RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROLAND A. WINTER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
DAVID TSANG HOU

EDISON, NEW JERSEY
SEPTEMBER 15, 1995

TRANSCRIPT BY

DAVID TSANG HOU
AND
TARA KRAENZLIN
AND
G. KURT PIEHLER

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Roland A. Winter on September 15, 1995 at Edison, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and

David Tsang Hou: David Tsang Hou.

KP: And I guess I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents. You grew up in Perth Amboy.

Roland A. Winter: Yes, I did.

KP: What is your sort of fondest recollection of growing up in Perth Amboy?

RW: Well, mainly the house where I grew up was extremely close to the Raritan River, and I'm a river rat. I love the water all my life and I spent most of my playtime down at the river and it was the depths of the Depression when I was a child. And I remember with great happiness, some of President Roosevelt's programs that really created the Perth Amboy waterfront. I was born and lived on Lewis Street and there was no Sadaowsky Parkway then. The public works projects that Roosevelt created and implemented started by bringing in huge boulders that were placed along the shoreline of the river and then they filled behind that and they built a boardwalk and at the same time, they built eight tennis courts and a tennis house. And that was in the same area as my house. And back in those days, tennis was a rich man's sport. There were very few poor industrial communities that had any tennis facilities whatever. And my friends and I took advantage of those courts. I remember the courts cost 20 cents an hour. We played doubles; it was a nickel for each to play one hour. And we couldn't afford to buy tennis balls, but we used to [be] ball boy for the adults. When they were through with the balls, we would get the balls, and that's what we used all summer. Between watching the construction and building rafts and fishing and crabbing and learning to play tennis, I really had a very, very happy childhood.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

RW: Well, they chipped in and they managed to buy a two family house at 164 Lewis Street which had an attic which was insulated. And the single people and the married people, we all lived at 164 Lewis Street and pooled funds and managed to survive. We didn't, as I recollect, we didn't have trouble buying food, but clothes, new clothes, were rare. And ... everybody just understood there was no money!

KP: Yes

RW: Very little, I mean we made do with what we had. ...

KP: So you had a lot of hand-me-downs?

RW: And mostly hand-me-downs and I had a growth problem. I wasn't growing. I was minute, which is another part of my life and my military career. So I was careful with my clothes. If that hammering [next door to us] gets to be obtrusive-

KP: Yes, I'm concerned it might really pick up.

RW: We might have to go inside. Well, let's see how it goes.

KP: Yes.

RW: But my circumstances were no different than my friends. There were the exceptional families where money was not a problem, but they were exceptions. My contemporaries were all earth poor, just everybody was struggling.

KP: I have interviewed a number of people and also I read the WPA Guide from the 1930s on Perth Amboy and it was a very diverse community. There were a number of ethnic groups all living fairly close to one another.

RW: In my life's experience, I have never seen a community that could even be called similar. We were very, very unique. Our Main Street was mainly supported by shoppers from Staten Island and the ferry was the economic life blood of the town, plus it was a focal point of interest for us kids. An exceptional pleasurable experience for me was to be able to get my hands on a quarter. For a nickel, I could ride the ferry to Tottenville, which was a quaint little waterfront community with a New York flavor and yet a country flavor. You know that was a nickel going and a nickel coming and an ice cream cone was a nickel. They had a wonderful newspaper stand that sold ice cream in Tottenville. And that was a major outing for me, walk around the streets and come down on the Tottenville beaches and that was a rare day. If you know--

KP: That was the big adventure when you were growing up?

RW: Oh, that was a huge adventure, a huge adventure.

KP: Before you started college, how far had you traveled west, south or north? Had you gone anywhere outside of New York or New Jersey?

RW: Well, on rare occasions, my family would take me to New York via the rapid transit, take the ferry to Tottenville, the rapid transit rattletrap to Saint George, and then the ferry from Saint George to Lower Manhattan, because that was a third of the price of Pennsylvania Railroad, which went right into the middle of Manhattan. But that's how we went to New York to save money. It took twice as long, but it was an interesting ride. You saw the little communities in Staten Island, and two ferry rides, so it wasn't all that bad. It was interesting.

When I was very young, maybe four or younger, my family had relatives in Toronto, Canada. And when I was very young, we got in the family car, we went up there, and I remember very little about that. But that was the extent of my travels.

KP: Until you joined the army?

RW: Yep.

KP: Here, your father came originally from Germany, and your mother came--

RW: Yes.

KP: ... came from Russia via England.

RW: Yeah, my mother was actually born in London while her parents were making the trip from Russia to the United States. But she was born in London. My father had a far more interesting background. He was born and raised on a farm in Germany near the Polish border, and he had a very strict father. And his life was hell. When he was 13 or 14, out of scavenged parts he put together a workable bicycle. And when he was satisfied that the bicycle was capable of making a long journey, he ran away and he pedaled to a port that even he didn't remember what port it was, whether it was north or [wherever]. When he got to the port, he sold the bicycle. That was his passage to the United States. He had no relatives here, and he was under fifteen.

KP: So he had no uncle or cousin.

RW: No uncle, no cousin, not even a family friend. I mean, it boggles my mind today where he got the courage to do that. No knowledge of English.

RW: It would be just like one of your kids going off. You would be terribly worried.

RW: It boggles my mind to this day. But he had confidence, he had natural mechanical skills, and he boarded with a family. He got a job in a machine shop. And he went to Cooper's Union at night and he learned English and basic engineering that which enhanced his mechanical skills. He eventually became a tool and dye maker, but it was tough getting a job. But somehow he made it. Incredible story.

KP: How did your parents meet? Do you know?

RW: They met because the people that he was boarding with knew my mother's family. And that's how they met.

KP: When he came to the United States, did he come to Perth Amboy, initially?

RW: No, they started out in Brooklyn and then my father eventually got a job with Curtis-Wright in Connecticut. You know, they built aircraft engines. And he was a machinist at Curtis-Wright. They lived in Hartford, Connecticut, for a while, and my mother became overwhelmed with homesickness and she put so much pressure on my father that he left a good job. By that time, my mother's family had moved from Brooklyn to Perth Amboy. And probably the biggest mistake of his life he ever made was caving in to my mother and coming to Perth Amboy where he couldn't find a job.

KP: Because Curtis-Wright was the major plane maker of the day.

RW: It was the premium engine builder and my father was well-established with them. It was the biggest mistake he ever made in his life. ... His inability to get a job after he left there really crushed him mentally. It made him a bitter man. He didn't find a job in his trade 'til the war broke out.

KP: So what did he do in the 1930s?

RW: Pumped gas, did odd jobs.

KP: Did he ever work on a WPA project?

RW: No, he never did that. He, for a short time, he had a job with the state highway department as a truck driver, which he enjoyed, because it gave him an opportunity to see different parts of the state. But then the state economy became such, he got laid off and that's the only other thing he did.

KP: When the war broke out, where did he work, because you said he then finally got to use his trade again?

RW: There was a sophisticated machine shop in Manhattan that had a government contract to make gauges to test the accuracy and precision of gears. And these particular items were very nerve racking on a tool and dye maker, because the forming of these gauges was all internal and you had to really guess at the cut and then eventually to make sure the gauge was accurate, they had to X-ray it. And if you made one wrong cut, I mean hours and weeks and months of works were down in it. It took a terrible strain on him, but he was working six and seven days a week at that. And he died while I was overseas doing ...

KP: So you never got to say good-bye, in a sense?

RW: These are the circumstances under which I got to say good-bye: I was in a staging area in Fort Pickett, Virginia, and I knew I was going overseas. I didn't know Europe or the Pacific, and I couldn't get a pass. And I wanted very badly to say good-bye to my entire family. There was a friend of my brother's who's seven years older than I, who was in the same division and had been in the same division that I got transferred into. And he took a protective interest in me, and he also had a greater awareness of when and where we would be going. And he approached me one day, and he said, "I got a pass, I'm going home this weekend." We're both from Perth Amboy. And he said, "I'm gonna take you with me, with or without a pass." Train had to go through Washington, D.C., which was overrun with military police, and he says, "Don't worry. I'll save your ass." And I was frightened as hell. I went over the hill. He had a pass, I didn't. And when it came time to go back to the train on Sunday afternoon, my father wouldn't let other family members come with me. He said, "I wanna take Roland to the train." And he took me to Newark. He was a man that didn't show much emotion, and he gave me a hug and he said, "You'll make it. You're a man now." That's the last I saw him.

KP: Your family, how observant were they in terms of religious practices? For example, did they keep a kosher household?

RW: My maternal grandfather lived with us until he died. He was super religious and the family respected him as the patriarch of the family and while he was alive, it was an Orthodox home life, which became watered down after his passing. I don't wanna go into that, because I, even as a child, never was adaptable to the ceremonial aspect of religion. I always believed in God, and firmly believe in God, but--

KP: The Orthodox faith has a lot of ceremony.

RW: There was too much hypocrisy for my palate. And I always rebelled against it.

KP: You have commented on the waterfront, but one of the other things I have also read about in the WPA Guide was that there was a big struggle between the city and the exempt fireman. I read, Perth Amboy was one of the few large cities that still had its own volunteer exempt fireman. Do you remember anything of that?

RW: Well, it's interesting that you mention that, because at one point in my career, I was literally dragged into politics by a lifelong dear friend of mine. And by that time, I had moved here to this house, [it] was 40 some years ago. I'm the only occupant of this house, the original and still [the] only occupant. And Edison then had a fusion government that was filthy corrupt and my friends wanted to undo that, and I was a young lawyer, and very busy lawyer. Not economically successful, but--

KP: You were very busy.

RW: --extraordinarily busy. And I spent several evenings a week being their counsel. And the major issue at that time was the same problem. Every firehouse in Edison was a separate and distinct political organization, and everybody kissed their ass. You know, there were too many of them, and they were inefficient, and the fire rates, the insurance rates in this town were ridiculous, because they would have fistfights at fires. And so, I wasn't old enough to realize when I was a child, you know, all of the ramifications of the problem that you addressed, but it all came back to me when I had to deal with it now as the legal person to abolish that form of fire protection, which we succeeded in doing.

KP: After we get through your war-time career I want to come back to your political career.

RW: Funny, how you touched that note.

KP: I interviewed both Steve Capestro and Lew Bloom, you probably know because I know both were involved in Edison.

RW: Well, of course, I've been close to both of them. So...

KP: Yes, well both have alluded to that. I want ask you some questions ...

RW: Of course.

KP: ... about Edison.

RW: I've got all the time you want.

KP: Yes.

RW: You're bringing back very emotional memories.

KP: I interviewed both, Bob Moss and Melvin Silverman who lived to Perth Amboy. From the two, I have gotten very different views of Perth Amboy. How rough and tough were the neighborhoods of Perth Amboy?

RW: Aw God, incredibly tough. I mean, I was always diminutive and a target for every bully. My family thought that I liked to fight. I would get beat up a couple of times a week. I could fill a book on that. There were certain neighborhoods that I was fearful of entering and which I would take wide detours around. There's a lot of anti-Semitism in Perth Amboy, and one of the things, I mean, when I was learning tennis, I've always loved tennis, I still play actively. Everything was white, and to the kids that didn't play tennis that was sissified.

KP: Yes.

RW: I mean, when I took my tennis racket, my white shorts, and my white T-shirts and walked to the courts, I, you know, constantly swiveling my head, because the other kid's would beat the shit outta ya. Yeah, they just would, I mean and the tennis courts are only two blocks away. But I watched, you know. Yeah, it was a tough town. And more Damon Runyon than Brooklyn, I mean if you were street smart in Perth Amboy, you were ready for the world. Academically or streetwise or problem solving or coping, I mean there's no training like growing up in Perth Amboy. Incredible town.

KP: How good was your education in elementary and high school? How well did it prepare you for Rutgers?

RW: Not at all. I found grade school and high school much too easy. When I got to Rutgers, I was shell shocked and overwhelmed and, and too young. First of all, I turned seventeen in June of '41, in September I started Rutgers. I was 4 feet, 11 inches tall; I was a freak on the campus. I was underage and undersized and at first when the professor started, oh, I gotta tell you about Rutgers in those days. There were no large classes.

KP: Yes.

RW: I mean my Spanish class had twelve, my economics class had fourteen, my English class was the biggest class. That had eighteen or twenty, and a lot of the professors wanted to be called by their first name. Smoking was permitted in the classrooms. The only thing the professors expected was that you come prepared, and when you didn't, their disappointment was acute like, "How could you pass up this ... opportunity, you know, I expected to teach you and have a receptive student that was prepared to receive what I'm gonna give you today. You disappointed me." I mean ... it bothered your conscience to not be-

KP: To not be prepared-

RW: -to not be prepared. And I tried, but I had never done that much work every night. You know, ... the assignments, not by today's standards, it wasn't as difficult, but to me it was.

KP: Why did you come to Rutgers? Is there a story there? Because it sounds like your family did not have very much money.

RW: To enable me to go to ... college, I had two uncles that were making a living. One was in insurance, the other was a lawyer, and I had an aunt that was in the Perth Amboy school system. The three of them contributed thirds to establish a college fund for me. They didn't give me any help in direction of selecting a college, it was a family friend that had gone to Cornell. I admired this man, had very good marks in high school. I applied to Cornell, only. I never heard from Cornell and the summer ran out and everybody ... is all set where they're going, [and] I never heard from Cornell. The family said to me, "What [is this]?". I said, "I guess they lost my application or something." Says, "Where you gonna go?" I had friends going to Rutgers, so I borrowed my father's Model A, 1930 Model A coupe, and I drove to New Brunswick. I found the office of admissions. They said, "Well, you need a transcript from high school." I drove back to Perth Amboy High. They gave [me] a transcript for a dollar. I went back to Rutgers and [they said,] "Well, these are the only courses that are open now, but okay." That's how I got to Rutgers.

KP: Did you ever find out ...

RW: You know, I didn't know what to do.

KP: You never heard back from Cornell?

RW: Never heard from Cornell, ... I never got a letter of rejection. I never got any explanation, but I'm glad, now that I know where Ithaca, New York, is, I'm glad I didn't go there.

KP: If it had not been for your mother's family, you would not have been able to go to college.

RW: No way. No way.

KP: Did you take the state scholarship exam?

RW: I didn't even know there was such a thing. There were no guidance counselors back then. My two uncles and my aunt were self-educated through Newark Normal School, which was today would be called a junior college. Two years, they got degrees and that got one uncle into law school and the other two went on with just that. I mean, they were self-educated really. I'm the first one of my family that's ever gone to a bona fide college.

KP: So your family must have been enormously proud of your going to college.

RW: Yes, they were.

KP: Was there expectation that you would go to college?

RW: Oh, it went beyond ... that. The family made up their mind that I was going to practice law with this one uncle that was a lawyer.

KP: So they had planned it out.

RW: Oh, railroad tracks, straight ... into the horizon. You're gonna be a lawyer. You're gonna practice with Uncle Lou ... and I didn't have the strength to defy them. I ... had no worldly experience, or no one to teach me any better, I just accepted a lot of things see. ... I had a sense that I should rebel, but I didn't have the balls.

KP: You went to a Rutgers that not only was small, but a very much a church-related school then. Almost everyone I have interviewed has a story about Dean Metzger.

RW: ... Oh Jesus, I tried to get out of that on secular grounds, religious grounds, I took advantage of my cuts. It wasn't only that, it was an ROTC school, too. I didn't want to put on a brown uniform and march with the infantry. Despised the infantry!

KP: Why did you despise the infantry so much?

RW: Well-

KP: Was there a reason?

RW: I hated camping.

KP: So you never were a Boy Scout?

RW: Oh, no way! One summer my family sent me to a YMHA camp someplace in Pennsylvania and the first visiting day, I didn't even say hello to them. I ran to the car and locked myself in and would not let them leave without me. I mean, I just hated it, you know, just hated it, hated it! And ROTC, marching with a twelve pound rifle, Uhhh! My God, I was 4 feet 10 inches, 4 feet 11 inches tall, ... the rifle hurt my shoulder, so I don't know which was worse,

ROTC or ... Dean Metzger. But ... you know, I was finally out of the house. They let me rent a room. I didn't want to commute.

KP: Where did you live? Did you live in a dorm?

RW: ... No, three blocks off campus in a rooming house, and then I joined the Phi Epsilon house, and then they found a spot for me, and I moved into the frat house. And that was nearly my undoing.

KP: Why?

RW: I mean, you know, ... I thought I'd died and went to heaven and college became secondary.

KP: So you had a good time?

RW: Ohhhh, you know, I wanted to do everything at once. I went out for ... I was coxswain on freshman crew. I went out for drama. I was in a play. I was ... freshman fencing manager. Every extracurricular thing that came up, I was a part of. I mean, class became-

KP: Secondary?

RW: Yeah, really ... I was like a ... jack-in-the-box, just flew out of the box and went nuts, see? ... All these new experiences at once, and I regarded as a joke, all of these assignments, you know? A human being can't do, I had five majors which they shouldn't have let me do. And two electives and (laughter) I mean, you know ... I said, "They can't really expect this," until the first marking period, I realized they did.

KP: Yes. (laughter)

RW: I immediately got on scholastic probation and scratched to get back ... into the academic swing of things. The adjustment just was like "Wow!"

KP: What about the parties?

RW: Well, because ... I was as big as a midget. I was nicely proportioned, but I was 4 feet 11. Even the smallest girl at NJC was taller than I. One of the early things that happened after I moved into the frat house, some guys from the Sammy house kidnapped me. I wasn't hard to pick up. I weighed 87 pounds. I could run fast, but they got me and they drove me up to NJC campus on the other end of town. They took off 100 percent of my clothes, including my shoes and socks. And left me naked up there. Totally stark ass naked. Now which I thought was a bit much. They could have left my underwear shorts. They could have left my shoes and socks, but they didn't. They stripped me naked. They took my clothes back to the Phi Ep house, opened the door, and threw them in. So the guys there knew whose tiny little clothes they were. First person I saw on campus there, this was 11 o'clock at night, was coming home from the library. First person on the campus I saw was a guard. I didn't want to meet him, no. What the hell am I

gonna do? This is early October, pretty cold, too. I went up to one of the dormitory houses, and I rang the bell, and I kept myself off to the side. One of the college girls answered the door, and I told her my predicament. I said, "Don't look around. I'm naked." She didn't giggle. She said, "That's terrible." She said, "First of all, we'll get you some stuff to put on and wrap around yourself. And then I'll call the Phi Ep house. Somebody there has a car, right?" I said, "Yeah." She didn't call the police, she didn't do anything. She did exactly what she said. She brought me some clothes that I could put on, then somebody from the house came up, picked me up with a car. And they drove me back to the Phi Ep house. The guys there didn't think it was funny, either. We had some rough guys in the Phi Ep house. I'm not gonna name them but-

KP: That's okay.

RW: Couple of football players, one gigantic basketball player, I mean rough, big guys. They put together a car full of guys, and they took me over to Sammy house, and they said, "You just watch. You stay out of it." And they beat the shit out of everybody in the Sammy house. I mean, they took the whole house on. They just knocked heads together and [they said,] "The next time you touch him, it'll be worse." And we we went home. That was it.

KP: So you never had a problem with the Sammies again?

RW: No. Or anyone else!

KP: Really?

RW: Word got all over the campus that, you know ... everybody knew what happened. First the girls in the house talked then, you know. But God bless the girl who answered the door. She handled it like ...

KP: Because she could have just called the police, or just ignored you.

RW: Or she could've [said], "Girls look!" You know and continued to joke if it were a joke, and she had a million different things [she could've done]. But what she did was, God bless her wherever she is. I hope she's alive, well, and happy. You know, she just did everything right.

KP: And you must have felt, after what your fraternity brothers did, very close to them after that?

RW: I was close to them before that, I mean. ... First of all Phi Ep house was a good house. We dominated the tennis team. We [were] very good at all the intramural sports. Incidentally, as diminutive as I was, I was a hell of an athlete. And I played all of those sports. I was dexterous and quick.

KP: You entered in the Fall of 1941, and we were getting close to war, I mean looking back on it now. What did you know about what was going on the world in the late 1930s and early 1940s?

RW: A lot. One of my closest friends was an intellectual genius.

KP: This was in Perth Amboy?

RW: Yeah, an intellectual genius. He's now emeritus, but he was head of the history departments in several colleges and during the war, he was American liaison to [Chiang] Kai-shek, total genius. ... When I was in Latin class with him, we would get ten sentences to translate from English to Latin. As the teacher gave the assignment, he would write in down in Latin. In 1940, he knew we were gonna go to war with Japan. He already could speak German. And he anticipated that Russia would be our ally. So in his own time, he taught himself Chinese and Russian. No outside teacher, he just taught it to himself.

KP: Which are not easy languages to learn.

RW: I'm talking about a genius. I mean, I have never met a more brilliant mind. He was poorer or as poor as I was, but he always made extra money tutoring. Any kid that was in trouble, in any subject. I don't care what the subject was, he always made money as a tutor. And by the time he got to college, he sought out the richest kids that were in trouble. He had a terrific income. He didn't need any support from his family. He was the brightest person I ever met in my life and I met him as a child.

KP: So he would tell you what was going on?

RW: Yeah. I loved to talk to him and we were close friends. ... The other indicator was that I had, I had a Spanish teacher, Dr. Stevens. He's a wonderful Spanish teacher, there were only a Spanish class, there were only twelve in that class. Was a very small classroom, very intimate. It was in a house on College Avenue in the sun parlor. It had six seats in front, six chairs, you know ...

KP: Yes.

RW: And he had a little lectern. He was a chain smoker. If we brought an ashtray, we could smoke too. And he would devote ten minutes of the class to international politics and he said, "You're gonna come to class one day, you're gonna see someone else here." He said, "Because I'm a consultant with the State Department and the government is making overtures to me to come back for an assignment." And less than a month after Pearl Harbor, [I] came to class one day and there was a note: "My replacement will be here tomorrow. Good luck to all of you."

KP: So you had inklings that we were going to war.

RW: My intellectual heavyweight pal and I went to different schools, Dr. Stevens took over from day one. He said, "War is inevitable and the enemy is Japan and we will be embroiled and start thinking about it now, what kind of military career you want before it's too late." I mean, not like this could happen, like it's going to happen soon. So I was more aware than most.

KP: Because I have interviewed a lot of people who said that Pearl Harbor for a lot of people literally was a bolt out of the blue. As historians, we look back and we see, Munich, we see the oil and steel embargo, and we see all these others signs, but a lot of people did not recognize them at the time.

RW: I was alerted by two brilliant people ... that I admired and took seriously. There's no surprise to me. The surprise was how we got into the war. I didn't think the Japs would be nuts enough to do this. But the interesting thing is, on the morning of December 7, I didn't go home that weekend. And several of us, there were several copies of the Sunday Times and we had a large console radio. Music was playing, we were reading the Sunday Times, Sunday papers, downstairs and there were about ten or fifteen of us in a group, drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, and reading the Sunday Times. When the radio was interrupted, "Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor." No one in the room knew where Pearl Harbor was. One guy had an atlas upstairs and he ran upstairs and got the atlas and found Pearl Harbor. You know, we didn't know that the principal part of our fleet was there or ... that's what happened. You know, from that point it was shock though because, you know, Dr. Stevens' words came back to me. My friend, Meyer Auerbach's words came back to me.

KP: So you were shocked by the attack at Pearl Harbor.

RW: Oh yeah.

KP: You had been warned and now the warning was coming true.

RW: Oh yeah, oh yeah, there were no, I was only shocked that, I thought Germany would be the instigator to get us into the war but they were too smart, you know?

KP: Let me give Dave a chance and see if he has any questions at this point.

DH: I assume you had a close brotherhood with your fraternity brothers?

RW: I didn't hear you.

DH: I assume you had a close brotherhood with your fraternity brothers.

RW: Sorry, I didn't understand your question.

DH: Your fraternity.

RW: My fraternity?

DH: Yes.

RW: Yeah, what about it?

DH: Was it a close brotherhood?

RW: A good brotherhood?

DH: A close brotherhood?

RW: Extremely close. I mean, one of the [guys], he was one year ahead of me, but the guy that owns Barney's New York today was the son of the original Barney. And he and I were very, very close friends. ... It was still Depression and couple of times a month he would take me up to their penthouse in New York which, was a mindboggling experience, but it was some rich kids in the house that had their own cars. I developed incredible friendships there, incredible. Incredible friendships. ... I learned as much in the fraternity house as I did in the classroom. There was a senior when I was a freshman, his name was Ted Sands. Everybody was looking for ways to make a few extra dollars any way they could. And Ted Sands would make a large bet, he always kept enough money in his pocket to make a large bet. The bet was this, go to the library, find the biggest book on the rarest subject you can find so that you know I never read this book. Give me the book. Leave me alone for one hour. I'll give you the book back. You tell me the page number. Out of memory, I'll recite that page. If I miss one word, you win the bet.

DH: Was he successful with this line of betting?

RW: I saw this 50 times! We would go through the library, look for the fattest book. Okay, Ted, we got you this time, a thousand two hundred pages! One hour. "Okay, 50 dollar bet." Twenty of us had put up two bucks, three dollars. Put the money with a stake holder, took the book back. Page 793. "Da, da, da, da, da,...da" He didn't miss a period or a comma. One hour with the book, ... talk about mental feats. ... You know, the house had its characters too. But there were representatives from every class there that were great at something. I mean, we had some terrific characters, but I mean, the personalities during my short tenure in the house were mindboggling. Ted Sands, I'll take his name to the grave with me. I ... just think about that kind of feat! But we did, you know, we would find common interests.

There weren't really cliques in the house, but there would be groups that had a lot in common with each other and wonderful parties, wonderful parties. And our parties never had a sad or destructive side to them. Just good fun. For example, ... there were three, the house was at 4 Mine Street and the living setup was you had a sleeping room and a study room. The three richest kids in the house got together and took over one of these mini suites. They hired a decorator, and she made everything beige and brown, light beige and brown. New furniture, new beds, new desks, new carpeting, new wallpaper, and a painter came in. I mean the room was exquisite. To break in the room, they hosted what they called a purple passion party. Purple passions are grape juice and gin. By the end of the party, the whole room was purple. The rugs were purple, the bedsheets were purple, the drapes were purple, the walls were purple, the ceiling was purple! (laughs) You're talking about hard dollars in 1941, '42! The room was destroyed in one party!

Another time, after the war broke out, there was a fuel shortage and the house was cold. There was a senior by the name of Jay Sykes who was another genius, but an oddball. Now he went to the house manager, he said, "I will not be cold. Either turn up the heat or I'm gonna make a fire." And they disregarded what he said. So he broke up some dining room tables and chairs and set them afire. (Laughter) I mean he just lit the whole, fortunately we could put it out ourselves, because it didn't really start. But he broke up a number of table and chairs and had a bonfire going in the dining room.

KP: What happened after he did this?

RW: Well, they just chastised him. ... Jay wasn't unreasonable. He was just trying to make a point. ... There was another guy who was kind of strange 'cause five or six years before he got there, he had a big brother that was a big man on campus. This guy's name was Bob Tulin, T-U-L-I-N. And Bob wasn't social, he wasn't athletic, but in many ways like an inventor or a genius. You know, he had a 1932 Model A Ford convertible that was creampuff, I mean mint, mint, mint. You ever heard a Model A engine that's in tune, I mean, it's like music. And then gas rationing came, he reads Popular Mechanics. And Popular Mechanics had a do-it-yourself instruction article on how to mount a five gallon can on the firewall of your car and fill that with kerosene. You start your car with gasoline, the fuel line from the kerosene wrapped around, it was a copper line that wrapped around the manifold to preheat the fuel. Then you shut the petcock off for the gasoline and opened the petcock for kerosene. And it burned adequately. Could buy all the kerosene you wanted. His worked to perfection. Tulin's shortcoming was he loved to play an ocarina. Know what an ocarina is? Some people call it a sweet potato. It's shaped like sweet potato. It has a little mouth piece and finger holes. And it sounds almost like a fife. And he had a very tiny little balcony on the second floor came out it was no bigger than this. Two people could stand on it. And Tulin, hot and cold, used to walk out on the balcony and play his ocarina. There was an old crotchety bastard across the street that had ears ... like an antenna. He'd coming running out, "Tulin stop playing that ocarina!"

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

Tulin says, "Would you please drop dead?" With that the guy grabs his heart, falls to the sidewalk, his wife runs out to call an ambulance, he dropped dead on the sidewalk! He was ... (laughs)

KP: He had not really realized that Tulin was not serious.

RW: He took Tulin literally. Another highlight is, my Dad had a 1930 Model A, and now he was working in New York all week. He couldn't use the car, so he let me take it to school. It was not in the shape that Tulin's was. It was transportation. I think my father paid for it $35 and he made it run. When he bought it, it didn't run. And you needed a toolbox with you all the time. ... But they were easy to work on. You know, and it got me around. I loved it. So I wake up one morning to go to class, and my car is gone. I call the police. Nobody says anything. Police says, "We found your car. We're gonna come and pick you up." In Buccleuch Park, there was some kind of a fountain that wasn't running. It had, you know, a big concrete basin and

there was a wide space on top of it. They drove my car there, picked it up, and carried it to the middle of the fountain. About eight guys picked it up. ... (laughter) ... I needed eight guys to pick it up and put in on the grass. (Laughter)

KP: So how did you get it out?

RW: I got eight guys to pick it up and put it on the grass. Yeah, they were happy days. They were happy days.

DH: How did your brotherhood react to the war?

RW: ... Everybody did their own thing. You know, ... we all started to run for a military career that we could cope with. Any number of things were started to come down from the government. I don't even remember all of them. If I ever knew them all. But there were things like V-2, ASTP, every branch of service had something. And the college set up advisors. And a lot of my buddies went into programs were during the war, they came out M.D.'s. Never had to finish college. Never had to apply to a medical school.

KP: Never had to take out a loan.

RW: Never had to take out a loan? They were paid to go! I mean that's one of the things that after the war made me really bitter. I'm the only one out of the house I know, that saw non-stop combat ... in a one-on-one way. Everybody else got into some kind of program and became (cartologists?), meteorologists, intelligence, officers of one kind or another. They all got educations.

KP: What do you attribute to your unluckiness?

RW: Well, my misfortune really started because I listened to my mother. She read about something called the ASTP. And my mother wasn't an intellectual heavyweight. She convinced the rest of the family to compel me to go into the ASTP. ASTP stands for Army Specialized Training Program. And before I acceded to that, I tried to enlist in the Coast Guard. I loved the water. The Coast Guard rejected me, because I was undersized and [had] weak eyes. Then I tried the Navy. Navy rejected me for the same reasons. When I couldn't enlist, I decided to wait until I was drafted and take my chances, because I could always request ASTP. No other branch would have me. So my number came up. And I requested ASTP. They put me in ASTP. The ASTP program on the East Coast started in Fort Benning, Georgia, which was the home of the Officer's Candidates School. They used the same facilities. The same 90-day program, except when you got through, they didn't give you a lieutenant's bar. They sent you to some school to learn a specialized science like mapmaking, or meteorology, or electronics, radio, some scientific area. And the ASTP was broken down into basic and advanced. To qualify for basic, you had to have no more than a year of college. To qualify for advanced you needed at least 2 years of college. Nobody gave any thought to the people that fell between those 2 areas.

KP: So you had had how much? You had had a year and a half?

RW: A year and a third, ... They started trimesters. So they wouldn't let me into basic and they wouldn't let me into advanced. In my entire outfit there was only one other guy that was in that category. No amount of pleading and reasoning could change it. Got too much for basic, ... not enough for advanced, you go in a replacement outfit. And they sent me to the only bastard regiment in the United States Army at Fort Pickett, Virginia. An infantry regiment. Not a division, a regiment. That whole regiment became a replacement for the 77th Division. I was only at Camp Pickett for a matter of weeks, before they sent me to the 77th that was already at a staging area.

KP: Did you do your basic training at Fort Benning?

RW: Yeah.

KP: And you did basic infantry training?

RW: Well, it was the identical course to an infantry officer candidate's school.

KP: In other words, you had officer candidate's school, but you had served not as an officer.

RW: I went in as a buck private, as a buck private. Within oh, there was [an] other interesting thing. They let me know that I wasn't going to go to college about two weeks before the program ended. And I gave that information to my family. My uncle, who was an attorney, had been preceptor to a lawyer that was now in the army and on the staff of the head general in G-2 in Camp Ritchie, Maryland. And he got word to him. So he had his general put in a request for me, so that I didn't go into an infantry outfit. The request came through and I had orders to go to Camp Ritchie, Maryland. But then ... an order came down from Washington that nobody in the ground forces can be transferred out of the ground forces. They needed infantry for the Pacific. And that overrode my order to go to Camp Ritchie. I wound up in the 77th.

KP: How good was your training? When you look back on your training, how well did it prepare you for combat? Because it sounds like you did not have ...

RW: Well, what saved my life in the Pacific was the Jungle School in Hawaii. I could tell you some stories about that if you want.

KP: Yes, I just wanted to see. You had not liked ROTC. How did you like the military now that you were in it?

RW: Let me tell you something. I prayed to God for two things. I wanted to fight for my country. I mean, I didn't know anyone that didn't. The attitudes you see today that started with Korea and came to a head in Vietnam did not exist in World War II. I mean, we all knew who Hitler was. We already heard horror stories of Japan and the Sino-Japanese War with all the slaves and I didn't know anyone that wasn't eager and willing to do whatever we were asked to do for the country. But I prayed to God, I only made two requests. I said, "First, don't let me

stay in the infantry. And second, don't let me go to the Pacific." Afraid of snakes, crocodiles, jungles, living in a hole. I wanted to fight in civilization. And, I also knew about, with all deference to you [Dave], the difference in the attitude toward quality of life between Orientals ... and people of European derivation. I mean, there was no comparison. And I wanted to do a war where people valued life. And I wanted, I'd kill if I had to, but I wanted to respect life. It was uppermost in my mind. I don't know how I knew that then. I know it a whole of a lot better now. But I knew it. Well anyway, I was in it and there was no way out. And-

KP: And you joined the 77th, and you had missed a lot of their training in the States?

RW: All of it!

KP: Yes.

RW: All of it! I mean, they were [a] highly trained outfit. One of the reasons they were so highly trained was the powers that be in the top army military used the 77th as training guinea pigs. They learned everything from frigid mountain warfare to hot jungle warfare to in between. Fighting in cities, fighting, they were trained in the United States for two years, before they were shipped overseas. I went in a cold recruit. But I don't think any of that would've helped me. The Jungle School which was only two weeks taught me everything. Jungle School was conducted on the island of Oahu. And the top of that school, its head, who ran it personally, was a major who was as wide as he was tall. He was as hard as a rock. And the two-week training that they gave us was beyond intense. They taught us how to ford streams, how to live off food in the jungle, how to catch water that ran off a palm tree. How to make things out of bamboo. How to survive on the ground. Except for at night when we went back to a tent dead tired, you were in the jungle all day. You didn't see skylight, it was thick jungle. But the jungles on Hawaii, there's nothing native that'll hurt you, unless you eat the wrong thing. There were no poisonous snakes. There were no wild animals. ...

KP: It actually sounds fairly pleasant.

RW: It was a benign classroom and I was relaxed from that point of view, because I have a fetish about snakes. The last thing you had to do in the Jungle School which was the ultimate test for the major to make his point. He would speak to the entire group every night after dinner. He would always finish by making a fist and holding it here [midsection] and saying, "If you don't learn anything else," he says, "Right here in the pit of your stomach there's a ball of guts. When your mind tells you, you can't take another step. When your mind tells you, your fingers can't hold on for another minute. When your mind tells you, you can't hold your head up any more, your mind is lying. You got a ball of guts here, that's a reserve tank. You can do ten times more than you think you can do. And that's what I'm here to teach you." So the last thing you had to do was, he had constructed something that looked like this: small platform with steps twenty feet in the air, 40 feet apart, there's a thick piece of rope stretching overhead from one platform to the other, underneath that were balls of barbed wire.

KP: So there is no mat to catch you.

RW: There was barbed wire to catch you. And what you had to do was, you had to go hand over hand those 40 feet with your full combat pack on. Let me describe what a jungle combat pack was for me. Everybody carried two full canteens. Everybody carried their sidearm. Everybody carried four hand grenades. Everybody carried ammunition for their sidearm. Everybody carried a field pack, which consisted of a blanket, a half of a tent, either a shovel or a pick, and a full canteen, and your personal hygiene things: toothbrush, razor, cleanliness items, soap, a towel if you want. In my case, I was an ammo bearer in a light machine gun squad. In addition to my personal gear, I had to carry a backpack to which was tied four boxes of machine gun ammunition. They weighed 22 pounds each, including the can it came in. I hadn't grown yet. I still weighed 92 pounds, or 87 pounds, or 90 pounds depending. My gear weighed more than I did. My hands were little and thin. I'm looking up at that at rope, and I am [thinking], "How am I going to go 40 feet with over a hundred pounds of weight on me?" The ammunition alone was 88 pounds. The other gear was over twenty pounds. Every night I'm looking at that thing and I said, "Not only am I gonna get cut by the barbed wire, but when the ammo lands on my back, I'm going to break my back." I said, "There has to be a trick to that. There has to be a gimmick to that." So when everybody else went off to rest or bullshit, nobody was around, I got up on that thing and I started to practice on it. First I took a couple of swings then I'd hustle back and the first thing I learned was that the rope is springy and that you don't have to keep tension on your hands all the time, that just a grip, let your weight go down, pop up, let go, a grip, and just keep doing that. Wasn't long before I could go across with nothing on very easily like a monkey. I developed a rhythm. Each night I added some weight. And I did it with the full pack, and now comes graduation. Everybody has to do it. Oh Jesus, guys were falling off. I would say only half made it. I get up there. I went across in a zip, right. I breath[ed] a sigh of relief. This major says to me, "Come here, you." I says, "What?" [He says,] "You've been practicing. Get up there and do it again." I said, ... [major says] "Get up there and do it again." By this time my hands were a little tired. Wasn't so easy the second time, but I did it. Besides, God first, and the Jungle School second, is why I'm here.

KP: You have a lot of respect for that major, I mean which is an understatement.

RW: Without the Jungle School, I wouldn't have stood a chance over there. Without God, certainly I wouldn't have stood a chance over there. Alrighty now, I'm not a fatalist. I could tell you fatalistic stories. A lot of them, but I'm not a fatalist. I believe in luck and I believe He watches. I'll tell you a lot of fatalistic stories.

KP: Where did you meet up with your unit before getting to Hawaii? Where did you join them?

RW: Pickett.

KP: Pickett. And then you boarded the ship where?

RW: California.

KP: So you went across the country?

RW: Yeah, Fort Stoneman, California. ... I came back to San Diego, but I left from Fort Stoneman.

KP: As a replacement, were you sent as an individual replacement or with a regiment?

RW: The whole regiment.

KP: The whole regiment was just put in as part of the division?

RW: Yeah, they parceled us off to outfits and the way I got on machine gun squad, they were a man short there.

KP: And so that is how you ended up there?

RW: Well, I preferred that to being a rifleman. Because, number one, my sidearm was a carbine. And the M-1 was really too heavy for me. And I have to tell you I was also partial. ... I was a good marksman with the carbine. Back then, they only had something called an L-sight. You know, it didn't have any windage and you just flipped it up one way for short range, the other way for a little longer range. But I got to know my weapon. And I could hit with it. I was very accurate with it. And I was comfortable with it. And I had confidence in it. So that was a big step in, you know, if we get into minutiae, I'll tell you stories where they tried to take my weapon away once when we were gonna hit Japan. And I went and stole it back. Of course, the stock had a big piece of it that was ripped out by shrapnel and the new carbines had more sophisticated sights like the M-1 and they also had a bayonet stud.

KP: But you wanted your old weapon?

RW: Oh, I knew I could hit with it. Plus it saved my life. I mean, you know, I was holding it this way and piece of shrapnel took off a big chunk out of the stock. That would've been my flesh. You know, you get superstitious after a while. I mean, that gun became a lucky-

KP: A lucky-

RW: I still remember its serial number, 12 18. It was made by Remington Typewriter. I mean, when they took that away from me, I thought they took away my safety, alright. I went nuts. I went and stole it back. I didn't want the new piece of shit. I mean-

KP: Yes.

RW: You know, I was good with that gun. Let's see where were we. ... Well anyway, the Jungle School made me feel that I could survive the jungle.

KP: When did they parcel you out to the machine gun unit? Was it in Hawaii or was it back in California in Fort Stoneman?

RW: Back in Pickett.

KP: Oh way back-

RW: Way back, yeah, way back in Pickett when the 77th was staging.

KP: Yeah.

RW: Yeah.

KP: This unit had been together for a while.

RW: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, a lot of firm friendships in the unit.

KP: And how did you feel to be the outsider? I mean fortunately you were not thrown in during battle, but they had been together for two years.

RW: Not at all comfortable. ... What broke the ice is that the gunner was a big, strong Jewish guy from New York who befriended me. The assistant gunner was a tough little, I don't know what he was, from Boston, a street kid who was short like I was, but he was square. He was tough. He was a street kid. And he didn't give a shit what you were. You know, if you were soldiering, he liked you. And I became friendly with the two of them. Squad leader was a wonderful soldier from the South who had gone to a military school. But couldn't finish so he was only a sergeant. A hell of a soldier. But he was a southerner with all the racism and came from a military family and he was a, but he was a good sergeant and a wonderful soldier. And I discovered he wasn't a hater.

KP: A lot of people I interviewed served under southerners or had southerners under them.

RW: Well my section sergeant ... was a hating southerner. But that was overridden if you soldiered for him. What made me qualify as a soldier was, not my love for the infantry or the military, Okay? I had an ... overriding formula to survive. The number one credo was: stay with the guys in front, stragglers get picked off. And I was always with the guys in front, ... I don't care how sick I was, how tired I was, how much in pain I was, I was up there with the guys all the time. And I got all kinds of admiration for that, because I was taking two steps to their one. And I could tell you some stories about that too, how, you know, guys get fagged on large marches and this ball of guts kept me with the big guys. That major was right. Your mind tells you you're finished. If you don't listen to it, you got a lot left. He was right!

KP: You are always being up front. I have read that in a rifle company the point is the most dangerous part.

RW: Not in the Pacific.

KP: Not in the Pacific? Being up front really is safer?

RW: I'm gonna tell you the Japs would always let the front guys through. In order not to give their positions away to the main force. They didn't know who the scouts were. They didn't know what they were seeing, all you had, when there were guys behind you. It's the stragglers that got knocked off.

KP: When did you figure this out? Did you have that sense right away?

RW: Before I saw combat.

KP: Really? You knew?

RW: ... You gotta stay with the troops. Don't be by yourself. One man can't fight. You got to be with the numbers.

KP: Did you see stragglers who did get picked off? Did it happen the way you expected?

RW: ... Every iota of my experience confirmed that my initial impression before I heard a shot fired in anger was basically factual. The stragglers didn't make it.

KP: On a lighter side, did you ever get into Honolulu when you were in Hawaii?

RW: Yeah.

KP: Did you get to see Lei's? A lot of people have very fond memories of Hawaii?

RW: I don't know how personal you wanna get. ... You can black this out if you want. ... My upbringing and my life's experience were so shallow. ... One of the fears I had was of dying without ever experiencing sex with a woman. It was an absolute fear. I didn't think it would be fair to me to die before I had a woman.

KP: I have read that it is common thought among soldiers.

RW: Oh, I got my first pass to Honolulu. I knew the regime. From eight in the morning till twelve noon, the houses of prostitution were open, and that was an experience in itself. From Here to Eternity didn't show it like it really was. They were highly regulated. They were all on the second floor with big broad stairways going up and downstairs were MP's and a prophylactic shop right next door. You came down those stairs, an MP brought you right into the prophylactic shop. So my first sexual experience was there. And there were three predominant whorehouses. They weren't clubs, they were whorehouses. I remember the names of two of them. One was The Camp and one was The Anchor. I don't remember the third one. But I had three passes. I went to all three. They were identical. You stood in line, and then they wanna call her a madam or a hostess, she would take your order. "You want straight French, half way, or old fashioned." They all said it the same and I won't explain what they are. Let your imaginations work. Then

you went into one of those three lines. And you had exactly, exactly ten minutes. If you weren't through in ten minutes, you were thrown out. ... After the first time, I didn't think it was worth it because of the experience in the pro shop which, which I don't think it's fit for the record, but, okay, then the only thing open between twelve and one was the YMCA which was big and beautiful and there you could have food there free and soft drinks free, and from one to four the saloons were open. You could drink from one to four. Four o'clock, everything closed, and if you weren't stationed in Honolulu, you better not be on the street after four p.m. That was it. No more no less.

KP: In many ways, when you were in Honolulu, you were really a kid. You had only had about a year of college.

RW: I was physically and chronologically a child. I had a good sharp mind and I was always a thinker and I always had intellectual curiosity, but I had no experience to test what I thought I knew. And the experiences were overwhelming me, between college and the war and the military. It was an awful lot to absorb.

KP: You had not traveled much before the military.

RW: I knew nothing, nill, ... nothing.

KP: What did you think of all these different places you were seeing? You were seeing Georgia, admittedly from a military perspective. You went across the country and you went to Hawaii which are very different places.

RW: Jesus Christ. I mean, I was only in the United States less than six months in uniform and all my experiences were negative. First of all, the shoulder insignia for ASTP was a little Roman lamp with a flame. You know, the typical oil lamp. Everybody else in the armed services called it the flaming pisspot. And we were despised by everybody. I mean, if you didn't walk in a large group, anybody from any other branch that saw the flaming pisspot would kick the shit out of you. (laughter) I mean, ... just because you were wearing a patch. Do you know what we used to do? When we were on base, we had four little stitches. As soon as we got off base, we'd tear them off. You'd get killed walking around with that thing. And then right before we went on base, one guy had a needle and thread. We'd put four little stitches back on. You couldn't go into town wearing a flaming pisspot. I mean, it just infuriated other military people. They hated us.

KP: When you did get off base, what did you think of Georgia and the South? In the 1940s, it was a very different place.

RW: Benning is near the Alabama line. The most infamous recreation spot in the United States was in a little town in Alabama just over the border form Georgia, which was really off limits to us. But I didn't know anybody that got arrested for going there. But anyway, the first time I went into town, there was a white boot black. I hated shining shoes anyways. "How much is a shine?" He says, "Half a buck." He had a chair, he's polishing my shoes and during the whole

shoeshine, he's telling me about the evil of Jews. They were all devils. ... They eat little babies. It was fantastic! KKK attitude towards Jews I'd never heard in my life.

KP: And he's shining your shoes.

RW: He's shining my shoes. So he just about finished, so I said, "Let me ask you something. Did you ever see a Jew?" He says, "No. No! My uncle told me they got horns coming out of their head." I said, "No kidding?" "Oh yeah," he said, "You'll know a Jew if you see one." He got all done. I took two bucks out of my pocket, and I said, "Here's a half a buck for the shine, a dollar and a half for tipping. When you go home, tell your uncle you saw a Jew and he gave you a buck and a half tip." And the kid just, when I walked away, his jaw was still down here. Another afternoon, there was another guy from Perth Amboy in the outfit. He was a year behind me in high school, but he was older than me. And we were kind of friendly, not being classmates, we weren't close friends. He was a rough guy, really rough guy. And we were in a saloon in a ... little town right off the base. We're at the bar having a couple of drinks. Two bar stools away, there's some woman sitting with her legs crossed and her back to me. And I never really saw the front of her until she turned toward the bar, she had a baby in her arms, and she took out one of her breasts at the bar and started feeding the baby. I was aghast. You know, I don't know which hit me first, this goes on at a bar or in public? Or, I mean, what am I looking at? Right. The guy with her, husband, boyfriend, I don't know, saw me staring and came over and was going to punch me. The guy with me took out a knife. He had a switchblade. He says, "Get back." Says, "Roland, back out of the joint. Just step behind me." We backed out of the joint, we left our money on the bar, our drinks on the bar, we got outside, we ran like hell. I didn't mean any offense. I was totally startled, totally startled.

... There were some things about the training that I did not dislike. I was fascinated by the weaponry and I became very adept at field stripping and reassembling every weapon that I was gonna deal with. And I was a good marksman. When I learned how to fire a pistol, however, some good old boy from the South said, "Don't listen to that bullshit. I'll show how to fire a pistol." A 45 would knock a little guy like me right on his ass if I didn't listen to him. He showed me in two minutes and that was that. There was a lot to be learned from some of these guys. If you want to get into personalities.

KP: Well, it is interesting because one of the things I found when I interviewed air force people, there was all kinds of stuff they did that was not by the book.

RW: You'd be amazed at who you can learn what from. At Okinawa, we were nearly starving to death. There was a guy from my platoon, he was a mortar man. ... I had become one of the few people he would talk to. I didn't know his problem, but I knew that he had had a hard life in Pennsylvania. If he had [a] question, he would ask me. He also asked me to write letters for him. I don't think he was illiterate, I think he was ashamed that he wrote poorly. And he had difficulty expressing himself, which is why he spoke so little. Of course, I admired him for the way he adapted to living in the field. He was never hungry, he was never dirty, he was never thirsty. He never looked cold, he never looked wet, he was an outdoorsman. And I had great admiration for guys like that and I wanted to learn from him. We were actually hungry at one

point at Okinawa and he said to me, "You and I are gonna eat." He said, "I'll be back in a half an hour." He said, "You can help if you can find an onion. Now try to find an onion." Well, he went one way and I went another way. And there were a couple of little houses off in the distance. I saw a little old man tilling something. I walked over to him and he was apprehensive. He was an Okinawan, not a Jap. They hated the Japs. And, I couldn't speak a word of Okinawan. I smoothed a piece of dirt, and I got a stick and I drew concentric circles. Went like this [draws circles in air]. He says, "Oh, onion." And with his hands he dug up a nice red onion about this big. I patted him on the back. I went back. By this time my friend had a ... fire going and he'd taken his steel helmet off the liner and he was boiling water and he had other vegetables in there. There was a small animal in there, skinned, cut into pieces. I don't know whether it was a rabbit or a local rodent or what the hell it was, but it smelled pretty good. ... I cut up the onion, put that in there and boiled it up into a stew. Doled it out into the messkits, it was absolutely delicious. You know, rewarding and fulfilling, a nice hot meal. Funny thing about the days on Okinawa, the days were hot and the nights were frigid. ... If you didn't have a sweater you could put on at night, you'd freeze to death. And the minute the sun come up, you had to take everything off. It got to be hot. You know, all kind of great soldiers.

... The only what I would call enjoyable moments I had in the army was after Ie Shima and Ryukyus and Okinawa, we were sent ... back to the Philippines on an island called Cebu, C-E-B-U, which allegedly was taken by the Americal Division, the only army division designated by a name rather than a numeral. And we were encamped on a beach adjacent to the coastal road, the only paved road on the island, which was bathed by the South China Sea. No dirt, no mud, no jungle, on a beach, lovely weather. The jungle encroached right up to the highway on the inland side of the road and immediately went up to a steep mountain. And we were staging there to make an amphibious assault on the mainland of Japan which was not a very comforting thought, but I didn't know [how] imminent that invasion was, and in the meantime, I had the false sense that there were no hostile Japs on the island.

KP: Because it had been secured.

RW: Allegedly. And I loved the fact that I didn't have to walk in mud and there was a road adjacent to our camp and the beach was right there. I swam, but with some trepidation, because there's a rare variety of water cobra that inhabits the South Chinese Sea and we saw some and the snake fetish were still intact. But we could borrow outrigger canoes and we swam. Jeez, is there someone there?

KP: No. No.

RW: Okay, anyway. By this time, my non-combat duties was, I was the company jeep driver. Every line company had one jeep and one trailer. And for many days, my mission was to take three guys north on the island to where the jungle really got thick. There was an abundance of bamboo, and we were cutting bamboo and taking it back on the trailer. And they were doing the cutting, I was doing the driving. There was a little farm on the way where a native lady had a big family and she had chickens. And for a small amount of money, she would kill a chicken and roast it on the beach in a pit fire on a spit. It was absolutely delicious. Every single day I would

order the chicken on the way to the bamboo cutting, stop back, the guys and I would eat the chicken, go back with the bamboo.

All of a sudden one day, we got a lot of replacements ... direct from the states that came out of the prisons, the federal prisons of the United States by virtue of an act of Congress that finally woke up and realized that our prisons were full of people that were sentenced to over a year and a day, that lost their citizenship, couldn't vote, were no longer citizens, and were not subject to the draft. In one fell swoop the legislation was passed, it was signed by Truman. Roosevelt had died by then, and to take all these guys with no training and decide to send them right up the front line. ... War in Europe was over by now, and they dumped them on us en masse. They sent them over without weapons. These guys were hardened criminals. They knew nothing about discipline. They weren't about to listen. They knew they were going from prison cells into combat, and they would just as soon die where they were. They were fearless. They were violent. They were killers. And they immediately started to overwhelm military discipline. They took no orders. They listened to nobody. They did whatever they wanted. They called every non-com together. By that time, I was a sergeant. And the officers told us that the only solution was to be violent with them. If they didn't take an order, don't ask any questions, use your rifle butts and break their heads and they'll soon get the lesson. Next couple of days were mayhem with a lot of broken heads, but they got the message.

In my particular outfit, there was an established clique of Oklahoma Indians and they addressed one guy as chief and he was their chief. Before I dared to try to get friendly with them, I knew I had to get friendly with the chief if I was going to anyplace with anybody. And he was kind of talking to this group in a semicircle around him. And to pass his time, he was reaching between his crotch and pulling out a homemade stiletto and throwing it at a palm tree about 20, 25 feet away. And missing insects sometimes by this much, or sometimes hitting them. He could throw that knife like I could shoot a gun. I mean, if I watched this performance on the stage, you know, I would applaud till I was hoarse. ... I approached him one day, and I said, "I need a big favor from you." "What do you want?" he said. "Teach me how to throw a knife." "Okay, I'll teach you." He wouldn't use his knife, because he made it himself and he had made a scabbard for it out of paper mache. Had one string around his waist, another string around his thigh and it laid in his crotch this way. It was thin, you know. He could just reach down and it was perfectly balanced. He borrowed a knife from me and he showed me the technique. And we became friends, and then one of his guys was in my squad. My first admiration for this guy, his name was James Lookadoo; my first admiration for this guy was his physique, his physical attributes. He had reflexes better than in anybody's. He could walk on dried leaves, you wouldn't hear him. He could run like the wind. He could jump like he had springs in his feet. He was six feet tall, was wire thin. And he and I became very, very close, which stood me well when we got to Japan.

But to end this Cebu experience, when the war ended, the Japanese commander on Cebu was one of the few commanders that recognized the inevitability of defeat and would not subject his troops to decimation. They ran up in the mountains and hid out. They lived in the jungle on both sides of the mountain.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Roland A. Winter on September 15, 1995 in Edison, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and-

DH: David Tsang Hou.

KP: I should maybe let you finish up with Cebu.

RW: Yeah, then I'll answer your question. Anyway, when the surrender came, the Japanese general sent a small group of emissaries to the military and indicated that he had a lot [of] troops in good shape on the island and that he wanted to surrender, but he would not surrender to anybody in the 77th. He had radios that were still functioning, and our reputation was we took no prisoners. All, but one of our campaigns was under Marine control. The only time we were under army control was on Leyte under MacArthur. May he rot where ever he is. And they wouldn't surrender to us. There was no one else on the island, so we said, okay, it'll take a couple of days to get some other troops in here, and we just changed our patches. We started to take out these prisoners, I mean, where I was hacking bamboo, twenty yards from thousands of them.

KP: And you had been a veteran of for four campaigns too, so it's not like you were naive-

RW: Five.

KP: Five. So it's not like you were naive and had never been in combat.

RW: Five. But I was having so much fun on Cebu. I really loved it. One of the things that we did, this is where they took my carbine away. We were replacing everything to hit Japan. Every vehicle, every uniform, every sidearm, every weapon, everything brand new. And, because I had been a jeep driver, I'd really two jobs. I was a machine gun sergeant ... one of the two machine gun sergeants, ... when we weren't in combat, I was the jeep driver. And we were all assigned, each line company as I said only had one jeep, and we had to exchange a lot of vehicles. We were taking vehicles working out of battalion motor pool and parking them in a field. They had no keys, just close the ignition switch, leave the batteries connected, whatever the fuel was in the tanks, walk away, truck'd pick us up and take us to the docks, and we'd drive a new vehicle to the assigned outfit. So I took a lot a lot of side trips with vehicles I was returning and investigated Cebu City, which was relatively unmarred. There were some houses blown apart and some buildings, but the city was clean, a lot of Spanish influence. Beautiful. Beautiful. Lot of Shangri La's on Cebu, beautiful clean island, civilized. The dominant controlling population there were Spanish Jews that had settled there from the days of the Inquisition to get away from Spain. And they were big in commerce, manufacturing, government, and it was a beautiful island.

Anyway, that was some education watching these perfectly healthy, clean, well-fed soldiers giving up in an orderly fashion. It was an interesting story about the end of the war, which is very much in my mind now, because of the controversy about the dropping of the A-bombs. We were standing on a beach around our tents. There was a guy in my company from New England that was a Brahman from Boston, an arch conservative, a Republican. And he also had a little bit of college and he and I were always at each others throats over politics, philosophy, social programs. We hated each other. I couldn't stand him. He couldn't stand me. When we first got news that an atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, a bunch of soldiers standing around, and I said, "I don't know what an atomic bomb is, but if it's what I think it is, this war'll be over in less than two weeks." This guy said to me, "You're full of shit." I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll bet you a month's pay the war's over in two weeks." We shook hands. The first bomb didn't do it. The second bomb was about 16 days later, then they immediately quit. In front of the same group, he said to me, "I get your next month's pay." And I laughed and the other guy said to him, "Give Roland your pay or we'll kill you. He was right you son of a bitch. You were wrong!" And they made him pay me. I missed by 2 days.

But anyways, you said when did you start talking about your war experiences. I only knew one other survivor that went through what I went through. When he and I met, he said, "Do you remember this? Do remember that? Do you remember the other thing?" And it was a rehash of old times. Who else could I discuss it with? I didn't know anyone else that saw mano-o-mano combat. I was on a ship that got hit with a Kamikaze plane. I was on a landing craft that capsized in the surf. The last year of the war I was suffering from jungle rot. I brought the jungle rot home with me before it dried up. Who was I gonna discuss it with?

KP: When you say you were a survivor, how many of your unit did you loose over the course of these five major campaigns?

RW: I can answer that question specifically. When we were finally relieved on the last ridge on Okinawa, there were only eleven others and me left in my company, that had a full T.O. of 287 men, there were twelve of us left. This company roster of 287 men actually had from the time we landed in Hawaii over 1400 people go through Company L.

KP: So you had several times, casualties of over one hundred percent.

RW: Many times over. ... One of the outrages of this is that when we came off Ie Shima, and relieved another outfit on Okinawa, we couldn't fill their holes. Somebody on the General Staff was falsifying our casualty records. They thought we had more troops than we did 'cause he was lying on the reports. We relieved, we couldn't fill our holes, and we had been in combat longer than they were. Ie Shima was the worst I saw, that's where Ernie Pyle got killed. And they took us right from Ie Shima and put us on a ridge in Okinawa. I mean just the boat ride and we were right back in the middle of it.

KP: Going back to your first campaign, you-

RW: Guam.

KP: Guam. My sense is that no one before Guam had seen hostile fire. You didn't have any regular sergeants who had seen combat.

RW: We were all green. ...

KP: You were all green. What was your first contact with the enemy? The first time where someone was trying to kill you? Directly or indirectly.

RW: Going on a beach. Although marines were already on the beach, it was still under fire. And we spent the first night in front of marine long tom's. Long tom was the biggest gun in the Pacific. And every time the marines fired him, we got bounced out of our holes and the flash and, I mean your ears, I'm half deaf today because of that. But I wish I had a map of Guam in front of me. The main beach really was secured when I went ashore, except for they still taking mortar rounds on the beach. There were no small arms fire. And we weren't immediately committed. We spent that afternoon, that night, in front of this marine artillery section. There was another marine beachhead to the west. These two areas were separated by a peninsula that pointed south called the Orote Peninsula. And one segment of the marines was engaged in pushing the Japanese off the end of the peninsula. That was going well, but there was a lot pressure from the land side on the marine beach to the west. So the second morning, we were committed to marching behind the marines that were pushing out on the peninsula and toward the beachhead that was in trouble to hit the Japs from behind. We got to the rear area where the Orote Peninsula met the main island area.

The head of the whole operation was a one-star general who had a nickname. His last name was Smith, and everyone knew him as Howling Mad. His first name was something like Howling, I don't know, Holland. And as a commander on Guam, he was ahead of all the admirals and all the generals. He was only a brigadier, one star. But he was a tough guy, he was wearing a baseball cap with a silver star in it. And he sees this midget trudging along with four ammo boxes, two canteens, all the gear I told you about. He says to me, "Stop!" I immediately knew who it was, I read about him. You don't salute in combat, and I looked at him and he said to me, "How the fuck you gonna fight with all that shit on your back?" I said, "Ask my sergeant." So he says, "Who's your sergeant?" I says, "Him." "Come here. Are all these assholes decked out this way? This is jungle." He says, "Take that backpack off your back." He says, "Put a box of ammo in each hand and leave that behind. Now go fight." I looked at my sergeant. Forty-four pounds is better than 88. The first time I hit the dirt with all that stuff on my back, knocked the wind out of me.

KP: It was 44 pounds?

RW: 88!

KP: 88?

RW: A 100, you know it's all behind me. ... And I dove, all this weight came down and knocked the wind out of me. Anyway, at the end of that march, we had high ground, we could overlook the beach. We could look down on where the fire was coming from, and my company commander, and his name has to go into the record, it's another reason I'm here, because I had the best company commander of World War II. He was a West Pointer, which accounted for why we got all the tough assignments. But his name was, and is I hope, Edgar Rickman, graduate of the Point. All his classmates were in the air force, or wherever, and were colonels and generals. He's still an infantry captain. Didn't know what enemy fire could do to him. I never saw him stoop. I never saw him flinch. He directed every battle ramrod straight.

KP: So he is the classic guy you see walking around the battlefield like he was just like-

RW: Like he was immune to enemy fire! And he directed! When you saw Edgar Rickman standing there, in rains of lead, you said, "Nothing's going to happen. Do what he says." And talk about inspiring leaders. I mean, you know, the infantry motto is Follow Me. Everybody followed Edgar. ... Nobody took a step in front to him. That wasn't true of our other officers. But it didn't matter, as long as you saw Edgar Rickman standing up, don't worry about it.

KP: How long did he make it through the war?

RW: He made it through the war. He got wounded once. Some lucky Jap got him. ... The man was not only a fantastic military leader, but he did it with a depth of compassion that could only be equaled, never surpassed. I'll tell you two incidents. I was on Guam. I got word my father died. We were in the only battle zone in the world where that didn't entitle a soldier to some home leave. He was aware of that. We were actually involved in a fight on Guam. We were being counterattacked and we were in shallow holes and small arms were firing all over the place and through the noise of battle, I heard someone say, "Winter's hole is over there!" I had an intuition that it was a chaplain trying to reach me to tell me one of my parents died. And I looked up and I see a young, very young, fresh faced kid with a helmet and a little metal cross on it. I said, "Over here, Father. And who is it? My mother or my father?" "It's your father." I said, "Let me ask you something, doesn't the 77th Division have a Jewish chaplain." He said, "Yes." "How come they risked your ass to get up here and not my chaplain?" He said, "Soldier, don't be bitter." He said, "Your chaplain is busy doing the same thing. The assignment came up and I'm here to commiserate with you." I said, "Fair enough." And he had a letter from the uncle that I finally practiced law with, that was written to the chaplain so it didn't come directly to me. He wanted it read to me. Giving me that it was my father's death and the circumstances and everything else, and I said, "Gimme the letter." He said, "It's not addressed to you. My instructions are to read it." I said, "You're gonna get your head blown off. Here, give me the letter and get the hell out of here." "No," he said, "This is my job." Well by that time the other guys in the outfit knew. They say there were no Jews in the infantry, we're basically a New York-Pennsylvania outfit. There were a lot of Jews. And from that day forward for ten days, nine guys would come around my foxhole in combat, and say the Kaddish. Help me. You need 10 to say it. They would stay above the ground, and expose themselves to fire so I could say the Kaddish for my father. ...

Many months later, we were supposed to, after Guam, we were supposed to go to New Caledonia for R and R. Excuse me if my voice is broken up a little bit. And MacArthur was in a lot of trouble in the Philippines. Is too proud to use Marines, he called for any Army he could get any place. We were not combat loaded when we left Guam, we were headed for New Caledonia. And I wasn't even on a ship with my company. I was with a jeep on a cargo boat. He diverted us to a little island in the Admiralties called Los Negros where we reloaded for combat, and they let us ashore for two hours there. [It had a] baseball diamond and a little PX there, got a Coco-Cola, back on the ship and off we went to Leyte. We're on a beach in Leyte, waiting to get committed when somebody figured out that the only way they're really gonna take Leyte is if they make landing with a big force behind the Japanese at Ormoc Bay. And then attacked ... the Japanese from both sides. Well, my outfit, the 77th, got that assignment. And we're making a another beachhead now at Ormoc Bay. Captain Rickman came to me and said, "You're not gonna take your squad on this one. I'll leave you here with the Jeep. When you can connect up with the company, I'll see you again." He says, "I want a personal favor from you." "What do you want, captain?" He said, "I'm gonna leave with you a sealed letter and it's addressed. It's not to be mailed unless you learned that I'm killed." And he said, he took it off his finger, "My West Point ring." He said, "Whatever you have to do, make sure that my widow gets this ring if I'm killed." I took the letter and the ring and the guys went off and made the landing and I waited behind. And it was a very historical landing. I'm glad I missed it, but I'm sad I missed it. Less than two hours after our guys got on the beach, a very similar landing ship started to head for the beach that we had just landed on. Looking through binoculars, it's a Japanese ship carrying reinforcements. All of my outfit's guns were pointed inland toward the jungle. And they saw this happen, the biggest weapon they had was a 37 mm anti-tank gun and mortars. Had 50 caliber machine gun, rare. Mostly 30 caliber stuff. Turned everything around, and as soon as the ship opened its doors, they started to hit it with everything. To this day, the 307th Regiment of the 77th Infantry is the only infantry outfit credited with sinking a ship. I mean, they were, they were sitting ducks, but by two hours, if the obverse had occurred, we'd have been wiped out that way.

But anyway, it was an interesting ride joining up with [the] outfit, because when we finally went, the battalion motorpool went to start the reinforce our guys with our vehicles. The trip was across virgin territory that was not fought for. Nobody knew the roads or if there were roads, rickety bridges and the most horrible terrain. And that was a three-day trek, which was another adventure, but Leyte was, that MacArthur, the most overrated, egotistical, selfish, momma's boy in the history of the military. Wouldn't even tell his mother he had a girlfriend. He had mistress for all of his life, he was embarrassed to tell his mother.

KP: You are not the first person who has had a less than positive view of MacArthur.

RW: I hate MacArthur. He was a lousy general. Nothing but an egomaniac and a momma's boy. Boy, I love Harry Truman for a million reasons, but when he canned MacArthur, I was yelling and screaming like Rutgers just beat Notre Dame! Oh! When he gave it to MacArthur, I said, you know, finally I squeezed the boil. Took little old Harry to get rid of him.

KP: Did the men in your unit share the same view of MacArthur?

RW: Everybody hated him. I never knew anybody that liked him. We were the only, I mean, anyplace else in the world a soldier was, if a parent died, he got a week home. What's the big deal? Not under MacArthur. And yet, that son of a bitch was eating caviar and drinking fine wine every day of the war, and his mistress was with him! He didn't have a single hardship. A real prick.

There's other funny things. I developed on Leyte, I never heard any other name for it, they called it jungle rot. I'll describe it to you. From the elbow to your fingertips, you would get open running holes, deep, from your knee to your feet, these holes all hurt like a toothache. They were open and they would just ooze like a colorless liquid. It wasn't blood. I went on sick call, the doctors put different stuff [on], nothing worked. I was on a beach detail in Leyte before the Ormoc, or after the Ormoc landing, I was waiting for instructions to go meet my outfit and I was on a detail off loading ships that were in anchor. Put the material on ducks and LCVPs, take it to the beach where it was off loaded again. And a navy corpsman saw it and he says, "Come here, soldier. I got something for you." He had a bottle of something purple in his pocket. He took cotton swabs, and he hit all of the holes. Burned a little and he said, "Meet me here in a half hour, I'll give you a bottle of this and a ball of cotton. Just do this every couple of hours." I says, "Well, thank God somebody knows what do for this." He says, "Yeah, this'll clear it up." And the stuff worked like a charm. For the first time in a year, the holes started to close and stopped running, and it actually healed. And I ran out stuff. I showed it to some army doctors, they didn't know what it was. Wherever I got near any kind of dispensary or field hospital, I described it, I ran out of it. The minute I ran out of it, it reoccurred. And it plagued me in Japan, although it started to clear up when I got on a ship and it started to clear up a little in Japan, but not fast enough. I was discharged with it. When I was civilian, I still had all of these holes in my arms and legs. Very, very slowly, the holes filled in. The outside covering wasn't skin, it was shiny and hard, like I had been burned there and no hair, body hair was growing out of those holes. And I thought I would be polka dotted for the rest of my life. A couple of years later, skin took over and the hair started to grow and it finally disappeared by itself.

KP: But how may years afterwards?

RW: Three, ... until you couldn't see any trace of it. ... Until it was three years. I thought ... it would be permanent scars.

KP: You became a sergeant. When did you become a sergeant? I am sure there is a story behind it.

RW: The gunner got killed, our squad leader got killed. The assistant gunner moved up to be sergeant; ... he didn't want the stripes. I said to him, his name was Eddie (Hotten?), the tough guy from Boston, I said, "Eddie, take the stripes." "It's not worth the money." He used epithets, he says, "I don't want any part of stripes. ... I wanna fire the gun when I have to, keep it clean, I don't wanna have to worry about assholes. I wanna worry about Eddie (Hotten?) and my gun." He wouldn't take the stripes. They said, "We'll court-martial you." So he said, Good! Put me in

a can. Put me in a brig. Put me anyplace. If I can't be the gunner, I wanna be in prison." He wouldn't take the stripes! I was the next survivor in line. By default I got it.

KP: And what battle was this? When did you get the stripes? Was it before Okinawa?

RW: No, it was on Okinawa where the rest of the squad got killed. ... We lost our gunner, oh God, you know my big Jewish buddy, oh God, I was along side him feeding the gun and he got, a sniper in a tree put a couple of rounds into him. Went in his back and came out his genitals, ripped his spine apart. I was feeding the gun, laying right along side of him. I missed him boy, good soldier. Excuse me. It's an actual statistic.

[Interruption]

KP: Yes, the 33 support people for every one up front.

RW: 33.

KP: So men in the unit resented the people who were behind the lines. I mean that is an understatement of a question often, but.

RW: Well, you know, when I came home and realized that, lost three years out of my life playing catch up in school, catch up economically, catch up, I was so bitter, you wouldn't recognize me. I haven't lost all of that bitterness or all that combativeness and all that feeling that I got fucked. But yet I wouldn't have, if someone said to me, "We'll give you 5 million dollars to excise those experiences from your mind," I wouldn't take it, I wouldn't take 50 million for having survived. It, it's an odd, odd thing. But it was very difficult for me to get back to civilian life. I mean, I saw all these guys already established and successful and on their way to family careers, and I'm no place. You know, when they discharge you, they give you a form "How you can use your military experience in civilian life," Okay? You know what mine said? "Maine guide or gun expert." (Laughs)

KP: Yes, which are not.

RW: Main guide or gun expert. Go head, take it from there.

KP: I guess I wanted to follow up on one thing you said about literally not having enough to eat on Okinawa. How did you find the supply situation on the island, in terms of all your needs from ammunition to food?

RW: When I was with the marines, we had no trouble because the marine kitchens were right there where we were, and we got fed. When I was under MacArthur, we starved. On Okinawa, it was a combination, they had Marines and Army, and I was under Army control on Okinawa. We had nothing. Nothing. Ammunition, only ammunition.

KP: In other words, what you are saying is that there were some benefits to being a marine.

RW: Holy Christ! If I had known as a kid that I was going to do the same fighting they were, I wouldn't have hesitated. You wanna know the truth? In combat, I would look for a dead marine and take his shirt off. I liked them better. They fit better, and I felt better in it 'cause when the fighting was over I had to [go] back into one of those stupid fatigue tops. But I would look ... for a marine, you know, a corpse, and take his shirt. Oh, I admired them, baby. My outfit was a good fighting outfit. It had a good reputation and in the Pacific there were some army outfits that broke and ran. Never the 77th. Twenty-seventh got that reputation. And the Americal, but the 77th had a well-deserved reputation for, you know, ... we got the job done. We got the job done. We had, well I had the best company commander in World War II. You know, and we had some terrific guys in the outfit. We had some terrific guys in the outfit.

KP: It sounds like you also had some very impressive medics, although they could not do anything for your jungle rot. How good were your medics?

RW: They were horrible. I'll show you one of my toes. I had a festered big toe. I don't remember where, I could hardly walk. I couldn't get a shoe on. And I finally got to an aid station and there was a young guy said he was a doctor, right? And he filled my foot with novocaine, excuse me.

[Interruption]

KP: You were saying about your foot being filled with novocaine.

RW: Yeah, you know I couldn't feel anything, but I had a sense he was cutting. He cut half my toe away. Did you ever hear of, it's pronounced ding he, but it's spelled D-E-N-G-U-E fever.

KP: I have heard of it, yes.

RW: It's a tropical fever, Okay? It's a five day fever. Its symptom is: it leaves you so weak that you can't even raise up an arm. Your mind is working and you're feverish and you get chills, but the overriding thing is you're totally weak. Well, I got dengue fever on one of the islands. Don't ask me which, and they actually took me to a field hospital on a stretcher. I couldn't walk, I couldn't do anything. They put me in a bed in a long tent, and the beds were laid end to end. There were some beds in the middle. There was guy on one end behind me. Every night he got half an erection and he peed, and he peed in a stream, and he was peeing on me every night. I could barely talk, you know? I kept telling [them], "This guy is peeing on me every night." And they said, "I know but we have no place to move you." That was their answer. Plus worse than that, Okay? I don't know who was guarding this field hospital, but it was far back from the lines. Every night there was bullets flying through the tent. We're above the ground. I'm not used to that. I'm used to bullets when I'm in a shallow, not really foxhole, we used to call it slit trenches. You didn't have time to dig a deep hole, ... just so you could get your body into it. You know, there's no protection against this, these assholes are firing at shadows. By the third day, I could walk. I just walked out of there. I found my outfit. I mean, it was terrible, terrible.

KP: You had had this experience with the chaplain. How often in other cases did you see a chaplain of any faith?

RW: That's the only time.

KP: That's the only time. Did any men from your unit ever go to services of any faith?

RW: No, I didn't, but there were in L company and I company, combined, we're in the same battalion and we were always along side of each other. In L company, there was a well-educated, religious Jew who would conduct services and guys, you know, in my circumstances, he got together the 10 men for a Shiva and he did it, so there was a semblance of it. You know, the other religions when we weren't actually fighting had actual services on Sunday morning which I didn't attend. But I never saw Jewish service that way.

KP: So you never had a rabbi come up?

RW: Or a Jewish chaplain, I guess that's a rabbi.

KP: Yes.

RW: No, I didn't. We had quite a number of Jews in my outfit.

KP: You had mentioned earlier that you did not like camping and you did not like snakes in particular. How long would you be on the field before you would get to a ship or some semblance of civilization?

RW: Only on a ship.

KP: Oh really?

RW: I was never in an R and R area. My occupation was not fun either, because I was in the jungles for two years, tropical jungles. They picked my outfit to go to Hokkaido, the northernmost of the Japanese islands, which was not bathed by the Japanese current. The climate is akin to that of Alaska. By October 15 of '45, the snow was up to my nose. I'm still in khakis. We had no winter clothes. Okay?

KP: And where had you come from?

RW: Well, here's what happened: We leave Cebu, we sail up to Hokkaido. The transportation fleet stops just outside the port. The decision is made to send one ship of vehicles to the docks. The port ... is Hakodate and the capital of Hokkaido is Sapporo which is about 150 miles north and west, so the plan calls for us to take over a Japanese army base in the city of Sapporo that's to be evacuated by Japanese and they had barracks there, extensively and mess halls and what not. It's an established Japanese army base. So the brain powers decide, there's a narrow gauge railway from the port to Sapporo, they decide to send five vehicles with a driver and a machine

gunner in each vehicle, ten men to see if the army base is vacated and secured. The way they selected the ten vehicles was, the top five vehicles in the center hole. My jeep was among them. So-

KP: You get this mission.

RW: I get to drive to Sapporo, and my platoon leader, who's a lieutenant, is going as my machine gunner. We line up the five vehicles, and we're told that the route to Sapporo will be lined with white ribbon. Just drive between the ribbons and every intersection will be secured by either a Japanese cop or somebody in the military armed only with a sword. We start this ride. The Japanese had instructed everybody along the route to paper over their windows. They didn't want anybody peeking, but we could see people behind curtains and every time we encountered one of these Japanese either military or cop, when we approached they turned they turned their backs. I thought it was a sign of disrespect. I learned later that that was to show, you know, ... it was a little unnerving.

KP: Was it funny seeing these windows papered over?

RW: Well, the overwhelming thing was you know there were only ten Americans on the whole island, so you know, if somebody decides to do something crazy, you're not gonna have any chance at all. I mean, it's ten Americans ... on Hokkaido. Finally the ribbon leads into the main entrance to the city. It's dark already, it's October, it's way up north, the days are short, it's pitch dark. One or two guys had flashlights, but mostly it was headlight beams. You know? And the thing was like a deserted city and no electricity. No lamppost, no lights in any buildings, no way to turn on a light. They had one radio powerful enough to report back to the port. I said, "Jesus, we don't know what's here. It's pitch dark. Wait until daylight and let's see what we can see." Course at the first crack of dawn, we went through the place and everything is deserted. Relatively clean, you know, broom clean, and deserted. There's no emissary there to greet us to say this is this, this is that, this is the other thing. Well then, the train ride took about three hours and they stared shortly after daylight, so I guess the first troops started to come in about maybe 11 o'clock in the morning, and then, you know, at least you saw comrades. It hadn't started to snow yet, but it was still bitter cold.

The way Japanese barracks were, they had no beds. All the barracks had a center path and they were two stories high, but there were pallets raised four inches off the main floor and then there was an upper deck with the same thing. ... They were just wooden pallets, there were no mattresses, ... just wooden pallets. And at one end of the building was a huge stove that was, man it stood ten or twelve feet. It had a big door where the fire was and the rest of it was like white insulation all around it. I mean, you needed an inferno to get any heat out of it. But it did have mess halls and some office buildings and stuff like that and that's where we operated out of.

We had no trouble with the Japanese, but MacArthur, that military and civilian genius, one of his first edicts was "We're gonna honor the Japanese Yen," which nobody believed would happen. And all of the Chinese prisoners dating back to '33, the Sino-Japanese War, were enslaved

laborers in the Hokkaido coal mines. He ordered them freed, and he ordered them to get backpay at the rate of six American pennies per day. Well, they dated back to 1933, they got a lot of money. They released them from the camps and these people immediately went into the towns and wanted to buy something with the money. They wanted good food, they wanted better clothing. The Japanese wouldn't sell them anything. In one instance, 50 or 60 of them picked up a store and started to carry it back to their camp. They lifted the building off of its foundation and started walking away with it. Wherever there was trouble with the former slaves, we had to go and quell it. With very small squads.

KP: How big could the incidents be? How many would you be confronting?

RW: Hundreds and hundreds of them.

KP: And you might be taking out twelve?

RW: Well, the first time I was sent on a mission like that was me and three guys and my jeep. I was the sergeant in command. First thing we had to do was find a Jap that could talk English. Then we had to find a Jap that could talk Chinese, so that we could communicate with them. In every one of these coal mining towns, there was one beautiful concrete building. That building housed the mine's officers and the manager's family. Everything else was pretty rustic. I decided to act like a conqueror. You know, when I could communicate with somebody, I ordered the manager out of his house and me and my men moved in there and then I operated through interpreters and I quelled it. And I demanded food. I demanded beverages and I set up a little government there. That was a lot more comfortable than where I staying, and I didn't have any bosses. You know, I kept getting calls on the radio. "Things under control?" "Yeah." "Well come on back." I was like, "Well, I can't leave yet." ...

KP: How long were you in Japan?

RW: I beg your pardon?

KP: How long were you in Japan? How long did you stay in Japan in the occupation?

RW: Okay. From October 15 until just around Christmas. Anyway, here's what happened. When I got back to the base, I found that my company commander ... had gone back to the states and we had a new guy from the states that had never been overseas before. And he was a, I'm searching for a word, a guy that loves the military and its puffery and its uniforms, there's a single word that describes him. Minuet? No.

KP: Marionette.

RW: Marionette, yeah. He was arch-typical marionette. Didn't know anything, wanted to throw his authority around. And he had taken over while I was away, and he's getting the reports back on how the other episodes went. Mine was trouble free and the others had to get off a couple of shots and break a couple of heads, and they had more trouble than I did. So instinctively, if I was

around, no matter whether it was my turn or not, he was sending me. Well, I know how easy it is for hordes to overrun three or four guys, I mean, I don't care what kind of weapons you have. I didn't want to get killed after the war is over or even hurt. So I went into him. I said, "I'm not privy to all the orders you get, but I have a strong inkling ... that combat troops are no longer supposed to [be] assigned [to] any hazardous duty." And I said, "If there isn't such an order, there should be. And I am now going to operate under the assumption that there is such an order and that you're sending me on these hazardous missions is a violation, direct violation, of standing orders. I won't go any more." He says to me, "How long have you been in this Army?" And I said, "Too." He said, "Two what?" I said, "Too fucking long. I should be home and out. I got a lot of points and I don't have to put up with stateside bullshit. You don't know what we been through. You can't imagine it and you're jealous. And you're trying to get me hurt and I'm not going let you do that." He said, "I'm gonna court-martial you. You're under arrest." I said, "Fine. I'd rather be in a brig than do what you're having me do." He summoned a couple of guys. "March him to the brig."

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

KP: So you were arrested and marched down?

RW: Yeah, he put me under arrest and he's marching me to the brig. Coming down the street in the opposite direction is a staff car with a general's flag on it, the inspector general's team headed by now Brigadier General Steven Hamilton, formerly Colonel Hamilton, regimental commander of the 307th Infantry, who had occasion to interview me when we were undermanned and relieved an outfit on Okinawa that was bigger than us and reduced to twelve men. He personally interviewed all twelve men, and he remembered my face and my name. He orders his driver to stop. He jumps out of the back. He says, "Winter, what are they doing to you?" I said, "General, thanks God for seeing you." I tell him the story. He says to my two guards, "Get out of here. Get in my car with me. Tell my driver how to get to your company commander." I direct him. He says, "Lead me to him." He walks in, this guy leaps to attention. He says, "Continue to stand at attention, you son of a bitch. I'm gonna tell you what Sergeant Winter just told me. Just confirm or deny it." "That's true." He says, "Take your captain bars off, you're under arrest. Sergeant, take him to the last car of my caravan. Keep him under arrest, he's going back to headquarters with me. He's under courts martial. Who's the executive officer of this company?" Top sergeant goes out and brings him in, he says, "You're acting C.O. Your captain's out of here." He says, "Are you aware of the order that combat veterans get no hazardous duties?" He says, "Yes, sir." "Don't let me hear of you violating that order, or you'll find out what happened to your captain. You'll get the same. Do you understand that?" "Yes, sir," he says. "Winter draws no more duty of any kind. He doesn't stand formations. He just waits here and does what he wants with a permanent pass to go off base until his orders come to go home or until he gets that I R and R." They had a fabulous resort on a lip of a volcano that was in the movie, Bridges of (Tokoree?). But there were only a few goes that could go there. I'm sure when he got back, I was next guy from the company to go there. And I was there when my orders came to go home. He must have speeded them up.

KP: So in other words, you were right to challenge this captain. You were really going on gut instinct that there had been this order issued.

RW: The war was over. They already did to me everything that they could do to me. I go to the brig, [then] I go to the brig. It was better than what I was doing. By that point, I didn't give shit. But I made up my mind that I wasn't on Earth to survive the war and get killed in some non-combat situation. That would have been-

KP: Yes.

RW: I couldn't take that irony. I'd rather be in jail than die after the war was over having been through what I was through. And to take these kinds of order from a total greenhorn. You know, a rank nothing!

KP: No, go on.

RW: No, I, I'm done with that episode.

KP: You had spent two years killing Japanese and the Japanese were trying to kill you. What was it like to be occupying them? I mean, you had mentioned that you had quelled this unrest between the Chinese slave laborers, but were there were there any mixed emotions.

RW: I had such a low opinion of Japanese and such a hatred for them that I found it difficult being civil to them. I witnessed too many atrocities. For example, there were frequent times when our attacks failed and we couldn't complete it by nightfall. We had to withdraw. One of their standard tactics was to torture the wounded, make them scream so that we would attack at night when they were safe in their holes, and we would listen to our buddies screaming, and this was almost every night. And when we finally got up there, we would see them dismembered, disfigured. One of their favorite things was to cut off their penises and put it in their mouths and leave them there. That was one of their favorite things.

You know, the other thing was, we knew how little they thought about life, I mean, their Kamikaze, you know. We were always resisting Kamikaze attacks. They'd run right into the mouth of a machine gun, and another guy behind him, and another guy behind him. I mean, they wanted to die in battle. How do you cope with that? These bastards wanna die and I'm willing to accommodate them, but I'm not willing to die. I want to live to fight on and get old. The total different approach to war.

KP: Did you have any gung ho guys in the unit who in a sense were foolishly gung ho or did that very quickly fade.

RW: Yeah. Yeah. There were a lot of kids in the marines that I knew were underage and walked around like Edgar Rickman. They were good jungle fighters. ... Your machine gun, even a light machine gun, is a principle weapon and it falls on more. So you usually use a machine gun to anchor a position. The first time I actually saw marines fighting was on Guam when we

linked up our right flank with their left flank and they had a machine gun there too. And there were three young kids in the hole. We shook and hands and said, "Now listen, we been here for a couple of nights. I hope you guys aren't hair triggered." We says, "Because with a machine gun, if you give your position away, you become a major target." We said, "Now they send a patrol down this gully between us every night." We said, "It's a bright moon, you'll see them. They come back the same way. Don't fire when they're coming down. Let them do their reconnoitering or whatever they do. They'll be back." Says, "Don't fire until we do. And then you'll see what we're shooting at. Then you can shoot. And if you can, use your sidearm. Don't open up the machine gun, because then the mortar guys on the hill will spot the machine gun." And they says to me, so we all stayed up and stood watch on the gun instead of taking turns that night. Alright. Sure enough, we see the first guy pop his head up over the edge like this, then another, then another, then another. You know they're really crouching and moving stealthily and they had to go down the gully between us. And then they went out of sight. And then we saw what we wanted to see, we started to stand watch as we got one guy on the gun at a time. What woke me up, I heard the marines firing. One shot at a time, sidearms, not the machine gun, right. And as they came up the ridge, we picked them all off with sidearms. The next morning, we says, "Thank God you listened, see how nice it worked." He says, "Beautiful buddy, that's the way we do it from now on. You're right." They were good. They were really good. They weren't taking prisoners and we weren't taking prisoners. We saw what they did.

KP: Did any Japanese try to surrender?

RW: I never saw anybody walk up and with a flag. ...

KP: Yes, no one-

RW: ... But sometimes you overwhelmed them and they'd, surprise, drop their weapon, and then they couldn't move. You had a prisoner, not that he wanted to surrender. He was on the ground, you were over him with a weapon. Most of the times, you didn't think twice, you just finished him off, you know? What were you gonna do with them anyway? We had no place to take them back, so-

KP: Did you ever get orders from higher up to take prisoners for specific purpose?

RW: It was more than an order, it was a request with a prize. Three days in the rear and a case of beer for every prisoner. Here again, I was on the right flank, we were hooked up with marines on the left flank and we advanced together and one guy in our outfit wanted a case of beer and the three days in the rear. He had a guy by the neck and a gun in his back and he's walking down, and there was a young marine without a shirt, right? Around his waist he had a sash, he had a beautiful samurai sword hanging like they wear them. And the prisoner must've recognized the samurai sword, some high ranking whatever, right? When he saw the marine, he broke away from his captor, started running toward the marine. The marine smiled, he took out the samurai sword, the Jap kept running, and he put the samurai sword right through his chest. That was the end of the prisoner. The guy in my outfit said, "You son of a bitch, you lost me a

case of beer and three days in the rear." He says, "Fuck you. That's it, he's dead." That was that.

KP: The other guy never got his case of beer and three days in the rear?

RW: He had no prisoner to deliver! I don't know what we would've done with him if we didn't. You know, ... we didn't know who was behind us. The whole world knew we were trying to take this objective, we're trying to take that objective. ... The grunt up there doesn't know anything. It's them or you. It's one on one. ... It's not a war, it's man to man combat. You know, we're totally disconnected from the world.

KP: It sounds like you got very close to the enemy.

RW: I clanged helmets with one! Close, I mean, there were times we had to stop firing to push bodies back so that our gun could shoot over the corpses. I mean, it was hand to hand, I mean, you smelled them, you saw their faces, their eyes. You stepped over them. There was one really, really funny incident. My platoon leader didn't like me, the lieutenant. He just didn't like me. He was from the Midwest and he had a family and he resented, he was 32 years old, he had two kids and a wife, he had been a school teacher. He particularly disliked me.

KP: And you do not know why?

RW: Well, I do know why. My first night of combat was on Guam. We were in front of the long toms. And every time they went off, there was a big flash, and it created shadows from the scrub brush and the little trees and the bushes and it looked like somebody was moving and everybody was trigger happy. They were shooting at shadow. It was the first night in combat. And he broke down and he started to cry. First thing was he directed everybody where to dig in, and by the time it got dark, he didn't have a hole. He felt my hole was wide enough, and he said, "Winter, ... I'm gonna share your hole with you tonight." And all through the night in the flashes of the long toms, ... he had his wallet out, he was showing me pictures of his wife and children and you know, I'll never see them again, and he was crying. He was 32, I was 19. And I was commiserating with him, you know. I wanted to see my family again too, but I didn't have any children and I felt for the guy. He thought I was going to relate that and embarrass him in front of the men. I never did, but he wanted me dead. He was fearful that I would reveal his moment of weakness and it terrified him, and he wanted me silenced. And I recognized that and I had no defense to it. I tried, I said to him, "I know why you're doing this to me. I'll never tell." "It has nothing to do with it! Get back here."
...

KP: Did the lieutenant make it through the war?

RW: No. And it got worse and worse and worse. We were on Okinawa. And we first relieved the outfit on top of a ridge. We couldn't move off that ridge. We didn't own it. We shared it with the Japanese. And the machine gun squad that we replaced had built an emplacement. You couldn't dig up there; it was all rock. And I mean rock. There was no soil, rock! And they had

taken rocks and made a pile to put their machine gun in it, but not near the forward edge of the ridge. It was well back. And to the left of that was an enormous boulder. You couldn't see behind it, you couldn't see in front of it, but you could see ... that the boulder was not on the edge of the ridge. When we relieved the guys, they said, "Don't get in front of that boulder. They got a machine squad right on the other side of that boulder. You stick your nose out, they'll blow it off." So this lieutenant come up. He looked around my position. After the other guys are gone he said, "Move your gun up to the front of the ridge." I wasn't going to tell him what the other guys told me. He wouldn't have believed it. He'd have made me go there. He did worse than that to me. Much worse. I don't know how I survived some of the spots he put me in. I said to him, "I don't know where you mean." "God damn it! Are you blind? I mean over here!" And he walked out from behind the boulder, they cut him in half, and fell off the ridge. It would've been me. But he did worse than that to me.

KP: When you say he put you in tough spots, what kind of tough spots would he put you in?

RW: Oooh, we were on Ie Shima, which was the deadliest and worst combat I ever saw. Ie Shima was like an inverted ice-cream cone. From the top of the mountain there, you could hit any exposed person with a rifle. I mean, unbelievable! If you weren't in the bush or the brush, or behind a building, they'd pick you off one by one. Just before nightfall, he wanted a machine gun out in front of the line of riflemen, in a field. We saw bullets hitting there every time somebody stuck a nose out. ... I couldn't live long enough to put the gun where he wanted it. There was a marine tank and a crew sitting there with the engine off. They could hear what he was telling me. They knew what I knew. They said to me, "Soldier, we'll get you out there, don't fight with him." "How you gonna get me out this?" "Roll the tank out there. We'll wait till you dig your hole. We'll back back. We'll make sure that you got a good deep hole." And that's what they did. The top of the mountain is here, they rolled their tank out here. They left it stationary there. I got my hole done, I got my gun in place. And they said, "You okay now?" I said, "Yeah." The hole was deep enough. I mean it was more than a slit trench, but I could get like this with my knees, if I wanted to, you know, I could peer over the edge. Every time I did a shot went by. Then the tank rolled back.

KP: So those marines saved your life?

RW: There's no question about it!

KP: I mean, they were basically doing you a favor. They did not have to do this.

RW: They're not the only marines that, it was strictly a favor. Nobody asked, no officer told them to do it. They knew that this guy wanted to get me killed. ... They listened and they knew. And that's, you know, I had this in my mind, there was not a, every time when we were really in thick jungle, you lose contact with the squad on your right and the squad on your left. (----------?) would say, "Put your ammo. I want you to be the scout. Tell me how far they are on the right." That made me a straggler. I was going through jungle looking for my troops. I didn't know I was going to find my troops or the Japs. It was invariable. I was ... always the guide. He

made me do it. I mean, no doubt in my mind he was trying to get me killed. Nobody else had to do that, only me.

KP: Go ahead.

RW: No, I'm done.

KP: You mentioned that this lieutenant started crying the first night in combat. How many of the guys just could not take it emotionally? Was that a common reaction? Or did people just get so inured?

RW: Not that many. Amazing. Amazing, the strength and fortitude of people under that kind of stress. You get, I mean, it's hard to describe, because you don't really get callous to it, but it becomes a way of life. You know, and the inner strength that, it's that ball of guts, I mean ... it's incredible.

KP: It sounds like you had a lot of time to reflect on what that major had said.

RW: 50 years.

KP: Yes.

RW: And it never leaves you. Like sometimes I'll react a certain way and, "I'm sorry it's the war." The war was 50 years ago. Yeah, not the one you fought. The one I fought wasn't 50 years ago.

KP: When you came home, did you, for example, have a hard time sleeping?

RW: Ahhh, that's, it's out of print now, but there's a book called That Winter. I had it and I loaned it to somebody, I lost it. Somebody in a bookstore in New York found another one and gave it to me, and I lost that. You gotta read that book. It's a book about three guys like me. I, first of all, I could not acclimatize to civilian life. I hadn't had a roof over my head in three years, only when I was on a ship. And then the bitterness of my lifelong friends' experiences, two of them were M.D.s. Everybody went to college, everybody was out in graduate school or further. And I could be a maine guide or an armorer, you know? Incredibly, one of the needs was the lack of excitement. I mean, I would look for dangerous things to do. I drank heavily! Heavily! And I did anything to do that was dangerous. I would go to the toughest sections of New York. One night a gun fight erupted in night club in Greenwich Village. As I was going to that club, I climbed up on steps to watch it. I was sad when the cops got there and broke it up. Other friends with me were under cars. And I though it was the greatest thing I saw since the war ended, you know?

KP: It is a strange question to ask, but had even thought of going back into the army?

RW: Jesus, this you gotta get on tape. The uncle I eventually practiced law with saw that I had become a drunk and a wild man. Uncontrollable, I mean, I was fearless, I was adventuresome, I was outrageous. I was profane. I had no direction, no ambition, I was just overwhelmed with bitterness and full of hate and envy. Every bad emotion affected me. This uncle let me go from January until May. Then he called me into his office. And, he said to me, "You had a lot to get out of your system." He said, "Time to resume your education." I said, "I can't argue with what you say, but I can't picture myself sitting in a classroom. It's captivity and ... I have to have freedom now. I can't. The idea of sitting in a classroom quietly is enough for me to break out in a sweat. I cannot do it. I don't know whether I'll ever be able to, but I'm not ready." He said to me, "I understand that." He said, "But Rutgers is still on trimester." He said, "It occurred to me you got about a year and a third, maybe even a year and two thirds. If you take two majors in the summer, two courses, five days a week, three hours a day. You've got the G.I. Bill. I don't want you to live on that," he said. "I'm gonna make you a present of the first 1946 automobile I can get my hands on. And I'm gonna supplement the government allowance handsomely so that you can play as hard as you want, but try to get these two courses under your belt. If you can't handle it, drop out. But make the effort for me, not for yourself, for me." And he named the allowance. He said, "Go to Rutgers. See if you can get into the two courses you need. You might be able to save that whole sophomore year and start in the fall as a junior. Talk to somebody." And then he said, "I've got the car I promised you. Let's go down and pick it up." It was a '46 DeSoto Club Coupe. Couldn't buy it for love or money. It brought me to the verge of tears. He gave me the registration, he gave me the keys, filled the gas tank. I didn't have two dollars in my pocket to put gas in it. And I drove the car to Rutgers, and again God was watching over me. Who interviewed me to reenter, but Mason Gross.

KP: Ah, yes.

RW: Velvet glove, he was a priest, a rabbi, an emissary from God, a family member, a friend, a counselor, an advisor, a psychologist, a philosopher, like he had nothing else in the world to do, but get me settled comfortably. I told him my problems. I still had a half a year of ROTC to make up. I said to him, "Can I graduate without this half a year of ROTC. 'Cause I will not take it." He said, "Well, no you can't, we're a land grant college." Said to me, "However," he said, "You had the ultimate infantry experience." He says, "The commandant is not an idiot." He said, "I'm gonna make an appointment for you. Have a talk with him and see, if based on your war record, he doesn't give you the one semester credit you need." He made an appointment for me. I had the foresight to stick in the trunk of my car a Japanese battle flag. I only took two souvenirs home. We didn't carry souvenirs openly, because if you got captured, they tortured you worse than hell with a souvenir on you. And I felt that was a bad [idea to keep on me]. But I had two. I had a little German Mauzer 25 automatic that I took from a Japanese officer, and I had this battle flag that was pretty beat up. I don't know what intuitive presence I had to take that battle flag, but I met the colonel. He gave me very nice greeting. He said to me, first question out of his mouth, "Are you in the reserves?" And I says, "No, colonel." "May I ask why?" I said, "Fair question." I said, "I hate the Army with a passion and my war experience is not pleasant. And I'm here to be forgiven for one semester of ROTC, because I despise it so thoroughly. I can't lie to you." He said, "I'm not familiar with you war record. Would you tell me what it is?" I told him. He was spellbound. He leaned forward and he said to me, "Did you

bring home any souvenirs?" And I said, "Like what?" He says, "I collect war souvenirs and I don't have a battle flag." I said, "Don't go away. Don't go away, it'll take me a minute to get to my car." Right? I went out to the car. It was all rumpled. I folded it nice and I said, "Please, honor me with adding this to your collection." "I can't thank you enough. You have no problem." He pulled out the form. (Laughter)

The next episode down the ramp is: my first class is some kind of history class. It's summertime. There's a young professor from the Midwest. I'm sitting in the chair, full of rebellion and hatred. First thing we did is he filled out a seating chart. And he says, "I'm gonna ask someone in the class a question." Goes over the chart, puts his finger on a seat and he said, "Where's Mr. Winter? Mr. Winter would you stand up?" "Yes, what can I do for you?" He said, "I'm gonna pose a question to you. I would like your answer." He poses a question. It's ambiguous. If I answer one way he'll ridicule me, if I answer the other way, he'll ridicule me. And I looked at him and I said, "I'm gonna tell you something. I don't know where you taught or how long you been teaching, but if you think that you're gonna offer me up to this class as an object of ridicule, you are fucking nuts. And right now, I'm gonna kick the shit out of you!" And I went for him. He said, "Please, please, please." He was a big guy, he started to cower. He says, "You taught me something. That's a terrible kind of object lesson. That's exactly what I was gonna do. But I didn't realize that it was at the cost of embarrassing a student. I'll never do it again. Please sit down." I said, "If you learned your lesson, all right." I sat down. The class was paralyzed. I would've taken his head off and walked out of and that would've been the end of my education. But that's exactly what he would've done. He was gonna ... create an object lesson by showing that someone hadn't analyzed a thing and ... at the embarrassment of one student, he would've taught the others. I wasn't going to be-

KP: Could you imagine doing that if you were in 1941?

RW: Yes.

KP: You can still imagine?

RW: Yes. It never left me. I paid too big a price for what I'm enjoying here to have some civilian asshole take it away from me. I'll still defend it to this day. That will never leave me. That's part of me now. The answer is yes, a loud, emphatic yes! I've done it. I can't get rid of that. I paid a hell of price to be here in this pleasant environment. And I'll defend it.

KP: You were back in college and there were veterans with you, but there were also kids who were eighteen, like you had been a few years earlier. What was that whole experience like? I mean you told us this story of keeping this one class spellbound.

RW: That's really funny. The kids were mostly awestruck by, certainly by combat veterans such as myself, got pilots, or a guy was on a warship, a naval guy that saw some naval battles, or ... There were also bullshitters that saw nothing, but claimed they did. The kids were in awe of us. Most of them. The summer I went to school, Doctor Gross got me a room in Ford Hall. The Phi Ep house was closed and they lost the house, it now became an administration [building]. They

have another house someplace. And I didn't like dorm life. So I went back to the fraternity, and I said, "I want a room." They said, "We don't have any." I said, "Kick somebody out. I'm a returning veteran. I don't want to have to report you to administration, don't wanna pull rank. You do the right thing. I'm a returning veteran. I want a room." President of the house was a pretty sharp and decent guy. He says, "Wait, wait, wait." He says, "The attic is habitable and it's heated, and you'll be away from the young kids. You might like it. And we'll charge you a fraction of what a room costs. Come up with me and take a look at it." I went upstairs, on the third or fourth floor, I don't remember, big open space, you could see the roof beams, but heat rises and it wasn't dusty and there was no debris up there and it had floors like this. They were not finished. A lot better than what I was used to. And I said, "This is great, but I want it all for myself. If I'm gonna share it with someone, I'll pick who I share it with. You don't send anyone else up here with me." And he charged me like ten or fifteen dollars a month or something. So I got some old furniture, and I ran some wires around, had a desk up there, the door to it, said, "private, no admittance," I don't wanna be bothered by anyone. I had problems. Not mental problems. But I had a lot of bitterness in me. And then one of my pre-war buddies come back to the house looking for space. There was a big warm reunion, they had no room for him, I said, "Hey, take a look at my attic. You want come upstairs, you'll live there for nothing." And then another one came back, and eventually three of us shared that space up there, but they were pre-war buddies. And it became the most enviable spot on the Rutgers campus. We had bullshit sessions up there. There was a veterans' hang out up there. There was always whiskey and beer up there. There was women up there. There was a lot of storytelling up there. And an invitation to that attic became a valuable asset.

One other interesting thing. Unbeknownst to me, the New Jersey ping pong champ was a kid from Newark that was living in a house. But I didn't know he was the New Jersey champ. But I was pretty good before the war. One of these kids thought he found a way to make some easy money. He said, "Hey, we heard you were pretty good in ping pong." Said, "Well, years ago I used to be." "Well, we got somebody we'd like you play for a bet." I hadn't seen a ping pong ball table or paddle in three and a half years. So I said, "What do you mean, a bet? Five dollars? Ten dollars?" I had about a hundred and ten dollars in my pocket. It was the beginning of the semester. And I said, "Jeez, that's not a bet. A bet is a hundred dollars. Wanna bet a hundred dollars, I'll play him." "A hundred dollars? Where am I gonna get a hundred dollars?" I said, "How many members are in the house that think this kid is great? Each of you put up two, three, five dollars, get up a hundred dollars and I'll play him." Half hour later he comes to me, "Okay, we got a hundred dollars." I got down to Student Union. In the old Phi Ep house we had a ping pong table. This one didn't have one, Student Union did. Well, I'm from Perth Amboy. People try to hustle me, I know how to hustle. Why did I make the bet so big? There was no kid in that house that could afford to lose a hundred dollars, especially with 25 or 20 kids rooting for him. He could be the best in the world. The pressure would get to him. All I had to do was to get the ball over the net, and I knew it. I knew I could get the ball over the net. This young kid was in paralysis; he couldn't move his arm. All I did was get the ball over the net, and he could hardly move to get it. The first game was easy, but ... I didn't know at that time he was state champ, but I knew he was a ping pong player. I said, "Gimme the money." They said, "Well, we want a return match." I said, "I can see the kid is good. You wanna get your hundred back and go home, don't you? I'm not gonna let you do that." I said, "The next game is $200." "Two

hundred dollars?" "That's right, $200." They reach in their pockets a little deeper, they come up with 200 bucks. By this time I had hit a couple of balls. It's like riding a bicycle. I wasn't as sharp as I was in 1941, but I could hit a ball. The next game he got a few more points, but I took more chances too, and I could see I could still hit a ball. Now I got 300 bucks, they got enough that day.

KP: And you won 300 when 300 was a lot of money.

RW: 1946-that was a ton of money!

KP: And you can really use it.

RW: That was a ton of money! And remember, I was getting an enhanced allowance from an uncle that became wealthy during the war which his conscience was, while I was over there getting my ass shot off, my family became comfortable. They went from the depths of the Depression to comfortable-

KP: He recognized it.

RW: Oh everybody recognized it! I mean-

KP: But you must have been shocked because you left this family really when this family was not doing that well and then to come back and find everyone prosperous.

RW: Well, they all said that to me. They said, "Roland we feel that this money came from your blood. Whatever you want, we'll give you! I mean, our consciences. ... I mean, we died for you but we couldn't not accept the better economic times." Which you'd be god damn fools if you didn't, but the company went from not to rich, but very comfortable. And the whole family. You know if my Dad had lived, even he was making a good salary. Well anyway, until I got into law school, those same kids were chasing that $300. And I was making two or three hundred dollars a week playing ping pong. As he overcame the pressure of the size of the bet, I regained my skills. I was knocking his brains out. After, you know, he got rid of the paralysis! But I would never play for a small bet. If we played for nothing, he'd have beat me. But with the pressure of the bet, you know, the weight was too much for him. Like you take a good horse, and you put the lead in his bag, you break his back. But I got a kick out of these kids trying to hustle me. You know, they, I became a playboy, you know, first of all, I knocked off the two courses with straight ones and I realized that my maturity had made me academically passive. And then ... they let me take a full junior curriculum, which I aced and then another funny thing happened with this uncle. ... It's like a war story, you know. By that time, I was fat and happy in New Brunswick. I had gotten away from my family, I'm really living on my own, I have a lot of income and no job. I found school now very easy; I'm absorbing this stuff like sponge, and I can reproduce it on exams. I have a lot of spare time and I got money, I'm in New York every night. Had a lot of girlfriends and the only new '46 car on campus. You know-

KP: Life had gotten pretty good for you.

RW: Yeah, I mean, my fortunes have turned around. And ... one thing that the war taught me which is still tonight, when I crawled between two clean sheets, I thank God. Those two clean sheets, crispy clean laundered sheets have a significance for me that they can't have to any other human being. And I am always aware when I'm well off. If I am not in pain, nobody in my family is sick, and I got enough food and a pleasant environment to sleep in, and the car that I want, and an extra little bit of bucks for spending money, I'm grateful to God. I let Him know. I called to Him enough when I was hurting and in pain and in danger. I want to let Him know thank you. And I do that consistently. Every time I go to bed between clean sheets, I thank God. I was like a pig in shit now. I was really happy. And I'm not ... in a big ... hurry to go on to law school. I don't know how tough it is or anything else, so my uncle sent for me again. Drove into New Brunswick from his office, and says, "How you doing?" I said, "As happy as a lark." Said, "You go to New York a lot don't you?" "How do you know?" "'Cause you're seen in all the best places." He says, "You're not doing that on the allowance that Uncle Sam and I are giving you." I told him about the ping pong. He laughed. He said, "I'm happy for you. You've been out of the army now for a year and a half." He says, "About time you got serious and went to law school." I said, "Well," I said, "I'm only a junior I got another year to go." I said, "As a matter of fact I'm not going to take it at Rutgers." "Oh, no?" he said, "Where you going to go?" I said, "I read a lot about the University of Miami. I like the weather done there. I'm gonna take my senior year in Miami." He says, "Are you really?" He said, "You know, if you pass two tests, Rutgers will let you enter Rutgers Law School at the end of your junior year." ... I lied, I said, "I didn't know that." The only lie I ever told him. He said, "Well, you know it now." I said, "I'm not so sure you're right. I gotta get the applications. I gotta get the applications and see whether you're right about this." He said, "No, you don't need the applications." He said, "I sent them in for you. Here's the day of the government test and here's the day of the law school test. No more bullshit. You take these tests, you pass them, you start law school." Well, the government test was tougher than the law school test 'cause I fell under the G.I. Bill, but ... if you want to go to a graduate school, you gotta show them via a government test that you're educable at the graduate school level. So anyway, I took the tests and I nailed them and I started law school after my junior year and you know, I did very, very well in law school and the rest is history, you know.

KP: And you ended up practicing with your uncle.

RW: Oh yeah, I stayed with him until he died.

KP: And you in a sense went back to Perth Amboy?

RW: Well, his office was in Perth Amboy until I got involved in Edison politics. And I had no clientele at all in Perth Amboy and he had roots there, but he lived in Woodbridge. And I said to him, "I would like to stay with you, but I can't stay in Perth Amboy. My clients don't want to come to Perth Amboy to confer with me. You know we move to Edison or I gotta go on my own." So we did, we moved the whole office to Edison.

KP: Lew Bloom was actually the first person I interviewed and I am from Northwestern Jersey originally which is a lot different from here. One of things that has struck me about Central Jersey is the way it was developed and I asked Lew about it. In his interview, Lew talked about how he entered politics do deal with the problems created by bad developers.

RW: Well, ... we had a clean, honest, progressive administration and Lew was part of it. And we wouldn't tolerate graft. We did what was right. We made all the right moves. The education system stunk. The police department stunk. The fire department stunk. I mean, they really cleaned out the Aegean stables like Hercules did. They broad stiffed broom, oh yeah. When I look at Edison today, I want to vomit. And I was part of the administration for twenty years. Course the guy that I attribute to everything positive that happened to Edison was Congressman Dwyer who started as councilman, council president, mayor, state senator in charge of the Joint Appropriations Committee, and then Congress. Dwyer is the guy that brought Edison from a dump and brought it up to all its enviable levels. He did it single handily. Ylencics was no help. Ylencics was a throwback. But Dwyer was incredible. What he did for this town is immeasurable.

KP: Because Lew said he had gotten involved because developers were really doing poor jobs.

RW: There's only one other drawback. The infrastructure was no good, the education system was no good, the public safety department was no good. There was, I mean zoning was handled by graft, I mean-

KP: That was-

RW: It was a cesspool.

KP: I have noticed on Route 27 there some industrial buildings next older buildings, and residential structures. Is there a story behind it?

RW: Well, I mean, ... that's a whole different war. You know, I spent twenty years of my life working with Dwyer. Ten as municipal judge when the previous township attorney was one of the old guard that they tolerated, would give him no responsibility.

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

KP: You are probably going to win the award for the best interview, and I have had a lot of good interviews, like Lew Bloom's. I started off with Lew and I was spellbound by what he told me. Before starting this project, I had only worked with documents. After Lew's interview, I said, "Oral history's the way to go." But we were on Edison.

RW: Well, I don't want to go into all the wars or ramifications. My highlight with Edison was closing the (Kinbuck?) Dump. And we had nefarious people that were working against me that were township elected and employed officials. The health inspector was being bribed by the dump. Dorothy Drawl was trying ... end runs around me to preserve the dump while claiming to

be against it and I caught her at it. She is a former councilwoman in Edison. I mean, I had foes within and without, and ... it took me eight years to close the dump. All the other tribulations, we had bad cops we had to root out, we had-

KP: There was a clipping that Rutgers saved in Special Collections, the school used to collect articles about alumni, and you had received a speeding ticket.

RW: Oh, no, no. ...

KP: It was just-

RW: I couldn't drive around the block without being stopped, because we were cleaning out the police department.

KP: So you would be constantly harassed by the police?

RW: My children too! You know, ... what I had to do to ward them off was I started to rent cars so that I didn't have an identifiable license plate or a car they knew. I would change the car every week. ... Every car I had had a voice activated recording machine and he says, "We got you now you son of a bitch!" It would be right on tape. You know, until when they found out that all of this was being taped, then they laid off me. It was the tape recorder that broke their backs.

KP: When did you leave politics? What years were you involved in Edison politics?

RW: ... When Paterniti got beat, and when Dwyer went to Washington. I mean, he was sterling, everybody else was base metal. I mean, you know when you're dealing with jewelry, you don't want to deal with lumps of coal. ... I couldn't take it, you know. I was used to a dedicated, brilliant, productive, far sighted public official. And when I didn't have that to work with, you know, I didn't have the time or the temperament to deal with the dummies. I just said that's enough.

KP: You practiced law for much of your career.

RW: Except for the last three years of my career when I went on the bench.

KP: In addition to your township work, what type of legal work did you specialize in?

RW: Litigation. Difficult litigation. I don't know if you know what prerogative writs are. Not many lawyers get into it. Unique cases that don't fall into any category. All the time I was township attorney, I had all these far out problems ... far out problems. I loved them 'cause there really was no beaten path. It took astuteness and you had to project how to get your remedy and create your own road. I loved that. I loved the challenge in that.

KP: What was your favorite case to do? Do you have a favorite that your look back and say that it?

RW: Of all time? Or for the township?

KP: Of all time, and maybe if there's also one for the township, if there is one that fits?

RW: When I was in my third year of practice, three stores opened in Woodbridge, Routes 1 and 9, and they wanted to be open on Sunday. And ... immediately the merchants in Perth Amboy got together and lobbied the Woodbridge Council to pass a local ordinance that you can't be open on Sunday. There was no such thing as a shopping center in those days. These stores were the forerunners of that. They quickly learned that being on a highway and being open on Sunday, they did 60 percent of business on Sunday. Their operation was geared to that. If they couldn't be open on Sunday, they had to back on Main Street. Well, it was economic warfare. And we all knew that the ordinance had its roots on Main Street in Perth Amboy and Main Street in Woodbridge. And they came to my uncle. There were previous attacks on those blue law ordinances in New Jersey. None of them met with success. There were five key cases, all ruling that these blue law ordinances were constitutional. Coincidentally, there was an anti-business law in the state statutes which forbade doing business on Sunday, but there was no penalty clause.

KP: Just a prohibition with no enforcement?

RW: When these clients approached my uncle, he called in two highly reputable book lawyers that were basically appellate lawyers. And he had me sit in and he gave the three of us [this] assignment. Can we successfully challenge this ordinance? He gave us a week to provide him with an answer. He called us together at the end of the week, and he listened to the two of them first and they told him it was hopeless. Didn't ask me at first. I was sitting there. And the two of them said, "Lou, Roland researched this too. Let's hear from him." And he said, "You agree with them?" I said, "Not at all." I said, "If you give me this case and the tools I need, I can't lose it." And he started to laugh. The other two said, "Don't laugh. He's younger than we are. He's got broader imagination. We're slaves to precedent. Maybe we missed something."

KP: They must have missed something.

RW: "Maybe we missed something." At least let's hear him out." "Roland, why do you think you can win it?" I said, "The last, most recent, and most scholarly case, if you read it like I read it, said, `Given the proper facts, we're not too sure that this is totally constitutional.'" And my whole approach to the thing was [to] forget about the results of the other cases. Give the court the kind of facts. First of all, I had a marvelous constitutional law teacher, who became dean of the law school. He made me understand constitutional law and what discrimination really is--how to gauge it, how to identity it, and how to deal with it. He made me understand that. I had a grasp of that. I knew it! And I envisioned a factual presentation that I knew from my own knowledge of the area could be presented. I also was admitted under the revised constitution and the new rules and the new court set-up, and I had to learn the New Jersey rules from cover to cover. There were a lot of new, untested avenues of presentation in those rules that old lawyers would never resort to. The concept was new. And I saw a way to eliminate the necessity of a

factual trial and get the issue to a judge without a jury, and knock the defense back on its heels. My adversary was a young lawyer who is now the Chief Justice.

KP Chief Justice Wilentz.

RW: The Perth Amboy merchants went to Dave Wilentz to buy the ordinance from Woodbridge. He had them set up a slush fund to bribe the councilman in Woodbridge to pass the Sunday closing law. One of these jerks in Perth Amboy when they sent their contribution to Dave Wilentz, said, "I'm enclosing my check per you request, and thanks very much for the ordinance." Instead of me hiring professional private eyes and professional investigators, I called together the three clients. That was: Rockford Furniture, Two Guys from Harrison, and American Shops, a clothing store. I said to them, "Each of you has one or two really shrewd people that are making a good living with you. I need that kind of motivation from people to do the investigation I want. I don't want guys that say I charge 50 or 60 or 100 dollars an hour and I'll take pictures for you and I'll interview this and [that]. ... I don't want that. I want somebody whose livelihood depends upon it." And they each gave me one or two such people. I sat these lay people down, I assigned various tasks to them, and I amassed a series of affidavits, knowing what the Court wanted. And then I filed a motion for summary judgment based on a brief and affidavits. Robert Wilentz never filed one answering affidavit. So the factual record was one that I created from the first word to the last. I had exactly the factual record I needed. The rest is history. After we won in Woodbridge, I took the case in Union and Union County on Route 20, Route 22 and beat them there too. It was the first and only case that overthrew a Sunday closing law. The third time the issue came up, came up in Paramus. And the biggest store there was Masters. Their house counsel was Louie Nizer. You ever hear of Louie Nizer?

KP: Yes, the name sounds very familiar.

RW: Was probably the most famous lawyer to ever come out of New York. And the Paramus people wanted to retain us, but they wanted Louie Nizer to interview us, even though we had two victories under our belts. So my uncle and I went into his penthouse office on Park Avenue in New York, and he interviewed us. And he had a setup like Hitler. His desk was on a platform. He was a short man. Everybody else sat down a foot lower than he did, looking up to this midget. Okay? And here's what Louie Nizer said. Says, "You got two victories under your belt. That's precedent. Anybody can win these cases now. Your fee is exorbitant. We can get any lawyer to win it now." And I started to laugh. I said, "Mr. Nizer, before you jump to a conclusion, I know you're older and smarter than I am, and a hell of a lot more famous, but I wanna tell you something. Somebody less clever than me, would've won the case and given all the lawyers the key." I said, "I had two ways to win the case, and the key is here [in my head]. You don't rent it, you'll never find it." My uncle said, "You said enough." He said, "I want to talk to Mr. Nizer." He says, "You represent very successful merchants. They became millionaires by buying low and selling high. If you can get my product for less money, what are you wasting my time for?" He said, "Please have your butler get our coats." And he had a butler! He brought our coat, we walked out. They lost the case, but I come into the office one day. They gave the case to an Irish lawyer in Newark. I came in early and I see files on our reception counter. I recognize them. There's only one girl in the office. "What's with these

files?" She said, "Mr. Jacobson is loaning them to Mr. Clancy in Newark." I said, "Oh, yeah? Wait a minute." I took all the files. I took them to my office. I weeded out all the keys. I put them back on the counter. After they lost the case, the delegation came to me, they want me to sit with their appellate lawyer. They heard my speech about the key. "We'll give you $20,000 in cash. Tell him how to win the case." They had the cash with them. I said, "You know, you really deserved to be bilked, you really deserve to be bilked." I said, "I should take this $20,000, and tell him what I know, he still can't win it, because these cases aren't won on appeal. They're won on the trial level." They wouldn't understand that they didn't have the factual record I had. On that case, they deserved to lose. In any event, nobody ever retained us again, and no one ever won a Sunday case again. Paramus is still closed on Sunday.

KP: Yes, I know, I was just going to say that, because I have family that lives near there.

RW: That's the highlight of my career. Unfortunately, it came too early, but I had a giant killer mentality. I had a lawyer say to me one day, after I beat him in court, he said, "Can I talk to you?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Please tell me I'm wrong. Nothing you said during this trial." He was an old established, fine gentleman, "You gave me looks in this courtroom during the trial like you wanted me dead. Tell me I'm wrong." I said, "My God, I can't tell you that. You're right. I'll never be guilty of that again." I mean, I had the instincts of a killer. I really wanted him dead. It wasn't enough to win the case, I wanted him to be sprawled out dead.

KP: So when you went into court, you really went to battle?

RW: Unless you were really sophisticated, you wouldn't know it. I was never loud, I was never angry, but I was lethal. I mean lethal! I mean, I don't want to get into the legal war stories because you know, I fought cases like I fought the war. I left no room for anybody to wound me. You know, and I wouldn't take a pushing around. You couldn't get me off. I developed a track. You couldn't get me off that track. Even a hostile judge. That was it. And then the highlight of the municipal cases, of course, was the Kinbuc case, which I won single-handedly. Nobody helped me.

Another interesting thing is when the Urban League named Edison to try to get more low-cost housing in Edison. We were the only municipality because of Dwyer, to have a legitimate master plan that allowed for that. On the opening day, if you saw this courtroom, 21 municipalities, 21 defendants lawyers and three lawyers from the Urban League. Courtroom looked like an unkempt lecture hall. They couldn't jam in all the lawyer[s] and everything else. The first day was spent in trying to get logistics. How do you [do] it, this and that? ... I saw a trial go on for months while only a part-time attorney. If I had sit there everyday, I'd be bankrupt. I couldn't bill Edison to equal what I [was] losing, you know, taxpayer's wouldn't stand for it. So when Judge Fuhrman adjourned the Court, I asked if I could see him in chambers. He says, "Okay, what can I do for you?" I said, "Judge, I have unusual request." "Make it," he said. "My taxpayers can't afford to have me here every day. I only what to be here when they're talking about Edison." And I said, "I don't have to call any witnesses, because my master plan exceeds what they're looking for." He said, "You've never lied to me, but I find that difficult to accept." I said, "Judge, I'm still not lying to you. Don't take my word for it now. The day you want me in

here, I don't care if I'm on my feet in another Courtroom, I'll take voluntary dismissal. I'll be here, there'll be no interruption, but I can't sit here and let them rule on my case." He granted me that. Before he made his decision public, he called me in my office and said, "I want to see you." I went in and said, "What is it, judge?" He said, "When you told me that your master plan exceeded the formula that Powell wanted, I was very skeptical." He said, "It exceeds it by a lot," he says, "It's way above what my decision's gonna be but," he says, "I want a promise from you. I don't want to embarrass Powell and I don't want to embarrass the Urban League." He said, "Don't leak out what I just told you and after my decision don't make any public comments. Let them read the order and you remain silent." I said, "You got it." We were above compliance, and my taxpayers paid me for two days in Court. When the newspaper published the counsel fees on that case, some of them were over $150,000 for one case-

KP: It was a big case.

RW: Mine was a couple hundred dollars. But working for a guy like Dwyer-

KP: So Dwyer anticipated Mount Laurel?

RW: Absolutely. He's that brilliant.

KP: No, I knew someone that worked for him in Washington and had a lot of respect for him. He noted that Dywer also shunned the limelight. He really was a very modest man.

RW: He's that brilliant. He hired the best planner. Not for any political reason. They were from Princeton. They were the best. He hired them. They did the job right. There were other things, too including, take you years to hear it all.

KP: I'll have to come back another time with another student. But I guess, one or two questions.

RW: From now on do not let me ramble.

KP: That's fine. How did you meet your wife?

RW: My present wife?

KP: Yes, maybe your first wife and then your present wife. How soon after the war, because it sounds like you, it took you some time to settle down.

RW: My first wife, she was at NJC. And I was at Rutgers. And she traveled with the shore crowd. Warren Wilentz and I grew up together. His baby brother Robert and I weren't friendly, but Warren and I were friendly from kindergarten. And we remained friendly and close. Warren told me about this girl from the shore crowd that's going to NJC. Said to me, "Look her up." I gave her a call, I went out with her, and I fell madly in love. I mean, we had a terrible courtship, because she ... came from an affluent family and I had college to finish and law school to finish and a bar to pass, and she, you know, ... she wanted to get married. I, you know, I couldn't. And

we split up for a year, and then she called me. I though the relationship was over, because I couldn't support her. And then she called me, "You wanna get back together?" Eventually, I married her when I was in my third year of law school when my only income was the G.I. Bill and family support. I passed the bar and it worked out. Lucky, ... my idea of responsibility, marriage at that time was repugnant to her, but I was in love. Thinking with my emotion, not my rationale. ... She died very young. It was young 30's, and two little kids.

KP: How did you meet your present wife?

RW: Interesting story, too. My daughter was in college, and I had stopped playing tennis, because I found sailing. And I became an ardent sailor. I was racing twelve months a year, sailboat racing, long distance. I raced in Florida and Bahamian waters in the winter and I raced up here all summer. And I quit playing tennis. I was sailing all the time and my son got to be about, it was before he was in high school, and he wanted to play tennis and he knew that I used to play, so he asked me to play with him. And I said, "Well, it's hard for parent to teach an offspring, number one. Number two, at this stage I would be nothing but a ballboy, and I don't have the time or patience for that. If you take lessons, when you can get to hit a ball over the net, I will pick up a racket and play with you." He said, "Fair enough." One summer day, he said to me, "I think I'm good enough to hit with you now." "Well, let's go find out." And he had been playing with kids on the Metuchen courts, and there were two attractive girls playing tennis there. Much younger than I and my son knew them from the courts. "Hi, Carol, how are you?" "Hi, Todd, how are you?" "This is my father." "Hello." That's how I met her.

KP: Because of your son's tennis lessons.

RW: Right.

KP: Did any of your children serve in the military?

RW: No.

KP: I have a sense you probably did not want them to serve. This may be a leading question.

RW: My oldest child is a daughter who had mainly two objectives in life. One was to get straight A's in whatever school she was in, and the other was to marry a doctor. And she did both. She never worked. She did well in school. And she married a doctor. And she has three lovely children, and she has taught them her values, which are not my values. (laughs) My son is totally different. I couldn't begin to describe my son to you. Finally, my late wife's brother, who was a Horatio Alger story, became a trillionaire, started out as a lawyer and became a tremendous developer and businessman. Huge economic success, and among his holdings were a lot of motels. He eventually bought the Howard Johnson chain. One of the largest owners of rooms in the hotel industry. Recently that business has gone down, because a lot of new outfits came up and outpaced him. But he was still building a lot of motels in those days and he gave my son a job. And he became adept at that. And my ex-brother-in-law made sure that my son did nicely economically. That's what saved him, his uncle. His mother's brother.

DH: Did you have any other children?

RW: I beg your pardon?

DH: Did you have any other children?

RW: No, just the daughter and the son. And my daughter gave me three grandchildren. To my knowledge, my son never married, but I don't know. We're incommunicado. He remains a mystery to me.
RW: I was opposed to Vietnam from minute one.

KP: 1965.

RW: ... From the opening gun. You know, I mean, those poor kids that were there and the worst ignominy was when these kids came back after risking their lives for the country, they were spat on. At least when I came back, I was a hero, treated like one. Mason Gross rolled down a red velvet carpet for me. My family, the community, the pre-war kids in college that I found, the professors, you know, public officials, you know, you wore the lame duck, the ruptured duck, you were respected. You know, saved democracy. These poor kids came back from Vietnam like they were turds. It was worse than having sent them there in the first place. It destroyed me.

The worst thing of all was when Reagan gave medals indiscriminately to everybody in Grenada, then I took all my, wherever they were, and I hid them, I was going to go to Washington and throw them at him. He rendered all of my medals meaningless. Everybody on Grenada got decorated. Grenada!

KP: They even gave decorations from the Pentagon to people.

RW: They just threw them like, scattered them like seeds. ... I don't know.

KP: Did you ever go back to Japan?

RW: No, I never went back to Japan. I'll tell you what I did do. I took a Rutgers alumni trip to Tahiti. And from Tahiti, I went to a couple of small Society Islands that really weren't war-torn. And I walked into the jungle by myself. And I remember one night, I don't know what island it was, I was in a foxhole, and the moon rose over the island, and there were a couple of palm trees leaning this way, and they framed the moon. It was glinting off the sea, the Pacific, and there was no firing going on at the moment. It was quiet. You could hear the waves splashing on the beach. And I said to myself, "If only I could be here in other circumstances." You know, and the terror of where I was washed over me again, and I'm looking at this indescribable beauty, you know, and the conflict. ...

When I got to Tahiti, it was a tour that the Alumni Association put together, but I had friend that had been there, and told me what to look for, where to go. If I could have chosen the hotel and the room that they gave from all of Tahiti, it would have been the one they gave me. And the view from my balcony had these similar palm trees where the sun set. Instead of the moon rising, the sun set there. And I would sit on that balcony. I couldn't let anyone intrude on me, I mean the emotion was so overwhelming. Then I did one other thing. ... I had a close buddy of my outfit. I was a machine gunner, but he was a mortar man. You know, our platoon, we had three mortars and two light machine guns. That was one platoon, weapons platoon. The other three squads were rifle, rifle platoons. And there was this mortar man from Hackensack, New Jersey, a great soldier and a great friend. I absolutely adored this guy. He got out before I did and I met with him once and we had a good old drunken time. He went back. He's married with children. And then I went through a period where I wouldn't look at or touch a gun, and I wouldn't join any veteran's association. I just was trying to get all out of my head and out of my system, you know? I kept getting literature from the 77th Division Association which started in World War I. They had a building in New York and they have regular meetings and, they're having a reunion in Mickey Rooney's hotel in the Poconos. About 25 years after the war.

KP: So you initially did not join any veterans organizations?

RW: Not at that time, no. I wonder if there are any of the guys there. Let me go and see what one of these things is like. Sent in my money and I drove up there. First of all, I had a lump in my throat the whole weekend. Second of all, the guys that I knew were so unlike what I remembered. One of them was an alcoholic. The other one was like old and he had trouble getting around. He was like an old, old man. ... Jesus Christ, I couldn't wait to get out of there! ... It affected me for months, you know, I'll never do anything like that again. I'll never go anything like that again. And I didn't. But when I got into politics, you know, Dwyer said to me, "You're a veteran. Join. You know, send in your dues. You don't have to go to meetings." And then the VFW needed a lawyer, I represented them for nothing. So, I'll send in my dues. The 77th Division has sponsored some trips back. They had one to Guam. And they had one to Leyte. They were not inexpensive, but they were affordable and I thought about it, both of them. ... You know, now that I'm in the right mind, I might get the shakes, I don't know how I'm gonna react, you know.

KP: So the war is still something you think about?

RW: Let me tell you something. It hasn't left me. It hasn't diminished at all. 50 years ago.

KP: Yes.

RW: I can't forget things like that. I ...

KP: This is sort of a what if question, but how do you think your life would have been different if you had not served in the military?

RW: In every way. I wouldn't have been the lawyer I was. I wouldn't have the fighter I was. I wouldn't have been able to resist the whole police department like I did. I mean, it made me strong, and I learned about this ball of guts. I mean, there have been times in my life after the war, mentally and physically, I thought I was out of gas. I knew I wasn't. The odds seemed overwhelming. Then I realized they weren't. ... I would be nothing like I am. Nothing.

KP: I almost get the sense that you were ambivalent. You had these terrible experiences, but you really were toughened by them.

RW: Look, ... you hear philosophers and advisors and psychologists and philosophers, tell you things like, "You learn from your mistakes. Success teaches you nothing, failure teaches you everything. Adversity is the greatest teacher." When you read and haven't experienced it, you say, "This is bullshit!" When you've experienced it, you say to yourself, "How can you teach a baby that that flame would not burn without putting her little finger in the fire." You can't! The answer is you can't! So don't get frustrated! You gotta put your finger in the flame! What can I tell you?

KP: Have any novels or motion pictures come close to capturing your experiences?

RW: Okay. After the war that winter, and ... The Naked and the Dead is bullshit. Norman Mailer was never over there, has no taste for it, and ... it's all a novelist's imagination. If you want to know what infantry warfare in the Pacific was, "The Thin Red Line" by Jones.

KP: Comes closest to? What about motion pictures, are there any that, in your perspective, come even close to?

RW: Victory At Sea.

KP: Is still the closest?

RW: There are a couple of good ones, too, about European warfare where, they didn't have it any easier than we had it. In some ways what they went through was more difficult. In some ways, what we went through was more difficult, you know, when I told you many hours ago, and I'm talking you out of tape, that I didn't want to go to the Pacific, I also can't stand the cold. Like if I were in the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans wouldn't have had to kill me, I'd have froze to death. I can't stand cold. So when God denied me one of my wishes, he probably knew what was better for me than I did. At least, I didn't freeze to death till I got to Hokkaido- and then I wasn't fighting.

KP: Looking back on the war, you mentioned that you preferred Europe, but after you learned what the war in Europe was like, did you still feel that way?

RW: Well, for the most part, they didn't have as much modern living in the field. They could get in an abandoned building and make a fire, you know, or hide against a masonry wall or-

KP: Yes.

RW: You know, it was a sense of civilization. There were roads, there was electricity, there was motor vehicles, there were mechanized things, you know. We had our feet! You know, thank God for that one marine tank on Ie Shima. We didn't have many tanks.

KP: You mentioned Ernie Pyle died in the same battle that you almost got killed yourself. Do you kind of came close to capturing your experiences?

RW: Ernie Pyle got killed, because of our poor intelligence. You see, if you're going back, if you look at a map, Ie Shima was one of the Ryukyu Islands. Until we went ashore on Ie, we were taking one or two island every day from a floating Trans Div. I made two dozen amphibious assault in the Ryukyus alone. And they didn't know what was on Ie. Why we were taking all these little island was, we were taking them close enough to Okinawa so that long artillery pieces could give support fire on Okinawa. And we were doing that two weeks before the Okinawa invasion, and Ie was going to be another of these little islands. But in point of fact, it was an artillery school and they had the instructors, they had troops, they had supplies, and they had professional soldiers. And from the high ground you could see every place on Ie. I mean, you stick up your neck, you could get shot, I mean, any place on the island, unless you were behind a building. The other thing they did when we started to hit the other Ryukyus, they took artillery shells and aerial bombs and wired them as mines. They weren't going to waste anything. And when you set one of those off, Christ, it took out a hole as big as this house and everything around it. I mean, and this one mountain was steep. It was like an inverted ice cream cone. I mean, you're clawing your way up with one hand and trying to shoot with the other. They're shooting down your throat. When you got to the pinnacle, the whole pinnacle was only three times the size of this deck. I mean, as big as my back, smaller than my backyard! And that was it, and they were all congested up there. Oh boy, ... that's where we got our most casualties. That's why they never should have put us on the ridge on ... [Okinawa]. We got wiped out in Ie. That's where we got wiped out. Pyle thought it was going to be a routine. No one told him otherwise, you know.
KP: And.

RW: Every soldier, every mud soldier loved Ernie Pyle. The two people we loved was Bill Mauldin and Ernie Pyle. Everybody else is.

KP: Did you ever get to see a USO show?

RW: A what? ...

KP: A USO show. Bob Hope or any other show. Is there story there?

RW: I came close.

KP: But not quite?

RW: This is what happened. One of those shows was put on the island and the stage was being built. They needed some jeeps. It wasn't Bob Hope; it was lesser people, I mean, they had a chorus line and some singers and dancers, I don't know who. I didn't recognize their names, but anyway, they needed some jeeps. So we got L company jeep, "Roland, go pick up some of these people from the show. Take them to where they're building the stage." And they gave me two girls from the chorus line. And they were giddy and "How are you?" and friendly and everything else, and we weren't in any convoy or anything. I was driving them to the stage. And a mortar round landed about a hundred yards away. These girls shit themselves. They said, "Please take me back to the beach. They told us that this was a safe area." And they were shaking like leaves. I said, "Girls, don't worry about it. I'll take you right back to the beach." Well the other people in the show did the same thing. They said, "The hell with this, they told us [this place was safe.]

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

RW: ... They took them off the island! Put them right back on the ship.

KP: What about the Red Cross? Did you have any experiences, good or bad, with the Red Cross? The reason I ask is some people in CBI had really bad experiences, but other people had very positive memories of the Red Cross.

RW: What's the Red Cross?

KP: So you really had no contact with them?

RW: I don't know what they did.

KP: Yes.

RW: You want to hear something really humorous? This is really personal, I don't know if [I should tell you], but it's so humorous that, you know, an intelligent human being will understand where this comes from if they recognize my youth, my inexperience, and everything else. The people back home could not send an overseas serviceman a care package unless they had a request for it. Then they could send a five pound package. Well, I had two uncles and two aunts and a mother that were writing me frequently. Incidentally, my late law partner dictated his letters, and it's worth interrupting this story to tell you this. Because you might want to look at this someday-

KP: Oh I would.

RW: -In your archive. Listen to this. He wrote me never less than twice a week, sometimes three times a week. From the perspective of civilians, and he would read in the paper where I was, and when I came home, before he gave me the car, he said to me, "On your blood, I became wealthy during the war, and it's important to me to grant any wish that you want. I don't care what it is or what it costs. I need to do this. I'm not like the genie that can grant three wishes, but I want to grant your number one wish. Don't tell me what it is today. Tell me in a week." I

gave it a lot of thought. I said to him, "All your letters came to me typed. Did your secretary keep a copy?" He said, "Well, they were personal letters, I'll ask her." Called her in, she says, "Yeah, I have copies." I couldn't keep them and I said, "What I want is, I want these bound into beautiful volumes so I can have them forever. Your letters were marvelous."

KP: You welcomed getting them.

RW: That was what I wanted for my wish. He says, "That you got. What else do you want?" I said, "That's all I want. I'm home in one piece, got me a nice allowance. I don't know what I really want other than that right now." And he had it beautifully bound, these volumes, they're all letter size, these big, and there are three of them. I never counted the number of letters, but I can't read them. I tried. I read the one that he wrote to the chaplain about how my dad died, and how he would like me to receive the news. Every time I try to read that letter, I get overwhelmed. I let other people thumb through it, but you know, this is really a chronicle of a combat soldier's family back home and what's important, what's new and you know, to fill it with interesting things, I mean, I mean, that's really an insight that you can't, there's no way you can overvalue something like that, I mean. But anyway, they keep writing me letters, and, of course, when I'm in combat, I can't write a letter, and they think that I'm slothful and uncaring. And I can't communicate that. I mean, I have no pen, I have no paper-

KP: You can't go to a phone and call them.

RW: My heart goes out to you, but I can't let you know I'm all right. Request a package. We want to send you a package. So I says, "Okay, send me." What do you miss? Hell, I miss everything. So a different uncle, the insurance man, once sent me encased in a loaf of rye bread from a local bakery, was a can, in the can he put, people did home canning those days in tin, you know, not jars, he filled a tin with scotch whiskey. I hate scotch, number one, but, so the rye bread was all moldy and green, there's no, lucky you could see a piece of Winter on the package. There was string and everything else was moldy and rotten, rotten paper and everything fell apart you know. If you know, if it was a paper box of candy or, forget it! There was all bugs and worms and wet soggy, you know. (laughter) There was nothing they could send. I tried opening the can of whiskey. It turned from the tin; it was like poison. And then I started to think to myself, you know, you're not actually on the firing line everyday. And by this time, the females in the jungles weren't looking so bad, and my only sexual experience was in Honolulu, but every place I went, guys were bigger than me, and better looking than me, and ... more attractive to an attractive female. ... And I was overwhelmed by the competition. So I started to write home for specific items. I wanted cheap perfume from Woolworth's and scented talcum powder, nail polish, lipstick. They must've though I turned fruity. And I also requested needles and thread. All Woolworth five and dime items. You know, I guess they took a deep breath and said, you know, "If he wants it, we'll send it to him." This stuff started to come to me when I was on Cebu.

KP: It finally reached you.

RW: I wasn't in combat on Cebu, and the packages arrive in pretty good shape. I didn't tell anybody what I had. I hid it in my barracks bag, and I would go to a village, and go up to an attractive girl and say, "See this." The Woolworth's cosmetic brand name was Tangee. T-A-N-G-E-E. One of my ex-girlfriends got an ad out of old magazine. Did you ever see a Tangee ad?

KP: No.

RW: Shut that off for a minute.

[Interruption]

RW: Anyway I get this stuff and I started to barter it for sex. Well I can't tell, a couple of my buddies discovered the strength of this stuff. They all knew about Tangee, on every island they knew about Tangee, and in Japan. I still had pounds of it when I got to Japan. ... The word of it's value was so widespread that it'd taken an American Indian partner to keep me alive. One of us had to stay awake every minute of every hour. They would kill me for the stuff. I got to Japan. The geisha girls, they had no make up, I had make up. It was worth platinum. Not gold, platinum.

KP: And this was something that your parents had gotten in a Woolworth's store.

RW: It was worth platinum. When I left Japan, I gave it to this Indian from Oklahoma, Jimmy Lookadoo, who was my closet friend and protector.

KP: The one who taught you how to throw the knife?

RW: No, not the chief. Jimmy Lookadoo was in my squad. [shows advertisement] But this came out of an old Life magazine. She framed it and this used to be Woolworth's. I have a late aunt. I didn't save this. She saved this clipping. And I just, with scotch tape, I had it, what do you call it. This was in the paper on March 7, 1946.

KP: This says, "Roland A. Winter awarded a Bronze Star for heroism." This was in the Perth Amboy paper.

RW: Yeah, then it was called the Perth Amboy News.

KP: How did you get the Purple Heart?

RW: A human Kamikaze on Ie Shima was trying to get to a tank behind us. And he had a satchel charge taped to his body with an impact detonator. He was going to throw himself against the tank. He was coming up. I shot him, and I hit him in the detonator. ... He blew up, and a piece of his helmet pierced my shoulder. I could identify, I pulled it out of my shoulder, it was a piece of his steel helmet.

KP: This commendation for the Bronze Star, you won it for walking a hundred yards, through enemy fire obtain more ammunition. On the return trip they returned mortar fire, but he continued forward arriving in time to permit the machine guns to provide full support for the successful attack which followed. And that was on Okinawa on May 2, 1945.

RW: Well, anyway, when I got to Japan, this stuff was still valuable and it made me competitive.

KP: I am actually almost out of questions. You have won the award for best interview, which is a tough award to win at this point, because I have heard a number of great interviews.

RW: Let me tell you how valuable that Tangee stuff was.

KP: How much would money would people give for it?

RW: Well, let me first tell you about the needles. You wouldn't have no way of [knowing] what I'm telling you now. On the islands, the shacks were made out of woven (palm from?) and bamboo uprights, and the structural members were bamboo. You can make anything out of bamboo. The most valuable thing, natural resource on the globe. There's nothing you can't make out of bamboo. Weapons, drinking cups, beds, chairs, buildings, scaffolds, there's nothing you can't make out of bamboo. It's a remarkable material. And they would build these shacks with bamboo structures and woven (palm from?) shingles. And the only reason we would destroy them is, Japs could hide in them. So the typical thing was, you fire a couple of tracers into them, or if you were close enough, throw in preferably an incendiary grenade, and the thing would go up in one big flame, and then there was a rectangle of ashes. And invariably, the one thing that would remain standing in a burned down shack was a Singer sewing machine with a treadmill. The Singer sewing machine people didn't miss an island in the world. And everybody had a-

KP:: It must have first shocked you when you first saw them.

RW: I mean, it was remarkable. You'd see some strange things in there. One time, I found an old Chevrolet in one that, they built the shack around it, and a lot of times you'd find a Japanese tank in one .... that was manned. You know, you'd be firing at it, all of a sudden the shack is moving and the leaves fall off and here's tank coming at you. You know, so ... every shack was suspect, so we burned them all. But in the middle of ashes, in the middle would be the Singer sewing machine. ... [Now], by mistake in one package when I asked for needles, they sent me spools of thread and sewing machine needles. ... They picked up the wrong package of needles. And on one of the islands was a tailor. And I wanted a shirt trimmed a little bit. It didn't fit me. He was kind of hesitant and he said, "Because ... my needle is worn out. I don't have too much use of it." And he showed me the needle, it was all eye, there was no metal around it. He had been honing it on a stone, so it would go through the material. It was worn out. So I says, "Hey, no problem." I take out this package of needles, he say, "Oh, I buy. I buy. I buy." And I says, "How much you wanna give me?" I [don't] remember where we were talking, invasion currency or local currency or American dollars, I don't remember. But, he named an outrageous price. I

said, “Okay.” I handed him the package. He took one needle out and gave me the package back. He was negotiating for one needle. I said, Jesus the thing cost a dime in the United States, you know. ... Well I remember paying five American dollars to a sailor for an orange. You know, the economy, you don’t have it, it’s worth that, anyway.

We’re in Sapporo now, and I’m not pulling duty any more. And there was a geisha district beyond our encampment which was on limits, but it was ringed by a doughnut circle of off limits. If the MPs caught you going to it, they would stop you and bring you back. But they wouldn’t bother you, if you were in the district. There was a small geisha house-- nice building, well staffed, my favorite place, I liked the girls there, I liked the food there, I liked the ambiance there. We got in communication, Jimmy Lookadoo and I, we were selling souvenirs to recruits coming over from the states. They were coming over with stateside money, the Japanese wanted stateside money and a good friend of Jimmy Lookadoos was the only economist in our company, was taking yens out of dead Japs’ pockets. Everybody said, "You know, it won’t be any good when we got Japan." First thing that MacArthur said, "It was good." This guy had a barracks bag full of yen. Must’ve been a billion yen in there. Okay, so Jimmy’s friend and Jimmy and I bought a geisha house. Lock stock and barrel. The personnel, the building, I didn’t need any deeds or anything, we just took it over. The staff ran it and we took the profits from it. And we were bartering for girls with, I mean, we were getting geisha girls at the other houses 'cause you compete with, you know. When I finally went home, I just gave it to the two Indians, and for all I know, they’re still there. Successful hotel operators in Sapporo, Japan. I mean it was. (laughter) ... Yeah, I did it. You know, it was wonderful. The Japs at the end of the war were still selling their daughters into geishadom and we bought them. You know, just like, unbelievable.

You know, another interesting thing, ... this Indian Jimmy Lookadoo, he had a sixth, maybe a seventh, and an eighth and ninth ... sense. We were walking in Sapporo one day and we were passing what I thought was a continuation of a wall. He stopped. He went like this, [he] wasn’t very talkative. He took out a knife and it was paper painted to look like masonry and he pulled all the paper down and there was an automobile garage there. And in the garage, there was another door. He tried the door. It was locked. And he kicked it in. And he walked inside, it was pretty dark, but there was light now entering from the, there was some Japs hiding in the corner. And he made them get out and made them turn on the lights. In the middle of the garage was a 1937 brown Chevrolet four-door sedan with a charcoal burner welded on the rear bumper and they started the car like Tulin started his Model A. Start it with gasoline, immediately switch over to the fumes from the charcoal fire which came in a big fabric hose over the top of the car from the charcoal stove through a big hole in the hood and then a small hose to the carburetor. It ran on charcoal fumes. The engine developed very little power, but we commandeered that car. We made them start it up and everyday when we went to town, we made them drive us around. We didn’t tell anybody about it. When the car had to go up an incline, it was maybe a five or six grade incline, car couldn’t go straight up, it had to angle, you know, reduce the angle of attack up the hill. It had so little power. But we had a lot of fun with the geisha house.

KP: Was this common, buying a geisha house?

RW: I never heard of it anywhere else. I mean, you know, ... this was my idea. I liked the people ... and I like, you know, I liked all the help in the place. Plus they had, what's the name of that rare steak where they keep the animal standing in a pen for it's whole life till they kill it. The flesh is as tender as butter. Kobe beef. They had the best, ... we ate like kings, we drank like kings, and I enjoyed having, you know owning that place. And we had no trouble. Nobody else knew it wasn't non-Japanese owned, just the two Indians and me. And I was glad to leave it to the guys. ... I came home broke. I didn't have any money at all. Nothing.

KP: Had you gambled it away?

RW: No, I wasn't a gambler. I just didn't accumulate it. ... They had silk there, I sent back to my family, nightgowns and dresses and I spent it on booze and food and girls. You know, I gave ... no thought to-

KP: To what would happen afterwards.

RW: Yeah.

KP: When was the last time you were in touch with someone from your unit?

RW: I didn't hear you.

KP: When was the last time you were in touch with someone that you served with?

RW: At that reunion.

KP: That's the last time you?

RW: 25 years ago.

KP: Did you ever find out what happened to your West Point captain you respected so much?

RW: He had, I told you, he had a lot of guys go through his company. When the war ended they called him back to Washington. I guess, you know, he had to go up to catch up with the Air Force guys that, ... they were all making general and everything else and, you know, I expected to read about him as a 4-star one day. You know, who knows, he was the kind of guy who came from Richmond, Virginia. And I always had the feeling, although he didn't display it, that he came from a wealthy family. And a military family, he may not have stayed in, you know, he saw so much combat, that he just decided ... there's just too much blood, take another career. He was a great leader, Jesus. ... Boy, there was only one Edgar Rickman, I tell you, ... I'd have followed him anyplace. Strong sense of compassion for his men. They all fought for him, not because they had to, but because they wanted to. He was that kind of a leader.

Well, you got some humor. We would put our feet to the enemy so we could sit up and shoot. I was on the right and the assistant gunner was in the middle and Eddy (Hotten), the gunner, was

on the left and there was a mortar burst close to us. It was a shallow hole, but we were below ground, anyways, something came down and got the assistant gunner in the kneecap and took off most of his kneecap. And he started to laugh and cheer hysterically.

KP: Which under normal circumstances you would not do?

RW: I mean, what the hell's the matter with you? He says, "I got the million dollar wound! My kneecap is gone, I'm going home!" ... If he could have stood, he would've got up and danced. But he couldn't get up and I'm laying here, he's laying here, Eddie (Hotten's?) over here.

On Okinawa, the battle was from ridge to ridge, each one was tougher than the next. There was an outfit behind us that was actually a chemical combat outfit, but we weren't using chemicals. But they had 4.2 mortars. They were big fat things and they made explosive shells for those. They were as big as artillery shells. And the artillery was ineffective, because the trajectories were wrong, they would've hit the ridge, and they had to lob stuff over, so we needed mortars. And a typical attack starts off with barrage and then the infantry rushes in under the barrage. And they tell us what time the barrage is gonna start, to get ready to attack. We're now at the base of the ridge we just took and we're headed for the next ridge. Course, an open plain. So the barrage is being laid down by the chemical unit, 4.2 mortars, and they're short. They're laying it on us, friendly fire. Friendly fire is as deadly as any other and the Japs didn't have 4.2's. We knew from the explosions, that we're were getting hit from our own shit, you know. And it's making everybody dizzy and crazy and scared shitless, too. Big craters all over the place. Finally, they get it stopped. You know, we don't know whether to attack, because it hasn't been laid on the Japs and nobody moves. First of all we're stunned. Second of all, we know the barrage wasn't on the enemy. Everybody, my squad was in little trenches and one of these mortars made a big crater not far from where we were, so we all got out of out shallow holes and jumped in the crater. Now there's a lot of small arms fire, I think the Japs realized that the barrage was short and they counter attacked. You could hear bullets whizzing over like grass cutters. By then, you know, whether they're close from the crack and the whiz, and you know. This stuff was low. We had a replacement in the hole, he was a young kid from the Midwest. Redheaded, fuzzy-cheeked kid. Was a big boy, and he's looking at the other two and he says, "I think they're getting closer. Somebody [is] gotta take a look." The other guy and I weren't going to stick our heads up, because ... the small arms is coming an inch off the grass, whatever it is, dirt, stick your head up, you're gonna get it. He says, "Well, I'm gonna take a look." He crawls up the side of the hole, pops his head up and gets knocked ass off a tea kettle backwards. His eyes are rolling. We look at him. He's laying on his back. There's a hole in his helmet right here. We figure the bullet went through and through, he's dead. Jesus Christ, why didn't he listen? Then you forget about it, worry about what's going on up front. Next thing, "Where am I? Where am I?" Kid is talking. Take off your helmet. Takes off his helmet. The bullet entered the steel, it creased the fiberglass liner, went over the top, still had enough steam to make a hole in the back of the helmet. If you took a twig through the steel, went right through the middle of his head. The bullet took a curve like this, it went out the back of his helmet, between the fiberglass and the steel.
KP: So his helmet literally did save his life?

RW: The fiberglass did.

KP: Yes, yes.

RW: Another time, we're stalemated on top of this ridge on Okinawa. There's a famous hill between the next ridge called Chocolate Drop. Just a mound of brown dirt. It's honeycombed with tunnels. They got all kinds of ... antiaircraft guns, they point out and shoot right at you. Rifleman, it's a hive of tunnels and every time we leave the ridge, they got us pined down from Chocolate Drop. Nobody know how to take Chocolate Drop. You can hit it with aerial bombs, you can hit with artillery, you'll never get to the caves and the tunnels. Nobody knows what to do, you understand. Couple of days, you stand on the top of the ridge and look at it. They can't reach you. They won't shoot that far, they wait till you get on the plain. I'm standing around a circle of half a dozen or seven guys, and we're just talking when a knee mortar round comes overhead and lands right in the middle of the circle. It was a dud. Half buried in the dirt. We recognize the knee mortar round. We're all just like "Jesus Christ, let's move away." Moved away twenty feet and continued the conversation.

KP: That as as close as you can get and still live to talk about it. When did you take up smoking?

RW: When did I take up smoking?

KP: Was it in the military or was it in college?

RW: When I was in the military I would trade everybody for Lucky Strikes. It was the strongest cigarette you could get and they came in little packages of four. Most of the guys couldn't smoke Lucky's, they were too strong. You used to say, ... that stuff's toasted or we're toasted, or it's toasted. It was strong, but you got so few of them. Yeah. We use to take all the cundrums we could get. And put the cigarette packs in cundrums, otherwise in an hour, the moisture ruined the cigarette. You have to unwrap the cundrum, pick one cigarette out, rewrap it, put it back in your pocket. Well.

KP: You have the longest interview and also the best interview to date, which I do not say to everyone.

RW: I don't know what I left out or what else you want to hear, but if you want to visit again.

KP: That would be great. Thank you very much.

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

Reviewed: 1/97 Tara Kraenzlin
Reviewed: 3/13/97 G. Kurt Piehler
Edited: 3/13/97 Tara Kraenzlin
Corrected: 3/14/97 G. Kurt Piehler

Edited: 3/22/97 Roland Winter
Entered: 3/26/97 Jennifer Lenkiewicz