

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT V. ARCHIBALD

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

PETER ASCH

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Robert V. Archibald on June 1, 2005 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Peter Asch: Peter Asch ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SI: Mr. Archibald, thank you very much for coming to the campus today.

RA: My pleasure.

PA: Your father was a graduate of Rutgers Class of 1917. What can you tell us about his life?

RA: Well, he grew up on the farm in Delaware County, New York, and his brother had to stay back on the farm and work when my father came. My father had a scholarship to Rutgers. He came to Rutgers and graduated in the Class of 1917, I believe.

SH: Was his brother older or younger?

RA: Younger. My father had designed one of the barns on the farm up there, they had a fairly good-sized dairy farm, but it was hard work up in Bovina Center. ... After he graduated my Uncle Wilbur came to Rutgers. No, I'm sorry, he had a scholarship to Cornell.

SH: Did he go to Cornell because of the dairy business?

RA: Probably, yes. He ended up as a physics teacher in the Poughkeepsie School System.

SH: What was your father's profession?

RA: My father was in education and he became an associate professor at Rutgers. First, he went to Bridgeton, where all of the three boys were born, and I think he left there probably in '28, '29, or '30; came up to Rutgers as associate professor for education.

SI: Had your father's family resided in that area of New York for generations?

RA: No, I think they had come from Scotland and Ireland, their folks, and ... I really don't know. I am trying to find out. But there is a diary up at Cooperstown Library, I believe, and, also, Margaretville, which tells about all the trials and tribulations and how difficult it was and the weather. ... I'll try and get a copy of that someday. That would be my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, when they first came over from Ireland and Scotland. My mother, with her folks, she grew up outside of Middlebush.

SH: Did they meet there? Middlebush is so close to Rutgers.

RA: Yes, that's right, they met out there. He boarded out there when he was in school, I think with one of the Thompson families, who was a minister. He had been a minister out in

Middlebush and had been from up in New York State. Actually, he was the brother of my grandmother. So, that's how that happened.

SH: Was his scholarship through the Dutch Reformed Church?

RA: No, it was an agriculture scholarship and I don't know how he got it. He was a smart guy, who worked hard.

PA: Your father was a veteran of World War I. Did he ever speak about his experiences?

RA: Not too much. I remember him talking about the awful flu epidemic and he said that one of his jobs was preparing and making the arrangements where they would pick up the bodies. He said they would go down by the barracks and the bodies would be piled up like cordwood. They would go around and pick them up on these trucks and ship them off. So, it was kind of a tough time. My mother was out there. I think it was out in Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

SH: Did he ever leave the States?

RA: No, he was [in] field artillery, 78th Division.

SH: Did he talk about any experiences other than the flu epidemic?

RA: Not that I recall.

SI: What else did he tell you about his days at Rutgers? Did he say anything about the athletics?

RA: Well, no. It was tough, because he was poor, I guess like everybody else was. He did know Paul Robeson quite well and Selman Waksman. I think my brother, [John Archibald, Class of 1943, interviewed October 1, 1999], mentioned when they had freshman week, Selman Waksman had been living over at the college farm and ... working at nights and whatnot. My father had very happy days at Rutgers. That is where he courted my mother.

SH: Was she going to school?

RA: No, she was a secretary to the president of Interwoven Sock Company, which, in those days, was a good-sized company. Mr. Mettler lived out in Millstone, in a big estate out there.

PA: You grew up in your mother's hometown of Middlebush.

RA: We moved there when I was about three years old. I don't recall living in Bridgeton, so, my whole life was in Middlebush.

SH: What did her family do in Middlebush?

RA: Her father had worked for Johnson & Johnson and he was in charge of the shipping department, when Johnson & Johnson was still young. ... They grew up on a farm out there; it

was the Voorhees Homestead. They had a farm, actually, down in South Middlebush. Then, when we moved back to Middlebush, my grandmother had a home in Middlebush and we moved into that house. It was kind of a house full. My aunt lived there at the time.

SH: How many siblings did your father have?

RA: He had a brother, and then, a sister who had died. I think she was the oldest one and I don't know exactly what she died from.

SH: How many people made up your mother's family?

RA: She had a brother who went to Rutgers, Garrett Voorhees, my aunt, Harriet Voorhees, who lived with us, she worked at J&J, and then, Margarita, who I think died of scarlet fever, as a young woman. So, there were four of them, actually.

SH: Did your father talk about Rutgers, as an employer? Or did you try to ask questions about him as a student?

RA: Not that I recall, no.

SI: When you were growing up, did you interact often with the children of other faculty members?

RA: Yes. It was a good life, because, every Saturday morning, we'd go up to the Rutgers Gym and Coach [James] Reilly would teach us how to swim. I think we went in at nine o'clock, and then the daughters would come in at ten-thirty. Then, there would always be faculty parties and at Christmastime, we would go over to [President Robert] Clothier's house on River Road for a party. It was very pleasant.

SH: Do you think you have a different perspective of President Clothier than some of the alumni that we have talked to who only knew him as the president of the University?

RA: I just had a lot of respect for him, and so did my father.

SH: We have heard him described as austere, but very proper.

RA: Very proper man, but I thought he was just a heck of a nice guy, a person you'd look at ... like a role model. I don't remember anybody really saying any bad things about him. I know my father thought a lot of him.

SH: They were not speaking negatively; they just felt that he was the perfect picture of a college president.

RA: That's right.

SH: You spoke a little bit about your father and Paul Robeson. What kind of interaction did he talk about?

RA: Oh, what a nice man he was and it was a tough life for him. When he came to New Brunswick to sing, ... I do not think he could stay in the Roger Smith Hotel and Dad would always take us down to listen to Robeson when he came. ... I can remember, as a kid, the only thing I really remember about Paul Robeson was his playing *Old Man River*; what a beautiful voice he had. That was probably, I don't know, in the mid-'30s. I wasn't that old.

SH: Were there any discussions about what happened with Paul Robeson later?

RA: Not that I recall.

SI: Did your father have a specialty within agriculture?

RA: Yes. He taught; basically, he worked both for New Brunswick and Rutgers. It was a twelve-month a year job and he would help train the teachers, who were going to become teachers of agriculture. He really was a great guy, very well [liked], a hardworking [man]. That's why he died so young. He was on the go all the time, extremely generous, and active in the church. He did an awful lot with the Boy Scouts and ... young people; always taking them on trips, you know, a good guy.

SH: We know that you have two brothers. Where do you fit in the order?

RA: I am the youngest. I was the baby of the family, the dumb one. [laughter] Bill [William Archibald, Class of 1941] was very bright in school and he got all the awards in high school. ... He was a very capable guy.

SH: What is the age difference between you and your brothers?

RA: We were close, all within three years, I believe it was. My mother was busy.

SH: What did your mother do? What were her interests?

RA: Church. I would say her family. She was very active in church, in ladies' groups and whatnot.

SH: What church did you attend?

RA: Dutch Reformed.

SH: Here, in New Brunswick?

RA: No, in Middlebush.

SH: Were you involved in the church?

RA: No. Reluctantly, I would go. [laughter]

SH: What are some of your earliest memories of growing up in Middlebush?

RA: Middlebush was a great little town. There was only three streets, Front Street, Back Street, and what we called "Chicken Alley," so, it was in the shape of an H, and then, you had all the farms to the south of it. ... The amazing thing about it was we had great bus service. We had bus service every half-hour, which started, I think, five-thirty in the morning, or six o'clock in the morning, and then ended at, like, twelve o'clock at night and it would come down and drop you right off at the train station. Also, we had train service. I can remember, very early in those days, the trains would start from Millstone and the first stop would be Middlebush. Then, it would stop at one other stop, then New Brunswick, and then on into New York. So, that went on for quite awhile; I don't know when they really stopped doing it. But it's hard to believe [that] you'd have train service and such good bus service in those days. ... The busses would go from New Brunswick to Somerville, (Anka?) Bus Line. We had our fire department, that was on Chicken Alley, and my father was very active in the fire department and we would get the phone calls if there was a fire. ... I can still almost hear him running up the back street in his boots to go up to ring the gong. We had an old railroad tie that was hung from a stanchion that he would hit. There was a chemical truck, because there wasn't any water out there. So, I think the truck carried maybe three hundred gallons of water. ... They would tip the soda, or the acid, over into the water and that would build up the pressure so, they would try to put the fire out. The big fire department, in those days, was Millstone. They always had the real nice engine. We had a lousy old engine, we used to always be kind of embarrassed about it, but it was good. The thing I do remember, during the Depression, ... we were in Middlebush when the Depression started, and people burned their houses down for the insurance money. I mean, things were so tough. I remember, one night we had three fires, which was kind of sad, one night, they got there and the fellow was stuck in the driveway, with all his belongings on the truck. So, there was a lot of arson going on in those days, where people [were] trying to collect the insurance. ... I don't know if you're familiar [with] De Russey's Lane, or not? Well, when you go out down Hamilton Street, it is one of the crossroads. It used to be almost like a tent city; people lived in boxes and [they had] pieces of tin over as roofs and, I can remember all this, when we're going down the road, my father would always say, "Those people have a pretty tough life." It was really tough. Then, we had the WPA that used to come into town and ... collect their funds and do odd jobs. ...

PA: Your father was employed at Rutgers at the time. Did that stave off the Depression for your immediate family?

RA: Oh, no, that was a good job. He had a good job in those days. I would say that we certainly were not rich, but we were not poor. I mean, we always had everything we wanted, and we always had a decent car, which a lot of people didn't have in those days. I don't ever remember wanting for anything. ... We took dancing lessons when we were young men.

SH: Willingly?

RA: Willingly, yes, it was a lot of fun. A lot of the faculty kids would be there in the Roger Smith Hotel. I think it was in the '30s and Johnny, we had a Model T Ford that we had bought for the big sum of fifteen dollars. ... That car had been jacked up every year by the farmer that had it; it was in beautiful shape. It was the first closed car that Ford had built. It had one door on it and looked like a stagecoach. Johnny still has some pictures of it. We had a good paint job on it, with red wheels. It was pretty sharp.

SH: Those dancing lessons paid off.

RA: Yes, well, Johnny, it used to be [that] everyone wanted to ride in Johnny's car. We'll pull in front of the hotel and we would go to classes and so on. I think we got another one, we paid five bucks for extra parts when we needed it. It was a lot of fun.

SH: Did you have after-school jobs?

RA: I did. When I was in high school ... I worked at Woolson's. It was a clothing store. Johnny worked there in Woolson's, also, on Friday nights and Saturdays. Then I worked, when I was in high school, an afternoon job, selling shoes, just above Woolson's. It was good.

SI: I was curious about this Hooverville that you mentioned in Middlebush, on De Russey's Lane. Was it people from the area who had fallen on hard times or transients who had come into the area?

RA: No, they were people from that area. That's De Russey's Lane where the Hall-[Mills] murder case took place. In other words, it's up the street from that, but it would be on the corner of De Russey's Lane and Hamilton Street. It is all built up now. That was a tough area.

SH: Did the people in the community try to make sure that they had food, or leave care packages?

RA: I think so. People were always coming to our backdoor. My mother would always be feeding somebody, it seemed like. They would come up on the railroad tracks or hitch a ride on the carriage of the train. We had a Mr. (Twineman?), a black man who worked for us. He would come in, I think it was one day a week, to do odd jobs, the nicest man. He lived down in South Middlebush, in reality, I would say, almost like an unheated shack, with his son, Jimmy, who was a good friend and would play with my older brothers, but he was such a fine gentleman. He made the ungodly sum of about two bucks a day or something like that. It was tough. He would do odd jobs around the village. Middlebush was a good little town. There were a lot of people from Rutgers out in that area, because it was reasonable. Right in the village itself, we probably had five or six people that worked for the college, and then, [in] South Middlebush, we had quite a few, a fair number of them.

SI: Do you remember anything about the Bergel-Hauptman case, the "Nazi Professor" case that happened at NJC in the late 1930s?

RA: What was that again?

SI: One of the professors at Douglass was accused of being a Nazi.

RA: No, I don't know.

SI: I was wondering if it was discussed among the faculty.

RA: No. Dad, though, was out with a bunch of Japanese people when Pearl Harbor was attacked. They were visiting Rutgers, and I think there were probably three or four of them, and he had [to] take them over to Walker Gordon Farm, to show them how they milked the cows on the merry-go-round. My brother, Bill, by then, had gone into the service and had hoped to get out within a year. ... It came over the radio that we've been attacked, and so, it was a very strained trip back to New Brunswick.

SH: Did he ever say what happened to those gentlemen that were there?

RA: No, not that I recall.

SH: They were visiting from Japan, correct?

RA: Yes, they were visiting from Japan. They were ... at Rutgers and my father had been showing them around and his office had been out at the Poultry Building, up on the second floor.

SH: What do you remember hearing about Pearl Harbor as a young man?

RA: When it happened, I thought, "Oh, gee, I'm too young. The war will [be] over before it was time to go in." I think a lot of people felt that way, at first, and then, you realize it was going to be [long]. I remember, my father used to go to parades before then and march in the parades on Memorial Day weekend, dressed up in his uniform. ... I can remember once, it was like twenty years after World War I, and thinking, "Gee, that's a lifetime, the war, was twenty years ago. It will never happen again."

SI: Did your father ever talk about the Bonus Marchers or anything to do with veterans' affairs?

RA: Yes, a little bit. He always felt that was our duty and he didn't feel like they should get a handout, you know what I'm saying. He was a conservative, from Upper New York State. He always believed that if you worked hard, the good Lord will take care of you; you take care of yourself. Same way with the WPA; he was so annoyed at the WPA, because they used to come down, park their cars on one little back street, then they'd walk up and collect their money. He always thought they could work a little bit harder. They did a lot of good, no doubt it, but there were a lot of abuses, too.

PA: Was he a supporter of FDR?

RA: No, I would not think so. My uncle was.

SH: Really?

RA: Yes, very much so.

SH: Were there any heated discussions about politics?

RA: Not really. My father's brother cared for FDR, but my father was always saying that, "FDR is going to get us in the war before he's through." ... He was always talking about that back in the '30s. Middlebush was a good life, I mean, it was a nice little town. We had our public school, eighth grade, right up the street from us, a nice school, and they would bus kids in. So, we could walk to school in the morning, come home for lunch and go back up. Then, we would start in New Brunswick Junior High.

SI: What did you think about the quality of your education? Do you think it prepared you well for Rutgers?

RA: Yes, I think so.

SH: Your high school was here, in New Brunswick.

RA: Yes.

SH: You talked about not willingly being part of the church. Were there other activities that you were involved with?

RA: Oh, I didn't mean it that way. I mean, like a kid, I thought when summertime came you shouldn't have to go [to] Christian Endeavor for two hours, every morning. We spent a lot of time in church. There was Sunday school and ... two hours every Sunday morning was a long time for a young kid that had to sit there.

SH: What about Boy Scouts?

RA: Yes, I was a Boy Scout. My brother, Johnny, was the first Eagle Scout and I was the second Eagle Scout in the troop. We liked Boy Scouts. I went to Boy Scout camp every summer. Johnny was a counselor at the camp.

SH: Where did you go to camp?

RA: Camp Sakawawin, up in Blirstown, New Jersey, and, there, I went for two weeks, maybe three weeks, but it was a lot of fun.

SH: Did you ever go to a jamboree?

RA: No.

SH: What was your Eagle Scout project?

RA: I forget what it was, but ... I have a grandson who's going [to] get to be an Eagle Scout. ... I thought it was much more demanding in those days, with bird study and some of that stuff, some of the merit badges, they really put us through a lot. Being an Eagle Scout, believe it or not, helped me get in the Navy V-5 Program, because, when I started talking about it, ... at that time, they wanted [you] to have two years of college and they then wanted a year of college when I enlisted. ... I said, "I was an Eagle Scout." The guy said, "Well, ... if you're an Eagle Scout, it means that much that we will give you a credit ... for having gone to college for a whole year," even though I only had half a year. But they said being an Eagle gave me enough time to be up on the list. I was very proud of being an Eagle Scout.

SH: How old were you when your brother went into the military? Was he part of the draft?

RA: No, he was ROTC at Rutgers. He came out of Rutgers and immediately went into the service, went to, I think, Fort Benning, Georgia.

SH: How old were you when he left?

RA: I was probably going on seventeen.

SH: How impressed were you that your older brother was off to war?

RA: You didn't think too much about it at the time. It's a lot different than it is today.

SH: You said your father marched in the parades.

RA: Yes, I think we were very proud of him, I mean really proud of him. He was there.

SH: Could you talk a little bit about the discussions around the family dinner table after Pearl Harbor? They have three sons, one of whom is already in. Did they talk with dread or make plans?

RA: Well, no, I think they're proud of us, that we all wanted to go in the service, but Johnny had a bad eye and Johnny tried his darndest to enlist. He even went to Canada, with his cousin, to see [if he could] get in from there and he kept getting turned down. ... I guess the shock was when he did get drafted. Jimmy Lauren looked like the picture of health and he wanted to get in and ... Jimmy got turned down, he had a heart murmur. Johnny, after all these difficulties he had trying to enlist, when they wouldn't take him because he had a bad eye, ended up by getting drafted.

SH: I thought perhaps your father gave you some advice, since you went into the Navy.

RA: Well, my father said one thing, "If you go in the Navy," he knew I liked to fly, he says, "You always have a place to sleep." ... I always thought the Navy uniforms looked nice. It seemed like the good life.

SH: Did you always want to fly?

RA: Yes, I always liked it. I remember sitting out in our backyard one time [when] the planes came over; there was a big gathering of all the Army planes in New York. We had seen these waves of bi-planes flying over, this is back in the mid-30s, and I always thought what a great life it was. My father always liked flying and, when the *Graf Zeppelin* came in and the *Hindenburg*, we would go down to watch [them] fly over New Brunswick and Middlebush and, I think, we went down there a couple of times ... to see the big hangar. My father always took us to a lot of different places when we were young. He'd take us to Washington, travel around, and so, I mean, he was an excellent, really a great father, never said you couldn't do anything. He wanted to know where you were and what you're going to do and, if you say you were going to do something, he would say, "You make up your mind, but I prefer you didn't do it." Then, we wouldn't do it. We had a lot of respect for him.

SH: Did you have a mentor in high school?

RA: Not really. I think my father was my mentor. He was a lot of people's mentor. I mean, we had letters from different people that said ... how [he] changed [their] life, the president of one of the universities and another fellow, Phil Alampi. I don't know if that name rings a bell with you or not.

SI: Alampi, he was a Vo-Ag teacher.

RA: Yes. He basically became Secretary of Agriculture for the State of New Jersey and was on WOR and my father was a consultant, when he was down in Bridgeton, to the Seabrooks, which were developing frozen foods at that time. ... Also, some people by the name of Watson, I believe, had a big tomato ketchup place and Phil Alampi didn't want to go to college. My father kept pestering him, "You've got to go to college," and ended up by getting him a scholarship. Dad got a lot of people scholarships. We have some letters, when he passed away, from some of these people that said what an impact that he had on their life and, I would say, my father was really a good teacher. I mean, by the time he put in, he wasn't one of these fellows that went in at eight-thirty and left at three-thirty. He put in a full day and, in the summertime, he'd go around, visit all these students. They had projects, like Victory Gardens, or they had to have a project. Each got to have a project and he headed up, I think, the Victory Gardens in New Brunswick. A lot of people had little plots to grow plants, vegetables.

SH: Did he take you along with him?

RA: Yes, quite often. On Saturday mornings, we would usually go to the office with him. He worked every Saturday morning over at the college farm and he would go over, do a lot of paperwork, and we used to go along with him. We used to always get milk over there. There was a little refrigerator box and, at that time, they had cows over at the college farm, and you could buy milk, good bottled milk.

SH: Did you consider going into agriculture?

RA: Yes, when I went to college, because I didn't have to take a language. I hated languages and had trouble with them, so, I figured I really didn't like this. I thought, at one time, I wanted to go into the business end of agriculture, not the farming end of it. Then, when I came out of the service, I said, "Well, I'll bite the bullet and take the languages," but agriculture is a lot harder than I thought it's going to be, a lot of sciences. Once I got the taste of some of the chemistry, I decided that I'd prefer to go into business.

PA: You entered Rutgers after your father had worked here for many years and your older brothers attended here, was that a choice or was it a family tradition at that point?

RA: No, it was no choice. I mean, I think one of the reasons my father came up here, at Rutgers, was because he knew that we would get faculty scholarships. That was a big item, your kids are going to have their college paid for. I think we paid, like, half price for books and there was a lot of nice perks, but I didn't have a choice.

SH: What did you do in the summer between your graduation from high school and your coming to Rutgers?

RA: I had fallen when Rutgers beat Princeton.

SH: You were at the stadium.

RA: Yes, at the Rutgers Stadium, and I had hurt my hip and got a bad bruise and I couldn't go to high school. I got an infection and they really didn't know what it was at that time, so, I missed a lot of high school. ... Instead of getting out [with] my regular class, I got out in February. So, I got a job as an office boy out at Industrial Tape, which was part of Johnson & Johnson. I worked there for about three months and that is when Camp Kilmer was opening up. So, I went out and got a job as chauffer at Camp Kilmer, which was the greatest job going. A bunch of ... other friends of mine went out there and I ended up by chauffeuring the chief engineer of Camp Kilmer, when they were building it. So, [I would] drive him around and [it] ended up, then, I got the night shift that started at four o'clock and I'd take the engineer around and, maybe, like, six o'clock, he said, "Well, I'm through for the day." ... I would take the car sometimes, go to New Brunswick, go home and come back, check the car in at twelve o'clock. So, it wasn't a bad job and I was just a young kid then, I guess, I was seventeen or eighteen years old and they had all these new cars. Eventually, they put me in charge of a warehouse out there. I got Johnny a job out there. ... Sometimes, the one thing you would do is take the car, we would go over some kid's house and go swimming in his pool and go pick up a friend. ... So, it was a good job, but the waste at Camp Kilmer then was unbelievable. ... I guess it was cost-plus and, every night, there would be these big fires. Supposedly, they would be burning up the scrap lumber or something. Lots of times, [they] would be taking stuff right off the truck, burn some of the stuff up, you know, inflate the cost. I can remember I used to go out with the engineer and he would get all upset about it. One night, he went out to check and they were taking a lot of nails and everything else, and used them for footing, then poured concrete on top of it. It was kind of a scandal at that time, because everything was cost-plus. Nobody really [checked], it was such a hurry to get Camp Kilmer built and it went up in a hurry. ... I can remember going over there when I was working, and seeing those soldiers trying to go through Camp Kilmer, I thought,

"Holy crow." I think this is another reason why I decided I wanted to get in the Navy. They would be out there practicing with the bayonets. It would be dusty and dirty and they would have these forms up, that they would be making thrusts at them, it was not a very good life.

SH: Did you ever see any of the Italian prisoners of war that worked at Camp Kilmer?

RA: ... No, saw them when I was in the Navy, German and Italian prisoners, saw quite a bit of them. I left Camp Kilmer; well, I did work out there for a while when I was in college, which was not a bad set up. I worked nights.

SH: You said it was a given that you would come to Rutgers. Did you live on campus?

RA: No, I lived at home. The idea was that we would live on campus for our senior year. My brother Bill did and Johnny, I don't think Johnny did, I think, it got to a point where he knew he was going to be going into the service, so he lived at home. I always thought that I missed out on a lot at Rutgers, not living on campus. In those days, the attitude was, "If you can't go to college, go to Rutgers." ... Anybody, ... I would say, within reason, could go to almost any college you wanted to, if you can foot the bill. Go to Princeton, as long as you have the money.

SH: What year did you graduate from high school?

RA: Graduated in '42, February.

SH: You would have graduated with the high school Class of 1941.

RA: Yes, I should have graduated Class of '41, then, the Rutgers Class of '45, ended up in the Class of '46 and '48.

SH: Could you walk us through your Rutgers experience?

RA: Well, I began as a freshman in '42, and then, a group of us enlisted. I think we were all distracted. None of us were working very hard and you knew you're going to go in the service and it's a matter of when. You're preoccupied. ... We really didn't do too well in school and Dr. Helyar from the Ag School was such a fine gentleman. He kind of took me under his wing and that was a big help, and so on. I enlisted. I don't know who was with the group, but a group of us went into New York. We enlisted December 7, 1942, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. ... They said, "Well, go home and a lot of these programs are starting to start up and get up to speed." So, they said, "Well, you probably won't get called up for, maybe, who knows how long? Six, seven, eight months." I got called up in June 1943, called me up on a Tuesday night and said, "Report to New York," the next day. I gathered somebody backed out, or somebody couldn't make something, so, it was really short notice. At that time, ... I thought I wouldn't get called up for the summer and [I had] gotten a job by the Raritan Arsenal driving a lawn mower on the golf course. I did that for about a week and that was the end of that.

PA: Were you able to complete one full year at Rutgers before being called?

RA: Yes, one full year.

SI: Did you pledge your fraternity during that year?

RA: Yes, DU. My brothers are all DUs. I think my uncle, Garrett Voorhees, was a DU. My father was an Alpha Chi Rho.

SI: Was there much activity at the fraternity or was it kind of shutting down at that point?

RA: It was pretty much shut down. We had a German ambassador, I think his name was Konrad, Mr. Konrad, who had been a German ambassador, believe it or not, to Mexico and went into the United States, got picked up, ... a very fine gentleman. He was kind of like the cook and the housekeeper. We ate at the Deke House and Konrad couldn't leave New Brunswick, and he was restricted to New Brunswick. I always thought it was kind of an odd thing. Here he is, he had been a German ambassador to Mexico and they put him right next to Camp Kilmer, but he was pretty much restricted, but you could tell that he had been quite a fine gentleman.

SI: Was he affiliated with the Nazi Party?

RA: I don't know. All I know is that he had been in the Embassy in Mexico City. How he got to the United States, whether he'd fled to the United States, or what, I don't know. He was a head honcho. ... I used to always say, "Boy, that's kind of a come down," he had a little room upstairs and here he is washing dishes, and cleaning up after a bunch of students.

SH: Did he ever talk about how he came to be in this situation?

RA: No.

PA: When you arrived in 1942, ROTC was mandatory. What was your impression of the program?

RA: It wasn't bad. There was a lot of marching, but I thought it was a good program.

SI: Did you take it seriously?

RA: Yes. I think, most of the kids in those days were in the ROTC.

SH: It was mandatory for the first two years.

RA: Yes, mandatory. I know when I came out it was.

SH: What did you have to go through to get into the program at Cornell?

RA: You mean at Colgate? Actually, we didn't know where we were going to go. When I enlisted, I didn't have any idea I was going to go to Colgate. I thought I was going to go to Chapel Hill, and Chapel Hill, in those days, when I enlisted, they said you'd be a Navy flyer in

nine months, and then, it didn't work out that way. Because, I guess, in training, they were losing too many people, and then, they kept extending the program and making it a little bit more difficult to get your wings. So, I thought I would be going to Chapel Hill for thirteen weeks, which was strictly physical, big time, then go to primary, then go to Pensacola. Instead, they said, "You'll be going to Colgate for a pre-preflight, to see if you could make the grade or not," because they were washing guys out at Chapel Hill who were not getting in shape fast enough. Colgate was very difficult.

SH: Were you in the first class that went there?

RA: I think they started that program in April. It was in that Banner book [a history picture book put out about the V-5 program], I went there in June.

SH: You really were right in the beginning.

RA: Yes, and they wanted us in shape in a hurry. I think we probably had, like, four hours a day physical training and we had push-ups and running. ... Each day, we had to run up the ski tow and we had Billy Geyer, who had been an All-American at Colgate and played for the Chicago Bears. He used to lead the charge up, this was at the end of the day, and then you come down. You'd run a half a mile on a wooden track. ... Every Friday you'd go up for four or five-mile jog and it was tough. ... You run to classes and it was a long day. I think we started at like six-fifteen and you would go until about nine-thirty at night, ten o'clock, and a lot of studying, navigation, meteorology and even the history; why we were doing certain things in the war. I can remember instructors talking. I didn't know why we're even in Africa, at that time, and then, they started talking about that we need the Middle East for the oil. It was a good course. Colgate, I think, was very happy to have all of us up there. We were the smaller group they had up there. They had the V-1 and, also, a V-12 group. V-12 was longer. We went to Colgate for thirteen weeks.

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

SH: It sounds like there was a tremendous amount of physical training, as well as the academic end of it. Were you in good physical shape before you reported?

RA: I thought I was. I mean, I was in good shape. I wasn't heavy or anything, but I can remember this thing. They took all sorts of measurements on us when we first went up. It seems kind of odd. We went in and, I guess, today, they'll say it would be an invasion of your privacy. ... They put us in front, we got up there in our jockstrap, and then, they measured our arms and our chests and everything else, they did that a couple of times, and you had to get through certain physical standards or they put you in the weak squad. If you're in that weak squad, I mean, heaven help you, because, then, you had to go to a lot of the stuff on Saturdays, to develop. By the time we got to Cornell, we had to do thirty-five pull-ups, fifty push-ups, and then, they had, like, step-ups. ... You would step up on a platform. ... We started off with, like, thirty pounds, and then went up, I think, to fifty pounds. I mean, it's pretty heavy and you do that for five minutes, and they're always, you're always being pushed and we had a couple of coaches that had [it in for us]. A guy by [the] name [of] Ambrose, I think everyone was ready to kill the guy,

because he played professional ball, football, and then you are always being pushed to extremes it seems.

SH: You talked about getting credit, for acceptance to this program, because you were an Eagle Scout. Were most of the other cadets college graduates?

RA: Some of them were. We had; I don't know, I forget the percentage, most of them had two years of college. Then, they lowered the standards. So, then, it got to be [that] you only had to have a year, finally, to get in.

SH: You only had one year under your belt at Rutgers and you mentioned not really being engaged academically, knowing that you were going to go into the Navy. How hard was the academic curriculum?

RA: I thought it was hard. I mean, we all thought it was hard. It was different. You would have these exams and, if you didn't pass the exam, you're out. Then, you went to Great Lakes [Naval Training Station]. ... It was a matter of pride. Nobody wanted to get washed out, especially in the beginning.

SH: Were there cadets helping other cadets make it through?

RA: Not really.

SH: Was it really every man for himself?

RA: Yes, you either did or you didn't do it.

SH: Were there many who wound up going to Great Lakes?

RA: Along the trip, yes, over the whole course. I started out with about forty guys. I think three of us got our wings. We went through ...

SH: Just three of the forty?

RA: Yes, but what happened, we went through; see, it was crazy. They never knew how many pilots they're going to need, so, you go through these purges and you could [get cut], if you [were] caught in the middle of a purge, when they wash guys out, because the system would get jammed up. ... They would be getting people out of these courses and there wasn't any place for them. They were supposed to go, maybe, to, say Chapel Hill and there would be too many people in Chapel Hill, so, you could not get into Chapel Hill. So, bingo, I mean, they go over your records and, if your records were not quite right, out you go. I got pneumonia in Chapel Hill, which, in a sense, was a blessing, because I got pushed back about two weeks. I was in the hospital there. When I got to primary out in Bunker Hill, we had twelve hundred cadets out there. Well, then, there was not enough room in Pensacola. So, we went from twelve hundred cadets down to about three hundred. They washed out about nine hundred and these are fellows that had gone through pre-preflight, starting to fly, which we did at Cornell, and then, gone

through Chapel Hill. You could be the best guy going, but, if they had to get rid of so many guys and you had a check ride that day, out you went. Same thing in Pensacola; we had a couple of purges down there, really good guys, who probably could fly a lot better than myself and a lot of the others, they were there at the wrong time.

SH: Can you talk about that first flight at Colgate?

RA: Oh, yes. Well, no, we didn't fly at Colgate. From there, we went to Cornell for thirteen weeks and there was a little airport at Cornell and there were fifty of us there and thousands of guys in the V-12 program, V-1 program, V-7 program at Cornell. We were the smallest group. We lived in an old house, two houses, they had. I guess they had been rooming houses or something. We had to have breakfast. Since we have the smallest group, we ate first in the morning, before calisthenics, and we started off, like, five-thirty, quarter to six in the morning. ... One morning, we would go down to the airport at six-thirty and start flying, or seven o'clock, and, the next day, you'd go down in the afternoon, go down by bus. ... It was cold. I mean, by then, ... it was November and we didn't have any flight jackets or anything. ... They would tell us to put some sweaters on, and we were flying Piper Cubs and [we would] have an old, white jacket on, you know, light coveralls on. Then, we flew Piper Cubs for, I think, maybe thirty or forty hours. Then, we went into a Waco, which was a biplane, which is open cockpit, and that thing was really cold. Man, it was cold. Then, I got out of there in December, and then went to Chapel Hill in January. Chapel Hill for thirteen [weeks]; actually, I took an extra two weeks there. Chapel Hill was supposed to be the toughest place. It had the reputation of being very, very difficult, physically, and we were in such good shape, because of this Lieutenant Ambrose. We got out of Colgate and we did the same thing. We did a lot of physical stuff at Cornell. It was almost like a push; I found it that way. There, you had to do a sport for two weeks. You got boxing for two weeks, football for two weeks, survival for two weeks, labor for two weeks and that was strenuous, and then, you're over. They always had you overmatched. They would try to make you aggressive and make you come back. I remember, I had to box with a guy who had been a former Golden Gloves kid in Chicago, had all my teeth loosened and whatnot, and my poor roommate got beat up. It was always something; you would either be beating up somebody that you are a little better than that or getting beat up yourself.

SH: Where were your roommates from?

RA: Ross Meyer, he was from San Mateo, California, and another one was from Westfield, Hunter Grant, and the other fellow, Washsagel, was from Staten Island, that was at Chapel Hill, and a guy, Bernstein, from Colgate, really from up at Cornell, as a roommate, but he was from Newark. You were just so damned proud to be in the service. I mean, we always thought we were a little bit special, not that we were, but it was hard to get in and it was hard to stay in and, I can't remember anybody, as tough as it was, everybody really wanted to be there.

SH: When did you get your wings?

RA: I got my wings on May 1, 1945.

SH: You received them at Pensacola.

RA: Pensacola. They extended that program. By the time I got my wings, it took me almost twenty-something months. They went from nine months to twelve months to sixteen months, and then, towards the end, we had to go to what they called pre-operational. You had different checks along the way. They killed probably a lot at Baron Field and we killed a lot of guys there, at Baron, in training, but they used to say they were killing more in training than they were in combat. I remember, one night, we were practicing carrier approaches and the landing officer on the ground had a few drinks too much. I think there were nine planes that went in that night, no, I'm sorry, six, but nobody got killed, and that fellow got court-martialed, to say the least.

PA: You mentioned that you were not V-1, V-7 or V-12. What was your program and how was it different?

RA: Well, V-1 and V-12, that was all deck officers. You would go into the Navy and be a deck officer, something along those [lines]. If you're V-5, that was training just for aviation and that was a smaller group. V-1, I think you're in college for at least two years; maybe that was V-12. V-12, I guess, got at least two years of college. V-1 was, you'd go in and, in ninety days, you'd be out. You'd have to be a college graduate, I believe, to get into V-1.

SH: When was the first time that you landed on the deck of an aircraft carrier?

RA: Never did. We went out twice, but, because of weather, we did not. That was the most difficult. You [could] say that was the ultimate thrill. But you would practice all this on land first and, ... everything you did was basically a carrier approach. We would go out, do it on short fields, and you have a landing signal officer out there on the outlying field and you come in and do everything right. Part of the training is always what they called spot landings, stalling, and they would have circles there and you had to land within the circle or you would not get the passing grade and everything was speed, and precision.

SH: Were there also the cables?

RA: No, not on the ground, but the thing on the carrier, which a lot of people [do not] realize, everything is air speed, ground speed. So, on the ground, your ground speed is always a lot faster than if you landed on a carrier. ... The carrier would be going maybe twenty-some-odd knots into the wind, which would be, hopefully, twenty or above, or fifteen, so, you've got the wind coming across the carrier. So, you've [got] thirty-five knots or forty knots. So if your airspeed was, say, sixty-five, ground speed would be twenty-five, so, it makes a little bit of a difference. Everything becomes relative. I have a good friend I play golf with, and he was in the North Atlantic on a TBM, flying that thing at night on a baby carrier, and he said he was just scared stiff all the time. I was frightened a lot of the time. I wasn't wild about night flying. It was pretty dark and the fields weren't lit and we use a different approach than the Army would. The Army will have a much longer landing pattern. You might get lined up with the runway two miles out and, with a carrier, we always used a simulated carrier approach and you would think this was the field. You would come down and, right opposite the land spot, you would start kind of diving in and you are lower and lower. It was fun, though.

SH: How often did you fly?

RA: Yes, at Cornell, we flew, try to fly a hop in a day, and then, Pensacola, we would fly every day. When I ended up as an instructor down there, it was not a bad setup. We would fly early in the morning, say, maybe get two flights in, get a little over three hours in, and then, you'd have off. Say, if I did that Monday morning, I'd have off until one o'clock or twelve o'clock on Tuesday. So, you had, like, a day almost in-between. So, you do two flights, then, three flights, and you do that seven days a week. ... Then, you would have a day off, on liberty. That was the same way in training, when we were flight training. They would schedule as much as they could, as long as the instructors were there and the planes were available.

SH: What did you think when you found out that you were going to be an instructor?

RA: We were all disappointed. For some stupid reason, I kind of decided, got talked into becoming a carrier-based night fighter. ... You did a lot of dumb things in those days.

SH: What made you choose carrier-based night fighters?

RA: I think ego.

SH: That has to be the toughest assignment that you possibly can get.

RA: Yes. I always figured we were not going to get it or you hope you were not [going to] get it. A lot of people volunteered for some pretty stupid things. I enjoyed it. Primary was difficult, I thought, because that is where you had a lot more flight checks and they were always washing guys out. Pensacola, it was all hard, I thought.

SH: Were your instructors civilians?

RA: At Cornell, yes, that was contracted out. Piper Cubs, in those days, it seemed like a big deal. I can remember my first cross-country flight out of Bunker Hill. He said to go to Chicago and gave me a road map. This is a Stearman in an open cockpit, "Go to Chicago, then go up to South Bend, get some fuel and then, come back to Bunker Hill," which is in Indiana. So, we would all go off [at] twenty-minute intervals and I said, "Yes how do you know when you get to Chicago?" The guy said, "You will see the lake." I landed at South Bend, which is where Notre Dame was. I remember, coming in, there was a B-17 there and I taxied up next to that thing. That's has to be the biggest airplane I've ever seen in the world. I mean, it seemed so big. The Army guys were very nice. They took me through it. I came back, got the gas and came back to Bunker Hill. We got a fair amount of night flying at Bunker Hill, also, not too sophisticated, as far as the instruments were concerned, a lot of formation, a lot of aerobatics. The old Stearman, ... that plane was stressed so that you could do anything in it. You have different types of spins, inverted spins. That was the beginning of the aerobatics, which was not too bad.

SI: We interviewed a man who was an air traffic controller in Jacksonville during the war. He said it was very difficult because there were so many military bases in that area, and then, you

had civilian flights. They just hoped that the planes did not collide, because they did not have all the information. Was that something that you had to deal with?

RA: You know, down there, I always wondered why we didn't hit each other. You had a big problem flying through the clouds, and we had like 250 planes at Whiting Field, and the same way at Bunker Hill. ... You get in a pattern and, maybe, the pattern would start ten or fifteen miles away and you'd be ... at a certain altitude. Then, you would drop down, so [that] you could kind of see what was in front of you. ... It was up to you to space it and there's so much traffic. You really couldn't contact the tower. You just start landing, like, at Bunker Hill, we had a big mat. It must have been about three thousand feet square. The guys would be landing all over that thing. If you go to an outlying field, which would be a grass field, away from the base, maybe fifteen, twenty miles, it may have some twenty or thirty planes out there. There wasn't even a tower. You just kind of fit yourself in. When you got to Pensacola, landing was a lot faster and, there, you would start away from the base. Then, you would come in. You would come over the field and you would peel off, and then, come to a very short approach and come in and land. ... There, depending on the runway, sometimes, there would be two guys landing right after the other, maybe three on the runway at the same time. ... Hopefully, nothing went wrong.

SH: What was your closest call before you became an instructor?

RA: I almost hit my roommate once, fooling around. I thought he was going to turn and I made a dive on him, and I thought he was going to see me coming, and, all of a sudden, at the last minute, I realized he wasn't going to turn. I just kind of slid off and came from underneath him and I did not miss him by too [much].

SH: Did he see you?

RA: No, I don't think so. Well, he knew. He saw me when I came around, but we used to get live targets. Sometimes, you towed the target. There was a big sleeve behind you and guys would come and start off usually with cameras. You made a run, and then later they would give you real bullets that would have a dye on them, so that they could see how many hits you got on the target itself. Then we practiced dive-bombing. We could go off and they started to give you these little smoke bombs, to see what you hit.

SH: What was your closest call as an instructor?

RA: I don't remember. I don't think I had that many.

SH: Did you have any pupils that you thought were going to be an ace or someone that you thought really should not have gotten that far?

RA: Not really. I think, by that time, [when] the fellows got where we were, where I was instructing, you knew what they went through to get there, and we had a guy, (Bowers?) was his name, and he flew with Pappy Boyington. ... He was a great squadron leader and his theory was, "If anybody gets this far and you have to give him a down, bring him back and give him an incomplete flight. We will give him another chance." So, everybody wanted to get into our

squadron. I don't think we ever gave one down that I know of, which means a guy got [washed out], that was the end of him. ... That was a fellow that had been an instructor at Bunker Hill, and at Bunker Hill, they had some instructors that became commissioned officers right off the bat, because they needed instructors quite a bit out there. He was a Marine captain and he was not a very pleasant man, so, anyway, he gave a lot of downs at Bunker Hill, and everybody kind of remembered him. ... He came through our squadron and the word got out to Bowers that this guy was not as good as he thought he was and he was always kind of throwing his rank around. ... He pulled his rank on a couple of guys, and then, we thought he was cheating on the radio range. If you knew how to do it, you could peek out. So, Bowers said he would give his check. So, Lieutenant Bowers, who's also a Marine, gave him a check ride. He found out that the guy was peeking and he washed him out. If you get washed out of an aviation program like that, it was pretty tough thing for the guy, but I think everybody was kind of pleased about it. Everybody was so stick-together, I mean, nobody wanted to see anybody fail. You do your darndest. Once you got to Pensacola you're in final squadron.

SH: In all of the different places where you went through training and were stationed, did you keep up with how the war was progressing across the globe?

RA: No. They would tell us pretty much [what] was going on. It was part of the program. One of the things we did see a lot of, they did show us a lot of movies of Americans getting shot down and, I think that was to make you realize that it was "the real McCoy." My father and mother wrote to us every day, so we'd always get mail and then we would write to them and they would put in their letters what [was] going on and where Bill was, or Johnny, or myself and what was happening with them. No, we pretty much kept up with what was going on. Food was great.

PA: Your brothers were spread across the globe. Were you able to keep in contact with them?

RA: Didn't write to them. We would write to them through my parents and say, "Can you tell Johnny so-and-so?" It was the same thing as writing to them. It worked out well.

PA: You were aware of how your brothers were faring.

RA: Well, we knew where Bill was. We weren't really aware of what was going [on] with him. We knew he would be in the Pacific and we knew which invasion. You would read about them in the paper and you knew he was involved in that invasion. He went through seven of them in the Pacific. The thing at Chapel Hill, the ones I remember, that's when they started showing us a lot of movies of Americans getting shot [down]. If you didn't do your homework, or you didn't do what you should do, I mean, you're going to have an unhappy ending. ... We had a lot of Italian prisoners down there and they waited on tables. That's another thing you didn't have in the Army, I don't think. Those fellows, I think, they were the happiest guys. I mean, they were tickled pink. That was not too tough a life for them, a lot better being there than in [the war]. ... In Pensacola, we had Germans and the German fellows, same way. [The ones] we had in our barracks when I was stationed at Whiting Field, they were tickled pink. The guys could speak good English and they took good care of us.

SH: They did not have an attitude at all?

RA: None at all. They had them behind barbed wire and buildings that were up on stilts so high, so [that] they couldn't dig a tunnel. I would think they could have left the doors open for those fellows. All they wanted to do, I think a lot of them wanted to stay in the United States.

SH: Were some of them able to?

RA: I think a lot of them probably came back.

SH: How much was academics a part of your training at Chapel Hill?

RA: Quite a bit, an awful lot of navigation, math and whatnot. One thing they did to us, which was [in] that little article I showed you, they packed us up one day and gave us pack and they took us out in the middle of the woods and dumped us off. ... They gave us, I think, seven days to get back and it was raining like crazy. The idea was, how [do] you forage for food? We were out in the swamps and everything else, bugs, what you could eat, what roots and whatnot. Then, they did that when we were down at Pensacola. They put us on an island for a few days with nothing to eat, and you had to survive, which was good, a lot of survival courses. It ended up being a lot longer program than any of us thought it was going to be.

SH: Was there anything that they taught you that, now, you look back and you think, "That was bunk," or, "That was helpful?"

RA: Not really. The best thing that ever happen to me was going in the service. I think a lot of fellows felt that way, because they really became a lot more focused. When I was a freshman, I had no idea what I wanted to do, or what I was going to do. I think a lot of us grew up. We became men. We saw a lot. We lost a lot of our friends. You know, they had crashes and people that we knew that were not in our group. A lot of our friends from high school that were in the Army were killed and I always felt blessed, though, I was in the Navy.

SH: What would be the reaction on the base when you lost someone in training?

RA: Not a heck of a lot. That's part of life. I mean, some of the guys, and I met a lot of guys, the fellow that lived right next to me, Bob Grammer, I have a picture of him that was in the paper, he went, one night, over Mobile. We used to do a lot to try to get away, flathatting. ... He hit the steeple of the Catholic Church. It shows the plane went through the steeple and, I guess, the thing we thought was, "Oh, gee, that's kind of tough on his parents, to do a dumb thing like that and get killed." One night, I remember a big stink. At night, you would head over to that Mobile area, because it was not patrolled. It was kind of out of the mainstream around the Pensacola area. They used to have some planes that would sit up high to keep their eye on certain areas and make sure guys weren't flathatting, or doing something. Somebody went over there one night and saw the freight train coming across this causeway and there was a big causeway in Mobile. So, he got down right on the deck, started heading for the train that was maybe about four or five miles up the ridge and not too far in advance. He turned the landing light on. I guess [the engineer] thought it was another train coming down the causeway and, I

remember, the guy slammed the brakes on and the big, long, freight train, they flattened a lot of the wheels. It was really a pretty serious thing. It probably put that train out of commission for a while. I mean, it did a lot of damage, and they were trying to find out who was responsible for that. Then, we had another fellow, I remember how, sometimes, they got these outlying fields and one of the fellows had a student in the back, happened to be an admiral's son, and he did a slow roll, and then, came down to buzz the field. ... They hit the antenna of one of the planes and he damaged one of the ailerons. When he pulled up, he bailed out and, unfortunately, the kid in the back didn't get out. I think, it was maybe five hundred feet. That ... happened to be an admiral's son, so that guy ended up in Portsmouth and got court-martialed. I think he got big time. But we used to have a lot of accidents that were pilot error, or just doing crazy things. ... The final squadron that Baron Field got to be famous for, they called it "Bloody Baron." I guess, at one time, they were having about one guy a day, having a training accident where somebody got killed. ... Walter Winchell's nephew was killed there and he looked into it and he was the one that started talking, complaining about it on his radio program. ... They changed the syllabus a bit, where some of the kids were having problems. Everybody's proudest moment was the day we got our wings.

SH: Was your family able to come down?

RA: No.

SH: Who gave you your wings?

RA: I don't know, some admiral. I mean, they put your wings, on and you go, and they call your name off. They did forty of us that day and the band played. Still, then, they were wondering where to put some of these fellows. ... The fellows I felt sorry for were, just before we got our wings, they took five guys and gave them a recheck, this is after we've finished pre-operational, and washed them out. They had their uniforms and thought they were going to get their wings. Once you got to that point, back to the main base, you think you're home free. That was tough.

SH: At any point, had you requested where you would like to be stationed?

RA: Well, I thought then that we were going into fighters and they took our whole squadron and sent us up to Atlanta to a special instrument school. ... They had so many cadets at Pensacola and they didn't know what to do with them. ... What happened, you could only instruct for a certain period of time. There were forty of us, but the whole group got sent to Atlanta for this special course, and then, it was a question of what they were going to do with us when they even sent us up there, whether we'd be instructors or we're going to night fighters, and we all got sent back to Pensacola to clean up the backlog. ... When I was going through, I think it was Whiting Field, there were so many people in front of us at Baron Field, which was final squadron for fighters, fellows who were going on [to] fighter planes, that I drove a dump truck, worked to stay in shape. You had to do something physical, when you've finished your training, and you're waiting for the next slot to open up. ... They had fellows sitting at Whiting Field, when we got sent back there as instructors, who had been there for well over a month, just waiting to get done. They just started speeding everything up.

SH: The lieutenant in charge of your squadron was a Marine. Was there any competition between the Marines and Navy flyers?

RA: We had a choice. You could be a Marine. We all had the same training, and then, you made your choice, when we got to Pensacola, if you're going to be a Marine or stay in the Navy. I would say the bulk of the people stayed in the Navy.

SH: Did they?

RA: Yes, but you went to the same courses, same classes. Everything was the same.

SH: What about the other services? How did the Navy pilots feel they stacked up against the Army pilots?

RA: I think the Army pilots thought they were better and we always thought that we were better, because our training was a lot longer. The fact that you're flying over water and the carrier, and everything, it was much more intense. That was my feeling. Whether it was true or not, who knows.

SH: Were you ever in a situation where you could discuss this topic?

RA: No, I mean they used to always tell us that we were the best.

SH: We have heard that such discussions took place between the services when they would meet up in town.

RA: Could be.

SH: Do you feel that the Navy was more hierarchical than the Army? We have heard that the officers did not interact with the enlisted men.

RA: I didn't find that in the Navy, no. We're very dependent on the people that worked on the line, the mechanics and the WAVES. Gosh, they have a tough job. I mean, you get out there and some of those girls, especially in primary, had to crank that plane up, there was a big crank, and those gals would get out there and that thing would start [the] inertial wheel going. That was a hard job and it would be hot. You weren't doing it [for] one plane; maybe they would assign you to five or six airplanes and those things were going out, like, every hour-and-a-half, all day long. We had WAVE instructors on the Link trainer. You would spend a lot of time in a Link trainer. I think we had more of that [than], probably, even maybe the Army did.

SH: You had a woman training you in a Link trainer?

RA: Yes, most of the Link jobs were done by young women. Most of them were college graduates.

SH: Did they ever voice an opinion as to whether they should be allowed to fly?

RA: No, never heard of it.

SH: Did they have an officer's rank?

RA: Some of them did, yes, the gal that was in charge of the department, but most of them were seamen.

SH: Did you ever have any planes delivered to the bases by women?

RA: No.

SH: As a young man, in New Jersey, had you done much traveling or was becoming a Navy flier your first time experiencing the country?

RA: No, we'd done a fair amount with my father. We had done a lot. He was always taking us some place, we would go up to New York, to my grandfather's farm, and we would take day trips out from there. I think, I had gone to Florida. I had gone down to see my brother, Johnny. It wasn't as if I had never been out of New Brunswick.

SH: Was there anything that was shocking to you, coming from Middlebush, New Jersey?

RA: Not really.

SH: In any of these areas?

RA: I can remember one time, which was [when] I thought, "Man, you don't know how lucky you are." I was officer of the day. This was after the war was over. When we were flying, ... it wasn't a bad life. You would wake up in the morning and, if the weather was lousy, you would not even go down to the hangar. You'd go back to sleep. Then, after the war was over, ... with so many of us around, we had a pretty good racket, they started saying [that] you had to do a little more work. ... I remember, once, I had to go inspect a barracks and it was an all-black unit and that's when you really realize that, gee, it was different for those fellows. I mean, ... they really didn't get the good jobs and we had a much better life than they did. Most of these fellows were working in the mess halls or something like that. That was kind of a shock to me, believe it or not. ... To go in and to see, I would think, "Gee," you know.

SH: Did you know that they were there at the same base as you?

RA: I didn't realize that ... we were treated a hell of a lot better than they were.

SH: Were there ever any black Navy fliers?

RA: I don't recall any, no. The Army did. But I don't remember [any]. I don't think so. We never had any in our group, but [they were] nice guys. One thing, everybody wanted to be there and they wanted to stay there, if you know what I mean. It wasn't like the Vietnam War. My

brother, Bill, I can remember he was the commanding general [of] Fort Totten during the Vietnam War and he was not exactly in favor of that. He thought that things were not right and he was getting a lot of pressure put on him by some of the politicians to take these guys into that unit out there, so [that] they wouldn't have to go into the service. ... He led a group down Fifth Avenue, for one of the Memorial Day parades, and was being spit on. Here he is, a general, going down, these are guys, young kids, coming up and spitting on you. I mean, that's tough to take.

SH: Did you also feel that your parents supported you and your brothers?

RA: Yes, they were very proud of us.

SH: Did your mother have the stars posted?

RA: Yes, stars in the window. I can remember we used to always try and surprise her, when we got home. When I went in the Navy, they said, ... "You will not get a leave. The next time you get a leave is when you get your wings. You'll never get home, even though you're in the States, because the program is getting filled up." I was fortunate. I would get a leave just about every time I finished stuff at school. I would never tell my folks about it. You usually liked to show up and come ring the doorbell. It might be six-thirty and seven o'clock in the morning and I guess that might give them a start, thinking it might be some bad news, but I remember how thrilled they would be when we would get home.

SH: Did the three of you ever get home at the same time?

RA: Yes, one time, when that picture was taken. I don't know why we were all home. I think, that was when I got out of Colgate. I happened to be home, Johnny happened to get home, and Bill happened to get home, at the same time.

SH: When you were getting your flying hours in, did you ever wind up at the same base?

RA: No. Johnny flew over to see me once. ... I went over to Mobile and Johnny flew in with another guy. A friend of his had to get some time in the airplane.

SH: You talked about how proud you were to be serving and, also, the fact that the Navy uniform looked good. How much advantage did you take of that?

RA: A fair amount. When we were in Atlanta, Georgia, there were maybe a hundred of us up there, at Peachtree DeKalb. ... Are you familiar with that airport? ... Anyway that was on the outskirts of town and there must have been eighty thousand troops around and we were in the Navy and, here we are, we're getting our first decent [check], we had a pretty good paycheck in those days. ... Anyway, the debutants in Atlanta would have a dance for us every Tuesday night and we'd go in and really have a great time, good time.

PA: Just for the Navy pilots?

RA: Yes, and not only that, we would get invited to a country club, where you could drink, every Sunday, because you couldn't drink in Atlanta on Sunday. It was a dry city. So, heck, we took advantage of that and, really, they were nice parties they would have for us and I think, lots of times, we'd even get picked up, transportation. So, it was good. We would walk into a bar and we had teamed up with a guy, Frank Fox, who had won the Navy Cross.

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

RA: Frank Fox, we teamed up with him, Ross Meyer and myself. We roomed right in the same building and he had the Navy Cross, which was pretty big time, and he was a full lieutenant. We were lowly ensigns. ... We would go into the town with him and we'd go into a bar and that was a great attraction. That was, like, next [to] the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was a real party guy. We had a lot of fun in Atlanta.

SH: You just considered it part of your training, right?

RA: Yes, well, a good part.

PA: In Atlanta, you were a hundred Navy pilots among eighty thousand Army troops. Did you ever have any run-ins with Army officers?

RA: No, I think everybody respected one another. ... The sad thing about that base, and why the Army ever did it, I don't know, but I used to come on the bus to go into town, because we were right next to an amputation hospital. ... We would take off at night quite often and one of the things you used to like to do is have a low take-off, before you pulled up, and we understand some of these guys would be jumping out of bed at night when they hear a plane go over, and when they [would] be coming back. You almost tear up talking about it. I can remember getting on the bus, at different times, and these young guys we would see up there with both their legs off, or their arms, and, here we are going into town for a good time. ... We had never been in combat, or anything, and these guys are at this hospital where they are getting whacked up, I mean, really sad. These were fellows who were in therapy and I remember, one time, we saw this one guy and he had both his legs at his knees [amputated] and they said he had been quite a football star at one time. So, anyway, that's one thing you remember about Atlanta.

SH: The fun and the reality.

RA: Yes, we are right next to it, going in on the bus.

SH: Before we got the tape turned back on, you talked about the fact that fighter pilots were not suppose to be married ...

RA: Right, if you were in the training program.

SH: Only while you are training?

RA: Only while you're training. As soon as you got out, a lot of the guys got married.

SH: Were there some that married on the QT?

RA: Yes.

SH: Were they married before they entered the program?

RA: They got married. The gals came down when they got to Pensacola. It was pretty hard to do when you were in primary, or one of those places. You had to hide this fact, but, at Pensacola, there was a couple I knew [that] had gotten married down there. I think, if they got caught, they would have been in big-time trouble. ... It was a tough life for them, because they couldn't live with their wives. They can only see them on a weekend. These girls had to work and accommodations were hard to come by.

SH: Where did you meet Mrs. Archibald?

RA: I met her after I came out of the service. She graduated from Douglass, Class of '46, and she was going around with a good friend of mine. ... I met her in a snowstorm and I had seen her before and thought she was pretty cute, and she just happened to be out with this gentleman and they had gotten stuck, and so, anyway, I helped her get unstuck. ... We started going together, and that was the beginning of it.

SH: This was after you were back on campus, again, as a student.

RA: Yes, she had graduated. So, it worked out well.

SH: Was she working at that time?

RA: Yes, she taught school. I ... got out in December of '45 and went back [in the] beginning of '46. Anyway, my father, I came home [from] my last class in June 1946 and my father was going to speak in Trenton that night. ... He wasn't feeling too well that day. It was a graduation or something, and my mother was always conscious of some heart problems, I guess. She said, "Let me call a doctor if you don't feel well." He said, "No, I have felt a lot worse pains than this," and within thirty seconds, he was dead. So, it was fast. He had been [to] the doctor's two nights before for a good checkup and he had some kidney problems and [the] doctor said he was in good shape. He was fifty-one, which was young.

PA: Had your brothers also returned home from the war?

RA: Yes, all of us had gotten back, yes, thank God.

SH: You are all back at home at that point.

RA: Johnny was in Florida. Bill was at home. I was at home. I was waiting on tables at that time, going to night school, day school, and had the flower concession at the DU house.

SH: You had the GI Bill, but you were still working all these jobs and going to school with twice the regular curriculum.

RA: Well, professors did not have a very good pension in those days and it was tough for my mother and you wanted to do your own part. I just thought it would be a big help. I really wanted to go to Cornell. I loved Cornell when I was up there and checked into it, because I thought I could use the GI Bill, and they said, "Everybody wanted to go back to Cornell, plus the kids that had been up there as students that had been there before." ... They said, "Listen, if you've been at Rutgers, especially if you have a faculty scholarship, you don't have a chance of getting into Cornell." That is why I came back to Rutgers. Then, I knew I wanted to go out and go to work. I had met Wil and wanted to get married. So, I really worked hard to get out, took extra courses.

SH: You came back in December of 1945.

RA: Yes, got discharged. I started January of 1946.

SH: When did your father pass away?

RA: 1945. No, he died in 1946, after I came back to school.

SH: That December?

RA: I started in January 1946. He died in June of 1946.

SH: I thought it happened as soon as you came back.

RA: No, yes, about five months, six months.

PA: Was he still working for Rutgers at that time?

RA: Yes.

PA: Did Rutgers have any kind of memorial service?

RA: No, but the fellows he worked with, they did. They started a little foundation. The sad thing about Dad, he was up in line to get another guy's job, who was going to retire, Professor [Harry O.] Samson, which was something you look forward to and that [would] really [have] been a slow down job for him ... It would have been a nice thing to retire [from], and the pay would have been a little better, and it would have been a lot easier for him. The education system in those days, you didn't have a lot of the benefits. You had benefits, but you didn't have retirement stuff, and all that. Today, it's not bad.

SH: When you returned to Rutgers, did you take day and night classes to allow you to finish early?

RA: Yes, I took evening classes and I took summer school. So, I came back and did it, wound up in a year-and-a-half.

SH: Did you have credit from the Navy?

RA: Well, actually it ended up that I did it in two years. I got out, finished Rutgers in 1948, January. Yes, the Navy helped a lot. They gave credit for certain courses.

SH: You changed your major as well.

RA: Yes.

SH: Did you do that as soon as you came back?

RA: Yes, I took Spanish and I didn't know if I was going to make it.

SH: Had you met your wife at that point?

RA: Yes. We became engaged in 1947 and got married in April of 1948, before I actually graduated; no, actually, just before I got my diploma.

SH: You talked about being here as a freshman and really not being able to focus. Do you think your training as a pilot, or just having been in World War II, made you come back and put your head down like you did?

RA: I think the flight program helped, because I knew, then, ... if you had to do it, you could do it. I mean, that was a whole bit. We were very conscious of our flight mates, if you know what I mean. We had a great respect for one another, and loyalty, and you would do anything for anybody, really, and you just worked hard. I never worked so hard in all my life and I was never so proud as getting my wings.

SH: When did you begin to make plans for the future? Many people say that, during the war, they were focused on only that day, or, maybe, where their next rotation would take them. When did you start to make plans?

RA: As soon as I knew I was going to get out of the service. I was going to stay in the service, ... I thought about it, because they wanted us to stay. ... They had asked us to stay in and I ended up by joining the Reserves, because they said, "If you join the Reserves," I had my points, they said, "You'll be out before Christmas." So everybody joined the Reserves, but, then, they had asked us to stay in. ... My father said, "Look, unless [you are] out of Annapolis," he said, "forget about it, because," he said, "in a year or two everything will be cut back," and he said, "you'll be two years behind." ... He said, "You're not going to have the life that you had." He said, "That's the case," so, he said, "Get out," which was right, "and get back to school." He had seen the same thing in World War I. He said, "Fellows who stayed in, unless they were West Point, no future." It was good advice and I stayed in the Reserves, never did anything. I went out to Floyd Bennett Field once and it was enough of a deal. I got married and I started getting

letters from the Navy, "You want to learn how to fly helicopters?" I could see things starting to heat up and I didn't want to fly helicopters. ... Anyway, then, I kind of resigned from the Reserves, I guess, before Korea.

SH: I was going to ask about that.

RA: I was in the inactive Reserve and all the guys that stayed in the inactive Reserve got called up, not the active, which was unusual. ... The reason was, I guess, they were going to keep the active in case things really got hot in Korea. I had quite a few friends that got called back and ended up flying in Korea, a guy named (Coogan?), Williams, Ted Williams, also. When I was out at Baron Field, he was at Bronson Field.

SH: Did you meet him?

RA: No. They had a good baseball team.

SH: The sports that you had two weeks of as you went through training, did any of those become something that you practiced?

RA: No.

SI: What was it like to be at Rutgers with this mix of kids coming out of high school and veterans?

RA: I don't think any of us were very happy. I wasn't. ... We kind of got kicked around. Certain things happen; ... I don't know, it has just gotten so big all of a sudden, when I had gone there were maybe less than two thousand. Then, all of sudden, you come back and there's like six thousand. I think we all wanted to get out. I wanted to get out and make some money. I mean, I wanted to get to work. You want to get on with your life, and whatnot.

SH: What about the idea that the Archibald men would live on campus their senior year? Did you do that?

RA: No.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You lost your father in June. Did you and your brothers have to take care of your mother then?

RA: Well, we helped.

SH: Was there a retirement package for her?

RA: We did take [care] of her, but we started carrying our own way, should I put it that way? [With] the funds that she did have, she could take care of herself, so, that worked out well. My

brother, Bill, lived at home. He was very generous in paying board and whatnot. I even tried to help out with the household expenses. I know I did. So, I mean, that helped out a lot, and, then, my aunt was also living with us. She worked in J&J. We were blessed with my father and my mother. They had great work ethics and, I mean, that made so much [difference]. I think, then, the service really did so much for me. I mean, it got me focused and, I think, you have a desire for something and I really enjoyed in the Navy. Such a good bunch of guys.

SH: What was the health care like for the airmen and yourself?

RA: Excellent. The toughest thing about going to a doctor as a naval airman is, you had to be so careful with what you said, but you go to a dentist and, boy, they did everything in one shot. ... If you had something, your dental work was good, but they would put a brace in your mouth and whatever you had to [have] done was done. I remember, I had gone once in Chapel Hill and, man, I thought I was never going to get up. They might pull a tooth, drill a tooth and the whole works, all at once. Service was good. I remember, once, when I was on final squadron, I guess, I said I had a headache; I didn't feel like flying that day. Well, that's the worst thing you can say, I found out later, because, see, all of a sudden, then, they think maybe you're stressed out, or something or other, and they send you in for all sorts of tests. None of us felt like flying that day and everybody said they had a cold. I thought, "Well, maybe I better say I've got a headache instead." I went through, had to go back for all sorts of exams and whatnot, but it worked out well.

SH: Did you ever see anyone who really suffered from what they called combat fatigue at that point?

RA: Yes, as a matter-of-fact.

SH: How did the Navy deal with that?

RA: I really don't recall. I remember, we had this one fellow, his picture is in there, he was always a little bit different. He was from Long Island. He came back and went to Princeton and, much to my surprise, about a year later, he committed suicide, which was a shock. No, they had some fellows who would kind of go to pieces.

PA: Were they quick to whisk them away from the rest of the squadron?

RA: I think they just kind of disappeared. I don't recall what happened once [the] fellows would get washed out, but you just won't see them again. Nobody made a big deal out of it.

PA: You were still very active with the military after the war.

RA: No, I was not.

PA: Sorry, I meant that you were still based in Florida after the war ended. Did you see the civilian population's attitude change towards the military?

RA: I think everybody was pretty nice. ...

SH: You finished up at Rutgers in February 1948 with a degree in business administration.

RA: Yes.

SH: Where did you see that degree taking you?

RA: I wanted to get in business, some sort of business. I don't remember giving it too much thought, but my wife's father had started Little Falls Laundry and, at that time, I was thinking about ... working for Johnson & Johnson, applying there, or something like that. ... He suggested I come work for the laundry, which I did. ... Laundry is a thing of the past. You are too young to know it, but Little Falls, at that time, was one of the largest laundries in the country. I went up there and started working for them. It covered most of New Jersey then. I guess, he had about eight hundred people working for him, which was a good-sized operation. So, in about three, or four years, I became a partner and we sold out in 1969. I stayed with them, ... the people that bought us, for two years. ... I had been on a couple of union boards. We were unionized, and so, I decided to become a stockbroker, which I liked. I used to see this fellow come in, trying to sell stocks to the union board, and I decided I would specialize in trying to do union pension funds and large accounts; it worked out well for me.

SH: Did you maintain your love of flying?

RA: Yes. It ended up, I had a neighbor that was a chief pilot with TWA. We got to be very friendly. His claim to fame with TWA was, he had to wait six months to make captain, because he wasn't twenty-two, ... really one of the finest pilots you could meet and he ended up by becoming one of the top people with TWA. So, we had a couple of planes together. ... I ended up with another fellow, a Joe Getz, who was their chief check pilot, had a couple planes with him. Anyway, they passed on and a partner of mine [who] I got involved with in another business, we bought a couple of planes, which we used.

SH: Did you continue to fly?

RA: Yes, I was flying, even though we had a pilot, I would fly co-pilot and I would do, you know, land, take-off, and do everything. But I was not that proficient at that stage of life that I wanted to go out and fly in the New York area, with all the radio stuff, but I still kept up tracking and flying instruments. This past winter, they had what they call the War Bird flights, out of North Palm Beach. To make a long story short, there was a plane I flew, the old advanced trainer, the SNJ, so, I took an hour in that and the plane, I think, it was sixty-something years old. So, I decided I wanted to go out and do some aerobatics. That went well. It brought back a lot of memories and everything went well, until I did a loop and the guy said, "You are going to pull about four-and-a-half Gs," and I thought, "I can't do that. I'm going to get sick." So, I said, "Enough is enough." They let you do everything but take it off and land it, and I told him, "I have my logbook and I had a lot of time on it." He let you do anything you wanted to do, so, it was a lot of fun. They take a video of you, during the aerobatics. I did some of the aerobatics I used to do. It was good.

SH: How many family members did you have to impress then?

RA: My wife, although I am not really quite [sure] whether she thought I was kind of crazy at this age. She's probably right.

SH: Did you and your wife have children?

RA: Yes, we have three children, a girl and two boys and eight grandchildren.

SH: Have you maintained a close relationship with your brothers?

RA: Very close, extremely close. My brother, oldest brother Bill, was like a father, in many ways to our kids. I mean, he was a great uncle and he'd always take them to the ball games and I was busy at that time. He would take them to a lot of places to visit. We would go to World's Fairs. Once, we flew the kids up to Montreal and he drove the car up, met us up there and saw that fair and took them to the New York Fair and took them to a lot of different places.

SH: We look forward to the interview with you and your brother John about your brother Bill and his experiences. Are there any other questions?

RA: I didn't mean to take so much of your time.

SI: No, this is about average.

SH: Do you have anything that you would like to leave on the record?

RA: I just think that young people today missed a lot by not being in the service under the circumstances that we were in the service. I can see why, [with] some of the things [that] have happened, ... they would not [want] to be. ... In those days, the attitude [of] everybody was so much different than it is in today's world. I mean, there were not as many people. I think life was probably a heck [of] a lot simpler, even though we thought it was complicated.

SH: Did any of your children enter the military?

RA: No, they all missed the [draft], though our son, Larry, I was always afraid that if he went in the military, he'll never come back, because Larry is such a straight guy, and, if they told him to do something, he would do it. ... I always felt, if he went to Vietnam, he would never come back and we are fortunate that his number didn't get called up. ...

SH: Having a brother who was in the military during Vietnam, how did you view the war?

RA: I never really understood it, thought it was such a waste, so political, the same way with Bill. Being in his position, he was up for a second star and ... he turned it down. ... I don't think he approved of some of the things that were going on. I think a lot of people thought that way.

SH: Can you tell us about your continued involvement with Rutgers?

RA: Didn't do anything for a long time, until my fiftieth reunion. I really I didn't have too much interest then.

SI: Thank you very much for being here today.

RA: Well, thank you very much. I'm sorry I talked so long.

PA: That is what we want.

RA: Anyway, I got carried away. My wife says I like to talk too much.

SH: Thank you so much for your time today.

SI: This concludes our interview with Robert V. Archibald on June 1, 2005, in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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

Reviewed by Peter Asch 06/23/05

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/30/05

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/10/05

Reviewed by Robert Archibald 2/14/08