we'd love to hear them, and thanks again.

JS: Well, you're welcome; it's been fun and brings back memories obviously.

SH: Continue, please.

JS: Number two hold on a Liberty ship was in main hold and that's where we put heavy gear down there. They had a main boom. They had what they called a king boom, take fifty tons. Side booms are five-ton booms and we were loading a Northwest crane cab, which weighed fifty-two tons. It didn't matter, you usually had a safe working factor. Picked the thing up and the outboard guy-line broke. It swung back around, you couldn't control it. It's fifty-two tons hanging on there, swung back around, smashed a twenty-millimeter gun sponson, bent a five-ton boom double, and the crane went down to the dock. It did, fifty-two tons.

SH: Did the dock hold it?

JS: It did. It went through the dock, and they had to get another crane down there to pick it up. They had to repair the dock. But they just ran that one off to the junkyard. Just some of the other things that happened, that's all.

SH: When you were in Korea…

JS: I wasn't in Korea.

SH: No, but when you were in service during Korea, I should say, were the materials that you were using or whatever, were they all World War II or had any of the technology changed?

JS: They had a huge yard there of tools such as lathes, milling machines, things like that, just sitting out in the open fields. They junked them. Some contractors were going crazy to get them, but they just junked it. We had a whole warehouse filled with big Packard engines that

used to go in the PT boats and, I think, they just junked them also. It hurts to see that kind of stuff. They had a couple of acres of rear-end assemblies, for World War II jeeps. Junked them. Fun and games, that's where all your taxes go.

SH: Again, my thanks.

JS: Getting rid of the stuff after the war, one of them, I don't know how many miles of color film we had available. We're not allowed to bring that back because they had a contract with Kodak. You couldn't bring it back and put it in the market; over the side. They took the whole dental lab, chair, x-ray all facilities that go with it; over the side. It hurts to see that stuff go like that. They could have had some use, but they weren't allowed to do it, by contract with the various companies and unions back in the States.

SH: What about rebuilding, because, I mean, you were in such a rebuilding mode for Europe and Japan, couldn't it have been used there?

JS: Apparently not. But remember the ABCD at Pearl was just one of many. There were more, out forward. That was it; over the side.

SH: Thank you.

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

Edited by Jessica Ding 7/9/07
Edited by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/13/07
Edited by James H. Strimple 5/28/08