

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN P. WIGGIN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

QUECHEE, VERMONT

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with John Wiggin on July 22, 2006, in Quechee, Vermont. Did I pronounce that correctly?

John Wiggin: Yes.

SI: With Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for having me here. I would like to say, on the record, that your response to the Class of 1944 letter really got this whole trip to New England kick started. Once you responded, the Class of 1944 leaders said, "People are interested. Let us try to get as many people involved as possible." Thank you very much. To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

JW: I was born in New York, on April 20, 1921. April 20th was Hitler's birthday, [laughter] for a little added [information]. ... Believe it or not, my second year at Rutgers, my mother drove me down from Englewood, New Jersey, and she looked up and there was the doctor that delivered me. ... He was a Delta Phi [laughter] and he was going back to the fraternity house.

SI: He was a Delta Phi from Rutgers.

JW: Yes.

SI: Do you remember his name?

JW: No, I'm sorry I don't remember his name, but it's rather interesting, and she started to talk [to him] and she said, "Here's the child that you delivered," [laughter] interesting.

SI: You were born in New York City.

JW: Yes.

SI: Before we started the tape, you were telling me a little bit about your family history. Could you tell me about your father's background? First, tell me his name, and then, a little bit about his background.

JW: My dad's name was Herbert Elsworth. He was named Elsworth after the first Yankee shot during the Civil War, [laughter] as just a little added information. ... My dad's mother was born in Norwich, Vermont, and he, as a young boy, always used to go up there every summertime. ... Dad was a sophomore in high school when his father died, and his brother was at Dartmouth College. So, my dad had to go to work and, as luck would have it, he ... went to work for National Biscuit Company [now Nabisco] in Lowell, Mass. [Massachusetts]. He drove a horse and wagon, and a pung, a drawn sleigh, in the wintertime. The office manager liked him and asked him whether he would be interested in learning a little bit about the business. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

JW: Well, that's basically it and, again, as luck, the office manager got sick and the manager of the agency questioned, "We need somebody from New York?" ... "No, the kid can do it."

When he got better, he went back on the job. The fellow died, probably about a month after that, ... Dad took over. ... Again, as luck, up comes the vice-president in charge of sales. My father was sitting on the desk, and that was a no-no in those days, and he asked him whether his report was in and my father said, "Yes, I sent it in on Friday," and all he said [was], "It'd better be right." So, the vice-president went back and it was right and he called the manager and he said, "That kid I was talking to, ... I want to see him in New York." So, my father went down to New York and put his system in around the United States, from there, up the ladder, slowly but surely, became vice-president, ... one of the vice-presidents of Nabisco.

SI: Was he still in the sales end of it?

JW: No, in the traffic end, movement of supplies and what-have-you. He had an office boy, that, ... when he was handling all the taxes for the company, ... a new office boy had arrived. When the general counsel came back from vacation, he said, "Hey, Wig, that new kid, get rid of him before we get stuck with him, and he stutters." My father said his name, "George? He's sharp. He's really smart." Well, he said, [stuttering], "K-k-keep him out of m-m-my office." "He reports t-t-to you." Well, George went on and George went up the ladder and became vice-president, president and the chief operating officer, and tapped my dad as a vice-president. [laughter]

SI: It is good to help people along.

JW: That's right, [laughter] a very interesting story.

SI: You were telling me a little bit about his family background, going back generations, going back to Vermont.

JW: Well, the early people were (Dexters?), [that] family, and that was on the ... great, great-grandmother's side, and (Lyman?) was on the other side, and her family were the ones that fought with Putnam's troops in Connecticut, [Editor's Note: Rufus Putnam, a Colonial officer during the French and Indian War, led a regiment from Connecticut], and they got land up here. It was given to them then because Vermont was trying to break away from New York and they wanted all the people they could get in here, so [that] they could vote their way out of New York [State] and they became the fourteenth state of the Union, and that's about it as far as early family history. I do know that there are a lot of (Lymans?) and there are a lot of (Dexters?) around. [laughter] In fact, the (Dexter?) Family is not more than three miles from here and they decorate that grave every year with a flag on July 4th, and he died in 1790.

SI: It is good that they keep up that tradition.

JW: Yes.

SI: What about your mother's side of the family? What was your mother's name?

JW: My mother's ... name was Georgia. ... They were going to name her after [United States Navy Admiral] George Dewey, because he was a big gun back in those days, and she turned out

to be a girl, and so, they called her Georgia. ... She lived in Indian Territory, Oklahoma. Her father was with an Indian group. He wasn't an Indian, but he was in [there] helping the Indians in Oklahoma. The government was always moving these people around.

SI: Was it the Bureau of Indian Affairs [within the Department of the Interior]?

JW: Yes. I don't know what it was, but his Indian died. [laughter] ... You've heard that story, of course.

SI: No. (A man working for Indian Affairs crying because his Indian died, putting him out of work.)

JW: Well, I won't tell, [laughter] but she was living with aunts and he [her father] left. Her mother died early, when she was probably about twelve, and she was shuffled around from one family to another. ... She just happened to be down in Jacksonville, Florida, when my father went down to Jacksonville, Florida, to help balance the books of the sales agency down there. ... He would go by every night where she was and he just stopped one night and, in fact, I have a little diary [kept by my mother]. My mother wrote that, "Mr. Wiggin stopped and talked to me this evening," [laughter] and then, they were married and there were two of us, myself and my sister, Dorothy, and we lived in Englewood for most of our life.

SI: That is a great story about the diary. Was it just her house where he stopped or was she working someplace?

JW: No, not then. She was in high school then, and, of course, Dad was very young when he got that job that he did. He was going around, and then, he finally ended up by doing all of the company's taxes.

SI: Did she ever tell you any stories about growing up in Indian Territory?

JW: No. She just said it was [interesting]. A lot of the Indians ... happened to be where the oil was and they were given a lot of money for being there and they would build a big house and live in a teepee in the back of the house. [laughter] They never got used to going into a house, and she used to laugh about that, every once in awhile.

SI: Your earliest memories are of growing up in Englewood.

JW: Yes.

SI: What was your neighborhood in Englewood like?

JW: Oh, it was a rather new neighborhood. It was up near the Knickerbocker Golf Course, [in Tenaflly, New Jersey], and [I] had a lot of pleasant experiences and used to be in the Boy Scouts, ... like many kids in those days, and I went to a camp called Camp Kawanee, which was in Weld, Maine. ... One of my acquaintances at camp was Malcolm Forbes, who you've probably

heard of, [laughter] and he was an Englewood-ite, and [I] had a great time as a kid, just enjoyed life as a youngster.

SI: How far did you go in the Boy Scouts?

JW: I was a, what do they call it? a Life Scout, I guess. ... Then, girls came along, you know, [laughter] but I used to play football for the Boys Scouts and baseball for the Scouts. I was quite small as a kid, but grew my first year at Rutgers.

SI: Did you do a lot of camping, aside from summer camp?

JW: No. Actually, I would only go to summer camp for one month, because of our place up here, and Dad always wanted me [there], because he was getting a month's vacation then, too, [laughter] and so, I would spend one month at camp and one month with the family in Vermont.

SI: That was in Norwich.

JW: Norwich.

SI: Which schools did you go to in Englewood? Did you go to the public schools?

JW: Yes, Dwight Morrow, Cleveland School first and kindergarten up, and then, the high school closed, as a high school, and it became a junior high school, and then, from there, we moved over [to], then named after Dwight Morrow, ... Dwight Morrow High School in Englewood.

SI: What were your favorite subjects in high school?

JW: Well, I like history. I still read all the history I can get. I have a great book upstairs now that Grant wrote, [*The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*]. You ever read his book?

SI: No, I have not.

JW: It's really something. ... If you're a real history guy, I couldn't put the damn thing down. [laughter] I just kept going, right into two o'clock in the morning.

SI: That is the sign of a good book.

JW: ... Oh, very interesting. He wrote it. He carried it through almost to the point of where he was tapped by Lincoln, but he had written all about that after he was [tapped], and so, they just added that to the book and they picked that up after he died. They found all his notes and everything ... that he wrote, and what was going on and Sherman and what he was doing, a real smart guy. One of the interesting things about that book is, the press was giving Lincoln and Grant and all the officers a bad time, almost like today, really, "Why aren't we doing this?" and, "Why aren't we doing that?" and, "Why did you do this?" all of this, and he realized, if he had a few victories, ... he said, "I'd be able to shut the press down." [laughter]

SI: Yes, things are not that different. Things are still the same.

JW: ... Yes, still the same.

SI: Was your neighborhood ethnically mixed or was it made up of people from similar backgrounds?

JW: Well, it was a group [of] middle management people and we had some great guys. ... A lot of them were good people and kids. I remember stories of my dad, growing up in New England, ... he was in that era where the mill owners were bringing people in from Europe because they got tired of paying local Americans. They could get a European, when he came over here, and pay him half what they were paying locals. He remembers that period and the people that came over during that period. Apropos, this is an interesting story. I, as a kid, always liked to catch. ... Generally, when we played baseball, I'd catch for both teams, because nobody liked it, and there was a little kid by the name of Bobby (Luskin?), a young boy, and my dad said something. We were out raking leaves in the front, and he said something when Bobby came by, and I won't say what it was. ... All of a sudden, Mr. (Luskin?) called and I heard my father say, "Yes, yes," he said, "I did and I'm sorry." That's all he said, and I said, "What was that about?" He said, "Oh, I said something." I won't tell you, but he said, "I made a sarcastic remark." ... Bobby was a great pitcher and I used to catch for him in the Boy Scouts, First Presbyterian Church, and he was down there. When I came back into this area of New Jersey, in Fair Lawn, I was a manager of the Fair Lawn plant, Mr. (Luskin?) called. ... At that point in time, I said, "Bobby, where's Bobby?" "Oh," he says, "he's fine, doing well. He went to Harvard," [laughter] and all what he had done, and I told him the story and I said, "I really wish to thank you for calling my dad, because we sat down, had a big conversation and I said, 'You started to give him a bad time,' and I said, 'He's our pitcher.' [laughter] I said, 'I play with him every day,' and Dad said, 'Yes,' he said, 'I'm sorry. I told Mr. (Luskin?) I was sorry.'" That was a rather interesting episode, and he was a little upset because the family next-door was the Hobins and Mrs. Hobins was Catholic. They had seven kids, and then, there's Jerry Brown's family. ... There were Catholics. There was a melange in the neighborhood and, of course, we all played together. We didn't care. [laughter] ... We had some great kids. We had, at high school, a guy by the name of Howard Allen, for example, and Howard Allen was a basketball player, and one of the best in the state. ... Howard Allen ended up teaching school down in the South and, from there, he went to Duke and, at Duke, he got his doctorate degree in English history and English literature and taught at Duke, which is rather interesting. ... When he went South, Garretty, who was his coach, went down there one day and he said, "Come on down to the hotel. We'll have lunch together." Howard advised Mr. Garretty that he was getting along well with most everyone, and so as not to rock the boat, "Let's have lunch someplace in my neighborhood. Things are getting better down here and around the country." Another interesting person I have read about: Thomas Sowell. As a young boy, his family moved from South Carolina to New York City. He became a gang leader, always in trouble. He was advised to join the Marines, going to Vietnam. Thomas Sowell went in as a private, came home as a major, went to Harvard and is now in Stanford University's Hoover Group.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: It sounds as though your parents probably encouraged you and your sister to go to college.

JW: Yes.

SI: While you were in high school, the Great Depression was in full swing. How did the Great Depression affect your family?

JW: Well, my dad was in a manager's position, at that time, and, I remember, a lot of the people that worked for him said, "Everybody took a cut in the company, but," he said, "your Dad's group." I checked [with] my father on that and he said, "Well, [Roy E.] Tomlinson," who was head of Nabisco at that time, "[said] everybody took a cut," but my father went up to Mr. Tomlinson, the President, etc., and said, "Roy," he said, "my guys, a real small group, and they're all good, I don't want to lose any of them." He said, "Take the cut, take it all, out of my salary," which he did, and these fellows, of course, stuck with my father right to the end.

SI: He looked after his people very well.

JW: Yes.

SI: Did you see the effects of the Depression in your neighborhood? Were any of your neighbors affected?

JW: Yes, we had one suicide, on Mountain View Road, but, otherwise, things just sort of went on. I remember, Father, when they closed the banks, it was 1932 [March 1933], I was eleven or twelve years old then. ... I remember, Dad opened his wallet and he had the radio on when they mentioned they were closing the bank and he said, "Gee," he said, "you know what, son?" He said, "I have twenty-six dollars in my wallet." [laughter] He said, "That's it, if they close the bank," and, of course, that didn't mean that much to me, because I wasn't involved in the goings [on], except I ... used to go to the bank with him on Saturday, every once in awhile. ... My dad was well-known in Englewood. In fact, most of the Nabisco people lived in Englewood. I went to the bank with him one time. He bought a ten-thousand-dollar war bond. I had just come up from Fort Benning, [Georgia], having just been tapped as an officer and a gentleman. The bank teller looked out at him and he said, "Just a minute, Mr. Wiggin." He didn't know him. ... He walked into the office of Mr. (McKinney?), who was the president of the bank, who came out and said, "Oh, hi, Wig, how are you? How are you doing?" [laughter] and he nodded to the fellow. Well, my dad used to always work outside, like I do. He always made sure the lawn was cut and everything like [that] and, on the weekend, he didn't dress to the nines. He would have a shirt or a sweater that had holes. It never bothered him what he really looked like on a weekend. I have a son the same way. [laughter]

SI: Were either he or your mother involved in any community activities?

JW: Yes. Mother was very active during the war with things that people could do during the war. My dad was down [in Washington, DC], and worked for [Lieutenant General Brehon B.] Somervell, [Commander of the US Army Service Forces]. General Somervell asked him, "Wig, how would you like to be on my staff? I'll make you a brigadier general." ... My dad said to

him, "No," he said, "I like it the way it is, because I can tell you now you're all wet, you're doing it the wrong way. As soon as you put the stars on me, I would be probably the first guy you'd ship out."

SI: What kind of work did he do with Somervell?

JW: Well, moving things. He said he found out they were making machine guns on the West Coast and shipping them to the East Coast. Up through Hartford and everything, they were making guns and machine guns and shipping them to the West Coast. He said, "Why doesn't somebody get together and say, 'What we build in the East, we keep in the East and what we do to fight the Japanese, we keep out there?' There's no sense in them shipping them back and forth," and they used to do that with troops as well. You know, all of a sudden, they'd be in the East Coast, they ship [them] to the West Coast, and then, bring them East again to go overseas, or vice versa. [laughter] ... So, he made sure that things were right and [he] went into different camps to make sure things were handled properly.

SI: Was that just in an advisory capacity?

JW: Advisory, yes. He got a buck.

SI: He was a "dollar-a-year man." [laughter]

JW: Yes, a "dollar-a-year man."

SI: Was that in addition to his work in Nabisco?

JW: Yes, in addition, yes. ... He probably spent about a year down there, but that was in-and-out. ...

SI: He would go down to Washington.

JW: Down in Washington. He lived in the Wardman Park Hotel.

SI: I want to ask you a few more questions about that later, but you mentioned that your mother was involved in civic activities at that time; do you remember any specifically?

JW: Oh, well, Red Cross gals. She was a Red Cross gal. I can remember, I was at ROTC at Rutgers at that time. ... Our sergeants' uniforms were really officers' uniforms, and I came up and they were supposed to march in the July parade and I was up there teaching these gals how to march, [laughter] and column right and column left and right oblique and left oblique and all of that business. So, I spent probably about six or seven hours with them, teaching them how to march.

SI: I want to get more into your years at Rutgers in a minute, but can you tell me what you knew about the larger world at that point? There were a lot of events going on overseas, particularly in

Europe, with Hitler and Mussolini coming to power and in the Soviet Union. Were you aware of these sorts of things?

JW: Yes, I was, being a history major. ... It was one of these things, I was telling my dad, "Well, here we go again," you know. It just didn't make any sense. ... Of course, he was worried about, ... in fact, he was even talking about, [a potential] cutoff of our oil supplies and things of that [nature] during those days, ... which were important to our country, and that was basically about it. I was very cognizant of what was going on.

SI: Did you read the papers often and listen to radio?

JW: Yes, yes.

SI: What about politics? What did your family think of Franklin Roosevelt?

JW: Dad was a good Republican and he wasn't too [in favor of him], and I've read some things about Roosevelt, too, that he really pushed like hell. He wanted to get the people behind him, so [that] when he said, "Let's go to Germany, let's go get in this fight," [they would follow], but he was going that direction right along. ... Of course, Churchill was trying to get the US involved, because he was going it alone there for awhile, and I think, basically, Roosevelt drove the Japanese to the war. I do not think he probably held back because our country was loaded with many Germans, nor because our country was loaded, at that time, with a number of soldiers that [experienced] "the war to end all wars."

SI: In those years between the start of the war in Europe and Pearl Harbor, did your parents have any opinion with regards to the war, and did you yourself have any opinion on that issue?

JW: No, not really. It's rather interesting. ... Most of us who lived in the East thought of the East more, and, in fact, I was going with a gal, a doctor's daughter, in Englewood, and I walked in that Sunday and he said, "The Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor," and I said, "Where in the hell's that?" [laughter] I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was, until he said, "Well, Hawaii." "Oh, yes, yes." Then, I remembered, but, when he just came out with it, "Pearl Harbor," I thought it ... might have been the Philippines or some other place. ...

SI: You may have been expecting something with Germany ...

JW: Yes.

SI: But, something in the Far East was a shock. Going back to Rutgers, how did you choose Rutgers?

JW: Well, I had a very good friend, or my friends of my father's, ... a guy by the name of George Hallock [Class of 1938] and George Hallock was a lacrosse player, All-American lacrosse goalie for Rutgers, and he kept saying how great it was. ... Basically, I wanted to go to Dartmouth College. [laughter] In prep school, I flunked French and that was about it. They said, "You probably wouldn't have a good time at Dartmouth, with your French," and that was it.

Well, I came down to Rutgers and I switched courses. I switched to Spanish and I flunked Spanish, at first. [laughter] I was never a linguist. For some reason or other, I would sort of fight it. I just couldn't roll it through. I always used to say, "Gee, that's a stupid way to say something," [laughter] but that was it. I wanted to go to Dartmouth, and then, I got involved with a fraternity, Delta Phi, and became president of Delta Phi my junior year and enjoyed it.

SI: Do you remember your first few days and weeks at Rutgers, what they were like?

JW: Yes, yes, moved right into the fraternity house.

SI: Had you been pre-rushed?

JW: No. I arrived and a guy by the name of John Vaill [Class of 1941] happened [to find me]. I was just sort of walking around and George Hallock was president of Beta House and he says, "You want to go in a good house, join Delta Phi," and so, somebody came around and invited me. I was in Hegeman Hall. Is that still there, Hegeman Hall?

SI: Yes, it is in the Quad.

JW: I was in the Quad, Hegeman Hall, and somebody came by and I went down. They invited me to dinner at Delta House and, by the time dinner was over, the guys were packing up all my stuff and moving it into the fraternity house. I lived in the fraternity for the three years; then four years. When I came back as a senior, after the war was over, I moved into the fraternity house again and enjoyed it. ... Now, I go to see the Dartmouth-Colgate game, because both of my sons went to Colgate. [laughter]

SI: What was living in a fraternity house like then?

JW: Oh, great. We had a great group of brothers.

SI: How was it set up?

JW: Yes. Well, we had, of course, ... some wonderful guys there and [they would] really help you as a student, work with you in school, and, of course, all the history courses, I've always got "A"s in history courses. [laughter] ... [I] had a great history teacher in my school I went to, Clark School, which was in Hanover, New Hampshire, and that's where I really tied on to history and enjoyed it. ... Math courses were fine and I sort of minored in geology. Now, I have a son who is in geology and he's a vice-president of a big oil and gas company out in Denver, Colorado, doing well.

SI: Mining?

JW: Yes, yes, mining. In fact, he was just here. He was opening up some mines in New Brunswick, Canada, and gas [operations] in Australia and down in Texas and did a lot of work down there. He got his master's degree down at the University of Texas, yes.

SI: What was your major?

JW: ... History and political science.

SI: That is an interesting combination of a major and minor, a science and the liberal arts.

JW: Yes, had a great teacher, Dr. [Peter] Charanis. I don't know [whether] you remember him.

SI: I do not remember him personally, but he does come up a lot.

JW: Yes, just a great guy.

SI: What made him so great, in your opinion?

JW: Just the way he would work with the class. My roommate at school was a guy by the name of Chuck (O'Neil?). He was from Summit, New Jersey, and he was also a Delt. ... Charanis would come in and hit Chuck on the back of the head and call him, "O'Neilitsky," and me, "Wigginisky." [laughter] ... Every class we were [in], he would do that, "Wigginisky" and "O'Neilitsky."

SI: Actually, our office is in Bishop House. After entering the door, you were in the classroom on the left.

JW: Yes, and then, George, Prof. [John J.] George, you remember him?

SI: Yes. He ran for office back then; is that correct?

JW: He was mayor of Dunellen, and a very interesting story. My father was looking for a place to put in another Nabisco sales agency. ... [George] received a call. He was mayor of Dunellen, and he sort of swore, "If you don't want me in office, this is a free country and, in the next election, the name is George, just don't put the 'X' next to my name," and he hung up, and then, he started [explaining] that [the] person was talking about what they were doing in some parts, and he says, "Interesting." He said, "We have land up there. It's on the railroad," and he said, "New Brunswick taxes are twice what they are in Dunellen." ... I went home that weekend, for some reason or other, and I mentioned it to my dad. Dad said, "We're down your way." He said, "We're looking at New Brunswick for an agency," and I said, "You ought to look at Dunellen." I said, "It's on the same line and our prof said, 'Taxes in New Brunswick are twice what they are in Dunellen,'" and so, he put the new Nabisco agency in Dunellen. ... Our vice-president in charge of sales was a kid from Rutgers that became a salesman at Dunellen and, from there, sales manager and, from there, to vice-president in charge of sales at Nabisco, all because of Prof. George. [laughter]

SI: And your own offhand comment.

JW: Yes, interesting.

SI: What about Prof. George in the classroom? What do you remember about him?

JW: He was very interesting. He'd ... talk about politics, being involved in politics, and he just had a lively class. It was a very interesting class, very interesting class. I would think about Charanis and George at times during the war.

SI: Did you have a specialty within your major, like American history or ancient history?

JW: No. Most of my history, at that time, was European history, because I think I was with the guys that wrote the American history book. [laughter] I like that. American history, I still read all I can about American history. *John Adams*, [(2001), a biography of the second President], you read that book?

SI: No, I have not, by [historian and author] David McCullough?

JW: Yes. It's a terrific book.

SI: I just read *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, [Gordon S. Wood (2004)]. That was very good.

JW: Yes, I read that.

SI: Do any of the other history or political science professors at Rutgers stand out in your memory?

JW: No. Well, we had a geology professor and I remember him, and a psychology [or] philosophy professor who went up to Canada and came back home and called the State Police. Somebody had stolen his car while he was in Canada, [laughter] and he went on to say that, "All of a sudden, I realized that nobody stole the car; I left it there," the absentminded professor. I also remember, one day, it was the first class after lunch and we had a dog by the name of Bismarck that used to be on campus, and Bismarck used to always come into class with his master and go to sleep. ... Well, anyway, it was down there one day and everybody was sort of lethargic and ... it was hot and he said, "As long as the dog keeps listening to me, I will keep talking and teaching," and Bismarck went [Mr. Wiggin yawns], then, "Thump," and he laughed and he said, "Class dismissed," very interesting, "Class dismissed." No one objected.

SI: Do you remember who that professor was?

JW: (Hayes?)? I don't know whether I do or not. I don't remember.

SI: Was it the philosophy professor?

JW: No.

SI: Was it Houston Peterson?

JW: No.

SI: Was Mason Gross there by that time, or was he after?

JW: No, before. He was after. Well, I remember the one that was there who was talking about cheating and all of this, and he said that, "Princeton has the honor system." He was talking about that, and he said, "My son had the system," and he said, "He was just kicked out of Princeton." He said, "I thought I'd tell everybody, because, otherwise, they would start hounding me about it." So, his son was kicked out of Princeton for cheating. They should have kicked out Ted Kennedy, too. [laughter] ... He's the one I can't cotton to, because he keeps talking about all these things and he gets involved. ... If I was in a position, running for something, and he started to give me a bad time, all I would say to him [is], "You still swimming in the Chappaquiddick?" where he lied. [Editor's Note: Chappaquiddick is an island off of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. In 1969, Senator Ted Kennedy was involved in an accident there which resulted in the death of Mary Jo Kopechne.] We were in there on a vacation when all of that broke loose, and he lied absolutely. Everything he said could not have happened the way he said it happened.

SI: You know that from what you saw on the vacation.

JW: Yes. Now, the roads, ... Chappaquiddick, you don't come down a road, the main road, to get to the ferry, and Chappaquiddick was sort of an island off of the Vineyard, just a little bit, you don't come down that road and turn back on yourself down a dirt road, and that's what he did with this Mary Jo, or whatever her name [was], Kopechne, whatever, was that it?

SI: I think so.

JW: Yes, and then, turn back on yourself, and then, go across a bridge and miss the bridge and go into the water, and she was, I guess, in the backseat. That's where they found her. ... It was that way, I guess. ... I thought Bobby was great and I liked Jack. I think Jack Kennedy was one of the best Republicans we've ever had in the White House, [laughter] because he told it like it was. ...

SI: Going back to your fraternity at Rutgers, how was it set up in terms of rules and behavior? Did you have a housemother?

JW: Yes, yes, and she held us pretty tight, pretty tight. We used to drink. I remember, ... I had a great room on the third floor and I had two closets in the room, and one closet I turned into a bar, [laughter] and, every once in awhile, we'd have a drink before dinner. Eddie Arnolt [Class of 1943], who became president, and Jack Williams [Class of 1943], who was also president, I followed Jack, and we enjoyed ourselves, had a good time, but ... it wasn't one of these drunken brawls that you see in the movies.

SI: Did they have rules about curfew and studying, that sort of thing?

JW: Oh, yes. You had to shut up at night, which I know my sons, both of them, said that their fraternity, John was a Deke and my other son was, ... I don't know what he was, but they would

... always go to the library and do all of their studying in the library, because the fraternity house was [in] an uproar every night, but Delta House was [not]. You'd get fined by the president.

SI: The house would fine its members?

JW: Oh, yes. In fact, we paid, they don't do that anymore, but we had a fifty-dollar or a hundred-dollar bill that we had to deposit at the fraternity and, if you were up (for arson?) or something, the president could say, "It'll cost you ten dollars," and he'd take it out of your fund.

SI: There was a lot of self-regulation.

JW: Yes.

SI: What would be an example of something that the group would forbid its members from doing, something that you would be on the lookout for and tell other people not to do?

JW: Well, raising Cain at night, during study period. We had coffee in the living [room], after the evening meal, and that was it. After the coffee, everything was [over]. Now, you could go play bridge, if you wanted to, like we did after the war was over. Danny Brennan and I used to play bridge together, ... but we still didn't make any noise at night and it was pretty tight, which is the way it should be.

SI: Did you have a formal dinner, where you had to be there at a certain time?

JW: Yes. It was every evening.

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

SI: Please, continue.

JW: And, of course, before the war, we always went to class, I always went to class, with a coat and tie.

SI: Really?

JW: Yes.

SI: Wow. Was that a formal dress code or just the way everyone dressed?

JW: Just the way [we dressed]. Most of us always had a coat and tie on, and then, after the war, we had so many of these, [pieces of military uniforms]. In fact, I keep buying them all the time. We'd wear our uniforms, but not ... just the brown shirts. We had all these brown shirts and we had the tan pants. We had to do something with them. [laughter]

SI: Yes, I have heard that people came to class in pieces of uniforms. I did not realize that that broke up the previous dress code.

JW: But, I do know one thing that was sort of funny after the war was, for football games, we were really outspoken, a little bit more outspoken than we were before. When somebody ... on the opposing team would do something, we'd yell, "Get that S-O-B," you know, not polite, like that. [laughter]

SI: The cheering was more reserved before the war.

JW: Yes, that's right.

SI: Did you go to a lot of activities, like football games?

JW: Oh, yes, yes. ... Of course, we went to chapel on Sunday. There's so many chapels you had to go to, and you had to [go to] our Monday chapel, on Monday afternoon. I think it was ... noontime, just before noontime. I think that's when certain classes would go. ... Basically, twice a week, you were in the chapel.

SI: What do you remember about the chapel?

JW: It was interesting. We had Norman Thomas. I was not a backer of Norman Thomas. We had different speakers that would come to chapel.

SI: Do you particularly remember any of those speakers?

JW: Well, I know Norman Thomas didn't switch me, you know. [laughter] ... They had a number of good speeches. ... I don't recall all of them. I just remember they were good, but Thomas, of course, was the name that everybody knew.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Was there anything that your fraternity was particularly involved in? I know that some fraternities were into football or the *Targum*. Did your house have a specialty?

JW: No, I don't think so. ... Eddie Arnold played and ... some of them played [one-hundred-and]-fifty-pound ball, football, ... but, no, there wasn't anything, really, that we could say, "This is a football fraternity or this is a baseball fraternity, lacrosse, etc."

SI: It was not particularly known for any one thing.

JW: No.

SI: What about some of the other activities, like house parties or participating in parades?

JW: Well, we had our house parties and, generally, about the same time that ... some of the Big Bands were down, and we always had a good little band that would come to our fraternity house, bring different girls in. Then, when I met Barbara, I met her, my wife, my first night at school.

They were having something over there and ... I saw this girl and it was Barbara. I said hello to her, and then, we didn't tie up again until my junior year.

SI: Would you often go over to Douglass, or to NJC?

JW: Yes, we'd go over to Douglass. In fact, with the Corner Tavern, we were in the Corner Tavern quite a bit. ... We weren't of the age to drink, but, in those days, they didn't push that too much. Well, we weren't driving around in cars, you know. We'd generally walk over and walk back.

SI: Where was your house located?

JW: Delta Phi, 17 Union Street. It's still there and it was the old Johnson & Johnson homestead and they gave it to the fraternity because he was a Delt. Demarest was a Delt, and my sister married a fellow and Demarest was a cousin. ...

SI: Would you have Demarest over at the house?

JW: Yes, he'd come over to the house. Of course, we'd always have the president in the house every year. We'd always invite the president.

SI: Did you have other people at the house, like professors or anyone else?

JW: Yes, yes. We'd always have somebody who we thought was interesting, because, generally, when they came in, they have to make a spiel about something.

SI: Do any of those visits stand out in your memory?

JW: Well, "Whistling Willie" [laughter] was Demarest. He had trouble with his teeth, so, he whistled when he spoke. He was there.

SI: Did most of your activities center around the fraternity?

JW: Yes.

SI: Was there anything else?

JW: No, not really. I got very active in the fraternity and, whenever they wanted something done or needed something done, I would go downtown and buy what was needed or fix it myself. That was a shock to me, when I went back, and this was; I don't remember the period. There was a period where fraternities weren't the thing and [I] went back, and to see how our house had been ruined on the inside. ... I got [in touch with] a very good friend of mine, (Mal Gillette?). He went down to see what they could do with his fraternity, the Deke [Delta Kappa Epsilon] House, and they were burning furniture. It was a cold night, and so, these guys came in and busted up a bunch of chairs and threw them into the [fireplace], and he said, "The house was a mess." ... The president was there and he said to the president, "What are you doing about

that?" "Oh, nothing," he said. "They're fraternity brothers." He said, "We came down here because," he said, "I have about fifteen thousand dollars to put this house back in shape, but," he said, "I'm going to send it all back to the guys who sent it," and he did. He went back, sent all the money back. Now, that house is closed, and the DUs [Delta Upsilon] had problems, too.

SI: Back in your day, from what I gather from interviewing people and reading about it in the *Targums* of the time, it seems like the fraternities really dominated the campus. If you were not in a fraternity, you were outside, to an extent.

JW: Yes, that was right. We had a close-knit group of people and they were involved with each other constantly, but they were very active as far as the school was concerned. In fact, my daughter's going with a guy, I saw him; her husband divorced her. ... Well, they got divorced. I don't know whether he did it, but Delaware is [a state where] everything is split right down the middle [when] you divorce somebody, and he was a lawyer and it was interesting to see how they work. ... This fellow, I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "Union." I said, "You know anything about the Union Triad?" He said, "No." I said, "Were you in a fraternity?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Delta Phi." He said, "I was president of Delta Phi." I threw my hand out. [laughter] I said, "That's interesting. Delta Phi was the third Greek fraternity formed. That's why it was called the Union Triad," and I said, "If you were president." I said, "I was president at Rutgers," and I said, "Ours was the third fraternity formed ... from the Union Triad of Delta Phi." So, it was a good group of guys. ... My thrust, even today, is more [towards the fraternity]. It wasn't for awhile, but it was prior to all the problems we were having, that we had down there. The thrust was always to the fraternity. ... Now, when the fraternities started to act up and all the problems they were having, ... we sort of fell back into the college.

SI: Your class has been very good at staying together and remaining active.

JW: Yes. We were all involved in the same thing, most of '44. We lost three brother Delts during the wars, [World War II and the Korean War]. Our fraternity, we lost three in the fraternity. ... Lee Temple [Leon Brett Temple, Jr., Class of 1940], was killed during D-Day, firing on German positions from a plane. He use to transport planes overseas. I remember, he came back one time. ... He said, "It was night, late at night," and he said, "all of a sudden, something was wrong and I kept looking." He said, "I thought my instruments were off, and so, I countered by the seat of my pants. ... All of a sudden, I heard a whistling," and he said, "I was diving into the sea." [laughter] He said, "I straightened that damn plane out right by the instruments." He said, "You sit there and it's dark and you don't see anything, and it could be a dark, dark night, and so, you're just flying by the compass," and he said, "All of a sudden, you'd better just remember, those instruments are there for you and that's the way you fly at night." ... He said it was really something. [Editor's Note: Leon Temple led a squadron of fighters from the 337th Fighter Squadron over France in the early morning hours of D-Day and was killed-in-action after being shot down over St. Georges de Bohon. The other two Delta Phi fraternity brothers were Gilbert Woodhull Tennent Combs, Jr., Class of 1943, who was killed-in-action on July 3, 1944, near Buquest, France, and Benjamin E. Ford, Class of 1944, killed-in-action on October 15, 1951, during the Korean War.]

SI: That is an important part of this project, remembering people that were killed during the war, but that brings up something else that we talked about before the tape started. You got your pilot's license while you were at Rutgers. Can you tell me about that?

JW: Yes, it was interesting. ... They had this Civilian Pilot Training course and we paid thirty-five dollars and we got our license and I used to go out probably four times a week and fly around. I can remember that we were on the line to Newark Airport and Newark was rather active. I can remember going up and we had just gone through spins and landed and the my instructor said, "Okay, John, go on up and practice a few more spins, so [that] you feel comfortable if you roll into one." So, I took off. I was flying solo and I got up there and I was looking around and I finally pulled her up into a stall. ... I kicked right rudder real fast and, "Zoom," over I went and down. We had a skylight on the top of the Aeronca and here comes a DC-3, [a passenger plane]. ... I realized that I'd better just keep going down, because, if I pull out, I'm going to be right in his path. So, I was doing a spin right in front of this DC-3, and he probably didn't see me until I went by, and I was probably about one hundred yards in front of him. ... Then, when I knew he was still going his way, I left ruddered and slowly pulled her back. [laughter] It was really something. I talked to my instructor and he said, "Well, good thinking, John, good thinking." [laughter]

SI: That was a pretty close call.

JW: Yes, but he was a great instructor. I remember taking off one time and he headed me right for the wires and I kept going, and so, I pushed the nose down. He said, "I got her," "Boom," and he grabbed it and took it underneath the wires and he said, "Good for you." He said, "If you'd pulled up, if I wasn't here," he said, "you'd be into those wires, because you weren't going fast enough. You'd have a stall," and he said, "You would have stalled right onto those wires," but he said, "I thought I'd better take it under the wires," which he did. He was good. ... When I was going out there one time, we had an accident in someone's car. ... When I got through with the accident, my instructor said to me, one day, "You know, you're a lot more at ease when you're out here." I said, "Yes." I said, "My only worry now is when we're driving down that road," where a person made ... a turn, right in front of us, and drove us into a pole, but that was an episode pre-going into the war.

SI: I have interviewed a few other people who got their licenses that way. It sounds like it really complicated your schedule.

JW: It did, especially if you didn't have a car.

SI: Yes. Did you drive people or carpool?

JW: No. I would always make sure who was going and there'd always be a couple of more fellows going out about the same time, and that was not the advanced course, where you were in the Aeronca. ...

SI: How many people were in that course at that time?

JW: We had about thirty.

SI: Were they all from Rutgers?

JW: All Rutgers, yes.

SI: One thing that interests me, in talking to people who were in college at this time, is that it does not sound like you had much time to sleep. Did you find that you managed your time well or that you were running all over the place?

JW: No. ... I always got my sleep. ... Maybe exam time, I would spend a little bit more time on going back over the books and spending more time [then], but, then, of course, the end was rather interesting, because they pulled us out. ... I think it was, oh, May or April. ... We never finished, really finished, our junior year, and I wish I could remember that professor. I was still trying to get a passing grade in Spanish. I had [Edmond W.] Billetdoux as my teacher and I flunked my first half year in Spanish, and so, I repeated it. Billetdoux was quite a linguist himself. ... I got an "A" the following year. ... This is when I was flying, and he said, "John, you got a hundred [percent] on your test, but I'm only going to give you a passing grade." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because you're never in class." I said, "I've been through this class once," and I said, "I ought to be able to get [through] my second part of my first year without any trouble." [laughter] He said, "Well, you did, you got a hundred percent, but, then, I gave you just a passing grade."

SI: He was a strict guy.

JW: Yes, he was strict. He was strict. One day, he was in the class, I'll never forget this, ... somebody handed him a telegram. He opened the telegram, folded it up and put it in his pocket and he went on with the class. ... That was the Army advising him that his son was just killed. ... He was dedicated. They said he could sit with a German and a Spaniard and a Frenchman and carry on a conversation with all of them. He was really a language professor.

SI: How did the war affect Rutgers? You were there for at least a year after Pearl Harbor, probably more like a year-and-a-half.

JW: Yes.

SI: How did the war begin to affect the Rutgers campus?

JW: Well, students kept being drafted. I was in a Spanish class and ... one after another of these classmates were being taken out of class, and, all of a sudden, I was the only guy in the class. I wish I could remember his name, a real nice professor. He said, "I'd like to see you." This was before I was the last, and he said, "When you and I are the last, if it happens that way, you and I are the only people left in this class," he said, "will you take a 'C?'" I said, "If you were a girl, I'd kiss you." [laughter] That's what happened. Two days later, I was the only guy in the class and he said, "John," I went up, he showed me the book, "'C', Final." [laughter] So, that was the end of my Spanish days, but it was interesting, but it was just [that] they were going.

A very interesting fellow in our class, and a fraternity brother, Jules Plangere, signed up. He was going into the Marines. "The damn line was so long," he said, "I crossed the street and ... joined the Army and became an officer in the artillery." ... Of course, Jules did very well. He came back. I don't know whether you've heard of his story. ...

SI: I actually interviewed him.

JW: Yes. He came back and a very good friend of his asked him what he was going to do. "Well, I have a job at a bank." "Don't go in there." His friend said, "They'll give you a real super office, but they won't pay anything." So, he ended up in what he took at college, in journalism, and the owner of *The Asbury Park News* [Press], gave him the paper when he retired. He says, "Jules, I want so much money while I'm still alive, but," he said, "the paper is yours."

SI: Yes. He grew that into the second-largest paper in the state.

JW: Yes, and, plus, things down in Florida.

SI: He had things all over, before he turned it over to Gannett.

JW: Yes, real great guy. ...

SI: Yes, a pleasant guy. What about things being cut, like courses or sports programs? Did you notice those sorts of things?

JW: No. When we left, there were still guys who still [played sports]. (McKenna?), there's a fellow up here by the name of (McKenna?), lived in Hartford, died recently, and he was playing football and he played football during the war and the Army wouldn't take him, for some reason or other. He had something wrong with him, so, he was a quarterback during the war. Rutgers kept going during the war. They didn't play a lot of games, but they did play some games, and Greg became a coach. He coached at Hartford High School. I asked a fellow one day, "You ever hear of (McKenna?)?" "Oh, you mean Coach (McKenna?)?" He said, "I used to play football for him," very interesting. [laughter]

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about ROTC and what you remember about those classes? Also, what was the mood among the ROTC cadets as the war began and progressed?

JW: ... I don't think we thought anything of it, really, ... being in the ROTC, especially the advanced program, because we had to go into Newark to sign up in the Army when we were sophomores, ... before we took our third year in the Advanced ROTC. We knew we were going to get involved. ... I figured, "Well, I might just as well go on with the ROTC program, and then, do what I knew a lot of Rutgers guys did after they became officers." They switched to the Air Corps, and it didn't look like that was going to happen. [laughter] So, we were almost through basic training when I switched and ended up in Norwich [University], as an air cadet, and I had a squadron. Big deal; [laughter] ... I knew my right from my left. A lot of these guys didn't know their right from their left.

SI: Was that due to your Rutgers ROTC training?

JW: Rutgers ROTC, yes.

SI: Do you remember what the focus of the ROTC was? Was it just drilling? Did they teach you anything else?

JW: Oh, yes. We looked at machine guns and they had all these things, which helped us, of course, when we ... went through the service, a lot of the things they taught us. I can remember ... going through officer's training at Fort Benning. When I arrived, I'm reading a bulletin board, and a lieutenant named (Demont Mullen?) came in. I didn't see him come in, I was reading, and he said, "Don't you salute when an officer comes in?" I said, "Yes, sir, when I see him." I finished. He said, "Where are you from?" "I came in from the Air Corps, sir." He said, "That figures," and he was on my back constantly, except when we went on to the range, and he must have made a couple of hundred bucks off of me. I shot, ... let's say, I forget what it was, but I put ... all five shots in at five hundred yards and I missed bull's-eye one shot, but it was a four. All the others were in the black, not a "Maggie's Drawer," [a military term which signified a complete miss of the target], and I shot the best in the company. ... I remember the colonel of the company saying to me, "Jesus Christ, where in the hell did you learn how to shoot?" I said, "My father gave me a rifle ... [for] my sixth birthday," and I could always use it in Vermont, and I said, "I could hit chipmunks at a hundred yards." [laughter] So, it was easy. The only thing I recall was thirteen clicks of right windage [side-to-side adjustment of sight] and about ten clicks of elevation [the up-down adjustment] to hit the target at five hundred yards. In fact, you'd look down my barrel and it looked like I was shooting in the other target. I kept shooting and shooting, when we had a practice session, and I called the sergeant over and I said, "Jesus, this damn rifle." He said, "Let me look down the barrel," and so, he looked down the barrel. He says, "Jesus, you're on the target. You're right on the target. That doesn't make any sense," and so, he went to work with the rifle and figured out the windage and, finally, ... I realized that damn gun was pointing at the target next to it, but somebody had either cleaned it with steel wool or something, that damn shot never even hit the target. ... I knew damn well I could hit a target just as big as this table, but it was an interesting period, a very interesting period.

SI: In the middle of your junior year, you were pulled out of Rutgers.

JW: Yes.

SI: Tell me about that experience, what it was like leaving Rutgers and formally entering the military. You had already enlisted, but, now, you were actually entering the military full-time.

JW: Well, we were called the "Black Fifty." You've probably heard of the reason. When we got on the train, right there at Rutgers, three or four days later, we arrived at our camp. I think it was Jackson. ...

SI: Fort McClellan?

JW: Fort McClellan, that's right, Fort McClellan. He was a bad general anyway. [laughter] McClellan, he never moved. Lincoln tired of him. [We] ended up at Fort McClellan and one of the sergeants made the call, he said, "You look like a bunch of blacks," and so, we took over the name of Black Fifty, because we were. We were four days on that damn train of chair cars, it was just seats, and they would feed us and that was it. I don't know why we went "around Robin Hood's barn" to get there, but we finally ended up at Fort McClellan. ...

SI: How many weeks were you at McClellan, roughly?

JW: Probably fifteen or sixteen.

SI: You were pretty much through the course.

JW: Yes.

SI: What do you remember about your days at McClellan? It was the summer, correct?

JW: Yes. Well, ... it was hot. We were all together. We were a friendly group. This was sort of like being at Rutgers, but we're in a uniform, [laughter] learning many things, but a lot of stuff we knew. We could take a rifle apart and a machine gun apart. We could do that and we knew our right from left.

SI: What about the intensity of the training? Was it physically intense? In terms of the pace, how was it?

JW: No, we were all in pretty good shape when we went down there. I can remember sitting there one day, flipping rocks on a ten-minute break. I had this one that was sort of shiny. ... When the Sergeant said, "Break's over," I flipped it and I realized, when I flipped it, it was an arrowhead. I dove for it in the bush, a beautiful quartz arrowhead, and I saved it and still have it.

SI: Do you remember any of your drill instructors at that point?

JW: Oh, there was a guy by the name of (Pappy Volpat?), was one of them. He was a lieutenant and ... our sergeant came from Windsor, Vermont, and he was a rather rough-speaking character, always [would] wake us up in the morning, "Okay, all you bastards," you know, that son-of-a-limbo. ... Some of the fellows had a very interesting Southern sergeant, and ... [he] was always bouncing around. On his birthday, they gave him a big, big present, a chair. He was so shocked that somebody would give him such a nice present. We fell out one evening and our captain asked this fellow front-and-center and he came up and he presented him with this gift, which was rather a shock to him, ... with all these rough times that he'd been giving everybody, but everybody liked him. He was fair. Ours, ... I think his own aggrandizement was what he was worried about. Most of our group returned to Rutgers for a period. I had switched to the Air Force, ending up at Norwich, Vermont.

SI: Let me see; you were at Fort McClellan, then, you were transferred to the Air Corps.

JW: Yes.

SI: There is one thing, in reading *The Class of 1944 Military Book*, that I was not quite clear on. It says that you left McClellan for Miami Beach for a few weeks and, from there, to Northfield, Vermont.

JW: Oh, yes. They put me on a train to Miami Beach and I arrived there with a bad case of prickly heat itch. The general at McClellan thought, because there was a war that was down in Africa, we might not be able to get all the water we needed. So, he cut our water ration down. ... I ended up with a back that was just covered with sores and the doctor took a look at it. ... I told him what went on. "Some generals are really stupid." [laughter] ... "Here," he said, "all this, I'll send this to your flight commander." He said, "You report to the beach every day. Get as much water as you can, get in there, but don't get out in the open when you come out of the water." He said, "Just stay out of the sun, go into the water and the saltwater will take care of that for you." In about four days, I was in fine shape. In five days, we took off for [Northfield]. We were not classified. We were down there to sort of get ourselves into the Air Corps shape, and then, took off for Northfield, Vermont. I didn't remember that part. I sort of forget.

SI: You were only there for a few days, basically recovering from your sores.

JW: Yes, that's right. They just sent us down there, and then, ... they broke us up and we were on a train north and this train would drop off cars at different spots. Then, the car I was in ended up at Northfield, Vermont, and I enjoyed that period. The colonel there was great. I talked to him one day, I said, "Hey, here we are, in the wintertime, we ought to open up that ski tow," and he said, "You want to open up our ski tow?" I said, "I'd love to." "Fine," he said, "Then, you don't have to do all these exercises. Open up the ski tow," and I said, "My skis are here." My mother had brought them up. So, I had my skis, and I had a great time skiing, plus an incident one day. We had four rebel kids and they came down a large ski jump in a toboggan and went off. The toboggan turned on its side and there was a bunch of broken collarbones when they hit the ground.

SI: Yes. They rolled over in midair.

JW: Yes.

SI: You were with Rutgers guys at McClellan. It was pretty much people you already knew.

JW: Yes, that's right.

SI: Once you got to Miami Beach, and then, Vermont, you started to meet people from all of the country, I assume.

JW: Yes, that's right, all over the country.

SI: What was that like, meeting all these different people? Was there anybody that kind of stands out in your memory as very different or interesting?

JW: No, not really. I remember going down to Cochran Field, when we were down there. A couple of Rutgers guys came by. They were training and they were already officers and they had done what I wanted to do, you know, become an officer, and then, join the Air Corps; [I] thought I wouldn't have to go through that Boy Scout stuff. [laughter]

SI: Was there any kind of friction between, say, the Southerners and the Northerners?

JW: No. The only thing I remember, really, was the food. I often wondered what happened to the broccoli heads when I was in the infantry. [laughter] We just got the hard core, and I found it in the Air Corps, always beautiful heads, none of that hard core, and the food was a hell of a lot better. It was interesting.

SI: You noticed a real change in the quality of living.

JW: Yes, quality of living. In fact, when we were in the infantry, ... you know, we'd sit up in the train and, when I was in the Air Corps, every time we went, we had a Pullman, [a sleeping train car].

SI: You had a berth and all that.

JW: A berth and all of that.

SI: What did the training at Northfield consist of? What was a typical day like?

JW: Well, they did a lot of mathematic training and training in math. Most of it was math training, in that, if you were in the Air Corps, how to find your way back and a lot of that sort of thing. ... Of course, we flew up there. I flew just one day when the orders came out that, "All ROTC people will report south." So, they knew something was going on then, because I was pulled out of there, but they didn't keep names, I guess, [laughter] later on, when we were shipped out. ... In fact, I had a roommate, my roommate at prep school, [who] was an instructor down there, PT [physical training] instructor, at Cochran Field, yes. It was interesting.

SI: When you were at Northfield, were you actually housed and trained at the university?

JW: Yes. We were housed at one place, ... Jackson Hall, and then, we went over to another bigger hall, a nicer hall. ... As I said, I had a squadron, because I knew how to march. [laughter] A lot of these kids had just come in as civilians. ...

SI: Did you have other responsibilities besides just marching them around?

JW: Well, I had a better deal, because I was acting as an officer, and, of course, then, the fellow, the head of PT, took a liking to me. I had the same thing happened when ... I went overseas, which is an interesting story, but you'll probably get into that later. [laughter]

SI: With this squadron under you, did you have to deal with paperwork or disciplinary issues, anything like that?

JW: No, just basic training, and you'd chew somebody out if he didn't do what he was supposed to do and pull him to the side and train him a little bit more. Of course, all that marching and all that stuff, we learned at Rutgers, and then, of course, through basic training, and they taught us different things down there. ... At Northfield, they taught us how to shoot. Of course, that wasn't anything. I'd been shooting rifles for quite some time.

SI: Was it a high-pressure situation, where people were struggling to keep up with the classes because they wanted to stay there and not be sent somewhere else?

JW: No, I didn't notice anything. Some of them were kids that had just come out of high school and it was a little bit more high pressure for them, I guess, because some of the fellows up there were in their high twenties. ...

SI: Were any of them college graduates?

JW: Yes, yes, some college graduates.

SI: After Norwich, you were classified as a pilot in Nashville.

JW: Yes.

SI: What was that process like? Do you remember the testing at all?

JW: Well, the one thing I do remember was the doctor. When he pulled my blood, he said, "You must be from the guys from Vermont." [laughter] I said, "How do you know?" He said, "Your blood's so thick." I guess your blood thickens up when you're in cold conditions.

SI: Yes, because of the cold weather.

JW: The colder weather. I also remember, in Vermont, I never had to polish anything, because of the cold weather. ... Down in [Fort McClellan], when we were going through basic training, we ... constantly had to shine our belts and keep everything clean that had to be kept clean. It was no problem up in Vermont. [laughter] I always remembered that.

SI: Did they do any testing at Nashville? Was it just book testing?

JW: Oh, they'd ask you whether you like girls and whether you like that sort of thing. I said, "Well, not anymore." I said, "I'm married." [laughter]

SI: I have heard of some outrageous tests. Maybe this was earlier in the war, but they would put a helmet on somebody's head and throw marbles at them and yell, "You are under attack; what do you do?"

JW: Oh, no, never got any of that.

SI: When did you get married?

JW: Oh, let's see, when was that? I should know that date. I got married when we were going through [basic training], when I was down in McClellan.

SI: Did she go down there?

JW: She came down there.

SI: Okay. Was that allowed?

JW: You had to go to tell them that, "I'm going with a gal and I want to marry her." That's all, "And she would like to get out of Massachusetts," [laughter] and so, that was it. Barbara came down there, we were married and been married ever since. It was the greatest thing I ever did.

SI: That is good.

JW: She's great, and, boy, she's a great mom, never had any, *any*, trouble with any of my children, none. They all know, if they say, "We'll be by at a certain time," when they were coming in from college or wherever, that if they weren't going to meet that date, get on the phone, and we get that today. John is just up the road. If he says, "I should be there in about twenty minutes," and, if, all of a sudden, something happened, he'd go on the phone, immediately, [laughter] and we've had great kids, just great kids. John's sharp as a tack, and Deborah was, and John went to prep school and Roger went to prep school in Japan, an American school in Japan, had a great time. ... Debbie went to prep school. When we were in France, she went to school in Switzerland, and then, we knew we were coming back, but we weren't going to come back right away. So, we sent her up to Northfield School for Gals and John went to Mount, Mountain Herman I always say, Mount Herman School, in Northfield, and did well. John is sharp. ... I always used to tell him ... he couldn't pour water out of a boot with the directions on the heel, you know, but bright and [can] write and speak [well].

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

SI: This continues an interview with John Wiggin on July 22, 2006, in Quechee, Vermont, with Shaun Illingworth. Please, continue; you were telling me about your son.

JW: Well, John, he's sharp. He writes beautifully. ... To give you an example, we were down in Florida, at our place, and, here, ... a woman went by and she had, "Woodstock," [on her shirt], and I said, "*The* Woodstock?" She said, "No, not *the* [New York] Woodstock, Woodstock, Vermont." [laughter] ... Her husband was right with her and I said, "Good, that's good." I said, "I was hoping you'd say Vermont." I said, "You don't know a guy by the name of John Wiggin, do you?" He said, "Everybody knows John Wiggin, everybody, you know. He is all around, does everything, helps everybody. He's always active." Even [Laurance] Rockefeller came out, when he first arrived and John took over his land and his properties, and he said, "John, you got an axe?" "Yes, Mr. Rockefeller; why?" He [Rockefeller] said, "What do you want to cut?"

[laughter] and John was making trails for cross-country skiing. ... Nobody told him to do that, but he said, "With all this land, let's have some trails. We've got Suicide Six, [a skiing resort in Woodstock, Vermont], and all of that for skiing. Why not cross-country?" and so, he took care of all of that for Laurance. ... In fact, with Laurance, we heard he had fun with Mrs. Johnson, [former First Lady "Lady Bird" Johnson]. Lady Bird would come up, because he appreciated her, because she liked to have country [that] looked nice and all of this business, and you can see where her hand is in down in Texas, you know. A lot of places in Texas, she made a beautiful countryside. ... Mrs. Rockefeller would always call John and say, "Lady Bird's here. Why don't you have dinner with us tonight?" ... They'd go up with her, and then, they'd go riding the next day, and so, he would take her all through the backwoods and the places.

SI: That is very interesting.

JW: Yes, and interesting, the girl next-door to us here in Quechee, her husband met John, spoke to him when he came back [from the Vietnam War]. ... [He asked] him what he ... wanted to do, and he said, "First, I want to go skiing. Then, I don't want to work inside." He said, "I'm not that type of a guy." So, he ended up, luckily, going [with] this man, vice-president in charge of sales of a paper company, and he knew exactly who John should speak to. "John," he said, "if you really want to be outside," he said, "I'll call Yale School of Forestry for you and get you in there." ... So, John went there, ... and, to go on with that, he ended up going to Woodstock, because he saw on a bulletin board they were looking for a forester. ... He went in and they said, "You're what we're looking for, but you don't have any experience," and we were over in Japan at that time. A guy by the name of (Gill Nettleton?) said, "What's my favorite kid doing?" "He went into Woodstock," I said, "He had about another week to go at forestry school, but they turned him down, because he didn't have any experience." "Oh," he said, "here, send him my card and tell him to give me a call." ... "John," he said, "can you be down Monday?" "Yes." John went down Monday. He walked across the hall and Gil said, "Laurance, here's this kid I was telling you about. You can't go wrong. Hire him." So, he spent the day with Laurance Rockefeller, [who] called Woodstock, "Cut the ads." He said, "I've got our forester." He worked for Laurance until he died. John still works for the Federal Government when needed. So, he's there. He's on call. Anytime they want something, they give him a call and over he goes and he does a lot of work for people, many regarding the control of their properties.

SI: That is very interesting.

JW: An interesting guy.

SI: Yes. He got involved with that after he came back from Vietnam?

JW: Yes, Vietnam. He was a SEAL. I think I mentioned that. That was a rough show.

SI: Yes. That is a rough service.

JW: Yes. He said the only mistake he made [was], he didn't quit the first day. [laughter] He said, "It was the roughest thing he ever went through in his life," and he said, "Then, it became a challenge." ... He said, "If these guys could take it, I can take it."

SI: I can see why he loves the outdoors. They really learn to live in nature.

JW: Yes, yes.

SI: Getting back to your World War II experience, was your marriage one of these wartime marriages where you got married and, the next day, you were back on the base?

JW: Yes.

SI: Not much time for married life.

JW: No.

SI: Did your wife stay down there or did she go right back?

JW: She went back.

SI: We talked about Nashville. What was your next stop after Nashville?

JW: Cochran Field, and then ...

SI: You were kind of lost in the shuffle. Then, you went to Fort Benning. How long were you at Fort Benning?

JW: Yes. Well, we were "ninety-day-wonders," and then, from there, ... well, I told you about (DeMont Mullen?), the officer that I ran into, and I saw him later, when he came into the Philippines as well, and he was still ... a second lieutenant. [laughter] ... Funny how you remember some of the guys and there are other good guys you've forgotten. I'll never forget (DeMont Mullen?).

SI: How was the training at Fort Benning? You said earlier that it was very influential.

JW: ... Yes. It was a good show. They really weeded properly and this fellow tried it, (DeMont Mullen?). I don't know whether I told you that, but (DeMont Mullen?) put me before the board. Generally, when you go before the board, you're out, and he brought me in and ... there was a colonel. ... I gave him my name, and so, he goes over the sheet and everything. He said, "My God, kid," he said, "you can really shoot a rifle. [laughter] I've never seen scores like this before," and he said, "Lieutenant," he said, "why did you bring this guy before the board?" "He can't spell, sir." "He what?" "He can't spell." "Where are you from?" I said, "Englewood, New Jersey." He said, "You know, I'm from Englewood, New Jersey," and he said, "I can't spell either." ... He said, "There's something deeper in this, Lieutenant. No more assignments for this fellow until he gets assignment as a lieutenant, do you understand? and I'm going to follow it." He said, "There's something wrong with this," and that was it. I didn't have another assignment for my last four weeks. I [had] nothing, nothing. ... The twelfth week board, it was; then, I

never had another assignment and that was it. ... [I] went into a great group, the 201st Infantry. They'd just come in from Alaska. You want me to go on with that? ...

SI: That was all at Fort Benning.

JW: Yes, Fort Benning, yes. Then, we took off from there and I joined the 201st Infantry. ... As luck would have it, I had a man by the name of (Austin?), a Colonel (Austin?) from Boston, and he liked Barbara and he would come over on the weekend. We'd be at the officers' club and he came over one time. I told a story one time and he laughed. He thought it was funny, and then, he came over when he saw Barbara and he said, "Lieutenant, would it be all right if I danced with your wife?" and I said, "Colonel, ask her." She said, "Certainly, Colonel," and she danced with him and, every weekend that we were at the club, he would come over and ask to dance with Barbara. Finally, ... when they started getting ready for the landings on Japan, he came to me one day and he said, "I'm sorry, but," he said, "we're all going overseas. All officers that haven't been overseas are going out on the next assignment," and so, I was sent home and drove home with Barbara, and [then], went overseas. ... While we were on the boat, the war was over, which made me very happy. Bradley was with me. He went to Okinawa and I went down to the Philippines.

SI: When you were assigned to the 201st Infantry in the United States, what were your duties and what would you do?

JW: Training. All of a sudden, the Army thought it would be good to have kids come into the Army and join an outfit. ... 201st Infantry was a West Virginia regiment and their claim to fame was that George Washington was their commander at one time, when he was ... [serving under] the British, and so, we were pretty proud of that outfit, [laughter] and they had all been up in Alaska, and a really great bunch of guys.

SI: Did they keep the veterans from Alaska in the unit or were they folded out?

JW: No, they kept them in. They had been up there almost a year.

SI: Had they been involved in the Attu and Kiska battles?

JW: No, they never got there. ... Some of them got out closer, but our group, our battalion, was in Kodiak. Their big problem was the Kodiak bear. [laughter] ... Some of them would tell interesting stories. They said, "You just couldn't jump over a log, because the bears had been going over that log for years and years," and he said, "On the other side is a pit about twelve feet down," because, every time, it's just like a horseshoe pit, they hit it and they would walk out. ... "They all seemed to go around the island the same way, carrying out just a little bit of dirt every time they walked out of the hole. They were so damn big, our sergeant said we were never allowed to shoot at them. ... A new arrival, one time, shot at one." Sergeant Daniels said, "John, every one of us was on the ground, fired at that damn bear as he came up the mountainside. We put more shells in him than I thought we ever needed, [laughter] and he just kept coming and coming. We finally stopped him. He was a huge, damn thing." He said, "They

stand about twelve feet high when they stand up," said, "It was interesting. So, that's where we were, the 201st," said Sergeant Daniels.

SI: When you say you were in training, were you actually training with the men or were you dealing with office matters?

JW: No, we were training men, troops. That's when I got wounded. I was teaching machine gun and ... one shell didn't go off. So, I pulled the slide back and the shell landed with a bunch of other shells, where it exploded, and I got wounded, [laughter] a scratch on the knee. It took about three stitches. I never applied for ...

SI: The Purple Heart?

JW: My son got two of them, by the way.

SI: Were there any other accidents in training, besides this one with the ammo?

JW: That was the only one, yes.

SI: That is one thing I have found interesting. You went through both aviation training and infantry training. Sometimes, particularly in aviation training, it could be as dangerous as actual combat.

JW: Oh, yes.

SI: Were there any accidents?

JW: Well, we had one fellow, ... the only one I know of was (Artie Wright?). He was [in the] Civilian Pilot Training course with me and he cracked up in Carolina someplace. He did the same thing. He stalled out, coming in for a landing, and he was killed.

SI: Nothing in your actual training unit.

JW: No. We had one; I remember, we were on the rifle range. There was another group down there at the same time and this was before we were officers and we were learning how to fire a Browning Automatic. ... Finally, everybody was called to, "Cease firing." Then, all of a sudden, Connell [was] his name, his gun [fired]. "Bring that kid and gun up here, Sergeant." Then, another shot went off and Connell said, "I didn't pull any trigger." He said, "Well, let's go up, let's go up." So, the Sergeant grabbed the gun and started running along with it. It went off again and killed a guy. ...

SI: Wow.

JW: He explained to the fellow who was running the range, he said, "Mine, when you said, 'Cease firing,' I had already stopped firing," and he said, "It just went off again," and he said, "When this sergeant grabbed the gun and started, it went off again." ... He said, "Thank God I

wasn't carrying it." Well, he went through OCS and he was with us in the 201st Infantry. I'll never forget it, Connell's comments.

SI: You mentioned earlier some of the differences between being in the Air Corps and being in the infantry, particularly the food.

JW: Yes.

SI: Did you notice any changes in the quality of life once you were an officer?

JW: Yes, but you were still being watched very carefully, so, you couldn't do [much]. The life was better, of course. You're treated better, but I think that's the way it always is. I think George Washington had a better deal than the guys that were fighting. [laughter]

SI: What did you think of your fellow officers, both those on your level and those who were superior to you, in the 201st?

JW: The 201st, we had a great bunch in that outfit, a great bunch. ... My sergeants, I had two sergeants, (Stallmaker?) was one of them, Pee-Wee (Stallmaker?), and he was about six-foot-ten, and ... Jigger Morrison. Just before they went overseas, they told me, "We knew we were going overseas and we knew we were going to Alaska, and nobody got a pass, but," he said, "we took off, not to run away from the Army, but to have one last fling in the States before departing." ... He said, "We were caught by the MPs [military police]." While in this MP lineup, Pee-Wee said to his buddy, "When they ask your name, hit the MP in front of you and take off," and back to the 201st they went! "We knocked them both cold," he said. ... He said, "We came and, of course, we turned to our captain and told him what we had done." He said, "Fine. Well, they'll probably be around. They know you're from the 201st." He said, "I'll give you an assignment when they come." So, he said, "When the MPs arrived, we grabbed our jeep and departed." Their captain did know. He saved [them]. Two sergeants, which were very important to his outfit, he didn't want to lose them. I've seen that before. ... We had a fellow who worked for us at Nabisco and was a sergeant that got drunk just before the landings at D-Day, and he said they broke him to private. The day they left, took off, they put his stripes back on. [laughter] He was a good sergeant. Good sergeants are hard to come by. He was great at Nabisco also.

SI: Did you have sergeants working under you that you relied on?

JW: Yes, yes. Morrison and (Stallmaker?) were terrific. Then, I had some good ones overseas, when I was in my big job in the Army. [laughter]

SI: In general, did you have morale or discipline problems before you got the assignment to go overseas?

JW: No, never ran into that.

SI: There was not any restlessness.

JW: No. Generally, you could talk to them. ... If it was one of the other enlisted men, of course, the sergeants would handle that, but, with the sergeants, ... I'd say, "Come on, you know better than that." Some officers would just explode, you know, "You don't do that," and they appreciated it. I mean, everybody isn't a good guy all the time, you know. Everybody goofs off or makes a mistake. You make mistakes now. I know the fellow that hired me for Nabisco, he said, "John, go out and make some mistakes, but don't make them twice, okay?" ... because, if you don't make any mistakes, you aren't doing anything. You weren't trying to do anything.

SI: Can you tell me about the process of going overseas, where you were shipped to and what it was like getting on the ship?

JW: Well, that was interesting. We went overseas on a combat troopship and we went over there with two of ... them and Dave (Mahoney?) headed for Okinawa. Norton Seidel and I headed for the Philippines. The powers-that-be thought that the Japanese were still going to put up a fight, which they didn't do. As we came off the boat, with our rifles and our carbines with us, as we departed ship, walking along in a group, a nearby officer said, "You, you, you and you." We went over and he said, "We need guys at the Army Exchange Service. You interested?" I said, "But, where?" He said, "Well, I need a couple of guys, up at Clark Field." I said, "I'm your man." [laughter] I said, "I love to fly," and so, that's the way I got to Clark Field as the head of the Army Exchange depot at Clark Field, which serviced about ten thousand; about thirty thousand troops were up there at that point in time. The war was over, but they hadn't shipped them all out yet.

SI: What were the conditions like on the ship?

JW: They were good, but hot, and there was no air conditioning and we had a bunk below and I ... had a top bunk. ... The top bunk, of course, was the hottest bunk, so, I just grabbed a couple of pillows and went up and slept on the deck all the time, going overseas. We took off in September, I think it was, August or September, and it was hot and warm all the way over, getting even warmer when we got closer to the Philippines.

SI: What was going through your mind, both on the ship and in getting ready, before it was declared that the Japanese had surrendered? What were you thinking as you were going into the combat zone?

JW: Yes, we all thought what would happen, but, of course, when they said that it's all over, ... the only reason why we thought we were going down there was because maybe some of these Japanese, the way they used to fight, they ... [probably] wouldn't throw in the sponge and [would] keep fighting. There were a couple of them that did. I can remember being in Japan when they picked up a fellow down in Saipan who hadn't surrendered and he finally surrendered and he came back to Japan. The Americans sent him back to Japan and it was just interesting. The Japanese looked at this as he was sort of a hero, because he didn't surrender. ...

SI: You were in Japan thirty years after the war ended.

JW: Yes, that's right, it was thirty years after the war, and there was one in the Philippines, too. [Editor's Note: Mr. Wiggin is referring to Shoichi Yokoi and Hiroo Onoda. Yokoi was found on Guam in 1972 and Onoda was found on Lubang Island in the Philippines in 1974.] ... He finally was captured and, when we were there, there were Japanese running around. There were about four of them that were killed one night and they had gone in and they were just robbing to stay alive, stealing food and all of this, and our headquarters were right along the tracks where these guys would walk into our depot, which was Camp (Dow?), which was a Filipino camp.

SI: How did they come in?

JW: Well, ... they still had weapons. I can remember Seidel and I going back into the hills one day. We had never zeroed in our rifles. So, into the local woods we went. We were shooting away when a sergeant yelled, "What the hell are you bastards doing?" I said, "We're zeroing our rifles in." He said, "What for? The goddamn war is over." He was really giving us a bad time. So, finally, Seidel said, "Well, what's it to you, Sergeant?" "Oh," he said, "I'm sorry." He said, "We're trying to get the Japanese to come out of the hills, but, if you're sitting over here shooting that gun," and a machine gun, basically. The carbine, with a push of a lever, became a machine gun. So, we said, "Sorry," apologized and we just cleared [out], but it was interesting. They were trying to pull these [Japanese out]. They had Japanese with them, to try to speak and pull their guys out of the hills.

SI: Did you have restrictions? Did they tell you, "Do not walk out into the hills," or, "Do not walk out there at night?"

JW: No. We never were told that. The Japanese pretty much gave up, you know, but just some, I guess, ... real hardnosed ones and just some of them, this fellow in Saipan, that his friend that was with him finally died and he got enough wood together to burn him and save the ashes. So, when he arrived back in Japan, he had his buddy's ashes.

SI: Was it all over the media in Japan?

JW: Yes, but it was interesting, in the Philippines, I, as requested, went up to Clark Field and we would bring our items up from Manila. ... One day, from Manila, my sergeants picked up watches and radios. We realized that the home office had shortchanged us on watches. ... So, I called and I said, "I was supposed to get 'X' number of watches and I got minus," but the Colonel said, "Well, that's your problem." He said, "You checked them." I said, "No, I had the Sergeant do that." He said, "That's it, that's it," and we had a ten percent leeway, which I thought was sacrilege. Luckily, Mr. (Salafranca?), our office manager, advised, "We got twice the number of radios that you should have," and I said, "Twice?" He said, "Well, there's supposed to be six in the container and there are twelve in the container. So, you've got about eighty radios we shouldn't have." So, I called the Colonel again and he said, "Didn't you hear me?" "Yes, I heard you, Colonel." I said, "I just wondered whether you'd like to make a trade." [laughter] ... When he heard that, "Yes," he said, "we'll make a trade, we'll make a trade," never forget that. So, we changed our figures, and I said, "You got the better deal," [laughter] but those were interesting days

SI: Can you give me a little summary of what your duties were at the exchange at Clark Field?

JW: Well, actually, I was in charge of all Army Exchange supplies coming in to Clark Field, and then, they would be picked up and paid for by the units using the AES. One, a US captain, came to our office and he said, "We've got 'X' number of Filipino troops that we're discharging and what do I have to do to get AES supplies?" "Well, you just can't talk to me." I said, "Go down to Manila, to the Army Exchange Service, and tell them. They will say, 'You can or can't.'" He came back and he got an okay. He called me later, advising, "I'm having trouble because I haven't any carryalls, big trucks to carry my beer, etc., here. Can you get some for me?" "Yes, we can get [something]." So, he thanked me profusely and this fellow came in and we loaded up. There were two big vans we loaded up with all the beer they ordered. One driver came back and he said, "Hey, Lieutenant, the next time you ship up there, ... tell my boss that ... I did a good job, because I'd like to go again." "Why?" He said, "Come here, look in this truck," and there were about three hundred cases of beer. "What the hell is that?" He said, "I don't know," but he said, "They told me I had to unload it, and so, I unloaded and Charlie unloaded his as well, and I took the extra beer and he went back to the base. We're going to divide this up between us." "Why?" He said, "There wasn't anybody there." I said, "Good." So, I told Mr. (Salafranca?), "When that guy comes in, let me know." So, in he came and ... Mr. (Salafranca?) said, "He doesn't have any papers on anything." I said, "Do you know how much he owes you?" He said, "Yes." He said, "I've got all the figures." I said, "Jump it by ten thousand." He said, "What?" I said, "Jump it by ten thousand." So, he thought, "Jesus, this guy's a nut. [laughter] He must be involved in this." So, he jumped it by ten thousand and brought the money into me and I said, "Is this the ten thousand?" "Yes, that's the ten [thousand]." "Good, stand there," and so, I called Manila, told them exactly what happened, and I said, "I've got an extra ten thousand dollars here that I told Mr. (Salafranca?) to charge this guy, because I think he's cheating." I said that there wasn't anybody there! The next thing I heard [was] that these guys were picked up by the Army and thrown in the hoosegow [prison]. I had a similar thing happen to me when I took charge of the warehouses when I first came up here. Our Captain came in and said to me; we have a ten percent leeway. ... He said, "John, everything you receive, knock off ten percent," and I said, "What did you say, Cap?" and he said, "Knock off ten percent." I said, "Fine, I'll do that, but," I said, "you'll sign?" He said, "Are you disobeying an order?" I said, "No." I said, "I'll bring it in for you to sign, because I'm not going to put my name on it." He said, "You can be court-martialed, and I'll make sure you're court-martialed," and Sidel was standing right beside me. "That's right, Captain. I heard every word you said and every word Lieutenant Wiggin said. You're absolutely right, you're absolutely right." Sidel looked at me, with a big wink. "You bastards," to quote the Captain; he turned around and walked out. Well, he left for home and, when he left for home, I took over, over the exchange. He was pissed. God, he hated my guts, [laughter] and he said, "Here, here are the sheets. Sign for them." I said, "Captain, I'm not signing for anything until after you leave, and Mr. (Salafranca?) and I will go out and count," and we did, and, boy, the things that were missing, especially the cameras, perfume, etc., and all these items that everybody wanted. [laughter] So, I went down to Manila. I said, "I'm not going to sign for any of that stuff up there. I want somebody from here to go up there and count." I said, "These are Mr. (Salafranca's?) [figures]," and I said, "He's an old Army Exchange guy," but I said, "These are ... our figures and these are the figures that the Captain put down." They brought him back from the States. As soon as he arrived, they put him on a boat back to the Philippines, [laughter] court-martialed him, which is interesting. In fact, basically, I was

responsible for that. I had another interesting thing that happened, a real great guy. The railroad went on strike, and so, we didn't get our beer and this was rather early on. ... General Worksmith, head of the Fifth Air Force, he came down, "Where's the beer?" He said, "Our guys are upset. [laughter] "General, the railroad's on strike and, for some reason, I can't locate a truck." ... This was before ... I knew where to go or how to get a truck. General Worksmith said, "I'll get the trucks." I drove one of these large trucks to Manila, to the San Miguel Brewery, that stored all our beers in the Philippines. A US major in charge of this, plus other critical items, looked at me and said, "Lieutenant, what makes you think you can just come down here and we're going to stop everything and load your trucks?" I said, "The railroads aren't running." He said, "I know that." He said, "Why don't you just go back?" and then, he said, "We'll give you a call when we can handle it." I said, "But, there's no beer up there." He said, "That's not my problem." "Fine." I said, "Can I borrow your phone?" "Yes, who are you calling?" ... "General Worksmith," I said. "He sent me down here to get this stuff." "Well, well, maybe we can do something." We got our beer, went back and, from that time on, Worksmith, whenever he was going to fly to someplace, he'd always ask, "You want to go up?" and I said, "Yes." So, ... every weekend, I'd be flying someplace with him, and we used to sit [in the cockpit]. He would fly, he'd let me fly; in this, he would be right there with me. ... We went up to Baguio one time, with his B-17 bomber, and he said, "When you hit that runway," he said, "when I yell," he said, "stand on those brakes with me," and that's what we did. We came down, hit, rolled down that runway and he said, "Stand on the brakes." I stood on the brakes and was pushing and he's pushing and we stopped this thing. Then, we rolled around. Then, when we took off, he said, "The same thing when we take off, John." He said, "Stand on those brakes," and he said, "When this thing starts to really bounce in place, I'll yell, 'Off.'" That's what we did, and down that damn runway we went, all the way to the end. I figured, "Jesus, this is it," and he had known [that] there was a grade of two thousand feet. So, he went right off the edge, dove down and pulled the monster out, and back to the base, Clark. I went on with him, another interesting story. "How would you like to go swimming this weekend?" "Great." "The MPs use this old home as their headquarters. There is a MP colonel up there who is a SOB and gives my boys a bad time, throws them in jail overnight, no food, etc." We are in the pool, out came this austere bastard. He had the riding crop and he's all decked out. Everybody's bowing to him, practically, and Worksmith sort of swam over to where he was and he threw up his hand and he said, "Colonel, how are you?" He caught the Colonel's right hand and, "Zoom," he yanked him into the pool, jumped out of the pool and headed to the locker room, and the Colonel came out. We're in the pool, we're completely surprised, and I figured, "Whoa, now, there's going to be some fun," and he yelled to two MPs, "Go get that son of a bitch, go get that son of a bitch." They came racing in. Worksmith was smart enough, he opened the locker and they look and here's all that "hash" on his hat and the stars on his uniform, and they said, "General," they said, "the Colonel would like to see you." [laughter] "Fine. Just tell him I'll be out when I'm dressed," and he got a shower and came out and here's the Colonel there. He started to laugh, "That was the funniest joke ever played on me," [laughter] and we were going back and he said, "That SOB, I enjoyed that," [laughter] a real fun guy to be with, just fun. Worksmith was a captain in the Philippines just before the war started as a fighter pilot and came back after the start as head of a B-17 group.

SI: How old was he?

JW: He was ... in his thirties, yes. He was about thirty-six, and I was twenty-five or twenty-four at the time, but just enjoyed [it]. I guess he liked me, ... because I certainly liked being with him. It was fun and enjoyable. ...

SI: That sounds like a lot of fun. You were in the receiving end of the Army logistics chain.

JW: Yes, that's right.

SI: I have heard from many people that, at the end of the war, they had to deal with all of the surplus equipment and many talked about enormous waste, just throwing things away and letting things rust in fields. Did you see any of that?

JW: No. We only had a jeep when I arrived there. Everything, they would bring stuff up, and you couldn't operate that way with only a jeep. [laughter] ... So, I went up, got a couple of weapons carriers and I taught my houseboy, Domingo (Sampang?), how to drive, and so, he could go to do things for me. ... Also, all these big trucks were being pushed out and just laying there in the field, and they were loaded. They left the keys and everything. ... So, we would go over and get them and wipe off what was on their fenders and put down, "AES," Army Exchange Service. [laughter] So, we had a fleet of trucks, when I left, of about twelve six-bys [trucks], and that was all we needed. The fellow who took over from me was from West Point and I ... ran into some trouble when I pointed out our motor pool. He said, "But, you're only supposed to have one jeep." I said, "Yes," but I said, "you can't operate up here with just one jeep." I said, "It's even gotten worse, because, as people are going home, ... you can't find any trucks, and so, we've got all of our trucks." He said, "I'm not going to sign for them." I said, "Fine, no problem. What are you going to do?" So, I said, "Come here." He came out. "What are you going to do?" So, I took the Army paint, just went over the "AES," and I said, "I'm going to put them out in the field, where we got them from in the first place, so [that] I could run this place." He was shocked. He was right out of West Point, "How could you do that?" "Well, I did it to operate, and we operated. We got things done." ... I met, at home, a person who signed to help us join the Morristown Country Club. He had been in the Air Corps. ... I asked him whether he knew a Bill Best and he said, "Yes." He said, "My God," he said, "where did you meet him?" "Well," I said, "I met him in Japan." This is when we came back from Japan, and I said, "It was a very interesting story. He swore at me, with a smile on his face." ... He said, "You know, he was my best man in our marriage," and he said, "What happened?" I said, "Well, I met him in Japan. He was a two-star general," and I said, "He was responsible for the Fifth Air Corps' move from Clark Field to Japan." ... Gee, I remember that move, when they took off, and I said, "I had a sergeant by the name of (Freddie Afsa?)," and I said, "We were working off of two-by-fours on benches and that was our desk, and Freddie said he found us a whole bunch of desks and he said, 'We'll set them up.'" Freddie was a machine gunner during the war, and he said, "I found some desks." He said, "Shall I go get them?" "Yes." I said, "Fine." So, he went out and ... he brought one back that was absolutely gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous, inlaid ivory all around of the top and everything, and he said, "Here, Lieutenant, why don't you take this desk? You're the chief here," and so, I took it and I explained this to this general that I met in Japan, in the Air Corps, and he said, "You, you son of a bitch. You know I was almost court-martialed for that desk," and he started to laugh. ...

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

JW: [He said], "That desk never arrived," and as I said, "It was a gorgeous desk. I wished I could have taken it home," [laughter] and he roared, and then, of course, when my friend wrote to him, he said, "I met the guy who stole all your desks." [laughter]

SI: Was there a lot of unrest in the Philippines at that time, among the troops, over the issue of going home?

JW: No, but, then, everybody was looking forward to going home. ... We were there when Ike came by, Eisenhower, and I was down in Manila. When he came by, somebody yelled, "Hey, Ike, when in the hell are we going to get out of here?" [laughter] and he stopped, got out and came across. ... The fellow that was yelling, he was all of a sudden like this ...

SI: Shaking.

JW: Ike walked [over], and I wasn't, oh, probably, from here to the wall, and he said, "We're doing our best." ... The kid said, "Well, I guess you are, but, Jesus, we came over here on tramp steamers," and he said, "anything to get us over here." He said, "Look, there's a great, big aircraft carrier out there. The war's over. We could go on that," and Ike said, "That's a good idea. That's a great idea." Suddenly, guys are leaving the Philippines on aircraft carriers, going back to the States, and he moved that quickly and, suddenly, they started to use them. ...

SI: He listened to an enlisted man.

JW: Yes, Ike was a listener, even as President. They didn't need the airplanes anymore. I can remember watching planes taking off. There was one day that one took off and they couldn't get the wheels up. One wheel stayed up, front wheel stayed down, this was a B-24, the other one [retracted], and then, they went around, burning off the gasoline. He flew up there about an hour-and-a-half and, finally, headed the damn plane for the mountains and everybody bailed out. [laughter] "Boom," and then, that changed things. A lot of guys said, "Hell, I'm going back by boat. I'm not going by plane," but they just stored them in the States, typically.

SI: This program also interviewed Douglas McCabe, from your class. It seems like he was in a similar job in Manila at the pier, taking in supplies and running a pier. He pointed out that the two biggest problems he faced were theft and strikes.

JW: Yes.

SI: You have talked about both. Would you say that those were big problems where you were?

JW: Yes. We had theft, and we had one big one and it was interesting, and was cruel, but, all of a sudden, the fellow [who] was in charge of my warehouse, where all the drinks and the Coca-Cola was, ... he came into the office one morning. ... "Lieutenant," he said, "I'm sick. Can you help me?" and I said, "Yes, let's go. Get in the jeep. I'll take you over to the hospital," and he said, "Well, I don't have to go to the hospital. Isn't there an aid station?" So, I took him over there and I said, "Here, can I take you inside now?" "I don't want to go inside." He said, "I

wanted to get out." He said, "My group has been stealing Coca-Cola." I said, "They?" "Yes," he said, "the people that are working for me." He said, "I saw it this morning." He said, "There's a false front of Coca-Cola, but, behind that, there's missing Coke, area after area." He said, "It's gone." I said, "Wow." I said, "Fine." I said, "You'd better go home. I'll tell these guys that you're sick," and I went in and told them [he] was sick. I called Manila, telling them what had happened. They said, "We'll have somebody there right away," and the MP that came up was a Filipino Scout. They were people that were trained by the US, and he said, "Can I borrow that weapons carrier?" and he grabbed the weapons' carrier backed it up to where the Coke was, and he said, "You, you, you, back of the truck." Jesus, when those guys came back, they'd been pistol whipped, and then, he said, "You and you," and they started to call the names, "you, back of the truck." I said, "Where are you going with them?" He said, "I'll have to borrow the truck. I'm taking them to jail." You run into that. ... That was the biggest one I ever had, ... but our guys, the fellows that I was with, I didn't have any trouble. I did have one fellow that started a fight with one of them. I broke it up and I said, "What's this all about?" and one of them didn't say anything and the other one started to. He said, "I'm not going to stand around with him," and he said, "He's doing things that he shouldn't do," and he said, "He's doing things that can get you in trouble and I told him, 'For Christ's sake, we've got one of the nicest officers around,'" and he said, "'You're going to screw things up.'" When he left for home, he was looking for a job and I suggested he go in and see my dad, and they were able to place him for a job at Nabisco.

SI: What do you think were the biggest problems or challenges of your job?

JW: Then?

SI: Yes, after the war, at the Exchange Service.

JW: Just keeping everybody happy and doing a good job, and, of course, you did that, just go a little bit different than what the Army would've allowed to get things done, but we got things done, and so, we were never accused of not getting things done.

SI: Was that kind of the bottom line, "Just get it done?"

JW: Yes. Well, we had, for example, when they used to bring the stuff up, beer, they'd bring the beer, but they'd bring them up in open gondola cars. ... By the time it reached us, lots of times, the Filipinos would jump on; there's a couple of hills. They would jump on these cars, open the doors and just sit there and kick it out, just kick the stuff out, and so, I complained. I said, "We're short four hundred cases," and somebody down in the Philippines figured maybe I was lying. So, the next month, I put in what we needed. They sent in more beer, and, the next month, all of a sudden, we had three thousand cases more, and I called. I said, "I didn't order [these]. Who in the hell's counting down there?" but I said, "We got three thousand extra cases. ... My warehouse is full and, now, I have to stack these things in the yard, and you can't lay them [there exposed]," they were all in their cardboard containers, "and I have to go find tarps to put over all these damned things." They said, "That's all right, Lieutenant. We're just checking." That's all he said, "We're just checking." So, constantly, people were stealing, which, to me, was surprising, besides the stealing I did to get that nice desk. We didn't have [one]; it was just, as I said, two-by-fours and that was the desk, two-by-fours or two-by-sixes.

SI: Did you have much interaction with Filipinos, besides the ones that worked with you?

JW: No, maybe the office help, we knew the gals and the guys there, and the Filipino Scouts, but that was it. ... Of course, the girl that used to clean your uniforms; they used to take them down to the river and beat the dirt out of them. [laughter] That was about it. Then, they'd iron them and make it look like you were halfway decent, anyway; generally, just for the Army, working with the Army.

SI: You worked with the Army Air Forces, obviously.

JW: Yes.

SI: Did you work with any of the other services?

JW: Well, I worked with one service which supplied trucks, and I'll never forget this one. This fellow, somebody was stealing from him and he got so PO-ed at this fellow, he hit him, and it was a Filipino who was stealing. ... He hit him and he said, "You know," he said, "I broke my hand." ... He said, "So, I went to a hospital and, of course, at that time, the war was over and they put me on the next shipment out. Shortly, I was called." ... "Your hand is sprained. It's not broken. We mixed up the X-rays," because the fellow that said he had broken his hand had [not] broken it, but he said, "We had the wrong X-ray. You're healthy." So, he still had to stay. [laughter] It was that sort of thing. One day, he was telling [me], said these trucks would come in. ... (Sambukoas?), they helped the US Army when the Japanese had landed and they supplied [the US Army], kept things going, because the Americans didn't have as many trucks as they needed when MacArthur was there, [in] the early part of the war, and he said that we would always help these guys. "When they would come up, put them first in line. Then, the others would always try to give us something, so [that] ... they would get closer in the front [of the line]. So, when we'd ... give them the gas," ... or sell them the gas, "when they'd go out the following morning, [they would give them things]," and he said, "Look what I got. I got a great sword here, Japanese sword, this guy gave me." I said, "You know how to tell whether it's a good sword or not?" He said, "No." I said, "Grab it and bend it." He said, "What do you mean grab it and bend it?" I said, "A lot of those things are false, I've heard," and so, he picked it up and went like that, and that's the way it stayed, never came back into the shape. [laughter] ... I was over there with him one day, though these are just an aside, fun things; I was over there one day and I said, "Looks like somebody's stealing your wire." He said, "Yes, it does look like that." He said, "He ends up right over there," [laughter] and he was rolling it, barbed wire. He says, "He'll be here in about another thirty or forty minutes, I guess." Then, we sat there. Finally, when he gets all the way up, he sent a sergeant and another guy out and he said, "They learn faster this way." I said, "What do you do?" "Oh, they make him put it all back." [laughter] ... He said, "It's harder to put it back than it is to take down," and he said, "We'll never see him again, stealing any wire." Interesting, his name was (Kurd?), Lieutenant (Kurd?).

SI: What is your most vivid memory of your time in the Philippines?

JW: Oh, I think ... the things that went on, what we've been talking about, about stealing and that, are memories and the time of the fun I had with General Worksmith, yes, really enjoyed him, and he made it fun. I can remember flying with him and going up to Lingayen with him and Baguio, as I said before, landing in Baguio. [laughter]

SI: Was it always in the Philippines?

JW: Yes. Then, I met some other fellows that came in from Australia. They were on their way to Japan, an officer by the name of Clark. ... He came in and he was wondering whether [there was] anything that he could buy. ... I said, "Yes, you're in the service. We'll sell you stuff, at cost, what we pay for it;" what we're supposed to sell it for. I don't know whether it's at cost or not, and so, he wanted a camera and we used to get cameras based on the number of people [in the area] and, lots of times, if you have a hundred, you'd get one camera. If you had 130, you'd get one camera. So, the thirties, plus or minus, etc., I could use those for trading to get something ... for our outfit. I could use those, but I never gave anything away, and I remember those times, and, of course, I remember ... going to Japan to work.

SI: With Nabisco, after the war?

JW: With Nabisco, yes.

SI: Can you tell me how you came home from the Philippines, when you came home and how you came home?

JW: Well, it was there, we got on the boat when the Philippines became the Philippines. ... It was July 4th, when they ... got their independence. ... We landed on one of the lower islands in Japan to receive a shot, because there was some problem going on. I forget what it was called. ... Then, from there, we went into San Francisco and, just before we landed, there was a ... fellow onboard with a real big accent, and he explained about the shadow that you could see right down on the horizon, far to the east, "That shadow is the United States." I remember that. ... The same voice, when we docked, there's a guy on the dock there, a "zoot suiter." The ship's captain was having trouble docking because of the noise and, finally, he announced, "If you guys want to go out and sit in the harbor for a couple more days, you'll do that unless you shut up." He said, "I'm trying to get this boat docked properly," and he said, "Those helping can't hear me." ... As soon as he said that, here's a man on the dock with a "zoot suit" on and this man's saying, at the top [of his] voice, "Man, oh, man, you're as sharp as a mosquito's peter." [laughter] "You're as sharp as a mosquito's peter," and the Captain started to roar and laugh as well. Everybody on the ship started to laugh, but that was a funny, arriving home. ... Then, of course, we went on the train and we had nice berths, all across the country, and arrived at Fort Dix. [I] called home, my parents came down and picked me up, and then, on to North Adams, Mass., and picked up my wife, and then, back to school, and it was interesting. ... A job was offered to me by a great man, (Russ Shultz?), said to me, "What's your degree?" I said, "I don't have a degree. I have another year to go," and (Russ?) was a man that never said much, but, boy, when he did speak, everybody listened. He said, "Fine, then, I'll see you next year." So, I went back upstairs and George Coppers, who was the CEO, he said, "Well, how did you make out with (Russ?)?" I would always say, "George, ... he told me to come back next year. He said to

get my degree." "Oh, gee," ... he said, "I forgot all about that. Fine," he said, "we won't need you until next year anyway. Why don't you go get your degree?" he said, and then, when he hired me, as I said before, [he told me to], "Go out and make some mistakes, but don't make them twice," just a sharp tack, just great to work for.

SI: How quickly did you come back to Rutgers? Did you take any time off or did you just come right back to school?

JW: No, I arrived in, well, twelve days after the 4th, I guess, about twelve days or thirteen or fourteen days after the 4th. ... Mother gave me her car, and Barbara and I and young John went up to Vermont for a month, and then, back and went to school, and enjoyed school. School was easy when I went back. I never really knew how to study well, ... but, all of a sudden, time [while serving in the military], you were working seven days a week. There wasn't any evening or you quit at four or anything. If you were needed, you stayed until twelve and everything was just [busy]. So, it became very easy, [in] school, when I went back, got good grades when I went back, [laughter] and I sort of got mad at myself for sort of wasting too much time, really, earlier, prewar, because I really enjoyed school. I took a couple of great courses and got another course with Charanis, which was fun. I told him, "I'm sorry I didn't get to Lemnos," and he had said, "That's where my father is." "That's right. You told me, if I ever got to Lemnos to look up your father." "I went the other way," and he started to laugh. He said, "Yes, I remember that. I used to tell a lot of guys, 'If you go to Greece, go to the Isle of Lemnos. My father will really be happy to see you.'" [laughter] He was a great guy, just wonderful, Charanis.

SI: Did you find that Rutgers was accommodating to the veterans coming back?

JW: Yes, yes.

SI: There were not any problems.

JW: No, I didn't have any problem.

SI: Did you live on the Hillside Campus?

JW: No, in the fraternity.

SI: With your family?

JW: No, no. My wife lived at her home and Mother wanted to go see her family, and so, she lived at my house in Englewood, and then, when we ... started with Nabisco, we went to Atlanta. That's where I started and we rented a place there. Then, when I really started to make money was when I bought my first house. Then, I kept moving and moving and moving and the real estate market was doing this, going up and up. I'd buy a house for one buck and sell it for two, [laughter] you know, [in] just a short, two-year period, fantastic. I remember George Coppers talking about, "How you doing?" He said, "How do you like the new deal that we have? Every time we move, we give you two months' salary, to cover it." "George," I said, "we have more shades and curtains, because [of] every house we moved to," and I said, "Now, I'm back in New

York." I said, "I've got all the things I need that you're giving us the extra money for," [laughter] and he started to laugh, "Yes, but you had to buy all of that stuff before. So, fine, I think the company owes that to the people that we keep moving," and, of course, when they came back, it was rather interesting. Anybody who refused to move, they let them go, the production people, because Nabisco was on an expansion program, one new bakery, then, another new plant. Wherever the old plants were, we'd close them down and put in a new one, like Houston, Philadelphia, New York. We went over to New Jersey, and Portland, Oregon, Portland, Maine, Chicago, most all new, big new plants and the best way to start ... these plants, we would move, and so, we've moved from one to another and you got better and better and better, because you've opened one and you remember the mistakes you made, didn't like the way [something went], and we used to keep score on how fast we could bring one of these things online. ... Fair Lawn was the best, the best one, and I remember (Russ Shultz?), he said, "Gee, John," he said, "that was a great job." I said, "(Russ?), I've had practice." I said, "You've got to get better, because it comes easier and easier." ... I said, "I picked my top guys, which you allowed everybody to do, and I ... picked between three or four of these bakeries as assistant manager, and I went along with guys who were older." ... I said, "I was able to pick my staff when we came into Fair Lawn, ... say who was coming in, and it was great. The fellows knew exactly what they were doing." ... Russ was talking to me one day. ... He said, "John, it was perfect, ... great opening." I said, "Yes," I said, "everybody I picked knew more about their job, what he was doing, than I did." I said, "I have a Kelly Butler, absolutely great," and I told him about the guys in packaging and the fellow, Jim (Connors?), icing department, and said, "They really know that they can do everything, all those things." I remember, in Philadelphia, a cute story, one day, he ... asked us, one of the departments, mechanical department, to fix a machine. I happened to walk outside and Jim had a hammer in his hand and he was banging at the damn machine. ... Things were flying off and I said, "Jim, what's the matter? You crazy?" He said, "No, John," he said, "they don't want to fix this machine, and every other man and machine in this department knows who's running this department." [laughter] ... He said, "Now, this machine knows who's running this department," and he said, "It's going to be fixed." ... So, the mechanic had to come out and fix it. Damn if everything that he said, the machine, we never looked back, worked perfectly, and he beat the hell out of it, and he was an interesting guy. He flew as a pilot in a Grumman Avenger, in the Navy. All of these guys were service people. They knew what the war was.

SI: It had a real impact on where they worked.

JW: Yes, they had a real impact on their work. (Russ?) was the same way. (Russ?) would always say, "You know where I am, but don't call me and say you've got a problem if you haven't done anything. See, if you haven't done anything, don't call." ... So, I remember, we had one in Fair Lawn; I said, "(Russ?), we did this and this and this." He said, "Have you tried this?" I said, "No, no." "Let me know how it works." [laughter] So, I called him. I said, "You hit it right on the nose." I said, "It's perfect. Sorry to bother you," just a great guy to work for.

SI: Was the Fair Lawn opening before or after they started sending you overseas?

JW: Yes, that was before I went overseas. I went in, was the head of operations for international, and so, I went around to all these places before I went overseas myself. I went to France and I learned. I remember telling the guy that I was working for then, head of

international, I said, "Those guys know more than I do." [laughter] I said, "They're great." ... I said, "This Papa Dallemagne over there, he is sharp as a tack." ... "I learned a lot from him. I didn't tell him anything." ... When I went in there and was working there, one time, I worked with his son. His son wasn't that sharp. I was down where we had a plant down in Paris, and Papa Dallemagne said, "Will you go down and help Roger with the plant?" I said, "Happy to, happy to." I said, ... "All I do is get good information when I'm up here," and he knew I appreciated some of the things that he told me, and it was fun to go. ... Well, his son was brought in. The company that made the Ritz down there for us, all of a sudden, it folded and the guys that went over there didn't know operations at all. ... So, I was down there checking and, all of a sudden, I saw all these cartons of Ritz and I asked the forelady, I said, "What are all these?" "Oh," she said, "Roger wants us to feed these into the Ritz we're making now." I said, "Well, before you do anything, hold it." So, I opened up the first box and I said, "Dump them." She says, "I can't do that." I said, "Well, don't put anymore [in]." I said, "They're rancid, and rancidity works like ice in a pond. If it gets down to thirty-two, freezing, and you throw in an ice cube, the pond will go, 'Whoosh.' It'll freeze. [laughter] You throw one piece of rancid cookie in a box of good cookies," and I said, "everything, all of a sudden, probably in two days, every cookie in that box will be rancid." ... Well, Roger came down and he started to raise hell with, "This isn't your job, this is my job," and he started to raise Cain. ... Then, he called his father and his father came down and, all of a sudden, I heard his old man, in French, and I had a girl there who would translate for me. She said, "He's really giving him a bad time, about [how] he's got to listen, he's got to listen, and he said, 'Monsieur Jacque is right. He's absolutely correct.'" ... He said, I didn't get it, but she said [that] he wants to do what I said, "Dump them all, dump them all." We must have thrown away ten thousand dollars worth of Ritz crackers, weren't made properly; a great time and I learned a great deal from Papa Dallemagne.

SI: How long were you in France?

JW: ... We were in France ... about two-and-a-half years, and ... almost seven years for me in Japan. Agee, the closest person to me, was a Japanese who handled our financial work. I had met him in New York. He was working with Nichimen at the time, one of our partners, and then, Tanaka-san, who was [the] production man, and he was in the Philippines, as was I, during the war. ... Our first day together, he said to me, "Wiggin-san, you in war?" "Yes." He said, "Where?" I said, "The Philippines." "I was in the Philippines, a sergeant." I looked at him, tapping his chest, and said, "I didn't see you down there, Tanaka-san." I said, "You must have found the biggest banana tree in the island." He looked like he was shocked. He said, "No see you either. You must found other big tree," and I started to laugh and, all of a sudden, he realized I was pulling his leg, [laughter] and he started to laugh and he sort of grabbed me. He said, "Let's go have some sake," went downstairs, and we were together like that for the seven years I was living in Japan. He ran production. He could do things well, and he would signal me when he would come out of the meeting. I had to have a girl in there, translating, and that is confusing. ... Agee could come out and tell me, because he could speak English fluently, and Tanaka-san came out of the meeting one day and he walked by. Why, generally, [he] would say, "Oh, hi, Wiggin-san;" [laughter] [this time, he] came out of the meeting, he went like this.

SI: Hit his head.

JW: Yes, hit his head, and Agee came out and I asked him and I said, "What's the problem?" "Oh," he said, "Hero-san, Agima, the President, wants to put more money on advertising ... that product that we think is so good from the States," and he said, "Tanaka-san said, 'It's not selling,' and Agima-san wants to put more money on its advertising." I said, "Good, fine." I go in to see Agima-san. I knew; I said, "How's it going?" "Oh, fine. We need a little bit more money on advertising for that other Nabisco product." I said, "Agima-san, this is the third time around." I said, "The Japanese housewife isn't buying [it]." I said, "Kill it." At another meeting, shortly thereafter, ... I heard he said, "Wiggin-san says," and he wanted me to hear that, and then, he went on and the meeting was over and Tanaka walks by the office. [laughter] ... That's the way we communicate and it worked and Tanaka-san was sharp as a tack, you know, really good. While in the service, he was told by the Army they were going to an island off of California. He said, "There's a big island off of California. I said, "It's not so big, couldn't take a big army of Japanese." [laughter] He said, "But, they told us that," and he said, "All of a sudden, we're in the Philippines," and he said, "We didn't beat MacArthur back." [laughter] He said, "He ... got there before we did." He said, "There were Japanese who we all knew there," and we enjoyed ourselves there in Japan. We used to go to Saipan and we'd go to the different islands at Christmastime. Saipan was interesting. We met a guy by the name of Bob and he was born in Saipan. He took us all around where the Japanese were, where the men, women and children jumped off the cliffs in Saipan, and he said it was ferocious, and he said, "We lived in a cave and we knew the Americans were coming." He says, "Somebody got in," and he said, "There had to be somebody on the island that knew what was going on, and so, Daddy took us away from our house and we went into the hills and got into a cave. We almost got killed." He said, "When the Americans came through," he said, "we're standing at that cave and US troops came close." He said, "I thought they were going to shoot." ... Interesting, going there; at a crossroad was a US M-1 rifle stuck in the ground with a helmet on top of it. The next time when we went down there, two years later, here was a great, big monument there, [laughter] and I remember talking to someone. I said, "You know, that rifle with the helmet on top was a hell of a lot more meaningful than that monument that they've put up, because you know what the hell went on." ... There were still tanks in the water that would get in [during the landings] and, all of a sudden, they got hit in the water. They came off the tank boat too soon.

SI: This was three decades later.

JW: Yes.

SI: You could still see the effects of the war.

JW: Yes, still see it. You could see the planes that were cracked up and went into the water. Of course, Roger, who's with us at the time, really enjoyed it, because he was digging up all sorts of memorabilia from the war.

SI: Did you have any apprehension about working in Japan and working with the Japanese before you actually went there? Did you have any concerns?

JW: No, not really, because, ... having gone into France, the biggest thing they taught me in France [is that] there is a difference, [laughter] and I knew there would be a difference. ... When

I arrived over there, someone advised me, "You ought to get involved with the American Chamber of Commerce, because, if you're having problems, and most people do when they first come over, because it is different, [they can help]." So, I joined the Chamber of Commerce. We didn't now how we were going to sell in Japan. That was one of the things I had to solve. One day, a young man came in who had done his homework, and he said, "Wiggin-san," he said, "you sell the same way in Japan as you sell in the United States, you will be in the used truck business in three days." [laughter] ... I said, "Why?" He said, "Look out the window." He says, "It's hardly moving, the traffic. There's so much traffic." He said, "If you go with Mitsubishi, we also carry Campbell's, etc.," but he said, "All we're doing is just a one block area," he said, "because you can't move. It's become so crowded here, and we would handle [that]." He said, "All the rest is up to you, advertising and quality of product," but he said, "We'll get it in the stores." Well, he came in the first day and ... I hadn't put on the advertising. Jim Farley was handling the advertising for McCann-Erickson and Jim Farley was a Zeta Psi at Rutgers, [Class of 1949], and I met him one day, looked at him and looked at him. I said, "I know you from someplace." He said, "Well, I came from Connecticut." I said, "That's interesting." I said, "I came from Connecticut. Maybe we saw each other on the train." Then, when the times didn't match, ... he said, "Where did you go to school?" I said, "Rutgers." He said, "That's where. I was Zeta Psi," [laughter] and so, he told me how to move, helped me, you know. ... But, this fellow came back and said, "Where's the advertising? You said you'd advertise." I said, "Well, I was also told, back home, never put any advertising bucks out until you've got the product in the stores." He said, "Come with me." I came down, ... got in the car, and I have never seen so much Ritz in my life, in every store, every gas station, every little, tiny booth that they used to sell [from], and they had a different system. He would charge you, if you're ... a top distributor, you would get so much [and] you would pay so much for Ritz, and then, you would pass some of that off. You would distribute it to a secondary ... distributor, and then, finally, to the guy who's on a bicycle, going down the street on a bicycle.

SI: Like a pyramid.

JW: Pyramid-type, and that's the way, and, when I told Harnick that we had to get rid of some of these people, and I said, "They want us to do this and to pay for this," ... he said, "Do it, do it." He says, "This isn't the United States." He said, "If you don't do it and Mitsubishi isn't handling your stuff, and it looks like they're handling about eighty percent of it, you'd better go and do what they say to do." [laughter] So, we did and, you know, we never looked back. We started in February, in March, we were black. I was in France for two years-plus and we still weren't out of the woods. In my last year there, we supplied over half of International's profits for Nabisco. Yes, that was fun. Then, I got involved; as I said, I was on the school board over there, American School board, and then, I became the president of the Chamber of Commerce and busy. [laughter] You could never call a day your own when I was doing that. ... We used to go to New York, or into Washington. I let the company know I was doing that, and they said, "What are we getting out of this?" I said, "The Japanese look up to companies that get involved with things." ... "The same way," I said, "we started;" we're talking about Nabisco and women's golf. I said, "We were the first one, Jim came to me about, 'Why don't you back the golf?' and we made money backing the golf, and I said, "We had to." He said, ... "What you do is just set it up so [that] your wholesalers or your top wholesalers could either pay [to] play themselves or [so that] some of their top grocer people would play," and it was interesting. (Ichiro Agima?) played

with Jack Nicklaus, and Jack Nicklaus came on, he said it was interesting, he said, "We were on our four hole and we were even up," he said, [laughter] and he's sixty-some years old. He said, "I was glad I ... finally pulled it out. I was getting embarrassed," and, of course, the wholesalers came into me and just thanked me. "What a great thing, Wiggin-san, just great." The person tapped to take my place was just thrilled to death. ... Boy, our sales tripled when that happened, just, 'Boom.' They had felt they owed us something, and so, we just kept going with that, every time they came over, and it was interesting.

SI: Is that how you got involved with this effort to change the law so that Americans abroad could vote, or was that another initiative?

JW: Oh, no, that was interesting, because, ... at that point in time, I was in the American Chamber of Commerce and I was president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan. ... We couldn't vote and there was a fellow that was a good friend of a friend of mine in the Chamber who had come over and he was telling me about what he had done and he said, "I saw a number of your letters to the US Chamber of Commerce that we should have the right to vote." ... He said, "I happen to be, with my company," ... a rather large company, and he said, "I was the CEO and I told my guys, 'Don't forget to vote,' and they said, 'We can't vote.' [I] said, 'What do you mean you can't vote?' He said, 'We can't vote,'" and so, he came back and he went to the American Chamber of Commerce. ... Because he was in the American Chamber, he said, "We ought to do something about this. Yes, we have some letters that Wiggin, who's the president of the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce, wrote to us and said, 'We should have the right to vote.'" ...

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

SI: This continues an interview with John Wiggin on July 22, 2006, in Quechee, Vermont, with Shaun Illingworth. Please, continue.

JW: I still have one of the pens that [President Gerald] Ford used to sign that bill, giving overseas personnel the right, and he gave me one. ... That shouldn't probably be given away, probably [be donated] to the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce.

SI: You wrote letters in support of this.

JW: Yes.

SI: Did you do any other work?

JW: No, that was it, just the letters, giving overseas people a right to vote. We could pick our own place to vote and where we wanted to say we were from, and many people didn't want to say they were from New York, because New York would then tax them. [laughter] New Jersey didn't do that and Connecticut didn't do that, ... because my home was at Connecticut at that time.

SI: Your family was able to come with you when you were overseas.

JW: Yes.

SI: Obviously, your son was in the American School.

JW: Yes, and my son, Roger, had a great time overseas, too.

SI: You were on the board of the American School. What were some of the issues or challenges that you dealt with in that capacity?

JW: Well, the only time I really got involved in any challenge was [with] a fellow who had come over and his son, who we removed from the American School. ... We had a "second chance" deal with the Catholic school over there. We'd take their bad boys if they would take ours, or bad girls or whatever it was. This fellow called me and he couldn't get anybody, because the president of the school, the head of the school and the president [were away], and I was the assistant president of ... the board, and he called me and he started off, "What right do you have to kick my kid out of school and send him to a Catholic school?" and he came down on me hard and I finally said to him, "Who's your attorney?" and he said, "Anderson, Mori and Rabinowitz. Well, we use Arthur Mori." "I would suggest you call Arthur Mori before you start giving me a bad time." About twenty minutes later, I got a telephone call, "I'm sorry I gave you such a bad time. We'll do what you say." Arthur Mori advised, "You signed an *nensho* [a memorandum stating good intent] when you came into Japan, stating that you would be a good citizen, and that means your kids as well, and your kid was taking dope and getting involved in dope and the Japanese would make sure that you ... left as well, and that's not going to go so well with Boeing, where you work, right?" [laughter] The next thing, his kid's on the way to the Catholic school. His father took him there and I never heard anything after that. Both were gone from Japan. ... I don't know what happened to the dad, but that was it. But, the Japanese were very rather strict, and especially when you sign that *nensho*, namely, "I will be a good citizen in Japan," and they didn't try to give you a bad time. As a funny story, we had a very good friend of ours and his brother was in Japan. His wife got caught speeding one day. ... She was taken to a police station and they looked at her license first. Her name was Mary. The police captain said, "Mary's mother of Jesus." She said, "Yes." [laughter] "Oh, that's a very nice name, very nice name." That's what they're referring to. She said, "Yes," and they said, "Drive carefully, carefully, Mrs. Alford, drive very carefully, because, otherwise, we will have to take your license away." God, they were very polite, and she said, "Believe it or not," ... she said, "I started to drive carefully. They didn't raise hell, just said, 'Drive carefully, because we might have to take your license away,'" and so, she said, "I drove carefully." [laughter] We had a great time. ...

I had a great time with Nabisco, really enjoyed it, both in the US and overseas.

SI: It sounds like it.

JW: Yes.

SI: Is there anything else that we have missed in going through your life?

JW: No, not really. We came up here, because my son is up here, and, as I said, he outdid me military-wise, becoming a SEAL, SEAL Team 13 in Vietnam.

SI: When the Vietnam War came along, did you encourage or discourage your kids from going into the military? Was that ever discussed?

JW: No. Well, Roger was too young and Debbie was not obligated and John just signed up. He became an officer. There was a senior officer who was [suggesting] areas of involvement and he mentioned the SEALs. ... John had written to a number of his friends that were in the Navy and sitting off the coast of Vietnam, and [they said it was] boring, and so, he decided to go into the SEALs. They told him what it was about and ... that was interesting. I met his exec officer, his buddy, all SEALs had a buddy, who was a full-blooded Sioux Indian. He said to me, "Don't worry, Mr. Wiggin. I'll take care of the kid." I said, "I thought this was the Navy." He said, "It is. We use Navy boats," and John would talk about going into the North, Vietnam, and he said, "Getting out of submarines, we would go out right through the torpedo tubes and, the following morning, when it was still dark, we would go back in the ocean. There's nothing more picturesque than seeing a submarine with an American flag on the back, and we'd play knock-knock, [laughter] [move the] raft on the sub and they would stop and open up the torpedo tubes. We'd slide in, they'd blow out the water," and he said, "We're back onboard." They knew who he was. ... He never spoke too much about what went on until he went to a SEAL team museum, down just north of Stuart, [The National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida]. ... I went in there with him one day. He said, "I know, probably, everything that's in there," and so, he went in and he started to point out different things to me, you know, this and that, "We used a lot of these. We used a lot of these little submarines," and a fellow came up to him and he said, "You a SEAL?" He said, "Yes." "Fine, come with us." They took him in the room and they said, "Where are you from?" He told them. ... "Where did you sign up?" and he told them. He told him where he was born and everything about it, and then, he went outside and they started, they showed different pictures, and there were a number of pictures they had on the wall, where John was in some of the pictures. ... [When] he came back, he never spoke too much about it, except when the two of us were together in the SEAL team museum in Stuart, Florida.

SI: Okay.

JW: Yes. I saw John in training and they were picking him out of the water with helicopters. Actually, ... they would drag a trapeze along in the water and they would ... grab it and he yanked them into the [helicopter]. He said, "You really had to hang on, because you were sort of slippery, when they yank you out of the water."

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for the record?

JW: I can't think of [any]. I think I've [run] out.

SI: I think we have gotten the basic biographical sketch and some great anecdotes. It is difficult to record one person's life in a four-hour session. You will probably think of things after I leave that you wish you had said. I will encourage you to make a note of that, then, when the transcript comes back, maybe add some things.

JW: Yes. I'll show you a little bit, maybe you'd like to see.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: This concludes our interview with John Wiggin on July 22, 2006, in Quechee, Vermont.
Thank you very much.

JW: Okay, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Kristy Behr 3/30/08
Reviewed by Greg Flynn 2/1/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 5/26/09
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/31/09
Reviewed by John Wiggin 6/25/09 & 8/8/09