

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD WHITSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on June 23rd, 2010 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Richard Whitson, Sandra Stewart Holyoak, and Rebecca Schwarz. Thank you so much for coming to Rutgers. Mr. Whitson, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Richard Whitson: I was born in Brooklyn, New York on August 1st, 1929.

SH: Let us begin by talking a little bit about your family history. Let us start with your father's family.

RW: My father was born in Brooklyn. Also, his family was from Brooklyn and Long Island. ... He had his own business making ice cream flavors, ... the Whitson Products Company in Brooklyn, New York. ... I used to work there in summers when I was at Rutgers. ... About the time of the Great Depression, he sold out to Borden's and had an office on Madison Avenue and had the Whitson Products Company in Brooklyn. ... My father started his company with a waiter who was a chemist, and they made ice cream flavors, and my father would peddle them up and down 3rd Avenue to mom and pop ice cream stores. ... Then, he was an executive with Borden's and would travel a lot around the country visiting the different Borden's offices. ... He loved business and was a very nice gentleman and a good father.

SH: How many brothers and sisters did he have?

RW: ... My father had one sister. His father died when he was, I think, fifteen years old. ... His father was thirty-seven when he died. ... My father had a tough time, he was a young man responsible for his mother and a sister. ... I don't know how far you want to get into it, but he had some kind of kidney problem, and he lost a kidney, and they wanted him to get out to the country for his health. ... He went up to along the Delaware River between Pennsylvania and New York, and he fell in love with the area. He loved fishing and the outdoors, and he ended up buying three hundred acres on the Pennsylvania side that an old gentleman owned and couldn't pay his taxes. ... My father said, "Well, I'll pay your taxes and you pay me back when you can," and eventually he ended up with the property and for years he had this property. We'd go up there and, you know, go fishing and so forth. ...

SH: That is a wonderful place for a kid to grow up in.

RW: He actually grew up in Brooklyn.

SH: How many siblings do you have?

RW: I have two sisters, one older and one younger, and they are both living in Atlanta.

SH: Can you please tell us about your mother's family and her background.

RW: It's interesting. ... Her father was Canadian and in the lumber business, and they moved to South Carolina around Myrtle Beach area because there was a certain type of cypress log they could get down there and they really started a community called Eddy Lake. ... There was absolutely nothing there at all, it was just like jungle, and they put a railroad in and they had a ...

sawmill. ... My mother and her, I think, five brothers and sisters were brought up there, so they were all really pretty very Southern. ... My grandfather lost an arm in the sawmill. He was doing some repairs, and somebody pulled a switch, and he lost his arm. The sawmill went under about the turn of the century, there were bad economic times, and I think they had a fire. ... Anyway, it went under. I was down there recently, two years ago. I was seeing what I could find, and I went to the Conway Historical Society, and they had a whole display on Eddy Lake. It was such a unique place and I couldn't get to it; it was the other side of the river, and it's now gone back to jungle again or something, but all the brothers and sisters, I think, ended up back North because my grandmother was from New York and she would get homesick for New York. ... They all ended up back north and that was when my mother met my father through mutual friends in Brooklyn, and they were married in New York ...

SH: I was wondering how they had met. I thought maybe it had been during school.

RW: No, they met through mutual friends in New York. ...

SH: Did either your mother or your father go to college?

RW: My father didn't. My father finished high school. Then, he had to go out and make a living but. My mother went to Skidmore, and she was an art major. She was an artist, a very good artist, and she worked as a commercial artist and ... I am an artist, too. I was that kind of a mix. At Rutgers, I was a business major, which my father felt was a good idea, and about halfway through I took some aptitude tests, they said, "You should go to art school." It was a little late then, but I ended up kind of doing a little both in advertising. I used both the creative skills and the business skills, and so it worked out pretty well.

SH: I saw in your yearbook that you had been a part of the sketch club.

RW: Oh, I was? I didn't know. [laughter] Funny, I don't remember that. ... When I was working, I did a lot of traveling, and I carried a sketch pad with me, and I do a lot of sketching of people in restaurants and airports and things like that, and I must have about twelve or fifteen little sketch books.

SH: Had your mother's family already moved back to New York when she went on to Skidmore?

RW: No, they were still in South Carolina and, but I think they, you know, probably purposely sent her to a Northern school. ... My younger sister went there also, yes.

SH: Skidmore was so well-known at that point for being a women's university.

RW: Yes.

SH: What were your earliest memories growing up in Brooklyn?

RW: ... I was pretty young when we were in Brooklyn. ... We moved when I was four or five to Glen Rock, New Jersey, and ... then moved to Ridgewood. So, I guess I was at first grade in Glen Rock, yes.

SH: Did your father commute into New York?

RW: Yes, to New York and Brooklyn

SH: Was your mother's family also living in New York at this point?

RW: No, ... her older sister lived in Connecticut, and she had two daughters, and we would vacation together a lot, and these two girls were almost like sisters to me. We were always very close, ... and we'd always vacation together. They'd come down to our house and vice versa and ... the two fathers liked each other, and so we'd frequently vacation together. ...

SH: That is good it worked out that way.

RW: Yes.

SH: Do you remember living in Glen Rock?

RW: Yes.

SH: Do any memories from Glen Rock especially stand out?

RW: When we first moved there, I remember we were playing on the jungle gym, and as a new kid I was getting a little bullying or something and so I got down off the jungle gym and just took off for home and the teacher running after me as fast as she could and she finally had to go back and call my mother and said, "He's on his way," you know, but I got over that. [laughter]

SH: How old were you when you moved to Ridgewood?

RW: ... It must have been the second grade, whatever that was.

SH: Eight?

RW: Yes, something like that, and I went to Harrison Public School, which is a fair way away and we would bicycle up there or something. ... I had lunch with some friends ... not too long ago, and one of them said, "The one thing I could remember about is you could do a back flip," and I had to stop and think a minute. [laughter] "I could?" ... I especially remember the sixth grade and they were doing an experiment. They took two of the kindergarten teachers, or first grade teachers, and gave them the sixth grade and this was supposed to be like a challenge. They had all these older kids or something and I remember one of them was very pretty. ... Sixth grade, I thought she was just great, [laughter] but they were very active and lively and had us doing little shows and things, so sixth grade kind of stood out. ...

SH: Did you have chores, after school jobs, or responsibilities?

RW: I don't remember too much of that. [laughter] No, I don't think I did have too many chores. That's terrible.

SH: You said your mother was an artist.

RW: Yes, she had worked as a commercial artist in New York, but then she always kept it up and she would run some art classes for children and I think we all picked it up kind of by osmosis you know, the red and green make brown and this is this and the proportions of the body are this, and without even thinking about it. ... Then, she was very active in the local art association and she was one of the founders of the Ridgewood Art Association.

SH: Did she travel into the city to work?

RW: No, no, she was a housewife.

SH: Were there organizations or churches that you were involved with as a young man?

RW: ... We were members of the Presbyterian Church, but none of the family was terribly religious and I am still not. ... My father traveled a lot so he didn't belong to any local clubs or anything like that. ...

SH: Were you involved in the YMCA?

RW: No, I was going to say I was in the Boy Scouts. I was very active in the Boy Scouts. I loved that, and I went off to camp. I think I just was turning twelve that summer and that's when you're supposed to be able to join the Boy Scouts. And, oh, I loved that camp. With two sisters, here's the thing with all these boys and no girls, and I thought that was wonderful, and so I kind of kept that up I think even through ... maybe the first year of college. ... I was waterfront director one year, and I was a camp bugler also. I can still play a pretty mean bugle, [laughter] and I'm called on to do that occasionally, but usually as a joke. I don't do taps. ... I don't do that for fun. ...

SH: Where was the Boy Scout camp?

RW: Camp Yaw Paw up in the Ramapo Mountains.

SH: Did you make the Life Eagle Scout?

RW: No, I didn't do that, and the friend who just called, he was an Eagle Scout or something. I enjoyed more the outdoor stuff. I wasn't much for getting merit badges. Cooking, bugling, and art were my two, three, merit badges, but also, we would take canoe trips down the Delaware and start at Narrowsburg and go down to the Water Gap ... and it would take about a week. I just loved that, and I did that maybe five times and led the last couple of ones down and that was the high point. I just loved that. ... Being a young boy during World War II, I think I was very

affected by what was going on. Everything was about the war, and I was very much into airplanes. ... My bedroom was up in the attic with sloping ceilings, and I painted them light blue, and I cut out airplane pictures from magazines. I had airplanes all over it. ... My younger sister used to say that I tortured her by making her go up and identify the airplanes or something, ... and we had all kinds of games we would play, and board game kind of things.

SH: Were these organized board games?

RW: Things I would make up--there would be naval games, and there would be airplane games and ... the other kids would come in and we'd play these games. ... Also, we'd be very influenced by the movies, you know, there would be something in them, so many war movies. ... Maybe not all kids were this affected by it, but I kind of was. ...

SH: What is your earliest memory of World War II?

RW: Well, I remember we were on a business trip with my father down in this area of New Jersey, and we were driving. He was visiting a dairy or something down here and, on the way, back, they announced Pearl Harbor was attacked, and we were in the car driving home. ...

SH: How did your father explain that to you?

RW: Well, I would have been twelve or something.

SH: Twelve, yes.

RW: Yes, something like that. Well, I don't know if he needed to especially, I think I kind of ... understood the importance of it, the impact of it, and so on. ... You got sort of used to it. The fellow across the street was in the Marines, the one up the street was in the submarines, and my best friend's uncle was in the 101st Airborne, and you sort of accepted that at a certain age you went in to the military. That was sort of what it was. So, I think when my time came, I just kind of accepted that as that's the way it's supposed to be, you know.

SH: What do you remember about your school, and what were some of the activities you did around World War II, such as collecting scrap metal?

RS: Yes, with scrap metal and ... they had a one big field that was a mutual victory farm. They assigned you a little plot and so forth and we kind of adjoined a brook, but the other side of the brook was a big athletic field, and they would do cadet training out there, ... marching them around, all this stuff, but I remember the gas rationing, you know.

SH: I wondered how that impacted your father's job as well, since he did so much traveling.

RW: Yes, he still traveled, but mostly by train in those days. ... He still traveled quite a bit.

SH: Did the war impact his business at all or did it change what they produced?

RW: No, not that I'm aware of particularly, or I may not have been that aware of what he was doing, you know.

SH: What you remember about the Great Depression, or what are some of the stories that you heard from the family about it?

RW: ... We had dinner yesterday with a friend of my wife's in Philadelphia and she served these itty bitty portions and this is the same as my mother would serve. My mother was so good at stretching out a meal. ... It's a wonder my father didn't starve to death, but she was very good about stretching things out and so forth and she would, you know, what you would consider a normal portion, "Oh, that's way too much," but I don't remember them, you know, pinching pennies or something. An older friend of mine said about the Depression, ... "Everybody was in at the same time," so everybody was in the same fix.

SH: The Great Depression did not affect your father's job?

RW: No, I think it might have if he kept his own company. If he had not sold out to Borden's, I think he could have had a problem. I think it was just before the Depression, but I may be wrong, but I do remember ... I think I was asking my older sister--she's better at remembering these things than I am--about, "Was it before the Depression? Do I have that right?" My younger sister said that she remembered ... my mother saying, oh, she was pregnant with my younger sister, and father woke her up in the night and said, "Oh, Alice, what are we going to do? Business is so terrible. ... How are we going to have another child?" He goes to sleep. My mother sat there with her eyes wide open. [laughter] "Good Lord, now what are we going to do?" But they seemed to do okay, managed the money well. We never had a whole lot of money. I didn't come to college with a car or anything like that. ...

SH: How diverse was the population of the community you grew up in?

RW: Not terribly diverse. There was a black section, and they went to high school, but it was a very small group. There were generally fairly affluent families.

SH: Did they attend the same school as you?

RW: Yes, public high school--Ridgewood High School.

SH: In high school, what were your interests?

RW: ... I hurt my knee when I was about fifteen, and it would seem to be an ailment that a lot of us had that the cartilages just growing together at that point, and a very susceptible injury. ... I wasn't all that heavy, but I played sandlot football, but because I injured my knee I didn't go out for football, and I kind of missed that. I think that's why I enjoyed lacrosse when I got to college, you know, but I wasn't active in too many activities. ... I don't remember any particular high points of that, you know.

SH: Where did your interest in art take you?

RW: I enjoyed the art things, the art classes, and so on, but I did more of that in the fraternity. I would do the big art things. I was kind of the one in the fraternity to do those things.

SH: I wanted to talk to you about your school, because I have noticed that yearbooks during the war often have a military slant to them.

RW: A twist to them or something? Yes, ... it was kind of in the air, you know.

SH: So, you did not work on the yearbooks.

RW: No.

SH: Were there any bond rallies that you attended in the town?

RW: Well, we had the Fourth of July parades that would come right by our house, and we'd all sit out there and watch that, and watch the fireworks and all that. They had a bandstand in the park and we'd all go over and enjoy that.

SH: Did you also notice the banners in the windows for people who had sons in the military?

RW: Yes, oh yes, that was quite prevalent, and the Gold Stars were the ones that got killed. ... They were all over.

SH: Did you have any friends that had lost family that were in the military that you wrote to?

RW: No, I don't think so, although ... the fellow was in the submarines up the street, he disappeared with the submarine, never heard from again. The fellow in the Marines had some kind of crack up in the Pacific and was home, and I never was quite sure what it was, battle fatigue or something. I remember my best friend, his uncle was in the 101st Airborne on D-Day. We were all very worried about him and so forth.

SH: Did you listen to the radio or the fireside chats?

RW: Oh, yes, my father would listen to Gabriel Heatter every night and he would read a newspaper in the morning, a newspaper in the afternoon, and then, listen to the news at night. ... See, at one point I had a big map and I'd keep track with pins on what's going on and all that. [Editor's Note: Gabriel Heatter was a radio commentator during World War II.]

SH: That is what I wanted to know, thank you.

RW: Yes, the other thing is that my father had some toy soldiers when he was a boy which would have been 1895 or something like that. So, he got me started on collecting toy soldiers and he ... had little British ones so ... when he traveled, especially when he went to Canada, he'd bring back a set, and we would go to FAO Schwarz in New York ... on birthdays and pay two dollars for a set. So, I still have all of those. [laughter]



SH: Do you really?

RW: I still have them all, and plus I've been adding to them. I must have a couple of thousand toy soldiers, and so the military interest kind of kept me in that.

SH: That is wonderful. Were there certain heroes you were aware of or people, whether they be in the Air Corps or the Army, that you found to be fascinating?

RW: Well, I was fascinated by flying, and ... identified all the airplanes and this and that. I remember, I forget what grade I was, it seemed like it was grammar school, ... and we were in the study hall and we were being very quiet. I hear these airplanes out, and I went to the window and saw and I said, "There they are--six of them." [laughter] You know, broke up the class. ... This will jump ahead a little bit, but the ROTC, this is jumping way too far ahead for you, the ROTC was, at Rutgers, mainly Air Force and a very small infantry group. ... I think I got in the infantry group because to become a flyer--I didn't want to become an Air Force administrative officer--but to be a flyer meant you'd have to stay in about five or six years and I was not ready to commit to that. So, that's kind of how I ended up in the infantry, but my interest was really in flying, and I still, you know, enjoy hearing about flying and studying it, you know.

SH: When you were in high school and were plotting and following the battles, were there certain battles that you still remember?

RW: Well, D-Day [June 6, 1944] was yes, very, you know, memorable.

SH: Did you pay attention to the North African campaign or the Italian campaign?

RW: Not as much as I remember. ... I think that they were kind of strange countries, I didn't know where half these places were, you know, and ... I'm trying to think of the Pacific. I was a very early reader, and I was kind of a voracious reader, and I started reading quite young and I remember reading *Guadalcanal Diary* (1942) when it first came out and I'm trying to think what else. ... I wasn't too much aware. It was a little hard to keep track of the Pacific too because you didn't know the names of the islands, and now they're famous, but at that time, you never heard of them, didn't know where they were. ...

SH: Do you feel that there was prevalence towards reporting on what was going on in Europe as opposed to the Pacific, or did you understand there was a China, Burma, and India theater?

RW: Yes, probably not very much, and I think probably because we're all Europeans, we all probably tended to follow the European War. ...

SH: Did you notice a difference in the coverage?

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: ... I must have been fourteen or fifteen, but we would ... make all these wooden guns, ... seemed like the movie was the *Commandos Strike at Dawn* (1942), going out on raids. ... At night, we'd blacken our faces and we'd go out and you know creep around with our guns and had to abort the raid when we ... ran into the man walking a dog or something, but it turned out to be that was very close to what I was doing in Korea.

SH: Is that not ironic?

RW: Yes, it was. I don't know if it's good training, or what, but that was close to what I ended up doing in Korea.

SH: Amazing. Were there air raid wardens during the war?

RW: Oh, yes, we had air raid wardens and blackouts and we had a searchlight detachment in town and, you know, the ladies would make cookies and take them down there. We'd go down there and see the thing, a great big searchlight, and there must have been an anti-aircraft battery around somewhere because one of my classmates Hunter Hogland got one of the shells and tried to take it apart unsuccessfully and lost some fingers and injured his legs or something like that.  
...

SH: Did this happen during the war?

RW: Yes, during the war. It was not a very smart thing to do. ... There was, you know, blackout wardens, and they'd reinforce that, and I think a lot of it was not because of air raids, it was because the light would give background for the submarines, the submarines would lay offshore, and the tankers would be silhouetted against these lights. ... A lot of it was keeping the lights down for that purpose.

SH: Was it reported in the paper when ships would be lost?

RW: No, I don't think it was. I think that would be like security stuff or something. ... I remember we would go to Long Island on vacations, and they would have Coast Guard men patrolling the beach. I think they did catch some Germans coming in by submarine on the Long Island beach. ... The Navy fighter planes, they would drop a dye marker out there then they would come by and strafe it, and so I climbed up on the roof and was sitting on the chimney watching the things go by and all of a sudden, I get these complaints, ... all the smoke was coming into the cottage! I had a wonderful view of these airplanes.

SH: When you would go on vacation, was this with your cousins?

RW: Yes, quite frequently, we'd go up to Maine or Connecticut, Cornfield Point in Blue Hill, Maine, and we'd go to Long Island a number of times.

SH: Did you notice any of their activities regarding the war?

RW: Connected to the war? No, not really, they were girls. [laughter]

SH: Were you part of the air raid wardens because you could identify all these different aircraft?

RW: No, but ... in woodshop we would make identification planes that I think the Navy used or something. ...

SH: That was part of how they supplied them.

RW: Yes, the woodworking shops in high school, we'd make all these planes.

SH: Was there a form of ROTC in your high school?

RW: No, there wasn't. ...

SH: In high school, was it assumed that you would be going to college?

RW: Yes, it was kind of split. There was trade school and college prep. Although, we kind of were mixed. I remember taking printing classes and iron casting and metal casting and this and that, but the assumption was I was going to go to college, yes.

SH: Did people assume the war was going to be over? Did you accept that you might have to go in to the military after high school?

RW: No, not really. ... I was about eighteen, seventeen when I graduated from high school so I didn't. The draft was still on. The draft stayed on through Korea.

SH: Was your family politically involved?

RW: Republican, and I remember my father and my uncle would joke about whatever went wrong with, you know, traffic jam or something, "Damn Roosevelt anyway," [laughter] but they weren't rabid Republicans like some of them are now. ...

SH: Did they talk about some of the New Deal programs like the WPA or did you see evidence of that in your community?

RW: Well, maybe on trips we'd see some of them, you know, people leaning on shovels, and that must be WPA or something. [Editor's Note: WPA stands for Works Progress Administration. It was later renamed Work Projects Administration and was a government employment program set up by President Roosevelt through the New Deal. It employed young men to work on public works projects such as the building of roads and parks.]

SH: When the war ended in Europe in April of 1945, where were you?

RW: I was in New York, I went to Times Square.

SH: Did you?

RW: On VE [Victory in Europe] Day, I was in Times Square. It kind of surprised me that at that age we would go in to New York that frequently, but at fourteen, fifteen, we'd go to New York by ourselves and not think anything of it.

SH: Did you really?

RW: I always loved New York, you know. After the war was over, the 82nd Airborne came down during a parade on Fifth Avenue and my friend whose uncle was in the 101st, we went in just to see this parade, and we went to a movie and somehow mistimed the whole thing and missed the parade. It was always a bitter disappointment that we missed the parade.

SH: Did you see the community change at all then when the war was over?

RW: No, I can't say I did, maybe, gas rationing going off or something, but I don't remember any dramatic changes.

SH: Let us talk about your decision to go to college and your choice.

RW: My grades weren't all that good and I think Mr. Foley the adviser in high school said, "I don't think that anybody is going to take you." So, I was happy when Rutgers did. [laughter]

SH: You said that you came in as a business administration major because of your father's encouragement.

RW: Yes, I didn't know really what I wanted to do. That's why I almost stayed in the Army partly for that reason because I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do.

SH: You graduated from high school in 1947.

RW: 1947, yes.

SH: Was Rutgers the only school that you applied to?

RW: You know, I don't remember.

SH: How did you know of Rutgers prior to coming here?

RW: ... I think my father talked about Antioch. You went to school, and then you worked for a while or something, and liked that idea, but then decided they were a little liberal and maybe let's see, I'm trying to think of any place else, but anyway was quite happy with Rutgers when I was accepted here.

SH: Did you and your father visit the campus at all before you made the decision?

RW: I don't think we did.

SH: Had you followed any Rutgers sports or anything?

RW: No, not particularly. I maybe was aware of Paul Robeson, but I don't think I did particularly.

SH: Can you talk about coming to Rutgers in 1947? You were coming in as an eighteen year old.

RW: Is that right? '29, yes, I guess I was eighteen, yes. ... The freshman class all stayed out at Raritan Arsenal in an Italian prisoner of war camp, and it really was a prisoner's camp. They had all the barbed wire around and machinegun towers at the corner and barracks. We stayed in a barracks with double deck bunks just like you would in the Army, and there was one little desk you were supposed to study at. ... I remember the recreation hall; the Italians had painted Walt Disney like figures on them. I remember the big bad wolf or something. ...

SH: Did you see the Italian prisoners?

RW: No, they were back in Italy by that time.

SH: Okay.

RW: We'd bussed in there from there to the campus. It wasn't all that bad. We had a good time and my closest friend was Doug Gosnell who was from Baltimore, and he was a lacrosse player and taught me how to play and all winter we would toss the ball back and forth out at the Raritan Arsenal and in the spring he and I were co-captains of the freshman team. An old hound dog showed up, and my family has always been animal lovers, and pretty soon, you know, the dog is following me around, and we called him Old "Queenie" for Old Queens. Larry Pitt, oh dear what's his name, he was young man who was a counselor, he also was one of the Lacrosse coaches, and he kept saying, "You got to get rid of that dog," and one day the dog disappeared. So, I think Larry Pitt, very nice man, but the dog disappeared, you know.

SH: Where were you fed? Was the dining hall right there?

RW: No, oh gosh, that's a good question. You know, I don't remember, maybe in that recreation hall they served food. They must have served breakfast out there. ... I really don't remember.

SH: Were there continuous busses all day long?

RW: I don't remember that either, we had to make a certain one, but we survived. It was all right. ... Dormitory space was very difficult to find. Even the fraternities ... didn't have single rooms. You had to share, and we all slept in a common dormitory. ...

SH: At Raritan Arsenal, were there facilities or did you have to do all your research and library work here at the Rutgers campus?

RW: Yes, there's nothing out there at all, we were mixed with the veterans. I think that was a good thing. We all had great respect for them. ... I remember one fellow had been a, you know, medic, cut his arm, and he sewed it back up together again, and I was very impressed with that. ... Two fraternity brothers were Navy flyers, and they were still in the Reserve, and they'd go down to the naval base down in Philadelphia. ... I forget what it's called.

SH: Willow Grove?

RW: Willow Grove, yes, and they flew Corsairs, which were the F4U with the gull wing, and they'd come up and they'd buzz the football fields at football games, and about the third time they did that, somebody took their number down, and then that never happened again. ... They were John Hoey and Jack Hoffmire. I thought they were very glamorous figures. ... In the fraternity, you know, the pledges would have to wake up the brothers in the morning or something, and there's one of them who'd been a Marine, and we learned that when he woke up, he woke up swinging. You'd poke at him and run away. [laughter]

SH: Really?

RW: Yes.

SH: Do you remember his name?

RW: John Milligan, but I think it was good for the young fellows to have to mix with these older fellows. We had great respect for them.

SH: At Raritan Arsenal, was it just freshmen?

RW: Yes.

SH: It was not until you got into the fraternity that you began to mix with veterans.

RW: No, they were at Raritan Arsenal as well. It seemed like my sophomore year, there was still a big space problem, and I didn't join the fraternity until my sophomore year. I didn't join the freshman year, and I rented a room nearby or something. I can't remember exactly where it was, and I was in there for maybe six months, and then, I was in one of the dorms across the street from the fraternity.

SH: Ford Hall?

RW: I think that sounds right. It was across the street from 66 College Avenue, and then, maybe I think by sophomore year I was there. Again, I had two older fellows who were roommates. It was one room. It was supposed to be for one person, and there were three of us sharing this one place.

SH: Do you remember your roommates' names?

RW: I don't remember them either. I remember one of them got married up in Bernardsville, and I don't remember either one of them, no.

SH: During your freshman year, out at Raritan arsenal, were you part of the initiation here at Rutgers? Did you have to wear dinks or do any of that? Were those practices still going on?

RW: No, I don't think so. If I had one, I don't remember wearing it. I don't think they could get the veterans to wear them, you know. [laughter]

SH: There were veterans who were freshmen.

RW: Yes, oh, yes.

SH: Were they housed with you at Raritan Arsenal?

RW: Yes.

SH: Is that true?

RW: Yes.

SH: Were there any incidents between the younger and the older students?

RW: I think it was all pretty positive, and I think if anything, they maybe took care of us a little better so.

SH: Okay.

RW: One time, not at Raritan, I roomed with two of the football players, and they were all kind of, tend to be more like big brothers, and it was like a positive relationship, you know.

SH: As a freshman was ROTC still mandatory?

RW: Yes, that's right.

SH: Earlier, you talked about going into Army ROTC. After the two years of mandatory ROTC, did you continue?

RW: Yes.

SH: The four years.

RW: Then, it was voluntary to do the next two years and no, I had no problem with that.

SH: Do any of the ROTC classes stand out in your memory?

RW: Yes, it was some fairly basic stuff, you know, taking apart the machine gun and so forth, and I remember the colonel, his name was Francis Deisher, an old small man. He was sort of my champion, and I remember he and a sergeant were arguing about taking a machine gun apart. But I think I caught his eye when there was a mortar as it leaves the tube and it has a certain mechanism, a safety thing, a clip flies off and the pressure does this and it sets this and I got kind of fascinated by it and being an artist or something I figured out how that happened. So, one day in class this colonel says, "Does anybody know how this thing works," and I said, "Oh, I do," and went up and drew the thing on the blackboard. He thought I was really something, [laughter] because I could draw, and I always was very interested in any of the military subjects. It was a very small class. I bet there was ten or twelve of us and the rest were all Air Force, and one was George Hodgkiss, a fraternity brother. He was one, Ron Roders was another one, and then in our junior year, you went six weeks to summer camp which was at Fort Meade, Maryland and to me this was like an extension of the Boy Scout camp with beer. We were there with two other schools, Clemson and Davis, I think, and it was really like basic training except we were cadets, and they had some airborne people there who were instructors and so on, but I enjoyed that. I was also the cadet captain of the Scarlet Rifles which was the predecessor to the Queen's Guards, and I have a photograph if you want any of those things. We did a parade on Memorial Day.

SH: Was that here in New Brunswick?

RW: Yes, I've got a picture of that.

SH: Can you explain what the Scarlet Rifles were and what you did?

RW: Well, this was the drill team, and we had white helmets with the big "R" on the front, and then another patch with an "R" in the front, and the red aiguillettes and white gloves and white spats and I guess white slings on the rifles, and I carried a saber and the guidon was a red thing with an Old Queens thing on it, and you're supposed to be precision drill, and so forth. I think the Queen's Guard which followed up, really were really very, very good, and they went to the Edinburgh Tattoo, and so on. We were not really that good, we were really kind of sloppy. [laughter] We could march, but we weren't like crisp and clean.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We were talking about off the record about Colonel Francis.

RW: Right, the colonel, yes. I just remember the first name [Francis Deisher] sticks in my mind because, you know, I remember him telling a story about after the war coming back with troops, trains full of veterans all were getting out and were a little unruly or something, and, "Here's little Francis against all these big guys."

SH: He shared that with all of you?

RW: Yes.

SH: Did you have parades?



RW: Buccleuch Park, it seemed like once a week everybody would be out there. Once a week sounds a little, maybe once a month. My Scarlet Rifles, when we would have reviews, would lead off the reviews and so on.

SH: Was there a military field day at the stadium?

RW: Yes, there was one at the gymnasium. I think there was something kind of displayed there. I can't really remember. [laughter]

SH: Were you involved in the military ball?

RW: Yes. A young lady, Pat Gorog, lived across the river there or something, and she was my date. [laughter]

SH: Did you join the fraternity your sophomore year?

RW: Sophomore year, yes. I enjoyed that. I think I got a lot out of fraternity. We learned a little public speaking and all that.

SH: Really?

RW: Yes.

SH: Was this in the DU house?

RW: Yes, Delta Upsilon, and that was a very positive experience--a nice group of fellows--and as I say, veterans were there kind of running the show. I don't remember this, but they told me that the one fellow used to have a .45 that he'd shoot off in the basement. I never witnessed that personally, but that's what they said. [laughter]

SH: Before we started recording you had mentioned a story about your cook.

RW: Yes. He was the cook and the general house repairman or something. ... He was English and served in World War I infantry, and I loved to pump him and hear his stories and other people might get bored by war stories. I enjoyed listening to him.

SH: He was from England.

RW: He was English, yes.

SH: Did you have a house mother?

RW: Yes, we did, and she was a young widow [laughter] and some of the veterans weren't too much younger than she was. I think she had a good time. [laughter]

SH: At this time, how formal was the DU house?

RW: It's coats and ties for dinner, and there could be kind of funny coats and ties. We'd have the pledges stand on the chairs and sing a song or something, and my song was *Good Morning Mr. Zip Zip Zip!* (1918). They used to call me Mr. Zip. "Good morning Mr. Zip Zip Zip, you certainly are looking fine." [laughter] I was sort of skinny with a burr haircut, and I put my towel around going to the shower, and they used to call me "Indian Dick" because they swore I looked like an Indian. So, that was my nickname, Indian Dick.

SH: That is interesting.

RW: Yes. [laughter]

SH: Were you involved in homecoming? What activities were you and the fraternity involved in?

RW: Oh, whatever they were, we were involved. ...

SH: Did you attend the football games?

RW: Oh, yes. When it was freshman year, I started off, I thought that was just wonderful, you know. I remember the game at Princeton and we won, and they sort of announced that all of the freshmen are supposed to go down and take down the goal posts and Princeton, they announced that all the freshman were supposed to go down and protect the goal post and so we all swarmed down there on the field. I remember the Princeton guys saying, "No fists, no fists, no fists," [laughter] you know, okay. I forgot who got the goal post and Frank Burns was one of our fraternity brothers, he was the quarterback, and George Ruddy--I think that was his last name--they had both been to high school together, and they were kind of a passing combo, he was the end [American football wide receiver], and they were both fraternity brothers. We had a very good team that year, and Frank, I think, later on became coach at Rutgers.

SH: That is what I understand.

RW: Yes, he was a very nice gentleman, very good man.

SH: How would you dress to go to football games back then? Rumor has it that you went in jacket and tie to the games.

RW: No, I don't think so.

SH: Polished shoes?

RW: Just like it is now? [laughter] Gee, I don't remember that.

SH: Or was that just for homecoming?

RW: I really don't remember. It could have been.

SH: Did you have floats or exhibits?

RW: We'd have exhibits out in front of the fraternity, and I would kind of be involved in a lot of those. I had one that was my idea, an exhibit that was all based on Hemingway books.

SH: Really?

RW: Big posters, and somehow it would tie in with the football, "Across the River into the Trees," was into the stadium. [laughter]

SH: What was the Keller Trophy?

RW: I do not know. [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: We always did a lot of singing, you know, in the parties and all this stuff, but there was one group of four fellows who had a group that were very good, a quartet, and they were excellent, and that's probably what the singing award was for them, and then, Bruce Malloy who was part of that group, I think maybe the year before I got here, he had won a singing contest that was like a Frank Sinatra kind of thing and he was excellent, you know.

SH: Did you attend any of the musical programs they had on campus?

RW: I don't remember that. I'm very interested in music. One of the classes I really enjoyed, and I think they tried it as an experiment, and it was three professors--it was English, music, and art--and they would treat it by period so that they'd show how each one of those things tied in, and I probably enjoyed that class as much as any one I had in college I don't know whether they continued it or not. Also, they made it clear how these things didn't happen in isolation and what was happening at a certain period, and I thought that was a pretty good way to do it.

SH: Do you remember anything about the Rutgers Glee Club and "Soup" Walters?

RW: Oh, that was wonderful. I had a .78 record of the Rutgers Glee Club, and "Soup" Walters was in charge that, and they did some wonderful Rutgers songs. Just recently my sister got a .78 player, and the record was so scratched that it wasn't usable, but I really would have liked to have a copy of that. [Editor's Note: The Rutgers Glee Club was started in 1872. Austin "Soup" Walters became the director in 1946.]

SH: It would be interesting to see if they are able to digitize it.

RW: Yes, I don't know. Maybe somebody does it. Maybe in the music department they've got somebody. It was mostly Rutgers songs and a whole record full of them, or a .78 record full of them. They were just great. The Glee Club came out to California when we were living there,

and we went to that, and they got us all up to sing with them, *On the Banks of the Old Raritan*. [*On the Banks of the Old Raritan* (1873)] I've got a record of that, but it's not Rutgers songs. It's a lot of good other pieces of music, but it wasn't that good thing of all Rutgers songs and I'll say, that reminds me, I was pledge master and I was very strict about them making them learn those songs. You had to know all those songs.

SH: That is good.

RW: Yes.

SH: Were the business administration courses you were taking on the College Avenue Campus?

RW: Yes.

SH: Did you have any interaction with Douglass?

RW: Primarily dating I would say. [laughter]

SH: Were there mixers between the two?

RW: No, I don't remember that. I remember we would, they all loved to come to the fraternity house. The two hangouts were Corner Tavern, which I guess is still here, and catty corner across the street was Smogies and Corner Tavern was the upscale one and Smogies was the downscale one, and the girls always thought it was really special to go to Smogies. [laughter] I guess Smogies must be gone.

SH: It is.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: Yes. I remember the Corner Tavern as being really good food, and you know, good steaks and all this, and so we were by Rutgers maybe ten or twelve years ago, and I took my wife there and it was pretty awful. [laughter] ...

SH: How strict was the administration with drinking?

RW: ... I think, before I arrived, it was very strict, because the fraternity house was all set with a buzzer at the door that would announce downstairs and there are all kinds of panels and things that slid around, ... Prohibition days or something, and you could get rid of stuff pretty quickly and those all still existed, little panels here and a top drawer there. ... They may still exist there ... I don't know, but we all drank beer and maybe some of the older guys drank liquor, but then Mac McCormick and I started making cocktails ... and serving them in the evening before dinner. ... I think we charged thirty-five cents or something, and we found that the fruit drinks we could make a big profit on, so we pushed the fruit drinks, [laughter] but that was very popular, and we would make ... I think we called them, "artillery punches." ... We got a new galvanized trash can and mix fruit juices and rum and this kind of stuff, and so they would insist

that Mac and I be the ... official bartenders. So, we would be the makers of the artillery punch. ... You'd sip the stuff, and it tastes like fruit juice and it would do you in, you know, [laughter], but I would say the drinking was fairly heavy.

SH: Would you?

RW: Yes.

SH: Okay, fair enough.

RW: ... I never remember any authorities ever coming down on us. ...

SH: Did the dean ever visit the fraternity?

RW: In a negative way or something? [laughter] No, we'd always have house mothers and things, but I don't remember anybody officially coming by, you know, or checking up on us or anything like that.

SH: What would happen on the weekends when you would have women in the fraternity?

RW: They would stay in the fraternity, and where did we stay? We stayed somewhere, I don't know, but then we would tend to drift in after dark. [laughter]

SH: I wanted to ask about your initiation into the fraternity. What was that like?

RW: ... It's a secret, I can't tell you. [laughter]

SH: We have heard some tall tales.

RW: Well, yes, they were probably all true. [laughter] I'd be breaching my code.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: The other thing was at Christmas we had a Santa Claus race, and this was all the heavier brothers would have to race each other, and the loser would have to be Santa Claus. ... Traditionally the Santa Claus would get drunk and be the one to have to pass out presents. ... Can you picture the Santa Claus?

Rebecca Schwarz: We have a picture of the Santa Claus.

RW: ... Boy, they would take it seriously. They would run. [laughter]

SH: This looks like small children in the picture.

RW: ... That must have been the day earlier, because the day before the Santa Claus got drunk. There's my friend Doug Gosnel, there's MacCormick, Fred Picton, oh my gosh.

SH: We are looking at the Scarlet Letter from 1950 that shows Santa Claus passing out what looks like gifts to the little children.

RW: Yes, that must have been in the afternoon we did that. Oh my gosh, that's incredible.  
[laughter]

SH: This was the picture that had the College Avenue scene. It was a lovely building.

RW: It was. I really was upset. I don't know what they did to get thrown off campus, but I really was angry about that, you know, lose our nice building and all this, you know.

SH: When you first came to Rutgers was Clothier the President?

RW: Yes.

SH: I believe Mason Gross was the provost. Was there interaction between the administration and students at all?

RW: ... Not that I remember.

SH: Was chapel or convocation still mandatory where you would have to go once a week or every other week?

RW: No.

SH: There was nothing like that?

RW: ... Nope, I don't remember that.

SH: Did you have a favorite professor or not so favorite?

RW: ... The one that stands out was Professor Burns. I don't know his first name, but he was a history teacher, and I liked that class very much, and I like kind of his down-to-earth approach to things or something that was very interesting. I was always interested in history anyway, but that one stands out.

SH: You were interested in history even though you were in business administration?

RW: Yes, ... the business part I probably kind of breezed through and did enough to get by.  
[laughter]

SH: Was there a project that you worked on?

RW: The only one I remember was a geology lab and there was like a student instructor--what would they be called--not a full professor. ...

SG: A Teaching Assistant.

RW: Yes, and he'd say, ... "There's a project you have to do, and if you can do well enough on that project I'll give you a passing grade," or something. Because I was an artist, I did this wonderful side view of a geographical thing with all the layers and colors, and oh, it just knocked him out, and I got an "A" in that class. [laughter]

SH: Were there day trips, or even overnight trips, that you took other than ROTC?

RW: We took one really nice trip with the lacrosse team down through the South. ... Coach Twitchell, who had been our freshman coach, he then became the general coach--this must have been in my junior year, I guess--and we went down to play Navy. ... I remember the big impression with Navy is we'd eat in the mess hall there, and they'd ring a bell, and they'd all come in, and they'd wolf the food down, and they'd ring the bell, and they'd all go out again, and we'd still be eating. ... We played Navy, we went down to William and Mary, University of Virginia, it seemed like there must have been one other [Washington and Lee]. ... The highlight of the Virginia game was the coach sent me in, and I couldn't tell which one was my man and my man scored. We lost the game eight to seven. No one ever knew but me that I was the one who let him make that score. [laughter]

SH: You are confessing it now? [laughter]

RW: Yes, I know, let's get off the record here. [laughter] ... That was a very nice trip. ... George Little and Al Sharrett were both fraternity brothers, were from Baltimore, they were good players, and Doug Gosnell.

SH: You talked about learning to play lacrosse once you got to Rutgers. Did people come and watch lacrosse games when you were here?

RW: Not heavily, I'd suspect maybe they do more now that it's a little more popular game, but it would be like watching a soccer game or something. I remember my mother and sisters came to a game in New York at CCNY, and I came so close to scoring a goal and the little goal pipes are about that big, it hit the pipe and bounced directly back. I was so disappointed, I wanted to show off in front of my mother and sisters, Stu Namm who did the Legal Eagle tapes, he was playing Lacrosse at CCNY. He ... was after I was, but the coach at CCNY was an Indian. They called him "Chief," and that was CCNY. I remember that and Stu and I kind of comparing notes, and I remember my father coming down to a game here at Rutgers, ... but they weren't big crowds.

SH: I have heard that traditionally back then that the football players would join the lacrosse team to stay in shape. Is this true?

RW: To avoid spring practice, mainly. [laughter] ... There's not a lot of them. Don Parsons was a good basketball player. ... I'm trying to think of any of the football players. I don't remember too many. I remember Kenny Cuffe was a fraternity brother, was a goalie, and he was from upstate New York and during the summer he'd play with the Indians up there, you know.

SH: What about intramural sports here at Rutgers?

RW: ... I participated in that because I played midfield in lacrosse. I was a runner and skinny, and I did a couple of cross-country things and I remember having lunch at the fraternity, and we had cream puffs or something for dessert, and I got through the race okay, but after the race I lost those cream puffs. [laughter] ... It seemed like we played some touch football or something. ...

SH: When you were here and you were part of the College Avenue campus and part of the fraternity, there were also people who were from the Agriculture school. Do you remember a division or pecking order at all?

RW: No, I don't think. I can't really remember too many fraternity brothers who were in the Ag school. ... We were all in the same campus, right. No, I don't remember too much about that.

SH: We have heard some stories.

RW: Some adversity?

SH: We have heard that that Ag school sometimes felt they were treated differently.

RW: Country bumpkins? [laughter] No, I don't even remember any of that at all.

SH: Did you attend any of the dances at Douglass or NJC?

RW: No, I remember they all being here usually at the, you know, the gym.

SH: Are there other memories of Rutgers that you would like to share?

RW: ... Well, this is kind of now jumping ahead. I don't know exactly how to put this.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: It's a little bit like not feeling as bad or more sympathetic about the wounded as you should and part of it came from, it must have been an ROTC session that was held at the gymnasium and one of the speakers was a fighter pilot who had been wounded in the hand coming back from a raid in Korea. ... He was speaking to us, and the other ROTC officers, who were World War II veterans, were laughing at him and saying, "Well, you got the million dollar wound," and ... kind of putting him down.

SH: Were you a senior at this time?

RW: Yes.

SH: The war had been going on for a year.

RW: And that was sort of the attitude, a light wound you were hoping that's what you're going to get, the "million dollar wound" they talked about, that was something, but that was kind of a start



of an attitude. ... The fighter pilot was, "And here I am my hand was bleeding, and I was coming down and made the airplane come back," and then they all [said], "Oh, you got the million dollar wound." ...

SH: You were finishing your junior year when the Korean War starts.

RW: Yes, that's right.

SH: What was the impact and reaction to the Korean War?

RW: Yes, the war had started then. That would have been '50, yes. I don't remember it being too much, you know, taken by it or something, but I do remember the class of '50, and ... the two I remember are Bruce Malloy and Walter Shallcross [Shallcross was class of '49] were infantry ROTC, and they went right over, I kept thinking my own experience was much better a year before I went over. So, I was at Fort Benning and trained down there, went to jump school, and tested my nerve, and then had troop duty and something, and so by the time I got over, I was pretty well-trained and these poor fellows, you know, [Editor's Note: Mr. Whitson snaps his fingers] right out of school they went over to Korea. ... I looked on the, you know, KIA list that you can find on the internet. ... I didn't look up Shallcross, but I looked up Bruce Malloy to see him but I did not find his name so apparently he survived all right. ... I think the assumption was that we were going to go right into the Army after we finished--there was no question about that. So, any other plans were academic, we knew that wasn't going to happen, and on graduation I just remember we had the cap and gown over our uniforms, and after we were graduated, we were then commissioned. ... I remember my mother pinning on my lieutenant's bars, and they were very proud of you. ... I think they were very proud that I was a soldier. ...

SH: Were these events at the stadium?

RW: Stadium, yes.

SH: Do you remember who was your graduation speaker?

RW: No I don't. Is it in the book? [laughter] No, I don't think it was anybody famous, but, that sounds terrible. ... I'm sure it was inspirational.

SH: At this point the Korean War had been going on for about a year. Do you believe that is why there was no other thoughts for different plans other than the Army?

RW: Yes, I think we knew at the time. We almost knew what division we were assigned to in training ... which was the Ninth Division at Fort Dix, and George Hodgkiss and I were both assigned there. ...

SH: How long did you have from graduation until you had to leave for training?

RW: Really the summer, and we went down to Fort Benning in the fall, but we had our orders, and then we were assigned to Fort Dix and sort of innocently George Hodgkiss and I put on our

uniforms--and this must have been in June or July or something--and reported to Fort Dix. I think they were quite surprised to see us. ... We were supposed to go to infantry school first then come down to Fort Dix. [laughter] ... You're supposed to give a dollar to the first enlisted man that salutes you, and I think that happened to us in the Port Authority bus terminal in New York or something, gave him his dollar. [laughter] ... We really had the summer off, and then reported to Fort Benning in the fall. ...

SH: What did you do that summer?

RW: I don't remember. [laughter]

SH: Did you work?

RW: I don't think so. I don't remember. ... The company officer's course is ... for company commanders and platoon leaders, and I was very impressed with the teaching down there. It was almost, Rutgers compared unfavorably with their teaching techniques. They just had you rip off things on charts and this and that and everything was very clear, and I was quite impressed with their techniques, and it was good very practical training, and it really was just the same course that the OCS people took except we already had our commissions and so we didn't take any nonsense. ... We weren't going to get kicked out whereas the OCS people they weeded out pretty quickly. ... One of my best friends, childhood friends, Bob Jones, was--in those days the troublesome kids all went off to military schools--and he had been to about three military schools and so he knew all the military stuff pretty good. ... I was at the officer and he was still an enlisted man. We'd go up to Atlanta together and raise hell and toward the end of the OCS course he smart talked a tactical officer and out he went.

SH: Did he go straight to Korea?

RW: No, he had something in his contract that he was going to be discharged, and so he did not.

SH: Oh, my.

RW: Yes, it was a unique twist in the contract. ... We completed that course in December, and I guess we were there three months, and so I stayed on with Ron Roders who is another Rutgers graduate, and went to jump school, and there was about seven officers who went in our class at jump school, and that was like a three week course. ... I remember that I thought, "Wow, isn't that great, you know, you got the pin and you got a thing on your hat, you got the big boots to wear and all that stuff, boy being a paratrooper is going to be great," and one of the things you do is you jump out of a thirty-five foot tower. ... There's a cable riding down, you have a cable hooked to you, and you ride down the cable, and I remember the first time I jumped out thinking, "My God, I'm falling," you know. [laughter] The first time it ever occurred to me that that's what it is all about. [laughter] "Oh, my God, I'm falling." ... The other two incidents at jump school were they have the 250 foot towers which are literally the same kind they had at Coney Island except with those you ride up on a little platform, and these they have a big metal ring, and they hooked the parachute to the outside of the ring and they hoist you up, and then, when they got up top they bop it and just releases it and you come down free on the parachute. So, the officers

always had to do everything first, and so, out there the very first time, we used these 250 foot towers, and they raised me up there and it bopped and nothing happened and bopped it a few more, and I'm dangling two hundred and fifty feet above the ground like a little puppet and about three more times they bopped it. It wouldn't release and finally they brought me down and did a little adjustment and tried it again. This time it released. ... We got the wings, and there was one more jump that the officers made which was a jumpmaster jump. ... Two people would jump out of the planes at the same time from the door instead of having a whole stick of paratroopers behind you. You just had a "phantom" stick and you gave commands to them, and I remember Ron Roders and I were sitting together and somehow the parachute was cutting into my shoulder and I said, "Would you mind if I switch and let me go first because this damned parachute is hurting me." ... Two of us jumped and something felt like it was wrong with the parachute, and I reached behind and the risers were kind of stuck and I pulled and the parachute was just one great wad of silk. ... I pulled the reserve chute, but we were jumping with a rifle and a pack that was under the reserve chute, and the pack had ridden up over the reserve chute, and this little pilot chute came out--it was about that big--and it was flopping around like this, I grabbed and threw out the reserve parachute and it opened up. ... I looked up and the fellow who had jumped with me was way up there and I was pretty close to the ground when the reserve opened up, and I still have a little piece of the parachute which they gave me. [laughter]

SH: How hard was that jump with just the reserve?

RW: It wasn't bad, but you came down like a bag of cement anyway. It wasn't like the chutes they have now, ... slotted chutes, and they can control them. ... These you have very little control over them. You plopped down pretty hard, but I was all gung ho, and I was twenty-two and that didn't faze me. ... I really wanted to go to an airborne outfit and I was very disappointed in ending up at Fort Dix, Ninth Division, but it was nice. Fort Dix was close to home, I would go up to Ridgewood on weekends and time off. Let's see, I taught tactics and map reading was my field. ... Map reading was kind of a little bit like art. I enjoyed all of that, you know, and ... the tactics was like games. I was always good at games. ... A lot of stuff we did was at night. That's because a lot of fighting in Korea was at night then. They were emphasizing a lot of night fighting and in all modesty, I got a number of commendation letters at the time from the commanding general. They would have this staff officer come down and give you, grade your things or something, and my things were always kind of colorful, but I had a number of commendations from the general from that.

SH: That reminds me of the games you made up as a kid that you made your sister play.

RW: Yes. I made her identify the airplanes. [laughter] ... My father, being in the food business, for some reason, every year, he'd get this wonderful box of chocolates from Nestle, I think, and all kinds of chocolates, and we'd go out on these night exercises. ... It would be pretty cold in the winter there in Fort Dix, and I'd send the men out on these exercises, and when they're all gone, I'd bring out a nice cold bar of chocolate and today I like frozen chocolate, like I keep it in the refrigerator, isn't that something. ... [laughter]

SH: You were at Fort Dix in the winter of 1952?

RW: It would have been the end of yes, '52, end of January through July, and so it was training. ... One of the things that happened there was ... some of us at Rutgers went ROTC and some didn't, and the draft was still on, and the ones who didn't get drafted, and so at Fort Dix there's a bunch of the trainees crawling under barb wire, and I'm tossing M-40 fire crackers at them, and I see this one guy with his helmet pulled down like this, and I says, "Harvey is that you?" It was Harvey Huaftman who I think went on to become a radio station commentator or something up in northern New Jersey. Yes, it was Harvey. "Should have gone ROTC Harvey." [laughter]

SH: Is he the gentleman who is the voice of Rutgers football?

RW: ... I don't know, but I think he was doing something. Harvey would not like me to tell that story. He was doing his best not to let me see him. [laughter]

SH: Were there others that you ran into that were from Rutgers?

RW: Ron Rogers was there, and ... George Hodgkiss, and when we first got to Fort Dix, they had a little few too many officers, and they'd ... have "make work" details. I remember mine was inspecting a mess hall, and I'd look for cracked cups and things and all that stuff, and Ron's thing was they sent him out into the boondocks to dig up cedar trees and come and plant them around. He was very embarrassed about that, ... doing these kinds of thing or something, but it was very good because it gave us troop duty. Instead of just throwing in with us, it was good experience and so on. ... When I finished that, we had the month off and I think I had to report in September to San Francisco. I can't remember the name of the base, it's now closed, but that's where we shipped out of, and a friend and I, Bob Jones, my friend who had flunked out of OCS, he had an old '39 Chevy Coupe. ... We'd put the trunk up, and we'd sleep in the back and drove across country, went up through the Black Hills and Deadwood and San Francisco and on up to something, and he dumped me off, and we had a nice camping trip across country. ... I remember while we're at this camp whatever it is, there was a young couple I met at the officer's club, and they were very nice and would invite men to dinner, you know, or something, and they invited me to dinner and just that time we got the orders and I had to meet them at the gate and thank them so much for dinner, but I was always felt bad that I had let them down. ... They were always so thoughtful about entertaining troops on the way over. So, I went on the *Marine Adder*, which coincidentally was the same ship I came home on, and it was an MAS, it was like a military transport ship. ... There were way too ... few officers ... and way too many men, and it was almost out of control, and the men would sleep on like four deck bunks with about a foot in between them down in the hole, and the Navy treats their officers and enlisted men with much great extremes. ... We had, I guess, maybe two or three to a room, but we had the mess table would be white tablecloth with mess boys serving. I had rabbit for the first time in my life. ...

SH: Really?

RW: Whereas, the enlisted men would eat standing up. ... As we left Puget it got very rough, and everybody was seasick ...

SH: How did you do?

RW: I did okay. I always had a pretty strong stomach. ... It almost got out of hand and the only way you could get anybody to do anything is they had these little mess cards, and they couldn't get fed unless they had their mess cards. So, you collect all their mess cards until the job was done and then hand their mess cards back to them. ...

SH: Were all these troops going over as replacements?

RW: ... Yes. There was no organization, we were all replacements, and when we got to Yokohama and because of the seasickness, a lot of the guys would sleep up on deck, and when we got to Yokohama, one of the guys who had been sleeping on deck didn't get up and had died and he had--I can't think of what it is now--something very infectious, and they thought they were going to quarantine the whole ship, and that it turned out it was not. ... Things were that out of control that we didn't even discover that somebody had died on the ship. ...

SH: Did you have any other port of calls?

RW: No, we went up kind of north, you know, mostly foggy and all that stuff, but it was, I can't remember what we did passing the time, played cards I guess or something, yes. There were about six officers ... that I became friends with and one of them, Russ McCann, was killed. He was killed on Christmas Day I think in ... '52, I guess.

SH: Were you pulling into Yokohama?

RW: Yokohama.

SH: Was this around the end of September?

RW: Yes, it was. Well, maybe at the middle, because then we went up to Camp Drake, and we were there for a little while, and then, we went down to Gifu, which was a Japanese fighter base, and they gave us CBR training. It was chemical, radiologic, and biological. ...

SH: Tell us about that training.

RW: They weren't too sure whether ... Russia had the bomb at that time, whether they might use the bomb or they might, they would talk about biological. ... The Chinese always thought we were using biological warfare, and so that was the idea was to give some officer training in each one of those things ...

SH: How good was the training?

RW: Well, it was better than nothing. [laughter] ... Geiger counters I remember, and the chemical warfare part was a sort of a joke because I have absolutely no sense of smell. When I was about four when I had a little scalp wound, and then a concussion, and I lost my sense of smell. So, some part of it was smelling these things, and I faked my way through this thing. [laughter] So, then from there we went down to Sasebo Navy Base and went from there by ship

over to Pusan, and I remember Japan was like a picture book, you know, with little boys flying kites and chasing butterflies ... and everything was just beautifully picturesque, you know.

SH: How did the Japanese treat you?

RW: Of course, that was not too long after the war, and ... I remember that you'd get a haircut, but they didn't want them to shave you with a razor and, you know, the guy shaving could have been a submarine commander or something, or lost his brother or something, but ... there was no bad feelings. I think I wrote in a letter, "they looked like bad bosses but good underlings," you know, that they had great respect for whoever, and we were in charge at that point, but I never experienced any bad feelings.

SH: No animosity?

RW: No. It must have been there, but certainly wasn't surfaced, and I'm not much of a MacArthur fan, but I think that the administration was very good. ... Everything was really under control, you know.

SH: Did you have any time to go anywhere off base and look around Japan?

RW: Yes, oh, yes. I remember one time we rented bicycles and rode around the countryside and I've got a picture of me giving candy to the kids, you know, classic, almost corny, you know, but I didn't get up to Kyoto or any of those exotic places. ...

SH: Did not see the effects of the atomic bomb?

RW: Yes. We did come through Hiroshima.

SH: Did you?

RW: Yes, and it seemed like then it was not totally flattened. Maybe they had started to rebuild or something. ... We got into Pusan, and got on a train going up.

SH: Is that where you first landed in Korea?

RW: Yes, in Pusan, and then, we were put on a train going up north and earlier in the war there had been a lot of infiltration and you couldn't tell where they were all over the place. So, we were all still full of that and ... these trains were little things with wooden benches and half the windows are out and you'd come by another train that had all had been blown up and put by the side of the road and all that. We were a little naïve because by that time it was pretty much settled down, but we were all very anxious about that, and let's see, I remember going to Taegu. We got there pretty directly by train. ... They asked us, you know, what outfit we would like to go to, which was a joke. ...

SH: Did they really ask you that?

RW: There was one airborne regimental combat team, the 187th, which was in Japan. ... I put I want the 187th, and I put down the Second Division because it had a big patch with an Indian on it, and I thought that would be great. ... What we wrote down didn't mean a thing, it was where they needed us, and so I was assigned to the Seventh Division. ... I can't remember too much about the headquarters there except there was one point I remember we were sleeping in a bunker with transient officers or something, and a rat dropped down from the ceiling on one officer's bunk, and he shrieked and the thing jumped over and hit my bunk and went out the door. That was my first rat experience. ... [laughter]

SH: Of many?

RW: Yes, oh, yes.

SH: When did the Army start telling you what to expect in Korea? Did it happen while you were in California, in Yokohama, or in Sasebo on the way over?

RW: No, at no time, I think it was all as much during the training, that, you know, the other officers who had come back from Japan you found out from them what was going on, but I never remember any formal presentation about this is what's going on. It was more from the officers that come back, and they would, you know, react to their own experiences. ... I remember one fellow who had been there when the infiltration was and that's all he could talk about was, "You got to look out behind you, they're going to be all around you," and all this stuff. So, then I was assigned to the 17th Infantry, and there were five of us assigned to that. ... We were at the regimental headquarters, and the commander was Royal Reynolds, and he gave each of us a little buffalo head nickel. ... All the units had a call sign. The division was "Bayonet", the 17th was "Buffalo", the 31st was "Polar bear", and the 32nd was "Buccaneer". Those were the call radio signs. So, we have always been the "Buffalos" ever since, and they had this little buffalo nickel with ... the regimental crest on one side and a buffalo and 1812 on the other, and the regiment was formed in 1812. It was one of the ... oldest regiments and so that was a very formal thing, unfortunately I have since lost my buffalo nickel. ... Over the summer things had been very quiet. There were patrol actions and so forth, but at that time in the war, things had settled down. They'd already been up to the Yalu, and the 17th was very far to the right and it was the only one that made it to Yalu before the Chinese came over, and they had they got out fairly easily. [Editor's Note: The Yalu River that borders China and North Korea. As United Nations and American troops neared the river in late 1950, the Chinese finally intervened in the conflict on the side of the North Koreans.] Whereas the 32nd Regiment ... were just massacred at Chosin and they were just slaughtered up there, and that's when ... the really cold weather was up there, and the fellows suffered without equipment, and I was just bitter because I think MacArthur just had all kinds of warning and didn't pay attention to them, and the poor guys suffered.

SH: Were you aware of that as you went into the war?

RW: No, that's more later on, or talking to some of the guys who had been there. ... I'm going to jump back a little bit also. In '50, the Seventh Division was stationed in Japan and it was, you know, fat and loose, and they were just occupying things. They weren't training really well. ... They didn't have half their equipment, and they were understaffed, and when the war started they

staffed up by press ganging Korean young men from Pusan, and sent them to Japan to train with the division. ... I'm not too sure any other division had that happen, but they then went and trained with the division, and then stayed with it up to the Yalu and back, and at first they were, you know, a bunch of bumbler and so forth, but by the time I was there, some of them were pretty well-trained and pretty hardened. They'd been up to Yalu and back, and ... they were pretty good, they knew what they were doing. Then, at the same time the army went through integration, and they broke up the 24th Regiment which was an all-black regiment and for the first time they were integrated. ... They also broke up the 69th Regiment which was the Puerto Rican regiment, and so we would then have part of these people. So, in a platoon, you could have the Koreans who spoke no English, you could have the Puerto Ricans who spoke no English, and you're going out on patrol at night with these people with maybe a third of your patrol not being able to speak English. ... It was amazing that it went as well as it did, and you'd have one Korean who was an interpreter and he would translate for the rest, tell them what to do, you know, but it's amazing it worked as well as it did. ... I'm just curious because I don't know any other division whether that happened to. ... It had been very quiet all the summer of '52, and there had been some patrol actions, but no real heavy action, and at that time it was really like World War I, static trench warfare on hills, you know, everybody was dug in. We had bunkers that were above ground, sandbagged bunkers, and covered bunkers, and barbed wire and mine fields and all this. ... You look across the field--the Chinese, they were super diggers, and they had to be because we had the air power--and you couldn't see where they were. There might be a little hole here, a little there, but they were just all tunneled in. You couldn't see their position. If you look back at ours, all you saw was what looked like castles with bunkers all over the place, and you look at the Chinese side, you saw nothing at all.

SH: Really?

RW: ... It was like World War I, there'd be ... patrolling, raids, and then every now and then, someone, either side would make a big push, and so it happened that this big push happened just as I got there, and they were fighting around Triangle Hill. ... There were about six of us, I think, officers who arrived at the 17th, and already we could hear, you know, the artillery barrages going on. It sounded like thunder in the distance and all this, and Stu Blazer who was a Princeton graduate he got assigned right away to one of the companies--I don't know which, I forget which one--but they had a battle they called for Charlie Outpost, and he was killed about the third day he was there, and a very fine young man. I really felt badly about that, but he was there about three days, and he was killed on this attack on this outpost. So, then I was assigned to Easy Company and the company commander was Captain Edward T. Sims, and he was a short wiry guy who had been 82nd Airborne, and he had made every jump that they made in Europe, and he'd been wounded--had a bad wound in the hip or something--and a little overqualified to be a company commander. He probably should have been a little higher up, but I'm not too sure, maybe he didn't have a college education. He might have been up from the ranks or something. ... He was a, you know, very experienced soldier, and the executive officer was Del Redmond, and I had the second platoon, and Tom Fernandez de la Riguera had the first platoon. ... Fernandez was from New Orleans. ... Oscar Davis had the third platoon--he was from Texas. So, they were fairly experienced, and Fernandez had been involved in this Charlie ... Outpost battle. He had gotten a Silver Star for that, and his two sergeants had got Bronze Stars for that. So, he knew pretty much what he was doing. ... We were at some little bunker that the Koreans



had built, and they were built a little more flimsy--in other words the Republic of Korean Army--so they were a little more flimsy than the outpost we would normally build. ... We were being shelled by the Chinese, and all the officers are sitting in this command post, and I kept wondering how far away I can get from the door and which way the shells would hit if I was over there. ... Tom Fernandez pulls out his .45, and he starts hunting rats in the ceiling, and I'm thinking, "I don't mind being killed by the Chinese artillery, but I don't want to get killed by some crazy guy from New Orleans shooting rats." [laughter] That's pretty much the way Tom was. He was kind of a crazy guy. ... I am still in touch with him. His father was a sea ship captain, and he did that after the war. He was a sea captain. ... [laughter] He was telling me that he'd go to sea and come back to New Orleans, and he'd give all his money to his mother, and he'd go out and raise hell and go broke, and come back to his mother and says, "Could I get some more money?" She'd say, "No." "Okay, back to sea." He'd say. ... All hell was breaking loose all along the Seventh Division area, and we were shuffled around. We'd go in the trucks and we'd go here, and we'd go to the trucks, and go there, and the word was our company was corps reserve at that point, and so finally at one of these shuffles during the daytime, and we came out to up to what was the Triangle Hill area and Jane Russell Hill. In particular, Jane Russell was named because there were two knobs. ... [laughter] They'd already had some attacks up this hill, and we were to attack next. ... You'd think there would be all kinds of maps, [but it was], "You did this and that, you go down this road and there it is, you go to the right, and you go to the center, you go to the left." ... Captain Sims, at the last minute, brought out three armored vests. At that time ... the armored vests weren't that prevalent. He gave one to each of the three platoon leaders, and he said, "I'm giving you a direct order. You are to wear this, not give it to somebody else. You are to wear this." So, I set off down this road, and we had tank support, they're firing not their cannon, their .50 caliber weapons over our heads, and so we started down this road, and there was the hill ahead of us and I was in the front. The correct tactical thing would have been, I should have stopped, and the platoon comes in and spreads out, and we'd go up the hill as a skirmish line, and with excitement, I just kept on going up the hill. ... There were dead GIs on the hill from the assault that had happened before, and I get up to the top of the hill, and started throwing grenades into the bunkers. ... You have to fry the grenades. If you throw it in cold, odds are it's going to come flying back out at you, so you had to let her cook a little bit, and then you throw it in. ... Sergeant Jim Sackrider, who was my platoon sergeant, he was a great big guy, and he fired the flare to lift the machinegun support fire, and they were cracking right over our heads, but we basically walked up the hill, and ... our timing was good--the other attacks were bad, there were dead GIs on the hill--we just hit a lull and ... just walked up the hill. ... I'll jump back a little bit. One of the toughest things in the world is to come into a platoon in combat as a green second lieutenant. These guys all look like grizzled "Willie and Joe" [Bill Mallden's soldier cartoon characters]. The sergeants all look like they're seven feet tall, and some of them are, and you're the little green snippy lieutenant going to come in and is supposed to take charge of this thing. ...

SH: Could you explain that a little bit more?

RW: ... Essentially, I said this in the Stu Namm video tape and some of the other people agreed. ... A command sergeant major, who is a professional sergeant, he says, "That happens with every outfit you go into," and the colonel ... said the same things, he said, "Happens in every new outfit you go into." ...

SH: What was the makeup of this group that you led up that hill?

RW: ... It was part Korean, and I think in one of my letters home I said it was almost like a foreign legion, but very good solid men. They all were just very fine men.

SH: How did you communicate with those who did not speak English?

RW: With the Koreans--through an interpreter.

SH: What about the Puerto Ricans?

RW: Some of them could speak English. ... Some of them were bilingual. It was certainly integrated. ... One thing that always amused me was after we'd taken the hill, and there was a big black soldier, with one of a little bitty Korean soldier, and neither one of them could speak the other language, and they were digging a foxhole together. ... The Korean has a canteen, and he drinks it up, and he laughs, and shows that it's empty, and the black fellow looked mad at him, you know, pretending he's mad at him, but I thought it was amusing because ... speaking no language they both were saying, "See, look what I've done. I've drank all your water," and the other one pretending he was mad at him or something, but there was that kind of relationship. ...

SH: You made this sound like you went out for a summer walk.

RW: Well, I can kind of go into it a little bit. ... I'll sort of describe this for you. The area I was on, which was on the lower part of Jane Russell, then it ... went right on up, and to the left we did not encounter any action, but apparently Fernandez did--his people said they'd ... hit some opposition--but most of the hill was just totally chewed up. ... Both sides would fire artillery or mortars, and the thing would just get so chewed up, and the whole face of the hill toward the Chinese, which was their back reverse slope, was just all bunkers and caves, all caved in, and broken up. ... They were still in there, and we were getting them out, two or three days later, and then there was a trench that kind of went around to the right of the hill and there were some other bunkers down there and I remember one of the men--we ended up kind of wondering what was down there--one of the men took a .45 and climbed down and I thought, "That's not something I would want to do." ... Then at the edge of this, all this chewed up stuff up here, and we knew the Chinese were still in some of these bunkers back there, and the platoon to my left--Davis' thing--were trying to get them out. They had dynamite charges or satchel charges. They were trying to blow them out. Every now and then, something would come out, and I remember Tommy our interpreter, was so proud he shot one of them as he was coming out, and we knew they were still down there. ... So, we're along this trench line to the right, and we looked down and here is one of the Chinese, he's kind of staggering out, and his pants are down around his ankles, and so we're all kind of, "Well, what do we do?" ... This was a very severe slope, and there was a 76 millimeter artillery piece on the other side that if you have too much activity out front, it would wham a round in, and so well, "What do we do? What are we going to do?" We should go there and get that guy, and so one of them says, "If I had an armored vest on I'd go down and get him," and, you know, it's a little, "test the officer." ... "Okay." I said, "Tommy (our Korean interpreter) come on. Let's you and I go down." So, we went down, ... and so we

were worried about the guys up on the hill and worried about making too much activity for fear the .76 is going to fire at us. ... So, this guy was, I think he was sick, very sick, and something's coming out of his nose or something. So, my idea of taking Tommy down, this guy is Chinese and he's Korean, they didn't speak each other's language either. [laughter] So, this poor kid was standing there. So, we're trying to get him up the hill, and Tommy is drawing red crosses on the ground and finally--I wasn't very proud of this--I thought, "Oh, maybe I can knock him out." So, I hit him with the butt of the carbine and it didn't faze him at all, but split the stock of the carbine, I think. So, then Tommy gets a knife out and going to cut his pants away and the poor guy freaks out, thinks we're going to kill him and somehow we got him back up there, but it was, as I said the slope was like that, the Chinese up here and the gun over there, but it was a little bit of test the officer. So, oh, now I'm going to jump back. There was another action before that which was literally my first one, and the order was, "Okay we want your platoon to go over and report to somebody over in the 32nd Regiment, and there's an outpost there you've got to go back, and you've got to relieve somebody at this outpost." ... I remember the guys are all loaded in the truck, and I thought, "Well, a good officer should tell him what's going to go on." ... My voice cracked, and they all laughed, [laughter] and so it didn't help my authority very much. So, we drive over to where this place was, and it was an outpost way out in the middle of the valley in the rice paddies. ... I was never too sure what it was. There was one called Iron Horse Mountain. That could have been it, or it could have somewhere else. I'm still a little confused about where it was, but they had had a Korean outpost there that had been taken, and they'd sent another American unit out to take it, and as it came back the platoon leader was talking to the captain or major who I was to report to, and he's saying, "I don't think my men will go back out there again," and I'm saying, "What?" ... Then, an artillery officer showed up, and he's wounded, and he's bleeding in his eye or something and apparently he had been out there, and he called down artillery fire on himself which they would do. They'd be in bunkers, and they know the Chinese are around, they'd call artillery fire down on their own position. ... He's saying, he's a little shell shocked, and he's saying, "Look out for the mines. Look out for the mines." So, all this is really building my confidence. This platoon leader says his men won't go out there again, and he's saying, "Look out for the mines." ... This thing was way out there--it was just like a rock outcropping--and so we started out single file and tried to keep the men spaced apart so to not draw artillery, and that's where I saw my first dead GI, ... a big man off to the side, with the sandbag over his face, and his head had been blown off, and I thought he was a peculiar color, I realized he was a black man, but he lost so much blood. ... Somebody had very thoughtfully put a sand bag over his head, and so we went out to this place and there was a just kind of a rough trail up to the top. ... We got up to one level ... and there was nothing up there--there was no dirt even. ... The bunkers had been built of rock, they had piled rock upon on top of each other. So, with artillery hitting it, it was just these fragments were just flying all over the place, and so there was another little place further on we needed to go to, and so I said, "Okay, send the first squad up there," and so, Sackrider the platoon sergeant, he looked at me, he said, "You know, why don't you and I do it," which was the wrong thing to do. The two leaders should not be going up there by themselves. My decision was the correct tactical one, and whether he was being thoughtful for the men or another little platoon leader test, ... the two of us went up to this little further forward area. ... The Chinese there had been--it was the worst horrible shape of bodies I'd ever seen--they were just totally mutilated by this artillery fire. ... One of them had been badly burned by napalm or a flame thrower or something, and so, we quickly realized that ... we needed more people than two up there. We couldn't barely cover it. So, we went back to

the original position, and so, about that time, we started to be shelled, and we kind of moved down from there to the back slope of this thing. I remember the shells were coming this way, and I couldn't decide whether it was better to be on this side of the rocks, or that side of the rocks, and finally Tommy the Korean said, "I think this side of the rocks would be better." ... We were supposed to hold until a Korean company came out to relieve us. So, we were there, I don't know, it must have been late afternoon, five o'clock, six o'clock it's starting to get dark, and this Korean company shows up, and they looked around, and they didn't like it at all, and so I said, "You know, I'm going to leave. This is your position now, you know, it's your responsibility, but we're leaving." So, we started to leave--they all left with us. ... [laughter] They got in trouble later on. ... That was really my first action, my first experience with it, you know.

SH: What are you supposed to do in situations when other units do not follow orders?

RW: ... They weren't reporting to me. They were reporting to whoever their commanding officer was, and the Koreans didn't treat their people well at all. They'd knock them down, beat them up, or shoot them. The Koreans with us were happy to be with us. ... That was the best place to be, not to be in the Korean Army, be in the Korean Army with them serving with the Americans.

SH: Did you see any of the other United Nations troops that were there?

RW: ... Not closely. We had the Ethiopian battalion ... with us, and they were, you know, Haile Selassie's bodyguards. They were pretty professional, and the apocryphal tale was that they'd come would up at night and feel the back of your neck for the dog tags, and if you didn't have a dog tag chain, you know, they'd cut your throat. This was the apocryphal tale, I heard that. ... The three battalions were red, white, and blue--first, second, third--but the Ethiopian battalion was orange and the officers tended to speak with an English accent or with an Italian accent. ... They were there, but we never really had that much to do with them and the Columbian battalion was attached to ... another regiment, but they were part of the division. [Editor's Note: Emperor Haile Selassie (1892-1975) was a major political figure in Ethiopia.]

SH: Did you ever see or talk to any of them?

RW: I went on R&R with some Australians, who were crazy as bedbugs. ... [laughter] My experience with Australians was they're big boys ready for a party, but no, not too much, and even with the Ethiopians, I don't ever remember serving beside them or anything. To go back to Jane Russell, ... I jumped ahead, because that was really the first experience that I had.

SH: What was the weather like by the time you got there?

RW: ... Most of the time, people assumed Korea was cold, but that was up north. My experience was it was pretty much like it was at Fort Dix, and maybe I was colder at Fort Dix sometimes. ... At that time, we had the equipment that the guys earlier did not have. ... Some of them were going in summer uniforms. Especially toward the end, we had the "Mickey Mouse" boots--thermal boots--and they had the thermal outfits that looked like skin diver's

outfits. They call them cold bar suits I guess, and we had those just toward the end, but I mean there were times we were cold, but it was not unbearable.

SH: Were you well-supplied with ammunition, food and everything else that you needed?

RW: Yes.

SH: I would like to return to the topic of Jane Russell Hill then.

RW: So, we were only up there a couple of days, two or three maybe, and started digging some holes and ... we didn't have any entrenching tools. We weren't expecting to be digging in or something. So, another platoon came to relieve us, and the platoon leader came up the hill, and I went to meet him and the platoon sergeants were there, and our medic who was, he was Doc Turpin he was a little kind of a busybody, nosy guy, so he came over wanted to join the group too, which really was supposed to be the command groups or something, and just about the time we got together, we heard this whistle and a mortar round came in and it landed right in the middle like as far as we are apart, landed in the middle of us. It hit the medic's shoe and didn't go off.

SH: Oh, my word. We are talking about two to three feet.

RW: ... It literally hit him, and we were this far apart. ... The mortar, the high trajectory ones come in really fast--there's hardly any warning--the direct fire ones you got a lot of warning to. This one whistled down. ... We all knew exactly what it was and went for holes, but it would have gotten all of us if it had gone off, and I still am puzzled as to where that one round came from. ... I think they still occupied part of the big mountain Pikes Peak, that really kind of dominated. I think they saw a little activity and just dropped one in, and I think also, I think both sides had a lot of faulty ammunition left over from World War II, and so I think a lot of our stuff were duds and I think a lot of their stuff too. I had other times with duds go off pretty close by, but that was probably maybe the closest call I ever had. ... Then, at that point Captain Sims was replaced by Sandy Polson, and Sandy was an ex-marine. He had tried to get a marine commission and couldn't and got a commission in the Army, and he was a good tough salty guy and I still see him. ... We went to another position that was west of that. We went on trucks, and we moved west of that, and it was a position that well, generally the lines were not very far apart. ... In other places they were maybe miles apart. In this particular position they were maybe fifty to one hundred yards apart, and so everything was very closely sandbagged and you didn't stick your head out. ... One part of the trench line that went down to the command post was totally covered. ...

SH: Really?

RW: ... We got to this place and word came down that ... my platoon was supposed to send out a patrol, and of course we didn't know this area at all, and Sandy says, "Well, ... go look out over the trench line there, you can see." ... You look out, and all I saw was hills and barbed wire and something, and so I went back down to the CP and try to convince Polson, "Really this is kind of crazy. How can we go out there. ... We don't know this area at all." and he says, "Oh, the orders

say you got to go out, you got to go out." So, then it got dark, and I was coming through this covered trench, was really a tunnel, and I knew the guys were all jumpy. ... So, I go into the tunnel. I pulled out the .45 in case there were Chinese around. Then, I went through whistling. ... I let the guys know it was one of their guys, and whistling some familiar tune I hope, and going through there with my .45. So, we organize this, you know, patrol, and it started raining and it was just pouring rain and this was again a part I'm not proud of, we go down the trench line to the right and down to where it was supposed to be down there with a valley floor where you go out, and we got to this last bunker which was empty and I didn't know where the barbed wire was. I didn't know where the mine fields were. I didn't know anything that was out there. All of it was pitch black, and the rain, so we kind of hunkered down. The platoon sergeant and the radio man and someone and I hunkered down in the bunker, the other guys hunkered down in the trench line, and we just sat it out, and it's a little bit example of how you can be brave as a lion in one thing, and in a different situation not so brave.

SH: Maybe smart?

RW: I don't know, but I remember saying to Sackrider, I says, "Do the guys know what's going on?" He says, "The old guys do," and you know this kind of thing had happened before and probably more frequently than not, and sometimes the platoon sergeant would turn in the officers who did that, and this guy Sackrider probably thought it was the smart thing to do, and didn't turn me in. Then, it turned out that the Chinese did, you know, hit our lines, and they snatched one of the KATUSAs and got away with him, and they were kind of hoping our patrol out in the valley maybe could have intercepted them or something like that, but it made me feel bad that we didn't. Never told this--this may be the first time I've told that to anybody. [laughter]

SH: It was dangerous to walk out into the dark without being able to see anything.

RW: But that wasn't the official answer. ... The danger of officers doing this was that the next patrol would have been told that area had been patrolled and cleared or something and not know that that wasn't true. ... After that, I guess we pulled out of that location. I guess we went, then went back behind the lines, and ... the regiment was sent down to Kojedo to guard prisoners. ... Kojedo was where they had all these Chinese prisoners, and they had way too many compared to the American troops guarding them, and they got out of hand, and they rioted, and they grabbed a general, and were holding him as hostage, and this would have been the summer of '52, I guess, and I think the general, now I think, I was going to say Boatner, but I think Boatner was the commander, the general, who cleaned them up, and they sent down an airborne regimental combat team down, and they kind of cleaned them out, got them back in shape and so forth. ... So, we were going to go down and take over and guard these prisoners. [Editor's Note: Kojedo Island was a prison camp that held prisoners from December 1950 until June 1952. In May 1952, Chinese and North Korean prisoners rioted and took Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd captive. General Haydon Boatner led the combat team that rescue the general and retake control of the camp.]

SH: This was after they had rioted.

RW: Yes, they got them kind of back in shape then, and they were also going through the period where some of them did not want to be repatriated. They wanted to stay, ... and ... go with the Chinese Nationalists or something, and would go to Taiwan. [This prolonged the peace talks] ... For us this was like a gift, coming off the line to go down to Kojedo. ...

SH: Did you have barracks or tents?

RW: We were in tents, but the prisoners were in barracks behind barbed wire and closures, and we'd go in there at night and kind of do surprise, ... not raids exactly, but just announcements and going into the screen door wouldn't open up and the man takes his bayonet, and slashes the things, and of course the door opens this way, not that way or something. The MPs were all upset because they're messing up their compound. ... [laughter] The guys would stand guard duty. I remember going out and checking the guards or something. We'd take a big thing of hot chocolate and give them something at night or something, but the guys would be out all night on guard duty. ... We did a lot of live-action fire exercises, and we did one that was, you know, a tank infantry attack. They had tanks firing over our heads, and the platoon leaders would try to kind of out chicken each other, go as far as they could without calling the fire off or something. They're playing little chicken games. One of the exercises that I remember, we're kind of at the top of the hill and David Pettis [Editor's Note: Pettis died of wounds from an action the night of Feb. 24, 1953], he was lying down in position from the tank machine guys up on top of this hill, but all of a sudden three rounds hit like, "boom, boom, boom," four feet from him, and he jumped up and at the time I thought it was funny. ... It was good assault training. Assaults are one of the hardest thing to organize, and that was very good experience. ... We had a good Christmas down there and New Year's and did a lot of drinking, and there was no tax on the liquor, we got cheap liquor and all that. So we had a good time.

SH: What kind of facilities did they have for these activities? Did they have clubs?

RW: There was not very much. ...

SH: Was this in a town?

RW: No, no, well, there was a town there. ... There was one young man got shot. All of a sudden, we hear this thing, you know, a shot go off, and fellow shot in the head. He just been a replacement, apparently was an ... OCS flunk out, and somebody was messing with his revolver and pointed it at him, and so we kind of rushed him off, and he died, and I felt sad his parents, you know, were wrongly told it was a suicide. ... Peeny was the man who shot him apparently was up for a court martial. ... So, then we had another accident on Koji ... Previously on Jane Russell. You know, I'm not sure if I should mention names. I guess I won't. An officer came on the hill, a general had sent him down, "Do you have anybody that should get decorations," and I said, "Well, you know, this fellow stayed with me all the way up," and I put him in for a Bronze Star or something. They came back with a Silver Star and we said, "Gee that's kind of strange. We didn't get shot at and this guy has got a Silver Star." So, when we were down in Kojedo, he's coming off guard duty and ... he hadn't unloaded his M1 and it went off and went through a tent and hit one of the Korean boys and the poor kid lost a leg. ... This same fellow later on, it was, I guess, maybe it was after I got home, he was with a bunch of guys, and ... they had a light

machinegun and it was jammed, and he banged on the light machine gun. It went off and he wounded three of the guys. So, he had a propensity for mishandling weapons or something.

SH: I would not have wanted to be around him.

RW: He was a very nice, good guy. I was just sorry he had such a bad experience. He was somebody we tried to contact after the war, and he wanted nothing to do with it. He'd had a bad experience. ... Joe Gonsalves who ... was a platoon sergeant with the weapons platoon, and we were talking about this with Polson later on at dinner after the war, and all these different accidents we had, and Joe says, "Boy, whoever was the safety officer should have been shot." I says, "That was me. I was the safety officer." [laughter] ... What else happened in Koje-do, but anyway that was like a breather for us. ...

SH: Did you feel better-trained when you went back?

RW: Oh, a little bit. ... Any time you do the live fire exercises, you know, it's good. Another thing that happened to us was on the way down on the ship, on the way down from Inchon.

SH: That is how they transported you.

RW: Yes, we went down from Inchon, yes, and the army had changed all the map reading symbols. They were standardizing the map reading symbols for NATO so everybody had the same symbols; this was a snap for me. ... I had taught map reading at fort dix. ... I was always fascinated by this. ... Battalion commander, Major Noble, had me run a class on this, and they were going to be tested on it. They were going to come down from headquarters and test on this knowledge or something, so I made big marks on that because I impressed him with all of my knowledge of these symbols or something. So, then later on when we were about to have the tests, Lieutenant Norwood who ... was the S2 at battalion or something, got a copy of the test results and spread them around, so everybody did well, but Major Noble said, "How did you do on the test?" Of course I did very well, because I had all the answers to it, but I think I would have done well anyway. [laughter] ... I made points with Major Noble, anyway. ... We came back into Inchon and went up on line to, it was directly north of Seoul. ... The most memorable area was Pork Chop Hill was part of it, that was one outpost, but a big outpost, and then the main line of resistance, and then ... our company area was on the main line, and then, we had ... two outposts. One was Uncle, and one was Yolk--the furthest one out. There would be self-contained platoons on each one of those, and they were pretty far out. You'd go down there by truck. It was not a ... walking distance thing, and then, out in the valley--which was all rice paddies--on the left, would be Hill 200, which was Chinese, and then, south of that was Arsenal which we held, and then behind that was a big spread called T-Bone, which was Chinese, and off to the right, were two things called Alligator Jaws, which were no man's land, but that was the whole area that we patrolled and were very familiar with. ... At that time, we got a new company commander--Polson went back to staff at division or something--and the new company commander was a young fellow named Warren Webster III from Camden, New Jersey. ... Warren was a West Point grad, and he had been a general's aide. He had seen a little bit of action, but he requested troop duty--A West Pointer wanting to get his ticket punched and so forth. So, he came down to take over the company. ... I ran into--at one of our reunions, we



have a very active regimental association reunion--a fellow who had been in the same platoon with me, and I didn't remember him, and he didn't remember me, and kind of out of the blue he says, "Did you go to Rutgers?" ... He said, "You went to Rutgers, right?" and I said, "Oh, yes. That's right." What they were doing, they would keep track of who the West Pointers were, because the West Pointers were out to build careers, and were going to take chances with them, and I didn't realize--it was the first time--that they were keeping track of that, and that's the only thing he remembered about me, was I went to Rutgers. ... They worried about the west pointers taking too many risks, you know, and building their careers and so on. So, Webster was very nice young guy, a year older than I was or something, but he did kind of scare us. ... He would talk about, "Oh, but if we don't make contact soon, we're going have to make a raid." ... A raid would be you went out and made direct contact. About that time I took out one patrol that went very deep, and we went almost to the end of T-bone and didn't encounter anybody, and we got back. ... We had a very clean patrol, except on the way back it got so cold that all the guys started worrying that if we got hit, we didn't know if we could handle the weapons, but we got through okay. Then, they had another patrol go out, and lost a man. ... Let's skip over that part, I would rather not talk about it.

SH: Were the weapons that you had to use when you first went in different than those you had to use by the time you left the military?

RW: They were the basic World War II weapons--M1, BAR, carbines--yes, and the officers all had .45s. Well, they weren't official. There were so many weapons floating around. The ordinance sergeant said, "Here's a .45." We all had .45s and carbines. ... In general, we liked the BAR, that was a good reliable weapon. The M1 was a reliable weapon; the carbine was not, most of us weren't too favorable about that, and the .45 was ridiculous. It was made to kill, you know, with the Moros in the Philippines who were on drugs, they needed that kind of stopping power, and we would have been better much better with a .38 or something like that.

SH: What about the Koreans? What about the civilians?

RW: ... We didn't see that much of them.

SH: Really?

RW: In Kojedo we'd see them. I know the little boy lost his leg, and Christmas we took a bunch of stuff over to where he was, and it seemed like we went to some school and took some candy over or something, but ... it was pretty crude. ... I got some pictures of the papasans and their funny little hats, and the A-frame with huge things of straw on them or something, but it was pretty crude. ... Now it's so dramatically different. ... It was pretty crude and ... the country was pretty beat up. ... At some point I remember ... these little kids that they flushed out who had been living in caves, and ... long hair and fingernails and they were living on what they could scrounge from the Army bases and ... there must have been about half a dozen or ten or twelve or something living in caves. They were all with long hair and long fingernails, and, you know, the poor kids are living on their own, but I don't remember too many other civilians. ... The other ones they had were Korean Service Corps, they're generally older men who were

not, you know, eligible for the draft and something, and they were carriers and they would, you know, hump stuff up the hills and so on. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Let us put the recorder back on.

RW: ... Just about the time we left Koje-do, Fernandez went up to--oh yes, that was kind of interesting--he went back to regimental headquarters as liaison officer. Then, he was assigned to the Columbian battalion because he could speak Spanish. ... He says, "The most dangerous thing was the drivers, none of them knew how to drive." [laughter] He says, "They would be all over the place," but ... he had a very interesting experience with the Columbian battalion and Davis, he was assigned somewhere. ... After you served a certain amount of time in the front, the officers, which was not fair because the enlisted men stayed the whole time on the frontline, ... we had two, three new replacement officers join the company.

SH: At the same time?

RW: Yes, at the same time. ... I was to take the weapons platoon, and this was--I remember writing home--it was like being in the rear echelon, because I was thinking, "Wow, this is terrific. I'm not in one of the rifle platoons. I'm in the weapons platoon. This is rear echelon stuff," and so of the three officers, one of them was pretty good, and the other two were a little bit wobbly. ... So, I went on R&R. I came back and the two wobbly ones were gone. ...

SH: Were they transferred out?

RW: Yes, transferred out, and I think it was done regularly. If the officers weren't cutting the mustard, they'd find a place for them in the rear. ... Then all of a sudden I'm back with the rifle platoon again, and the third platoon.

SH: Where did you go on R&R and what did you do?

RW: Tokyo, drank a lot, and had a good time, and that's all I'm going to say. [laughter] I was twenty-two, and I thought I might be killed and had a good time. ... [laughter]

SH: How long was this R&R? Two weeks, ten days?

RW: I don't seem to think it was that long. ... I can't remember. It seems like a week might be a little short to go back and come back again. ...

SH: Were you flown over?

RW: Yes, we'd fly over, yes.

SH: Was R&R on another military base?

RW: ... Well, you live at the base. ... You go into Tokyo right away. ... The first time Japan looked quaint, the next time, "Oh, it is a wonderful modern city," you know, compared to Korea. ... [laughter] When I got back from R&R, it seemed like one of the times I had a hard time getting back. ... We landed at Yong Dong Po, which was the Air Force both airfield below Seoul, and I bummed a ride. You bummed rides ... on a little Piper Cub or something like that. ... When I got back, two guys were gone, and we had Webster as the company commander, and there was a Lieutenant Brammer who was a World War II retread. He was sort of more like an administrative officer, and then, it was me and Jack Sullivan ... While I was on R&R, he was on Yoke, the outpost with Cavalluzzo who had also been the one who had replaced Sackrider as my platoon sergeant. ... Cavalluzzo was a short little feisty guy who had been 82nd Airborne and had a gravel-y New York voice. ... They apparently got out on this outpost Yoke, and I think they got spooked, and they think there's somebody out there in the barbed wire. ... I think maybe the men were putting him on a little bit, but Sullivan called back to battalion and called in his protective fires, and the battalion commander gets on the phone, and says, "Now, Sullivan, I don't think, you remember this costs us a lot of money, and you know, I don't really think you want to fire the protective fires. Are the Chinese really out there?" ... I get back the next night, and so they sent me out to stiffen them up. ... I spent the night out there with them. We were very short of officers. ... One of the officers got sent to the rear. I think one of the reasons was he had done as I had done, he had taken a patrol out and ... squatted them down and the platoon sergeant reported him to the company commander and they kicked him out. ... Webster had an idea, you know, he's going to capture a prisoner. ... Usually on patrol, you had two groups. One would be the advance group, and the other would be a support group and in theory, if this advance group made contact, the other group was to move around a flank. ... It really ended up being up a big mess. ... He took one group out of volunteers and they were going to set up an ambush and then they had another support group that was stationed nearby, and they would set up near T-Bone about halfway out in the valley, and I was the support platoon back on the main line of resistance, with the third platoon. So, they, about midnight--this is the February 22nd, 23rd--and all of a sudden they ran into trouble. ... The official report was that they ran into two companies of Chinese coming down one side of T-Bone, and there was another two companies coming on the other side of T-Bone attacking Arsenal because Arsenal got hit that same night, and we think that his patrol ran into this group coming down here, but anyway, all of a sudden you know, they're in a firefight, and grenades are going off, and machine guns and all this stuff, and so I'm their support platoon. So, we load in trucks, and we go on to down to Yoke, and I stopped at Yoke to report to the battalion commander, and Sergeant Bonar, who was my third platoon sergeant, he kind of started out without me and was kind of anxious to get out there, his friend Edward Gleason had been one of the ones who had volunteered for this patrol, and I think he was worried about Gleason, and so I'm talking to Major Noble and I said, "Oh, I don't have a radio operator," and ... the man who was operating the radio Mort Kranz says, "I'll go with you," and so he and I went out. We caught up with the other guys, and so the fire fight is going on. ... It's one thing to go out on patrol, and you might make contact. In this situation, you hear the grenades going off and the burp guns and something, and you know you're going where the sound of the action is. So, we formed a skirmish line and kind of went toward where this was, and as we approached the firing died off because they ... didn't know how many of us there were, and so they kind of backed off and stopped firing, and so as I went forward there was a couple of little trees there, and the trees that marked like an "X" of berms in the rice paddies. ... As I got up past these trees, one of ... the Korean guys who had been out there jumped and said,

"No, no, no." I had gone too far. That's where they were, and I think he probably saved my life. I think there was a guy there with a burp gun and if I had seen him, he would have blown me away. ... So, I pulled back a little bit, and then, this guy started firing up a storm. They would tend with the burp guns to do it like a hose, they would just [Editor's Note: Mr. Whitson makes a spraying noise] and so we were maybe from here to the end of the table, you know, throwing hand grenades, and, you know, firing at each other. This berm was about that high that we were hiding behind it. ... This guy was just firing up a storm, so I had two grenades, and I threw them and the radio operator Mort Kranz gave me his, and I threw those, and it stopped. I think I killed him, but I didn't know where the rest of our guys were, and I also could have done in some of our own guys. Sergeant Bonar had found his friend Gleason, and Gleason had been really badly wounded, and Bonar told me this later, that he thought both his arms and legs were blown off, which they weren't, but he asked Bonar to kill him and I think this shook Bonar up. ... He came back and said, "Lieutenant, you know, there's way too many of them. We got so many wounded. Now, we can't bring as many out. I think we should pull back." Who knew what was going on? ... I said, "Okay, we'll take as many as we can and we'll pull back." So, we went back to Yoke and at that time, I knew, "Geez, this was the wrong decision, you know. We should have gotten more people out there." ... So, they had sent down some of the second platoon guys from Yoke to be stretcher bearers and I said, "Come on, come on, get together, we're going back out there," and they say, "Oh, we don't have our weapons with us." "I don't give a damn. Come on, we're going out there anyway," and about that time they all drifted away in the darkness, but there was another platoon from George company ready to go out.

SH: You went back out?

RW: Yes. ... Part of the second platoon and Jack Sullivan, I went out with, and then we had another platoon from George Company and there was an officer there, but I'll be damned if I knew which guy, I never saw him. ... I remember one of the sergeants from George company who was very good. ... As we were just about ready to go out, we would normally take our lieutenant bars off. He said, "Lieutenant, you still got your bars on." He said, "Well, take them off," and he took them off and threw them away. ... He said, "Boy I never thought I'd be doing this." ... When we had pulled back, we had a medic with us who had been in World War II, and when we're doing our live fire exercises in Koji, ... we're supposed to be pulling back, and he was lagging behind, and I was chewing him out and saying, "Come on, come on, what are you doing?" ... "Oh," he says, "I always thought the medic was supposed to be the last one off the hill," and he was a kind of goofy looking, non-soldier guy, you know. It'd be one pant leg down or this or that or something, and when we pulled back, he stayed out. His name was "Malcolm Scott." I said, "Scott, come on, we're going." ... He said, "No, I'm staying," and one of the men said, ... "This is a direct order. He wants you to come in," and I didn't want him to give him a direct order, that was very serious. ... I didn't want him to do that, but he stayed out there, and so our next group came out and Sullivan and myself, and we had a hard time finding him. By that time the valley was full of smoke, from the firing and all this stuff, and finally we heard Scott, "Come over here. I'm over here," and he had been out there giving morphine to the wounded. He had built a little fire trying to keep them warm, and he was wounded himself, and so we got him back, and so we still needed more people out there. So, I said to Sullivan, "One of us has got to go back and get some more people," and I said, "So, I'll go back," and he said, "No,

no, you're more experienced. You stay, I'll go back." So, he went back. ... That group took a bunch of wounded, and we still had more. ...

SH: Was this still at night?

RW: Still night time, so then ... we're waiting for the next group to come up, and Peevy, who had been the one who had shot the man by accident on Koji-do, I said, "Oh, good, Peevy, I'm going to send you ... and this man back and bring some more people out." Maybe that was an earlier, maybe that was the first time around, and Peevy went back, and Peevy came back, and the other man did not. I said, "What happened to the other man?" He said, "He sprained his ankle." I said, "Peevy, you know, I'm going to see what I can do about not getting you court-martialled for what happened before." [Editors Note: Peevy later received a Bronze Star for an action on Pork Chop Hill.] He had proven himself at that time. ... We were waiting for this next group to come out and bail us out, and we were literally under the Chinese lines on T-Bone, so we were like kind of sweating it out, and they showed up, and we got the rest of the wounded out with that group. ... That was a group led by Gorman Smith who was the battalion S2, and a West Point graduate, and they came out through by Alligator Jaws and came in to where we were. They had a hard time finding us, and I blamed some of the guys who went back who were supposed to bring somebody back for not guiding them back out, but they had trouble finding us, and when we got halfway back toward Alligator Jaws, the sun was starting to come up and the Chinese started firing rifles. They were cracking over our heads. Bullets don't make a ricochet sound, they crack when they go by. ... We still had a lot of the dead out there. So, I get back to the bunker, and I've been up all night, bit of a strain, and got a call from the battalion commander, and he wants me to go down and guide the tanks out there to pick up the rest of the bodies. So, I went down and ... I was with ... a Sherman tank, which was the older tank which was part of the regimental tank platoon, and I was to go with them and guide them out to where this place was, and then they had about five tanks from the regimental tank company from division which were the more modern M48 tanks, I think. So, they would go out, and they'd shoot up the hills and keep them all pinned down while we went out with the Sherman, and so off we go to where the fire fight had taken place. ... I've been maybe one time in a tank, and so off we go, and we find this spot, and so the bog, who is the bow gunner, he was a Korean, he jumps out, and so the tank sergeant, he gets out. Next thing I know, the driver's getting out, and they're getting further and further away from the tank, and they were getting the bodies, and I'm sitting there, and my glass is half full. I've been out all night. I've been trying not to be caught out there in the daytime, and I just stayed in the tank, I just sat there. I thought, "These guys are crazy. How do you drive this damned thing?" I was sure they were all going to get killed out there, and I was going to have to get this tank back. ... So sure enough all of a sudden there was an explosion, and they come running back, and the tank sergeant has been wounded, he had a tanker helmet on--like a football helmet—he is hit in the temple. He was doing okay, he was bleeding, and they get loaded up and back we went, and he's bleeding all over me on the field jacket, full of blood and all that stuff. So, we come rolling into the company area, and I must say I had the good grace to stay hunkered down, and let the sergeant sit up there and be the hero tank commander or something, but we got the bodies back. ... The Chinese, they had booby trapped the bodies, and they had put the hand grenades--you know, the potato masher hand grenades--they put it in the shirt or ... their finger through the grenade pin so you'd pick the arm up, and ...

pop the hand grenade. ... That was how the tank Sargent got wounded. ... They had booby trapped our bodies and their bodies.

SH: Really, both of them?

RW: Yes, both of them, and so I remember we had the bodies back by the battalion aid station, and ... Doc Cable the battalion surgeon was a wonderful man, black man, but very fine man. Everybody just respected him, and I remember he made us move all those bodies away from this battalion aid station. Doc Cable, We have a wonderful picture of him ... digging the place for the battalion, I think, not having someone out there, doing it himself. He was a wonderful man, that we had wonderful respect for, a fine man, but anyway that was when I was awarded the Silver Star, and Webster was killed. ...

SH: Was Webster one of the bodies that you brought back?

RW: Yes, one of the bodies that we brought back. ... The tank sergeant ... Webster had some kind of a fancy .38 revolver--nickel plated or something like that—and the general who's aide he had been, ... had come down and was interviewing us, and I was pretty salty about that time. I had been through a lot of nonsense. I was not too respectful of senior officers or something, and so he's describing what had happened. ... He said to me, "What were you doing in the tank?" I shrugged and said, "I don't know," and the sergeant says, "He was covering us with the .50 caliber," [laughter] which I felt was very generous of him. I'm not even sure there was a .50 caliber there, I thought that was very generous offer of him and later on we got him, that sergeant, a Bronze Star for his part. ... Webster's wife was pregnant at the time when he was killed and about three or four years ago, I got a call from his son. He had tracked me down, and we got together and had lunch, and he gave me a lot of material, ... letters home from his father. I felt a little bit intrusive, but ... I was at the time historian for our regimental association. I wrote an article about him, and he was a fairly wealthy family from Camden, and it was obvious he could have come back into the family, and the son seemed to think that he was going to do that, and I kind of read the letters. I didn't think so. I think he was going to stay in. ... He easily could have--company commanders usually didn't go out on patrol. It could have easily been me he sent out there to do that. ...

SH: Do you think he did that to advance his career?

RW: ... I think he came back on line to advance his career. ... He was a brave man, I guess, he was willing to take the risk and so on. ... We have a very active association, about six men I served with, and one of them is Bob Petzol, and Bob was one of the ones who was left behind the first time. ... The first time we ran into each other, he says, "I don't know whether to knock you down or hug you. I'll knock you down for not taking me back the first time, but coming back and getting me the second time," and Bob was badly wounded in the spine, and was a carpenter, and couldn't hold a job and worked for the Veterans Administration and couldn't have children. They had to adopt children, which was another casualty of the war.

SH: What kind of medical treatment did you get?

RW: I was never wounded. ...

SH: Can you talk a little about the medics that stayed out on the field?

RW: ... Sargent Malcolm Scott, after the war, about '55, we got a Silver Star for him. ... Somehow he was overlooked. We just assumed that because what he did was so outstanding that, of course he'd get something, and then it turned out he didn't. He just fell through the cracks, and so Sullivan and I ... and some of the others--my radioman, Mort Kranz who had been awarded the Bronze Star--we wrote things up, and Scott did get the Silver Star while he was at Fort Dix in about '55. I know from that night that Scott would go around giving morphine injections, and I think ... now they train them, use a piece of cord or rope to use as a tourniquet. They teach them automatically to use tourniquets, and I think some of the guys could have been saved if somebody had been smart enough. An odd thing was there was a quartermaster officer out on that patrol, and he was kind of sent out to get some experience, and he went out on this patrol and he came back all right, probably handled himself very well. He was giving morphine to the wounded and going on and so forth, and I always kind of wondered who he was and what his name was. ... Bob Petzold's experience when he was left behind the first time around he could hear the Chinese moving around and maybe bayoneting some of the guys, and he said he had his .45, and he was getting ready to shoot himself if they came near him, and then, someone gave him some morphine and all he remembered after he was picked up the second time, you know, seeing a big white star--which was on the tanks that had brought him out--and he said, "I got out home free," and then, they put him on the these Bell helicopters--the little helicopters that had a litter on either side--and some of these guys hadn't even flown before, you know, and they're up there. ... Those are about as a terrifying experience as anything, going back in these helicopters, but it wasn't the evacuation that they had with Vietnam that they had the Bell helicopters, and there weren't very many of them. The commanding general had one, and the artillery commander had one, and then, the medical evacs were, [the H-21] Piasecki, the flying bananas [helicopters]. They were funny shaped things, but they didn't come all that far forward. ...

SH: How did you take care of these men?

RW: They'd go back to battalion aid probably on jeep litters. ... Lots of time the tanks would go out and they'd meet the tanks halfway and bring them in.

SH: What kind of air cover did you get or did you have?

RW: The only time was out on the Iron or Horse Mountain. ... Some jets came in and dropped some things, and I thought they were pretty far away, and the sergeant said, "Oh, no, those are close," but that was about the only time. I didn't see too many. We sort of complained that the Marines would have an integrated unit. ... When they would do amphibious landings, they would have an air flight assigned to this certain something, and they were on call, whereas with the Army, you had to call up the Air Force. ... We always complained that the Marines got immediate action, whereas we didn't, but I don't even remember seeing that many air strikes. ... Then, after that, now we were down to three officers. Sullivan, Brammer, and Myself ...

SH: Did you go back and sleep?

RW: Not the nights of February 21st and 22nd ... All I remember is I got down there by the tank because we were going to go out, and I didn't have anything to eat, and I said, "You got anything to eat in there?" They had a big can of tomato juice. So, I drank a bunch of tomato juice; that was my breakfast. [laughter] ... So, two nights after that, Sullivan takes out a patrol, and they go out pretty much where I had gone up by T-Bone and back in. ... He came back almost the same way I did cutting across the Alligator Jaws. They got about halfway over, and they ran into an ambush, and so again I was the relief patrol up there and I go out to help them. I can hear the burp guns and the grenades going off, and I felt bad because this was my old second platoon, the guys I really knew and was fond of and so on. So, I got my guys and we went down by truck again to Yoke, and it occurred to me that we had been using that Yolk exit an awful lot for the last few nights and I think, "You know, what a place to set up an ambush right off that thing." So, instead of going out the end of there, I cut off at about halfway, and where they were was over here somewhere. ...

SH: You are motioning to the right.

RW: To the right, and so I cut off and all of a sudden, I'm thinking, "Holy smokes, where are the minefields? I don't have any idea where the minefields are. It was February, maybe the ground is hard enough I'm not going to set anything thing off, and am I leading these poor guys down through a minefield?" Just about when we hit parallel, to where we would have been if we had come out of yoke, this enormous artillery mortar barrage hit right where we would have come off, and I made the right decision for the wrong reasons. I thought there might be an ambush out there, but it would have hit right where we were coming out, and I think what happened was when Sullivan ... earlier was out on the outpost, Yoke outpost, and called in artillery fire and they refused it, again he was calling for artillery fire, and they knew he was really being attacked, and they gave him artillery fire, but they didn't have any idea where he was. They set off the damn protective fire for Yoke, and I got that feeling because when I was doing my after-action report and I see the battalion commander looking at his chief of staff and I thought, "Uh oh, something's fishy there," and I think that's what happened. So, I got out with Sullivan, and Sullivan was wounded, and Cavalluzzo was wounded. Herbie Golden, who was a young eighteen year old kid, light machine gunner, who was the friend of everybody--everybody was fond of him--he was killed, and ... the Chinese had snatched at least three guys as prisoners.

SH: Really?

RW: Yes. So, we got those guys back. ...

SH: You got the POWs back that were taken, or the people that were left?

RW: ... Not the POWs, the people that were left, and Sullivan was wounded in the hand, and one of the guys had asked him, "Okay, to throw the hand grenades?" He said, "Yes, yes, throw the damn hand grenade," and he didn't throw it far enough, and Sullivan got some shrapnel in the nose, ... but I forget how many were killed and wounded that night. ... We're going through a whole period with hardly any casualties, and all of a sudden, within two nights, we had almost



half the company wiped out. So, then about three nights after that, ... now there's Brammer and myself, the only officers left, and so they wanted another patrol to go out, and this time they had nothing but recruits. ... A new officer came in, and I was probably more scared that night than I was at any other time. ... One of our second platoon guys, Sergeant Miles, he was the only man on the patrol, other than myself who had been out there before. So, I'm thinking, "Holy smokes, I should take the point on this thing." ... Should I ask Miles to do it, or should I do it myself, and Miles came up and volunteered to do it, and I was ever grateful to him, and we went out. We called it a confidence patrol. We didn't go out very far which sort of builds confidence in the new guys, ... but we went out to the tip of Alligator Jaws, and I was struggling. It was going to be a full moon that night, and I was struggling to get out there and get in position before the full moon came out, and these guys are bumping into each other and tripping on the wires and this and that, and then, of course about halfway out there, the full moon comes out. We're out in the middle of the valley, and ... it wasn't that big a hill, you know, but pretty steep and this one kid, "Sir, sir, I just can't make it!" I said, "Get your ass up the hill." Tossed him up the hill, and all I could think about was all these guys who had been out there in the cold, suffering, wounded and never a muttering a word, and this kid complained about not getting up that hill. ... Then, I get up there in this bright moonlight--you could see all over the valley--and I think, "Oh, boy, if we do see anybody we could call in some artillery," and of course they were smart enough not to come out there in the bright moonlight either. So, anyway, we got back from that one okay and didn't make any contact, but I don't know what would have happened if we made contact because these guys didn't know what they were doing. ... Then, there were some talk by the battalion commander Major Noble of maybe I would get the company, and so ... this could be kind of interesting. Then, Gorman Smith, who had been the S2 who came out the last time around--West Pointer--he got the company, and I was the executive officer. ... Your company commander is personally responsible financially for everything. ... First, he wants everything spread out, "We're going to do an inventory." I said, "You know what I think? I think we should practice assaults. We got all these new guys, and assaults are the hardest thing to do. We should go out and practice assaults." [Editors Note: The company later made an assault on Pork Chop Hill] and now we counted all this equipment and stuff. So then, the regimental surgeon was ... my next door neighbor in Ridgewood--next door being the other side of an athletic field, an older man I knew causally, Greg Brown, and so Greg used his influence and got me transferred back to regimental headquarters, and I didn't feel too badly because you generally got transferred back. I just got it expedited a little bit, and so I went back to regimental headquarters as liaison officer, and there were three of us, and one would be night duty officer, and the other would go be liaison and generally go to the ROK unit to our right, and the other would be liaison to division, and we'd all take turns and split it up. ... That was pretty easy duty, I used to enjoy driving over to the ROK unit, you'd drive over in the jeep early in the morning and the top of the hill was pretty and all that stuff, and you go there, and you usually have a big breakfast and go to the briefing. ... Then, when you went to division headquarters and Wayne Smith was the division commander--a two star general--and he was, you know, "Mr. Everything by the Numbers" and this and that, and the officers all had to--when they're at a meeting--had to wear colored scarves of the branch of service--red for artillery, and blue for infantry--and he had a wooden carbine that was supposed to be used as a pointer. It was all Mickey Mouse or something, and he constantly put down the officers making presentations. ... It turned me off a little bit about regular Army. The night duty officer sits there with the switchboard and the people would report in and in the morning you'd have a report. You'd have to call the regimental commander and

give him a report about what happened today. "Well, so and so company had contact, and they had the one KIA and three WIA," or something like this, and it struck me that our nightly reports were almost the same as what we get in the newspaper from Afghanistan. You know, they'd list two or three, we would have two or three almost every night, but it was, you know, pretty cool duty, and see whatever happened over all. ...

SH: Describe what kind of a base it was.

RW: We were pretty far back, rear echelon, you know. I can't even tell you how far back it was--a couple of miles maybe or something like that. ... We were in tents, but it was cushy. We had an officer's club ... or a tent in an officer's club and liquor and houseboys--Korean houseboys. The houseboys would bend over backwards, you know, because ... the next step was to be drafted into the Army. That was the cushiest job, houseboy, and we'd go to movies, you know, and so on. It was rear echelon. [laughter] ... The troop carrier command in Japan wanted to do a practice drop, you know, send in supplies by parachute, and so I'm airborne. "I'll take that one," ... I get my little manual out, and it says you put a big arrow on the ground showing the wind direction. So, there was a kind of a ravine around a river that I selected for my drop zone and put the arrow out there in the direction of the wind, and here comes this airplane from Japan and circles around once and comes right down the arrow, or right across the arrow, the way he was supposed to be. Then, he circles around and comes down directly with the arrow, which meant that's where the wind was blowing. So, all these colored parachutes come out of the plane, and all these generals in a grand stand are there watching this drop and all these parachutes come down and about three of them hit the top of the ravine, the rest of them go off into the river. [laughter] ... I wish I had my copy of my official report about it because I thought it was quite amusing. [laughter] ... Then, another request came down, and there was inter-service conflict, and we did have one of the Navy planes come over and a bomb had hung up in the rack, and it had dropped on our position and killed one of the sergeants in the, I forget ordinance or something like that, and so there was a lot of anger. They say, "We want an officer to come to Japan," and "we're going to do this course at the Air Force and we're going to, you know, make everybody feel better." So, I could do that. "Could I do that?" [laughter] So, I went back to Japan, and we went to--I forget what the Air Force base name was--and there were some Navy guys and Air Force guys and Army guys and pretty typical, we checked in. We had our rooms assigned, and we went back to our room and on each bed was a bottle of scotch and that was sort of the tone of the thing, but we'd have a little course in the morning, and then we'd all go to Tokyo in the afternoon, but it was interesting. ... They would take us out, and they'd have planes go by and do strafing runs, and they'd show us how to do this. ... I've forgotten, but it was pretty interesting, their idea was to try to, "We're all going to work together now. We got our problems. You got your problems." ... About that time I thought maybe I was going to stay in the Army, and I had all my recommendations and my papers made out, and Colonel Metaxis, who was the assistant regimental commander, and he was probably the officer I respected most that I have ever worked with. He was very fine, a very fine man. So, he was due to go down to Eighth Army headquarters, regular medical inspection, and I went down with him then to get my medical inspection. So, we went down with the jeep driver, a Native American. ... The Colonel was meeting his friends at Eighth Army, and the jeep driver and I were supposed to go down to Yong Dong Po--the airfield--and spend the night there. So, the jeep driver and I decided maybe we wouldn't do that, we'd go somewhere else. We picked the colonel the next morning and he

says, "Wow, you guys were right on the heart of that thing," and I say, "In the heart of what?" ... Maybe the only time during the war they came over in biplanes, and they bombed Yong Dong Po, and they set some oil tanks on fire or something, and we weren't there. ... [laughter]

SH: Did you not tell anyone?

RW: ... No, no. Not many people know that story, and I'm blushing. [laughter] ... Anyway, I had all my papers made out and my medical stuff and recommendations, and I began thinking about it, and I'm thinking, "You know, Smith came down and got the company, West Pointer. I'm always going to be fighting the West Pointers, the 'ring knockers'." and part of it was I didn't know what I wanted to do. So, I thought that maybe the Army was just you know a cop out and so on and so forth. So, I end up carrying all the papers home with me. ...

SH: While you were in Korea, did you know that there were peace talks going on?

RW: Yes, I was just going to say that, people make a big thing about that, "Oh, you poor guys were fighting over there with the peace talks," we didn't know anything about that.

SH: Really?

RW: Yes, we didn't get any newspapers. I don't think any of us even thought about it. ... We were more concerned with what was going on where we were. ...

SH: What kind of communications did you have of what was going on in the rest of the world or even in Korea?

RW: No, nothing. I mean they had *The Stars and Stripes*, but I don't even think that any of us ever read it.

SH: Did you have any idea how the war was going, or what was happening in your area?

RW: Yes, pretty much what was happening in front of us. ... At one time I seemed to think, we were going to do a big push. ... Also what happened while I was there was the first battle of Pork Chop Hill. ... I was back at regiment at that time, but Gorman Smith and Easy company made an assault on Pork Chop Hill. Old Baldy was off to the left, and Pork Chop Hill to the right of that, and the Columbian battalion had got knocked off of Old Baldy. That means from Old Baldy the Chinese can look behind Pork Chop Hill, and there was one road that went down to Pork Chop Hill, and they kept making the attacks directly down that road to Pork Chop Hill. ... Smith took our old company around and attacked from the Chinese side, and as he said, "It was all or nothing." It was going to be a great idea or it's going to be a terrible idea, but he successfully ... made his attack up on the reverse slope of the hill, but I had no involvement. I was up there once or twice on the back side of Pork Chop ... boy, the bad feelings came back. They were having a hell of a time and that first battle, and then, there was a second battle in June, and those were just meat grinders. Those were terrible, both sides were just dumping artillery and mortar down. ... It was terrible and ... a little sense of guilt that I had, but also I

wish I had prevailed and that he had practiced assaults rather than counting inventory because that was the time he really could have used it.

SH: Who won that battle?

RW: He did. [laughter] He was the company commander.

SH: You went to Korea as a replacement. Did people come in as units or as single replacements?

RW: All single replacements.

SH: Even the enlisted men?

RW: ... Yes, the bad part was you're there usually nine months. If you were on the line the whole time you got the most points, and the guys in the back would stay there longer because they got fewer points, but somebody on the line the whole time would stay there nine months. So, usually, the first three months they're green, pretty good the next three months, then the last three months they're thinking about going home and going to take care of themselves. ... That was not so good, and I think in Vietnam they got around that somehow. ...

SH: Did you ever meet S.L.A. Marshall? [Editor's Note: S.L.A. Marshall was a United States combat historian during World War II and the Korean War. While he was the author of many books regarding war, including *Pork Chop Hill: The American Fighting Man in Action--Korea, Spring 1953* (1956).]

RW: No, I never did, but he did the interviews for [the movie] *Pork Chop Hill* (1959). ... The one who was kind of the star of *Pork Chop Hill*, Walt Russell--whom Gregory Peck played--he stayed in the service and was in Vietnam and was badly wounded by a sniper and was paralyzed on one side. He's come to a couple of our reunions. I felt bad about him. ... So, anyway, I came home--I think in June, maybe a little earlier than that--on the same ship I went over on. ... One incident that amused me, we're in Inchon, and I think this happened all the time, the old timers would stand there, and the recruits or the new guys would come in, and they'd all hoot and holler at them. ... The poor guys would come in, and, "Ah, you're going get it," and all this. [laughter] I remember we were in an open truck--a bunch of officers--and we're going along one of the roads, going to an officers' club or something like that, and one of the guy's hats fell off and all of a sudden--this is back hundred yards down the road--all these Korean prostitutes came out in their little slips and nighties, and they picked up his hat. So, he gets down, and he goes to get his hat, and they're all playing catch with him, you know, "keep away" with the hat. ... All these officers in the truck were hooting and hollering at him, and he's got to get his hat now and two little Korean girls took it. I just thought it was such a picture, you know. [laughter]

SH: If you only had your camera.

RW: I know it, yes. So, I came home on the same *Marine Adder*, ... and I remember at the dock ... there was a band at the dock, and there were some girls throwing streamers at us and all that stuff. It was all very nice. ...

SH: Did you come back to the same place you left from?

RW: ... No, we went to Seattle. We all talked about, "We're all going to get into San Francisco, and all get together at the Top of the Mark and have a drink," and that never happened. ... [laughter]

SH: How was the trip coming back compared to the going there?

RW: Yes, going back was nothing, piece of cake, ... an easy trip. ... I flew back to Camp Kilmer, ... flew back from Seattle.

SH: Did you really? You did not have to take the train?

RW: No, they flew back from Seattle to Camp Kilmer, where I was mustered out, but then I looked up my friend, Pat Gorog who I had dated in college, and I was seeing her maybe two or three weeks or something and that was it. ... After that, I was kind of a little shocked to find that people weren't kind of consumed by what was happening over there, you know. Life was going on, ... probably the same thing as it is here with us going to Afghanistan--life goes on, we do this, and we do that, and then, you know, "Don't you realize what's going on over there?"

SH: To come back into Kilmer must have been funny because you had been a freshman at Raritan Arsenal.

RW: Yes, full circle, whole circle. ... I'm going to run out of steam eventually. [laughter]  
You're all very patient.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: I am going to turn the tape back on.

RW: Yes, okay. When I was historian of the 17th Infantry Association, we'd write columns every quarterly for the Buffalo Bugle. ... One of the columns I wrote on and I said, "Based on my experience as a television commercial producer, I'll feel free to review some war movies for you." So, I reviewed the various movies I'd seen and thought were terrible. You know, most of them were just awful and off base. The very best one was *Battleground* (1949), and it was done by an experienced war veteran and some of the people he had recruited into it and so forth. ... I can send you a copy of my thing, but as I remember, it was *Paths of Glory* (1957), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)--the old one--*Battleground* (1949) and ... *A Walk in the Sun* (1945), and as it turned out when I finished, three out of four were done by the same director. You know, those were all very realistic, where most of them are just shams, you know, just terrible. ... As I say, I produced television commercials, but I did a series of television commercials with Jane Russell for the Playtex Bra, and I got to know her quite well and played tennis with her. ...

I never mentioned to her that I had assaulted Jane Russell [the hill in Korea]. [laughter] ... I don't know why I didn't say anything. ...

SH: Let us return to the Korean War. You had previously mentioned that you kept all the letters to and from your mother and father.

RW: Yes, I always credited my sister with, she typed them all up. She said, "No, no, it was my mother, she said you have to keep them for historical interest," and so I have copies of all my letters home, and I would share those if there's something you want. ...

SH: Did you get regular mail service?

RW: Yes, because we were in a static position, mail kept up pretty well. ...

SH: How were the holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, away from home?

RW: ... Of course, we were in a golden position being down in Koje-do. We were there for Christmas, Thanksgiving--no not Thanksgiving--but it wasn't bad, you know. We got some packages from home, and as I say, the liquor was very cheap. [laughter]

SH: Was there a Red Cross presence?

RW: Yes, there was a Red Cross man. I remember seeing him on Jane Russell. He came up with something, and yes, he was there. I remember him being there, and another one that everyone mentioned was the Catholic priest, Father Rooney, who was a real character. He would come way up on the lines, and he was a good source of sacramental wine and things. ... [laughter]

SH: Was Father Rooney your chaplain?

RW: Yes, and the other one was Father Strube, who was the Protestant chaplain, they were both good men. If we can go back to postwar a little bit, I didn't stay in the reserve. ... We were living in New York City, and I was in the reserve, and they somehow assigned me to a quartermaster group off in Jersey City, and I went over there a few times. "Well, this is crazy, you know. I'm not quartermaster. What am I doing going to Jersey City?" We were living in Tudor City near the UN building, and so they transferred me to an infantry outfit, the 77th Division, which ... met at an armory at the other end of 42nd Street. Well, that wasn't too bad. I could go right down 42nd Street, but I found they were a bunch of bums. ... The officer who had been pulled off the line, there he was, and I found these guys weren't doing anything--it was a night out on the wife or something--and I stayed there a couple of months, and then I quit that, and got out of the reserve. ...

SH: What did you plan to do when you came home?

RW: I didn't know, and so, I went to New York.

SH: Did you think about going back to school?

RW: No, but I started interviewing around and one of my best friend's father was an executive for Curtiss-Wright, and I went over and interviewed there, and I thought, "You know, here's a bunch of engineers. I'll be one of the guys who's not an engineer, and that doesn't smell right," and I talked to some insurance company, and they said, ... "You're going to let your hair grow, and you're got to wear this kind of shoes." Well, I don't want to do that, and somehow I stumbled onto an advertising agency, and ... I wasn't too sure what they did, but it looked like fun, [laughter] and they had a program that you'd work in the mail room for three months, and then, you could pick any department you wanted, and you worked there for a month, you come back to the mail room. ... So, I started doing that and it looked ... interesting. I started working in the art department on the paste up desk, you know, and then I got into a little TV art department. TV was just coming in, and so, it's a little--I don't know--six people, a group or something. I got in the TV art department and started doing that, and I kind of faked my lack of art experience and went to another agency, and then, I kind of went to another agency and became an art director producer, and then I got into producing, and then I jumped the fence, and I had my own production company for a long time, but it was sort of following a path of interest, you know, or of least resistance. I don't know which. ... For young people, I always recommend advertising, there's so many facets to it. ... I've always found they're bright interesting people. ... Of all the people I worked with, I enjoyed working with and a lot of variety and a lot of this, and so I never regretted it. I always wondered if I had stayed in the Army how I would have done or something--done any better--but I looked at the Gregory Peck character Walt Russell, he was wounded and paralyzed, and Sandy Polson stayed in and he got a battalion and retired as a Lt. Colonel, but I don't know Colin Powell wasn't West Point, and he ... became Chief of Staff. So, he did all right. I don't know.

SH: How hard was it to come back and realize that the world had gone on and hardly seemed to be aware of what was going on in Korea?

RW: Yes, it seemed like a different world, you know, or a little bit to that point. I've probably never done what we have just done in as much detail. ... My wife and children probably could not tell you a war story, ... but I've never done this, and you find that it's such a different world people don't know what you're talking about, and it's, "Oh, you poor guys are over there suffering." It wasn't all suffering all the time, or what they don't understand the technical thing about it, and pretty soon you'd stop talking about it, you know. It just kind of dried up and people get hesitant to ask you about it. "Oh, you're in Korea, and you got a Silver Star or something," but then they kind of back away, and they don't. "Oh, it may be too personal," or maybe you're plodding into something that's going to make you feel bad, or this, but I think with most veterans when they don't talk about it, it's they've found their audience doesn't know what to ask. ... Well, you did very well. [laughter] They say the veterans clam up or something. We quickly learn that they don't want to hear war stories or they misunderstand them. ... My other point was--how many years ago--twelve years ago now, I got a call from Joe Gonsalves, and Joe was, when I was with the platoon leader of the weapons platoon, Joe was the platoon sergeant, and Joe is, my God, he must be four foot four or something like that--little bitty guy and always very gruff and rough, and I get this call from Joe and he says, "Is this the Richard Whitson who was in the 17th? ... This is Joe Gonsalves." I says Joe, "I'm sorry, I don't remember you," and

so we keep going. All of a sudden it struck me and I pictured this little guy, and it seemed to me he used to wear those Army overcoats, he looked like Snuffy Smith. I said, "Oh, Joe, I remember you," and he says, "Describe me." I say, "You're not too tall." He said, "Bingo." ... [laughter] As Stu Namm did with the video he made "Battle of the 38th Parallel", Joe tracked down the guys from the company, and he wrote a book that is about Easy Company '52 through '53 and did a wonderful job documenting it, and a good part of what he based on my letters home. ... He did a wonderful job of tracking people down, and he's got statistics and so forth, and probably in that year officers were eighty-seven percent casualties. ... [Editor's Note: Snuffy Smith was a short "hillbilly" moonshiner in the American comic strip, *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith*.]

SH: But you were not aware of that going into Korea.

RW: Oh, no, we were pretty aware. The officers were at high risk. ... No matter what war, infantry officers are at high risk. ... Then, Joe said, "Oh, yes, ... Jack Sullivan has been trying to get in touch with you," and Jack had written a book, and Jack's book was very one-sided presenting his own thinking. I came out fine, ... but he upset a lot of people with his book as somebody said, "He's a, you know, platoon leader who hadn't been over there very long and he thought he was a ... battalion commander or something." I shouldn't say that because Jack has since died. ... It turns out there was this 17th Infantry Association which I didn't know anything about and I started going to the reunions, and they're a group that meets, a reunion every year, and the first couple of ones my wife didn't go with me, and then she went, and now she knows the ladies, and we look forward to it. ... At one time they broke up the regiments, and they had battalions which they ... would do modularly and create into brigades, and ... one of the regimental commanders who was active in the association was Bill Quinn, whose daughter was Sally Quinn, the gossip columnist in Washington. He was a real rough tough guy. ... That was when the reporters, and we were Buffalo, from the call sign, and "Oh, there's Buffalo Bill Quinn," and they made a big thing about that, and so when they were going to break up the regiments into battalions he goes to Colin Powell, he said, "No way can you break up my regiment." "Alright, alright, I'll tell you what. We'll take this battalion. This will be the first battalion of the 17th Infantry." So, that unit was stationed in Alaska. ... Those guys had been very active and so forth, and then, that group went over to Iraq and served in Iraq. Then, when they came back to Alaska, the Army in its wisdom arbitrarily said, "No, now you're the number something-something, and we're going to start a new 1st Battalion at Fort Lewis." So, a group of ... the officers of the association went out to Fort Lewis for the inauguration, and it was kind of neat to meet these young guys, and these are all now volunteers, and they're just wonderful young men, and so we were at the, you know, trooping of the colors and putting in the campaign ribbons onto the new thing. So, they had us all doing this, and ... one of the members Gil Isham is Indian, and so, we're standing in line and he says, "Here. You take Wounded Knee, and I'll take the Little Big Horn." [laughter] Those are the ones we put up. This guy has got a good sense of humor. ... Two years ago, we went back out to Fort Lewis, and the 1st Battalion is now getting ready to go over, first to Iraq, then they switched to Afghanistan, and they took us out on the firing range, and we rode around on the Stryker vehicles and met all the young men and the officers, and they come to our banquet, and just a very fine group of men.

SH: Was this about ten years ago that you discovered the group?



RW: Yes, but my wife, she knows the people, and the wives all know each other, and have a very good time, and then, last year we were in San Antonio, and then this year we're going back to Fort Benning, and I was the head chairman of the board and the historian, and we had close to a rift between the young guys and the old guys. ... The old guys did not want to let go, and I was kind of the bridge and got the thing going to the young guys, ... and the young guys have got it going well here and I think ... I'm going to kind of back out. This may be our last reunion. ...

SH: Did your unit go to Vietnam as well?

RW: No, they did not. ... That was part of our problem, the association was a jump from the Korean guys, and ... the Army tried an experiment--they called it cohort--where ... the recruits came in, they went to Fort Benning, and took basic training, and then they kept them all together ... and sent them to Fort Ord, and these guys have as much strong feeling about the regiment of all those who served in combat because they spent their whole time with one unit together. ... Because we weren't really in Vietnam, they had one company in Vietnam that was Company D, and they guarded an airfield, and it was short timers who they were getting ready to send home, and they put them in this thing temporarily to guard the airfield. So, we have a campaign thing that says Vietnam, but in truth we didn't have much of a presence there.

SH: How do you think being in the Korean War and in the military affected the man you became?

RW: I don't know, maybe self-confidence. I mean it was experience since I survived and didn't get hurt, you know--glad I had the experience. I don't know, just not afraid of very much, I guess, you know. Got some good children.

SH: That is good.

RW: Good, strong children.

SH: What did you think of Vietnam?

RW: I think that was a shame. ... The poor guys going through that without the support of the public is a terrible thing. If we were maybe ignored when we came back, they were spat on. So, it's a shame. ... I felt like if we hadn't been in Korea, Korea would be all like what North Korea is now. ... If you feel a good reason for having been there, it would have been just like it is now instead of the prosperous country that it is, you know. Yes, I feel if there was any justification for being there, that was it.

SH: Have you been back to Korea?

RW: No, some of the guys have and I guess I don't have any burning desire to, you know, but this Colonel Mataxis, who I say was the colonel, and he was very active in the association, and he was at one of the reunions at Fort Benning, whoever was the speaker said, "All right, now

who was in World War II?" and "Who's in Korea?" and "Who was in Vietnam?" and ... Mataxis put up his hand for each one. Plus, in his sixties he had gone to Afghanistan working with the guerillas, you know, the Taliban, I guess, fighting the Russians or something. He was something.

SH: Really?

RW: Yes, very fine man. ... You rarely see senior officers down on the very frontlines. ... He would come down to the outposts. I just had great respect for him. ...

SH: Did other officers come to the front or was it more just for show?

RW: ... No, you'd rarely see them. ... General Wayne Smith would ride by in his helicopter. He'd fly by, and you'd salute him, and he'd salute you back from the helicopter, [laughter] but no, not many.

SH: How aware were you of what President Truman and the MacArthur were doing?

RW: Hardly anything at all. It's interesting. ... The people we're seeing in Maine where the house that we're staying is owned by my wife's cousin, and he's blind and he, a year ago loaned me an ... audiotope, I can't think of the author, but a really excellent thing about the war and I've been playing the tapes as we drive along, CDs, ... and I'm really learning a lot about it, ... probably more than I did then. I just had a sketchy outline of what was happening then.

SH: Is it true that you are finding out more as time goes on?

RW: Yes.

SH: Do you think that it is because of the anniversary coming up that more is coming out?

RW: ... Maybe, ... so many of the books that were written were kind of broad scale, and I kind of look ... for our experience, ... and we could never find too much, but I thought the Pork Chop Hill book was quite good. ... They did a good job at that.

SH: Have you been down to the Korean Monument?

RW: Yes, I went ... when that was commemorated or something. I like it better than the Vietnam, and the Vietnam looks to me like victims, and everyone who sees it, "Oh, these poor guys," or something, and the Korean War looks like they were doing something. The only thing that bothers me is the ponchos, and ... we would never think about going out wearing ponchos. Some of the guys said they did, but I would never think of going out on patrol in ponchos. One, they would make noise, and two, it might encumber you with your weapons, and I felt like the sculptor ... said, "They look better with ponchos on," or something, but aside from that I liked the characters. They look like they're doing something. They look real. The weapons look real, and their actions look real. So, I like the monument, yes.

SH: So you did not wear ponchos.

RW: No, ... we got wet. [laughter]

SH: What about getting hot showers?

RW: I can remember maybe two or three showers the whole time I was there except maybe for R&R. ... There was one shower. ... They'd set up a tent with the shower heads and all that stuff, and I remember I had just finished showering and ... got my clothes on when they started shelling the tent, and these guys were running out of the tent in the buff and some of them with cartridge belts on and all this stuff, and they struck that tent and boy, off it went. [laughter] That was another time a dud came pretty close.

SH: Really?

RW: Yes, I was in a ditch, and the dud came in, ... I hoped they burned the sleeping bag I had, because it was pretty foul, [laughter] the same sleeping bag for nine months.

SH: You were probably thankful that you did not have that sense of smell.

RW: That's right, that's right. It saved me. ...

SH: How did you meet your wife?

RW: ... In New York I was living ... with three guys, ... four of us. ... We all met in the mail room, and we went down to Sea Bright, New Jersey for the summer--and when the summer was over, we were having a pretty good time, and we decided, "Let's all stick together." We had a wonderful apartment on West 46th Street between 9th and 10th Avenue, ... Hell's Kitchen, and you go down to a little alley, and it opened up in a courtyard, and there was a little three story building that was the original coach house for the Clinton Estate back in Revolutionary times. ... It was a wonderful place for parties and probably ... only guys could stay there because of the neighborhood. One of my roommates was dating a girl who had two other roommates, and they kind of tried to fix me up with this one roommate. ... We didn't get along too well, and then, when this couple got married, I met my wife at that wedding, and we ... hit it off right away. She's from Tennessee, and I was ... racing a sports car, and I think I was coming--a little bit--coming off the high of jumping out of airplanes and shooting guns off. ... The advertising agency was a little bit bland. ... I had a sports car and my wife would go with me. We went up to Watkins Glen, and off here and there, and had a wonderful time, and then got married the next spring. Then, we lived in Manhattan for about six years. Then, she got pregnant. We couldn't find an apartment big enough or afford it. ... We moved out to Westport, and we were up there for another six years, built a house in Weston, and just about that time I got an offer to go to California, and so we said, "Well," it was supposed to be a two year contract in California, then a two year contract in England. ... "That sounds pretty good." So, we rent the house we had built. ... We got to California. ... It wasn't as bad as we thought it was going to be, stayed in Los Angeles for about fifteen, sixteen years, had my own production company. ... When I went to Clorox in Oakland, and I was their expert TV guy, and so we moved up there and we lived up in

the Bay Area for another fifteen, sixteen years. So, when I retired, she'd been chasing me all around the country with no protest and everything, game to go, and I said, "You want to retire to Knoxville?" ... We did--been there about almost ten years.

SH: Have you stayed connected to Rutgers or to your class at all?

RW: No, I haven't. I religiously read the magazines and I just saw that my friend Doug Gosnell had died, and I was sorry to hear about that. He had kind of a bad time. I don't know he was teaching up at CCNY, I don't know, but he had a bad time. Another was Marsh Johnson who is currently has been very active in the fraternity and Rutgers, and he's the one who kind of wrote the column. ... The other fellows who were infantry ROTC, when it was George Hodgekiss and Ron Rogers and George I had met afterwards. ... His platoon went into a mine field and some of the guys got hurt, and so George went in to help them and another mine went off, and he probably lost a kidney and was all right and survived and so forth. ... He was pretty badly wounded. ... He, I think still lives up in Verona in ... northern New Jersey. ... Briefly we got together. It's very hard to keep up with everybody. ... I have not been a loyal son. [laughter] I've donated a modest amount every year, and I put my Rutgers stickers on letters to people I think will be impressed by them.

SH: Do you think your Rutgers education served you well?

RW: Sure, it was fine. It was a great time here. I loved it.

SH: In closing, I just want to say thank you again for making time to come on your way to Maine from Tennessee. We look forward to talking to you soon.

RW: Well, thank you both Rebecca and Sandra.

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

Reviewed by Alexandra McKinnon 6/15/2012

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 6/19/2012

Reviewed by Richard Whitson 6/12/2018