RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD L. YOKEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Commander Richard Lewis Yoken, Class of 1941, on July 1, 2010, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Commander Yoken, thank you very much for being here today. Also, thank you to your son for bringing you in.

Richard Lewis Yoken: It's my pleasure.

SI: To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

RY: I was born in 1920 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, June 14th, Flag Day. That's why they put the flags out.

SI: Yes. My grandfather was born on Flag Day, too. He says the same thing. [laughter] Happy birthday--your birthday just passed.

RY: Thanks.

SI: Can you tell me your parents' names?

RY: Yes, my father's name was Harry, first name, Euruchem was his middle name, which is a Hebrew name, E-U-R-U-C-H-E-M, Yoken, and my mother's maiden name was Harriet Ann Chavenson, C-H-A-V-E-N-S-O-N.

SI: Beginning with your father, can you tell me a little bit about his family background, such as if there was any kind of immigration history there?

RY: Well, my father was born in the United States, … at 1898, and his schooling was basically grammar school and junior high school. … The rest of the time, he was self-educated, until he got to be about forty years old, forty-two years old, when he decided to go to law school. … He spent one year at a YMCA night law school, and then, transferred to the University of Indiana, where he got a law degree, but he never practiced law. He was basically in the food business. He was in the grocery business, and then, he had a large restaurant in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he'd moved to, and a wholesale grocery and food store there. …

David Yoken: He was one of the first to introduce Birds Eye frozen food, was he not?

RY: Yes, he was one of the first. … What was the name of the frozen food?

DY: Birds Eye?

RY: Yes, Birds Eye. He was one of the first merchants in New England to bring in the … frozen food line.

SI: It is very interesting that he went back to school at age forty-two, as you said.

RY: Yes.

SI: That was while you were alive.

RY: Yes, but he wasn't living at home at the time. He and my mother … had separated and become divorced.

SI: Do you know anything about his family background in terms of where the family came from?

RY: Yes, they came from--his father, my grandfather, my paternal grandfather, that is--came from Russia. They were Russian immigrants, at about 1872, and settled [First settled in New York City, then moved to Fall River, Massachusetts]. Actually, my maternal grandfather came over at the same time. He'd married my grandmother, whom he married in Russia. … My maternal grandfather was an interesting guy. He actually, in his youth, was in the tobacco business. He was a tobacco merchant and he was fortunate enough to have made contact to be the tobacconeer for the Royal Russian Army headquarters in Moscow, because Jews were not allowed to live in Moscow, but he was able to do that. [Editor's Note: From the reign of Catherine the Great through the Russian Revolution of 1917, Jews in Czarist Russia were forced to live within a Pale of Settlement, the westernmost portion of the Empire, unless they received special permission to settle elsewhere.] The colonel in charge of that barracks in Moscow--and the term for the colonel was *polkovnik*, is the Russian name for the colonel--had a daughter that he was trying to get together--he had a single daughter--with my grandfather, who was also single at the time. He was maybe twenty-two years old, twenty-three. She died. … His daughter died in childbirth. So, the *Polkovnik* said to him, one day, "I've no use for you. I have no more daughters. You're useless around here. So, you'd better get back to your *shtetl*," which is about a hundred miles north [northwest?] of Moscow, and he went back, where he met my grandmother. Now, they're interesting, because he was a very bright guy, very handsome, but he was only about five-foot-six. My grandmother was about five-foot-ten and she weighed about 280 pounds. She was a huge woman. You would not have thought … that they would get together, but they did, and then, he decided to come to the United States, because he had no prospects in where he was living. … He left his wife, my grandmother, who was pregnant at the time, with two children. He left her in Moscow, or, actually, in the settlement where they had to move to, came to the United States, to New York City, and because of his background in [the] tobacco industry, … he started a tobacco business. He came to the United States … with the equivalent of about thirty-five thousand dollars, which would be equivalent to about four hundred thousand dollars in today's money. So, he was pretty well-to-do, and he was lonesome, I guess, and decided that he ought to bring his wife and his two oldest children to the United States. There was one problem with that. She came from a big family. She had six brothers and four sisters, and she, being twice his size, … probably said to him, "I'm coming, but you're bringing my family with me." That, I don't think, made him too happy, but he knew better, that he'd better say, "Yes, okay." So, they came over and they all came to New York City. At that point, he realized that, although he was pretty educated; he spoke Russian, of course. He spoke Yiddish, which was his native language. … He'd gone through Sweden. He spoke a little Scandinavian, a little German, … and the Polish. He spoke about five different languages, all of them quite fluently, and he brought … the brothers and sisters over. My grandmother had four sisters and six brothers. So, he brought them all over, not too happily, but he brought them over. He'd better, because, being twice his size, he knew better than to say no, and they lived in New

York City for about six months. … He had what was known in those days as *landsman*--people from the same area living in New York that he knew from the old country. … He said, "[With] the competition and the fact that I don't know the language, English, particularly well, I don't really want to stay in New York City." … They said to him, "Why don't you come to Fall River, Massachusetts, where there are some people from your area that you'll feel more comfortable with? and it's a relatively small city of about 120,000 people and you'll be able to do better there." That's how he got to Fall River. Now, … do you want to go beyond that?

SI: It sounds like these grandparents were alive when you were growing up, that you were able to hear this firsthand.

RY: Yes, yes. Both my grandparents, maternal … and paternal grandparents, were alive.

SI: Growing up in that area, with grandparents who had emigrated from Russia, were any "Old World" customs carried on in your family?

RY: Oh, yes. … My maternal grandfather was quite religious and very conservative. As a matter-of-fact, he's so conservative that, in 1918, when the First World War broke out, he was made chairman of the draft board in Fall River, Massachusetts, which, for an immigrant, was quite an accomplishment, because English was one of the languages that he commanded, but not particularly well. He chopped it up, but, fortunately, in Fall River, there were a lot of Polish and a lot of Irish, and so forth, who didn't speak English any better than he did, so that … they looked up to him. Then, he … was well-to-do and became a member of the board of directors of the big local bank in Fall River. Now, that was my maternal grandfather. My paternal grandfather, actually, … believe it or not, was a nephew of my maternal grandmother. Families were very close in those days and my mother and father, … who were both born in the United States, … became married, so, they married … first cousins. First cousins were married.

SI: Are you aware if there were any changes to your family name upon coming to this country?

RY: Only the pronunciation of it. … My mother's maternal name was, in English, … Chavenson, C-H-A-V-E-N-S-O-N, was pronounced "CHA-venson," [with the "CH" pronounced like the Hebrew letter *chet*]. So, nobody could pronounce [that]. None of the English-speaking people in Massachusetts could really pronounce that. So, it was changed to Chavenson, and [the] Yoken name was originally Yochen, the same "CH," and that was changed, too. The "CH" was made to a "K," instead, so, it's Y-O-K-E-N.

SI: Your family was pretty well established in Fall River.

RY: In Fall River, yes.

SI: Can you tell me about your early years, traveling around? For example, how long was your family in Bridgeport when you were born?

RY: Oh, they'd been in Bridgeport maybe about fifteen or twenty years, was … one of my mother's sisters. My mother's family had six girls and one son, the Chavenson side of the family,

and the daughter that lived in Bridgeport, married a Bridgeport man, was my mother's favorite sister. They were the closest, and I was born in Bridgeport only because--my mother and father lived in Brooklyn, New York when they first got married--my mother decided that she wanted to visit … her sister in Bridgeport one weekend, took the train down, pregnant with me. … I guess I got shaken out in Bridgeport. So, I'm really a "Connecticut Yankee."

DY: … She took the train from Fall River to Bridgeport?

RY: No. She took the train from Providence. …

SI: Can you share with me some of your earliest memories of where you grew up, the neighborhood you grew up in?

RY: Well, I grew up, actually, I went to elementary school, in the south end of Fall River, which was called the Maplewood Section of Fall River. It was a working man's area, because my paternal grandfather, Abram?) Yoken, who was … a brother of my maternal grandmother, had a large grocery store that he owned and worked in. So, we lived in that area of Fall River for about three years, and then, we got, quote, "high-browed" and moved up to the Highland Section of Fall River, where the very fancy, WASP-y [White Anglo-Saxon Protestants] people, who owned the mills, the cotton mills, … lived in the big houses. … We moved up to that section, where my father opened up a very large, fancy grocery store. This is before … they were separated and before he went to law school and stuff like that. … So, I went to elementary school at a school called the Highland School, which is right across the street from where we lived in Fall River. …

DY: You remembered even your kindergarten school last night. …

RY: Oh, yes, was in kindergarten school … at a school called Susan B. Wilcox in Fall River. …

SI: Was that in the Highland Section?

RY: No, … actually, that was in the center of town, but I went to elementary school at the Highland School, which was right across the street from [where] we lived in the Highland Section. … Then, I went from there to Madison, James Madison Morton Junior High School in Fall River, and, after that, I went to Bradford Matthew Chaloner Durfee High School in Fall River. At that time, it was the only high school in Fall River. It was an interesting school, because Fall River had a very large French-Canadian, Irish, Portuguese population, so that it was quite integrated, which in most of the New England-type schools were not. I had very close Portuguese friends and Irish friends and French-Canadian friends.

SI: In either the working-class neighborhood or the Highlands, how much free exchange was there between the Jewish community, the Irish community and other groups?

RY: … Well, in the middle areas, there was a lot of intercommunication. In the Highlands, not very much, because the very fancy, WASP-y Protestant people, … they were socially a step above and they tended to stay by themselves, but, then, by the time I was maybe twelve or

fourteen years old, there was an influx of well-to-do, what we used to call "Lace Curtain Irish" that moved in. So, it became much more integrated at that point.

SI: Would you say that your family was accepted into this new community, the WASP-ier community?

RY: Yes, they were accepted, but they had to know their place, but they were accepted, because my father, … he had great education himself, so that he was on their level, educationally speaking, and being the proprietor of the fanciest grocery store … in Fall River gave him a certain prestige, and he was the kind of a guy that he had the stature that he could walk into a room and take it over. He spoke beautifully and he wrote absolutely beautiful letters, with the old Spencer-type penmanship. So, we had no problems along those lines.

SI: It is interesting that you said they were accepted, but they knew their place. Could you give an example of that?

RY: Well, when I say we knew our place, … you didn't get involved with them socially, because they had their own clubs. They had what was known as the Quequechan Club and the Fall River Country Club, which I think the Fall River Country Club had one Jewish member and he was a very prominent architect, and that's all. The Quequechan Club didn't have any Jewish members. It was strictly Protestant-oriented. The Protestant area in Fall River was quite isolated and insulated, and they didn't have much to do with the Catholics as well as the Jews. Each of them had their own particular areas.

SI: You said your maternal grandfather was very religious.

RY: Yes.

SI: What about in your own family? Was religion very important?

RY: Well, peripherally, we were, but … we were what was known as Conservative Jews. We were not Orthodox, and my … maternal grandfather had a problem with that, because, when he used to come to visit, he would not eat in our house, because we didn't keep a *kosher* house.

DY: And what about your *bar mitzvah*? …

RY: Oh, yes. I had a *bar mitzvah* in which he would not attend, because it was in a very fancy Conservative synagogue. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

RY: It was a very fancy Conservative temple. It was called a temple. He would not, my … maternal grandfather, … come to that. It was like walking into a church, as far as he was concerned.

SI: What was the name of the temple?

RY: Temple Beth-El.

DY: You had to actually do a whole service for his Orthodox congregation, correct?

RY: Yes--not my *bar mitzvah*, but the regular service was, yes.

SI: Was going to temple important when you were growing up? Did you go there every Friday?

RY: Truthfully, not. It was only important from a social point of view, but, religiously, it was an effort, you know. … When I was *bar mitzvah*-ed, I had to learn about twice as much as most young men do at that age, because my maternal grandfather was going to be there, … and then, as a matter-of-fact, I had two *bar mitzvahs*. I had a *bar mitzvah* at that one and my paternal grandfather was the president of a very rigid, old Jewish synagogue at the other end of town in Fall River, about four miles distance. … The Saturday morning, I had to go through another routine for that service and I had to walk to that. He wouldn't allow me to drive a car to that. … When I tell people that, sometimes, they look with astonishment, "You had two of those? One is bad enough, but you had two of them," [laughter] but it pleased him. … I remember that, … when I got up on the platform to do my thing, he was very pleased with that, … being president of this Orthodox synagogue, that his grandson was able to do the job, which made him proud, but he was quite anxious that I continue. So, to please him, for a year after I [was] *bar mitzvah*-ed, I kept taking Hebrew lessons and that sort of stuff, until, finally, it got to a point where I wanted to play football and I wanted to play baseball and, … Saturday mornings, I had to be down there. So, we finally gave that up and I guess, after a while, having been in the country, at that point, for about thirty-five, forty years, he realized that there was no point trying to push me into something that I would not have been happy with.

DY: What about the baseball story? That's a great story.

RY: Yes, I have a great story. When I used to come to visit him, he lived in the other end of town from where I did and I had to take a streetcar to the center of town, which was about a seven or eight-minute streetcar ride, and then, I had to walk though a very big park, local city park, to where his house was. … He had a big house … in the east end of Fall River. … I [went] to visit him and, as I used to go through that park, the kids were always playing, a bunch of guys, playing baseball. They got to know me after a while, because I would visit him about every other week, maybe, and they would look to me and they'd say, "Hey, Yoki, come over here. We need a first baseman," or, "We need an outfielder," and I would go and play. My grandfather was blind in one eye. He was basically totally blind. He had a glass eye, that if you didn't please him, he would be apt to take it off, to scare you, to … put you in line. … I would walk up to his house to see him and, … by that time, I'd come in, I'd be sweaty and dirty, you know. … He'd put his arm around me and he'd say to me, in Yiddish, "(*Dus svitz*?)," which means, "You're sweaty," and I'd say, "Yes," and he'd say to me, "How come?" "(*Varum*?)?" "Why?" and I'd say, "I was walking through the park and I was playing baseball." "Baseball? What is that?" So, I explained to him that you took up a stick and that you hit a ball, and it just didn't make any sense to him. He said to me, "You do what?" [laughter] and I explained it again to him and he said to me, he said, "That's kind of stupid." He said, "Why would you do that?"

He says "(*Yas spoila*?)?" "You should learn how to be in business," because he was a very successful businessman. … He said, "Beside that, Jewish boys shouldn't be playing that kind of a game, because that's a game and life is more than a game." So, I'd say it was about 1936. Hank Greenberg played for the Detroit Tigers, was an All-American, an All-Star, and, that year, he signed a contract for seventy-five thousand dollars, a six-year contract for seventy-five thousand dollars per year. … I said to him, "Let me tell you something." I said, "There was a … professional baseball player who does what I play at, but he does it professionally, who just signed a three-year contract," for three years, "to play this game for seventy-five thousand dollars a year," which, in that time, was a lot of money. … He said to me, "Seventy-five thousand dollars?" He's speaking to me in Yiddish, which I could understand, and I say, "Yes," and he'd say to me, "Who?" and I'd say, "Hank Greenberg." He says, "Who?" and I realized the word "Hank" didn't mean anything to him. So, I said, "His name actually is Herschel Greenberg." That, he understood. He says to me, "A Jewish boy?" I said, "Yes, a Jewish boy." He says, "How much again?" and I told him. He says, "Eighty-five thousand dollars a year, for three years?" I said, "Yes, and you know what?" I said, "He only plays baseball three months a year. The rest of the year, he can do whatever he wants to do." Well, that really freaked him out. He said to me, "How good are you at the game?" I said, "Not very good." He says, "Go back to the park and learn how to play it properly." [laughter] [Editor's Note: Hall of Fame baseball player Henry Benjamin "Hank" Greenberg played for the Detroit Tigers from 1930 to 1946 (excluding his service in World War II), then, the Pittsburg Pirates in 1947.] He was a very practical guy, but I loved him. … Being blind, I used to visit him fairly often and I used to pick up the mail for him when it came to his house. … He'd sit down at a table and he'd say to me, "How would you like to open it up and read it for me?" because he couldn't really see it, and I'd read it for him and they were all business related. If he'd get dividends, I'd tell him, "There's a dividend here from American T&T." He owned a lot of stock, and he'd say, "How much is it?" and I'd tell him and he'd say to me, "How many shares does that represent?" … the number of shares. I'd say to him, "Give me a paper and pencil and I'll tell you." He said, "I don't need it. I'll tell you what it is." He was very sharp. He could pick that up right away, and I used to do that for him and he was a very great guy. … Then, if I didn't behave, if he didn't feel that I behaved properly, he would go into his bedroom and take out a huge, like you'd find in a library, a huge book, with pages in it, and he'd say, "In that page, for every one of my grandchildren," he had about five grandchildren, "there's a name and your name is on one of those. … When you do something bad, I mark it in there." Well, … I opened it up. There was no pages in it, you know, but that was his idea of telling me, "You'd better stay on the straight and narrow path."

SI: Growing up in this area in the 1920s and 1930s, what kind of things would you do for personal entertainment? Were you involved in pick-up games, sports or clubs?

RY: … There was a lot of sports activity. I played football … in high school and I was, in junior high school, … in the dramatic society. I did a little acting and there was a lot of social [activity] going on with the kids. There were dances, but that was basically it. There was nothing really structured.

SI: There were no Boy Scouts or Sea Scouts.

RY: Well, I was in the Boy Scouts, but only for a while, which is rather surprising, since I wound up in the Navy to begin with. [laughter]

SI: Can you tell me a little bit more about your early schooling, such as what you thought of the teachers or if any of the material really spoke to you?

RY: … In grammar school, from first grade on, which was right across the street from where we lived, was the Highland School. … In those days, you had one teacher, basically, for all of the grades. … I had a teacher, I can't remember her name now, but she was very good and she led me to my interest in the Civil War. I collect Civil War books and I've done a lot of research in Civil War history, and, through her, because we studied Pickett's Charge [in the Battle of Gettysburg] one day, which really wetted my appetite, … that kept me interested. In high school, I had a Latin teacher whose name was … Miss Langford and she was very good, too, also, and, if you played, if you were on any of the school sports, you were sure to get at least a "C." Even if you didn't do anything, you'd get a "C," really. She used to be at every game. … The class had a lot of kids in it who were like myself. They weren't really interested in Latin, but she kept you interested, because you knew that if you didn't show up that she wouldn't show up to your games. So, you always made it your business to show up, and then, … those are my [pre]-undergraduate days. Now, do you want to go to college?

SI: I would like to stick with your time in Fall River a little bit longer.

RY: Okay.

SI: When you were about ten, the Depression really started setting in. How did that impact your family or the area?

RY: Not terribly bad, because, being in the grocery business, there was always food available. … The business, being in the section of Fall River where the mills were, the mill owners, even though the mills were no good at that point, they had, over the years, collected a lot of money, because they were all Yankee families. All these people that lived up in the Highlands, that owned the mills, were families that came from over in the *Mayflower* era. So, they were really right-wing Republican families. So, we didn't have any, really, hardships. We didn't have money to go out and throw it away, but we had never had any problems of not having anything to eat or enough money to have a little recreation.

SI: Were you able to see the impact on other areas of Fall River, like the more working-class areas?

RY: You could see that, but we didn't get really into that. I only became involved with that when I was in junior high school and high school, because … all the kids that were in there were--a good many of them--from those areas and … you knew that they found hardships. One of the interesting young men in my high school class, as a matter-of-fact, he was selected to be "most likely to succeed," wound up being a cardinal. His name was Cardinal Humberto Medeiros and he came over from the Azores when he was probably about sixteen years old. He couldn't speak a word of English, went to work as a sweeper in one of the cotton mills and, eventually, learned

the language and he became, as I say, … a cardinal. [Editor's Note: Cardinal Humberto Sousa Medeiros was the Archbishop of Boston from 1970 until his death in 1983. He was made a Cardinal in 1973.]

SI: Was he the one who succeeded Cardinal Cushing?

RY: Pardon?

SI: Was he the one who succeeded Cardinal Cushing, the famous cardinal in Boston?

RY: Yes, he succeeded Cardinal Cushing, because, when Cushing passed away, Medeiros was the next one that came in. [Editor's Note: Cardinal Richard James Cushing was Archbishop of Boston from 1944 until his death in 1970. He became a Cardinal in 1958. Cardinal Cushing was succeeded in 1970 by Cardinal Medeiros.]

SI: Going back to the issue of all these different groups getting together and getting along, do you think you ever faced any anti-Semitism in this area?

RY: No, no, none whatsoever in Fall River. I'm trying to think of [anything]--maybe once, a very slight one. My mother decided I'd better learn dancing lessons, social dancing lessons, and took me to a school that had about twenty-five or thirty kids in it. She got the name from one of the customers of the grocery store who was a very fancy WASP lady, who said to her, when she'd mentioned [it] to her, "I'll give you the name. You go to this school and you take Richard down there. … She'll teach him social dancing," and I remember, maybe I was ten or twelve years old at the time and I went to this school. … I remember, the teacher kind of looked askance at me and said to me--I had knickers, I think I was wearing knickers at the time--she says, "Is that the only suit that you have to wear to this school?" and that really kind of bothered me. So, that was the end of that dancing school. I didn't go to there anymore. So, that's basically the only time that I saw that.

SI: Did your mother ever have to work outside of the home?

RY: My mother … helped my father in the grocery store. She basically ran it, and then, when they got divorced and he left--he left, moved to Indiana--she ran the store herself. She was basically a business lady and she tells me that, when she was younger, that she used to work in my grandfather's grain place. He sold grain and flour to the Portuguese and French-Canadian bakers in Fall River, had a big business with it, and she spoke Portuguese like a native and she spoke some French. So, she was basically … trilingual, you might say. … My father spoke French very much like a native.

SI: Did you pick up a lot of these languages as you were growing up?

RY: Not really. I would say I didn't pick up a language until I got to college. I studied German in college, … not very successfully, but I also was able to communicate pretty well in French. French, I was able to speak pretty well.

SI: I remember reading, in the war diary, that you spoke French fairly well.

RY: Yes.

SI: I wondered if that started that early. As you were getting older, in your teen years, were you keeping up with the news of what was happening around the world in the 1930s, such as Hitler's rise to power or what was happening in Asia?

RY: Well, my family was quite interested. We had several newspapers delivered regularly and my father, with his background, was very much interested in what was going on in the world. So, I was quite sensitive to what was going on and I knew that, in Germany, we were … getting to have problems and those kind of things--not actively, not until I got into the service.

SI: Did you still have family living in Europe?

RY: No, no family, not that I'm aware of.

SI: Everyone had come to this country.

RY: Yes, I think they all came to this country.

SI: How did your family feel in general about what was happening overseas? Were they pro-interventionist or did they not really have any feelings about what America should do?

RY: Yes, … of course, when the Nazis came into power, they were, of course, very much concerned with that and they were very pro-Allies, that sort of stuff.

SI: I wondered if that put them in conflict with this very Republican area they were living in.

RY: Well, the Republican area was only in certain parts. The Fall River area and New Bedford area and the Cape [Cape Cod], those areas … were not basically Republican, because they were working people. They were mostly Democratic. So, although there were the big mill owners [who] were Republicans, because of the money that was involved, and my grandfather himself was a staunch Republican, my maternal grandfather, but the people that had the money, they were not very conveniently interested in what the other people had. … You've got to remember, most of them came from Europe, where their conditions, when they came to the United States, they were changed 180 degrees, because most of them didn't come out with a great deal of money or a great deal of education.

SI: How did you and your family view Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal programs?

RY: They were very pro-Roosevelt. … I would say one out of every eighth one of those houses would have a picture of Franklin Roosevelt on the wall--very, very pro.

SI: When you were a teenager, in junior high and high school, did you have to work in the store?

RY: Well, I used to help in it. I didn't have to work. I mean, it wasn't necessary, but my father felt that it was important to learn how to handle money. One of the things he used to do, we belonged to a small yacht club that was about fifteen miles outside of town in a place called Tiverton, Rhode Island, was on the Tiverton River. … They had little sailboats and, in the summer, I would take a bus and go there, because we were a member of it, … to learn how to sail, but the fact was that my father felt that he just would not hand me the money to go on the bus and the money to get a drink or something at the yacht club. So, what he did is, he went out and he bought me a cart that you would pull, and he said, "This cart cost me ten dollars. You're in to me for ten dollars for this cart, but you'll be able to pay it [off]. … You come down," it was during the summertime, "I want you here Fridays and Saturdays, at seven o'clock in the morning, and I will give you ice and I will give you fruit and vegetables and you can peddle it. … This is the cost of each one of these items. You can get for it whatever you feel that you can get and, when you bring it back, whatever is able to be used, you'll be credited for. If it's not able to be used or if it's [not] been sold, it'll cost you whatever was the original cost of it. … Whatever money you make is the money that you will use to take the bus to the center of town, and then, take the bus out to the club," and that's what I had to do.

SI: How did that go? Were you able to sell all of your fruit?

RY: Well, it was okay. You know, I mean, I knew that I had to get off my can and I had to get up in the morning and do that or I wasn't going to be able to get to the yacht club. Otherwise, there was no other way. I had no other money than … what he was [offering]. I didn't get an allowance, because … what I had to do around the house, I was expected to do.

SI: Sticking with the yacht club, did you race or did you sail for pleasure?

RY: I was a crew. I was one of the crew. It was a small boat. It had the skipper and one person, and I used to be the one person.

SI: Was that your first taste of sailor's life?

RY: Yes, you might say so, yes. [laughter]

SI: You mentioned that you did not have much opportunity to travel, but were you able to travel at all?

RY: Yes. When I was in my senior year in high school, in junior high school, my mother and an aunt and I went to Europe. We went to France, England, Germany, Belgium, for … about twelve to fourteen weeks. … One of my biggest impressions was seeing the Lion of Lucerne, that was [carved] into the wall--it's quite a famous thing--in Switzerland. That was an experience.

SI: This was in 1937.

RY: No, it was in '34.

SI: What was being in Germany then like? Where did you go in Germany?

RY: Well, we went to the big city. We went to Cologne. It was just before that. … I was fourteen--it was in '34.

SI: Okay.

RY: … Went to Cologne and we were in Berlin. … If there was something, I certainly was not aware of it.

SI: However, you still saw all the signs of Nazism, the banners.

RY: There were no signs. There were no visible signs in '34. I think he [Adolf Hitler] was just about coming into power at that time.

SI: Did you feel anxious at all, being Jewish and being in Nazi Germany?

RY: No, not in Germany, because, in Germany and Belgium, my mother had relatives who … lived in Belgium. So, you didn't get that. They were well-to-do people who made curtains, linen curtains. They were very prosperous people. So, we didn't get involved in the lower elements of the population.

SI: Do any memories stand out about that trip?

RY: It's somewhat vague, because, you know, when you're twelve, thirteen years old, … as I say, the Lion of Lucerne made great interest in me. Many years later, my wife and I were … in Switzerland and … that was one of the places I wanted to see again. [Editor's Note: Adolf Hitler came to power as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933 and was not declared *Fuhrer* until after German President Paul von Hindenburg's death in August 1934. Commander Yoken, who would have turned twelve in June of 1932, may have visited Germany prior to the Nazi takeover or just as the Nazis were consolidating their control over Germany.]

SI: Can you tell me a little bit more about your high school years?

DY: … What about Blitzy? That's a nice story.

RY: [laughter] Well, I had a dog whose name was Blitzy. She was a German shepherd mongrel, great animal, and, when I used to go to high school, which was about three-quarters of a mile away, I used to walk to high school. … She would come with me in the morning and she would sit on the sidewalk outside of the high school and watch me go through the doors to go to school. … Then, I understand, she would turn around and walk back the three-quarters of a mile to the house, and my mother tells me that--I finished high school at about ten minutes to two--my mother said, at one o'clock, she'd be looking for Blitzy. Blitzy wasn't there. When I'd come out, at two o'clock, Blitzy was at that same spot, waiting for me, … an amazing animal. … As a matter-of-fact, when I went overseas--the dog used to sleep in my room, at the end of my bed. … My mother tells me that when I left and went overseas and didn't come back to the States for two-and-a-half years, that that dog never went back into that room again, until about a week

before I returned. … She [his mother] didn't know I was coming back, because I didn't tell them. My orders had been canceled once to come back and I didn't want to tell her when I [got orders] the second time, but she said that when I finally did get back, about a week before, the dog went back into the room again and jumped up on the bed.

SI: That is pretty amazing.

RY: Yes, it is an amazing story.

SI: In high school, did you always have the idea in mind that you were going to go on to college?

RY: Yes, that was a given, yes. As a matter-of-fact, having only been fifteen miles from Brown, … and [having] an uncle of mine who had gone to Brown, that was the fact, that they supposed … that's where I'd be going, but … I wasn't interested. I wanted to go away, get out of Fall River, and are you interested to know how I got to Rutgers?

SI: Absolutely, yes.

RY: Okay. One of my mother's closest friends had a son whose name was Ray Laurans. Now, Ray Laurans was an alumnus of Rutgers, I would say, probably, Class of, about, '35, [Class of 1936]. He was a very good baseball player and his family, his mother's family, actually, originally, came from New Brunswick. That's how he got to Rutgers. So, he came to visit one day and, knowing that I wasn't interested in going to Brown--I was interested in going to Yale, because my cousin in Bridgeport was a Yale graduate. The problem with that was that I had to take entrance exams and B. M. C. Durfee High School only had a limited college preparatory group. Most of the kids went to work in the mills, those kind of things, so that I had to take college entrance exams. … I did very well in them, except German, which was a language I studied here that I was not very good at. … Yale got my request. … You had to show a foreign language for one of the requisites, and I got an answer back from them. They're saying, "You've done very well in your history and in your physics and in your English, but not at all in your German. What we'll do is, we'll put you on the waiting list and, if, by the end of August, you take those exams again and pass them, we'll enter you." So, I went to my mother and I showed it to her and she said, "Well, we'll get you a tutor," and I said, "Ma, don't do it, because you'll be throwing money away, because I'm not going to do any better with German than what I've been doing right now." So, that's why I never wound up at Yale. … An interesting story about that, if I may continue, was, some years later, about my second year down in town here, I was homesick. I used to leave Mine Street, when I had the time, walk up to the railroad station, sit at the railroad station and watch the trains that went from Washington to Boston pass by, because I was sixteen years old and I'd never been out of Fall River, except with my mother on that trip to Europe. … One day, I got on and I wrote a letter to the dean of admissions at Brown and I explained my situation. … I said, "I'd like to transfer to Brown." … He wanted to know where I'd been, where I'm transferring from, and I told him. … He said, "I'm going to tell you something. I'm not going to do that right now for you, because, number one, you're at the third-oldest [eighth-oldest] colonial college in the country, a very good school, and I think that you ought to stay there and get an education." He says, "If, at the end of the year, your grades are decent and you still feel

the way you do, get in touch with me again." … He said, "I'm doing this for two reasons: number one, because I think it's going to be good for you to stay where you are; number two, you're in a good school; number three, that … one of your uncles was a classmate of mine and I know what kind of a scholar he was, so that I think you'd be a good scholar if you put your mind to it." … I've got to tell you that, about two months later, I'd got into Phi Epsilon Pi and I forgot all about Brown by that time, because I was well enclosed, and I had four happy years here at Rutgers.

SI: Can you describe your first few days and weeks coming down to the Rutgers campus?

RY: Well, it was an experience for me. I remember coming up to the first campus, the original campus, [the Old Queens Campus], and, in those days, freshmen had to wear little dinks. [Editor's Note: A dink is a small, beanie-like hat that Rutgers freshmen were required to wear as part of a class-wide hazing ritual.] The first thing you handed me was that, and I said, "What am I supposed to do with that?" "You're supposed to put it on your head and, when an upperclassman tells you what to do, you're supposed to do what he tells you to do." That was my first experience.

DY: Also, [talk] about George driving you down here.

RY: Yes, my cousin, George, drove me down from Bridgeport to here and, when he let me off on Old Queens, he said to me--he was a very stern guy and, as he said, he was a brilliant scholar. He was a Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year at Yale and he was a Connecticut Supreme Court judge, very brilliant guy. … He said to me, "I'm letting you off and I expect you to do a good job," and, if George said that to you, you'd better damn well do a good job, [laughter] and so, then, … because I had connections with the Phi Ep House at the time, through--this name is very familiar to Rutgers …

SI: Ray Laurans?

RY: Ray Laurans was one, but … Bob Kriendler.

SI: Okay.

RY: Yes, Bob Kriendler and Ray Laurans were brother-in-laws. … Bob Kriendler was the one that said, "You'll go over there. You've got no place to live--you'll go to the Phi Ep House."

SI: You went right into the fraternity house.

RY: Right, immediately.

SI: Bob Kriendler, who owned the 21 Club. [Editor's Note: The 21 Club is a restaurant in New York City.]

RY: Yes.

SI: What was that like? Not only did you go to a college far away from home, but you were immediately thrown into a fraternity. What was the fraternity like then?

RY: … Well, the fraternity was kind of an unusual situation for me, but my roommate was Kermit Axelrod, in those days--he changed his name to Axel--Kermit Axelrod, who was a nephew of Bob Kriendler's, so that I was well insulated, and I really enjoyed his company. He was kind of a character and we would, about every four or five weeks, wind up in 21 Club in New York, which was quite exciting for me. … I was a pre-med student. … Matter-of-fact, my degree was bachelor of science in biology, and his was in education, … so that our educational paths were completely different, one from the other, but I enjoyed my four years at Rutgers. I really did.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were talking off the record about Scarlet Key. Did you get started with that right away in your freshman year?

RY: … My second year, yes, in my second year, and I was appointed or elected to the Scarlet Key. … That job was, … basically, [with] visitors that came aboard, to show them around, make them comfortable, and particularly sports, visiting sports teams. … As I jokingly told David, the big thing was to fix them up with the girls at Douglass, [then the New Jersey College for Women, now Douglass Residential College]. Sometimes, it did well and, sometimes, it didn't do so well.

SI: Do you remember having to meet any of the speakers who would come to Kirkpatrick Chapel?

RY: You know, the one that I remember vividly was, in my senior year, the Premier of Czechoslovakia, [Jan Masaryk, Foreign Minister of the Czechoslovakian Government-in-Exile], which the Nazis had thrown out of office. He came to talk to us about it, and that was really the first time that we were personally, really acquainted with what was going [on] over in Europe.

SI: Okay. You arrived in the late 1930s and graduated on the eve of America's entry into World War II.

RY: That's correct, yes.

SI: How aware was the Rutgers campus of what was happening overseas?

RY: Well, we got aware of it back in my senior year. … My junior year, that would be in 1940, … one night, we came [home and] there was a big Nazi sign on our post at 40 Mine Street.

DY: A *swastika* was painted on the Phi Ep House?

RY: Yes.

SI: This was also in the time when fraternities were religiously segregated. It was an all-Jewish fraternity.

RY: Yes, right, yes. Now, it's not, and I remember that. Now, I don't know if I should say this or not, but the Dean at the time was [Reverend Fraser] Metzger and I had a definite feeling--being president of my fraternity--I had a definite feeling that he was anti-Semitic. I think it was very subtle, but I remember, once, [his] calling me in, in his office, just me, it was in my junior year, and raising hell with me about the fact that we were making too much noise. "*Your* fraternity," is the way he pointed it out, "*your* fraternity makes too much noise. Now, you'd better get it in shape," and I got the impression he never said that to anybody else.

SI: To go back to when somebody put a Nazi *swastika* on the house, what was that like and what was your reaction?

RY: Well, it was a shock, I've got to tell you. We quickly got it painted over and I think that the administration … got involved in it, too, and made sure that the security, campus security, would be a little bit … tighter on and that stuff--never had any other incidents from that.

SI: Many alumni say that what was happening overseas was not discussed that much on the campus, but others say that some people were outspokenly pro-Allied or pro-Germany.

RY: Yes. … Up until I left, I didn't see much of that. … I think that [for] most undergraduates that I knew of, even all of the fraternities, that wasn't much of an interest of them, because none of them figured, at that time, that we--that the US--would be involved. [It] was only until my senior year when it began, when the draft came through, that they began to realize that they would be involved, but I didn't see much of it while I was an undergraduate, except for that one instance.

SI: You were also in ROTC for the first two years.

RY: … Yes. Of course, I had to be. That was the land-grant college thing. Is that still in effect?

SI: No, I think they eliminated that in the 1960s.

RY: Did they?

SI: Yes.

RY: Yes. Well, you had to take two years of that, and then, you could opt to take the last two years, and then, you'd come out with a commission. A couple of my fraternity brothers wound up as second lieutenants just before the war, and then, when they went off, they went off as second lieutenants. One of my classmates and fraternity brother, Charles Pine, wound up as a second lieutenant and he flew over the … Himalayans to China. He put his time in in China.

SI: Did you know of anybody who left early, after the war started in Europe?

RY: No.

SI: Left to go join the British?

RY: No, I didn't know of anybody who did.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit more about what life was like in the fraternity, the types of things the fraternity would do?

RY: [laughter] Well, I've got to tell you that it was basically, most of the time, fun and games, and it wasn't a hundred percent conducive to good habits and, really, educational purposes. If I had a son now, I don't think I'd be happy to [see them in a fraternity], like David, … my younger son, he went to American University. You didn't have ROTC at American, did you?

DY: No.

RY: And Tony went to Syracuse, because my oldest boy was interested in going to Rutgers, but he was also interested in radio, which is what he wound up doing. … He had applied here to Rutgers and he was accepted. The fact was that he didn't particularly think that the communications course … was headed toward radio, which is what he was interested in. So, that's why he wound up in Syracuse, and he wound up as being president of the Memphis Radio Group and, now, he runs the Elvis Presley Sirius station in Memphis, Tennessee. He's been in radio ever since. … My daughter was interested in coming down to …

DY: Douglass.

RY: Down to Douglass, primarily for dance, but I don't know why she didn't. She also was accepted, too, at Douglass, but decided not to come to New Brunswick.

SI: That reminds me, did you have a lot of interaction with the women at Douglass at that time?

RY: Did I have what?

SI: When you were an undergraduate, did you have any interaction with the Douglass Campus?

RY: Yes, I had a girlfriend at Douglass. I can't even remember what her name was now, [laughter] but I did have a girlfriend at [Douglass]. Yes, … most of the guys in the fraternity had friend girls/girlfriends over at Douglass.

SI: Were there a lot of parties, house party weekends, that sort of thing?

RY: There were house parties, but, … interesting enough, when there were house parties and you'd invite [a date], if it was a weekend, a dance or something like that, you would never invite the girls from Douglass. You'd invite them from some other place. [laughter]

DY: What about your Saturday morning lecture? …

RY: About what?

DY: Your Saturday morning lecture, with your Professor Peterson?

RY: Well, I don't want to say that.

DY: No, but you talked about Houston Peterson.

RY: Oh, about Houston Peterson.

DY: Right, yes.

RY: Oh, yes. Houston Peterson, he was a great, great professor, philosophy. I had him in my senior year and, believe it or not, I had him on a Saturday morning, at eight o'clock, Saturday morning. You can imagine how many guys went to that thing, but he was so outstanding that it was a place that most of us who were there were very anxious to go to, and I enjoyed [the class]. He was one of my favorite professors. I really enjoyed his lectures.

SI: He always comes up as a very engaging professor.

RY: Yes. Do you get his name often?

SI: Yes, he and Mason Gross.

RY: Mason, well, Mason Gross, yes.

SI: Out of the Philosophy Department.

RY: Yes.

SI: How demanding was the biological sciences curriculum when you were here?

RY: How was it?

SI: Yes, how demanding.

RY: It was a demanding course. A good many … of the guys that got there and stayed there wound up in medical school and dental school, and had no problem getting in.

SI: Do any of the professors or classes stand out in your memory?

RY: I had the names of two of them on the tip of my tongue. [Editor's Note: The interviewee is offered a copy of the 1941 *Scarlet Letter* yearbook, featuring a list of faculty names.] I don't know if it's in there; let me see if it's in there. I have my glasses on, so [that] I can read that.

SI: It goes from this page to the next page. I do not see a listing for the Biological Sciences Department.

RY: Well, I took a course in political science and [Edward McNall] Burns, I remember.

SI: Yes.

RY: He was outstanding.

SI: I understand he was quite a character.

RY: And English, [Donald] Cameron, I remember Cameron, and [G. Stuart] Demarest; well, of course, Houston Peterson's name in there.

SI: You were able to take a number of classes aside from just your major.

RY: In my senior year, most of my classes were not scientific. They were political science. Do we have political science in there?

SI: Yes, it was a combined History-Political Science Department.

RY: Let's see, there was Burns and [John J.] George. I remember Burns and George, and I was telling David--and David said I should tell them--tell this story. Burns was quite a character and he'd get up there in the morning and, … one day, he gets us in there and he says, "We're going to study a little botany today, besides …

SI: Politics?

RY: Yes. He says, "We're going to study a little botany today. We're going to study the pine tree," and he says, "The scientific name for the pine tree that we're going to study is *pinus erectus*. Now, gentlemen," … very sternly, he said, "now, gentlemen, one thing I wanted to repeat to you, we're studying *pinus erectus*." He says, "This is one of the sciences they don't teach at Douglass," [laughter] with a straight face, and George, is George in that group? Yes, John J. George, he was kind of wild. Did he have a reputation? …

SI: He often comes up. I know he was very involved in local politics as well. He was a very memorable figure.

RY: Yes. … Who did I have in physics? I don't remember anybody in physics.

SI: Do any stories about Professor George stand out?

RY: Yes, I have a few stories about Professor George, but I don't remember what they were. …

SI: I think some of the sciences are on the other page.

RY: I had [Charles H.] Stevens in German, but only for about a year or two, and I had sociology. I had [Charles F.] Marden in sociology. Of course, I wasn't in engineering. … That's about it.

SI: If a story comes to mind, go ahead and tell it. Either just before you came to Rutgers or during your time here, there was a big controversy at Douglass involving some of the German professors, where one of them turned out to be a Nazi supporter.

RY: I think that was after my time. I don't recall that.

SI: That was not while you were here.

RY: Yes.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit more about some of your extracurricular activities? I know you were on the *Targum* and you were also involved in *Scarlet Letter*.

RY: Yes, I was the copy editor of *Scarlet Letter*.

DY: You played football your first year?

RY: Yes, I was in freshman football my first year and, also, freshman baseball my first year. I used to run cross-country, but not as a team sport, but I used to run intramurals cross-country. … That was about the extent of it.

SI: Why did you not go on with football or baseball?

RY: I wasn't really good enough for either of them. You know, I had an occasion which might be of interest--played freshman football one weekend at Columbia, played Columbia [in] freshman football, and my mother didn't know that I was playing football. … Being an only child and a single mother, at that point, she would not have been happy about it. … I knew that I was going to go, after the game, on a Saturday--I had the weekend, I didn't have a Monday class--that I was going to go back, pick up the train and go back home for the weekend, back to Fall River. I got put in the game and [was] playing against Columbia, Columbia freshmen. … They had a running back, and I believe his name was Barabbas, who was considered really topnotch, and I was playing right end. … My job, the coach says, "Your job is to go in there--he's going to have two or three guys in front of him for protection--your job is to break that up, so that the linebackers can get at him." I said, "Okay." So, I get into that and, [at] about the second run, (Barabbas?) is coming around my end with three big guys in front of him. … I threw myself at their feet, the last I knew, because I got knocked out. I got taken out of the game and got knocked out. I eventually came to and I was okay enough so that I could get on the train and go home. So, I walk in the house to go home and my mother says to me, "You're a little late today. How come you didn't get an early train?" because I didn't get the train until probably maybe about three-thirty, four in the afternoon, so, I didn't get home until about six-thirty, seven at night. She said, "You should have been home about three or four in the afternoon." Well, I said,

"You know, I was hanging around and didn't get on the earlier train," and she said, "Are you sure you were hanging around?" and I said, "Yes." She said, "You feeling okay?" and I knew that something was wrong. I said, "What are you talking about?" and she said, "You were playing football this afternoon, weren't you?" and I looked at her, I said, "How do you know that?" She said, "One of the fellows who's got a cousin who goes to Columbia was at that game," and he was a friend of the family's, "and he came back and he told me that he saw you playing football up at the Columbia field and that you apparently got hurt." … From that point on, I always had to tell her if I was going to play football or not. So, I didn't play football after that year, plus the fact I really wasn't big enough or strong enough to play football, although I think that, right now, I would not even be able to get on the field, because, you know, we played schools like Lehigh and Lafayette and Marietta and schools like that, not anything that was grade A football.

SI: Princeton was the big grudge match.

RY: Princeton was the big game, yes.

SI: You were here when they beat them for the first time [since the first football game].

RY: I was at the game when they beat them for the first time … after the first time that they ever beat them. That was at the new stadium. It was just built at that point, and that was really some affair. [Editor's Note: On November 5, 1938, the day of the dedication of Rutgers Stadium in Piscataway, New Jersey, Rutgers beat Princeton University for the first time since defeating them in the first college football game on November 6, 1869. One of Yokel's fraternity brothers, Robert Gottleib, was the starting halfback.]

SI: Did you attend a lot of events like that?

RY: Did I what?

SI: Did you attend a lot of the athletic events?

RY: Yes. I used to watch the basketball games and … I played a little baseball, but, … once, I got [to play], in my freshman year, … against NYU, in a baseball game. They had a guy by the name of, a pitcher by the name of, Hank Berrari. That name may not be [memorable], because he was only in the Major Leagues for maybe five or six years, but he was considered something, and he threw the ball twice to me. I was up twice, threw the ball maybe no more than six or seven times, and I've got to tell you, I never saw it. [laughter] So, that ended my baseball playing. The coach said to me, "You try hard, Yoken, but I think you'd better find another sport." [laughter]

DY: How come you have this metal discus that we had at the house for many years in the front hall? Did you throw a discus here at all?

RY: No, I used to throw a discus for my own use, and I used to run cross-country in Buccleuch Park. That, I did, but I did that intramural, mostly intramural stuff.

SI: What did you do at the *Targum*?

RY: Well, I did … mostly copy work. … I was the copy editor of the *Targum*. I used to write the headlines for the *Targum* and I used to do general paper work at the *Targum*.

SI: Was that the kind of thing where your involvement in the fraternity led to that, or did you do that on your own?

RY: Well, I was president of the fraternity in my senior year. The fraternity was quite active. We were quite active in socializing and in helping out people. … Like, when they have something going on in the town … of New Brunswick, if they needed volunteers, a good many of our guys would go out and help them with that.

SI: What sort of things would they volunteer for?

RY: Like collections, … for [the] Salvation Army and that sort of stuff.

SI: Okay.

RY: But, that's [if] you could get them away, … mostly on the weekends, if they weren't going home, but since a good many of the guys lived in New Jersey and New York City, we lost a lot of guys on the weekends.

SI: That is interesting. I know that it is very common now for fraternities to do community service, but I have not heard too much about it being done back then.

RY: Well, it wasn't organized and it wasn't done by every fraternity, but we used to do it together with the Delta Phi, who lived around the corner from us. I guess that fraternity's still in business.

SI: I am not a hundred percent sure, but I think they could be.

RY: Yes.

SI: Did you have to attend chapel?

RY: Well, I had to go to chapel. In my freshman year, it was required every Sunday, but, from then on in, it wasn't. We would go to chapel occasionally, if there was a speaker that we were interested in listening to, but it was a problem to go to chapel, because … Sunday morning, … you know, you didn't want to get up early enough to go to chapel, but, … in my day, it was required in your freshman year. … Of course, it was completely non-sectarian, so, there was no problem religiously about it.

SI: Yes, I was wondering about that, if you felt put upon.

RY: No. … It was put upon because it was Sunday morning and you had to get up.

SI: Besides the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, do any of the other speakers stand out?

RY: … Nobody else that really makes me feel … that I remember to that point.

SI: As you neared graduation in 1941, what did you think was going to happen at that point? What were your plans for the future?

RY: … Well, I had hoped that I might be able to get into medical school, but realizing that I wouldn't, I went back home and I worked. I worked in a wholesale grocery, in the receiving department, and decided that maybe … I should stay in the commercial end of enterprises instead of going to medical school. … Fortunately, I had an uncle who had a big wholesale grocery and I worked … in his place, but it was physical work. I worked … in the delivery [department], the truck delivery, moving furniture, moving heavy bags of sugar and flour, and I remember one of the most interesting things was, … the freight cars were in a freight yard that had a lot of tracks in it. … One morning, I'm working in there and I see a train come in with three or four coaches behind it and I wondered why that would be in this freight yard, and the next thing I knew, I see a bunch of National Guard guys marching down. … That was just before they got into the Second World War and that made quite an impression on me, because I knew one or two of the [soldiers]. I saw one or two of the guys that were in that group.

SI: In those months before Pearl Harbor, did you see changes happening in Fall River, such as war-based building?

RY: Not specifically, but … you knew that the draft was coming into effect and that made quite an impression, and people started to get more [involved]--you see more flags flying, people getting more patriotic--than they had been before that point.

SI: Were you concerned that you would be drafted after you graduated?

RY: Well, … it was a good chance, because … I was single, I was healthy and I had a low draft number, but, fortunately, it never happened. They had enough, and because I had a single mother, I think that the draft board decided that they didn't need to pick me right away.

SI: I am not sure if there is anything in the information I have here, but you did not enter the Navy until after Pearl Harbor.

RY: … Yes, after Pearl Harbor.

SI: Did you investigate any possible other services before Pearl Harbor?

RY: Yes, the Marine Corps. That's a story in itself. … I was at home. I'd finished college and I was at home, and I knew that I would be drafted sooner or later and I certainly didn't want to get into the Army, plus the fact that, being young, twenty years old at the time, because I was twenty when I graduated, … the Marine Corps uniform intrigued me. See how shallow one's mind gets? So, I went up to Boston, to the receiving station, to enlist in the Marine Corps and I walked into

the Marine office. … The Marine officer in charge looks at my credentials and he says to me, "You know," he says, "there are no vacancies in the Marines now, because, by law, the Marines are twenty percent of … what the Navy was," and he says, "However, Marine Air Force is available. We can put you in that if you're interested," and I wasn't interested in flying. I said, "No, thank you." He says, "Well, I've got to tell you, with your biological background and the fact that you've had physics and mathematics," he said, "I'm going to send you down the hall." Down the hall was the Navy enlisting office. He said, "You go there." He says, "I think they'll be able to help you." That's how I got in the Navy. So, they signed me up, said, "Go back to Fall River and you'll hear from us in about six weeks." Six weeks, I got a notice--a phone call, and then, a notice--saying, "You are to report to the V-12 Program down … at Annapolis."

SI: When did you enlist in the Navy?

RY: That was '41. That's just right after Pearl Harbor, yes.

SI: Okay, that December. Tell me about Pearl Harbor, the day of the attack, where you were.

RY: I was home and I got that over the radio. That was kind of a shock, and then, I knew damn well that … I was going to be in the service, one way or another.

SI: Was there any initial fear or anything like that?

RY: No, not really, because, … when you're twenty-one years old, … all you see is the romantic side of things and, not knowing exactly what I would be in for, it didn't make that much impression on me. I did realize that being in the Navy would be a hell of a lot more comfortable than being in the Army, because I knew [that] in the Army, even though I'd had two years of military here [ROTC], that that was meaningless, that I would go in as a private and probably not [be] something that would be of great interest to me. So, … when I got the orders to go to the Naval Academy, … I picked up the ship in Boston--no, I took the train from Boston to Baltimore, and then, went to Annapolis. They had a small trolley run that was between Annapolis and Baltimore, and then, reported to the; … get that thing right. No, I know how it was. I was assigned to a converted yacht that was running … out of the Navy base at Norfolk, and I went down and the ship was in Chesapeake Bay. … We got a call one afternoon. … It was at sea, at Chesapeake Bay, with the anchor down, got a call from the Captain, "Come to the Captain's office," went to the Captain's office and there were three of us, myself and two other fellows. … Captain says, "I want you to look out that starboard port. What do you see out there?" and I looked out and I said, we saw, "There's an old Spanish-American ship that's there, a sailing ship." He says, "That's the receiving station for the Naval Academy." He said, "Your records, all of your records, are all scientific based and that's where the three of you are going. Get your gear together, because, in two hours, you're going to be on that thing and you're going to go to the Naval Academy." So, that's what we did. We got to the Naval Academy, and then, they were building up a Reserve, Naval Reserve, unit at the Naval Academy and they were looking for … engineering officers, people who had scientific backgrounds. … I spent nine months at the Naval Academy and I was commissioned at the Naval Academy, was commissioned as an ensign, with a classification which was EVG, engineer volunteer general, and then, sent up to Penn State College for diesel engineering. We had a professor at diesel

engineering whose name was [Paul] Schweitzer. He was [of] German background. He was the professor of diesel engineering, and it sticks in my mind forever, … the first thing he said is, "We have two types of diesels. There's the mechanical diesel and there's the air injection diesel." He said, "We're going to study the mechanical diesel here, because there is no such thing in the US Navy as air injection diesels." So, I was at Penn State College. At this point, I'm an ensign.

DY: And he pronounced it, "*Hair* injection," didn't he?

RY: Yes, "*Hair* injection." [laughter] At this point [while still on the converted yacht], he said, "You'll get orders to proceed to Norfolk. You'll go home, you'll be on leave at home, and you'll get orders to go to Norfolk from home, down to the Naval Academy." So, I got to the Naval Academy and, as I say, I was there for about 150 days and I was commissioned in the Naval Academy. … At the Naval Academy, I was then sent up to State College for diesel engineering training, but I had leave to go home. In the meantime, I'd had a friend who was the skipper of a subchaser. He'd picked up a new subchaser. He was an ROTC [graduate], … Navy ROTC, out of Harvard. He picked up a subchaser in Boston, where it was built, and he was heading down to Florida, to Miami, Florida, through Norfolk. … He got in touch with me and he says, "I understand that you've got to go down to Norfolk, Virginia." He said, "I'll give you a ride down." He says, "You'll be ahead of the game, because they're paying per diem and mileage." He says, "You can keep the per diem and keep the mileage and you'll get a ride and you'll see what the subchasers, the brand-new subschasers, are like," 110-foot subchaser, and I went down with him. We pulled into Norfolk Harbor and there … must have been 150 ships in Norfolk Harbor, all types. There were transports, there were destroyers, there were one or two cruisers. … I get down and … he said, "You report to the officer in charge of [the base]. That's where you report in to, the office." I reported in to the office in Norfolk and there's a lieutenant, senior grade, there who's got my record in front of him and he says to me, "Can I look?" and he looks very familiar. It was an ex-movie actor, Richard Bartholemew. You probably don't remember the name, but I'll bet you that your seniors or parents know the name. He was a lieutenant, senior grade, in charge of this office and he … looks up these papers and he says to me, "I have your orders here." He says, "You're to report to an SC-503, which is a subchaser, at Little Creek," which was a little bit north of Norfolk, and he says, "and they will give you further orders from there." [Editor's Note: The SC-503, a US Navy submarine chaser, was launched in March 1942, commissioned that April, and was eventually transferred to France on November 4, 1944, being renamed the CH-112.] So, I got transportation. … As I left, he shook my hand and he says, "Good luck, Ensign." I was an ensign at that point. He says, "Good luck, Ensign." … I'm getting in the station wagon to go … to Little Creek and I'm saying, "What the hell is he wishing me good luck for?" … It didn't make much sense. So, I get down there and I get back to where I had originally come in. Where all those ships were, there wasn't a ship left in the whole place. They'd all disappeared, suddenly, and I got down to Little Creek and I got orders to go down to pier so-and-so, "And you'll see a relatively small ship down there, the SC-503, and that's where you'll report to the commanding officer." So, I get down there. As I say, there's nothing left in the harbor now, except some few harbor craft. All these ships had suddenly disappeared overnight. … He's leaning on the rails, but a little, short guy, … he was a lieutenant, senior grade, and he says to me, … "You the new engineering officer?" I said, "I guess I am." He says, "Well, I'm the captain," name was Cone Johnson, and I found out that he had … left the Philippines with [John D.] Bulkeley's PT squadrons. He'd taken MacArthur out of the

Philippines. [Editor's Note: Vice Admiral (then Lieutenant) John D. Bulkeley led the May 1942 rescue of US Army General Douglas MacArthur from the Philippines after the Japanese invasion and earned the Medal of Honor for his command of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 3 in the early days of the war.] So, he had quite a reputation. He was the captain of this subchaser. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Ready?

RY: Yes.

SI: Before we get into your time on the SC-503, in general, when you first went in the Navy, how did your family react to the news?

RY: Well, I think that they had mixed feelings, because they realized that the war was not going to be a one-day proposition and they were somewhat glad that I got in the Navy, rather than the Army. … My mother, particularly, being a single mother and that I was an only child, she was concerned about it. … I think, in a way, they were kind of proud that I had selected this and that I … eventually was being assigned to the Naval Academy and places like that.

SI: How did you react to going in the military and being subjected to military life?

RY: Well, it was something new and different, because it was more structured than I'd ever been used to, but I learned pretty quickly that, when the "T" was there, it had to be crossed properly.

SI: Tell me about being at the Academy during the war. What was it like, the daily life, the training, the discipline?

RY: It was very structured. Everything was structured. I mean, every minute was assigned to it, and, since we were involved, the Reserve units, like my own, were actually co-mingled with the regular midshipmen. … They did a good job, so that you weren't looked down on, because, when you're in a company, you're in a company with regular midshipmen, … you weren't assigned to special, different situations. I found that to be very interesting. … I had a friend, who was a high school classmate, who was a regular midshipman and … I was in the same company that he was in. … You know, he was there for four years and … I would only be there for nine months, was a lot different, but … he didn't look down on it at all. I think that they had been, regular midshipmen had been, advised by the authorities that, "Look, guys, you'd better … handle these people properly, because they're going to save your butt if you're not too careful."

SI: How intense was the classroom work?

RY: It was very difficult, used to go to class. I remember, … you would sit down in a class. … First, you had to walk in in order. You had to be in a group in which the head of the group would go to the main desk and say to the instructor, "Section So-and-So is reporting, sir," and then, you'd sit down. … Then, the instructor would go up on the board and he'd say, "We're covering chapters one to four," let's say, "and you're going to be asked questions about it." So,

he'd say, "Now, sit back [down]," and he had a bunch of papers, … three-by-five cards, on his desk and they were face down. … He'd pick one up and he'd turn it over and he'd look at the schedule of who was there and he'd take a name and he'd say, "Midshipman Yoken, come up here and pick a paper, pick a card," pick a card. You turn it over and whatever the card said on it, it had something to do with the five chapters that you … supposedly had to read. … He said, "Go up on the board and I'm going to start asking you questions about this," and you had to write the answer to them. You had to pass a certain grade, I think maybe seventy-five was the grade, and you had to pass it, get at least a passing grade on it. … At the end of the week, on a Friday, because there were no Saturday or Sunday classes, there would be what was known as "The Tree." There'd be a bulletin board with names on it and, if your name was on "The Tree," that meant that you didn't get leave that weekend because your work wasn't satisfactory. You'd have to go to a special class to get renewed on it. So, everybody was quite anxious to look at that board, to see if their names were on there or not. So, then, you would be able to go off on a Saturday, at noontime, but you had to be back by midnight on Sunday for Monday's classes. … It was always a standard joke, at twelve o'clock midnight, if you hadn't signed in at Bancroft Hall--at twelve midnight, not 00:01 or two minutes or two seconds past twelve o'clock midnight--you were back on the crap list again. … So, everybody, you see a bunch of midshipmen running from the train to get there on time on a Sunday, but I enjoyed that. I had three roommates and I was always impressed with the inspections. These guys would come in with white gloves and they'd go around your room, under your bed, like this, [swabbing with their fingers]. If any dust was on it, boy, you were really in trouble. It was very strenuous.

SI: Did they have a demerit system?

RY: Yes, absolutely.

SI: I have heard, from midshipmen who went through the Academy in peacetime, that they would deliberately find things.

RY: Well, every so often, you know, … you wouldn't make that hospital corners correctly--that would be a demerit of some sort, … any small thing that was not right. … When you get out your uniform on weekends, Sundays, you had to go to some religious [service]. That was required. The Catholic boys would go to Catholic church, the Protestant boys would go to chapel on the grounds and the Jewish boys would go to a synagogue. You had to be in line and you had to stand there and to be signed off. … You'd better be there in shape and in uniform, which was pressed and cleaned, and your tie was right and your hat was on correctly. They were very strict about that and I used to have, as I say, a regular classmate, regular from high school, who was a regular midshipman, and I used to see him in my group on a Sunday morning. I was in with the Jewish group and I'd say to him, "Art," I'd say, "what the hell are you doing in our group here? You don't belong here," and he'd say, "I go in your group for two reasons." He'd say, "Number one, when you go to the synagogue," he says, "the food is great there, and," he says, "the girls are much prettier than the other group there." So, he says, "Just keep your mouth shut. Don't say anything." [laughter] He wound up with bad eyes, so that he was finally put out of the Navy.

SI: Were there men who washed out, either regular midshipmen or V-12 midshipmen?

RY: Yes, I knew one or two of them that washed out. Does the name Wendell Willkie ring [a bell]?

SI: The Presidential candidate? [Editor's Note: Republican Wendell Willkie was defeated by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1940 Presidential Election, but became a staunch supporter of Roosevelt's interventionist policies in support of the Allies on the eve of America's entry into World War II. His son, Philip Willkie, served in the US Navy during World War II.]

RY: He was a classmate in this group and he was so impossible that they didn't know what the hell to do with him, because his father was running for President at that point and they didn't want to make too many waves. So, what they did was, they transferred him. He was always out of uniform, he was always late for inspection--he just didn't belong. They transferred him to a midshipman school up in New York. … I saw him later on in the Mediterranean and he was no better then than he was when he was down in Annapolis.

SI: Tell me about some of the traditions that you were exposed to at the Academy.

RY: Well, as I say, you'd touch [the statue of] Tecumseh the Native American chief … before exams. … At dinner, when you sat down, you sat in the huge mess hall with maybe seven or eight hundred midshipmen there. You sat at a long table and you had to stand at that table until the senior midshipman came in, and then, he'd stand there with you. … None of you could sit down until an officer, who sat at the end of the table to monitor this, came in, and then, you could sit down. When he sat down, then, you could sit down. That was one of the traditions. … You went to classes in a march. You had to march to classes and, when you got in, you had to stand until the instructor told you to, "Be seated, gentlemen." … There's nothing more than that on there. … There were no sports going on at that time, so, we didn't have any sports, … any football games and stuff, that we could see. That was basically it.

SI: Did they have a lot of calisthenics?

RY: Yes, a lot of physical work, mental and physical work.

SI: When you were at Penn State, at the diesel school, about how long was that?

RY: That was a six months' course, yes.

SI: Was that a little more relaxed?

RY: Yes. Well, we were all officers at that point. We weren't midshipmen at all, we were all ensigns. So, we were all officers and, … actually, you were in a city, in a town, that was a college town, so that we had to act much differently than the students that were at the college. We were even separated from them in different [classes]. Our classes were all just our classes. We had no regular students. [Editor's Note: David Yoken produces a photograph.] Yes, that's one of the …

DY: A formation. …

RY: Yes, that's one of the …

SI: Is that from Annapolis?

RY: Yes. No, that's at Penn State.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: It is an image of all of you in uniform.

RY: Yes, all the time, yes.

SI: Were there any USOs or entertainment options for you out there?

RY: No, not at college, and, mostly, if there were USOs, even overseas, they were primarily for enlisted men, although officers were there, but they were primarily for enlisted personnel, because there were officers' [clubs], like, in Oran, there was a big naval officers' club that you could go to, which [was] a place for entertainment, that enlisted men were not allowed in. … There was an enlisted man's club that officers--it wasn't that they were not allowed, but it was protocol that officers … didn't go there.

SI: At either of these two training sessions, did you have additional duties that you had to do, like guard duty?

RY: … Well, when we were down at Annapolis, you had certain guard duties that you had to do; not at Penn State College. … You had hours, … just [that] the hours were not as restricted as they were at the Naval Academy. I mean, … you didn't have to sign in at midnight, but you had to be at class in the morning. So, you could go out. If, let's say, you had an eight o'clock class Monday morning, you didn't have a class on Saturday or on Sunday, but, if you didn't make it [to] that eight o'clock [class], you're in serious trouble. … You didn't have to be there to sign in, but you had to be there when he took the roll. [If] the instructor took the roll and you weren't there, you had to have a pretty good answer why you weren't there. At the Naval Academy, if you weren't there, you just get demerits and you were restricted from going ashore, or whatever it might be.

SI: To jump forward, you described how you met the skipper of the SC-503 and joined the crew. Tell me a little more about that.

RY: That's an interesting story. As I said, I came aboard and this guy was leaning over the way, railing, and he was in uniform, in his work uniform, his khakis, and with a Navy officer's hat on. … He said to me, "You're the new engineering officer?" I said, "Yes, sir." … It was about twelve o'clock noon. He says, "I want you to go and get yourself some lunch, but I want you back in the engine room by 1300," one o'clock. … I said, "What am I supposed to be doing down there?" He says, "We're taking the engines apart and I want you to be down there to

supervise it." Now, that, to me, was kind of a shock, because, number one, I didn't know what the hell the engines were to begin with, but I was an engineering officer. So, I get down there and I'm … looking over the rails in the engine room and I'm looking down below and I see a bunch of seamen walking around, scurrying around, and a lot of work going on. … A chief machinist's mate comes by, spots me, and he says, "Ensign," he says, "are you the new engineering officer?" I said, "Yes, I am." He says, "Well, sir," he says, "I'm the chief motor machinist," and he says, "you can see we're hard at work down here." He says, "I only have one thing to say to you--stay out of my way, because," he says, "we've got work to do down here and I don't want any interruption." So, I listened to him and I'm standing there, watching them. At about two in the afternoon, I'm standing there and I get a tap on my shoulder and I looked down like this and I see behind me a pair of black, Navy, shiny, you could … see your face in it, shoes. … I slowly look up and I turn around and I see a two-star admiral standing behind me. It was the commanding general [admiral] of the Atlantic Fleet, and he says to me--and I, of course, quickly came to attention and saluted him--he says, "You the new engineer officer?" I said, "Yes, sir." He says, "Get these damned guys fast to work," he says, "because we've got to be out of here by … 1400 tomorrow." … The engines were all apart. These were two twelve-cylinder diesel engines, doubles. We had twin screws on this 110-foot subchaser, and he says, "And I don't want [to be late]. … When I'm saying out of here by twelve noon tomorrow, I mean twelve noon tomorrow. That doesn't mean 12:05 or 12:10, that means twelve noon, or the whole bunch of you are going to be in trouble, including you, even though you just came aboard." I said, "Yes, sir." Sure enough, they got them together. … I found out, what had happened was that the ship, this boat, had gone out the day before and it'd got as far as Cape Henry, which was about fifteen miles out to sea, and it crapped out. … It'd been sabotaged. Somebody had poured sand or something into the engine. They had to take them all apart, put them back together again. So, we finally got it together. We went out on time. When they went out the next morning, I see … [why] I came in, there was a bunch of ships in the area, now there wasn't a ship left in the whole area, except one or two small yard tugs. They'd all disappeared someplace. I didn't know where they had gone, but they weren't there anymore. So, we get aboard and Cone Johnson, who was the captain, comes to me and he says to me, "You've got the mid watch." Mid watch is … twelve midnight to four in the morning. So, he said, "I think you'd better go below and get some rest." He said, … "I'm going to be up here. You come up topside at twenty minutes to midnight and I'll give you the route and give you the orders. By that time, we should be out to sea." So, I come up in the morning, twenty minutes to midnight in the morning, and I was told, "He's got the orders for you. Just come in the charthouse," comes in the charthouse and shows me the orders, and he says to me, "Now, do you see where we're heading?" … I says, "Yes," I said, "but I'm a little puzzled." He says, "Why?" I said, "I would be figuring that we'd be heading south. I figured that all subchasers, to begin with, new subchasers, went down for training and shakedown in Miami, Florida." … I'm saying to myself, "Jeez, that's going to be great, nice, for the winter. Hard, cold winter coming up, we're going down to Miami, Florida." … I said, "Well, why am I taking this route down here? Why aren't we heading out … west?" He says to me, "Where?" I said, "West." He says, "Why are you saying west?" I said, "I thought that all new subchasers shook down in Miami, Florida." He says, "Most of them do," he said, "but we did our shaking down in Boston." He says, "If you want to go to Miami, Florida, I would suggest that you go to the port side and jump overboard, because it's only about a five-mile swim. We're only five miles off the beach." I said, "Where are we going?" He says, "We're going for the invasion of North Africa." That was the first taste that I got. … I said, "What are we supposed

to be doing?" He says, "We're supposed to head a convoy. We're going to be in the front of a convoy with [sonar]," … sonar had just come into effect at that time, "with radar and sonar. … To protect this big convoy," he says, "we're going to be one of fifteen ships that are going to be escorting this convoy." … I says, "Straight across?" He said, "Well, no, first, we're stopping at Bermuda. We'll be in Bermuda for about a week, because we're going to take supplies on and water, and so forth," he says, "but don't get any ideas, because you're not going to get ashore in Bermuda. You're going to see Bermuda. It's pretty, but you're [only] going to see how pretty it is, because you're not going to get ashore to see it." That's how I got acclimated; that was my instruction in the beginning of getting over to Europe.

SI: You said it was a small boat, 110 feet.

RY: 110-foot subchaser.

SI: How many men were aboard? How many officers?

RY: Thirty-five, four officers, the captain, the executive officer, the communications officer and the engineering officer. The Captain, of course, had his own duties, but the Executive Officer also was the [navigation officer], he worked the charts, and the engineer officer spent his time down below, most of the time, and the fourth officer was the overall officer. The junior officer was everything.

SI: How many men did you have under you in engineering?

RY: Well, as an engineering officer, I had four men under me, but, eventually, I became commanding officer of this subchaser, over in Europe, but that's a funny story in itself, because … just after the invasion of Sicily, I get orders, one day, to come to headquarters. … The captain who was in charge of headquarters says to me, "Got new orders for you, Yoken." He says, "You're going to be the new skipper of the subchaser." He said, "Where everybody else is going home, I've got a new crew coming aboard and you're going to be the skipper." … I said to him, "But," I said, "Captain," he was a captain, I said, "Captain," I said, "I can't be the skipper." He says, "Why can't you be?" … He says, "You've been at the Naval Academy. You've got some navigational experience." I said, "Because my classification is EVG, engineer volunteer general, and that doesn't qualify me, by law, to be … commander of the ship," which had to be a deck officer. So, he says to me, "You know," he says, "you're right. I hadn't thought about that," turns around and he yells to the yeoman. … He says to him, "I've got Yoken up here." He says, "Write him new orders." He says, "He's got a new classification." He says, "I'm now classifying him DEVG, deck engineering volunteer general." He says, "Now," he says, "you can take command." [laughter] So, … that's how I got into the command position. Eventually, I was a commanding officer of an APD, which is a high-speed transport, … with a company of Marines, with their complete equipment. That was down in Guantanamo, for … the coming invasion of Japan, which never took place. [Editor's Note: APDs, US Navy destroyer transports, garnered the nickname "Green Dragons" because of their camouflage paint.]

SI: Going back to when you were going to Europe for the first time, what were your daily duties as the engineering officer? What would you do?

RY: Well, I had to stand a deck watch as well. You know, it was four on and eight off. So, when I was on for the four hours, I spent half of the other eight hours on the bridge, you know, checking the charts, and so forth. … Then, the rest of the time, I was down in the engine room, to make sure that the crew was down there doing the job they were supposed to be doing.

SI: How did you get along with, say, the chief who told you to stay out of his way?

RY: Well, … by that time, you know, he realized that I wasn't going to get in the way. I knew enough to know that he knew a hell of a lot more about engineering than I did. He'd been twenty years in the service at that point and I didn't bother him and he didn't bother me, because I knew he was doing the job very, very well.

SI: Tell me about getting over to Africa and your initial impressions of North Africa.

RY: Well, it was an excitement, because it was an adventure, going by the Rock of Gibraltar, … into Gibraltar, seeing Gibraltar. … You know, it was a sight I never expected to see. … The towns in North Africa were interesting, because they were Arab and French, most of those towns, … the ports we got into. Because we were a small ship, the only big port that we ever got into and stayed any time was Algiers. Most of the time, we're in small ports, so that it was an experience that I would not ordinarily have seen before my time. … Because I was able to speak the language--French was the basic language--I could speak it moderately well, so that I was able to get along. … We used to go ashore. All officers who went ashore had to carry a .45-caliber pistol, because you never knew who you were going to run into on the beaches, but it was, basically, mostly peaceful.

SI: In the diary, you wrote that you would often have to go off the ship to search for supplies and procurements.

RY: Yes.

SI: Was that pretty routine, or did you have to actually scrounge around for things?

RY: … Most of the places that we got supplies, where we got off the ship, were close to where the ship was docked.

SI: Did you have any trouble getting supplies, getting the things that you needed?

RY: Well, we occasionally had a little trouble, but, very often, there were bigger ships, Navy ships, in the area. For example, ice cream--we didn't have enough refrigeration to carry much ice cream. So, if we wanted ice cream, if we saw a cruiser, US cruiser, we would go ashore. We'd go next to it and sort of beg, and they'd look down and say, "These poor slobs," and they'd give us some ice cream. … I had one guy from Boston on the ship who was really a hustler. You could send him ashore and he'd come back with a bunch of stuff. I don't know how he did it, but he must have conned a lot of people to get the stuff. Most of my crew was from the Boston area and they had their own story. They all enlisted in the Navy, because, at that time, they needed

inshore patrol. … They all figured that if they were inshore patrol out of Boston that they could go home in the evenings and on the weekends, but they got fooled, like a lot of people, and so, they got sent to us instead, going overseas. So, most of them were very unhappy about that, but they were all Boston area guys, with the big Boston/New England accents.

SI: On small ships like this, from what I have heard, the line between officer and enlisted men was not as strict.

RY: No, none at all.

SI: You became more familiar with the men.

RY: Yes. Hey, you had to, because you were living so close to them. The only place where there was some restriction was on the APD, the high-speed transport, because that was a bigger ship. It's the size of a destroyer, and the officers had their own mess hall and the enlisted men had their own mess space. … The restriction was just that the enlisted men were not allowed in the officers' mess hall and the officers were not allowed in the enlisted men's mess, unless on a disciplinary mission, just they weren't even allowed to walk through it. That was the enlisted men's space.

SI: Was everyone in the same mess on the subchaser?

RY: The substance was the same, if that's what you mean.

SI: The mess or the galley?

RY: The galley was in-between the two mess halls. So, the food was the same.

SI: That was on the APD.

RY: That was on the APD. Certainly, it was on the APD, as well as on the subchaser. It was exactly the same. On the subchaser, the eating space was no larger than … this table over here or this table here seven feet-by-three feet.

SI: When you were at sea, would the men still call you, "Sir," or, "Mr. Yoken," or was it more informal?

RY: No. They would still call you by your term. … When I was a captain, they'd say, "Captain," you know.

DY: What about that one incident with that anti-Semitic situation? I don't know which ship it was on, with the guy; was he from Mississippi? … He had gone ashore and there was something and he asked you whether you knew any Jewish people.

RY: Oh, yes. I had one guy, was from Mobile, Alabama, real Southerner, with all of the feelings that Southerners have, you know. … One day, he came back to the ship. I was captain

at the time. This was on the APD. He came back to the ship, and he was actually an officer. He was a junior officer, and we're sitting down in the wardroom and the guys were talking about their experiences ashore. It was in Green Cove Springs, Florida, … up the river from Jacksonville. … He says, "I had an experience today." He says, "I ran into some character who was giving me a hard time." … He says, "He was a Jew from New York City," and he says, "and I just hate them to begin with, and this guy was even worse." … I looked at him and I said, "That's interesting." He says, "Why do you say that?" I said, "Some of my best friends are Jews," and he says, "They are?" I said, "Yes--my mother and father." I've got to tell you, he being … a junior officer and [I being] the captain, … I think if we were out to sea, he would have jumped overboard.

DY: I don't mean to interrupt, but just very quickly, please talk about the YAG, because that was a converted yacht. …

RY: Yes, my first ship was a converted yacht.

DY: And that had belonged to whom?'

RY: YAG-7, it was called. It was a beautiful ship. This was when I first went to sea, out of Little Creek. That ship used to do a patrol between Norfolk and Morehead City, North Carolina, down the coast. It wasn't very seaworthy, but it was a beautiful ship. It had, on the bow, … a Spanish-American War cannon. So, one day, we decided we'd like to [fire it]. Nobody'd ever fired it, as far as we knew. We happened to have some ammunition aboard that would fit it. We tried to fire it. The thing went out about fifty yards ahead, only about fifty yards ahead of the ship, and I've got to tell you, we bounced around a little bit when that thing exploded in the water. …

DY: Who had the yacht belonged to?

RY: What's that?

DY: Who had the yacht belonged to?

RY: It belonged to the Vanderbilts, [a prominent, wealthy American family that made its fortune from building railroads]. They had given it to the Navy.

SI: That was before you went to Annapolis.

RY: Yes.

SI: Okay. I did not understand. I thought you just reported to this yacht, and then, went immediately to Annapolis.

RY: Yes, yes.

SI: How long were you on the yacht?

RY: I would [say] about six, seven months.

SI: Really?

RY: Yes.

DY: … Were you also investigating the submarine [threat]? You were looking at the German U-boats.

RY: Yes, we were looking for them--a lot of U-boats right off Norfolk--but we were useless, actually. If any of them came to the surface, we would have been in trouble.

SI: In reading your war diary, it was not too long after you first got to Europe that you started being attacked by the air. Can you tell me about your first experience with an air raid?

RY: … It was in the Mediterranean and German planes came out to bomb the convoy. So, that's a picture of it right there. This is the German plane. So, we had to fire. We fired at the German plane and they dropped a few bombs that hit a tanker that was near us. Is that the one that hit the tanker near us?

DY: Yes.

RY: Yes. … It sunk the tanker and we took survivors off the tanker, and we shot down the plane, actually, and we brought them into Bizerte. It was in North Africa. We brought them into Bizerte. … There was a pilot and another pilot aboard this aircraft, and there were three German aviators. We took them aboard, kept them below until we got to Bizerte, and then, took them topside. In the meantime, the British, who controlled that port, came up to take charge of them. … The British soldiers, with their heavy boots, and they had no use for these Germans, they gave them orders to move and, if they didn't move, they'd kick them.

SI: How did you feel being under fire for the first time?

RY: It's scary, it's scary, but, after a while, you get used to it. One of the black humor situations you can talk about, fire, getting under fire, we were up at Anzio. A bunch of ships were in the harbor, troopships and cargo ships for the troops, and our job was to patrol around the harbor. … We were getting under surveillance from German planes that were coming out of Naples, which was just up the coast. [Editor's Note: Commander Yoken may be thinking of another city since Naples was in Allied hands at the time.] They would come over the harbor and probably take pictures in hopes to drop bombs on some of these ships, so that there was a lot of firing going on. … One day, I go out to the stern of the subchaser, and we used to lay down smoke. We had smoke canisters on the stern, so that it would block the … sights of the German planes from seeing the ships. … I go back to the fantail and I see, by where … we had the smoke generator, … a big sign, about maybe a third the size of this [table]. In handwriting, big scrawling handwriting, is the legend, "Ships, This Way," with an arrow. Some clown on my ship decided that he was going to put that out, so [that] if the Germans saw it, they'd know. He had the arrow

pointing away from the ships, that they would see it--if they could read it, they would go the other way. These are some of the funny things that you find.

SI: One of the incidents from before the invasion of Sicily was the attack on the LSTs, particularly the LST-333. [Editor's Note: This incident took place on June 22, 1943.]

RY: Yes.

SI: What do you remember about that incident?

RY: Well, I remember that they were not too far away from us and they … really hit that thing almost amidships, and we had to take--we took--one or two survivors off that. Didn't you run into some …

DY: … And there's corroboration on the Internet of that, which is included in the diary.

RY: Yes, there were some casualties in that. Fortunately, we never had anything like that. The only thing we ever had was in Palermo. We had an air raid and it hit the dock that we were at. … There was an ammunition base, … an ammunition center, at the dock. So, everything was like Fourth of July and shrapnel rained. We were on [the] right, the first ship on the pier. Shrapnel rained in and I got a cut on my arm. It's still there, someplace, a little scar from the shrapnel, but that's the extent of it. … I don't know if you read about George Patton. Is that in there?

DY: Yes.

SI: Yes, you said he came to …

RY: Yes, he came aboard the ship. That was quite an experience, fantastic looking man, and this was just after he got into trouble at the Army medical base, where he slapped … a soldier, that he almost got sent back to the States for that. [Editor's Note: US Army General George S. Patton slapped and berated a US Army private at an evacuation hospital in Sicily on August 3, 1943, an event made famous after it was reported in the news. According to Commander Yoken's war diary, Patton visited his ship on August 1, 1943.] He came down after an air raid one day to see what was happening down at the beach, pulls up at the end of the pier, and I see this car come down with the flags … on both the fenders and I see the three stars on it. … I knew somebody important [was inside] and I knew that the only three-star general in the area was Patton. The guy walks out of this car, he steps out of this car, beautifully shined shoes, his uniform, like joffers-- horseback riding pants-- were pressed, and I look again and he's got two pistols on his hip, two pistol-handled pistols.

RY: Yes. … He comes over, stands by me, because we were the first ship and I was the officer of the deck, and he salutes me and he says, "I'd like to come aboard." He says, "I haven't had breakfast this morning and I understand the Navy has good coffee and donuts and I'd like to have some. May I have permission to go aboard?" Here's the General, a three-star general, asking me, at the time, I'm a JG [lieutenant, junior grade], if he can come aboard, and I said,

"Permission granted." … He knows the protocol. He stands up, he salutes the ensign at the stern, salutes the flag, salutes me, goes aboard, comes back up about three-quarters of an hour later, reverses that, and says to me, "May I [have] permission to go ashore?" and I said, "Permission granted." That was my experience with George Patton.

SI: At that time, did you know of him from the papers?

RY: Oh, yes, because he was the commanding officer of that whole army. …

SI: Had the news of the slapping incident reached you yet?

RY: Yes, we knew about that, too, yes, but he was probably … one of our best fighting generals.

SI: In an incident like this air raid in Palermo or during the rescue of the LST-333 …

RY: And you're also talking about the invasion of Sicily.

SI: Yes, I will ask about that, but what would you be doing during those events? Would you be working with the engines?

RY: No, … at that point, I was commander of the SC503 subchaser, was on the bridge.

SI: Okay, when Palermo was attacked, you were commanding the …

RY: Yes. Once we got to North Africa, … I became commander, because … the other two junior officers got sent back to the States.

SI: What would you try to do during an attack like that, the attack on Palermo?

RY: You didn't have much chance to do much of anything but make sure that your guns were manned and that your ashcans for submarines were loaded, ready to be rolled, and that you had to be alert to all that, and make sure that general quarters had been called and all the men were at their proper station.

SI: Looking at the invasion of Sicily, from interviewing people who were in the invasion in the ground forces, I know that they did a lot of training for it for weeks ahead of time.

RY: Yes.

SI: It seemed to me, in reading the diary, that you got pretty short notice about the invasion.

RY: Sicily, we did, but I've got to tell you, the invasion of Anzio was practiced. We practiced that invasion for ten to twelve days. Every day, we'd go out, the courses we were to take in, what equipment we had to have. That was very strenuous.

SI: Sicily was your first major operation when you were in command of the ship.

RY: Yes, right.

SI: Tell me about the buildup to the invasion and what it was like that night and morning.

RY: Well, the invasion of Sicily, we were in the van' of the invasion fleet. We were ahead … of the ships that carried the troops, the troop carriers. … Beyond the troop carriers were the cruisers that were firing the big guns on the beach, to clear the beaches. The beach was probably about from where the troop carriers were, that those troop carriers landed, … anchored, were probably about five miles off the beach. … They would drop their landing craft over the side with the troops in them. … Since they didn't have compasses, we had to lead them in. So, we lead them into the beach. That was the job, and then, you'd turn around and go back and get the next group that came in.

SI: In those first few waves into Sicily, did your ship take any fire?

RY: Yes. … JU-88s were up on the hills that were about a mile behind. They were firing on the beach, but the cruiser big guns took care of them, for a while. … On your way in, you'd hear these big cannons going over you and, after a while, that stopped the German JU-88s from firing. [Editor's Note: Commander Yoken may be referring to the German eighty-eight-millimeter artillery piece, rather than the JU-88 bomber aircraft.]

SI: Once you had accompanied the waves in, what happened after that?

RY: Yes. Well, we'd go back … and we'd have to get a second wave, until that portion of it, to that beach, was completed. Then, we'd go back to where the headquarters ships were and wait for other orders. If there was a problem in getting troops from another group, that may be two miles down, we would have to go that way, but, most of the time, the invasion of Sicily came off pretty clean. We didn't have too much of that problem.

SI: During that whole period, how much time were you on duty?

RY: Constantly. You're on general quarters from the moment that they decided to make that run until the time they called it off. So, you could be on general quarters for twelve solid hours at a time.

SI: Was it very draining, both physically and mentally?

RY: Oh, sure, it was. You had to be alert, you had to keep your eye out for planes that were coming over, and to make sure that you weren't firing at your own planes, because you had a lot of your own planes in the area, which was a problem at the invasion of Anzio. We shot down--not we, but the Navy, US Navy--shot down a few planes. [Editor's Note: Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily, commenced on the evening of July 9-10, 1943. Due to inadequate communication and identification methods, Allied ships shot down twenty-three aircraft carrying American paratroopers, resulting in over three hundred casualties.]

SI: I know the problem at Sicily was that they did not have communication between the forces on the ground and the forces in the air.

RY: Yes.

SI: Did they address that at all?

RY: Well, I think they eventually got it straightened out, but there were a few casualties before they got around to that.

DY: I think there's something in my daughter's documentation that she articulates about that.

SI: Yes. They did not have the friend-or-foe devices and there were no air liaisons, the men from the ground forces on the planes who would communicate with the ground forces.

RY: They were supposed to have them, but I don't think they were completely taken care of.

SI: In future invasions, though, were you more aware of where the friendly forces were as opposed to enemy forces?

RY: Oh, yes. When we made the invasion of Ajaccio, which is Corsica, and then, the invasion of Southern France, we didn't have any of those problems at all. That was pretty clean-cut.

SI: In the diary, much of what you describe in terms of receiving enemy fire came from air raids, but were there any threats from U-boats?

RY: The Mediterranean was really too [unsuitable]. … It was too shallow for a lot of … U-boat work. So, if there were any U-boats in there, there were very few of them. They wouldn't bother with us anyway. We're too small. They would go after the bigger ships, if there were [any], but what we did have to be watching out for [was] the Italian Navy. We were still at war with Italy and the Italian Navy was operating in the Mediterranean, but the standard joke about the Italian Navy was, in the US Navy, … that the Italian Navy, which had great ships, the Italian Navy had their guns in such a way that their big guns, if they had nine guns, they'd have one turret forward of the bridge and two turrets back. So, three guns were forward, six guns were aft, and somebody once used the phrase, "Well, that's typical of the Italian Fleet--they're always running in the opposite direction," [laughter] but I think there's an article in there, that we ran into two of them during the night. That was quite an experience.

SI: Please, tell me about it.

RY: Well, we were escorting a landing barge from Palermo to the Isle of Ustica, which is about twenty-five miles out to sea. That was a penal institute, at one time, and, also, was … where the Italians kept a small force. … Our job was to go out there, and it was a water barge--they didn't have their own water--it was to escort. They had no navigational equipment, so, we had to escort them out there. So, we went out one night from Palermo, I guess probably about ten o'clock at night, and about three in the morning, we're off the beach, about maybe a mile-and-a-half off

Ustica. … By that time, … you could [just] barely see the beach, but it was enough for the landing barge, water barge, to go in by itself. They didn't have to follow us, because they didn't need us anymore. All of a sudden, we're back there and we get a signal, a light signal, and we look up. … I'm on the fantail and I see in the distance two good-sized ships, looked like cruisers, and I look at them closely again and I see that they are Italian light cruisers, because we had identification information on them. … First, not knowing that, we didn't know who they were, we signal them back, waiting for a return answer. Well, they didn't have the proper return answer and we didn't have the proper signal when we signaled them. The codes were different. The next thing we knew [is] that we see shells flying over our ship--they were firing at us. They didn't know who we were, but they thought that, with the size, … we may be a submarine, and there were no Italian submarines in the area and they didn't know whether these were American or British submarines. … The firing kept on for--they must have fired maybe twenty or thirty shells at us and that was scary, I've got to tell you, because if one of those even came within ten or fifteen yards of that … 110-foot subchaser, they wouldn't be there anymore. So, … we had our radio operator get on the radio and radio our fleet that was in Palermo. … Admiral Davidson was the commander in charge of the fleet [that] was in there, and told him that we identified them as *Garibaldi*-class Italian light cruisers and, in about twenty-five minutes, we could hear the drones of the airplanes coming … out of Naples [Palermo?]. … They turned right around and went back to Italy, but, for a good forty-five minutes, it was, I've got to tell you, a little scary. [Editor's Note: This incident took place on August 6, 1943.] … I had an intriguing thing with that. At the end of the war, I was down in Miami, Florida, at naval school, advanced naval school, at communications. … I had an officer who was talking about proper identifications and how to use them. … He says, "You know," he says, "you've got to be very careful about using your proper identifications." He says, "I have a story here, I'll tell you, about a subchaser in the Mediterranean that ran into two Italian light cruisers, on their way to hit Palermo, that flashed identification signals to Italian ships, which didn't have the right answers. … We didn't have the right answers to them, and they got fired upon." … He says, "It was pretty stupid on their part to have done that." … I raised my hand and I said--he was a lieutenant--I said, "Lieutenant," I said, "I don't think you have the story quite right," and he looked at me. … You could see him saying to himself, "Who the hell is this smartass lieutenant, talking to me this way?" He says, "Well, what are you talking about?" I said, "I was on that subchaser that you're talking about." … He says, "Yes, what was the number of it?" I said, "The 503." "And your name?" and I gave him my name, and he looks [in] his records and he says, "Yes," he says, "you're right." He says, "You were on that, weren't you?" He says, "Supposing you come up here and tell the story, so [that] it's right this time." So, that was kind of a [funny story], and I tell you, … there are three articles that David has got me about that same incident and, for some reason, … and we've got to straighten this out with the Navy Department, they've got SubChaser 530 on there, instead of 503.

DY: … I mean, it's really incorrect.

RY: But, that was our major situation of really getting into … trouble.

SI: Yes, it was very rare to have surface engagements in World War II.

RY: Yes. … Well, they thought … the reason that they turned around after we fired at them [was], … we were small and so low in the water, they couldn't lower their guns enough to hit us, the first way. Number two, they thought there might be American submarines in the [area] and they didn't want to get hit, either, and they turned around and went ahead back to Italy.

SI: To get into the Salerno invasion, again, there was not much lead up to it for you.

RY: Which one?

SI: The invasion of Salerno.

RY: … The Salerno invasion was, as I say, we brought the troops into the beaches. After that, we hung around, and then, went up to Anzio, but we didn't bring them into Anzio. They were already there when we were in Anzio. [Editor's Note: Operation AVALANCHE, the invasion of Salerno, commenced on September 3, 1943. Operation SHINGLE, the invasion of Anzio, commenced on January 22, 1944.]

SI: Going into Salerno, from what I understand, Italy had surrendered, therefore, many servicemen thought there would not be much of a fight in Salerno.

RY: … No, but there were big German forces in Salerno, big German forces in Salerno.

SI: What could you see from where you were on your ship of what was happening on the ground?

RY: Yes, not really. You could see a lot of movement and you could see flashes of firing going on, but you couldn't see much more than that, because they were inland, five or six miles, and we were out two or three or four miles from the beach. We knew there was something going on. As a matter-of-fact, it got so tenuous there … in Anzio that …

SI: Anzio or Salerno?

RY: … No, this is after Salerno. Salerno was somewhat like a piece of cake. Once we got them in there, there was no big problems. They took care of the German "eighty-eights" on the hill very quickly, and then, … that's where they moved up to Rome, and then, from Rome forward, but, in Anzio, it was tenuous there, because we didn't have as many men in there, Army men, as we should have had in there. … The Germans were … very tenacious. They didn't want to give that up, because it was the road to Rome at that point. … We had orders to stand by. … They were pretty close to evacuating that whole beach, taking them right off again. General Mark Clark came up there. He was the commanding officer of that whole area. [Editor's Note: US Army General Mark W. Clark served as commander of the Fifth US Army and later assumed command of all Allied ground forces in Italy.] He came up one day, when we were out patrolling the area. … We hadn't gotten any word that he was coming out and we had a lot of German motor torpedo boats running in the area, to torpedo the boats, and his boat that he was coming up in looked like a torpedo boat. We almost blew them out of the water. We had our guns trained on them, until we finally got the right recognition. These are some of the things that

do happen when the coordination is not that close as it should be. Maybe the reason was, they didn't want the word out that he was on his way up. So, nobody knew that.

SI: What would you be doing between the invasions, just running supplies back and forth or patrolling?

RY: Yes, that's right, yes, just running back. We'd run out of stuff and have to go back to Naples, which was our headquarters, and get fixed up, and one or two of the boys, … who may have got hit by shrapnel and had wounds, got sent ashore to the dispensaries, to have that taken care of, but that was about it.

SI: Did you lose any men on your ship?

RY: No.

SI: Did you ever have any problem with sailors not being able to handle being in combat?

RY: No, once they were in it, there wasn't much they could do about [it]. I mean, you got to a point where you might have been--everybody, obviously, was frightened and scared. Don't let anybody tell you that they were not, but, after you're there for a while, you figure, "Well, you know, if my number's up, my number's up. I can't turn around and go around. I'd get [hit] just as bad going back than I can going forward." So, … I didn't have that; on my ship, I didn't have any of that problem.

SI: How long were you in Anzio?

RY: In Anzio? Well, we were there for about four or five days at a time, then, we'd go back. We'd go back to North Africa, then, go back again. We were there for a total of about four months, all together.

SI: I understand they also used a lot of artillery against the naval forces in Anzio, particularly the railroad guns.

RY: Yes, right, yes. There were a lot of naval forces in there, a lot of British. British had a good deal, many … troops and ships in that area.

SI: The Germans were able to use their large artillery pieces to attack the naval ships.

RY: Yes, because they were up on the hills.

SI: Yes, like "Anzio Annie."

RY: Yes.

SI: Were you ever in an area where those shells were landing or were a threat to you?

RY: … They were landing, all of them were landing in the water, close to us, but I didn't see anything get [hit]. Nothing got hit there.

SI: How did the ship come through all of these engagements? Did you need repairs often?

RY: Well, the repairs it had were just from usage, not from getting hit or anything like that. … [Editor's Note: David Yoken produces a photograph.] That's one of the ships that got hit at Toulon. That's in Toulon. The Germans hit the harbor at Toulon. Those are French ships that got hit. [Editor's Note: Commander Yoken may be referring to ships scuttled by the French Navy at Toulon on November 27, 1942, to prevent their capture by Nazi forces.]

SI: Any damage to your ship would be from normal wear and tear.

RY: Yes, right, yes.

SI: Were you able to get the repairs you needed done in a timely manner?

RY: … There was places, for example, to get repaired, if we're up in North Africa, Algiers had a repair section. You'd get in there, but they got you in and out pretty fast. … Many of the repairs we had were minor repairs. They were nothing that was serious. For example, if the radar crapped out, they would send a technician aboard and he'd work on it maybe four or five hours and get it straightened out again--nothing much more serious than that.

SI: Let me pause again.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We discussed the operation at Anzio. You were there for quite a long time. What happened after Anzio? That is where your diary ends.

RY: Well, after Anzio, we got the invasion of …

SI: Southern France?

RY: … Southern France, yes. [Editor's Note: Operation DRAGOON, the invasion of Southern France, commenced on August 15, 1944.]

SI: What was that like for you?

RY: It was very quiet. By that time, the armies were pretty far north. They're up at Nice. They're up, yes, around Nice and stuff. So, it was a piece of cake, actually. I have an interesting story to say, though, about that. … At Southern France, we got orders to turn the SC-503 over to the French, because we're heading back to the States, and they sent aboard the prospective new captain, … the French captain, whose name was Roger Guillaume, which, in English, would translate to "Roger Williams." A very fine young man, he was, … basically, the same as a lieutenant, junior grade, in the Army, and he came aboard. He spent about a month [onboard

while] we were still in command … of the SC-503, and to learn the intricacies of how to handle it, and so forth. … We got orders that, … after a month, that two weeks later, we would formally get orders to turn the fleet [the ship] over to the French fleet, French Navy, but … he got two weeks leave notice and, at this point, the US Army was up around Grenoble. They were north of [there], going into Germany. [Editor's Note: Grenoble was liberated on August 22, 1944.] He came to say good-bye, and he said, … "By the time I get back, we'll have turned the ship over, so, I won't have much time to be with you all, but, so far, you've given me very good lessons and it's very nice knowing you," spoke excellent English, a very handsome young man. … I see him about ready to go ashore. I said, "Wait a minute, come over here." He comes over by me. He's got a .45 strapped to his side, and I said, "You're going on vacation with a .45?" He said, "Yes," he says, "I am," and I said, "Why are you doing that?" He said, "Grenoble had a lot of French collaborators in it, and, if I go up there and I find any of them harmed any of my family," he says, "that's going to come in very useful to me." So, I don't think he ever used it, because, by the time he came back, … I'd got orders to go back to the States.

SI: How did you travel back to the States?

RY: I came back, I flew by aircraft from North Africa, … from Europe, from Toulon, [France], to North Africa, stayed in North Africa about a week-and-a-half, two weeks, and then, went on … a US supply ship that was heading back to the States.

SI: At that point, did you know what was happening next or was your future uncertain?

RY: … Yes, I knew that I was probably going to be sent down to Miami, Florida, for advanced training for the so-called invasion of Southern France.

SI: Japan?

RY: I'm sorry, for the invasion of Japan, yes.

SI: I saw in the diary that you had put in for destroyer escort work.

RY: Yes.

SI: Okay. Why did you want that?

RY: Because it was a ship that was about three times the size of the subchaser I was on. I wanted something a little bit larger, and, yet, it wasn't huge. … It was a little bit smaller, about the size of a destroyer, but … I didn't want to be on a big ship like a cruiser or a "battlewagon" [a nickname for a battleship], because you get lost in that kind of ship.

SI: When you came back to the States, were you able to visit your family then?

RY: Yes, I was there. I had leave. I had a month's leave at home.

SI: What was that like, to be reunited with your family after so long?

RY: Well, it was very pleasant, and, of course, … after you've been away for that long a period of time, in the war zone, [and] you come back, they treat you like you're a hero, somewhat. They don't know that. They don't know what actually happens, but they think that you did fantastic things.

SI: Your mother had been running the store by herself.

RY: Yes.

SI: How was she able to fare during the war, under rationing? Was she able to keep it up?

RY: … It was a very high-grade store. It wasn't a regular grocery store, so that the stuff that she got, she was still able to get--not to the same amount, but certainly was able to get them. She had, they had, no problems with that, as far as I know.

SI: Businesses also had difficulty finding help, because everyone was involved in the war.

RY: No, because the help she had were people that were probably, when she had them, … they had children and they were older and they weren't really age-related, available. If she had those that were, like, young truck drivers, she could get kids out of high school who were below the minimum age … to be able to be drafted.

SI: Then, you reported to Miami for advanced.

RY: I reported to Miami for advanced training, and then, that's when I was then selected for the APD that was supposed … to go to Japan, the invasion of Japan, which was called off.

SI: How much time did you spend in Miami before you were assigned to the APD?

RY: Probably about six, seven weeks. The course was about six or seven, about seven, weeks. The course, basically, [was] in navigation, primarily, navigation, and … that was mostly basic navigation. The officer's training, I'd already had quite a bit of, and, actually, not only training, but I actually had experience. So, there was no need for that. … I didn't have need to study more engineering, because what I had … to begin with was for small ships and, secondly, … by that time, they had men out of the Naval Academy who had engineering experience. They didn't need Reserve officers for that kind of stuff.

SI: Were you able to get any leave while you were in Miami, or just to go out and see the town?

RY: Well, I had a leave between Miami and being assigned to the APD, because, at that point, … my orders, after Miami, were leave for a month, and then, assigned to the building, the new building, of the APD outside of Boston. So, it was right near the home. I used to commute from home to the APD.

SI: Okay. You were there for the entire building of the ship.

RY: From the very beginning, from when they laid the keel. … I was assigned to the building of the APD in Hingham, Massachusetts, which is outside of Boston, and then, I went aboard that as a junior officer; eventually, became the skipper of it. We went [on] a shakedown cruise [the testing period for the ship] to Florida. It was down in Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, the St. Johns River, up Jacksonville. [Editor's Note: The USS *Hunter Marshall* (APD-112) was launched on May 5, 1945, and commissioned on July 17, 1945.]

SI: What did you do while the ship was being built? What were your duties then?

RY: When you're watching the ship being built? not a thing, truly. You just make it your business to be there and to see what's going on. … If something doesn't strike you as proper, then, you get in touch with the people that build it, but, generally, you just stay out of their way.

SI: When you were forming a crew, how much input did you have into who got on the crew, or did you just accept whoever they sent to you?

RY: Oh, you don't have a great deal of influence. You have a table of contents [table of organization and equipment], of who's to be, of what positions have to be filled, but you have no choice in who the Navy Department sends to that [ship]. Once they get on there, then, it becomes your responsibility to make sure that they do the job, and, if not, then, you can ask to transfer them, but you don't have any initial responsibility to pick the crew.

SI: How many men were on the APD?

RY: There were eight officers and there were probably, I think, between thirty-nine and forty-two enlisted personnel, and that doesn't include the over-and-above. … The enlisted personnel is forty-two, and then, you've got the [additional personnel]. In those days, the crew was segregated, so that Afro-Americans were not [regular crew members]; they were basically in the [ship] as servants, in the wardrooms or in the cleaning part. … To have an Afro-American who was in the crew as a coxswain or a seaman, every so often, you would promote one of those people, one of the good ones, and they could become apprentice seaman, which was the lowest brand of seaman, which took them out of the wardroom and out of the cooks and servant area. A good many of them didn't want to leave, because they had it made in the servant area, and we had a black guy on the APD who was a great, great young man. He was a servant in the wardroom, but … everybody loved him, and he was great for the crew, because he'd be in the wardroom, serving, when the conversation was going on. He knew everything that was going on on the ship, and the guys, … the regular guys, always wanted to know, "What's happening?" you know.

SI: You promoted him.

RY: Yes, we promoted him up to apprentice seaman, … which didn't make him too happy. He was happy where he was, made more money when he was an apprentice seaman, but that wasn't that much different.

SI: When you promoted him, would he still serve on the ship?

RY: Oh, yes, yes. He just moved into a different department.

SI: That kind of very localized desegregation was okay, to have an African-American sailor working with white sailors in other departments.

RY: Yes, … it was okay. It wasn't something that … all the ships did, but he was such a likable young guy and that all the guys liked him, the officers and enlisted men. So, they were very happy and very pleased that he was promoted.

SI: Okay, nobody had a problem with that.

RY: No, because it sort of gave them an idea that if they were straight and out of trouble, that they might someday be promoted, too. … Some of the enlisted men, you know, were really--on the SC-503, that crew was basically, … I think they opened the Navy [prisons]. When we went overseas, to fill the crew, I have an awful impression that they must have opened up the Navy prisons, let them all out, because, you know, it wasn't the kind of a deal that most people would want, because they would know that, number one, they were going to a war area and, number two, they were going on a very small ship, which didn't have the stuff that the bigger ships had. So, they weren't too happy with that.

SI: Was there anything about what they did that made you think that as well?

RY: Well, they were always complaining, always complaining about something.

SI: You said the crew, most of the crew, left and was replaced when you took over, correct?

RY: Pardon? …

SI: When you took command of the subchaser, before Sicily, you said a lot of the crew had been sent back and you got a new crew.

RY: No, some were sent back, but most of them were veterans by that point. I think we only replaced two or three of them.

SI: I was wondering if you had the same attitude about them.

RY: No. The ones that we replaced were a better grade. … In some cases, they [would] even opt to come on a small ship.

SI: Were there any African-Americans on the subchaser?

RY: No, not because they were excluded, just none of them were qualified, apparently, to be on the subchaser. We didn't have any Afro-Americans.

SI: When was the APD launched?

RY: The APD was launched in, let's see, I got aboard … [in] the late Spring of '43.

DY: I don't think so. It has to be after '44. …

RY: … Is it there in the papers?

DY: Yes. … I don't think they have the dates on your separation papers. I should check that. We can cross-reference that.

SI: Yes. Was it towards the end of the war?

RY: Toward the end of the war, yes, yes.

SI: You said you did not go to the Pacific.

RY: No, we didn't. As a matter-of-fact, we were shaking down in Guantanamo [Bay, Cuba], when the war ended.

SI: It might have been in the late spring or early summer of 1945.

RY: Yes. We were scheduled to go to Japan--the invasion of Japan--but the war ended before. … About the second or third week that we were shaking down in Guantanamo Bay is when the war ended.

SI: How did you hear the news? What was it like when you heard the news?

RY: Well, the news came over the radio. Everybody in the Navy knew … when the armistice was signed. [Editor's Note: V-J Day was declared on August 14, 1945, in the United States.]

SI: Was there any kind of celebration when they surrendered?

RY: I think, well, … wasn't much of a celebration. I think there was a feeling of relief that they didn't have to go to Japan, and … that they knew that, in a short time, that most of them would be discharged out of the Navy to begin with, which is what they were looking for. We had very few men on our ship who decided to make the Navy a career, not on a small [ship]. On a small subchaser, that wasn't what they were looking for. I think we had one young man who was very bright and he decided that he would rather stay in the Navy … than go on a small ship to the Pacific. … The commanding officer of our unit, we were part of a unit, designated him so that he could go to the Naval Academy. He went to the Naval Academy, came out as a midshipman four years later, or an ensign four years later.

SI: At this point, when the war ended, what were your plans for the future? Did you see yourself staying in the Navy?

RY: No, I wasn't interested in it. I'd had enough time in the Navy. I wasn't interested in staying in the Navy. I thought I wanted to go back home, and I must tell you, frankly, at that point, I didn't have any, really, ideas of what I was going to do. I got a job working for an uncle, but it was a very pedantry type of job, wasn't a supervisor's job. He had a large wholesale grocery and I worked in there, … you know, just to make a few bucks. … My mother wasn't very happy about that, because I used to be hanging around at home, but I got a girlfriend who lived in Boston. So, I used to travel back and forth to Boston. That girlfriend is now his mother. [laughter]

SI: How did you meet your wife?

RY: Pardon?

SI: How did you meet your wife?

RY: Family connections, you know. It was a blind date, actually.

SI: Was that right after you got out of the Navy?

RY: Yes.

SI: All right.

RY: I was in the Naval Reserve at that point, and there's a cute story about that. I was in the Naval Reserve and I used to go to drills on 90 Church Street in New York City. … I was due to go on two weeks training duty, which was part of the Naval Reserve [commitment], and I had been selected--there had to be one officer from each naval district, of which there are twelve in the United States--to go to an advanced school in Washington, [DC]. … In the First Naval District, they selected me, not because I was outstanding, but because I had this long war experience. … I went home and I told my wife, who was pregnant with David, … and I had two other kids at the same time, a little bit older. I told it to the captain that … was in charge, that I couldn't go, and he said to me, "What do you mean you can't go?" I said, "My wife tells me that if I go, … when I come back, she won't find herself or my other kids [at home], … because they'll have gone back to Boston to her family's house," and he said to me, … "Want to repeat that?" and I repeated it to him. He says, "Listen," he says, "you go back and you tell your wife that we have in the Navy a certain saying, that when you get an order in the Navy, you have to do it, and, particularly, … this kind of an order that I'm telling you, is that what you gave me as an excuse is no excuse, because, in the Navy, our answer is, in the Navy, you have to be there to the laying of the keel, but you don't have to be there for the launching." So, that was the answer I got there. [laughter] So, I came back and I said to Joan, I said, "I'm just going to [go]. There's nothing I can do about it." She says, "Supposing I come and talk to them?" I said, "Yes, you try that and you'll find yourself in the [Navy]. You'll be a Navy WAVE. They'll take you in." She said, "No, I don't want that." So, that's what happened there. [Editor's Note: Starting in 1942, US Navy WAVES ("Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service") served in administrative and operational capacities during World War II.]

SI: When did you leave active duty and go on Reserve status after the war?

RY: Well, when I left, when the APD was finally put into non-commission, into the fleet that they were holding in reserve, this is at the end of the war, … I was transferred. … The captain I had, … he had been transferred to Boston, … to the First Naval District Headquarters, as the executive officer, and he knew that my ship was going to be put into mothballs. So, he said, "Don't resign now. Stick around for a while, because jobs are not available on the outside." He said, "I'll get you to come up to Boston and you can be the administrative assistant to the executive officer at the naval station," is … [what] would happen, and I said, "That's fine." He said, "That would be great for you, because you can commute from Fall River to Boston," which was forty miles, "and, if you have duties over the weekend or two or three days, you [First Naval headquarters will] have special rooms for you. … It'll be a good job and you'll get good money. You'll get good pay out of it." So, that's what happened. So, I stayed in that, oh, what? you've got the discharge papers there someplace.

DY: Yes, the separation papers.

SI: 1957, was it? I think you wrote on here that it was 1957.

DY: That's from the Naval Reserve, yes, but, from Boston, … that would be more …

RY: Yes, but it's in there, someplace, should be, shows the discharge papers from the Navy.

DY: This says August 24, 1946; uh-oh, August 31, 1946 is this, is what this is dated.

SI: August 1946, almost into September. You said you had this job working for your uncle while you were courting your wife.

RY: Yes. I went back to Fall River and I had general work. It wasn't a great job, but I had a job working for him and I was living at home. So, that didn't cost me anything.

SI: Did you ever use any part of the GI Bill or consider using the GI Bill?

RY: Yes, yes. I went to Columbia [University]. I took a course at Columbia in economics and I used the GI Bill for that.

SI: When was that?

RY: That was back in …

DY: In the late … '50s?

RY: Yes, … but that's the only reason I used the GI Bill

DY: … You mentioned insurance, a life insurance policy, also.

RY: Well, I had life insurance, probably, but that wasn't the GI Bill. That was …

SI: You just continued your life insurance from when you were in the service.

RY: Yes. I had that bill, first, had it as annual insurance, but, then, it was changed to long-term. So, I haven't paid a thing for it in thirty years and I still get benefits of it.

SI: Yes. Many veterans either regret that they dropped it or are happy that they kept it, because it turned out to be a much greater benefit than it was originally intended to be.

RY: Yes, yes.

SI: After this period where you were working for your uncle, what was your next step? What did you want to do with your family then?

RY: Well, I knew that that was a dead-end, because I was a laborer there, you know. So, I decided that … maybe I'd better get a job that had something to do with my naval experience. So, I went to New York City and, having been an engineering officer in the Navy, I felt that I should go to some ship company that was stationed in lower Broadway, see if I could get a job with them in the engineering department. … I went to the Istraband Ship Company, which is a big company, and I walked in and I showed my credentials to the guy that was hiring, and he said, "What specifically are you looking for?" I said, "Well, I'm sure when your ships come in that they come in to be checked for repairs, and so forth, and that would be right down my alley to do that," and he said, "Well," he says, "that's a good idea," he said, "but I want to show you something." He says, "Take a look over there in that room," and there were about six desks in that room. He said, "All those six desks are held by men who were in the engineering department who do the work that you're talking about, and they're very senior." He said, "If you get a job like that," he says, "you will be working at the lower end of the scale for the next twelve years." So, at that point, I says, "That's not what I'm interested in." So, I left there and decided I should go see what was doing at Sears Roebuck, because I figured--I had a friend, a shipmate on the APD, who was out of the Navy, who lived in Baltimore, and he said to me, … "There's a big office in Baltimore for Sears Roebuck." He says, "Why don't you check Sears Roebuck and find out if you'd like to have [a job there]? They're looking for people. Maybe they'll use you with Sears Roebuck. That's merchandising and that ought to be pretty good for you." So, I went to New York City, to the headquarters of Sears Roebuck. It was the ready-to-wear headquarters--women's dresses and coats and hats and millenary, and so forth. … I walked up and I got an appointment to the employment office and I went up to the employment office and it was in a room about twice the size of this. … As I walk in, there was a table at the end of the desk of a man sitting next to it, behind it. … He looked out and he called and he said, "Come over here, I'd like to talk to you," and he walked over and he looked down at his paper and he looked up at me and he said, "My God," he says, "that's Dick Yoken." … He didn't have my name, but he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm the guy you're supposed to be interviewing," … and I recognized him. I said, "You were over in the Mediterranean." He happened to be one of the officers in the Mediterranean … that my ship served with. So, he was in charge of the New York office, and he says, "I'll put you to work in Sears Roebuck, but, first, you've got to work down at Allentown, Pennsylvania, in their receiving department," and he says, "to get acquainted

with what's going on." So, I used to commute, for about six months, from New York City to Allentown, every single day. I'd go down in the morning and come back in the afternoon, except Sunday, and I had a young man that I reported to who was the head shipping clerk. I had to work for him. … I found out that he'd been an enlisted man in the Navy, and, when he saw my credentials--and he apparently did not have a good time in the Navy--and he must have said to himself, "Here's my chance to get even." So, he was Pennsylvania Dutch. … I got a job in the receiving department, and he made sure that every job that was difficult, I got. One of the things that came in one day was garden hose, big rolls of garden hose, and that had to be put into a warehouse, which is right across an alley, up a second flight, no elevator. … My job was to take that up to the second flight and, boy, that was backbreaking, and then, when I'd come back, he'd have some cleanup work for me to do, nothing that I was hoping to get. … He used to speak with Pennsylvania Dutch [sayings]--he'd say, "Come over here, (*vonce*?)," which means, "Come over here right away," and I'm standing there and he says, "You understand English?" I said, "Yes, I understand English, but I don't understand you. You start talking English, I might understand you." Well, that didn't make it any easier for me. So, he said to me [that] he'd find every tough job he could find, [which] he gave to me, and, eventually, I got transferred to the New York office of Sears Roebuck, and that's where I worked for many years, at Sears Roebuck. So, that brings you up to the time that I opened my business myself.

SI: That was in 1960.

RY: That was in 1960, yes.

SI: Tell me a little bit about why you decided to open your own business and how it came about.

RY: Because I … had been trained by my father that you had to work for yourself, you shouldn't work for anybody else, because, if there were anything good [that] would happen, it would happen through your efforts, alone, most likely, and, if everything bad [happened], that would be your fault, too. So, by [not] working for somebody else, you would have more incentive to do the job properly. He was a self-made man. …

SI: What kind of business did you develop?

RY: A commercial stationary business, office equipment and commercial stationary.

SI: Where was it located?

RY: In Scarsdale.

SI: In Scarsdale.

RY: Well, at first, it was located out of my house. I worked it out of my house, and then, I finally got a space, and I've worked in Scarsdale for many years.

SI: What are some of the major challenges you have seen? On your survey, it said that you owned the business until--do you still own the business?

RY: … I didn't really sell it. … The business was interesting. It was a good business. The problem of it was that the type of business it was was too small for anybody to be really interested in it and too big for anybody who might be interested and was not able to handle it. So, it was right in the middle, and to get a buyer for it would have been a tremendous problem. So, I, eventually, after many years, just closed it down.

SI: I think you had 2010 listed here. You closed it down this year.

DY: Basically.

SI: All right, you closed it down this year.

RY: No, it's been about five years since [then]. …

SI: What were some of the biggest challenges you faced? Did you have to face competition from the larger outlets, like Staples?

RY: No. As a matter-of-fact, I had a certain niche of the business, so, I didn't have much competition. I dealt, basically, with small companies who had, maybe, three or four offices and about three, four people working for them, and that was it. … The purchasing agent of this small business would be somebody that would be looking for somebody from which they could buy seventy or eighty percent of their material. They didn't have to go to many places, and, also, … having been an officer and an engineer and having a scientific background, … I had architects, small architects, that dealt with me and I could talk their language. … I knew what a T-square was and I knew what a prowell straight-edge was and that sort of stuff, which most people in the stationary business wouldn't have any idea what it was. … If they'd want to know … if they needed a certain pencil, I'd have to know what question to ask you, "What are you using it for? Do you need a 2H or a 3H?" whatever it was, along those lines.

DY: You were also one of the largest packing suppliers. …

RY: Yes, packing, that was another [part of the business].

DY: When Cuisinart, the food processor, … first came out, you worked, actually, with the inventor of that.

RY: Yes, right, with the inventors, packaging material. …

DY: Supplying all the packaging material for the original Cuisinart.

RY: Corrugated cartons. That was a big portion of the business, and drafting supplies with architects, and then, I had my own stationary items. I had what was known as Today Brand pencils, that I would sell. "Today" stood for Tony, my oldest boy, Anthony, Tony, and David.

DY: "D-A," Yoken, "Y."

RY: And then, I had rag paper [paper made from fiber products, particularly cotton], twenty-five percent rag paper, writing paper, that was called Holly Brand, after my daughter, whose name was Hollyce, and pencils, Holly Pencils, that I had made up. So, those were very good, because, price-wise, you didn't have competition. If somebody'd say, "Well, your price is too high," or, "You should be less," I'd say, "But, they don't have the Holly Brand twenty-five percent rag paper," which was true. Now, somebody else may have had the same basic paper, but with a different name to it. So, that was a merchandising kind of thing, and I still have a lot of Holly Brand pencils that I still have, that I use, myself. Do you have any of them?

DY: Yes, they're collector's items. [laughter]

RY: Yes, David has some.

SI: Would you have to develop relationships with businesses, like you did with Cuisinart?

RY: Yes.

SI: Was that a large part of what you would do on average?

RY: Yes.

SI: Were there other firms that you developed a relationship with in packaging?

DY: Union Carbide.

RY: What's that?

DY: Union Carbide?

RY: Yes, Union Carbide was one of my bigger accounts, and Casual Corners, if you know [them], have heard of them.

DY: Did clothing. Were they clothing? Casual Corners was a big clothing line, right?

RY: Casual Corners, yes, was clothing.

DY: Who was the outdoor furniture company? Did you work with them?

RY: Yes. Finkle Outdoor Products, New Jersey.

DY: Here in New Jersey.

RY: It was a big outdoor furniture company that I dealt with. It's been some years since I've been doing that. I basically retired this business five, six years ago, because … I didn't have the inclination, nor did I have the help that could work at it. My kids were not interested in it.

DY: Well, I was for a moment, but, when I came to work for you, my dad said, "Listen, you work for me for six months, you can do a good job, but you know what?" I'm a musician, and you told me, you said, "Go out and do your music. You're a talented musician and you should go do that."

RY: Well, a funny story with that is, David used to come down to my office, and my office, outside, had a big driveway with a hill on it. … David, one day, used to come to my office, and I had a desk here and the other desk was facing me, and he used to drive me nuts, because he … had pencils and he was always tapping the table, like he was doing a drum. … One day, I'd had enough of that. So, I said to David, "Look, let's knock that off. Don't do that anymore," and he couldn't stop it. So, I just went over and I got so annoyed that I picked him up in the chair. I picked him up, took him outside, put him outside of the building, so that he wouldn't disturb me. … I get back to go to work, and, all of a sudden, I hear tapping again. He's outside on the driveway, with two sticks, tapping on the driveway. [laughter] So, I couldn't break him of that. Now, he's a first-class professor and musician right now.

SI: It seems like your children primarily went into the arts. Your daughter was a dancer.

RY: Yes, she was a dancer, and she then became a teacher. … She got a degree in teaching. She teaches early--what do you call that?

DY: … Early education expert, pre-K expert.

RY: Yes, pre-K.

DY: … She was at PS 234 on 9/11 [the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States], which was just north of the North Tower [of the World Trade Center]. So, she was dealing with [the] evacuation of all the little kids.

RY: Then, she moved to Italy. She's in …

DY: Monza.

RY: She's in Monza, Italy, which is right outside of Milan. She teaches … kids in a private Italian school.

SI: Were you interested in the arts? Was that something you encouraged your family to get involved in?

RY: No. Basically, I was in sciences; mine were all sciences.

DY: Yes, but you always took us to the New York Philharmonic, we always went to see museums, when we were growing up.

RY: Well, yes. My family was very interested in taking me to concerts and museums and places like that, because my father was a very good musician. … Although he was an excellent businessman, he was an excellent violinist, and my mother played the piano quite well. So, they were always [playing], there was always music around, that I could hear. … My mother made it her business to make sure that I saw good art, and my father, I remember, as a young kid, … first thing he did was get me a subscription to the *Reader's Digest.* … Books, there were a lot of books around the house. There still are a lot of books around the house. I have what I think is a first-class collection of Civil War books, that I intend to, one day, call the Rutgers library, give them the information on it and ask them if they're interested. If they're interested, I will leave it for them; if not, I'll leave it for the Fall River Library or the high school library.

SI: That is wonderful.

RY: I must have fifty, sixty …

DY: Try about three or four hundred.

RY: Yes, maybe, Civil War books. … Even now, I spend a lot of money on that stuff.

SI: Does anything else stand out about your time in the Reserves, any assignments that you want to talk about on the record? You were in the Naval Reserves up until 1957.

RY: No. Naval Reserve, well, I was commanding officer of a battalion in Jersey City in the Naval Reserve, and I was with that for about three or four years.

DY: Only if I hadn't come around and you had stuck around for--how much longer?--you would have gotten a nice, fat pension.

RY: Yes, right, if I would have stayed [in]. … Now, I have a rank of commander in the Naval Reserve. Now, that's equivalent to a "light" colonel in the Army, [a lieutenant colonel in the US Army, US Air Force or US Marine Corps]. If I had stayed in another five years, or ten years, I would have probably made rear admiral, which would have [resulted in] a good piece of change with thirty-five, forty years of naval service. Your annuity on that would run, right now, probably, twenty-five thousand bucks a year. So, … whenever my wife gives me a hard time, I tell her, "It's your fault," [laughter] because she wouldn't have any part of that.

SI: You described the one incident, on the APD, where the junior officer made an anti-Semitic remark.

RY: Yes.

SI: Were there any other incidents of …

RY: Anti-Semitism?

SI: Anti-Semitism?

RY: No.

SI: No. I have heard from many Jewish veterans that they either anticipated facing anti-Semitism in the Navy or they actually experienced it. Yours was almost the total opposite.

RY: That's the only time. I didn't have it, [an experience of anti-Semitism], and that was with a junior officer who came from the South. He was from …

DY: Mobile. …

RY: Mobile, Alabama, and he didn't like anybody, didn't like Northerners, or anybody who wasn't [from the] Deep South.

SI: In all the different places that you visited, did you get a chance to get to know any of the local people or have any exposure to the locals, in Europe, Africa or around the US?

RY: Not really, because … we weren't there long enough and didn't have the time to socialize.

DY: There's one incident where you were invited to have dinner with a French family or a Frenchman.

RY: Yes, but in Algeria.

DY: Right.

RY: I went ashore one day and he was a [Frenchman] and I walked into, it was a jewelry store, … hoped to get, to buy, a present for my mother. … As I walked in, I saw on the wall a Star of David. So, I knew that he was Jewish. … I said to him, "I see that star," and he says, "Yes," and he says, "*Je suis juive*," "I am Jewish," and I said, "*Moi aussi*", "[Me, too]," and he got all excited. He said, "*Et tu*?" "[And you?]" I said, "That's right." So, next thing I knew, he called his daughter out. He was thinking, "What the hell? Here's a chance to get rid of my daughter," [laughter] and she wasn't that particularly interested in me and I was certainly not interested in her, but I got invited to their house, to dinner and a few other things, which I [attended], but … you didn't have enough time, because you're in port for maybe a day or two, and then, you're in another port.

DY: But, you did meet Josephine Baker.

RY: Well, Josephine Baker, the American, Afro-American, singer. … We were in Algiers, [the] ship was. I had to go to Algiers to get supplies one afternoon, with a couple of other officers, and she was performing and we went to see her and she said, "Are there any [Americans here]?" and she saw us in uniform. … She sent somebody out to say, "She would like you gentlemen," there were three of us, three officers, "to come to … where her room is. She'd like to talk to you," … because she was originally from New York City, and it was an interesting conversation.

She was a great singer, and she was very interested in what was going on in the United States. So, that was an interesting situation. What else have I forgot, David? [laughter]

DY: … You haven't forgotten a thing, because it's all here.

RY: Yes.

SI: Yes, much of the material that we have not covered or have only covered in part is in your war diary, which your son has transcribed.

RY: Yes.

SI: Also, your granddaughter produced a paper for her school, all of which will be on file with this interview at Rutgers. Is there anything else you would like to add to the record, anything that we missed or skipped over?

RY: No, I don't think so. I would have liked to have stayed in the Navy, to get the rank of a rear admiral, which would have been probably another ten years, not only for the monetary effect of it, but for the fact that it would be the pinnacle of my Navy experience, but that wasn't to be. …

SI: Were you concerned at all about being recalled for the Korean War?

RY: I was worried about that. I thought I was going to be recalled for Korea, [and I] am surprised that I was not, because they needed officers at that point, but, apparently, they had enough that they didn't [need to recall me]. They figured that I'd been out long enough, so that I wouldn't be of great use to them. If so, if I had been recalled, it would probably be a shore job someplace. It wouldn't be at sea.

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

DY: Just …

RY: He's my alter ego. [laughter]

DY: Mostly, to thank you.

SI: Thank you for bringing your father down. Thank you both for all of your time.

RY: … You're a very good interviewer.

SI: Thank you.

RY: … You know, some interviewers can really annoy you, because they press a point that you're not interested in enlarging, but you know the questions to ask, you know the questions to stop asking.

SI: Thank you. We do not want to pressure anybody into bringing up things that they do not want to talk about.

RY: Yes.

SI: We let the interview go where it is going to naturally go.

RY: So, you say that you transcribe that? …

SI: Yes. If there is anything that you think about later that you want to add, you can always add it to the transcript.

RY: Okay.

SI: Thank you very much.

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

Reviewed by Dan Kessler 3/9/11
Reviewed by Ariel Ramirez 3/9/11
Reviewed by Kevin Easton 3/9/11
Reviewed by Thomas Baldino 4/7/11
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 5/20/11
Reviewed by Richard Yoken 7/10/11