

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAYMOND TOTH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an interview with Raymond Toth on Monday, June 11, 2018, in South Plainfield, New Jersey. The interviewer is Kate Rizzi. Also present in the interview is ...

Gary Toth: Gary Toth.

KR: Mr. Toth, thank you so much for doing this today.

Raymond Toth: You're welcome.

KR: To begin, can you please tell us where and when you were born?

RT: Born in Jersey City.

KR: When were you born?

RT: [June, 7, 1924].

KR: Happy birthday last week.

RT: Thank you.

KR: To begin, can we talk about your family history, starting on your mother's side?

RT: My mother had a brother and three sisters. I am an only child.

KR: Can you tell me a little about her family background? Where was her ancestors from?

RT: United States.

GT: But going back, on Grandma Faede side, where was--

RT: Grandma Faede side, that's my--wait a minute.

GT: Your mother, where was she born?

RT: She was born in Jersey City.

GT: Her background, what is her background?

RT: English.

GT: German, I don't know.

RT: And German. English and German.

KR: What do you know about her parents and how they came to settle in Jersey City?

RT: I don't know too much about it.

KR: Okay.

GT: He lived with Grandma Thomas. You lived with your grandmother after your father passed away.

RT: Yes. We were in an automobile accident. My father lasted about five years. He had tuberculosis from the steering wheel going into his lungs from the accident. He lasted about five years. I was between seven and eight years old when he passed away. He was Hungarian.

KR: What do you know about your father's family background in Hungary?

RT: Not too much. In fact, his mother was married twice. She was Hungarian. My grandmother, on my father's side, I never knew much about her because she couldn't talk English. She'd talk Hungarian. So, my father's brother's wife used to take us over--we'd go to New York--used to take us over there. I was only over there twice. I went there and I couldn't understand her. So, my father's brother's wife interpreted for me, so I could understand. But like I say, that was the only time, twice, that I ever saw her.

KR: How much Hungarian did your father speak?

RT: To tell you the truth, I don't know. Like I say, he never talked Hungarian at home. If he did talk Hungarian, it would be when we go to New York to his brother's once in a while, but I never really heard him and his brother talking Hungarian. They talked English.

KR: Can you state your father's name for the record?

RT: Joseph Raymond Toth.

KR: Please tell me about his military background.

RT: He was in the Navy. Gary traced it. He was on a ship up in Boston.

GT: Yes. I think the *SS Minnesota*, was it?

RT: *SS Minnesota*.

GT: He was a trainee.

RT: Yes, training ship. So, I don't know really how long he was in the Navy.

KR: Did he share any stories about his service with you?

RT: No.

KR: How did your mother and father meet?

RT: That's a good question. I never knew anything about it.

GT: I never heard you talk about it. I never remember her--

RT: No, my mother and father, how they met--

KR: What's your mother's name, for the record?

RT: Edna. Well, Edna Thomas. That's what she was born with. Then, when she got married, Edna Toth.

KR: What did your father do for work?

RT: My father had a route for the National Biscuit Company. My mother worked in a restaurant on Wall Street.

KR: Did your father ever take you around on his route when you were a young child?

RT: No, he wasn't allowed to do that.

KR: Did your mother work throughout your childhood?

RT: Yes. Well, she worked until she got remarried. She married eight years after my dad passed away. She had to go back and forth to New York on the train. She met my stepfather. He was a conductor on there. Later on in years, he quit and worked for the Kearny Shipyard, building ships. He was a welder. That's when I got to know him. My mother confronted me one time and she said, "I met a man." She said, "What do you think about having a father?" I said, "I think that would be great. He'd take me fishing and stuff like that." That's what happened. My stepfather was very close to my first father's brother in New York. All my relatives in New York accepted him. We always went over there a lot and did things with my cousin on Jones Beach, [such as] play ball. My stepfather fit right in with all my first father's relatives.

KR: Let's back up a little bit. What are your earliest memories of growing up in Jersey City?

RT: Well, I was three years old, and my mother and my father and me, we lived in Jersey City in a two family house. The owner lived downstairs. Later on, when we had this bad accident, these guys run into us, and my father was in the hospital, he'd only come home--less than a year--he'd come home on weekends. We'd wear masks, my mom, me and him. Then, it got so bad that he had to stay in the hospital for that kind of disease. So, we used to have to drive there. We didn't have the turnpike or anything. The only car in the family was my uncle's car. He had a Model A Ford with a rumble seat. If it didn't rain, we'd go. If it rained, we couldn't go because the car only held four people. We'd go up there. Then, it got to the point that he got so bad that we

didn't go up there that much because he didn't know that too much was going on. He passed away about five years [later]. I was between seven and eight years old. My father was in the Navy, so I remember that he had a military funeral. They had sailors there and they shot the guns. I remember when I was a kid I was so scared with them shooting off the guns because at my age, I didn't hear any guns any time like that. Then they played Taps. They gave us the flag. I found the flag again. Gary and my daughter-in-law took the flag, cleaned it up and it's out in the living room. Gary and I folded it up and he bought me one of those triangles. It's out in the living room.

KR: What hospital was your father in?

RT: Trying to think of the name of it. It was up in Bergen County.

GT: Secaucus.

RT: Right now, if you drive up the turnpike there's a big building with a smokestack. That used to supply heat for the hospital. Well, when he first got up there, we used to take him out for walks when he couldn't go home anymore. We used to take him out for walks. That building is still there. When you go past the turnpike to the exit going to the Lincoln Tunnel, you can see it before you get to the exit. I can see the building is still there. He only lasted between four and five years. I was about seven or eight years old. My mother didn't get remarried for almost eight years. Then, she married my second father, stepfather. He was German and so was his family.

KR: When you were living in the two-family house with your mother and father, what section of Jersey City was that?

RT: Woodlawn Avenue. Woodlawn Avenue, Jersey City. Then, when all this happened with my father, now my mother was working in a restaurant. Now, I didn't have nobody to take care of me. My grandmother lived about six or seven blocks away. She used to walk and come stay with me while my mother worked. Then, what happened, it got so bad that my grandmother, my grandfather, my aunt Agnes and my uncle Johnny, they all lived in a one-family house. My grandfather was a detective on the Pennsylvania Railroad. He worked in train yards. What they did was they had my mother and me--my grandmother brought us over. They lived in a one-family house and they had enough room. We moved over there and my mom went from there, worked out of there. I was there all day with my grandmother and my aunt and my uncle.

KR: That was the Woodlawn section also.

RT: Yes, that was the one family house. That was Cator Avenue.

KR: What was that section of Jersey City like?

RT: It was nice. Everybody knew everybody in the neighborhood.

KR: Was it a mix of ethnicities that lived in that area?

RT: No. Not at first. That all happened years later. No.

KR: What were the backgrounds of the people who lived there?

RT: Mostly Irish and German. They were the most [populous] ethnic group that was there.

KR: Can you tell me about your early schooling at this point, grammar school?

RT: Well, I went to two schools. The first school because of the area we were in, I went to one school. Then, when [we lived with] my [mother] and her parents, I went to a different school. So, I went to two schools, [Public School] 34 and [Public School] 20.

GT: Those were the school numbers?

RT: I went to school up until high school. When I got in high school--you go to high school when you go into the ninth grade. You do eight in a regular--and then ninth. I wasn't doing so good. I never did good in high school. I get up to where I was in the eleventh grade and I decided that I didn't want to go anymore. I had to get my mom to sign papers that I was able to--that she sanctioned it for me to go out and get a job. So, I figured by helping her--because my grandfather was the only income. My mother gave my grandmother money for food for me. I went out and got a job. I worked in a movie theater about two miles from the house. I was an usher there. On Saturdays, they had three pictures. That means you get out at twelve o'clock at night. On a Saturday night, you'd get a plate, you'd get a saucer, you'd get a cup. That's what made people come back to the theater. So, what happened was, *New York News* and *The Daily News*, I got in contact with them. They used to drop off on Sunday Nights with Dick Tracy in the comics and all those comics. The *New York News*--I mean the *New-York Mirror*. The *Mirror* and *The Daily News*, they'd drop off papers. They had this big sack--I put them in there. It took me--I would say it took me over two and a half hours to walk home. My last stop, I'd call, "*Daily News* and *Mirror*," and people would yell out from apartments. He'd run up there, give them the paper and stuff like that. I never collected money. The newspaper company had somebody do that. My last stop was a tavern. The tavern stayed open until two o'clock in the morning. Back in those days, to make them drink beer, they used to have bread. It was about that round and used to put one piece of pepperoni on there. The bartender used to keep some of them for me. I'd give him a free paper and he'd give me a Coca-Cola and I could eat as much as that. Then, I'd go home.

KR: I wanted to ask you about your grandfather who was the detective on the railroad. What stories did he tell you?

RT: To tell you the truth, the only things he ever said about it was he'd go check the freight cars and make sure the seals were on there. If they weren't, he had the seals that you would put on there. He had this thing, he'd seal them back up. Because they used to break in, break the seal, open the door, throw the stuff out and run. So, what he did was he'd check certain freight cars at night. That's what he did. Being he worked on the railroad, he got a pass for my grandmother and him and me and Agnes. We could go--that's how we got down the shore all the time. My

grandmother had a sister that lived down the shore. So, we used to get down there once a month during the summer. She had eight kids. We'd go down there and I'd hang out with my cousins.

KR: Where down the shore?

RT: Union Beach, New Jersey. Right next to Keansburg.

KR: You grew up during the Great Depression. What do you recall about the economic struggles of that time period?

RT: The only thing I can remember was once in a while I used to hear my folks, my mother, my grandmother and my grandfather talking about trying to meet the bills every year. After we were on Cator Avenue, some people were going to buy that house. So, we moved to another place that was Old Bergen Road. We were in that place for a while. After that, we moved out of there and we lived more or less in the city part of Jersey City--trolley cars running down the main street and stuff like that. Being that I lived there with my mother and she was working and the only income was my grandfather and my mother--the mayor of Jersey City was very, very good. Every Christmas we got oil put in the oil tank. Then, for Thanksgiving, we'd get a basket with a turkey and all that. Once a year, I'd get a pair of shoes. During the summer, I went to a Boy Scout's camp; we were under their supervision. The organization was underprivileged kids in Jersey City, which I was on account of the economy and everything. Every year, I'd go for two months to this camp up in Picatinny. I used to go up there and stay there for two months. All my mother had to do was buy [a] uniform: shorts and a shirt to match. We had doctors up there. Everything I learned about animals and stuff like that, like milking snakes and different animals. Once a week, we'd go into the mess hall, which was all open. It was made out of logs. The curators of the little museum that we had there used to take one animal and then we'd all get together. The Boy Scouts and the underprivileged kids get together and then they teach us not to go near this, this snake is bad, this snake is good, stuff like that. We ate right there in the mess hall. They blew a bugle. There was nine kids, underprivileged, all in a big tent up on a platform. But the Boy Scouts, we had two leaders. They had a small tent. They took care of five tents. That's almost fifty kids.

KR: This program, the underprivileged children of Jersey City, was it a Boy Scout program?

RT: No, it was a state program, but it was a Boy Scouts camp. They were over us. In other words, they were teaching us how to do this, how to do that.

KR: I was curious if any New Deal programs affected you or your family.

RT: Any of the programs?

KR: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal. [Editor's Note: The New Deal was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's plan of government-sponsored social and economic programs.]

RT: I don't know too much about that.

KR: How many summers did you do this Picatinny camp?

RT: I did that about three summers. Then I got a toothache and I had the doctor come up there and pulled the teeth with no Novocain or anything. I went home, I got an infection. From that day on, my mother always made sure I went to a dentist and got "sweet air," they called it back in those days; knocked you out. [laughter] I'd say to mom, "He's got to have sweet air." [laughter]

KR: I wanted to ask about your family's political affiliation. You talked about the mayor of Jersey City and some of the benefits that he gave your family. How active was your mom and your grandparents in politics?

RT: It was mostly my Uncle Johnny. See now, when my father passed away, my Uncle Johnny was living in the house with them. He was only sixteen, so he couldn't take my father's route over. So my mother had to find somebody in the National Biscuit Company, another route driver, that wanted to buy my father's route. That's what happened. This is a little something that really impressed me: thirty or forty years later--at least that many--I was driving--I drove tractor trailers for a living. I was taking trailers to Kearny Yards to put the trailer on the train. So I pulled on the scale. The guy weighed the scale and I had to sign my name down there. This gentleman opens the window. He said, "Raymond Toth?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Did you know a guy by the name of Joe Toth?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you know who I am?" I said, "No." He said, "My name is Charlie Tuers." He said, "I bought the route off your mother when your dad passed away."

KR: Wow.

RT: Yes. He wasn't young at that time, either. It was just unbelievable. All those years. I remembered his name, as soon as he said it. I told him, "You bought the route off my mom."

KR: Wow. You mentioned the Boy Scout camp at Picatinny. What other activities did you do as a young child?

RT: Played baseball. Not much football. We made things up to do. Years ago, the orange crates used to come out with two sections. Maybe you don't remember that. It was a wooden crate; it had a divider in there like that. Well, we used to take a pair of skates, get a two by four, split the skates, nail them on the two by fours, take the orange box and nail that to the two by four, then go get two branches off a tree that were about the same size, and slice them down and put them on for handles. Then we used to take two big cans that food came in. You open it up and you put a candle in there. That was the lights on the front of this thing. You get on and go down the hill. Then what you do, you take a two by four and you slice it down so that when you want to stop, you take your right foot and you push down on the--you had to put a hinge on there and you push it down. That would drag along the ground and slow you down because the hill was like that. Everybody used to laugh to see these candles lit at night, what we used to do to make it look nice is go slow so the candles wouldn't go out. The candles were those big thick votive candles. We had to put them in there. Then I bought a bicycle one time--fifty cents--but

it didn't have no tires. I rode it until the wheels collapsed. I couldn't afford tires for it. So, it's just [inaudible] rims. You do all those things way back in those days because there's no money anyplace to really buy a good bicycle or buy some kind of a wagon.

KR: When you were at P.S. 34 and 20, what were your academic interests?

RT: Art, geography, math, reading, writing, arithmetic. [laughter] That's the only way I can remember.

KR: What memories stick out in your mind about your teachers in grammar school?

RT: My art teacher; I think I was in love with her. She was such a nice lady. She took time. You know what I mean? She took time telling you things. If you were doing some kind of picture, a painting or something, and you got stuck, she'd come down and spend some time. She'd actually sit in the seat with you and do that. And I loved geography. I had a great geography teacher. I wasn't too good on math and English.

KR: You mentioned going down to the shore. What other types of travel did your family do?

RT: My grandmother had a pass from my grandfather, which take care of the family. That's Agnes and me. So we'd get on the train and we'd go down the shore--Asbury Park, Point Pleasant, all of those.

KR: What are some memories you have of the Jersey Shore?

RT: Getting a terrible sunburn standing in the last car coming home like this. When I got home, my back had blisters like that. Had to get a doctor and he pierced that there. Then I had to put these packs and I sat in one of those collapsible chairs. He put that pack on, the doctor did, and that lasted for quite a while until it healed up. Then I got pneumonia. I didn't start school until I was almost seven years old. I got pneumonia and I was wiped out.

KR: What was your treatment like when you had pneumonia?

RT: When I had the pneumonia, I remember my mother used to take a sheet and wet it down and hang it on the door. Then I had medicine for the pneumonia. I used to get shots.

KR: How did your family get the news? What newspapers did your mother or stepfather read?

RT: They got the *Jersey Journal*; it's still out. *Jersey Journal*, *The New York News*, and *The Mirror*. They got three papers. Yes. My grandfather did a lot of reading. My grandfather, he was actually a lay preacher. When the church that we went to--Methodist Church--when the minister wasn't there, my grandfather would take over. My family go way back. They're very, very religious. My mother, her sisters--the only one who wasn't [religious] was her brother. All her sisters, my grandmother, went to church every Sunday like that.

KR: What congregation did they go to?

RT: We went to the Methodist Church. My grandfather, like I say, was very religious. He found out that Sunday isn't the right day, according to the Bible. You look at the--

KR: You were talking about the day of the week that your grandfather said should be the day of worship.

RT: Yes. He said that, and I said to him, "Well, what's the right day?" He said, "Saturday." That's Seventh-day Adventist. So, my Aunt Agnes, she went to the Seventh-day Adventist school in the church. That was something--maybe it's not a nice thing to say--I regretted that because what happened was from sundown Friday night until sundown Saturday night, I couldn't do nothing but sit downstairs. My friends would all come up and talk and say, "Well, we'll see you." I couldn't go out. I couldn't hang out with my friends. We all went to the Seventh-day Adventist [church]. Going on a Saturday like that, at my age, you want to hang out with your friends. Then you have to sit downstairs on a front porch and then kids, my friends, would come around. Once in a while, my Aunt Agnes and I used to cheat. We were supposed to go to Sunday School. Then my mother and my grandmother and my grandfather would come and I'd have to go to church, besides Sunday school. So, what we used to do was hang in--there was a park across the street. We'd hang in the park across the street. When they see them coming down the street, we'd run across the street and go inside and sit in the pew and wait for my grandfather and my grandmother. It's not a nice thing to say, but at that age you want to get out and play with your friends. At sundown, nothing. Then, besides that, to show you how religious it was, there was a Catholic priest on the radio every Sunday. His name was Father [Charles] Coughlin. Very famous priest in New York, I think it was. Well, we had to sit down, listen to that--one hour.

KR: What do you remember about listening to Father Coughlin?

RT: Well, the only thing I remember [was] that he preached. We just had to sit there and listen. The only thing nice about Sunday was all my cousins come over because we had the three newspapers. They only had a father working. So, they used to come over and read the funny sheets and then go home.

KR: Was your family in agreement with Father Coughlin's politics?

RT: My grandfather was. My grandfather was one of those diehard guys. To show you how he was religious, my grandfather knew rabbis, he knew African Americans. So what happened was, during the week, my grandfather used to take us to the African American section of Jersey City. The railroad ran underneath the ground and there was a bridge there. This side of the bridge was mostly all white; this side, they had their own thing. Well, my grandfather knew a lot of African Americans. So he used to take me and my Aunt Agnes to one of these storefront religious people. We used to have to do that; go with him. "We're going to see Pastor So-and-So." That's where I learned some of my religious songs, through the black people.

KR: This sounds like it was a connection through the church.

RT: Oh, yes. Like I say, that was the only thing I had against my grandfather. Not that I didn't love him, but it was just the idea--you couldn't go out and play with your friends. That was the same way with my aunt. She's two years older than me. So she then went out with older kids and they couldn't do that. You couldn't go to the movies--that was another thing. We used to have to sneak to go to the movies. Otherwise, my grandfather--phew. To show how he was, I remember Agnes, one time, got mad and said, "Damn," First time I ever saw my grandfather use force. He smacked her in the face. I couldn't believe that. No cursing. Nothing. Everything was religion.

KR: What were the political discussions like in your household?

RT: Well, none of my family was actually connected with Republicans or [Democrats]. It was my uncle. My uncle was young, Johnny. He got in with people in Jersey City because he had a lot of connections with friends. He was the one that more or less got me into the camp and got the mayor to give us the food and oil for the oil burner, and things like that.

KR: Who was the mayor at that time?

RT: How could I forget that guy?

KR: That's a name we can add to the transcript later.

GT: If you think of it, just blurt it out.

KR: Yes. Did you family vote Democratic?

RT: Yes.

KR: What was the discussion about President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal at that time in your household?

RT: At that time, I was getting up in years. My grandfather, he was just religious; no [politics]. The only one I ever heard talk was my Uncle Johnny. He was my mentor. I used to go to his room. If I had any problems in the family or anything, I'd go to my Uncle Johnny; he'd straighten them out. Later on, he got married. What happened was he lived in this house in Jersey City. This was a house my mother--my Uncle Johnny lived in this house. It was a four-family house. He talked to the Polish woman--they were Polish--and they were the owners. My Uncle Johnny talked them into lowering the rent for my mother and me. So, my mother and me had that apartment, but it wasn't soon after that that my mother wanted to get married and she asked me and I said, "Yes." Then my father moved in. So my Uncle Johnny always was downstairs when I needed him.

KR: Where was that house located?

RT: That was on Van Nostrand Avenue. That was the fourth house that my mom and I was in.

KR: What was your life like after your mother remarried?

RT: Good. Good. It was very good. That was the thing that I was worried about, that my stepfather wouldn't get along with my first father's relatives, like my father's brother because my father's brother was very close to my mother, of course. Then his wife, and they had two kids. So we used to go over there. My kids used to go later on. But when he went over there and my mother and I were with him and my mother introduced him for the first time, they hit it off good and then I have six cousins, two different families, in that same building. The cousins all used to get together, plus my father's two brothers, John and Frankie. They used to go out to Jones Beach. All the adults used to play baseball on the beach. Then, me and my two cousins would go swimming. Like I say, my stepfather was really good. He took me a lot of fishing, something I never did because my father passed away. I used to work and I'd come home--this is later on. I used to come home from work at twelve o'clock at night. My father would be ready with the fishing rods and everything, throw them in the back of the car and we'd go down to Point Pleasant and fish off the pier down there. Then we'd go over and have breakfast. I'd come home and I'd go to sleep, so I could go to work at night again or daytime, four to twelve. Yes.

KR: Was that your job at the movie theater as an usher?

RT: Yes. The same thing happened later on in years when I started driving truck.

KR: When you were in high school, what activities did you do?

RT: When I got in high school, I didn't do nothing. The way things were going--I'm not very good in English. That was one of my worst subjects, vowels and stuff like that. I wasn't doing that great. As much as I liked geography, I wasn't doing good. I got up to the eleventh grade. I figured, "Well, I might as well quit now while I'm safe because I know I'm not going to make it into 11B." We did 11A, 11B, like that, A and B. Every six months you change. Same way with regular school.

KR: What was Snyder High School like then?

RT: Good school. Very good school. The only bad person there was the disciplinarian, a man. He was also the coach. Like I say, I never got in sports up there. One of the things that even until this day, I thought it was really great--I never saw until I went to high school--right next door was a school for children that were paralyzed, couldn't walk, stuff like that. That school was right next door to us. You could see the kids sitting out there in the wheelchairs.

KR: From polio?

RT: A. Harry Moore [School]. He was something in the state of New Jersey. [Editor's Note: A Harry Moore was the 39th Governor of New Jersey, serving the state from 1926 to 1941.] The named the school after him, A. Harry Moore.

KR: Are there any teachers that stick out in your mind from high school?

RT: Yes. My printing teacher. I liked printing. You have to make up everything, make up a paper and had blocks of wood. He was really great. In fact, it was funny. If he saw you goofing off, he used to have--you know those hard rubber balls you hit up against the wall. He used to take one of those and throw it at you. He'd say, "Toth, get back to your spot." [laughter]

KR: Did you ever get in trouble and have interaction with that disciplinarian?

RT: No, no.

KR: In the late 1930s, World War II was brewing. What news were you hearing about German and Japanese expansion?

RT: Not really until Pearl Harbor hit. In fact, what happened was I wanted to join the Navy, which I did. My mother wouldn't sign me to the Navy. Now, my mother had a sister; we called her the black sheep. She used to drink and smoke. In fact, she died with a lung problem. She signed me in. My mother didn't know it. So, what happened was the war broke out. I had a friend of mine that day and we were in the movie theater. A guy came on the stage--a band played there. He said, "Anybody that's in the Reserves report back to your station immediately. We're in war." So, this buddy of mine that I was with, we all run home. Saw him get on a train. I failed a test for the Navy. I had low blood pressure. I was supposed to go back in six months. Well, the Pearl Harbor attack [happened]. So I went over there and there was a huge line over in New York. That's where I had to go for a physical. I went over there and I got up to the guy and I said, "I'm already in the regular Navy." He said, "Nobody's in the regular Navy. Everybody is a Reserve. The regular Navy is gone. It's all Reserves now." So, I said, "Okay." I took my physical and I passed. At that time, with all those guys lined up, the *New York News* was there snapping pictures. So, I was in the neighborhood and I was talking to these friends of mine, girls and guys sitting on the step. Somebody said, "Is that your mother coming down the street with an apron on and a broom?" I said, "Yes. What the heck is she doing coming over here?" She come down there and she started crying because my Aunt Martha signed me up. She said, "I hope someday I can repay the favor." I said, "Well, there's not going to be another war, mom. I hope not." I said, "How did you find out?" "Florence"--that's my cousin. She saw my picture on the front of the paper. On the front of the paper the heading was "Pearl Harbor Avengers sign up." She saw that. I could hardly see it myself--it was only about that big--but I happened to be in the front of the line because I got over there early. She called my mother up and said, "There's a picture right in the newspaper signing up in the Navy." My mother said, "What?" I'll never forget that though. She was crying and beating me with the broom. All the kids got up and started running.

KR: How old were you then?

RT: I joined the Navy in '42. That meant I was eighteen.

KR: Did you have a lot of friends that joined the military also?

RT: I had my best friend went with me to New York. He didn't pass [the physical] on account of [being] colorblind. He was colorblind, so he had to come back in six months, too, but he came back after, way after I did.

GT: You had other friends, too.

RT: Yes. I had another guy, a friend of mine, but he signed up for the Seabees [US Navy construction battalions, known as CBs or SeaBees].

KR: What influenced you to sign up for the Navy? Why did you choose the Navy?

RT: So we didn't have to walk. [laughter] When I see them guys doing all that walking on the islands, getting killed doing that on the ground, I said, "No, I want a ride."

KR: What was the next step in your military service after induction in New York?

RT: I went to boot camp. After boot camp, I got assigned to a ship. My ship sailed--that's the pictures and a buddy of mine had sailed from New York through the canal. I met him in the Navy Yard in Seattle, Washington. That's the biggest Navy yard going. Two of the ships, the *Nevada* and the *California*, that were sunk at Pearl Harbor, were brought back. I worked on the *California*, scrapping where the water was sunk and inside the compartments. Anybody that didn't have a ship at that time worked in the Navy Yard on the Navy ships. Finally, the ship got to Seattle and I got on that ship.

KR: Can you describe what boot camp was like?

RT: My boot camp--it was the beginning of the war. Things that you were supposed to do normally in boot camp, I didn't do, only because the program was so--hurry up, to get the men on the ships where they wanted to go. I didn't fire a gun. One of the things I wish I had learned, I learned later on. You put on a life jacket. Now, around the life jacket neck was--it's called (pock?). It's like cork and it holds your neck up. Now, what you do when you jump off a diving board, supposedly, you're supposed to hold that down so it don't break your neck. Well, I never did that either. I learned all that when I got on the ship.

KR: Where was your boot camp?

RT: My boot camp was in Chicago, Illinois.

KR: What was the training like for boot camp? What sticks out in your mind?

RT: What stuck out in my mind? First of all, I got something against wool. I can't stand wool on myself. Well, that's the uniform you had, undress blues. We lived in Quonset huts. You'd go out in the morning at six o'clock and do calisthenics. Up in that area, you get snow. Snow would be on the ground. They'd clean it off and you'd get out there. So, what I used to is put a sweatshirt on underneath. Well, I got caught with the sweatshirt and the guy said, "Tomorrow, I want to see you out here, no sweatshirt." I said, "I got a problem. I can't stand wool." He said,

"I don't care what you stand. That's what you're supposed to wear." So I learned by that there, scratching, by wearing a woolen uniform. In fact, later on, I went out and spent a hundred and fifty dollars for dress blues with silk lining in the pants and the top. This was a nice dress uniform, really smart looking, not like the wool thing. I had the whole inside [lined]. It had to be black silk.

KR: What do you remember about who was training you when you were at boot camp?

RT: The training?

KR: Yes. Who was training you?

RT: Petty officer. First class. Like I said, it was so short to be in the war again, we didn't have any officer's training. We had first class or chief. We'd have them. We did a lot of marching and calisthenics, that's it.

KR: Did you learn any Navy traditions?

RT: Not really, except on the ship crossing the equator and then also crossing the dateline. That was funny. Today's Tuesday, tomorrow's Wednesday. Then you're back to Tuesday, or vice versa.

KR: Describe the advanced training that you did after boot camp.

RT: After boot camp I didn't do any advanced training. I went right on the ship.

KR: You became a sonar man later after training on the ship.

RT: Right.

KR: What kind of training did you go through to learn sonar?

RT: Well, that was on the ship. The shipmate below me was a sonar operator. He was first class. I slept in the bunk above him. Out of a blue sky one time, quite a while after I was on the ship, he said to me, "How would you like to be a sonar operator?" I said, "Well, who's the sonar operator now?" He said, "Well, we don't have to cook. The cook is a sonar operator." I said, "I don't know nothing about it." He said, "I'll teach you everything. I'll give you the test. If you fail the test, we'll go back to the books. I'll take you down and show you the operation. It's like a football and it goes down below the ship. One side of this football sends--that's what surface ships do. They send a ping, goes out, hits anything, it bounces back. Submariners swing it around the other way and they do nothing but listen. I went to school to learn both of them. Submariners, what they have to learn is they can tell by prop noises. If a prop noise is like, *choo, choo, choo*, that means it's a big ship. If the prop noise is fast, that means it's a fast ship. Until you can actually see it on the horizon, which always--when I think about it, when you see something on the horizon, it's called (low down on the right?). All you see is a smoke stack, but you're so surprised--a couple hours, you get a gigantic battleship because it got above the

horizon. But that's what the sonar operators on the submarines do. They listen and they ping once in a while. But not very often. The only time I can remember that is when we got to Pearl Harbor--that's later on--we got to Pearl Harbor. No submarine came out of Pearl Harbor or went into Pearl Harbor. When they came in off patrol for thirty days, they stayed under water and we had what was called a "grid." It's a map and it's got squares in it. Well, this submarine, he's going to stay in that grid. Then what happens is, at a certain time in the morning, like about six o'clock in the morning, I'll hear a dot and dash. I have a dot and dash there, but I never learned that either. I had to radio them. I called the radioman up in the shack right next door. They'd tell him who they are. Then, he'd get back to them. He'd challenge them, even though they say what submarine they are, because it could be a Jap sub coming to get in Pearl Harbor again. So, he'd get on that. Then the submariner would send a radio message: "Escort Subs coming in off patrol." We used to escort sometimes three submarines that's coming in off patrol. They fly flags and we fly flags--these ships are friendly. Because Pearl Harbor had aircraft over there. We were always afraid that one of those guys, they'd see my ship had a Japanese flag on the side. Well, we had one about that side. My skipper said, "What do you want us to do? Get shot at by an airplane?" So, we made it small. But they had a lot of all them Japanese--all the shipping that they sunk. They used to fly these flags. We'd take them into Pearl Harbor. They'd get thirty days in a row Hawaiian hotel. Then, he'd go out on patrol again. We used to take them out again. Drop them off. They'd sink. They'd go under water until they got way up past Pearl Harbor. You can see down like that, a submarine under the water, believe it or not. Not really deep, but just below periscope depth.

KR: To back up a little to boot camp, do you remember what you did for fun?

RT: Nothing. They only had a place to go get candy or cigarettes, that's all. Like I say, we had a man in there that took care of the furnace. It was a Quonset hut. We had somebody that took care of the furnace; we didn't do that. All we did was lay around all day or you do a lot of marching, depending on the weather. Very cold up there in the winter.

KR: Did you ever get to go to Chicago?

RT: Only when I got picked up. That's the only time I got in Chicago.

KR: What memories do you have of Chicago?

RT: Meeting this guy from New Jersey. I met him in New York. His name was John Toth. Came from New Brunswick, New Jersey. My uncle, my father's brother, would come over to see me off because everybody else was working--Agnes and them. So, he said, "There's a guy over there by the name of Johnny Toth." He said, "Do you know him?" I said, "No, I don't know him." So, he said, "Why don't you go over and talk to him?" So, I go over there. One thing led to another. Said, "I come from New Brunswick." I said, "I come from South Plainfield." It's not that far. So, from that day on, our service numbers are one behind the other. I was known as "Toth One" and he was known as "Toth Two" to the officers on the ship. What happened was when we got the submarine, it was big hoopla in Seattle, parties and all that stuff. Well, we got flown home from the naval base in Seattle--Sand Point is the name of the place, Sand Point Naval Air. We got flown home. I had one low seat in there because it was a cargo

plane, put the cargo down the middle and you can still have people on there. They flew us to New York. We get out of New York. My orders read--I have to go to--what the heck's the name of the airport in New York? I had to go there and report. I got over leave, but not really because I went and I took my orders. Me and Johnny Toth took my orders there and we got in touch with a WAVE, got in touch with her. We explained to her. She said, "Well, I'll get the lieutenant to say that there's no transportation from New York to Seattle." So I said, "Okay, that should do it." What happened was, we're over leave almost thirty days. I call my skipper; he lived in Staten Island. He got the Navy Cross. I call him. I said, "Captain Cornell, we got a problem." I told him. He says, "Yes. I got a couple of phone calls. What's going on over there at the naval air station in New York?" I said, "I don't know, but we can't get back." He said, "Well, you guys are over leave a long time. Go to Red Cross, get fifty dollars, and take a train. I'll tell the new captain not to bust you, that I knew where you were all the time." We got the fifty dollars, we got on the train, we went to Chicago. Got in Chicago. We're walking along the street in Chicago and the shore patrol pulls up and says, "I want to see your leave papers." Showed them the leave papers and he said, "There's two days here. There's nothing on there. Nobody signed that." I said, "How can that happen? I'm on a train for two days from New York to Chicago." He says, "Well, I don't know that much about it. I'm just doing [my] job." So he takes me back up to where I--near Chicago. Takes me up there and the guy that was in charge there never was overseas. For some reason, I always had a feeling he felt bad that he could never get out of that job. He was a yeoman that makes up orders and stuff. So he says, "I don't know that much about it. You're going to have in the brig." We didn't go in the Navy brig. We went in the Marine brig in the Navy, where I got my training. We went there and--make a long story short--we had work detail and we had whites on at that time. It was summer. On the back there, it was a bullseye painted in black paint. So we used to go out on work details and stuff like that. Then, we had this Marine guy--oh, when you went to chow, you had to show your fingers. If you had any dirt under the nail, the head guy, he used to whack you on the hand with a ruler and say, "Go clean your nails." So, we had a guy that took care of us and we had to give him our shoelaces and all. He come to me one day--me and Johnny were laying in the bunks--and he said, "You know what I can't figure out? We got murderers in here, we got rapists in here. What are you guys in for?" So, we told him. He said, "You got to be kidding." We said, "No." He said, "I got a day off tomorrow. I'm going to go to the provost marshal." That's like a head cop or head something. He says, "I want to take you over there. I'm going to go over today when I'm off. I'm going to explain to them your situation and we'll see what he can come with." So, to make a long story short, next day, we went over there. This lieutenant, he gave us a cigarette. They would smoke. "Sit down. Tell me the story from the beginning." I told him and he says, "I got your orders here. I can see what he means. There's two days on the train with stopping and everything, getting donuts from different towns." The train pull in and Red Cross and them give you donuts and coffee. So, he said, "I can see that. All right. I sign for you guys. I'm going to give you new orders and you're going to go back to Seattle and catch your ship there. So, we said, "That's really great." We get the orders. We got on the train. Get to Seattle. Go to see the head guy in Seattle now. That took us almost two days to get to Seattle. We get there. First thing he says: "You're going to have to do brig time." We say, "Why? But there's two days here on the train. That's nothing." He said, "Who's going to sign for those?" I said, "Well, call up the place where we had ...Call them up and they'll verify it. So, we're not going to do nothing." "As far as we're concerned, you're on the brig." So, we got put in the brig. That was a Marine brig too. I got there at the end of October, almost into November. I was there for Christmas.

KR: Of 1942.

RT: Yes.

GT: No, '43 that would be.

RT: No, '43. Yes, '43. It just so happened that a guy that was on my ship with me was in charge of the--now, the uniform you wear there is whites, but it has PAL, prisoner at large. When you're walking around, that's what you got on your back. So, we got in touch with him. Christmas was coming up. His name was Eugene (Coltheart?). I'll never forget--he's from down South. I said, "Eugene, we got to make liberty. We haven't seen liberty in I don't know when." He said, "How are you going to go liberty. You haven't got no passes." I said, "Well, you've got them." He said, "I know I've got them. What do you think, I'm going to give them to you and get in trouble?" So, to make a long story short, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll leave them out. If you get caught, [say] you stole them. That's the best I can do for you." So, we got that and we got dressed. It was snowing out. I'll never forget. Snowing. Until this day, I tear up when I hear Bing Crosby singing, "I'll be home for Christmas," because they had loud speakers and they were playing Christmas music. We walked out and walked down the town. The USO had a store there. So we walked in the USO store; they had donuts and coffee and stuff like that. Elderly woman sitting there. She says to us, "How would you like a nice Christmas dinner?" I said, "Yes, we'd like a nice Christmas dinner." She said, "Okay, I'll sign you up. Somebody's going to come and pick you up. This family wants servicemen. They want to give you Christmas dinner." So we said, "Okay." So about two hours later, in walks a chauffeur with a full uniform on. He said, "I'm supposed to pick up T-O-T-H." I'll never forget, he couldn't say Toth with the two T's. So, we went over there. He said, "All right. Come on with me." We get in this car and we ride up--I don't know where, but the place was quite far. It had these cement statues on the driveway. It was a big place. Found out later that he worked for Universal Studios, the owner of this place. Two stories. Had a twenty-seven-foot Christmas tree because the stairs went upstairs and they had it right up in the middle like that. Then he gave us gifts, but the only trouble was, we were sitting down, it was his mother and father, her mother and father, their three kids, and I don't know who the other people were. I never seen a table that long. Another thing--I've never seen that much utensils to eat food with. We had to keep watching the people that knew how to use all that stuff. So we did that and then they gave us a gift. Then he took us back to the base.

KR: Where was that?

RT: That was in Seattle, Washington. Took us back and we sneaked in, put the cards where Eugene could find them. That day, he called us in the office and said, "Thanks for putting the cards back. What are you going to do now?" I said, "Nothing. We'll just wait." He said, "Well, I got a little news for you." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Your ship left." I said, "What's new about that?" I said, "The ship left?" He said, "Yes, the ship left. You're going to have to go over to the office." A couple of guys--the marine took us over there. We talked to this officer. He said, "I've been reviewing your case. I don't want to know nothing. I'm going to send you guys back on a freighter. Your ship already left for the Aleutians. You're going to have to catch it up

there." So we got on a freighter. It took us--oh, god. I forget how many weeks it took, but when we got there, that was the only thing in my life that I really regretted is staying over leave like that and I lost a lot of friends because we were in Dutch Harbor. The ship made it to Dutch Harbor instead of all the way to the other part, the Aleutians. Me and Johnny Toth was walking down the deck--I'll never forget that--and I heard a lot of guys, friends of mine on the ship, say, "Look who finally got here." Well, here's the reason why. When the ship went into a civilian yard to get this plate put on where we rammed this sub and made a big hole in it; ship almost sunk, why they wanted--the guys from the East Coast got thirty days leave. The guys from the West Coast had to work on the ship with the civilian guys, because it's a Navy ship. They had to paint and stuff like that. What happened was when the guys from the East got back, the guys from the West got their leave. Well, being that there was so many guys in the same situation, but didn't take advantage of it, they didn't get back to my buddy down in Virginia. He was four days late. So what happened now, all those guys from the West Coast and the Middle West, they didn't get no thirty days on account of guys like me. I lost a lot of friends on the ship before I finally got off it because they didn't get thirty days and they got families and stuff like that.

KR: Let's back up a little bit. I want to ask you a couple questions. When you finished boot camp and then you were assigned to Seattle, what were your first orders?

RT: What was my first orders? My first orders was getting on a train, yes. While I was on that train, I had my--the train was fixed for mostly sailors and had a shower on there. So I was going to take a shower and I lifted my mattress up and I put my wallet under there. When I come back from the shower, the wallet was gone. There was fifty dollars in it. So I got off the train--it stayed in the station for at least two days with donuts and coffee and all that. I went and I saw shore patrol. I said, "I just had my wallet stolen on the train." He said, "You're kidding." I said, "No." "What did it look like?" Told him. He said, "Was there any money in there?" I said, "Yes, fifty dollars." He said, "I'll look around." So about two days later, he saw me and he waved to me. I went over there. He said, "I found your wallet. I found your Navy ID, which you need, but the fifty dollars wasn't there." So I lost fifty dollars.

GT: What did you do when you first got to Washington, after you got the train back to Washington State?

RT: When I first got--?

GT: What was your first assignment?

RT: My first assignment was working on two ships that had sunk in Pearl Harbor, scraping that. Then, the ship finally got there; the 487 got there. Now, the five new guys--Johnny Toth and me and three other guys--when we got there, the skipper was in the pilot house and we had to pass through the pilot house. He had to do some [inaudible]. Now, this skipper, his father was Bernard Baruch. That was President Roosevelt's money [advisor]. Well, you probably know more about that. Well, worst skipper we ever had. Worst skipper we ever had. He didn't know how to get into the dock and he was always looking for things for him to do. Now, his wife was in Seattle. Well, we were patrolling between the United States and Canada, so no subs could come in from the ocean and go down that waterway--that was called the Juan de Fuca straits--

that come down there, right into the Navy Yard and do some damage, miniature subs or something. So, there was an Indian [village]. We were running back and forth. Over on that side, the United States side, there was an Indian village. They did logging. So, just to show you how much pull he did--the boatswain's mate from the ship; he steered the small boat wherever you had to go. That skipper had him drive the small boat over to that Indian reservation there. He stayed there three days with his wife. Then, he blinked a flashlight when he wanted Bob to pick him up in the small boat again. Then, he came back over and got on the ship. He was so bad that I was on the gun crew and the waves up there come over the bow--if you ever watch that show on television. What is it?

GT: The crabbing show. [Editor's Note: Mr. Toth is referring to the Discovery Channel's show *Deadliest Catch*.]

RT: The crabbing show. That's the water that we were in. Well, what happened is, we were on a gun crew, and the waves were coming over. He tied me and four other guys, the captain had the boatswain's mate tie us around the gun, so it wouldn't get washed over the sea. So this guy, Bob, he had a lot of nerve for a first class; he could have got busted. He went in there and I remember the door being open to the pilothouse. I remember him talking to the captain. I said, "Is [he] really saying that?" He was telling the captain that, "These guys are going to get washed over the side. How's that going to make you look." He said, "You got to bring them men in. They're getting soaking wet." We had all kinds of heavy equipment on. He said, "You're going to have to bring them in." So, he said, "All right, (Pointer?), go ahead." So, we went down to the mess hall and had coffee and stuff like that. That was just some of the things he did. Then, when he found out that we were going to the Aleutians for the second time, he got his uncle to pull strings. He got a different ship. We got this gung-ho skipper that we got, that rammed the sub. He was the second skipper. He was a sailor skipper.

KR: What was his name?

RT: His name was Gordon Cornell.

KR: Gordon Cornell.

RT: He got the Navy Cross for ramming a sub and sinking it. Later on, he got promoted to Spain. [Editor's Note: Wallace Gordon Cornell was awarded the Navy Cross in 1943.]

KR: Let us talk about when you were first on the PC 487. Can you describe the ship and what the ship's mission was?

RT: The ship mission was antisubmarine warfare; ASW it's called. That's what our job was--convoying and looking for submarines. That's why we got the sub. We had a ship with soldiers on it going to one of the islands up there in the Aleutians. We had an ocean-going tug that saved us because when we rammed the sub, we got a hole in the side of the ship, two of the guys that have--I'm trying to think of the word. They plugged the hole up. They plugged the hole up with mattresses. That's how they learned how to do that. Two by fours. That brought us above water a little bit. Then the tug come along side. He had one of these--it's called Gardner Denver, it's a

compressor. Years ago, they used to use them out in the street to dig up the streets. It's an air compressor, but it's huge. They swung that over and they welded it to the deck. They drilled holes down through--my compartment was the one that got water in it, that got the hole in it. They drilled holes down through that. They blew air down through there and raised the ship up another six or eight inches. I was ready to jump over the side. You last only twenty minutes to a half hour in that water and then hyperthermia sets in. Everybody [had] a job to do, like gunnery guys and dropping depth charges. We all had to get on the rail and keep a look out for the sub, so it was going to come up. One of the cooks on our ship cut hair. He was from down South. He cut hair and he was a cook. So I was standing next to him. He says to me, "If we have to jump in the water, stay near me." I said, "Why?" He opened up this black suitcase that he had all his tools for cutting your hair. There was a thing of--what's the name of that? It's like oatmeal. It's got a decal on it.

DT: Quaker Oats?

RT: Quaker Oats. Had the guy on it. Well, his folks used to make white lightening. That's hundred percent alcohol. What his folks used to do was put it in that thing and then put the stuff all around it, so it wouldn't make any noise. That's what he had. He had this Quaker Oats thing and he liquor, this hundred percent almost, hundred percent pure. He said, "We jump in the water. At least we're not going to get hyperthermia. So stay near me and we'll keep swapping it back until we get picked up." But we never had to go over the side. It was real scary because the water was only about five inches from coming on the deck and then, like I said, just lucky that that tug was there with that compressor. Then we were right on with the convoy to Attu. I slept on another ship. They gave us stuff to sleep in and everything. While I was on there, this guy from New York, his name was Aillo, A-I-L-L-O. We're walking along one time and we see this young officer. He said, "Hi." We said, "Hi." He said, "Can I talk to you for a few minutes?" We said, "Sure." He said, "Tell me all about what happened?" So we tell him. I told him about getting the sub and all that. He goes back that night--now, my skipper's eating with all the guys from this other ship that we're sleeping on. So my captain heard that, he got ahold of me right away. He yelled at me because he said, "We're not supposed to say anything." We were waiting for naval intelligence to come up to find out the whole story. So I got yelled at. So, we're looking at this guy, my buddy from New York, said, "That guy looks familiar to me." So I said, "Excuse me." His name was Richard Nye, N-Y-E. He was an actor. He played in the movie *How Green [Was] My Valley*. I'm trying to think. The people that played in there. Anyway, we got to see him. I heard that the reason why he wanted to know about that, he was going to write a book about the Aleutians. I tried to find if he ever made a book, but he never did.

KR: Let's hear the full story about PC 487 in the Aleutian Islands. You are involved in antisubmarine warfare. It is 1943. The Japanese have occupied Attu and Kiska. What was your ship's mission in the Aleutians?

RT: Our ship's mission was to catch--what they were doing--the Japanese, when they saw they were losing the war in Attu, they were taking off all these guys on the submarine. That's how we knew about it. We had gotten stuff about that, that submarines were taking guys off of that island.

KR: What was your ship's first contact with the Japanese?

RT: Our first contact was when I got the sonar.

KR: Tell us about that.

RT: It was eight o'clock in the morning. I just had gotten on duty. I got a contact at ten o'clock in the morning. I was on the sonar in the pilothouse. I told the captain where I was. Now, by me moving [inaudible] this wheel down, it's a hundred and eighty degrees, but sonar only does one hundred and eighty, instead of three [hundred] sixty. Otherwise, you're going to pick up prop noises, like the submariners. So then I had it--I told them where it was going. By me moving that five increments all the way along, he can tell what side it's going down. That's portside. Just turning that five degrees. Then if I miss it, I can go back and keep going until I get a strong signal. Then he has a machine up there that transfers what I'm doing on mine. He's got a transfer that goes like this, like that brown moth and it was paper on there. He could see that it was going down the port side. Right away, they dropped depth charges, trying to blow to the surface. Then we had the gun crew--everybody went to general quarters. Anybody who didn't have a job had to be lookout. So the gun crew got up on the top deck and he fired some shots in there. As he come around, he cut the net and a radio antennae because that was on the front of the sub. Then he went around and he went up over the top and he pushed the sub down. As we pushed the sub down, the props got water underneath it and it starts cutting through the sub, but they also broke off one of our propellers. So we went around and he fired three shots into it--three inch fifty. I got one of the shells that they fired. In fact, I got two of the shells--twenty millimeter and a three inch fifty. My stepfather made an ashtray out of it for me.

KR: Nice.

RT: So, everybody saw it coming up. Then, all of a sudden, we see this four hundred and something feet long--we're only a hundred and seventy three feet, our ship was. Then, when it come up like that, and then the captain yelled out over the loud speaker: "Everybody hold on and standby for a ram." Like I say, he come around and went up, like that and pushed the sub down. We got water underneath us because we pushed them down. Then, the propellers were right through there. It tore the conning tower. On the side of our ship, they call them wings; they come out like that from the [inaudible], so the officers can stand out there and they got compasses. They can give any kind of thing they want with the compass. Well, what happened, that wing caught the conning tower on the submarine and bent it around. Then, like I say, we got water and they went through there. It opened up my compartment. I would say it was about--I'm trying to think of the size of the plate they put on there. I'd say it was about six by ten, maybe.

KR: What did you do?

RT: Well, I was standing on the side ready to jump in. I secured the sonar. I pushed a button and secured it so that it wouldn't cost a lot of money to get fixed.

KR: What did the submarine look like after the ramming?

RT: After ramming and shelling it, we started seeing it going down. Nobody got out and we picked up oil and everything, so we could make a regular kill, they call it. They did that and some other stuff come up, took that.

KR: No Japanese survivors.

RT: Nobody got out. They didn't have a chance. Between the guy shooting the three inch fifty and the twenty millimeters, they didn't have a chance. Plus, five depth charges they dropped to bring them up.

KR: Now, how were you feeling? Your ship just sunk a Japanese submarine, but your ship was also damaged. How were you feeling? How was the ship feeling at this time?

RT: Well, everybody naturally was cheering and all that. I was actually scared because if I jumped in the water, like I say, hypothermia sets in twenty, thirty minutes up there. We were already taught that when we got on the ship, that if you have to jump in like that, try to get something around your warm, to hold you for a while. Then, like I say, we put the compressor on there and floated her up, I would say a good ten inches. We finished taking these two ships up to Adak.

KR: Adak.

RT: Attu, I'm sorry.

KR: Attu. How long were you at Attu for?

RT: We were up there about two weeks until we got worried that we were going to go back to Seattle. What happened was we had a radioman who was supposed to keep silence. Well, he got so excited. Now, I'm sitting here on the sonar. There's a door here. This goes into the radio shack, and it goes in there where they do plotting the courses, all the maps and stuff like that. I opened the door. This guy's name is (Bihari?). He was doing what he heard with that door open, blow by blow description. Now, that's a no. You're supposed to have radio silence. Well, forget about the radio silence. We got congratulatory messages from battleships, cruises, carriers, admirals, everything. Then, when we pulled into Seattle, had a band there and all kinds of people. Newspapers had a big spread. We had a reporter come on and talk to my captain about what happened. They wrote it up and all.

KR: That was the second skipper.

RT: That was the second skipper. That was the second skipper, Gordon Cornell.

KR: What did you do when your ship was being repaired in Seattle?

RT: I got leave.

KR: That is when you took the cargo plane and flew back to New York.

RT: Yes, right. Went to New York.

KR: You ended up in the brig after your ship sank the submarine.

RT: Yes. Let's see. I was gone--trying to think when I got home. I know it was in the summertime.

GT: The sinking was June 10th.

KR: Of 1943.

RT: Yes. I must have been gone--I must have [done] brig time three months at least, three or four months. I was in Chicago, there, then I was in there for a while. Then, I went to Seattle and stayed there for a while. The worst part about this was, like I say, I lost a lot of friends on account of that. When we got on there, we got a new skipper. This guy was English. He owned a laundry over in England. He was very skittish. He used to almost run up and down the deck all the time. He called us into the wardrobe. He says, "I got some good news and I got some bad news." So, we said, "We'll do whatever you want to do." He says, "There's a new construction." At that time, my ships were no longer what they were used for. They started getting destroyer escorts. They were in between my ship and a destroyer. They had more guns on there--that was run mechanically. He says, "Somebody's going back to New York for new construction." Three months later, we were [inaudible] New York. So, Johnny Toth wasn't married. He said to this new captain--his name was Parker--he says, "Send Ray Toth back; he's married." See, I got married when I came home on the other leave. He said, "Send him home; he's married." So, he said, "No." Johnny said, "Why?" He says, "First of all, we're the only PC that ever got five medals at once. So I want to keep the prestige going. So when I pull in port, I can say, I got five guys on there that got medals for heroism." So that's what he did. He kept me on there. Johnny went back and he got thirty days more leave and got the new construction. At that time, we went down to Pearl Harbor. Johnny Toth came in with his ship, but I never got to see it. My brother in law came in with--he was on a cruiser. I never got to see him. I got restricted. I did something wrong and I got restricted. My brother in law wanted me to go down to Honolulu with him, but I never got there with him. I got down there; I never got down there with him.

KR: PC 487 was at Pearl Harbor after it was fixed up.

RT: Yes. We went from the Aleutians down to Pearl Harbor. We did convoying and we also did search and rescue planes. We rescued three pilots one time from a plane.

KR: Tell us about that.

RT: Well, we got this message that there was a downed pilot. We tried to find out where it was. So, my radioman contacted the Army [to] find out where it was, what area, because they gave the location where it was going to go down. So they gave it to us and finally, we found him in a yellow rubber life raft. We brought him on my ship and kept him there. I got to tell you this

story. We had an officer on there; everybody called him Tarzan. He had a nice physique. He had blonde hair and he had blue eyes. He was tanned. He worked out every day on the deck. We were leaving Pearl Harbor, and we were convoying the ships. We'd take them to the five islands and they'd load them, whatever they had--watermelons and stuff like that and pineapples. From there, they'd take you to San Francisco. Well, this ship left Pearl Harbor and we waited for--they come out of the dock and everything, and got them out going. All of a sudden, forty-five minutes after we get out there, we get a call that a guy jumped over from the liberty ship into the water. So, my captain, like I say, he was gung-ho, he didn't care. He put the spotlight on and we saw the guy in the water. But there were sharks going around, like three sharks going around this guy. This guy Tarzan--we all got issued knives. He [took] his knife and he said, "I'm going to jump in. Put two life preservers together." So, he jumps in the water, gets out there and he's swishing the sharks away. He's going like that just to scare them. They go out and they keep coming back. So, they throw the life preservers out, but the rope isn't long enough. We got to pull two life preservers in. We have to add another hundred foot clothesline. We finally get that and get it out to them. He swam up and he pulled them out a little bit further, put them over this guy, and this guy said, "I don't want to go back." So, he hauls off and hits him. The guy's out. He sticks him in a life preserver and he's pulling him. He's watching the sharks, pulls him back to the ship and put him on there. They locked him up in one of the officer's quarters up there. We found out that he was gambling on the ship and he lost all his money. He was drunk and lost money gambling. So, that's why he jumped over. He was going to swim back to Pearl Harbor, but he never made it. The officer who jumped in to get the drunk, his name was (Robert Robbins?). Never forget the guy. He was our officer that checks the mail, censors the mail. Well, it just so happened that Johnny Toth could write Hungarian. (Bihari?), the radioman, could understand Hungarian. So, what we did when Mr. (Robbins?) wasn't around, we sneaked in there and we got the stamp and we learned how to do his initials, RBR, inside of this round circle. It says here that it was checked, censored. We went to this little island, Canton. It's about as big as a pencil point. We were taking a convoy down there. I sent my mother home--through (Bihari?) going to Johnny Toth's sister--Hungarian--she talked to my mother and told her I was on this island called Canton. My mother writes me a letter back. She says, "When did you go to China?" [laughter] She said, "What are you doing in China? I thought you were in Pearl Harbor." I said, "Ma, that's the name of the island." She said, "Oh, I was wondering how you got so far."

KR: I am curious what daily life was like aboard the ship, both in the Aleutian Islands and when you around Pearl Harbor.

RT: Four on and eight off. When you were in the Aleutian Islands, I was just a seaman. You get to do other jobs because we were [inaudible] radar, the sonar guy. The sonarman was a cook and the other guy was a regular sonar. Then he filled anybody in. Like me, I started filling in. It was like he said, you know a little bit about it. You do your regular job. Say, I went on sonar. My next job was I went on top of the--

GT: The bridge?

RT: The bridge. Up on top of the bridge. Three lookouts up there. One looked starboard, one looks port, and then one guy looks ahead. Then you have a tube that goes up and you flip that up

and say, "Mr."--whoever is on duty, call them down there. "Bridge, we have a contact." Then they say, like, "Zero-one-zero." That's ten degrees off the starboard side. So, he gets out on the wing and he checks. He'll see nothing because they're down on the horizon. From there, then you go on the gun. Then the fourth one, you go down the mess hall and you get warm and you get coffee. So that's the way it was. Every so often, you change around. You don't get on the gun anymore; you do something else. That's the way it was there. Then, when I got down in Hawaii, I was already a sonar operator, so I just did sonar, lookout and coffee, and just hung around in case they needed anybody extra.

KR: What were your impressions of the Aleutian Islands?

RT: Very, very bad. It's one of the worst--I got it on the computer one time. The weather, it's one of the worst places like that. Just to give you an instance. When we were getting the ship fixed, we got a ship that just come over from--I don't know where--it's a repair ship. They pulled alongside, tied up to them. [inaudible] hard-hat diver going to put this huge plate on there. I went downstairs and I come up. I wanted to see what they were doing. In a matter of twenty minutes to a half hour, my shirt, the buttons were right off my shirt. The wind was so strong that you had to go like this to talk to anybody. So they stopped sending a diver down because the ships, they were tied up together, but there was a gap in there, what they call cushions. They had them in there. They kept going like that and they were afraid somehow. It was the worst weather I ever went to. I'm not exaggerating when I said I saw waves forty feet high. I remember a time we were convoying--a ship was going to send a cable under water, a cable--had this big reel on the back, half the size of this room. It would roll off. It had a break on it to slow it down. As the ship went up and down like that, it'd run off real fast. Then, when it went up like this, it would tie it up and pull it back up out of the water. I forget how many miles we run it. Anyway, I was up on lookout at this time. The waves were like this. So what happened was when you go downhill, like that, the wave comes down and you go up. The whole ship, the whole half of the ship is out of the water. Then, the wave goes up. I'm standing up there and I don't know how many times I said this--I looked and I'd look to see the other lookout and I'd say, "Look at this one. This is it. That's going to right over the top of the ship. It's too big." But then the ship started taking on--going real fast because the current taking you down, plus propellers. You'd go down like this. For an instant, you'd say, "We're not going up. We're not going up. We're going right through there and the whole ship could get covered and sink." Many a time I said a prayer. "Please, one more time. One more time." But those waves, forty, fifty feet high. What you see on that show with the crabs, that's the kind of water it was all the time. In a matter of seconds, you get--they called them [williwaws]. That's the name of the storm. Come up like that. Very bad up there. The waves, the winds. Army was up there. Had the Army up there. We had Air Force. Let's see. We had one, two, three--we had three bombers up there. They didn't do much bombing because Attu they were starting to move over there.

KR: What was it like when you were on Attu?

RT: I was only on there for about an hour, that's all. You couldn't go too far because there was still guys, people, on there. The Army had already cleaned out most of them guys up there. You what was interesting? I found a diary. Remember?

GT: Yes.

RT: I found a diary made by a Japanese officer. He was a doctor. It gave [information] about how towards the end of the war the Army was doing a good job. These guys were so bad wounded. He was giving them morphine to kill them.

GT: That was on the island. The ones that didn't get off the island. I have that story in the book. It's his diary of basically they were all committing suicide, the ones he was taking care of in the infirming. He was talking about the constant bombing and the threat of they're going to be eventually annihilated. For honor, they were blowing themselves up in the tents.

RT: But he was married. So, what I did was, I got him down on the computer, where he went to college. I knew from the diary that he had a child, he had a daughter. So I got in touch through the college, which changed from he went. It was changed over to a Seventh-day Adventist college. But I got the college--he was there. I got in touch with the college. I got in touch with a girl there and she gave me the address of the daughter, but then she said, later on, the daughter--I got in touch with the daughter and asked her, "Do you want the diary?" She said the daughter didn't want the diary. She already knows about it through the Navy. The Navy, I guess, printed it up for her. She didn't want it. She was married to an American, but she didn't want the diary or anything. But it was interesting, tracing back this doctor--like Gary said, killing all these guys with morphine. Those are the kind of people the sub was trying to take off as many as they could, but they never got them all off there.

KR: Where did you find this diary on Attu?

RT: I found it in a building, a small building. I went in there and I was looking around. I [saw] this post in there, a column. I happened to see this thing sticking over the edge, so I asked the guy to give me a boost. I got up there and I reached and I pulled it down. I gave it to the Navy and the Navy gave it back to me. I thought I wasn't going to get it back. The Navy gave it back. I printed it all out on sheets. I don't know whether it's in the book or not.

GT: It's in the book.

RT: It's on the book about how he was killing them and how guys were dying off because it was cold and they weren't getting any food coming in there.

GT: They knew they were going to be with the Americans eventually--captured and they didn't want to be captured. They thought it was his duty--the people who were working in the infirmary--assisted suicide. In the end, I think he killed himself, shot himself or something.

RT: Yes, he did.

GT: It was an honor thing to do. I think he was an American-trained doctor.

RT: Oh, yes.

GT: Japanese, but schooled in America. So, he knew a lot about America.

RT: I think he graduated from a college in California.

GT: Yes. If you read the diary, it was his inner thoughts of what was happening day to day. You could see the men dying and he knew they were getting closer. He knew there was no hope of getting off the island. It was a pitiful thing, but for honor--he was still Japanese and he felt that nobody should be captured. Mass suicide was going on.

RT: In the beginning that's how these subs were going in there and taking off the guys that were all right, trying to get as many people off of there.

GT: I don't even know if this sub ...

RT: We don't even know the one that we got, whether or not that had anybody from the island on there.

GT: They were heading back to the island. That was their last message, that they were on their way there. Then they made no more contact. Then they assumed it was sank and it wasn't.

KR: The entire Japanese garrison on Attu did a massive banzai attack.

RT: Yes, a couple of them.

KR: There were few survivors.

RT: Oh, no.

GT: That was the only time they ever basically were on American soil or a foreign invader was on American soil or American possession soil. It was probably miserable for them because it was so miserable for the Army. When they went there, they weren't prepared [for] the time that they were going to be there clothing-wise, food-wise and whatever. If you can imagine what life with the Japanese--

RT: Well, the Japanese actually were on Pearl Harbor. First place they hit was Pearl Harbor. Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians was hit on the 3rd and 4th of June in 1942, six months after Pearl Harbor. Dutch Harbor was hit June 3rd-4th, 1942, six months after Pearl Harbor.

KR: Can you tell the story about the dog?

RT: The dog? He was on the Army base. We didn't do much. There was nothing to do there. Like me, I used to go on Adak and I got to know some of the Army guys there. They had tents just like *M*A*S*H*, they dug big holes and they put the tents up there because it's so cold up there. So what they did was they'd dig big holes, put a regular tent there on the platform and then they'd take this black soil and they put it over the top of the tent. They'd reinforce it and they put it over the top of the tent. They got the smoke stack and everything. I was only in one

of their tents one time. I met these guys, talking to them. They unloaded ships, the Army did up there for all the Army guys there. We had a guy on there--the worst thing on that ship is seasick[ness]. I was seasick for maybe five, six weeks. Of course, I had to go down to mess hall and scrub and clean up the water because the hatch on the stern of the ship, the depth charge watch stood there. He had a breast plate on and an earphone. The captain could drop so many charges off the back. He backed in. So, you just lift the hatch up and you try to climb down real quick, but the ship's going like that, water would go right over the steel conning, they call it. We'd go down there. Well, when Baruch got on there and he thought he was going back, he had a steel plate put on. He opened the door and climbed down so the water wouldn't get in the mess hall. But when I was on it, every new guy--five of us--we had to sleep in the hammocks over the tables and get up at six o'clock in the morning and start mopping up and pass it up in the buckets to the depth charge watch. He'd tip them over the water, like that. We had a storm up there. We had three guys--ribs and cuts in the stomach. This guy was on depth charge watch later. He lost control holding on and he went across the top of the hatch and the dog, Patch, was down. He got his foot under the dog, Patch; he twisted his leg around like that. So, he's screaming, yelling. Took him down. Doc gave him morphine. My skipper called the beach and said, "We're bringing him in. Get a medic there and also ambulance." So they said, "Well, we don't have nobody to replace you on the (ping line?)." He said, "I don't care whether you got anybody to replace me or not, I'm coming in. The man's in agony. Broke his leg in two places." Like I say, my [captain] was gung-ho. He took right off, went in there, they had the ambulance there, floated the guy up. Months later, we're in Dutch Harbor and somebody said, "Look who's coming down the dock." His name was (Carlson?) [inaudible] nice guy. (Carlson?) and he was limping. He come on the ship. I said to him. "How come everybody uses your last name?" I said, "(Carlson?), how come you didn't stay home and get a medical discharge?" He says, "I got three kids. As long as I'm in the Navy, they get subsistence from the Navy. This way my wife can eat and sleep and drink and everything." Yes, he was nice guy. He got shore duty. He got shore duty. That was our worst thing on our ship, was seasickness. Had a radioman, as soon as he hears the bells going off in the engine room, he knew we were getting underway. He used to hang his bucket up so he could swing his bucket over and get sick and swing it back. What happened to him--I don't know how many weeks or months, his face swells up from being seasick, so they transferred him on the beach.

GT: How did you acquire the dog?

RT: The dog. I'm sorry. He was on the shore in the Army, running around there. This Army guy had him there. He said, "You want a dog?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I don't want to keep him around here. He's so small he sinks down in this black stuff and there's a lot of water and stuff like that there." I said, "All right. Well, let me go talk to my skippers." "Yes, bring him on." So me and the signalman, we took care of him. Then, like I say, the captain got to the point one time, he'd come out and talk to us. He said, "I got bad news." I said, "What's that?" He said, "We got to take your dog off, Ray." I said, "Why?" He said, "We don't want him to get washed overseas. Do something nice for him, let him go." So that's we did. We let him go. But we had to get documentation and everything for him. A lot of ships got dogs or cats on them. Well, cats are better than dogs.

KR: What was the tradition that your crew did when your ship crossed the equator?

RT: Well, everybody gets dressed. We took a canvas and we wrapped it around. We threw garbage in there. Then you got to crawl through the garbage and out the other end. My skipper, my other skipper, he only had jockey shorts on. Nobody else is going to see him. He don't know about pictures. He had jockey shorts on and stuff like that. Then we had guys dressed like girls do hulas, stuff like that. Any crazy thing you want to do. Then they give you a certificate for crossing the equator. We crossed the dateline too.

KR: What was daily life like when you were at Pearl Harbor?

RT: Pearl Harbor was good. First of all, I kept my nose clean. I got a lot of liberties. This one guy from Cleveland, Ohio. Name was (Roy Sanders?). I kept in touch with him after the war. Then, finally, a relative called up. He was a drunk. He died. Alcoholic. I used to make liberty. In fact, I got pictures of him and I at a dock. Then, when my wife and I went to the big island, the hotel we were staying at was right here. I took her where we had the picture taken. This was the dock and the water. I come out of the room and I come down onto the--we're going to get in the car. I look and I said to my wife. "You know what? That looks like the picture I sent home to you with Roy on the dock and me. Let's go over there." We did. We went over. It was. It was that there.

GT: It was probably fifty years later.

RT: But went in town, drank. The Navy had a place, it was in Honolulu on the beach. It was I forget how many acres. It had this long pavilion, roof on it. All open all the way around. Stairs that get down onto the beach and everything. The beer was only ten percent. Is that right?

GT: What?

RT: You had to drink a gallon to get drunk.

GT: The beer was only three percent.

RT: So you didn't get ...

GT: Too drunk.

RT: The guys used to go there and get drunk and then the shore patrol would throw them in a truck and take them--"Where's your ship? Where are you at?" Somebody would go with them; take them back to the ship. I only went a couple of times. I used to hang around the Royal Hawaiian. That's where the submariners used to get their leave, their R and R. I used to hang out with them guys because I knew a lot of guys from the sub service, from taking them in and out. I used to go over there and go swimming there in the Royal Hawaiian. My wife and I, we were there twice. I took her to the Royal Hawaiian, showed her where we used to swim. We went swimming there. The only thing is, there was a lot of coral. A lot of people got cut from the coral. You had to swim out over the top of the coral. Then it was all nice and sandy.

KR: When your ship was in Pearl Harbor, what were you hearing about the war about the war at that point?

RT: What were we sharing?

KR: What were you hearing about the progress of the war in the Pacific and Europe?

RT: Actually, we didn't talk much about the war. You know what I mean? Just listened to the-- had the radio on, listened to the radio, what Franklin was doing and Washington, [DC], stuff like that. Somebody always had something to listen and write it on the blackboard. The base that we were at, there was only two ships--mine and net ships. This was a channel going into Ford Island, where all the ships got sunk and everything. What they did was they got a ship out there and they had this net, big round steel things. Well, they pull that across. When the ship's coming in, they signal the net tender and he opens the net and they come in and then they close it. That way, submarines can't get in without getting cut up and stuff like that. They only had the net cutters and us. We were only in this little--where they had these big balls for the nets to drop them and float them, so they'd stay down to the ground. Then they'd be floating on the top and you pull them along. Well, we stayed there. We were with them all the time. Everything that came in with us, you always have somebody on watch, signalmen. What happened--whatever signalman was on duty, we had a blackboard down in the mess hall--that's how I found my brother in law, Johnny Toth. As they came in, the signalmen would signal the ship because they only had numbers; didn't have names. If you didn't know--whoa, what is this? So they'd write down--they'd signal their signalman. He'd signal back [inaudible] St. Louis. Then he'd go down and write it on a--or send somebody down, write it on there. So, if you had a cousin or nephew or relative on any of them ships coming in Pearl Harbor, you could go see them, I couldn't.

KR: Describe what it was like being in convoy that sailed to Pearl Harbor.

RT: I went swimming down in Canton Island. I got an ear infection. There was a ship down there that was sunk. It was letting out oil and stuff like that. This is a PBY base, just supplying them with these other ships. I swam in there. As I got back to Pearl Harbor, I started to get an infection in my ear. My pharmacist gave me stuff and said, "When you go to Pearl Harbor, you got to go the hospital." So I went to Pearl Harbor, went to the hospital and the guy said, "What happened?" I said, "I got an ear infection." He looked and he said, "You're a sonar operator?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I don't think so." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "According to the decibels"--is that what they call them?--he says, "You can't hear certain things. I'm going to have to report to your captain." I said, "What's going to happen to me?" He says, "You'll probably have to change your rate." So I went back to the ship. Make a long story short. I got transferred to Corregidor. You ever hear about Corregidor?

KR: Yes.

RT: The Death March. [Editor's Note: The Bataan Death March took place following the surrender of US and Filipino forces on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines in April 1942. Over seventy-eight thousand POWs were forced to march to Camp O'Donnell over six days with little to no food and water while enduring constant cruelty from their Japanese captors.]

Thousands died along the more than sixty-five mile route to the POW camp.] I got there. I went there with guys that were getting their rate changed or they didn't care, the war was over. We had a skipper there that didn't care. I did things that I wanted to do myself and nobody said anything. I went with the Seabees. Seabees put on the beach--they put a shack to eat in, a mess hall. Drove telephone poles down in the beach. They put a Quonset hut on top. I just walked around all day and tried to find jobs. I'd ask a guy--an electrician one day, his name was Cunningham. I used to call him Glenn, the racer from World War I, from Germany--Glenn Cunningham. [Editor's Note: Glenn Cunningham was an American athlete and runner who competed in the 1936 Olympics in Germany.] I did that. He told me what to do. I loused up sometime [inaudible] so I didn't do that. He said, "All right, I'm going to have you do some wiring." He taught me how to climb a pole with those things and put an electric wire in there and then wire it down in the Quonset hut. Did that for a while. I had two guys that used to come over to the island. I started talking to him. One of the guys was getting transferred off his landing barge. I said to the guy--I called him "skipper"--I said, "What's going to happen?" He said, "We'll have to get somebody from down in Manila." I said, "How about me? I have boats. How about me going with you?" He said, "It's all right with me." So he said, "I'll get in touch with my superior and tell him you're coming on." We used to take a deuce and a half and a jeep on the landing barge, take them down to Manila and get supplies for Corregidor. We used to do that. Then, when we didn't do that, this guy--we used to take the landing barge over to this island. It was only about a half hour and there was people living [there]. It was actually an island with people and kids. We used to go over there, give the kids chocolate and stuff like that. What they did was they set up this latrine and they took fifty gallon drums and they roll them together and water would go through there. One day, we got over there and there's a big commotion, gunfire. We run up there. On Corregidor was iguana lizards. This iguana lizard got up the pipes. The guy was sitting on there and he hit the guy and the guy flew right--they had this screening up. It's like cloth screening. Shot the guy right through the top of the toilet, right out onto the ground. That's what everybody was shooting at. They finally got him. I asked the guy. He said, "Yes, they eat those." So that's what they did. So we used to go back and forth there, talk to the kids. Other things we did was we'd go up-- Corregidor was here, had a north channel and a south channel. This goes down to Manila. We took a small boat out one time and we went up there. Just about the time we got to the end where the bay opened up, there was a Japanese guy here by one of the caves, standing there. So we got scared, so we took off. We went back and we notified the Army. The Army went out with six guys every day and they'd go to the caves that they knew about from when [Douglas] MacArthur and all those guys were on it. They used to throw phosphorous bombs in there. If anybody was in, they'd come out, they'd shoot them. I only saw that one. Then what happened was, we had a swimming pool. We got water out of the ocean--salinization. Took that out of the ocean and filled this up for water for the island. Otherwise, we used to have to take fifty gallon trucks and pick it up. Anyway, every night, somebody else had guard duty--four hours--guarding the water because some guy was going down there one night, said he saw a Jap taking water out of there. We never saw a Jap again, but they put up lights to see and we used to go down there and watch it. I slept in a bombed-out barracks. In fact, a guy that I go to lunch with once a week, his father was a paratrooper that jumped on Corregidor and secured the island. He said, "These are pictures of my dad." I looked and I said, "Oh my god." He said, "What?" I said, "That's the barrack I stayed in when I was on Corregidor." He said, "No kidding." I said, "Yes." I got it on my computer. There's a couple of guys that go back there every year. They got a Howard Johnson's

on the island. It's a tour. This guy went back there. He goes back there and he takes pictures and he puts them on the computer, then and now. See what happened there was they had this huge gun up on top of the hill. What happened was they had a wall. Now what happened when the Japs started coming in down here and going up the hill, they couldn't put the gun far enough to shoot the ships because it hit the stone. They tried to do that but it was too late. That tunnel that MacArthur and all them guys did the communications with, you could take two tractor trailers driving [through it]--Malinta Tunnel. I went in there a couple of times. They had a lot of dead Japs in there when I got on the island. The rats used to go in. The Philippines is like Vietnam. You sweat every day. It's real bad. What happened was--anybody dies, like all those Japs that got killed in the tunnel there, they were parched, almost like drums. Rats were going in there. We reported they went down to the mess hall and they went through the plywood flooring, was eating the flour. So the Navy got on there and they put three hundred traps on there. I was talking to one of the guys. They were back there. Out of the three hundred, there was only six that were rabid. They just let it go. They just let it go.

KR: When were you on Corregidor?

RT: That's a good question. Let's see. '45 I got discharged. That was in New York. I was on Corregidor between '43 and '45, I guess.

GT: '44 and '45 probably.

RT: I can't remember that much about time. I didn't write anything down, anything like that. I just hung around there. What happened was I was married and I got a medal. So I heard that there was a ship coming in from 'Frisco and they were going to take people back to 'Frisco. So I went down to Manila and I talked to a guy. The Wilson Insurance Company had a building down there, but the Navy took it over. That's where we used to check in all the time for food. I went down there and I saw the yeoman down there. I said, "What's the chances of getting home?" I said, "I'm married. I got a medal. I'm in almost three years." He said, "MacArthur"--he was the king down there. You couldn't do nothing without MacArthur. In fact, we served under him for a few days. He said nothing but Army guys are going home. Well, I found out through this yeoman that there were three Seabees going home. How they got on there, I don't know. So I went to him. He said, "You really want to get home that bad?" I said, "Yes." He said, "How about fifty-six dollars?" I said, "Okay." So I gave him fifty-six dollars. He wrote me up orders and I went on the ship. I met the chief and I met two of the Seabees. He said, "We have to do our own dishes and we got to serve ourselves. The cook's going to cook the food. We're going to eat like guys on the ship, good food--ham, eggs, stuff like that. He said, "We got to do our own dishes." Not a problem. So we chipped in. Like I say, we had good food. When they were in 'Frisco, they loaded the ship up with beer for Manila and the islands. When I was going back to 'Frisco, I was talking to the guy. The guy said, "You know what you're going to do on the way to 'Frisco?" I said, "No. What?" He said, "They come back so fast, they took the gun off from 'Frisco, but they left some of the ammunition on it. We're going to throw it over the side when we get out really deep." So I said, "All right." We did that. What happened--the ship kept going like this and the propellers were going out of the water. They were afraid they'd burn out the drive shafts. What they did was they loaded up the two holes. They loaded it up with water. So we had our own swimming pool. We used to go down the ladder, go swimming in

these two holes and then get on the ladders and get out. So, we're out one night. I'm on deck and it was beautiful out. I'm lying on the deck and I'm talking to the guys who were off duty. They said, "Hey, Ray. You feel like having a beer?" I said, "Yes. Where are we going to get beer?" "Come on with me." They have these things on a big ship. Air goes down there to the engine room. Well, they took a case of beer and they put a rope on it and they lowered it down there because nobody goes near there. The guy pulls it up and had a bottle of beer. So while I was on the way back to 'Frisco, I was drinking beer and having a good time. The only thing that--when we were coming into 'Frisco, the war is over. All the guys that were on deck with me, everybody started--well, they [had been in] 'Frisco and back, but I hadn't been. Me and the three Seabees were standing on the deck there. We were all crying. We're coming into 'Frisco. There's the bridge, all lit up. The war is over. All lit up. All the docks went up. Cars are going. People blowing horns and everything. Really something. I pulled in there. I was on Treasure Island. There was a world's fair. I don't know what year. But that's where the Navy took it over. I was supposed to stay there. When I got in, I had a week's vacation. My buddy was doing recruiting, but the war was over. So I went and I saw him at the recruiting station. He was staying up on Nob Hill in this rich person's house. Name was Ruth. He says, "I'll see if I can get Ruth to put a cot in my room, stay with me for the week before you have to check back in on the island. I said, "All right." So, we went to see her. She was in her late seventies. She had two girl Marines that had seen duty, I don't know where, and a Marine that was on one of the islands. She had them there too. I stayed there for a week and I'd go down to 'Frisco and have lunch with my buddy all the time. Then, finally, I cashed in, went back to the States, got discharged. Years later, I found out that he lived in North Jersey and he was a neighborhood kid. I'm saying, "What is he doing in North Jersey?" So I get his phone number. I get on the phone. This woman gets on, says, "Hello?" I said, "Hello." His name was (Aubrey?) Topps, T-O-P-P-S. "Is (Aubrey?) home?" She said, "Yes. Who is this?" I said, "Ray Toth." She said, "Who?" I said, "Ray Toth." She said, "You know who this is? Ruth Parker." I said, "What? You married Aubrey?" She said, "Yes. We went to school together, to grammar school together, in my class." Later on, he died with a heart attack.

KR: I am curious when you were married.

RT: Yes.

KR: Did you come home on leave to get married?

RT: Was I on leave? Yes. Well, my wife thought it was kind of a hurry. She says, "I'll tell you what we do." We got engaged. We got engaged on Thanksgiving. My Aunt Agnes worked in New York. She took my wife over to one of these diamond places you go in. She went in there and she picked out her ring. I sent Agnes the money to send to these people. She said, "Why don't we wait until you get another leave?" So I got another leave. I sent a telegram. Her folks got everything in action--the place to eat and everything. What was really nice about it, four guys that I went to school with from the neighborhood, all in the Navy and they were all home on leave. I used all four of them for the wedding.

KR: During your time in the Navy, you must have come into contact with people who were from different regions of the country. What were your impressions of people from the South, people from California?

RT: To tell you the truth, we had rebels on our ship. The officer's cook was African American. He worked for a train company in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was a car person. The guy that did the officer's, he was also--but he was sharp and New York-style. That was only two. We had a Navajo Indian on our ship. He came from Colorado. We had a Mexican guy, came from Mexico. We used to call him Pablo. Looked like he shouldn't even be in the Navy. He's overweight. He was a real heavy Mexican. I said, "Pablo, how come you joined the Navy?" He says, "I got five kids. The Navy keeps my wife going." [laughter]

GT: Blacks during the war, were pretty much--

RT: Mostly all rebels.

GT: Pretty much cooks and stuff like that. It was just the way it was on the ship. I was surprised.

RT: When I got on the ship, I went down to the mess hall--me, Johnny Toth, and the other three guys went down to the mess hall. We look at everybody. Said, "My name is Ray Toth." I see the cook sitting there. He's got a paper open and it says *Jersey Journal*. I said, "You from Jersey?" He said, "Yes. You from Jersey?" I said, "Yes. What's your name?" He said, "(Walt Whittenborn?)." I said, "I come from Jersey City. What did you do before you got in?" He said, "I worked in a bank. I was a teller." I said, "What's the name of the bank?" He said, "Jackson Street Bank." I said, "My cousin is a teller there." "What her name?" "(Florence Kimley?)." "She's my teller right next door. We're good friends." So, from then on, when I got seasick, he got me through that--soda, crackers, no coffee, just a little sip of water. I was awful glad to have him on there. Guy from my hometown.

KR: I am curious about your time in the brig, both in Chicago and then in Seattle. What were the actual charges against you?

RT: Over leave. Over leave. In fact, I didn't know it until, in that book, when I was going through there, that the Navy wanted to bust me. They wanted to take my rate away. According to the things that Gary got, the skipper Cornell went to bat for me to the Navy and said that he didn't want me busted, that I was in touch with him all the time, which I wasn't really. He said, "He was in touch. I knew everything he was doing. He kept in touch with me." So, at least he showed that I tried to get off of being bad and going in the brig. Yes, great skipper. When he got to Seattle, he came over the loudspeaker. He said, "Everybody going on shore duty tonight come to"--I forget the name of the hotel and the room. He said, "It's open house. Everything's on me." So we all went over there and got free drinks. Me and Johnny Toth got bonged out, and another guy. So we picked this other guy up and we're coming back to the ship. We were over leave. We were supposed to be back eight o'clock. We woke up on the floor in a hotel room. Got back there. This one officer there, he didn't like us too much, me and Johnny Toth; always giving us something to do. He put us on restriction--no liberty for a month. Our captain,

Captain Cornell, had heard about it through the grapevine of course. He came to me and said, "Is that right?" I forget his name now [officer Dave Perry]. "He put you on restriction for a month." I said, "Yes." He said, "No, you were with me. I'll go talk to Mr. Perry. You were with me." So he went to Mr. Perry. From that time on, Mr. Perry got mad because the captain went over him. So, we didn't have to do that that month of restriction. Like I say, he was a good skipper.

KR: Are there any other stories you want to share from your time in the military?

RT: Trying to think. No, I think I got it all.

KR: When you flew on the cargo plane from Seattle to New York, was that your first time on a plane?

RT: Yes.

KR: What was that like?

RT: It was stormy and lightning. When we stopped for fuel, some of the guys wouldn't get back on. They took buses to get home. The funny part about it was we hit an up and down and the [inaudible] that we had on there, got scared. So, we landed at Indianapolis, Indiana where it was stormy with lightning. We landed there, fueled up. Those guys got off and they said, "We're going home to Alabama on a bus. We know that stays on the highway." So, a couple of guys got off there. Now, the same kind of plane we were supposed to get back to [inaudible] also used for paratrooper--C-47s they were. Well, what happened was all the planes going out of there back to Seattle were taking toilet bowls, sinks, all that stuff, flying down, going to different bases. So, that's why we couldn't get on there. They said, "Can't squeeze nobody in there." That's the way that was all the time. Then, that guy, like I say, he signed that we [were] up to date. But then we left after the time we got lost.

KR: That's why you got stranded?

RT: Yes. In Chicago. We got in Chicago. We already had gotten going there. When the shore patrol locked us up, the guy thought that maybe we were wearing the ribbons that we weren't supposed to be wearing. The war hadn't progressed that much. So, we told them, "Yes, that's what we got. Look at our orders."

KR: What ribbons were you wearing?

RT: Seaman Third Class. What was lucky about it--the war got over. I didn't have to change my rate, so I kept the same rate, same rate of pay and everything, because I was going to take something else, but the war was over. So I would come out First Class Seaman again and I would have got knocked down in pay. What? I made fifty-six dollars a month.

KR: Was there anything on your permanent record about being in the brig?

RT: No, I don't think so. No. I think the captain cleared that up.

GT: It wasn't on there, but it was funny because there was a letter he wrote. After they got out, they went to a hotel to stay overnight. He gets to the hotel and they finally got released and were told to go back to where they were. I have the letter here. He wrote the letter home. I don't know if he mentioned that he was in the brig, but he mentioned it to somebody else and somehow it got back that he was locked up in the brig there. That delayed me even further from being lost and then have to document that. That's what caused all of his problems. Like he said, they weren't happy on the ship because a lot of the guys weren't allowed their leave because a couple of them--other than them too--were late coming back. Some were considered AWOL. So they resented--

RT: You figure I was in Seattle at Christmas.

GT: Guys weren't getting home.

RT: My leave was July.

GT: Yes, somewhere in that time period.

RT: July, August, September.

GT: You were quite late, but circumstances--

RT: Let me see. I come home.

GT: That would have been '43.

RT: Yes, around there.

GT: February '44. Between going back and forth--

RT: That's the only thing I ever regretted. Guys who were in the next bunks over here stopped talking to me, didn't say much.

GT: Then getting reassigned at the end--the last six, seven, eight months, they knew the war was winding up from that aspect for them. So he just floated around until he could get discharged, just to keep busy. Where they sent him nobody really cared too much because things were done for them. He was able to get home. That was it.

KR: What do you remember about when the war ended in Europe?

RT: That was VE-Day. I thought sure the Japs are going to follow behind real quick, but didn't happen. I was so glad. At least there was one war that was over. I lost three buddies, two Navy, one Army, kids I actually hung out with every night. In fact, it was just a stroke of luck. My son and the grandkids--Admiral [Chester] Nimitz has a museum down there. He grew up down there and his house is still there.

GT: Fredericksburg, [Virginia].

FT: Fredericksburg. He had the museum there. I went down there and we went out in the garden out there. I'm looking at these pictures. Not necessarily people that died. There was a woman there, who was in the shipyard. Somebody honored her by having her picture up on this wall. I think it was Gary or somebody said, "Maybe you'll see somebody that you know here from the ship." So, we're walking around. It was you that pointed to the picture? Or was it Brian [who] said, "Hey, Pops, look at this picture here."

GT: It was the engraving they had.

RT: That's in the book.

GT: It's in the book. We took pictures.

RT: It's on the wall.

GT: His Facebook page is my grandson--he's six now, but he was maybe a year and a half.

RT: Yes, my great-grandkid. That's what I use on Facebook.

GT: Admiral Nimitz museum [National Museum of the Pacific War] in Fredericksburg, which is a beautiful museum.

RT: Then, we went out in the garden. We walk along the walkway and you pay for bricks, bricks put down with your name in there, and walk along. Someone said, "Hey, Pop, look at this." There's my name on one of the--they bought a brick for me on the Veteran's Walk on Honor.

GT: We did the brick and the plaque on the wall for Christmas.

RT: Plaque, it's on the wall.

GT: My two sons and I. We used to go away, but hard to coordinate when he was living up here and he was teaching and married. We tried to get together. We went to Texas that year and did some things in Texas. When they can't go away--the last time they went away was a little over a year ago. He went to Jacksonville for his Navy reunion. It was his third or fourth. The boys both flew in and met us. That was when they had that big storm.

RT: Yes, it was nice having him at my place.

GT: We got really close.

RT: Yes, I had a great time.

GT: We've met up a couple times where the boys, all of us have been together, spent three or four days doing either his reunion. We've been to Vegas. We've been to New Orleans. The kids came that time.

RT: Funny part about it is I joined this organization when it started in the '90s, but I never went to any of their reunions because I'd have to pay for my wife and I. My wife, I figured, maybe she's not going to be interested in seeing military stuff. We had a motor home. I used money for gas. My folks had moved to California and all my cousins. So, I used to go out there with the motor home and use that money for gas going out there. We used to go out there every year when my mom moved out there, and my aunt.

KR: You said you had friends from growing up that lost their lives in World War II.

RT: Yes. One of them lived on the same street with me. The other two guys lived on the street that I hung out on, one block away. I heard a story about the one guy, who was on a ship with soldiers going to an island. The Japanese dropped a bomb right down the smoke stack. He was down in the engine room. He got killed. But I heard a story about--it knocked the engines out partially. The captain drove the ship as far up on the beach as he could before it stopped, so the soldiers on there could jump down into the water and they wouldn't drown with the heavy equipment on. I never knew the ship. I just put it on search and it come up, the name of the ship and everything. It told the story about it. I thought it was really nice. The other guy that I hung out with was on a destroyer. I was talking about Fredericksburg and the museum down there. This guy come on the computer and he says, "I'm going to send you something." I said, "Okay." He sent me a plaque and it's got the guys on his ship that got killed and one of them was my buddy. I look and I said, "Andrew?" His name was Andrew Hoyes. I said, "That's the ship that Andrew was on." So I got in touch with the guy, but he didn't want to keep communicating. I found it through a magazine from Fredericksburg that I get once a month. I saw this plaque on there. Then I read about this ship and these guys got together and paid for this stone with the guys' names on it.

KR: Is it okay if we pause for a minute?

GT: Sure.

[Tape paused]

KR: We're back on. Describe what your discharge was like from the Navy.

RT: My discharge from the Navy. Well, first of all, I was happy that I was getting out. Three years, one month. I wanted to get back into civilian life because now I'm going from a young kid, going into a family person. I'm going to sooner or later, have a family. I was worried about how I have to get a job. I'm married, I got to get a job. Then you got to think about a family coming and get a better job.

KR: Did you take advantage of any GI Bill benefits?

RT: Yes. The place where my wife is, it's not a big town. It's only got two streets. Under the GI Bill, I wanted to do--there was a plumber in town. I got a job with him. Then, I said to him, "How about if I, through the government, I get on the GI Bill with you?" He said, "It's all right with me." So, he signed papers for me. I learned through him. He had a son working. I learned a lot from plumbing. I did that, I don't know how many years, right in town. Then, my father-in-law worked for a lumber company, coal, all of that. He lived right on one of the main streets in Far Hills [New Jersey]. When I got out of the service, where am I going to find a house? Well, the company that he worked for had one, two, three, four apartments. They were condemned, the apartments were. There was one guy that worked for the same company. He was an oil burner man. He lived in the one apartment. My father-in-law said, "If I can get them to let you move in there, you're going to have to paint it yourself." I said, "Not a problem." It was up on a second story. Underneath was nothing. It was a barn where they kept trucks. My backyard was the coal bins for the coal. So he got me in that place. It had a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bath. That's it. Had to supply my own heat. He got me in there and then I worked for the company. I worked quite a while. The kids used to come over. I delivered oil during the winter. During the summer, I worked with my brother-in-law. He did oil burner [inaudible]. He went to school. I worked with him. Then, in the winter, I did the oil truck. My kids used to come over when I'd load up for oil. Mil used to bring the kids over by the truck. Like I said, walk from here to here. That was it. My father was a CPA. In fact, he loaned me a hundred and fifty dollars for the closing on this house because I didn't have that kind of money.

KR: When did you buy this house?

RT: When did I buy it? '52 or '57?

GT: '51 or '52.

RT: '51 or '52.

GT: Because Sue was born in Plainfield.

RT: My wife and I were driving around. This was supposed to be the first suburban living in South Plainfield. It was a development. As you pull in, there were no houses; just foundations. The first house was the one that you go in. This woman let you come in there. I got to be friends with her later on. We went in there, we liked the house. We said, "We'll buy it." Went back and told my father in law. It was a hundred and fifty dollars. I didn't have it, so he paid a hundred and fifty dollar closing fee for the house.

GT: And lived here ever since.

RT: Yes.

KR: How did you meet your wife?

RT: I met my wife on the merry-go-round on Asbury Park. I had a girl that was in the neighborhood I liked. She was going down to the shore, but she was going with her sister. Her

sister, she told me later--her sister said, "If I take you down to the shore for the weekend, you're going to stay with me." I met up with them. The older sister said, "Louise is going to stay with me. You can see her when you go home." I said, "All right." I jumped on the bus. They had the open tops back then. I drove down from Point Pleasant all the way down, and I got down to Asbury Park. They have a merry-go-round just before you go into that religious town next to Asbury Park. So, I go in there. There's a bench in there. I sit down on a bench. Sailors, soldiers were all down there. This girl comes over to me. She said, "Hi." I said, "Hi." She said, "My name is Bonnie (Schweicker?)." I said, "My name is Ray Toth." She said, "I got two friends of mine over there, two girlfriends. Do you want to come over, get acquainted and meet them?" I said, "Okay." So, I got up and I went over there. I saw my wife, said, "That's it." Thirty days I wanted to get married. She said, "I'm two years older. Let's figure this out a little bit." What happened was--my mother and father come down to Point Pleasant every year and they stayed in the house. They rented a room in the house. They were down there. My mother and father didn't know I was home yet. I went over to the house and saw my mother and father. My mother said, "We'll go back to Jersey City being you're on leave." I said, "No, no, mom. I'm going to be home for thirty days. I'll see you. Go ahead, you and dad take a vacation. Go fishing down in the inlet. I'm going to be catching up with some guys." So, I went down--jumped on a bus, went down there. At the end of Asbury Park by the merry-go-round, there's a little lake over here. They had these big swans you paddle. So, I took my wife out in one of these swans, paddled around there and come back. She gave me her phone number and address. I said, "I'll be out there tomorrow night. What time do you get off [work]?" She said, "I get off at five." I said, "I'll come out there. Is there a place to eat?" She said, "There's a diner right by the house." I said, "All right, I'll meet you." It took me two busses and two trolley cars to get out there. It took almost two hours to get to Bloomfield, New Jersey. So, I went out and I kept doing that and doing that, and staying there and staying there. Next thing I know, I got over leave. Like I say, she said, "Next time you get a leave"--and I didn't get one for almost a year. I come back and so I got married. Her folks set everything up. I got married.

KR: How did you communicate with your future wife and also your family when you were overseas during World War II?

RT: While I was going with her all that time, I brought her to meet my mother and my grandmother, grandfather. I don't know. I think grandfather was dead then. I brought her to the family and Agnes and everything like that. She got along good with the family. What happens, when I was in the service, my mother bought a house in Cranford. It was right off the Parkway. So my stepfather and my mother used to live there and Mil used to go down there and Agnes. My cousins used to all go down to my mother's house and have a party and had the place fixed nice.

GT: She kept in touch with--after they got married--my grandmother's mother would come and have dinner [while] he was in the war. You got a lot of letters. I went through all his letters and pretty much told the story, what she was doing and him writing to her saying, "Make sure you call Mil. Maybe it would be nice if you invited her for dinner." Basically, they knew each other a month when he came back a year later and married her, but they corresponded.

RT: One of the guys in my compartment, one of these good friends, I used to write to his mother and he used to write to my mother. I'll never forget his name--Frank Nelson. I can name the guys in my compartment. When I was down in Virginia, I said to Bob, "You remember a guy by the name of John Braun?" He says, "Yes, he worked in the engine room." I said, "Okay, you're all right. You remember the other guys."

GT: When you were out to sea, obviously they couldn't get mail, but what was the mail called? They were like a postcard.

RT: San Francisco.

GT: No, the little cards. When you went to the radio room, you would tell them what you wanted to say. They would write it out, translate it and then send it.

RT: That was V-mail.

GT: Very common. Victory mail.

RT: You unfold it and you write it. Then they check it over and make sure you don't say nothing.

GT: It would come in a little envelope, a little card, almost like a little postcard but smaller. That would be a message on there from them that they were--and the radiomen would deal with them. I guess the radio--they transcribed it, put it in a little envelope and sent it. It was very common. It was called V-mail for Navy.

KR: Was that a telegraph?

RT: No.

GT: It was radio translated.

RT: He's even got the telegram. I asked my mother for fifty dollars.

GT: Yes, that was when he was going across country.

RT: That's when I needed money.

GT: It was funny. Even when he was in basic training everything was the telegram and we have the actual telegrams that my grandmother kept. It would be funny. He's asking for twenty dollars for the month. "I have to buy some stuff." He started smoking like everybody did then.

RT: Yes, like cigarettes, candy.

GT: "I need ten dollars." You're thinking, "My god, the telegram probably cost something." Then she had to send it back through telegram, then they would get the money and she'd pay for it, for ten dollars or fifteen dollars or whatever he needed for something, while he was in basic.

RT: The radar that we had on there--we had this steel octagon building with a door on it. Later on, they put one up on the mast. But I used to go over to the Navy yard and get cigarettes and different kinds of Hershey bars. I took all these life jackets and put them down on the floor. I'd sit in there. I'd be open for a certain time of the day. Now, one of the officers in there, Mr. Perry, he was in charge of our money. So he put so much in there and he'd hold on to you. That was your account. So when I sold something, I had to tell him how much I sold. He took that from your pay when you got paid. He was the paymaster. I used to sit there and do that. I used to sit in there, have the door open, and guys would come in there and buy cigarettes or candy.

KR: Describe your life in this house, raising your family and your career.

RT: I first bought that house--I had a lot of problems with--

GT: This house.

RT: This house. I had a lot of problems with the cellar. The guy that did the job--terrible--on the concrete floor next door, all around. We all got together, put so much money, tried to get him for a lawyer. Couldn't get him. Took me a lot of years to get money to have the cellar fixed up. I went through washing machines from water being in the cellar. Then, my wife had to run up and down stairs. When my stepfather died in California--first of all, my daughter came to me and her husband and said--

GT: Go back to when you moved in. You're getting too far ahead.

RT: What?

GT: Go back to when you first moved in. I was born. Carol was born. You moved into this neighborhood. She's looking for when you first moved in here, what was it like, where you worked.

RT: Like I say, I had problems with the furnace and everything like that. The jobs, there wasn't too many jobs around at the time. I had a friend of mine that worked in a trucking company. So he said to me, "I'll try and get you a job." I got a job, a regular straight job. Then I went to trailer. Then we had the kids. Let's see. Carol, then Gary, they're, what? A year apart.

GT: Yes, me and then Sue. We're a year apart. There's three of us.

RT: It was pretty tough raising three kids, a house, and then I had to have a car.

GT: That's when you worked for Chicago Express.

RT: Then, I went to a bigger company. I worked for them. Then I worked for a guy that worked for them. He had his own truck. I did that and I was over the road for a while. Then I said to myself--I come home, my wife's got to tell me, "He was bad, she was bad, they need to get whipped." Finally I got to the point where I said I got to be home. So that's what I did. I took a city job and stayed in the city, worked doing that.

KR: What did you do in the city?

RT: Drove tractor trailer. Yes, same as on the road.

GT: He drove over the road--Midwest, Chicago and stuff like that--before my sister was born, Carol in '47. So, between the time he got married and got the house, there were two of us. Then, I guess before we were born, he drove over the road and worked various jobs. When he came here, he became a truck driver and worked for a local company. Then was still driving out where he'd be away for days. I don't remember that as a child, but -- then got steady truck driving job and did that until he retired.

RT: Did that for thirty one years.

GT: We've always been in the same house.

RT: Then after that, I retired. Gary told me about a job for the Board of Education. I drove a special needs bus for the Board of Education another twenty years.

GT: He was seventy-nine when he stopped [working].

RT: And I still see some of them kids--twenty-seven, twenty-six year old. Hard to believe. I had them on my bus. Most of them, like I say, couldn't talk, couldn't see, were crippled. But they were good kids. I loved them. Like I say, I still go over there and see them for Christmas. This one girl, she's hooked up with everything. I usually take something that makes some noise; she can hear a little bit, but she can't see too good. She's got a tube to get fed with and all that. One of the mothers had the child on my bus. She works for my cardiologist. But I see them, keep in touch with them.

GT: They had a lot of friends. There were a lot of kids in this neighborhood. It was a brand new neighborhood in South Plainfield. So everybody had kids in here. It was all post-war.

RT: I have three guys that, every other week, they want to take me out to breakfast. These three guys I knew of them, but I knew that their wives--one of them was my boss, the other one was a dispatcher and the other was a secretary. I knew the wives and now I know--like I say, I'm in contact with them. I thought that was real nice. The one guy that we knew really good, he was the guy that started that. Said, "Let me take you out to Park Ave. Diner. We'll have to get together for breakfast." I said, "All right." Then he got these other two guys. Now we go to breakfast maybe every other week.

KR: You did your service in World War II. Then your children were born in the 1940s. You're living in South Plainfield. What sticks out in your mind about the 1950s and living in suburban New Jersey?

RT: When did you go in the service?

GT: That was in late '40s.

RT: 40's?

GT: What was life like in the '50s living here after the war? We were all born.

RT: Well, I was making pretty good money even with the three kids. Had a car. My wife even had a car for a while there. But like I say, taking care of a family. Every year, no matter what, the only credit card that you had out at that time was American Express. That was the only credit card. I had that credit card. I had to pay Peter to Paul. In other words, when I took the kids on vacation--every year, they went someplace on vacation and I had to pay for it. My debt would come and I talked to my boss. "Can I work extra? Instead of getting lunch, how about working through the lunch for the hour?" He said, "All right. Go ahead." Paid the credit card off like that.

GT: We went to the Shore. He drove.

RT: Florida.

GT: Everywhere.

KR: Did you go to California?

RT: Yes.

KR: Yes.

RT: My wife and I have been [to all] fifty states, including Alaska and Hawaii.

GT: We'd take my grandmother, his mother. So there'd be six of us in the car. Trunk loaded, drove to Florida and went out [to the] Midwest. What was that? In the '60s, mid-'60s. Drove all the way across country, saw everything.

RT: Yellowstone.

GT: At one o'clock in the morning for the geyser. Nonstop driving to this day. He and my mother had a motorhome for twenty years. He bought that in the '70s.

RT: Yes, when the gas crunch was on. The motorhome people couldn't get rid of them, so I got a good deal on twenty-two.

GT: Twenty years he kept the motor home and every year, because he drove for the Board of Education at that point in time, was retired, he went to California. He bought a little car, towed it behind, and they'd do about eight weeks in California, see my grandmother before she moved back.

RT: Yes, all my relatives and their kids. Agnes and her kids grew up with Gary and them. So we'd go out to California. The kids have somebody to hang out with. We hung out with Agnes and (Buddy?).

GT: Even when he sold the motorhome, he continued to drive out there. My mother's brother lived in Texas for many years. So they would meet them in Las Vegas. They had this time share. Then they would drive across country and continue down, go to Texas. From Texas, he'd go into Florida and see that Navy friend of his that he just saw last week. See him and his wife on the drive home. He'd do seven thousand, eight thousand miles in the summer while he was off in his car. Then he'd go back to work. As kids, we always went somewhere. Went to Florida, went to the Shore for the week.

RT: My wife's mother was the greatest lady. Now, my father in law died young. So what money my wife's mother got through social security or his insurance--he had a good job. So we'd take her and she'd take Gary in her room and we'd take the two girls in our room. Or was it vice versa? Whatever. She paid for meals. She paid for motel for one of the kids. Always liked to eat in Howard Johnsons. So every time, she'd say, "If you see a Howard Johnsons, Ray, stop for lunch." We took her up to New York State. My favorite place is Lake George. I've been going there for about 40-some years. She was a good lady. If it wasn't for her, we couldn't have gone to some of the places. We took her to Florida.

KR: Did your wife work outside of the home?

RT: Yes, she worked for Bradlees Department Store in South Plainfield. She worked in the money office for eleven years. She did--outside of the home--good friends of ours, the wife was in the Girl Scouts and the husband, him and I got into transportation. I got the busses to take them up to the Army place, West Point. Take them up there. I'd get a regular nice bathroom on the bus. Him and I used to take the kids to these different places. Gary would go with them because he was getting into the Scouts at that time. My wife was doing the Girl Scouts. That family there, the mother was an alcoholic. She had a son Gary's age. I'm down in Fort Dix and I'm walking along there. All of a sudden, this woman said, "Ray? (Millie?)?" I said, "Joan, what are you doing down [here]?" "Oh, Freddy's graduating." I said, "So is Gary." They're both graduating from the Army. One thing led to another. We went over. So, her father owned a trucking company and he wouldn't let the father off, see his own son off. So the only guy down there was a mechanic at the airport. So they're sitting there talking to her. In Vietnam, Gary went one way in Vietnam and Freddy went another way. I think Freddy was over there--maybe it wasn't even a month--and he got killed. Got an ambush and he got killed. We went to the wake and we're over the house. A knock comes on the door. It was on a Saturday. Christmas week. Knock on the door and there was a box there for his sister. Him and his sister were very close. Not the mother though. She opened a box that had one of these black velvet jackets and it

had a thing of "Vietnam" on the back. On top of it, it says, "I was born in hell and I'll die in hell." That's what it had on the back of the jacket. I'll never forget that. The daughter had that. The mother and him didn't get along. Well, he had a girlfriend. So when he got killed got, the girlfriend got--what? Ten thousand dollars?

GT: Ten thousand. The insurance.

RT: The mother, she went to the Army, she thought she'd get it. She's the mother. The Army said, "Hey, he can sign it over to anybody he wants to." So that's what he did. His mother, after that, she went downhill. Tried to cut her wrists, put her head in in the oven, all the stuff.

GT: Just a tragic situation.

RT: Yes, a real tragedy.

KR: What sticks out in your mind about when your son was overseas, serving in the Vietnam War?

RT: Well, when I first heard about it, I thought, "Why can't he go to Canada? Everybody else is." Right?

GT: He never said that to me.

RT: He says, "Well, if I go there, I might not be able to get back in the States again. I'll take my chances." He went over there to Vietnam. He had the same thing as Freddy. He got ambushed too. He got wounded. He was lucky; he got home. When I heard about that--and as the war progressed over there and you heard all these politicians telling you--and now you find out years later all those people that were in charge were lying to help the President out. Finally, he didn't want to be president anymore. You see it on television and you see some of them guys that's retired and they can say what they want. They said that some of the people in charge lied. Instead of maybe twenty-five guys got killed, there'd be about fifteen or thirty. Something like that. Gary even said the same thing when he came home--more guys killed than they really told you.

KR: How did you hear that Gary had been wounded?

RT: Trying to think how I--

GT: I told you. I wrote a letter home.

RT: You told me?

GT: I wrote a letter home.

RT: All right. He told me. Now, I didn't want to tell him about Freddy getting killed and he didn't want to tell me.

GT: Yes, I found out on Christmas.

RT: It was in the paper.

GT: We used to get *Stars and Stripes*. We were on a fire base during Christmas and New Year's. It was out in the middle of nowhere. The enemy was there, but basically, we were on the firebase and I'm reading the *Stars and Stripes* because they send it out with supply. I see his name in there, that he was killed. [inaudible] childhood friend and then I didn't see him for a while. Then, we went through basic [training] together. Went to Vietnam together and we were hanging out. He went to First Cav. I went to a different group. So, I didn't say anything and they didn't right away. Then, I think one of my letters I wrote home, I said, "I know Freddy was killed in action. I read it on the paper over here." I knew at that time he had been sent home already. They [had the] funeral.

RT: The worst thing to happen, we went to the funeral in Middlesex and I said to my wife, "The casket's not open." There was no lid up. So, we're walking up the ramp there with the VFW. I get up there. It was hermetically sealed. You could see from the waist up. You could see him, through a plastic shield. I took one look at that and my wife took one look at that--I stayed home from work three days.

KR: Yes.

RT: It could have been Gary. Sorry. He was a kid from the neighborhood with his mother and father, friends and everything. I just didn't think that it was going to be like that. You never know. Then when we went to the funeral, of course.

KR: How often did you exchange letters with Gary when he was in Vietnam?

GT: Quite a bit.

RT: Quite a bit. I think he sent me a map home and then he'd tell me where he was and where he was going. I'd mark on this map--I had it down in the cellar for the longest while. Then we sent gifts, stuff for Christmas and Easter.

GT: It took a week for a letter to get home and a week to get an answer. So if I asked a question, it was two or more weeks and you didn't get your mail right away. Sometimes you get your mail and you have five or six letters in there. There's two weeks since you had mail because they drop it off when you're in the field, but at a safe location. Packages, same thing. You get a gift package. It's like they send today, the goodie packet. You're in the field, you're carrying everything and you're getting canned food. You divide it up and give everybody--you take what you want to take and you say, "Here. Help yourself. Take whatever somebody sent me here." The worst part was I got a package on the fire base. I knew Freddy had died. I think that day I got a package from his mother. Prior to him dying, she must have sent the package. It finally got out to the firebase because it was more of an area that they could give you something like that. At that point in time, I already knew he'd been killed.

KR: What are your thoughts on how Vietnam veterans were treated when they came home?

RT: Bad. Now I'm an associated Vietnam member. Wherever Gary goes, I go. Same with VFW. But the Vietnam is really great. Met some real super guys there. When I see somebody, I always say, "Welcome Home," because nobody ever said that to most of them guys. There was no welcome home. So now, you see somebody--if I see somebody on the street and he sees me with my Navy hat on, he'll say, "Welcome home." I say, "Welcome home." But I go with him; we go to Washington, put the wreaths on the Vietnam monuments down there and go to the Wall.

GT: Things were different. He came home pretty much--I always thought how they treated the World War II [veterans], but that was a war that ended. This was ongoing. So people were constantly coming and going. It wasn't well [received] here. I figured, "I'll come home, get a job." I did with the Nike site, actually in South Plainfield, for a half a year. It was a missile defense site. It was just a job I got through the newspaper prior to coming home. At that time, even with the GI Bill, guys went back to college. You were proud and yet, people didn't care. You put it down on job applications, nobody ever asked you anything. It was strange. Even friends. I had a couple friends that were in Vietnam--my best man. We were friends before we went over and our wives went to school together, so very close, but guys don't talk about it. He's not active in any organization. You come home and nobody really cared. It wasn't: "Oh, you're a veteran." After a while, you just get numb to it. You don't even bother. If somebody asks you, you say [inaudible] nobody ever asks about it. So this is what's nice about these Vietnam groups.

RT: You know what was nice? It was our twenty-fifth anniversary, [which was being celebrated at a restaurant in South Plainfield].

GT: Yes, I came home for that.

RT: Yes. Well, he was home, but we didn't know about it. My granddaughter, Jeanette, she was a baby.

GT: Yes. She was four or five.

RT: She had seen Gary. Her mother said, "Now, don't tell us that he's home." Excuse me. We're coming into the restaurant over there. Gary's staying at the very end. He's walking up. He had the flower for mom to pin on her.

GT: Yes, I think so.

RT: She had to look--she didn't realize who it was because we didn't know he was home.

GT: Stateside by then. Colorado.

RT: Yes, that was nice.

GT: I always worried about saying things, telling him too much, but I figured he knew better than anybody what it was like. So, I would be able to tell him things I normally wouldn't tell somebody else, like my wife, [who] was my girlfriend at the time. It was a different type of letter. Then, I found out that she was reading the letters that I was sending home, so she knew what was going on. After the war and coming home, I always thought it probably was a terrible thing to do was to tell him things figuring he knew, but having to think about what's going on. I'm thinking this wasn't really a good thing to do. Really tell him what was going on.

RT: It's nice bonding now with the Vietnam Veterans [of America]. Then Gary also belongs to the Purple Heart organization. Now I'm an associated member of that too. So it's nice. We get a chance to hang out together every month.

GT: This is all Vietnam veterans in the VVA. There's probably thirty-some guys at the meeting. If I go to the meeting [and] he didn't go, "Where's Pop today? What's the matter? Why didn't he come to the meeting?" We have a lot of associated members. They're treated good. It's a good organization. They're good with each other. It gets him out of the house.

RT: That one guy that sits behind the desk--I forget his name. Everybody gets up and says what they did in the service, what outfit. I just say, "Ray Toth, US Navy, '42 to '45." This guy always goes like this. I said to him one day, "Why do you do that?" He said, "Three years? That's why I do that." It's nice having all them guys there. They treat you so good. You do things with them. I feel just the short time I've been an associated member, it's great. Gary got me a beautiful jacket; has the thing on the back, has my name. It said associated member. He bought it for me. Beautiful. I wear that whenever I can--nice weather, a little cool, I can wear that. Then from the organization I belong to, Patrol Craft Sailors Association, I got a patch and he had that put on for me.

KR: I have reached the end of my questions. Is there anything that we skipped over that you would like to add?

RT: I can't remember. You remember anything?

GT: No. When he was growing, that's his best stories.

RT: When you're three and four years old and your father dies and it's just you, and your mother and your grandparents--we had my uncle John. Now, my great-grandfather, I didn't know him too much. That's on my grandmother's side. He was German. Now her mother and him got divorced way before I even--I guess before I was even born. I don't know. It was my great-grandfather, Uncle Johnny, Agnes, my grandfather, my grandmother, my mother and me. Seven people living in the same house, because my mother worked and there was no one to watch me after my father passed away. So, we moved in with my grandparents, so I had someone to take care of me.

GT: His best memories are back then. He gives you the detail. Any time you hear the story, there's an addition to the story. You say, "I never heard that." "Oh, yes." It's something he missed. My daughter-in-law was the one that listened to the stories because they were up here

for several months. "He's got to do that," she says. Every time I listen to him, there's something more here. She says, "Who's going to tell the kids that?" My little grandsons. Who's going to pass it on? That's why I wanted Pop to do this.

RT: I asked my father, before he got TB from the accident, when he first got that new Mack truck, before he got tuberculosis from the accident, and it had solid tire rubber on there. That's what they called tires then. I remember asking him, "How come you don't have the fat tires?" He said, "That's the new ones that don't make any noise and you don't have to worry about them blowing out. There's no air in them. There's just solid strip of rubber on the back and the front." The first thing he had, but he only had that maybe a couple--he had a horse and wagon, small wagon and a horse before that truck. This was before he got sick; I was still small, and the three of us were still together.

KR: That was on his Nabisco route?

RT: Right. The funny thing about it, that was when I worked for Chicago Express, that was one of my company's best support and business. We used to do a lot of work for Nabisco out West. Then when you go there and you back in, between the doors they have a box there. It's crackers that either broken up or half broken up. You can have as many as you wanted. I used to take them out, keep them in a cab, something to eat.

KR: I want to thank you so much for inviting me into your home and sharing your stories with me.

RT: Thanks for listening for so long. When I get started, I was worried. Trying to think of stuff when you're young and then in between the war. That's why a lot of stuff he remembers that I told him. Once in a while I forget it. He says, "Well, tell him about that."

GT: You did a good job.

KR: Yes. Thank you so much.

RT: Thank you.

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