RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH IRVING VEROSLOFF

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Francis Asprec: This begins an interview with Mr. Irving Verosloff on October 21, 2005 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Francis Asprec and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

FA: Thank you very much, Mr.Verosloff, for participating in this interview. To begin, when and where were you born?

Irving Verosloff: I was born on October 1, 1923 in New York City.

FA: Can you tell us about your parents?

IV: They were both immigrants. My mother came from the province of Galicia in Austria, I guess. It was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. My father came from Poland, which was then occupied by Russia. They didn't know each other until they met here. My father, I believe, was nineteen when he came over. I think my mother was fourteen when she came over.

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Did they come over with other family members?

IV: No, they each came separately. My mother had a sister here. My father had a friend; they called him Landsman, someone from the area that he came over with. He was nineteen. We never talked, and this was a regret that I had, about why they each came. I can almost guess why my father came, I think. The Russian Army had a twenty-five year draft, and he wasn't going to go in the Army for twenty-five years, so, he came over here in 1913, and, in 1917, the American Army drafted him, but he was here. My mother was thirteen, I think she was thirteen, and she had a sister here waiting for her.

SH: Did any other members of the family come after them?

IV: My father had three sisters who came after he did. My mother had nobody. They were all left in Europe.

FA: How did your mother and father meet?

IV: They were introduced, and I've never been able to find out by whom, but they were introduced in Lower Manhattan, and they got together; and they got married. They had two children.

FA: You are from New York City as well. Where in New York did you grow up, and did you live in New York your whole life?

IV: I was born in Lower Manhattan. My father was a locksmith, and he had a shop on 39th Street and 2nd Avenue in Manhattan. … We lived on 40th Street, about two blocks away from his store.

FA: You mentioned that you went to Stuyvesant High School. Can you tell us about your experiences there and the educational opportunities that this school offered you?

IV: Well, Stuyvesant and another school called Townsend Harris were the premier schools in New York City. You had to take a test to get into each of them. I chose Stuyvesant. My mother was quite upset about that because it cost a nickel each way, or ten cents [a day], on the subway, and there was a high school two blocks away from home. … The only excuse I gave her was, "Mom, I had to take a test." Well, that convinced her, you know, I passed the test. It was primarily a science and mathematics school; emphasis was on the sciences.

FA: What was the other school?

IV: Townsend Harris, which was an adjunct of City College. That was considered a premier school, also. I chose Stuyvesant. I don't know why, but I did.

FA: During your time at Stuyvesant, were you active in any extra curricular activities and did you work?

IV: No, I didn't work and wasn't in extra curricular activities. Two reasons, one, they didn't have many in those days at Stuyvesant anyway; and two, I had to get a train to get home. So, you know, the subway ran frequently, but I had to walk over to the subway station to get myself home.

FA: Was the commute to school hectic?

IV: I never thought so. It was a subway ride, you know, a subway ride down, a subway ride back. We lived in the Bronx at that time.

FA: Where in the Bronx did you live?

IV: Originally, we lived … off of what was called Melrose Avenue, which is, probably, the center of the Bronx. … Then we moved from there over … more toward the western portion of the Bronx in the center … and when I was going to Stuyvesant, the station was on Jerome Avenue, and we had to walk over there to get to the train. It was elevated there.

SH: Did your family move often in the city?

IV: No, those were the only three times we moved until they left New York.

SH: When did they leave New York?

IV: They left around 1941. You want the anecdote for that?

SH: Sure.

IV: My father had branched out from locksmithing to a hardware store, and, finally, to linoleum, and, with all due respect, he couldn't stand the women. They were driving him crazy as customers. … He wanted to get out to the fresh air of New Jersey; and he ended up in a chicken coop where there is no fresh air, but he loved it. So, they moved to New Jersey. My mother was

dragged, kicking and screaming, to New Jersey. She didn't know it. She didn't want to know it. She didn't want any part of it. Two weeks later, with a brand-new house, she didn't want to go back to New York. So, it worked out.

SH: Had they saved their money to buy this chicken coop?

IV: Yes, my father was quite frugal. … It was, mainly, the buying of the land, and building the coops, and he really enjoyed that.

SH: So, he did everything from scratch?

IV: Yes. Yes. Another anecdote; when we were children, on Sunday, my mother wanted us out of the house so she could clean and make dinner. … He used to take us for walks, or trips, and one of the places he took us, and [for] this we had to take a trolley car, was to the brand-new George Washington Bridge. … We would walk up on the bridge, because we didn't have a car, and we'd walk halfway across the bridge. He'd turn around, because the other side was New Jersey, and he wasn't going over there. He didn't know it, and he didn't want any part of it, but after he got to New Jersey, he got to know it well.

SH: I'm amazed at that story, because, less than twenty years later, he bought land and built a home there.

IV: Yes, yes. He had a sister who lived in Lakewood, who had a farm, and he fell in love with that idea.

SH: So you would go and visit her there?

IV: Yes.

SH: How often would you get out of the city and visit like that?

IV: Not very often at all, but he just liked the living. He came from a town of two hundred people. He always liked the land, and he always wanted to go back to it.

FA: When your parents were growing up, did they also have educational opportunities?

IV: No. No, they had never been to school, as far as I know. Incidentally, my father, who had no education at all by the time he died, was reading the *New York Times* everyday. … He worked his way up. … They had no educational opportunities, and it was frustrating to them, because they couldn't give me any guidance. They didn't know what to recommend to me. They could give me no leadership at all. They tried, but there was nothing that they could do.

FA: But they encouraged you.

IV: Oh yes, well, education was part of our family, you know, tradition. Part of the cultural tradition [was to] always get a better education.

SH: You have a younger brother?

IV: Yes.

SH: How many years younger than you is he?

IV: … Five.

SH: Was he involved in the chicken farming?

IV: [He was] totally [involved] in the chicken farm. He still lives on the farm, although he doesn't farm it anymore. But [he was] totally into that.

FA: You mentioned that your father served briefly in the US Army. Can you explain a little bit about that?

IV: He was drafted. He was sent to a camp in South Carolina. I don't think he got any further than that. … Then he was discharged after the war.

FA: In which branch of service was he?

IV: In the Army … in the infantry.

FA: How old was he when he first enlisted into the Army?

IV: … He didn't enlist; he was drafted. I enlisted; he was drafted. They thought I was crazy. [laughter] He was drafted [when], I'd say, he was about twenty-one. I think the rule then was they didn't take anybody under twenty-one. That was the rule in World War II, which leads me to go a little off track. I went in when I was nineteen, which meant that I had to get parental consent and that was not easily obtained. They didn't want to give it.

FA: How did your family feel about it?

IV: [They felt] very strongly about staying home. They lived on a farm. The people who worked on the farms had exemptions, and they couldn't understand why I wanted to get in.

FA: Did you have relatives that served?

IV: No, nobody.

SH: How did the Depression affect your family?

IV: My father, God bless his soul, put food on the table, and put clothes on our backs. We didn't live in any sort of luxury, but he took care of us. He had this locksmith store, and … I can't say he did well, but we survived very nicely.

SH: Do you have any memories? Did you see any of the scenes that we see now?

IV: One of the things that I remember is [him] telling me that he was doing something that was somewhat illegal, and they can't do anything about it now since he is no longer with us, but he did some work for some gentlemen, who were bootleggers. One of the things he told me he did was, he installed an electronic lock in the form of putting a magnet in the door, and he had to put a nail in. When you put the nail in, it made the connection, and the door opened. So that nobody could get in or out. But that I recall. All he could say about them is [that], they were nice to him, they paid him.

FA: You mentioned that your parents didn't have a political affiliation, but were they in favor of FDR's New Deal?

IV: Oh, yes. FDR was God. They were very, very on the liberal side.

FA: What did they think of Herbert Hoover?

IV: They didn't have much to say about him, you know. They got married in 1923. They were young. … They didn't read the English press, and there was nothing on the radios to speak of in those days.

SH: What was their reaction to the events that were going on in Europe, in particular with Poland?

IV: Well, it was traumatic for them. That leads to another story. In 1936, the President, Roosevelt, had enacted a Bonus Law, granting bonuses to veterans of World War I. So, my father got the bonus. My mother took the money, took the two kids, and went back to Poland. He stayed home, and we visited on both sides [of the family]. … By that time, it was all Poland, it was no longer Russia, or Austria, or Hungary. … We visited both families, and after 1939, they were all gone. … This was very traumatic at home.

SH: So, there was correspondence back and forth?

IV: Constant correspondence, yes.

SH: What do you remember about the trip?

IV: To Poland? I remember the ship was brand-new. It was called the *Batory* and the one that came back was the *Pilsudski*; and I remember the train rides back and forth. I remember my relatives; my grandmother on my mother's side, my grandfather on my father's side, some uncles, some aunts, and cousins. …

SH: You would have been about ten years old?

IV: No, I was thirteen. It has been very troublesome to me ever since. Because, when people are lost, as a number, it doesn't have effect [on you], but when you've known the people, [and] you've lived with them, it's much more difficult.

SH: Were you also corresponding with your grandparents?

IV: No, no, because I didn't write the language they did.

SH: When you went on the trip, did you bring any souvenirs back?

IV: No, there wasn't anything to pick up really, no.

SH: In your home, what kind of traditions did you keep that would be reflective of your mother and father's background?

IV: Not much, because my father was agnostic and he would not go to temple. I didn't have a *Bar Mitzvah*. … My mother was a strong woman in her own way, but she went along with him on things that he felt were particularly important to him. So, we didn't have any religious tradition at all.

SH: You said your father and mother didn't read the American press. What were they reading?

IV: Jewish papers. My mother didn't read papers anyway. My father did.

FA: Did you learn Polish when you were in Poland?

IV: No. No. … First of all, when we went there, we didn't talk Polish. We talked Yiddish. … I didn't speak it, but I understood it. That brings another anecdote. At home, they spoke Yiddish, but when they got mad or something, they didn't want us to know what they were talking about, so they switched to Polish. That, I never picked up. I just couldn't do it. It's not an easy language. [laughter]

SH: Now as a young man going into school, were you fluent in English as well as Yiddish? How did you learn English?

IV: English. English from the neighborhood, from the public school, and then from high school, it was all English. I wasn't raised on … anything but English. They tried to speak English with me. They preferred that I [learn English]. They knew that I had to get out in the world, and that I had to … [know] English.

FA: Was your neighborhood predominantly Polish?

IV: Jewish.

FA: Excuse me … yes, Jewish?

IV: Jewish, yes.

FA: In your community, did most of the people speak English or Yiddish?

IV: They spoke Yiddish and an English that had a lot of Yiddish accent to it.

SH: In that neighborhood, though they were all speaking Yiddish, what countries were they from?

IV: Well, let me back up. When we lived in Lower Manhattan that was a German and Italian neighborhood. When we first moved to the Bronx, we lived in a neighborhood that was, primarily, German and Irish. Then, we moved over further west, because my mother was insisting she wanted to be near an aunt of hers. So, that was Jewish.

SH: Was your mother taking care of this aunt?

IV: No. No, just, this was her aunt.

SH: Did your mother work outside of the home at all?

IV: No, those were the days when women, … primarily, did not, if they were married.

SH: Did she help in your father's business in some way?

IV: Yes. She was the homemaker. She took care of the home. She took care of the food, the laundry. … He took care of bringing home money. … That was the arrangement. I think that was primarily the case with most families.

SH: Did you and your brother help out with the businesses in Manhattan?

IV: No. I helped out a little bit with the linoleum store. I did some deliveries. I did a little bit of selling. Not too much in the hardware store, because I was a little too young for that.

SH: Did you have an after school job?

IV: No, no.

SH: The whole focus was helping in the family business

IV: That was really something that most kids did. After school jobs is something relatively new for me.

SH: Really? Kids talk about selling magazines or newspapers …

IV: Door to door, no, or cookies or anything else, nothing like that, but I did help my father in the linoleum store.

SH: Okay, thank you.

FA: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was struck?

IV: That, I remember very distinctly. I was sitting at home, it was a Sunday afternoon, listening to the Brooklyn Dodgers playing the New York Giants football. … All of a sudden, they started coming on with the calls [over the loudspeaker for service men], "Report back" … Then the reports from the radio commentator [came on], and I knew there was a Pearl Harbor.

SH: What year did you graduate from Stuyvesant?

IV: 1940.

SH: What did you do after graduation?

IV: I worked for a while in the garment district. … Then I got into a defense industry out on Long Island for a while. I was working as a machine operator. Oh, one of these things I hadn't thought about before, but, yes, I worked. … Then I started pressuring my family. I was living in New York. They were living out on the farm, and I was visiting every weekend. … I started pressuring that I felt I should go [into the Army].

SH: Where did you live when you were living in New York and they were living on the farm?

IV: I lived with my cousin, my mother's cousin, a maiden lady, who was the daughter of the aunt that I referred to before. She had a separate bedroom, and I lived in there.

SH: What do you remember of the reaction in your family and around the neighborhood when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939?

IV: The only reaction was [from] my mother. She was horrified. My father, … I'm sure he was upset, but he was trying to calm her down, so, he was not being vocal about it.

SH: Was there discussion on the street within that neighborhood?

IV: I didn't hear too much.

SH: What about in your school, was that addressed at all in Stuyvesant?

IV: No, no, [I] didn't hear it at all. They were all nerds anyway. [laughter]

FA: Were the students at Stuyvesant mostly Jewish or was there a mix?

IV: It was a mix, very definitely a mix.

FA: Even though there was diversity in your school, did some of the students end up talking about Hitler invading Poland?

IV: I heard no discussion of that, that I can recall. I don't recall any of it. The concentration was on school, and that's about it.

FA: Did you have any teachers that had any viewpoints about the invasion of Poland?

IV: No.

FA: They just tried to keep it to themselves?

IV: Well, most of them were on the scientific and mathematical level. It was English, but I don't recall much of history. So, there was really nobody who would have that opportunity to get involved in that.

SH: You talked about being home and listening to the game when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Were you home in New York?

IV: In New York.

SH: In New York.

IV: Yes.

SH: Your parents had moved to New Jersey in 1940.

IV: Yes.

SH: Did you help with the building?

IV: No, because I remained in New York.

SH: But your brother did help?

IV: Yes.

FA: When your parents moved to New Jersey in the '40s, did you move with them to New Jersey or did you stay in New York?

IV: Well, no, something new happened when I got out of the service. I went to school. All of a sudden, I got the fever to go to college.

SH: You had been out of high school for almost two years when Pearl Harbor happened. Did you have any thought to go and enlist right away? How did that affect you?

IV: It wasn't an immediate reaction. It was just a reaction that, with all that was going on in Europe, [and] with all that was happening with us, I felt I couldn't be, you know, exempt. I didn't want to be a draft dodger. I didn't want to be drafted. I felt that it was something I had to do. I mean, you know, in hindsight, having had children, … what would I have felt if they came to me with that? I probably would have resisted. … I couldn't understand why my family, my mother and father, were so difficult about giving consent.

SH: Where did you enlist?

IV: Well, they were living in Farmingdale, which is right outside of Freehold. … I recall that I had to take the train in Farmingdale and go down to Trenton, which I did. … From there, they sent me to Fort Dix. So, I think I actually enlisted in Trenton, [and then I was] sent to Fort Dix.

FA: Can you tell us a little bit about your experiences at Fort Dix?

IV: Fort Dix was just a replacement depot. They moved me out of there very quickly. My first experience was basic training in, of all places, Atlantic City, in January.

SH: That was because you had taken tests at Fort Dix. …

IV: I was assigned to the Signal Corps. I guess I had a high IQ, so I was assigned to the Signal Corps. They sent me to Atlantic City in January. … Marching on the boardwalk in January, in Atlantic City, with all that dirt coming in off of Bader Field was not pleasant. So, I did what everybody else did. You volunteered for KP, so, you were inside the hotels, in the kitchen working, so you didn't have to march on the boardwalk. … Several days we had to march with gas masks on because … the sand and the dirt coming in off Bader Field was so bad. … Finally, somebody said, "Hey, the smart thing to do is enlist for KP." So, you do pots and pans, but you're inside, it's warmer. [laughter] So, I remember that. We were in the hotels.

FA: What was your first day like being at KP?

IV: KP? I thought you were going to ask me what my first day was down there. I was scared silly. I didn't know what it was all about. [laughter]

FA: Actually, that was going to be my second part of the question.

IV: I was to going complete about the marching. They gave us brand-new leather boots, high-top boots, that had never been worked over. … When you're marching up and down in the cold with … boots that are not being very cooperative, it was not easy.

FA: It must have been unbearable.

IV: Well, not unbearable, but it was not fun. Anyway, that basic training was in Atlantic City.

FA: What was your relationship with the ranking officials?

SH: Your drill sergeants.

IV: "Mind your own business." "Keep quiet." "Don't give them any lip." [I was] scared silly, because, you know, they were a lot rougher in those days than they are today. Because there's so much pressure now about how you have to … treat them better and [have] better management, but in those days it was rough. Nobody picked on me, and I didn't pick on them.

FA: Was the discipline strict?

IV: Oh, yes. Yes, it was strict discipline. … You just said, "Yes, and, no." That's all. … You did what you're told.

SH: In Atlantic City, what hotel were you in?

IV: I think it was called the Florida. But, for the KP, it could have been pushed in any one of [a lot of] different hotels. … It was an interesting experience. I'd never been to Atlantic City before.

SH: What were they training you for in Signal Corps basic training?

IV: Well, it wasn't Signal Corps. It was just basic training, mostly close order drill, marching. So, I think the idea is to try to get you to react as a group; to march as group, to move as a group, and to take orders as a group.

FA: What kind of equipment did you use during your training?

IV: I don't know what kind of equipment you would talk about. We carried rifles for marching, but I never shot one, not in basic training. I did afterwards, but not then.

SH: How long was your training in Atlantic City?

IV: It couldn't have been more than a couple of months. It was a fairly short training.

SH: Had you ever been to Atlantic City before?

IV: No, no, and it's very different today than it was then. Then, it was a whole bunch of dumpy hotels. But the boardwalk was the same. But it was all closed. There were no civilians there.

SH: Had you ever done any other traveling before?

IV: [Not] other than Poland. That was it.

SH: From Atlantic City, where do you go?

IV: Okay, I'm trying to remember. I think the next [place], where I got shipped to, was Camp Murphy, in Florida, which is now Jonathan Dickenson State Park, right outside of Stewart,

Florida. … It was a radar training station. … Nobody had ever heard of radar before. We couldn't write home and tell what we were doing, in radar and doing in school. … I was trained there to operate a radar set.

SH: How many people were in this school?

IV: I don't know, because there were a number of … people coming on, coming and going. I really don't recall. I do remember writing home, and also sending a picture of me on the beach in February. … They had never heard of Florida before. That was great. [laughter]

SH: Were the people from all over, or was it predominantly East Coast people that were there?

IV: All over. I think it was pretty much all over. There may have been something in between Camp Murphy and Atlantic City, but I can't remember exactly what it was.

SH: Were the people that were part of this class college educated?

IV: Not many, [they were] mostly high school graduates. … [A] high school degree was much more important in those days than it is today. It was considered quite an honorable degree to get, because so many never even completed high school. … No, college was not that important.

SH: Just to back up a bit, when you graduated from Stuyvesant, was there any thought of going on to college?

IV: It was a thought, but I didn't know anything better. My father didn't know anything better. He made a recommendation, because he was always into agriculture, to make an application to the agricultural school in Cornell. Well, it turned out Cornell didn't want kids from New York City, so, I didn't get in there, and then, that was it. [I] didn't even think of City College or any of the others. [I] just let it go.

FA: But you were thinking about going to Cornell originally?

IV: Well, my father said that was what I should do. So, I did it, but, I mean, I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know what would happen, but, whether fortunately or unfortunately, they turned me down.

SH: What was it like for a kid from New York, who had never done much traveling, to be on the beaches of Florida?

IV: Oh, Florida was amazing, amazing.

SH: What did you do?

IV: Went to school. In the afternoon, we were allowed to take a boat over across to the beach, because they had the Inland Waterway you had to cross over. It was somebody's mansion, [and] somebody's boat, and they had rented it, I guess. … It was great. I enjoyed it. It was very, very

nice. There had to be something in between, [Camp Murphy and Atlantic City], because, as I recall, Camp Murphy was a little bit later in the year. I'm not sure now. I'm vague on my dates.

SH: After Camp Murphy, were you assigned to another school?

IV: No. I was assigned to a place called Neah Bay, N-E-A-H Bay. If you look at the United States map, the mainland, it's the most northwestern part of the United States. It crossed the Straits of Juan de Fuca, from British Columbia. … It's the point where the Pacific and the Straits come together. It's an Indian Reservation. … They had a radar unit there. … We used to sit there, and watch the blips, and report to Seattle. Talking about the same things, we worked seven days a week, but, I think, once every three weeks we were given some time off, more than a weekend. … They trucked us into Port Angeles, which is in the State of Washington, about seventy miles away, from there, you took a ferry over to Victoria, British Columbia. That was a beautiful city.

FA: I've been to Victoria actually. Ten years ago, my family and I went there.

IV: I was very impressed with it, very impressed. It was very British. They even drove on the left side of the road. I was very impressed with the place. … I visited Victoria about three or four times.

FA: What did you do in your spare time? Did you travel?

IV: The only thing I did was I went to Victoria.

SH: What kind of duty would you have? Were you on twelve-hour shifts?

IV: I don't recall what … it wouldn't have been twelve, because then you'd fall asleep at the equipment. You're supposed to be alert to see the blips on the screen. I'd never heard of a blip before, and I never seen a Cathode Ray Tube before, but …

SH: You hadn't been trained in that in Florida?

IV: Yes, that was what I was trained in, so, the blips were very impressive to me. … You had to watch for those, and see any planes that were approaching.

SH: How many men were with you on this station?

IV: I don't recall, but it was a very small group. It couldn't have been too many, because, we only had the one unit; the one, the receiving room, and the antenna, that revolving antenna. I do recall one other thing, in terms of travel. The main headquarters was in Seattle. … I was in Seattle and I had some time off, so, I hitchhiked to Vancouver, British Columbia. … That was quite nice. Except, coming back, it was four in the morning and I was out there deserted. It was wartime, so there weren't very many people on the road. … Along comes this truck with a lady, probably in her thirties, pretty well built, you know, strong; and she said, "Hop in." … I was

wondering, "Hey, lady, why are you taking me?" but I didn't argue the point. She took me all the way to Seattle. I thought it was very nice. I appreciated that.

SH: To back up a little bit, what kind of transportation did you take from Florida to Seattle?

IV: All train. Everything was trains.

SH: How long did it take you, and did you travel as a unit?

IV: No, I traveled by myself, from what I recall. … If I recall correctly, I went first to a Signal Corps base in Missouri called Camp Crowder. … I think, from there, I went up to the State of Washington. I was transferred out of there.

SH: Did you know when you left Florida that you were going to Washington State?

IV: No. I think I went to Crowder. I had an interesting anecdote about that. I'm sitting with a bunch of guys, and we're watching … they were training people to climb poles, the Signal Corps, to climb poles. … These guys [I was with] were laughing, because they said, you know, "We worked in civilian life as pole climbers. We're not doing that. They're training them. … That's stupid." That's their … reaction. That's the Army. So, I recall that one. [laughter]

SH: So, there were actually people in this unit who had some experience in this field. They weren't all brand-new like you.

IV: Well, they claimed, they had been pole climbers, and they didn't understand why the Signal Corps didn't put them into pole climbing. …

SH: You were one of the people learning to pole climb?

IV: No, no. I was just waiting to be sent somewhere, reassigned.

SH: So, from Crowder, did you travel as a unit or were you still traveling alone?

IV: I believe I was alone. Yes, [we] didn't travel as a unit.

SH: Did you have any sense of how long this base had been set up?

IV: Crowder was …

SH: I meant the one in Washington State. I apologize

IV: That was after Pearl Harbor, obviously. I mean, it was not really a base. It was just a piece of land that they took from the Indians. … It was right on the waterfront, and they just carved it out. I would assume they had them all the way, up and down the Pacific coast.

SH: What kind of housing did you have there?

IV: I don't recall. … It was military, but I don't recall what it was. I think it was open barracks.

FA: Were the living conditions bearable?

IV: I never had any problem. The food was bearable. The living conditions were bearable.

SH: No more KP?

IV: No, no. The only thing [was] that once I got overseas, we were living out of cans. … The only food I liked out of cans was the spaghetti and meatballs. The rest of it was pretty bad. They had C-rations, which I don't recommend.

FA: Was there a lot of camaraderie with the other soldiers?

IV: Typical, you know, a bunch of guys. Nobody was too happy with being there. Everybody wanted to go home and nobody was … [Everybody was] talking about women, that's about it; … Talk was cheap, so …

FA: Were the other soldiers who enlisted the same age as you, or was it a mixture of young and old?

IV: I think I was a little bit younger than most, because I went in before the twenty-one year old cut-off entry level [for enlistment]. They were all in their twenties. There were very, very few people over twenty-nine.

SH: Were there any who were married?

IV: There probably were. I don't recall any, but there probably were some. Some married people were drafted if they didn't have families.

SH: In what year and how long were you stationed in Washington State?

IV: The years become merged. I went over in 1944. … I do remember [that] for some reason I was in Fresno, California at a replacement depot. … I was given orders to report to Fort Lawton, Washington, which is [in] Seattle, where you ship out. There, I think I went with the … Let's put it this way, I do recall that I went AWOL in Portland, Oregon for two days. … I was given orders, told to report to Washington. … I was with another guy, and he says, "Why don't we take off for a couple days?" … I said, "We have to report" He says, "They'll wait." So, we spent two days, I think. We worked for a couple of days in some vegetable market, and had a good time. … [We] reported to Fort Lawton. … Whoever checked us, … said, "What took you so long?" "Well, the train was late so …" "Okay," and I think I was, then, tied in with a Signal Corps unit, which was going overseas.

SH: So, they sent you from Washington State then down to Fresno?

IV: And then back up to Washington.

SH: When you were in Fresno, you were just waiting for orders?

IV: Yes, yes. [In] Camp Pinedale.

SH: Were you allowed off base at all?

IV: No, no, which is going to lead me to another story [about] when I'm going overseas, but …

SH: Go ahead.

IV: You want to start it then? … Another guy from Brooklyn and I went AWOL in Seattle. You're not supposed to do that. I did a few of them. For instance, in Camp Murphy, this comes back, we had a three-mile pass. … This is [in] Stewart, Florida. … Miami is about eighty miles away, but somehow I ended up in Miami. … [When I was] going back, the MPs come through. … The guy looks at me. He says, "You're going back?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, it's all right." So, he let me off the hook on that. … As I said, in Seattle, before going overseas, this other guy and I went … [AWOL]. We came back. I mean, [it was] nothing malicious. It's just that we were (trapped?). [We] got on what they called a Liberty ship, which could be used either for cargo or for manpower. No women [on those ships] in those days. … These cots, they open up. It's a very large hold. … You can go four high in those cots. We were on that boat for forty-two days. [For] five days in Pearl Harbor … they wouldn't let us off the boat. They were afraid we wouldn't come back. … [We were] sitting right next to the … capsized *Oklahoma*. [We stayed] five days there, [and] seventeen days in Eniwetok. Now, I could understand why they wouldn't let us off in Pearl Harbor, because we might not come back. Eniwetok is a piece of sand, coral. … There was no place to go. We got off one day to go swimming, and that was it. … That was only for an afternoon. We sat there seventeen days. … Then, finally, we ended up in Tinian, which is immediately south of Saipan, and forty miles north of Guam.

SH: Do you remember when you left the States and headed to Hawaii?

IV: No, it all merges. I could check. No it's probably on my DD-4, DD records, but no. But anyway …

SH: What did you do for the forty-two days you were on this ship?

IV: You slept. You ate, and you slept. [There was] nothing to do, no recreation, nothing.

SH: Was the crew Navy?

IV: No, it was Merchant Marine. I came back on a Navy ship, went over [on a Merchant Marine ship]. … The food was box lunches, box lunches and C-rations.

SH: How did the Merchant Marines treat the soldiers?

IV: Nobody talked to each other. We ignored them; they ignored us. I also learned, very quickly, how not to get seasick, sleep on deck. Because, in the hold, there's no fresh air, and the mustiness and everything just … and then the boat is rolling. You got seasick in a hurry. So, I used to take my blanket and go up [on deck]. … Everybody else did too.

SH: Really? They let you do that?

IV: They didn't care. There was no place to go.

SH: You said you were part of the Signal Corps unit at this point. Who was your officer in charge?

IV: It was a Captain Porter, from Texas. … I remember when we marched out of Camp Pinedale, the band played, "Deep in the Heart of Texas," in honor of Captain Porter. He was a difficult person, I recall.

SH: Really?

IV: Yes.

FA: What was your relationship with him?

IV: I stayed out of his way. No, no; he only talked to his lieutenants; the lieutenants talked to the sergeants; the sergeants talked to us. Everything was … up the line.

SH: Was the sergeant regular cadre or was he also recently enlisted?

IV: I think most of them were recent. There weren't very many. I think the Army, prior to World War II, was very small. There weren't too many people there. So, it was …

SH: Do you remember your sergeant's name?

IV: No.

SH: Or your lieutenant?

IV: No, particularly, now that my memory is not as good as it used to be anyway.

SH: Did you ever suffer any anti-Semitism from any of the people that you were involved with in the military?

IV: No, I didn't advertise my Jewishness, and I never had any problem with it. I mean, they either didn't know or they didn't care. … I never ran into it.

FA: Did you meet any other officers that were also Jewish?

IV: Two of the lieutenants in the Signal Corps unit were Jewish. … One of them I'll never forget. I did a job on him, and I've been sorry ever since. I've been paying penance. We were on guard duty, because on Tinian, there were still Japanese hiding out in the hills. … They wanted to come in to grab food and clothing. So, we had to be on alert. … Here this idiot comes down the dark, very dark road, and he's whistling. It scared the heck out of me and the other guy I was with. … Finally, the other fellow says, "Let's fix him." … So, we waited until he'd gotten back. I got out and hollered, "Halt." I should have warned him. … I scared him. That's something I haven't forgotten. It was Lieutenant Schwartz

FA: Do you still keep in touch with Lieutenant Schwartz

IV: No, no. He was a lieutenant; I was a private.

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

FA: Side two, tape one.

IV: You asked me about OCS. No, I didn't [apply], but I did get admitted. I didn't apply for it. I was sent to ASTP, which was sending people to college. … When they graduated, they became second lieutenants. … I was sent to a place called Randolph Macon, which is about ten miles north of Richmond, Virginia.

SH: From where were you sent?

IV: I don't recall at what point it was, but I remember being sent there. For some reason, I got on the wrong side of the commander, I don't remember why or what, and I was thrown out. I find out later, he did me a tremendous favor, but he didn't realize it. … They eliminated a lot of ASTP, and took all those people and threw them into the Bulge. So, I could have ended up in the Battle of the Bulge, but I didn't.

FA: What is ASTP?

IV: The Army Specialized Training Program. … I think they were taking people with higher levels of IQ, … who are high school graduates, and sending them to college campuses where they were trained militarily, … similar to what OCS would have done, but then it got abolished.

FA: Why did it get abolished?

IV: I don't know, because I left before it was abolished, but I heard that they all got closed down.

FA: Did you benefit greatly from ASTP?

IV: Not particularly. I wasn't there that long. Something went wrong. I don't recall the [reason] why, but for some reason I got transferred out.

FA: Where were you transferred?

IV: Well, you see, this all begins to merge in terms of where I was. Whether I went to Camp Crowder from there, I don't know.

SH: You talked about seeing one of the ships turtled when you were in Pearl Harbor. What other signs of destruction did you see while you were there?

IV: That was the only thing I saw, was the upside down hull of the Oklahoma, just floating there. I didn't see anything [else]. I think by that time, most everything else had been cleared up.

SH: Did you travel in convoy from the West Coast to Hawaii?

IV: Traveled in convoy to Hawaii, another convoy to Tinian, and I think that the reason we waited seventeen days in Eniwetok was to pick up another convoy.

SH: Was there any talk about any sightings of Japanese submarines?

IV: There were none. We were escorted by destroyer escorts, which are smaller than regular destroyers. … We had no problems.

SH: No air raids?

IV: No, no. The first day on Tinian, we had an air raid. Whether there was an actual plane I don't know, it was at night. … They told us, of all things, to climb under the trucks. In hindsight, that was the worst place to be, because if the truck got hit, the whole gasoline [tank would] blow up, [and] would eliminate all of us. … We hid under the trucks. Tinian was all coral, and there was no soil. You couldn't dig. So that we had to … excavate by blowing coral, in order to build barracks in there. … We had dynamite that went off that killed a couple of people, because they were keeping the dynamite [in the sun]. [It] just got too hot in the sun.

SH: Really?

IV: Yes. You want to know why we were there and what we were doing. We were a Signal Corps unit assigned to the Air Corps. Tinian was a major base for the B-29s. The two atomic bombers, that one that hit Hiroshima and one that hit Nagasaki, were both based there where we were based. The three islands, Guam had a tremendous number of B-29s, Tinian had a bunch of B-29s, and Saipan had it. These were the three bases for the 529th Air Group, whatever it was called. … We were supplying something that was very, very new; radiotelephone, so, they could intercommunicate among the three islands. We were using FM radio. … Now, nobody uses wire anymore, everything is wireless. But this was a great novelty, wireless telephone communication, both for voice and teletype.

SH: Oh, really?

IV: Yes.

SH: And what were your duties specifically?

IV: I was, supposedly, a radio repairman. I didn't know too much about repairing radio, still don't know, but I was a radio repairman.

SH: What would be a normal day for you?

IV: I think we had three shifts, to be on duty, and just to make sure in case anything went wrong. The easiest way to repair was to replace it with another unit, so, I would hook up the other unit.

SH: Were you well supplied on Tinian?

IV: Yes, oh, yes, yes, well supplied. Again, no hot food, but we did get the cans [K-rations.]

SH: What did the base consist of? You talked about having to blow; did you help build this base?

IV: No, it was put up by the SeaBees. [U.S. Navy Construction Battalions, or CBs] Oh, that brings me to another point. I had no religion. I was not religious, but I went to services one Friday night. There were a bunch of SeaBees there and we got buddy-buddy and they said, "Come on down, we get steak every day." So, I went down for dinner a couple of times. It was nice. I never told the boys in the barracks what I was doing. I didn't think they'd appreciate it. The Navy treated their people much better. (Shipback?) was a navy ship. We ate very well. The Navy treated the Seabees very well. … They took good care of them. The Army wasn't as good to their people.

FA: The camaraderie was very strong?

IV: Yes, it was. It was just … I'm talking about the way the Navy, for morale purposes, really fed their people much better and clothed them better.

SH: What facilities were there at Tinian? Camp barracks?

IV: They had individual barracks built out of plywood with mesh windows, so you let air in. There was no air conditioning in those days. So, they had to get in air in there. That was it. There was no camp to go to. I think we had USO. There must have been some place where we went for entertainment.

SH: Do you remember who you saw?

IV: No stars, but a lot of theater troupes that came through, that stuff, acting troupes, singing, dancing. That's the only time we saw females. I mean, there was no women. There were some WACs, but there were none stationed there overseas. Almost all the WACs were back in the United States.

SH: What kinds of medical facilities were there on a base like that?

IV: Rudimentary. The basic treatment for any complaint was a PC pill, an aspirin pill. You had a headache, or you had a broken toe, aspirin pills. That was all.

SH: Were all the branches of the military represented there, on Tinian?

IV: No, just the SeaBees for the Navy. … The Air Corps was then Army, so, everything was Army.

SH: Was there any differentiation between the ground crews and the Signal Corps?

IV: We were not supposed to be up there. Particularly, not with those people who were with the atomic bomb and bombers.

SH: Did you understand that it was a secret unit?

IV: No question, it was a secret unit. We didn't know what the secret was. … So, one day, being very inquisitive, this other fellow and I were in a jeep. We were up at the airfield and he said, "Let's take a look, nobody is standing around." So, we went and looked. It was the same type of B-29 as all the others, except that all the gun turrets were removed. The gun turrets jutted out of the sides. So, it gave it more aerodynamics by removing those jutted out areas. So all the machine guns were gone, but other than that, it was the same plane. So, we couldn't figure out what it was.

SH: When did that plane come in?

IV: I have no idea. This was a separate unit. They had their own MPs. They had their own mess hall. … They were not part of the regular B-29 groups. They were a separate part. Everybody knew they were there, but we didn't know what they were doing. The only other … There was one fighting group there, it was … The Army, during World War II, was still discriminated. They had an infantry regiment. It was all black. … They were chasing the Japanese up in the hills. The Japanese were not fighting. They were just hiding, but they were trying to flush them out. … We … kept separate and apart from them.

SH: Really?

IV: Not deliberately. Just, they had their own base. We were in another place. Ours was concerned with the airfield. … They had their own duties.

SH: When the USO troupes came in, were they allowed to attend?

IV: I don't remember seeing them. I don't know. I don't know if it was deliberate. I really don't recall. I just don't recall seeing them.

SH: Did the USO perform for the Navy and Air Cops separately?

IV: I don't know. … It may have been that there were black troops there, too, because I don't think they would have been jumping from one to the other. They came one day, and they left. They would go to the next island, or wherever.

SH: To back up a little bit, when you came into the harbor, how did you disembark? How did you get your equipment in?

IV: They dropped a rope ladder, probably about five to six people wide, from the top of the deck, which was at least five stories up, down to the water. … They said, "Climb." … You climbed down, and there was a Duck there, you know, these Ducks, like up in Boston. [Editor's note: Also DUKW, these were small cargo ships that could also run on land, designed to carry equipment and men to shore.] [We] climbed in, [and it] took us up on land. We went in with full field pack and carbines, six months after the invasion. [I] never figured that one out. Nobody explained it, but we went in with full field packs and carbines. But we had carbines anyway, … for self-protection.

SH: One thing that you had mentioned earlier in the interview was that even though you were marching with a rifle in Atlantic City, you did not shoot it. Where did you take your training and learn how to operate weapons?

IV: It wasn't there. I don't know. I don't recall shooting the Garand rifle. The carbine I shot quite a number of times. … The submachine gun I shot a number of times, but I never …

SH: Where were you trained to do that?

IV: What?

SH: Do you remember where you were trained to do that?

IV: No, no, I don't [remember where], but I do remember being on the firing ranges and shooting, but it was always a carbine, always the … The rifle, I think, I only shot once or twice. … I was very thankful, because the rifle kicked. It made a bang here. The carbine was a sweet little weapon. It didn't kick. … It was very accurate. … It didn't have the distance that the Garand had, but for my purposes, it was fine.

SH: Did you carry a .45?

IV: No, the carbine. I carried a .45 in Korea, but I carried a carbine, that what was issued, that's what we carried.

SH: Because you're with the special unit, did you have higher security around where you were, both in Washington State and in Tinian?

IV: Very little. I think the fact that we were so isolated, being on this Indian Reservation, … it would have been picked up if anybody came anywhere near. Because there was nowhere to live, any cars coming in the area would have been noticed, so, very little.

SH: Did you have a special patch or were you not allowed to wear anything that designated you as part of this unit?

IV: … Yes, I think I had some sort of a Signal Corps patch. That was allowed.

SH: What did you do for recreation on Tinian?

IV: Not much, reading, I think we had some movies, and that was it. Talking about movies, they showed a lot of ugly movies in Atlantic City, particularly, with regard to venereal disease. They showed very graphic, specific movies, and everybody slept. That's how much impression that made.

FA: Why did they show you these movies?

IV: The Army was very concerned about venereal disease, extremely concerned about it. They tried to drum it into you. They didn't say you shouldn't do it, but, "Be careful." … They gave out prophylactics. … Also, they had provisions, when you came back, for self-administration of whatever the medicines were there, the drugs, in order to prevent any disease. Even if you had contact with it, just was the intent to kill it.

SH: At Tinian were there any natives left? You talked about the Japanese being in there.

IV: Yes, yes, Okinawans. … They were used for labor. Not by us, but in some areas they were being used.

SH: Who was using them?

IV: I don't know. I know they were used for labor purposes. We didn't. We didn't need them, but they were used. This had been a sugar cane plantation, that the Japanese had. … They had taken Okinawans, who were a lesser class of Japanese, I gather, and brought them over there.

SH: So, they were actually left over there.

IV: Yes, yes. … They didn't commit suicide.

SH: What about the other allied troops, did you see anyone from Australia or the British?

IV: That comes in Korea. I'll tell you about that one.

SH: Do you know how long you were stationed on Tinian?

IV: Probably about fourteen months. I'm not quite sure, probably about fourteen months. I went over in '44 and I got out in early '46.

SH: How did you keep up with what was going on in Europe?

IV: Radio San Francisco. That gave us everything, including the dropping of the atomic bomb. Even though it came from where we were, we found out about it through Radio San Francisco, the Army radio.

SH: Was there a base newspaper?

IV: I don't recall one.

SH: *Stars and Stripes*?

IV: *Stars and Stripes* was being distributed, but we didn't get much of it. Here in the States, yes, and some of the other areas, yes, but we didn't see too much of it.

FA: Radio San Francisco was the media you relied on.

IV: Yes, it was the only radio. … That's where we got all our news, all our entertainment.

SH: Was Tokyo Rose a reality, or just a rumor?

IV: I didn't hear her. I think she was a reality, but I didn't hear her. I don't think she made much impression from what I gathered but …

SH: Did you see any infantry?

IV: The only infantry, and I didn't see them, were the black people, who were up there trying to flush out the remaining Japanese. I did have one other interesting experience. Waking up one morning, … Tinian has no natural harbors, you anchor off the island, and the whole ocean was covered with ships, a tremendous number of ships. … I couldn't figure what it was. That was the staging point for Iwo Jima. … [I] found out about that through Radio San Francisco. [There were] a huge number of warships. … If I had had a camera, I would have loved to take a picture, just because it was so impressive, the way it covered the entire expanse of ocean.

SH: Did any ships ever have to come into Tinian, even though it didn't have a natural harbor?

IV: There must have, because food was coming in. The ammunition was coming. A lot of things were coming in, none of those [were] being supplied by air. It was all by ship. They didn't have the long distance aircraft that we have today, or anything like that. So, yes, obviously, they were bringing it in, but we were not near the port area.

SH: Were the control aircraft, the seaplanes, and the PBYs there as well?

IV: None of that. Those were all navy, PBYs, no, this was strictly the B-29s. No fighter planes, nothing. … That was the reason they went in to Iwo Jima, so they would have a base for fighter planes, because it was halfway between Tinian and Tokyo.

SH: What about the news when President Roosevelt died? Was there any reaction?

IV: Very traumatic, very traumatic, a feeling of tremendous loss, [among] a lot of people. [It was] as if the world had collapsed. He was a figure, god-figure. Can I take a break for a minute?

[TAPE PAUSED]

IV: I don't recall whether there were one, or two fields on Tinian. I know there's one big one on Saipan. I remember that, because we went over to Saipan a couple of times.

SH: You did?

IV: Yes.

SH: You have to tell us about that.

IV: I hopped a ride on a DC-3, first time I'd ever been in the air. … We went over three miles to it, and I also did one to Guam, forty miles away. Those were the only flights I'd ever made, up until that point.

SH: You were just going along for the ride?

IV: Yes, I had time off and, "Do you mind if I hop on?" "Yeah, come on, we'll be back soon." "Okay, let's go."

SH: There was no problem with someone who had your training to get on a flight like that?

IV: Well, it was all, you know, very local and you couldn't go anywhere.

SH: Did they have anything on their bases that you were jealous of, that you didn't have on Tinian?

IV: No, no, pretty much. First of all, I didn't even look. I didn't care. We flew in, and we flew right back out again.

SH: I am amazed that all of these basics were supplied only by sea.

IV: It was all sea. We had a tremendous number of Liberty ships out there.

FA: How many ships exactly?

IV: I have no idea. But, as I said, they were convertible into either for transporting manpower, or for goods.

SH: A tremendous amount of fuel would have had to come in for the planes.

IV: I'm sure they had a number of tankers, yes.

SH: With no natural harbor, how did they off-load the tankers?

IV: That's a question I don't know the answer to. … Whether they used floating pipelines, or how they did it, I don't know. … Everything was offshore, probably about, at least a mile, maybe less, I don't know, but it was quite a bit offshore, because that DUKW ride was long, that was scary.

SH: Really?

IV: Well, going over the side that way was scary. It's a long way down.

SH: You had not been trained for that at all?

IV: Didn't even know what they were doing until [they said], "Okay, climb over."

FA: Did they expect you to know everything?

IV: You're supposed to know your job and that's about it.

SH: Who commanded the DUKWs?

IV: I think it was Army personnel.

SH: What kind of mail did you get from home? Were you writing?

IV: Yes, there was constant correspondence back and forth.

SH: Had your brother gone in the military by then?

IV: No, he never went in.

SH: Was there anyone special that you were writing to?

IV: He was five years younger than I am. By the time he would have been qualified, the war was over.

SH: You talked about the reaction to when Roosevelt died. What was the general consensus of Truman's ability to lead?

IV: It was sort of a shrugging of the shoulders. I mean nobody really knew him. Nobody knew anything about him. Nobody thought very highly of him at all. Nobody expected much out of him. It turned out he fooled a lot of people.

SH: What was the reaction when you heard that the war was over in Europe?

IV: Not much. Not much, we were still there. We really didn't care.

SH: Did anything change? Did you start seeing more supplies coming in?

IV: No, no, it was the same war. Incidentally, you mentioned the *Enola Gay*. I know it was on Tinian, but I never saw it. I wouldn't have known it to pick out anyway, because it wasn't mentioned by name until afterwards.

SH: Did you meet any of the pilots?

IV: No, we were kept pretty much separate and apart. We did our job, and had nothing to do with the crews or anything.

SH: What about the ground crews, did you eat with them?

IV: See, we were not right on the base. We were several miles away from the base, from the airfield itself. So, I mean, we were pretty much out in the sugarcane field all by ourselves.

SH: Did you have access to jeeps?

IV: We had jeeps, yes. I told you about that experience when we scared the heck out of Lieutenant Schwartz. … Another thing, where it scared us, there were two of us, and we were on this corner. We were sitting in the bushes; this clump, clump, clump [sound coming from] across the way, banging around, and all kinds of things. I mean, it's pitch black, there's no lights, or anything. It was not until the morning, and we heard that all night. We were there all night. It was wild pigs walking around. … The Japanese had had a lot of sheet metal roofs and the house had collapsed. … The pigs were just burrowing around. It was scary.

SH: The unknown.

IV: I mean, just sitting there like that.

FA: You must have been really scared.

IV: All in all, I had it very easy compared to a lot of other people. I have no complaints.

SH: You heard about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from Radio San Francisco. Did you have any concept of what an atomic bomb was?

IV: None at all. As a matter-of-fact, in hindsight, looking at it from history, I think that the firebombing that they did on Tokyo and all those other cities was as devastating as any one of the atomic bombs. [There was a] tremendous amount of damage, [and a] tremendous amount of deaths, but we had no concept of any of it. We didn't see any pictures. We didn't know what was going on. … We didn't fly with those planes.

SH: From Radio San Francisco, and as the war was winding down in Europe, what did you hear of the death camps?

IV: Nothing, no, that didn't filter through.

SH: How did you perceive the German, Italian, and Japanese enemies?

IV: … The Italians were never even perceived as an enemy, never even thought about them. … A lot of Italian people were in the US Army, [we] didn't care. The Japanese, [we were] very horrified by what they did at Pearl Harbor. There was no reason for it. I mean, this [was the] attitude, no reason for it. … This was real treachery, and we had to hurt them and hurt them badly. The Germans, well, I felt strongly about it, because I had lost people I had lived with. … It was a lot more difficult than when just dealing with numbers, [with] how many people died. These were people I knew, and had lived with, so, that was harder. But the attitude where we were in Tinian was [focused on] the Japanese; didn't even think much about the Germans. The problem was with the Japanese.

SH: Did you see them as human, or less than human?

IV: Animals. Considered them very badly. I mean, I'm just talking general. I'm not talking about my own personal reaction. Yes, tremendous hatred.

SH: After the bombs were dropped, and the days after that, were there rumors that the war would be ending?

IV: There were no rumors. Nobody knew, but the feeling was that those two atomic bombs were going to be of tremendous benefit to us in terms of going home. The feeling was that it wouldn't last much … beyond that.

SH: What about preparations prior to that for the invasion of Japan? Was that a rumor?

IV: No, no. Nobody really gave it much thought. We were not in the planning department. … We weren't really involved with it. We didn't even think much about the invasion of Iwo Jima although it was a tremendous benefit to the war effort, as far as the B-29s were concerned. … We didn't give it much thought.

SH: In these messages that were being transmitted, Teletype and voice, were they all in code? What did you hear?

IV: We didn't see it. We just did the maintenance of the lines, of the transmissions, but we didn't see the messages.

SH: What was the most difficult part of maintaining those lines?

IV: Not much, because, as I said, rather than trying to fix the unit, you just replaced it.

SH: How did weather impact your work?

IV: I'm sorry?

SH: Weather.

IV: Weather? [It was] beautiful. There was no snow, never had any snow. It's not the equator? It's not tropics, but it's beautiful country. I'd like to go back on a vacation some day.

SH: Did you have any typhoons to deal with?

IV: Never during our time. I understand there were typhoons, but we didn't get any, not while I was there.

FA: Were there occasional rains?

IV: Very little rain. There wasn't much rain either. I don't recall too much rain. … I understand, from history, that there was a major typhoon that the Navy was involved with, but we didn't experience it.

SH: When did you first know that you were going to be coming home?

IV: They started sending people back based upon longevity situation. … I think it was probably when the peace was signed. When the Emperor said, "We have to have peace." So, that's when we knew we were going to go home soon. There was no reason to be there anymore. They started moving the planes out.

FA: When you found out that you were going to be sent home, what was your feeling? Were you excited about going home?

IV: Elated.

FA: How did you feel about leaving the military life and trying to head back to civilian life?

IV: I had no problems, absolutely no problems converting. I still didn't know what I wanted to do, but, by now, there was a GI Bill. … I decided I wanted to go to college. I didn't know where, or how, or when, but I wanted to go.

SH: How did you find out about the GI Bill?

IV: There was just general talk about it, constantly. "This is what you're going to get when you get out." It wasn't [talked about] that much over there, but at the very end, yes, when we were being, you know, debriefed, or whatever you want to call it. That was very definitely emphasized.

SH: When you left Tinian, where did you go?

IV: To Long Beach, California.

SH: And it was just a straight shot, you didn't have to stop?

IV: With the US Navy, no convoy, fast trip. I don't remember how many days. I think it was seven, but I'm not sure. … With very good food.

FA: No canned food?

IV: No. The Navy does well.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

IV: No. It was just a Navy cargo ship.

SH: Where did you put in?

IV: Long Beach, California.

SH: Where did you go after that?

IV: Fort Dix.

SH: By train?

IV: By train.

SH: Did you call home?

IV: No, no, no. Wait a minute. This one may have been by plane. I think I went by DC-3 to the East Coast. I don't remember. I think it was I flew. Then, I went AWOL in Fort Dix.

SH: To come home?

IV: I called my parents. I said, "Come and get me."

SH: They did?

IV: They did it.

SH: Then what?

IV: I mean, it was just for the day. I wanted to get out of there legitimately.

FA: What was the reunion like with your family?

IV: Oh, it was very emotional.

FA: With all the letters that you sent each other?

IV: Very emotional, having me back.

FA: Have you kept in touch with the friends you made during your time in service?

IV: Never really followed through. Sort of, everybody went their own way. I didn't. Some people kept up their correspondence. Some have been organizations, but I didn't.

SH: Fort Dix is where they processed you out, and that's where you learned about the GI Bill?

IV: I think that's where they gave me the education on it, because they didn't let me out right away. We just, I was there for, probably, a week while I got orientation.

SH: Did anybody try to talk you into staying in the military?

IV: No.

SH: Did you stay in the reserves?

IV: Well, that's the next story.

SH: Okay, please tell us.

IV: Well, first of all, I didn't know where to apply. so, I applied to Rutgers, but, [for] Rutgers, it was too late. This was March of '46, or January of '46, somewhere in early '46. … They recommended I go up to a place called Utica College, which was a brand-new school in Utica, New York, … housed in an Army general hospital. I ended up in the Section 8 room, which is the psychiatric [ward]. I mean, thick walls, solid door; that was our room, another gentleman and I. However, then, I came to Rutgers in September of that year, '47, I guess.

SH: So you did one semester at Utica?

IV: I did one year there. … At that time, there was a problem. Mr. Stalin and Mr. Truman were getting nasty with each other, and I'm thinking, "If I have to go back, I'm not going back as a non-commissioned officer," because I was a corporal. So, the ROTC said, "We will never call

you," but, you know, and also, "We'll forego the first two years. All you have to do is the last two years." … I joined up.

SH: So, you went into advanced ROTC when you came to Rutgers.

IV: Yes, yes.

SH: When was this?

IV: Well that would have been, since I graduated in '50, it would have been September '48 to June of 1950.

SH: What were you studying?

IV: Political science.

FA: That's amazing; I'm a political science major as well.

IV: Good.

SH: When you were at Utica, what was your major, what were you focused on?

IV: It was just a first year, liberal arts courses. I don't recall. … I wasn't majoring in anything, but I knew I wanted to do political science.

SH: I want to go back and talk about when you first applied to Rutgers, but it was too late. Did you come to campus? What did you see? Who did you talk to?

IV: I don't recall. All that I recall is, I wouldn't have known about Utica [if] … somebody here at Rutgers hadn't told me about it, because I never heard of it. It was brand-new. It was just created for veterans. … It was two-year school.

SH: Was there a special department at Rutgers that dealt with returning veterans?

IV: Not that I'm aware of.

SH: Do you remember whom you spoke with?

IV: No.

SH: What did your parents think of you going off to school?

IV: It was a lot better than being in Tinian. So, at least I could come home. … I could call. … I could write.

SH: Was this part of …

IV: They were happy about me going to school.

SH: Did you take part in the 52/20 club, where you got paid twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks?

IV: I don't recall. The name rings a bell, but I don't recall anything about it.

SH: Were all of the students at Utica veterans?

IV: Yes, yes.

SH: When you went to Rutgers, after that year, can you describe where you were housed?

IV: Ford Hall. One year … I couldn't get in. I … lived in Highland Park, in an apartment. … After that, it was Ford Hall the last two years.

FA: Did you and your roommate get along well?

IV: Oh, yes.

SH: Was he a veteran as well?

IV: No, no, (Vince Riley?), no, he was not.

SH: What was that like to be with someone who was not a veteran?

IV: Didn't make any difference. He did what he had to do. I did what I had to do. I remember doing one very, very nasty thing. I used to go up on the third floor, fill up paper bags of water, and throw them over toward the fraternity house. … Then, one time Mr. Pitt showed up. … Somebody threw some water in his direction. I remember that, too.

SH: Just somebody?

IV: Lawrence Pitt. It wasn't me. [laughter] I know better. I'd been trained to behave myself, by the Army.

SH: Do you remember who was in charge of the ROTC here?

IV: No.

SH: Were there any social activities for you, the military ball anything like that?

IV: No, not that I can recall, no.

SH: You were a very serious student, all the time?

IV: Well, I went out. I dated. I went to concerts. I remember the orchestra at the gymnasium. … All the symphonic orchestras came. I don't know where they play now, but they used to play at the gymnasium.

SH: Had you enjoyed classical music all your life, or was this your first exposure to it?

IV: No, I started to learn it there. I took music with Mr. (McKinney?) and started to appreciate classical music. Except, he misled me on one thing. He hated Tchaikovsky, and I thought Tchaikovsky was pretty good.

FA: My mother loves Tchaikovsky. Actually, both my parents loved Tchaikovsky.

IV: Well, you had to know Mr. McKinney, too. He was the professor in charge of music. I mean, he was the whole works, very impressive individual.

FA: The god of all music.

IV: Nice man. I mean, I'm not letting him down, but he was very rigid.

FA: Did you become part of the Jewish community at Rutgers? Did you have any sense of anti-Semitism while at Rutgers?

IV: I never felt that, no. I think I had relationships with all groups, all types of people. They didn't have a Hillel on the campus, at that time. So, I wasn't directed in anything, in terms of exclusively being in one area. No, I didn't have any problems that I'm aware of.

FA: Without Hillel, did you feel you were able to practice your religion?

IV: I'm not particularly religious. I never was particularly religious.

SH: Was chapel mandatory?

IV: No, absolutely not, no.

SH: It used to be mandatory.

IV: I know. I didn't go.

SH: Did you work on the *Targum*, or were you involved in any social clubs?

IV: No. I think I was involved in a history club. … There were a couple of other things, I don't recall exactly. I participated.

FA: Can you describe the history club? Did you have competitions or did you do research?

IV: Not very much. I honestly don't recall much of what I had done, or any of the History Club, or any of the other clubs.

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

IV: At this juncture, you know, it's a lot of years ago. [laughter] I don't know.

FA: Any particular one?

IV: Burke. Professor Burke I remember, yes. He impressed me, and a couple of others over in the history department, but I can't recall now.

SH: Dr. McCormick was one of your professors.

IV: Dr. McCormick, yes.

SH: When you were in college, how often did you go back to Freehold?

IV: Almost every weekend.

SH: Did you?

IV: Yes, if I didn't go, if I was up for a social on Saturday night, I went down on Sunday, took the bus. Then, my parents bought me a 1929 Pontiac with a rumble seat, so I could use that to go back and forth.

SH: Did having a car make you more popular on campus?

IV: No.

FA: At least college was more accessible.

IV: I did cause some aggravation for a Douglas young lady one time.

SH: Really?

IV: Took her out to, what was then, The Log Cabin on Highway 1. I don't know what it is now, but it was The Log Cabin. … She had to be back by twelve o'clock, or else. We got in the car, and it wouldn't start. She went bananas. I got her in late, and she wouldn't talk to me after that.

FA: Did you know Dean Metzger?

IV: I knew him, but I didn't have much of a relationship with him.

FA: Did you meet him occasionally?

IV: I knew him as member on campus, as a person on campus. … He was a person of note, but that's about all.

SH: Did the professors treat the veterans any differently?

IV: I don't think so. I didn't get that impression at all.

SH: Did the veterans congregate and talk at all?

IV: Didn't see much of that either. Nobody wanted to talk about their experiences. It was over, done with.

SH: What about the Corner Tavern?

IV: I'm not much of a drinker. [laughter] I was in there from time to time. I had a beer, occasionally, but that was about it.

SH: Did you work at all, or were you able to get by just fine with the GI Bill benefits?

IV: Just the GI Bill benefits. In the summertime, I worked on the farm.

SH: When did you decide to go on to school?

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

FA: This continues the interview with Mr. Irving Verosloff on October 21, 2005 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Francis Asprec and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SH: Please continue.

IV: Well, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school; that the BA degree in itself was not that emphatic. … I got admitted to Wisconsin and to Columbia. … My mother said, "Of course, you're going to Columbia." I said, "No, I've been to New York City. I'd like to see what Wisconsin looks like." So, I went to Wisconsin.

FA: Which political science field were you interested in studying?

IV: Mostly, American Government.

SH: Do you have any idea where that interest came from?

IV: I think my father built something into me, in terms of, he was interested in American affairs, world affairs. He was also interested in politics. … He was way out in left field with it, but that was interesting. … I appreciate what he did. He put it in my head.

FA: Was there a particular political science professor who inspired you?

IV: No, this is what I wanted to do before I had any political science professor interfere or intervene.

SH: Did anyone advise you towards Wisconsin from here?

IV: No, I just picked it. I don't know why. I just picked it, and I loved it. It was a beautiful setting, beautiful place to live. I do remember that the snows came in November. [I] didn't see the sidewalks until March. … Other than that, it was very, very nice. I also met my future wife there, so …

FA: Was she also a political science major?

IV: No, she was going to graduate school in social work. … She was from Colorado.

SH: You went to University of Wisconsin, the fall after your graduation from Rutgers.

IV: Right, except there was a problem. I was offered the opportunity to go to Fort Monmouth for that summer … now that I was a second lieutenant, having been commissioned, and Korea broke out. I'm at Fort Monmouth thinking, "I'm not going back to school," but they let me out in September, and I went to Wisconsin. … Very shortly [after that, I] met the lady who became my wife. … We were together all the time. … We decided that we would transfer to Chicago for the following year, the University of Chicago. If I was admitted, I would go to University of Chicago Law School, and she would continue and complete her social work at Chicago. … It was a better school than Wisconsin, and I got a telegram from Milwaukee, "We need you." So, she went to Chicago, and I went into the military.

SH: Did you marry prior to going?

IV: No. [We] put the marriage off for two years.

SH: Let's back up to Rutgers. Do you remember who your commencement speaker was?

IV: No. I do remember I was in uniform when I graduated.

SH: You were commissioned that morning before graduation.

IV: Yes, yes, and it was required as part of my graduation dress to be in uniform. … My parents were there and they were very thrilled.

SH: Then you went to Wisconsin. Where were you housed in Wisconsin?

IV: I found an apartment, a room in a house with a lady, who was very, very strict about no company, no nothing. I mean, I didn't find that out until I was in there. It was rather restrictive, but I spent the winter there.

SH: When did you decide to go to law school?

IV: Well, that was, I had a Professor (Thelman?), who was the leading light in the political science department, and he sat me down one day. … He said, "Look, take a look at all the catalogs. Take a look at the political science departments in all the catalogs, and all the good schools, and you'll find that there are very few people who were teaching political science. You might be better off with law school, because you can do a lot more with it." I said, "Fine. I'm happy to listen," because I didn't know, and I'd never thought of law school. I didn't know anything about law, but I was willing to give it a shot. So, I made that application to Chicago. What happened was that I [was] going into the service. She was moving to Chicago. … I was sent to Fort Devens in Massachusetts, not far from Cambridge. So, I drove into Cambridge to see a couple Rutgers classmates of mine who were attending the Harvard Law School. … They said, "Chicago is crazy. Try here." I said, "I can't get in here." They said, "Give it a try." So, I gave it a try. I got accepted. So, when I got out of the service, I went to Harvard Law School.

FA: When were you discharged?

IV: In 1953.

FA: You went to Harvard Law School right after that?

IV: … No, I was working in Chicago with the Ford Motor Company in the personnel department. They were making airplane engines out there, and she was already graduated. We were married, … this was February, and then I got the notice that I was accepted. … I had a very reluctant wife who didn't want to go. It took a lot of persuasion. She liked the fact that I was working. I had a good job with Ford Motor Company. Why would I want to go to law school? But I was more persuasive in those days, than I am today, so I got away with it.

SH: Who were the Rutgers classmates that talked you into applying?

IV: I don't even remember their names anymore, but a couple of people I remember visiting.

SH: What were you doing at Fort Devens?

IV: Fort Devens was a sort of a … processing area. I was stationed there for a while. … Oh, I know what I was doing there. They sent me to a "hush-hush" school at Fort Devens called the Army Security Agency, which was very funny when I was in Korea, because we were not allowed to write home what we were doing. I was an officer. I was censoring all the mail. I was not allowed to let anybody write what we were doing. There we were, sitting in the middle of a rice paddy with the tent flaps open, all the radios, all the antennas, the whole thing was loaded with antennas, we were listening to the Chinese radio, and intercepting and translating. … We didn't do the translations, but we … decrypted the encryptions. … I went to the school in Fort Devens. I've trained with the Army Security Agency, which I had never heard of before.

SH: Were you quite sure that you would be sent to Korea from there?

IV: I had no idea what they were going to do to me.

SH: When did you know that you made the right decision to become an officer as opposed to being an enlisted man?

IV: I was never sure … [of] the decision in the first place, because, as I said, I lost two years of the marriage. Well, you know, [we] went back to Seattle to get shipped out of there. We flew out of there. [We] landed in a place called Shemya, which is in the Aleutians. [It was] "hush-hush," nobody was supposed to know about it. [We] landed at the dark of night, and they were having a submarine scare. … Everybody was running around with guns, and that scared me more than anything. … They fed us and got us out of there fast. Next stop was Tokyo.

SH: Did you fly as a unit from Seattle?

IV: No, no, we were sending bodies, replacements. In Tokyo, I got assigned to Korea, to an existing unit.

SH: How long were you in Tokyo

IV: Just three or four days.

SH: So you were just stopping there.

IV: Yes.

SH: Did you get to look around Tokyo at all?

IV: A little bit, but it was kind of scary, in a way. You know, I didn't know the language. I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know what their feelings were toward us. I'm an American GI in uniform, and we weren't allowed to go in civvies, so it was a little worrisome.

SH: Were there any directions, such as to not go alone?

IV: No, nothing like that.

SH: So then they flew you from there to where?

IV: Seoul. … [They] assigned me to a unit that was stationed three miles north of Seoul, out in the rice paddies listening to the Chinese radio transmissions all in code, no voice. … We would send the raw data on to Tokyo for translation. … You wanted to know about did I meet any Australians? The front was about fifty or sixty miles from where we were stationed, maybe less, I don't know. Maybe forty miles, I really don't know. … The unit that was closest to us was the Marine Corps Division. Right next to it was a Commonwealth Division, consisting of New Zealanders, Canadians, and British, and a few others I don't know. … We always went up there. … The reason we went up there was, we had people from Formosa, now Taiwan, who were doing voice translations. That was part of our function. They were sitting up there listening to

the voice, but they had to be up close. They told me they kept hearing the other side saying, "Be careful. The enemy is listening." Then, they would talk away like there was no tomorrow. But we always went up there, because the Commonwealth had an arrangement with the Chinese, "You don't bother us, and we won't bother you." … The Marines were out killing each other … with the Chinese. … So we always went to the Commonwealth, because it was nice and peaceful there. [It] went right up to the front. There was a valley you could see across to where the Chinese were. … That was my experience with it because we got invited to tea, tea being drinks, and then they had football, soccer, afterwards. They didn't come there to fight. They came there to enjoy themselves. So, it was good.

SH: Were you ever in danger when you were in Korea?

IV: The only danger was by some people in the Commonwealth Division, because part of the road ran parallel to the front, and you had to go parallel. What we didn't know was that they have some .75 mm cannons on the other side. They used to wait for the Americans to shoot off their guns. … I got it in the ear. I got an earful. That was the only danger. No, never had any experience … It was a very static war. Nothing moved. I didn't get up to Panmunjom. [I] could have, I guess, because we had people up there too. … The Commonwealth and the Marines were about the same distance. It was much quieter with the Commonwealth.

SH: What was a typical day? What would you do?

IV: Well, I had a whole bunch of garbage jobs, since I was the lowest officer on the pole. I was morale officer, I was the mess officer, I was a few other odds and ends, I don't remember. All I remember is the mess people treated me very well. They fed me very nicely, just to keep me quiet, because, I suspect, they were selling some of the stuff to the Koreans.

SH: Really.

IV: Yes.

FA: So pretty much you did a variety of jobs?

IV: Yes.

FA: You weren't really assigned to a specific job as opposed to World War II.

IV: I didn't do any tactical stuff. It was more housekeeping.

SH: What does a morale officer do?

IV: Feed them literature, try to get them movies, you know, pump them up.

FA: More like a motivator or inspirational type of person?

SH: How many men were part of your crew?

IV: I don't know, a couple of hundred at most. It wasn't very big. We had a whole bunch of radios that we kept intercepting.

SH: The ones from Formosa, Taiwan, were they there on the base with you?

IV: No, they were all the way up with the frontline units, because in order to get any reception, you know, when the other side is using very low power radios, you had to be very close.

SH: Did you ever go into Seoul?

IV: Yes. Seoul was off limits for food, but it was wide open for everything else. [It was] very desolate, very bitter. It had been run over about five times between the Americans [going] in and out, and the Chinese and the … North Koreans coming through. The biggest problem … that we always worried about was not, "How to move up?" but, "How do we get out of here?" because there was only one bridge across the Han River, in case we had to move in a hurry. That was the major concern, 'How to get across with everybody else that would be doing the same thing?"

SH: Did you ever have to move out?

IV: No. It was all static. The line didn't move.

SH: You talked about the Commonwealth and the Marines. Were there any Air Force, any Air Corps, or any integrated troops?

IV: No, the air people would have been, and by now it was the Air Force, would have been behind us. They weren't ahead of us. [They were] way behind us.

SH: Truman had signed the order to integrate the troops. Did you see that taking place?

IV: Not much with my unit. It was pretty much, I believe it was all white, but I understand in the infantry there had been quite a bit of integration.

SH: How often did you get replacements in?

IV: Not very often. I think you had to put a certain amount time in before you'd be sent home. That happened to me, too. … My time came up, and I got sent home.

SH: So there was no delay?

IV: No.

SH: You had studied political science and you were now an officer. What did you think about that whole affair at that time?

IV: We didn't think much of it. We were there. We were told to be there. Mr. Truman must have had a reason for it, and that was it. Then, maybe I'm giving away my political affiliations when I say, you know, right now I can say the same thing about Truman that they're saying about Bush. Why were we there? I don't know. But we thought there was a reason then, there don't seem to be a reason now. I don't see any difference between our intervention in Iraq and his intervention in Korea. But I didn't condemn it then.

SH: What about any leaves? You were there for nearly two years.

IV: … I don't know how frequently we were given time off to go to Tokyo for R&R.

SH: Did you stay right on the base in Tokyo?

IV: Oh, no, no, [we went] anywhere we wanted to go.

SH: So, it was different from the first time you went into Tokyo?

IV: Could I tell a slight off color joke?

SH: You may.

IV: Not a joke, but an anecdote. Another fellow and I came in from Tokyo. … We were told about Atami, which was run by the US Air Force, and was a Japanese hotel with springs. … So, we went forty miles, took the train. The first thing we noticed, it was Friday, and all these older Japanese gentlemen with all these young Japanese ladies, they were secretaries, they were going off. That was their business, but I thought it was funny. [We] get to Atami, and we were enjoying [it]. … The warm springs pool was about this deep.

SH: About ten inches deep.

IV: Yes, and you just go in and … you just lay there. … The two of us were laying there with no clothes on, and a Japanese family came in, and they were all naked. … The grandmother spotted me, and she went like this. I looked away. I was embarrassed for her. … It just shook her up, Americans. If it had been Japanese, it wouldn't have bothered her, but then it hadn't been so long ago when we had been bombing them. So, we were all evil people, I guess. That's one of the things I've always remembered, how she … covered herself up. Anyway, where were we?

SH: You first said that when you were in Tokyo as an officer, you didn't want to go out alone. Now you're going back there on R&R every so often, and I wanted to know if you became more comfortable?

IV: … Also, we were told by the people at the headquarters in Tokyo, that these were places to go. I recall being told to go to one particular Japanese restaurant, which was all … white tile. … You sat down low, and then there was a platform, about this high. … On the other side was the chef, and he made one piece at a time. … You know, this was my first experience with Japanese

food and it was fantastic, the way he did it. But I drew the line at eel. I don't know why, but eel bothered me. … Everything else I went for, and I enjoyed. [laughter]

SH: Did you go to see Hiroshima or Nagasaki?

IV: No.

SH: Did you do any exploring out in the countryside?

IV: No. Other than Atami, we didn't go anywhere, except within Tokyo. [I] rode the subways in Tokyo.

FA: Was your experience like with the subways in Tokyo?

IV: Crowded, crowded, jammed, and, of course, not knowing where we were going didn't help matters either. … You know, it wasn't like I assume it is today, so many people now can speak English and some of the signs are in English. There wasn't anything like that. … I don't recall why we went on the subway, but we did a little bit of that.

SH: You talked about being the person in charge of censoring all the mail that went out. How often did you have to make the big cut or the blackout?

IV: I didn't do too much, I let most of it go. Most of it was innocuous anyway. [It] didn't bother me.

SH: Did you regret having not married before you left?

IV: Yes, yes. I mean, I was an old man when I got married. I was twenty-nine.

SH: Talk about how the war is progressing, and you're coming back, that part of your experiences.

IV: Well, [I] came back and went to Harvard Law School.

SH: Did you know you were going to Harvard?

IV: I didn't know. … I got married in February of 1953. … We lived in Chicago, and I got the job at the Ford Motor Company. … Then, I got the notice sometime around April.

SH: When did you apply to Harvard?

IV: I think before I left.

SH: Korea?

IV: Before I left … I think it was when I was in Fort Devins.

SH: Before you actually went to Korea.

IV: Yes. … I think, since I was there, I went in and I made the application in the admissions office.

SH: When you left Korea, was the war over?

IV: No. It went on for quite a while longer but …

SH: When you came back, where did you go?

IV: Well, I came back to Fort Dix, and then I went out to Chicago, and we made arrangements to be married.

SH: You said she was from Colorado. Did you go to Colorado for the wedding?

IV: I almost didn't make it. It was in February, and I'm flying out from Chicago. … There was a blizzard. … She got the wedding license without me signing it, but I got in.

SH: When you got out, did you stay in the reserves?

IV: I remained in the reserves until sometime, probably, during my first or second year at Harvard, when I got a nasty letter saying, "You haven't been reporting for weekends. You haven't been reporting for summers, and if you can't make it, resign." … I'm thinking, "Hey, one, summers I have to work to earn some money. Two, weekends I'm too busy studying," and I resigned. I would have made Vietnam. I definitely would have made Vietnam, because I know guys who went.

FA: It was from then on that you officially were discharged from the military service?

IV: Yes.

SH: When did your parents meet your wife-to-be?

IV: My mother is a shrewdy. She knew my future wife was living in Chicago. … She had a nephew in Chicago, whom she hadn't seen for many years, but, suddenly, had a great need to see. So I didn't even know about it. I forget where I was. Was I in Korea? I think so.

SH: Really?

IV: Yes, I think I was in Korea. She went out to visit, and took my father with her.

SH: How did she get a hold of your fiancée?

IV: I don't know how they arranged it, but she was good at that.

SH: Did they come to Colorado for the wedding?

IV: Oh yes. Oh yes. Yes.

SH: I'm assuming they traveled by train.

IV: And the nephew who they went out to visit was my best man at the wedding. No, they flew. Everybody flew by that time. [In] 1953, they were flying.

SH: Was that their first time in a plane?

IV: I think so, yes.

SH: What had her family done in the West? What were they doing in Colorado?

IV: Well, her father was born in Chugwater, Wyoming. It's still on the map. … Her mother was born in Denver. … Her father … was a distributor of novelties. You know, these cheap rings, cheap … flags and all. … He was a wholesale distributor. [He] covered the whole southwest area. [He] traveled through all of the Arizona and New Mexico territory. He used to bring home quite a bit of Indian jewelry. … That was his occupation.

SH: Was his family originally from Chugwater? Were they ranchers?

IV: No, they came out, they were immigrants, … I think there was some sort of an association in New York that was trying to put Jewish people on the land, so, his parents ended up in Chugwater, Wyoming on a ranch.

SH: And her mother's family?

IV: I don't know how they got there.

SH: Was she one of many children?

IV: No, just two others. There were three.

SH: Can you describe the wedding in 1953?

IV: The temple is right across the street from the house. It had snowed, but there were still some snow on the ground. We walked over to the temple, and we had the ceremony. … Then the reception was held in my mother-in-law's basement, [it was] catered, and that was it. Then we took off for a week in Colorado Springs for our honeymoon, and then [we] went back to Chicago. Then, I already talked about Ford Motor Company. [I] went to law school, graduated in 1956. During those two summers, one year I worked for the Ford Motor Company, on the assembly line. It's the hardest worked I have ever done. I was called the "skid man." He's the person that picks up the skids and puts them on the platform. Then they build the car on top of

it. The problem with skids is they were, I don't know, fifty or seventy-five pounds each, which wasn't bad, but they had just come out of the paint shop. … Most of the paint had been taken off, but there was still some, so they would stick. … That was the job. … If I didn't get those skids on in time, I held up the line, and everybody screamed, so. That was my job. The second time, I worked for Acme Foods. I used to go in at night and clean out the grinders with the meat for making the sausage. … Then I graduated in June of '56 and came east to New Jersey.

SH: But you're going to Harvard Law School?

IV: Yes. That was done in Massachusetts.

SH: Right, but then you would go back to Chicago in the summer to work?

IV: No, no no. … The Ford Motor Company was in Somerville, Massachusetts and the Acme was in Boston.

SH: Oh, all right, because you had at Ford Motor in Chicago …

IV: Yes. She continued to work in Boston. She got a job with the Red Cross. … Then, I think that she transferred to Jewish Family and Children's Service, or vice-versa, I'm not sure which. … So, she worked all during that time, and in the summers I worked. So, in June of '56, I came east, and I got a job with the Attorney General's office in New Jersey as a law clerk.

SH: Who was the Attorney General?

IV: I don't remember, but my preceptor was Dave Furman, who became a superior court judge after a while. … They had the nine-month requirement at that time. … Before you could even take the bar, you had to do a nine-month clerkship. Which, in effect, became twelve months before you could actually get admitted to practice. … I started work with the Attorney General. … I was the highest paid clerk in Trenton. I was getting twenty dollars a week and they couldn't give me a raise. That was it. … I was offered a job at a law firm in Newark. … I think it was fifty-eight dollars a week. The trouble was, then I had to pay for the train fare.

SH: Where were you living then?

IV: In Trenton. … She was working in Trenton, and we were living there, actually, Hamilton Township. … So, I did something that I've regretted ever since. I went to see the State Senator from Mercer County. … I said to him, "Senator, you and I are both graduates of the Harvard Law School. I have a problem." He says, "What's your problem?" I said, "I got a job up in Newark, but it's going to cost money." He said, "I'll send you a pass." So, I got a railroad pass. That finished that up. … Then at the end of the term, once I was admitted, I was no longer a law clerk. I got a job in New Brunswick, and I've been in New Brunswick ever since.

SH: Did you have your own firm or were you working for someone else?

IV: I worked for somebody for a long time. The problem was, he was the township attorney in South Brunswick, and the school board attorney in South Brunswick. That's why he needed me. … Then he lost the school board job, and then he lost the township attorney's job, and he didn't need me anymore. So, that's when I went out on my own.

FA: Just backtracking, when you studied at Harvard Law School, what field of law were you particularly interested in?

IV: General Law. I didn't have any specialty in mind. I didn't know anything about it. I'd never been inside a law office. All I knew is I wanted to be a lawyer; so general practice.

FA: I'm planning to go to law school.

IV: Well, what are you interested in? [TAPE PAUSED] I'll be very honest with you, I was scared silly. I was overwhelmed. I had never been in the company of such a great group of geniuses. … Frankly, I was just happy to get through the course. I didn't specialize. The first two years you didn't even have any opportunity to specialize. It was all set. I don't think that's the case anymore, but it was very rigid at the time. I didn't know what torts were. … I knew what a contract was, but I didn't know about the law of contracts.

FA: You encounter Socratic Method in law school. How did you feel about it?

IV: Scared the hell out of me.

FA: What was your experience with the Socratic Method?

IV: I used to try to creep under the table so he wouldn't find me. [laughter]

FA: Was there any particular law school professor at Harvard that you looked up to?

IV: See, one of the problems I had was, I really didn't know how to study. I wasn't prepared. Nobody told me how [to] … study. I didn't realize that if you take the table of contents in the book, that's a fantastic outline. It is a beautiful outline. I didn't realize what to do with it until I was out of law school. [laughter] I wasn't prepared for it.

SH: Did you ever think of running for office?

IV: I wouldn't like to run for office. I was involved politically, but never in terms of running for office. I held several jobs. I've been a township attorney. I've been a planning board attorney, zoning board attorney, board of health attorney. [I] never had school board. … I've been a municipal judge.

SH: Did your wife continue with her work with social work?

IV: Not when the children came. She decided to become a housewife.

SH: When did the children come along?

IV: Well, one came in '56 and one came '58.

SH: In '56 you were already in New Jersey.

IV: Yes, they were both born in Trenton. One lives in Kendall Park, and one lives in Bangor, Maine. The grandchildren are in Bangor, Maine. The one in Kendall Park is married, but has no children.

SH: How do you feel that your experiences in the military either prepared you or were to your detriment?

IV: Neither. Neither, it was an experience. I don't feel that … it contributed to my seeing the United States, and seeing some foreign areas, but, in terms of my development, I don't think it did, positive or negative.

SH: It didn't expand your horizon?

IV: No.

FA: Did joining the Army have an impact in your career life?

IV: I don't think so. I really don't think so, no, because whatever I learned in the military was never put into practice.

SH: You had such a specialized scientific background, militarily, it is amazing to me that you would make that switch to law school.

IV: It amazes me too.

SH: Do you find yourself still interested?

IV: I'm interested in the law, but I would not be interested in practicing anymore.

SH: I mean, as far as the engineering background that you came out with, did you ever pursue it?

IV: Just very generally, like, [I] read the articles in the papers about various problems engineering-wise.

SH: When you came back to Rutgers having had this experience with the radar, etc, and Rutgers did a lot of that technology here …

IV: But I was in political science. I wasn't in …

SH: That's what I wondered, did you ever think to go into that?

IV: No, no.

SH: You knew you wanted to go into law school.

IV: Well, no, no. You've opened my mind. My original thought was I had to be an atomic scientist, because, after all, this was the age of atomic science. … The first year I took calculus, and I no longer thought I wanted to do atomics. Calculus and I did not agree with each other. I mean trigonometry, and algebra I handled, but calculus was beyond me. So that ended that. … So what's left? Political Science.

FA: Did you ever encourage your sons to join the military or ROTC?

IV: No. I didn't discourage them, and I didn't encourage them. They didn't ask, and I got the impression they weren't at all interested.

FA: Did your sons ever ask you to tell them stories about your experiences?

IV: Oh, yes, yes. [They were] very much interested. They were interested in what I went through, but never expressed any interest in doing it themselves.

SH: With the grandparents out in Colorado, how often did you make that trek back and forth?

IV: Not terribly often, because my father-in-law used to come in, periodically, to New York for shows, and we'd meet with him there. My mother-in-law visited on occasion. Then, once my wife became ill, my mother-in-law was in quite frequently, to help out. Of the thirty-five years that we were married, she was seriously ill twenty-four. She went through a lot of turmoil.

SH: Do you have any other questions?

[TAPE PAUSED]

IV: Now, I realize what my parents went through when I kept hollering that I wanted to join and what they looked like the day they took me to the train. It looked like it was almost going to a funeral. What would happen if my kids asked me? I would have had serious problems. I don't know whether I would recommend or try to talk them out of it. It would have been a major problem if they had asked, but they never did.

FA: Your eldest son, Byron, went to law school. What law school did he go to and what type of law did he pursue?

IV: He went to the University of Denver. He got messed up with ETS. He got such a high grade that they didn't believe him. They thought he cheated. They made him take it over. He got the same grade. … By that time, it was too late to apply for any of the big schools. So, he went to the University of Denver, but there was something fortunate about it, because between

he and his brother, who ultimately went to the University of Colorado, they used to come in on Sunday and raid Grandpa's refrigerator so they did very well.

FA: Your son, Robert, went to medical school. What medical school did he go to and what field of medicine did he pursue?

IV: He went to the University in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. It was one of those things. … He was floundering, he didn't know what he wanted to do. [He] had been into a number of things. … He had a friend, who was a next-door neighbor of ours from Kendall Park, when we lived in Kendall Park, who went to medical school down there. … [He] called him up one day and said, "You ought to go" and Robert said, "What do I want medicine for?" He says, "Great, great, you ought to go." He says, "I can't speak Spanish, will they have an English school there?" … The light went on. He's been a 200% physician ever since.

FA: What type of physician is he?

IV: He's an internist. He's a licensed general internist.

FA: My parents are in the medical field. My mother is a nurse, and my father is a pediatrician.

IV: For many years, "Robert, what do you intend to do?" "I don't know." Then, once he got this, I mean, he eats, sleeps, and lives medicine. [He] works for the VA now. [He] worked for a hospital in Machias, Maine, which is way up near the Canadian border, right near Campobello Island. He got tired of all the day and night [hours], and the weekends, and the calls in the middle of the night. The VA offered him a job in Bangor, and he loves it.

FA: Do you still keep in touch with the officers in your unit?

IV: No, none. I have no contact at all.

FA: Overall, what could you say about your experience in military, I mean, in both World War II and Korean War?

IV: It was interesting. I think it was something I had to do. I felt, in terms of my background, that it's something,… I had to go, I could not be a draft dodger. … I saw a lot of things. Some of it wasn't so good. Some of it was very good. Saw some rather frightening poverty situations down South, particularly in the black areas. It was really scary. But, overall, I think it was a good experience.

SH: Being an enlisted man, and then going back to Korea as an officer, do you think you made a better officer because you had that experience as an enlisted man?

IV: Well, I had empathy for the enlisted men that I wouldn't have had if I'd come out of the academy, or out OCS, I guess. Although, [in] OCS [I] would have been an enlisted man first.

SH: Was there any kind of division between the officers who were not out of West Point as compared to those who had been to West Point?

IV: I didn't know any West Point [men]. We never met any West Points.

SH: Really?

IV: They were few and far between.

SH: What did you think of the commanding officers in Korea? You had very little contact with them as an enlisted man in World War II.

IV: Well, I didn't have much contact. We were an isolated unit. I had an overall opinion, which I still take. I never understood MacArthur's tactics. He divided the front into two parts, both of which reported to Tokyo, and nobody in the middle. … The Chinese just came right down the middle. It didn't make any sense to me.

SH: From that can I guess that you sided with Truman's assessment of the man?

IV: Oh, yes. The man was an egotist. I think in World War II, he did a brilliant tactical warfare. There, because he didn't have the men, the material, he did island hopping. He did it brilliantly, but I think that by Korea, he should have been retired.

SH: Well, I thank you again. If there is anything that we have forgotten to ask that you would like to put on tape, please do.

IV: Certainly. You're welcome to give me a call. We could talk about law school.

FA: Thank you. [laughter]

IV: I have a few opinions on it, and a few suggestions. Remember, I've been out of school since '56. Oh, do you want to know why I'm not practicing law anymore, or does it matter?

SH: Do you want to put it on tape? I'm more than happy to hear it.

IV: Are we on?

SH: We're on.

IV: One of these political jobs I got was being a commissioner on the Middlesex County Board of Taxation. It was the board members, the commissioners. … We would hear appeals on assessments. … I was there for a while. … I had taken some of the courses. … I got some of the certificates. … Then the job opened up as administrator, and I decided that I'd had enough of practicing law after forty-two years, and took a new position. I'm now the administrator. [I] have been there six years.

SH: Do you regret not practicing law?

IV: I don't miss it. I think for a general practitioner today, it is very, very difficult. I feel sorry for the women who are coming in. They're taking an awful beating. It's very dog-eat-dog. There are too many lawyers, and the competition is tremendously fierce. I guess the best word I could think of is what used to be a profession is now a business, [a] cutthroat business. … I think a lot of the lawyers would like to get out of it. … I had the opportunity to do so and did. But Francis talked about international law, [which] is a different story. [They're] different areas. It's not something that you would practice in New Brunswick. I'm not even sure you'd practice in Newark. I mean, it's all pretty much New York, and Washington, and Atlanta, and Boston.

SH: You had a lot of jobs that would have been definitely affected by who was in the governor's office.

IV: Yes.

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

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 4/29/07
Reviewed by Edwin Robinson 7/30/07
Reviewed by Irving Verosloff 4/2/10